



WASHINGTON NONPROFITS

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Getting Out the Count: What Nonprofits Need to Support Census 2020 In Reaching Hard to Count Communities

January 2019

SUMMARY

Below is a summary of Washington Nonprofits' 2020 Census stakeholder research. We conducted this outreach to inform the development of our 2020 Census Nonprofit Action Kit. Key findings include:

- Nonprofit leaders have an understanding about the Census informed by national and local media stories. Their primary understanding of the Census' importance is that it determines the allocation of funds for services.
- Communities across Washington State are distrustful of government for a variety of reasons. One particular reason is the Trump Administration's immigration policies and, by extension, the proposed citizenship question.
- Communities are concerned about who is collecting the data, and for what purpose.
- Overcoming questions and concerns about the Census will require trusted messengers, such as nonprofits and community leaders, to actively engage their communities.

PARTICIPANTS

The 18 survey participants were current or former nonprofit staff from across Washington State. A matrix with their names, organizations, communities served, and locations are in the appendix section. Geographically, the vast majority of participants were based in central and eastern Washington. All of the participants serve populations generally considered hard to count. Participants serve a variety of racial, ethnic, and age communities, but the most frequent population cited was the Latino population found in central and eastern Washington.

Washington Nonprofits is continuing to conduct interviews across the state to inform the toolkit design. The final question of our survey asks for referrals to other people who could have valuable insight to share, and we plan to pursue those leads with the intention of learning more to inform our work.

METHOD

Survey participants were interviewed by phone by Washington Nonprofits' Director of Public Policy David Streeter and Graduate Intern Samantha Wells. The Appendix contains a summary of a facilitated discussion held in Yakima, WA that was used to vet and test the survey.

Participants received \$25 Amazon.com gift cards as a gesture of appreciation for their time. We felt that it was important to provide a gift in recognition of their time since we have learned through other work that nonprofit staff, particularly leaders of color, are frequently asked to do extra work without receiving compensation.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

A consistent theme among survey respondents is that a distrust of government is prevalent in their communities at large. Key reasons for the negative view of government include:

- Fear among immigrants and people of color due to the Trump Administration's immigration enforcement policies. People are concerned their personal safety and the safety of their families is jeopardized due to the Administration's policies.
 - This is present among Latino communities throughout the state, Sikh communities in northwest Washington, and Russian and Eastern European communities in the Spokane and Walla Walla areas.
- Lack of efficacy stemming from unmet needs and unclear benefits from government.
- Confusion resulting from difficult to navigate government programs, as well as a perceived loss of individuality when interacting with government.
- Feeling forgotten by government, particularly among homeless communities.
- A view that the country and local communities are headed in the wrong direction.
- Apathy and low information about government.

Several participants also emphasized that communities are divided politically between liberals and conservatives, which makes dialogue and engagement difficult. Liberal communities tend to include immigrants and people of color, while conservative communities are largely or exclusively White.

CURRENT 2020 CENSUS KNOWLEDGE

Existing knowledge about the Census varied by participant. Some were actively involved in Census organizing and knew a lot about the issues impacting the 2020 count. Others were relying on knowledge they received through the media.

Many participants, regardless of their activity level in Census organizing, expressed that their current views of the 2020 Census are informed by media reports in national and local publications. The most frequently mentioned topic that participants were aware of was the proposed citizenship question. Participants who cited this mentioned the consequences reported by the media, including the possibility of a depressed count and concerns about safety. A secondary issue informed by media reports is how the 2020 Census will be administered. Various media outlets have reported about funding challenges for the U.S. Census Bureau as well as the shift to an online-first response format.

Our survey asked respondents, “How would census results positively or negatively impact your local community?” The most commonly cited impact category was funding. In particular, respondents were concerned about the availability of government funds to meet community needs. Redistricting and political representation were also cited, especially by nonprofit staff serving racial and ethnic communities that are historically underrepresented in government. Quality data for service targeting and forecasting was also cited by participants.

