

Roadmap to the 2030 Census

A Resource for Community-Based
Organizations and Advocacy Groups

April 2023

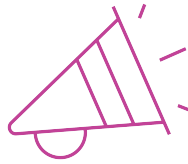


CENSUS COUNTS



The Leadership
Conference
Education Fund

Introduction



Our democracy depends on our collective engagement and our commitment to ensuring a fair and accurate decennial census year in and year out. During the 2020 Census, the Census Counts campaign, housed at The Leadership Conference Education Fund and co-chaired at the time by NALEO and Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, brought together community-based organizations across a wide spectrum of advocacy and outreach efforts to ensure that historically undercounted communities and population groups were enumerated in the 2020 Census.

Amid the challenges of the 2020 Census, we created a movement — and with the lessons from 2020 fresh in our minds, we know what is needed to ensure a successful 2030 Census. By investing our time now, we can lay a strong foundation for those who will work to get our communities counted in 2030. A fair and accurate census in 2030 will be determined by actions we take today.

For these reasons, and inspired by the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation's "[A Blueprint for Philanthropic Census Engagement](#)," The Education Fund and Census Counts developed the "Roadmap to the 2030 Census." This resource includes 2030 Census milestones and concrete examples of ways community-based and advocacy organizations, state and local governments, and other partners can engage in census work throughout the decade.

Underlying all the steps below is the collaborative policy and advocacy work that needs to be done by all stakeholders throughout the decade to ensure adequate funding for the Census Bureau, advocacy for updated questionnaires (including revised race/ethnicity questions and sexual orientation and gender identity — or SOGI — questions), and input on operational changes and any legislative recommendations resulting from the experiences and implications of the 2020 Census.

Please note that the timeline below is based on the rollout of activities by the Census Bureau for the 2020 Census and may change depending on funding, lessons learned, or operational modifications. This roadmap was launched in April 2022 and updated in the spring of 2023. We will continue to update the information annually (or more frequently, if needed) as the Census Bureau finalizes the 2030 Census design, releases an operational plan, and announces plans for field tests and then preparations for the census.

2021 – 2022

2021 Census Milestones

- Release of 2020 Census redistricting “legacy format” data files (August 12) and transmittal of user-friendly redistricting files to the states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (September 16).
 - Redistricting data files contain block level data by race and Hispanic origin, voting age (18+), plus housing unit counts and occupancy status, and Group Quarters data by type of facility (e.g., prisons, college dorms, military barracks, and more).
- Release of demographic profiles for governmental units (places) on a flow basis by state.
- 2020 Census assessments and evaluations begin (through 2023, tentatively).
- American Community Survey (ongoing).
- [Count Question Resolution](#) program begins January 2022 (deadline for submissions is June 30, 2023).

2022 Census Milestones

- Post Census Group Quarters Review launch.
- Results from the 2020 Census [Post-Enumeration Survey](#).
- 1950 Census forms become available through the National Archives (April 1).
- [American Community Survey](#) (ongoing).
- Research and testing to inform 2030 Census design and operational development begins.
- Census Bureau updates urban and rural categories.
- OMB listening sessions on revision of federal race and ethnicity standards; White House requests for information on Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity.
- Census Bureau solicits recommendations through [Federal Register Notice](#) for research to inform development of 2030 Census design and operational plan.

Actions for Community-Based Organizations

- Document and preserve the work your organization did for the 2020 Census and be sure to note the members of your census coalition and broader network (such as trusted messengers).
- Collect outreach and data success stories to use in 2030 get out the count (GOTC) work.
- Evaluate accomplishments, best practices, challenges, and solutions from your 2020 Census campaign.
- Contribute to efforts to amplify 2020 Census learnings and develop recommendations for the Census Bureau.
- Develop a plan for engaging your census coalition throughout the decade, with a specific focus on how your organization can sustain civil infrastructure leading up to the 2030 Census.
 - Additionally, maintain relationships with funders and funder/PSO collaboratives, as well as government, service providers, and practitioner partners throughout the decade. These collaborations can mobilize around issues like improving accessibility and equity around census data and other Census Bureau data and tools; expanding access to broadband infrastructure; leveraging

Evaluate accomplishments, best practices, challenges, and solutions from your 2020 Census campaign.



technology and local knowledge to map communities; building government knowledge and improving data collection on the LGBTQ+ community and people experiencing homelessness; and strengthening civic participation.

