

PUBLIC PRIVATE STRATEGIES

Census 2020: Regional Business Roundtables

Background

The U.S. Constitution requires the federal government to conduct the census every 10 years to count the nation's entire population, because the founders of our nation envisioned it as a vehicle for gathering data to guide fair and informed governance.

The accuracy of the upcoming 2020 census, however, is threatened by funding cuts, a leadership vacuum and uncertainty surrounding the development and implementation of new technologies. Without a complete and accurate count, the Foundation will not be able to effectively target investments to ensure the largest impact for children and families. We have joined forces with other foundations to support the different sectors – nonprofit, religious, business, advocacy and government – to ensure a complete and accurate count in 2020.

The census also is a vital tool for business development and growth. Businesses use data derived from the census and the American Community Survey to guide strategic development, operational decisions, and investment of resources. Unreliable data would impact businesses' ability to make decisions or disrupt their business altogether and make it more difficult for governments to make sound economic policy decisions about hospitals, schools, transportation and other infrastructure. Acting Census Bureau director Ron Jarmin recently explained: "the business community is by far the largest consumer of census data in the country."

Business leaders can and should be vocal and effective advocates for a fully-funded, fair, and accurate Census in 2020. The roundtables will serve to mobilize top corporate and community business leaders, educating them on the risks facing the census, the business impact of these risks, and most importantly, how they can help prevent, overcome and minimize them.

Objectives

The Census Business Roundtable is an opportunity to engage the business community. It is an opportunity to leverage the community's strong interest and reliance on accurate census data to bring its significant resources and powerful voice and influence into the effort to assure a complete and accurate Census. Our hope is that in educating and engaging the business community will lead to additional support for nonprofit groups, create new allies and champions to assure adequate funding and leadership for the Bureau and build a solid foundation for engaging the business community in the "get out the count" phase of the campaign that is gearing up.

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Description

Each Census Business Roundtable will be co-hosted by a leading locally-based foundation and major corporation, with guests including approximately 20 C-suite executives from Fortune 500 companies based in the region, as well as other major business community stakeholders, such as prominent chamber leaders.

As co-hosts, the foundation and anchor corporation would help identify participants and jointly, formally invite leaders to the roundtable and provide welcoming remarks at the session, which will be led by a trusted moderator with Census expertise. The Roundtable would consist of an educational briefing and an “ask” for business leaders to get engaged.

Who: Approximately 20 C-suite executives & major business community stakeholders

When: Late Spring/Early Summer

Time commitment: Two hours

Where: Locally-based, nationally-renown foundation headquarters

Role of co-hosts: Both foundation and corporate co-hosts collaborate to Invite C-level leaders to provide welcoming remarks

The Business Case for a Complete, Accurate Census

- The census and American Community Survey (ACS) guide the distribution of \$700 billion in federal funds annually.
- Businesses use Census data to tailor their goods and services to regional, local, even neighborhood differences.
- Businesses rely on the data to make key growth, marketing, site selection, and workforce decisions, to better serve customers and create jobs.
- Homebuilders use data to determine where to build certain types of housing, such as apartments in markets high in people age 25-34 and renters.
- Data are used by state and local governments to make decisions on road construction, public transportation, healthcare facilities and other critical infrastructure
- Congress uses the data to allocate grants for homeland security, highway planning and construction, Medicaid, substance abuse treatment, community development, rural electrification, public transit, low income housing, special and adult education, home energy assistance, rural business and industry development loans, water and waste disposal systems, mental health services, rural broadband access, crime victim assistance, coastal zone management, outreach to disabled veterans, natural disaster recovery, and dozens of other programs...all with direct impact on the businesses which serve each community.