WHY COMPLETE THE CENSUS? SUGGESTED MESSAGES

We asked survey respondents, “If you could give the people you serve one reason for completing the Census, what would you tell them?” Responses included:

- More resources for the community
- Our ability to vote is impacted by the Census
- The services you use are at stake
- Your response to the Census provides X dollars for the state over 10 years
- Participation is a requirement
- We want your voice to be heard, and that can't happen without participating
- Make yourself count
- Represent yourself
- Recognize collective power
- Make your voice heard
- The data is used to make decisions on your behalf
- If you're not counted, policymakers don't know if you exist
- It affects your future
- It is empowering to get counted because the Trump Administration does not want you to get counted (rising to the challenge)
- If you don't get counted, you don't exist
- Getting counted provides a good future for your children

Critically, two survey participants specifically said that they would be uncomfortable encouraging Census participation if their clients' safety or immigration status could be jeopardized.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE 2020 CENSUS

Our survey asked respondents if they had any questions or concerns about the 2020 Census.

The most frequent questions raised was "Who is collecting individuals' data, and for what purpose?" Participants emphasized that their clients are likely fearful of providing their personal information to someone they do not know or trust. For immigrants and communities of color, this is a significant concern given the Trump Administration's immigration policies and statements.

Several participants also raised questions about the proposed citizenship question, and whether or not it will be included on the final Census questionnaire. Some participants also asked questions regarding the online response format. In particular, multiple participants raised questions about individuals' access to reliable Internet. One participant also asked how the Census Bureau will be requesting online responses. Additionally, three participants raised the question of how the Census count will be conducted and if it will disrupt local homeless counts. One respondent whose organization serves children in the foster care system asked how children who are in residential facilities will be counted.

Additionally, multiple participants expressed concerns about how to count hard to count populations, especially homeless individuals, youth living in residential treatment facilities, and long-term care patients.

Our survey asked respondents to share any suggested responses that they have to the concerns that they are hearing. We did not receive responses to the questions that were raised by survey participants. Instead, we received strategic and tactical suggestions for outreach designed to overcome the challenges underlying the questions and concerns. Most of the respondents highlighted the importance of using trusted institutions and individuals as the messenger for information about the Census. Nonprofits and their staff fill this role because of the explicit trust that exists between nonprofits and their clients. Respondents who did not refer to trust in their response to the specific survey question certainly discussed the role of individual and community trust in other question responses.

Tactical suggestions used by trusted messengers included:

- Door to door canvassing to encourage participation
 - Multiple participants suggested that this be conducted by people who are from the targeted communities
 - One participant suggested mobilizing college-aged adults to act as door to door messengers
- Events dedicated to the Census

- Building Census information into pre-scheduled events
- Direct branded mail from organizations to clients encouraging participation

Our survey also asked about possible barriers to participation that exist in communities. The shift to an online response format was cited as a top concern due to inconsistent Internet access in communities as well as limited proficiency with using technology. Other concerns included fear and distrust of government, lack of information about the Census, and general apathy about civic participation.

TOOLKIT DESIGN FEEDBACK

Our survey asked respondents for suggested materials or other resources that should be included in the toolkit. Suggestions focused primarily on communications items:

- Email templates organizations can use for engaging their constituents
- Newsletter articles that can go in print and online publications
- Fact sheets on the Census, including how the process works, how the data is used, and reasons to participate
- Social media images and messages
- Press kit for engaging local media

Additional suggested resources included:

- A hotline that people can use to ask questions about the Census
- A texting service for engaging with people whose primary source of communications is texting
- Videos that cover the “why” and the “how” of participating
- Table banners for events

We asked survey respondents to describe images that would resonate with their communities. Participants suggested using diverse and culturally appropriate images that match with the communities that are being targeted for Census outreach. Other suggestions included images of children, families, communities, and clergy members. Materials produced by La Casa Hogar and Byrd Barr place were specifically cited as successful, culturally appropriate materials.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey interviews, Washington Nonprofits offers these recommendations to Washington State and the coalitions that are emerging for Census outreach.

1. **Suggested General Messages:** These suggested general message ideas are based on synthesizing the responses we received from participants. They can and should be altered to fit different community contexts.
 - Getting counted in the Census empowers your community and provides resources for a better future.

- Your community's power and resources depend on you getting counted.
- Getting counted secures your community's future.
- Make yourself count for your community's sake.
- Make yourself count for your children's sake.
- You Matter. Get Counted.