- Stay updated on the 2020 Census data release timeline, 2020 Census data quality assessments (e.g., Census Bureau data and independent benchmarks), related mitigation strategies, and census policy issues and litigation.
- Educate communities on direct impacts of the 2020 Census through storytelling campaigns reiterating the importance of the decennial census and promote positive narratives around data releases.
- Connect decennial censuses to other issues such as data equity, redistricting, American Community Survey (ACS), and health care.

- Educate communities and elected officials on the importance of the ACS and encourage community participation. Additionally, contribute to efforts to support adequate funding for the Census Bureau through the annual appropriations process.
- Educate communities and elected officials on the pulse surveys, particularly the household pulse surveys, which provide real-time information regarding the needs of communities.
- Educate communities and businesses about the [2022 Economic Census](#).
- *Optional: Begin to build awareness and educate partners on how to use census data for advocacy efforts (such as voting, education equity, transportation, health care, or housing issues) or for economic business and economic issues. Consider which other groups to bring into the census coalition.*



2023 – 2025

Census Milestones

- American Community Survey (ongoing).
- Count Question Resolution and Post-Census Group Quarters Review programs end on June 30, 2023.
- Population Estimates Challenge Program for counties, cities, towns, and tribal nations resumes.
- Research and testing to inform 2030 Census design selection and operational development, culminating in release of 2030 Census design and first operational plan by the end of 2024.
- Obtaining legal and programmatic justifications from federal agencies for topics to be included in the 2030 Census and American Community Survey, including possible SOGI questions.
- Securing dedicated funding for research, cognitive, and field testing for SOGI questions.
- Federal Register Notices seeking public input on updated American Community Survey content and operational improvements and [OMB standards](#) for the federal collection and reporting of data on race and ethnicity (2023).

- Release of Demographic Profiles for governmental units (places) on a flow basis by state (by May 31, 2023).
- Release of Demographic and Housing Characteristics files, with additional data collected in the 2020 Census for various levels of geography, including age, sex, household/family relationships, and housing tenure (by May 31, 2023) and the first sets of detailed data for racial and ethnic subgroups (August 2023).
- [Population Estimates Challenge Program](#) restarts, allowing local and tribal governments to appeal their annual estimates starting with the 2022 estimates released in 2023.
- OMB finalizes revisions to federal race and ethnicity standards (Summer 2024).

Actions for Community-Based Organizations

- Leverage 2020 Census and ACS data for work on voting rights, other civil and human rights issues, and social and economic justice campaigns.
 - Continue to educate coalition partners and communities about the importance of these surveys.

- Begin to engage with local and regional funders on 2030 Census design/planning and how they can support state and community organizations engaged in outreach efforts.
- Monitor and, as appropriate, contribute to research and development decisions for the 2030 Census, such as residence criteria (e.g., where people in prison are counted), operations (e.g., reliance on the internet, mapping technologies, and use of administrative records), and questionnaire development (e.g., improvement of race/ethnicity questions and consideration of SOGI questions).
- Start educating local and state entities about the [Local Update of Census Addresses \(LUCA\) Operation](#) (Fall 2024).
 - Offer at least one broad briefing or webinar for local and state officials/agencies on the importance of LUCA participation.
 - Work with state and local governments to help them plan and have the infrastructure to support LUCA.
- Educate local governments and other partners about the importance of Census Bureau economic surveys in providing a full picture of our communities.
- Continue to support sufficient annual funding (federal appropriations) for the Census Bureau, educate communities about the ACS, and maintain relationships with 2020 Census coalition partners.
- Continue on-the-ground messaging around the importance of the census with census stories, particularly related to any positive (or negative) developments in the community. Connect programs to federal funding and Census Bureau data sets and data tools.
- Provide educational and engagement opportunities focusing on the importance of SOGI data collection on the ACS and census.
- *Optional: Continue to broaden census coalition with partners on the ground by engaging on the uses of data for community education and policy making.*



2026

Census Milestones

- Testing for the 2030 Census to support key decisions affecting detailed 2030 Census design and operational plan. Those decisions include questionnaire content (topics), question wording, and possible revisions to the residence rules (formally known as Residence Criteria and Situations), which govern where people are counted.
- American Community Survey (ongoing).
- Demographic and economic surveys (ongoing).
- Launch of 2030 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Survey (CBAMS) (tentative).
- 2030 Census planning phase continues (through 2027).

