THE 2020 CENSUS: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

TERRI ANN LOWENTHAL
FUNDERS CENSUS INITIATIVE (FCI 2020)
JANUARY 25, 2020
IT'S SHOWTIME!
MAJOR COUNTING OPERATIONS

- **Self-response** (most households) (March 12 – April 30)

- **Nonresponse Follow-up** (NRFU) (May 13 – July 31)
  - Early NRFU starts April 9 (off-campus college student areas)

- **Group Quarters** (no self-response!) (April 2 – June 5)
  - Includes Service-based Enumeration (SBE) of people experiencing homelessness @ shelters & targeted outdoor locations (March 30 – April 1)

- **Enumeration of Transitory Locations** (April 9 – May 4)
SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT!

- The census *does not start on April 1, 2020.* That is a reference date only.
- The 2020 Census is *not a “digital census.”* Households can self-respond via internet, telephone, or paper form, or in-person if all else fails. *Lift this up!*
- People cannot obtain a paper questionnaire by calling the Census Bureau.
- Students living in college-run housing *do not self-respond.*
- The daily self-response progress reports will represent *percent of all known housing units, not people,* that have self-responded via internet, telephone, or paper questionnaire. (Projected national self-response rate: 60.5%)
- The first mailing is *not a postcard.*
- The Census Bureau *will not email or text people* for the 2020 Census. *(Beware of scams.)*
THE CHALLENGE

- The census is not an equal opportunity enumeration.
- "Hard to count" groups include:
  - people of color
  - low income households (renters)
  - young children (age 0–4), esp. Black & Latino
  - LEP & foreign-born households
  - single, female-headed households
  - young, mobile adults
- Non-Hispanic White + higher income households overcounted
- **Result:** disproportionate undercount that skews census data and everything that flows from those data for next 10 years
THE 2020 CENSUS AT RISK: The perfect storm?

- Insufficient & delayed annual funding (appropriations)
- First high-tech census: cybersecurity threats; digital divide; disinformation campaigns; IT failures; phishing, fake websites
- Civic disengagement & mistrust of government: threatens participation in many communities
- Citizenship question controversy: disrupted preparations; increased the “climate of fear”
- Natural disasters: The census meets the climate crisis.
- The wildcards: presidential campaign; @RealDonaldTrump
I AM NOT ON TWITTER, BUT …

#FailureIsNotAnOption
TAKE-AWAYS

1. **Name a full-time city census coordinator** (at least from February – July).
   - *Can’t afford it?* Ask philanthropy or the business community to chip in.

2. **Engage group facility administrators to ensure accurate enumeration.**
   - E.g. Prisons/jails; colleges/universities; domestic violence shelters; skilled nursing homes; homes for ‘returning citizens’ (halfway houses)

3. **Engage service providers and advocates for people experiencing homelessness.**
   - Shelters; mobile food vans; “outdoor” locations, such as encampments & train stations

4. **Be a cheerleader, advocate, and guardian for your city!**
   - *Nothing* is more important over the next year than an accurate census in your community. *There are no do-overs.*
   - **Lead. Promote. Empathize. Reassure. Stand up for your residents.**
THANK YOU!
Happy Census Year!
#CountMeIn