Actions for Community-Based Organizations

- Identify at least one staff person dedicated to census issues part time.
 - Begin to review 2020 Census evaluations and 2030 Census CBAMS results (when available) to inform development of an initial GOTC (and advocacy, if applicable) plan for 2030.
- Help the Census Bureau fill focus groups with diverse community representatives when CBAMS is in progress.
- Depending on your state's legislative session, begin early advocacy efforts and conversations with elected state officials to secure funding for a statewide 2030 Census GOTC campaign, which should include support for community-based organizations in 2028, 2029, and 2030.
- Begin to gauge interest in 2030 Census involvement within your professional network and build out a strategy to bring in key partners for census engagement such as funders, elected officials, community-based organizations, advocacy organizations, demographers, businesses, and others.



**Have 2020 Census
success stories at
the ready.**

→ Identify potential community partners to form a coalition led by community-based organizations to engage with the Census Bureau and census champions.

- Develop and determine the structure of the coalition.
- Be prepared to tell prospective coalition members what you expect them to do, or the role you think they can play, in promoting census participation in your communities (e.g., collect and share census stories with stakeholders).
- Collaborate with state and/or local government in the formation process of [Complete Count Committees](#) (CCC).

→ Identify specific communities (e.g., regions, cities, neighborhoods, rural communities, tribal areas) and specific population groups (such as communities of color, people with disabilities, and immigrants) at greatest risk of being undercounted to inform 2030 Census campaign strategy and funding decisions.

→ Identify state philanthropy organizations that are providing aligned and/or joint funding for community-based organizations in your state.

→ Offer at least two broad briefings/webinars for funders, cosponsored by interested affinity groups, to get buy-in for engagement in 2030 Census GOTC efforts. Focus on

2030 Census methodology, operations, timeline for implementation, and organizing strategy.

→ Toward the end of 2026, set up conversations with local and state officials who will participate in the LUCA Operation.

- Offer to be of assistance, within the program's legal parameters, to ensure accuracy in the residential address list for their jurisdictions.
- Offer at least one broad briefing or webinar for local and state entities on the importance of LUCA.

→ Continue to monitor and contribute to testing and planning decisions for the 2030 Census, educate communities on the importance of the ACS, and support efforts to adequately fund the Census Bureau.

→ *Optional: By mid-2026 or 2027, begin the initial round of message testing for the 2030 Census. Note that many state-based organizations conducted their own message testing for the 2020 Census. However, should your organization not have the funds to conduct unique message testing, be aware that many large national organizations will most likely conduct message testing around this time. The results of this messaging research are typically shared among broader census networks.*

2027

Census Milestones

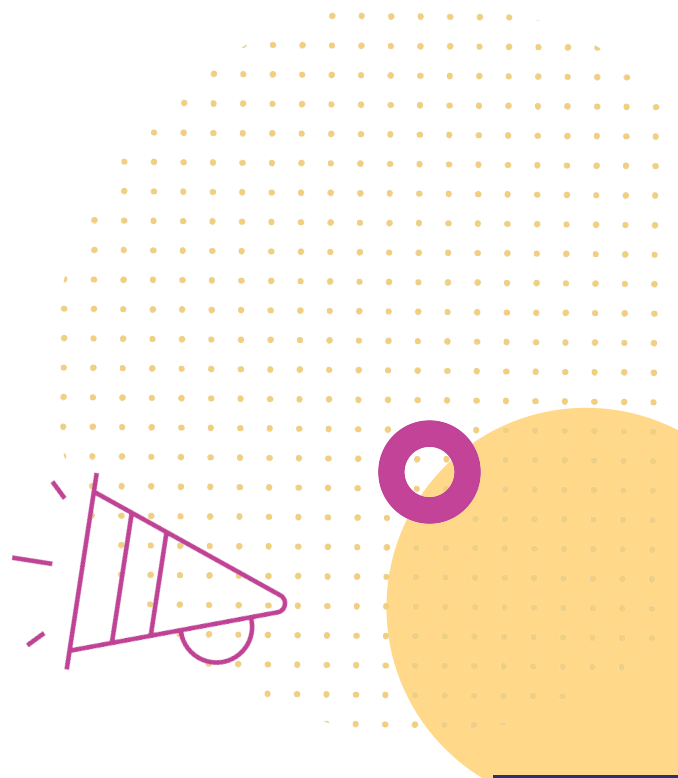
- Final testing of specific census operations, methods, and question wording and format (tentative).
- Submission of topics to be covered in the 2030 Census and ACS to Congress by April 1, 2027.
- Start of the [Local Update of Census Addresses](#) (LUCA) operation (tentative).
- American Community Survey (ongoing) .
- Census Bureau finalizes Residence Criteria and Residence Situations (affects prison gerrymandering).

Actions for Community-Based Organizations

- Launch your 2030 Census community-based organization-led coalition (early 2027).
 - Identify co-chairs.
 - Identify the scope of work.
 - Invite your network to join and develop a strategy to target specific audiences.
 - Develop communication and meeting structure (i.e., how often will you meet? How will you communicate?).
 - Begin regular census coalition meetings (quarterly or every other month is recommended at this time) to keep 2030 Census coalition members informed about key 2030 Census policy and operational developments.
 - Identify shared resource needs (e.g., “hard to count” maps, analyses of geographic funding based on census/ACS data, toolkits, effective messaging strategies) and gaps.

- Ramp up funding efforts for state government budgets and determine gaps and other funding opportunities. This includes national, regional, and local foundations/philanthropy organizations. Start this process early, as pulling philanthropy organizations together may take some time for coordinated, collaborative efforts.
- Develop a timeline for 2030 Census engagement and outreach campaigns.
- Begin to identify media partners, with an emphasis on local and ethnic media, who can partner with you on a 2030 Census campaign and begin to curate a list of language translation needs to prepare for GOTC.
- Continue to support LUCA operations, identify specific communities at greatest risk of being undercounted, identify census partners, monitor and contribute to research and development decisions for the 2030 Census, educate communities on the importance of the ACS, and support efforts to adequately fund the Census Bureau.
- By the end of 2027, granting should become available to move full steam ahead. Identify one full-time staff member to work on census issues.

- Educate communities and businesses about the 2022 Economic Census.
- Track if any census tests will be taking place in your area in order to help with GOTC for the test.
- *Optional: By mid-2026 or 2027, begin the initial round of message testing for the 2030 Census. Note that many state-based organizations conducted their own message testing for the 2020 Census. However, should your organization not have the funds to conduct unique message testing, be aware that many large national organizations will most likely conduct message testing around this time. The results of this messaging research are typically shared among broader census networks.*



2028

Census Milestones

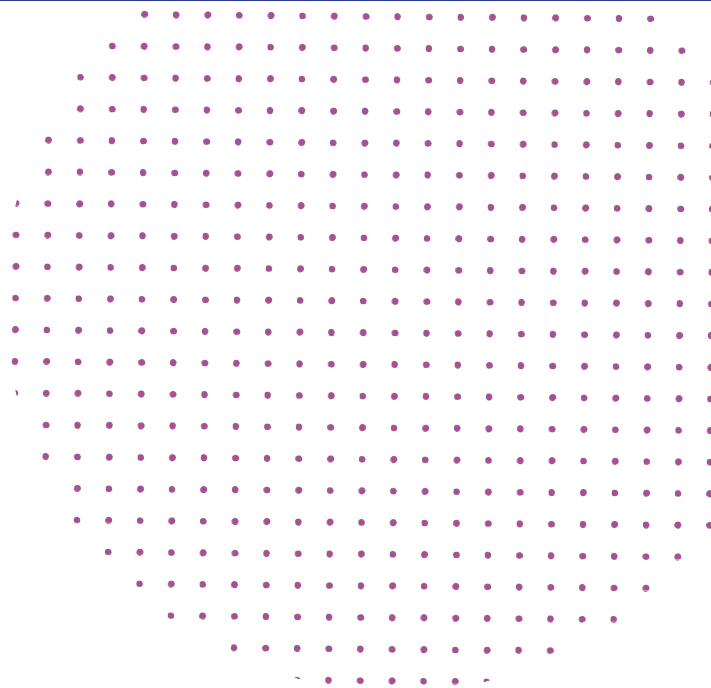
- Begin implementation of 2030 Census operational plan (through 2030).
- End-To-End Census Test (sometimes called a “dress rehearsal”).
- Submission of 2030 Census and ACS questions to Congress by April 1, 2028.
- Regional Census Centers open (there were six in 2020).
- Recruitment begins for temporary census positions, including partnership specialists, local office managers/staff, address listers, and peak operations field staff. Hiring for some local census offices might start late in the year.
- Launch of education and communications campaigns (tentative).
- American Community Survey (ongoing).

Actions for Community-Based Organizations

- Identify national and state coalitions conducting 2030 Census outreach efforts. Join these national and state coalitions for support and resources; share this information with your local-level coalition members.
- Build relationships with your regional census office/regional census center officials.
- Build relationships with your local and/or state [Complete Count Committees](#) (CCC) to ensure effective investment strategies and constructive relationships between your census coalition and state/municipal/local officials.
 - CCCs will begin to form in 2028 and will continue to form through Spring 2029.
 - No CCCs in your community? Host community census briefings and connect with local leaders to create your own.
- Deepen and clarify roles in census coalitions. Coordinate to avoid duplication of work.

- Suggestion: Build working groups that can cover messaging, communications, field outreach, and digital outreach/tools and materials.
- Determine who is obtaining digital and relational organizing tools and start obtaining lists and training partners and volunteers on using them.
 - Continue to identify specific communities at greatest risk of being undercounted, identify census partners, monitor decisions for the 2030 Census, educate communities on the importance of the ACS, and support efforts to adequately fund the Census Bureau.
 - By the end of 2028, your organization should have a field plan and a communications plan (including earned, paid, and social media) drafted to bring to your census coalition.
 - Urge your city or town to hire a full-time employee to coordinate GOTC efforts, staff the local CCC, and serve as the liaison with the regional and local census offices.
 - Promote applications for census local office, field, and partnership specialist positions to help ensure that census enumerators are representative of the communities they serve, which in turn will help meet the goal of a fair and accurate census.

**Build relationships with
your regional census
office/regional census
center officials.**



2029

Census Milestones

- Final census preparations, including in-field address canvassing and opening local census offices (tentative, based on 2020 Census operations).
- Recruitment continues for temporary census positions; hiring continues for local census office staff and address listers.
- Continuation or launch of education and communications campaigns.
- American Community Survey (ongoing).

Actions for Community-Based Organizations

- Continue regular meetings to keep 2030 Census coalition members informed about key 2030 Census policy and operational developments and identify needs (monthly meetings recommended).
- Build relationships with your local partnership specialists to ensure effective investment strategies and constructive relationships between your census coalition and census officials.
- Consider developing a rapid response network and/or monitoring disinformation. (Note that things will look much different for the 2030 Census, perhaps significantly so, from the 2020 Census. Utilize contemporary best practices from recent campaigns when building out this system).
- Utilize coordinated messaging, research, and database tools to finalize field and communications GOTC plans.

- Continue promoting applications for census local office, field, and partnership specialist positions to help ensure that census enumerators are representative of the communities they serve, which in turn will help meet the goal of a fair and accurate census.
- Continue to identify media outlets, with an emphasis on local and ethnic media, that can partner with you on a 2030 Census campaign.
 - Begin to identify and train a network of trusted messengers to promote the 2030 Census.
 - Note that the Census Bureau cannot buy advertising with media outlets that do not have a U.S. remit-to address. If those outlets are important to your community, explore ways to develop and place ad campaigns with them independently.
- Continue to work with key census partners (such as funders, elected officials, census officials, and CCCs), monitor decisions for the 2030 Census, and support efforts to adequately fund the Census Bureau.
- By the end of 2029, all field and communications plans should be final to allow for easy implementation.
- Start developing train-the-trainer modules that will be used to mobilize your coalition for GOTC activities.

- Start identifying digital and relational organizing tools that can be used for GOTC.
- Reach out to local businesses to develop partnerships for GOTC engagement.
- *Optional: By Spring 2029, 2030 Census messaging and materials should be finalized, including fact sheets, webinars, and other information sessions. Additionally, have in-language materials ready to go simultaneously with English-language resources.*
- *Optional: By mid-2029, conduct another round of message testing for the 2030 Census and update your initial messaging guidance from 2027.*
- *Optional: National organizations may offer subject matter assistance to your network and state and local elected officials through fact sheets, webinars, and one-on-one consultations.*

**Start developing
train-the-trainer
modules that will be used to
mobilize your coalition for
GOTC activities.**



2030

Census Milestones

- 2030 Census peak operations (April 1, 2030, is Census Day).
- Hiring of field staff, including supervisors and enumerators (starting February/ March).
- Coverage improvement, data processing, and quality check operations after field operations end.
- Post-Enumeration Survey to measure census accuracy begins.
- Secretary of Commerce transmits apportionment counts and results to the president by December 31, 2030; Census Bureau releases that information, along with national and state resident population totals, publicly at the same time.
- American Community Survey (ongoing, even during the census year).

Actions for Community-Based Organizations

- Begin implementation of communications and field organizing in January.
 - Host a large-scale day of action on Census Day, April 1, 2030.
- Activate key partners for census engagement to get out the count, such as funders, elected officials, CCCs, community-based organizations, advocacy organizations, faith leaders, demographers, businesses, and more.
- Consistently update outreach materials, ensuring they are available in multiple languages and up to date on any real-time changes in basic census operations.
- Closely monitor 2030 Census implementation in real time to identify communities that might require additional outreach to ensure an accurate count, as well as unanticipated implementation challenges (such as cyber security scares) that might require additional communications efforts.
- Host at least one webinar during the height of census operations on implementation progress.

Census Milestones

- Release of 2030 Census redistricting data files on a flow basis by state (no later than April 1, 2031).
 - Redistricting data files contain block level data by race and Hispanic origin, voting age (18+), plus housing unit counts and occupancy status, and Group Quarters data by type of facility (e.g., prisons, college dorms, military barracks, and more).
- Release of demographic profiles for governmental units (places) on a flow basis by state.
- 2030 Census assessments and evaluations begin (TBD).
- Count Question Resolution (CQR) Operation begins (tentative, date TBD).
- American Community Survey (ongoing).

Actions for Community-Based Organizations

- Document and preserve the work your organization did for the 2030 Census and be sure to note the members of your census coalition and broader network (such as trusted messengers).
- Collect outreach and data success stories to use in 2040 GOTC work.
- Evaluate accomplishments, best practices, challenges, and solutions from your 2030 Census campaign.
- Contribute to efforts to amplify 2030 Census learnings and develop recommendations for the Census Bureau.
- Develop a plan for engaging your census coalition throughout the decade, with a specific focus on how your organization can sustain infrastructure leading up to the 2040 Census.
 - Additionally, maintain relationships with funders and funder/PSO collaboratives, as well as government, service providers, and practitioner partners throughout the decade. These coalitions can mobilize around issues like

improving accessibility and equity around census data and other Census Bureau data and tools; expanding access to broadband infrastructure; leveraging technology and local knowledge to map communities; building government knowledge and improving data collection on the LGBTQ+ community and people experiencing homelessness; and strengthening civic participation.

- Stay updated on the 2030 Census data release timeline, 2030 Census data quality assessments (e.g., Census Bureau and independent evaluations), related mitigation strategies, and census policy issues and litigation.
- Educate communities on direct impacts of the 2030 Census through storytelling campaigns, reiterating the importance of the decennial census and promote positive narratives around data releases.





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