2. **Local-level organizing could use a jumpstart through state-level coordination.** With the exception of survey respondents already involved in local Census organizing, there is little knowledge available about emerging coalitions at the local level. This signifies that the issue is not a priority for many communities, despite the significant stakes. Washington Nonprofits is aware of efforts underway in King County, Pierce County and Yakima, as well as forthcoming organizing in Bellingham and Vancouver. However, to ensure the successful dissemination of our tool kit and other materials produced by nonprofits, it would be helpful for us to build partnerships with local Census coalitions. However, a statewide list of coalitions does not currently exist. We recommend that the Washington State Complete Count Committee compile a list of local Census organizing, similar to how National Voter Registration Day organizers circulate a list of organizations and events engaged in voter registration.

3. **Dollars must be available for community groups to fully engage in Census organizing.**

Currently, it is unclear if public and private funders will make funds available to implement the recommendations sourced from survey participants. For example:

- Each communications item suggested requires resources for printing and dissemination.
- Engagement at events requires tools to draw people in, such as candy, items for children, and other services to maximize attendance (childcare, interpretation, space rental, food, etc...).
- Door-to-door engagement requires people and coordination.
- The online-first response format of the Census requires access to Internet-equipped devices. If people have a limited data plan, lack devices, or live without reliable Internet, then it will make it difficult for them to respond. Nonprofits are positioned to provide opportunities to respond, but funds are needed by grassroots and community groups in order to pay for the equipment that enables responses.

Nonprofit organizations' budgets are already stretched thin, so it is imperative that funders provide additional resources that can be used to get out the count. However, funding requests to public and private funders typically require detailed proposals, which could deter nonprofits from seeking funds due to them not having the time, grantwriting skills and infrastructure to apply and/or comply with reporting and evaluation requirements. Additionally, the funds must be made available with ample time available for local organizers to plan and strategize for Get Out The Count work, ideally before January 2020.

One way for funders to expedite getting funds to community groups and lower the application and reporting burden would be to fund empower an intermediary group to issue expedited mini-grants, while having the intermediary be responsible for the grant reporting. This will enable community and grassroots groups to build Census outreach into their work, easily seek funds, and minimize the burden of extra work on organizations. Washington Nonprofits is considering playing this role, or would be happy to see another organization step forward to do this.

4. **Scenario planning is necessary for the proposed Citizenship Question.** As of this reports' writing the proposed citizenship question is in legal limbo. Because of this, it is important for all Census advocates and organizers to start planning for one of two scenarios: (1) the citizenship question is removed; or (2) the citizenship question stays and threatens the count. We are aware that nongovernmental organizations are wrestling with this issue, but recommend that there be a coordinated approach to addressing this issue once the question's status is determined.

ABOUT WASHINGTON NONPROFITS

Washington Nonprofits is Washington's state association for nonprofits. Its mission is to make sure nonprofits have what they need to succeed. It helps nonprofits learn, increase their influence, and connect to people and resources. Visit our website at <http://www.washingtonnonprofits.org> or contact Washington Nonprofits' Public Policy Director David Streeter at (855) 299-2922 for more information.

Washington Nonprofits has been actively engaged in Census advocacy since January 2018. We are engaged in pro-Census advocacy at the federal and state levels of government; continually circulating information about the Census including our informational video and U.S. Census Bureau job postings; and participating in state and local Complete Count Committee meetings and the Washington Census Alliance. Our 2020 Census resource page is available at www.washingtonnonprofits.org/2020Census

APPENDIX: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1. Respondent information.
2. Interviewer information.
3. What communities do you work with and/or identify with?
4. What have you heard about the 2020 Census?
5. How would Census results positively or negatively impact your local community?
6. If you could give the people you serve one reason for completing the Census, what would you tell them?
7. What is the current view of government among the people you serve and your geographic community?
8. What unique sensitivities or dynamics (cultural, physical, religious, etc...) exist in your community?
9. What questions or concerns do you have or are you hearing about the 2020 Census?
10. Do you have any suggested responses to the concerns you're hearing?
11. What barriers to Census participation do you see among the people you serve?
12. We will be putting together a Census toolkit for nonprofits, with items like talking points and a poster about the Census. What tools would be most useful to your organization? Are there other resources you would need?
13. What images would resonate with the people you serve?
14. If time and money were not issues, how would you count your community?
15. Can you provide examples of other outreach materials encouraging participation that have worked with your community?
16. Is there local Census organizing taking place in your community?
17. Are you involved in local Census efforts?
18. If "no," do you want to be involved?
19. If "no," are there barriers that are holding you back? What are they?
20. Can you recommend others in your community for us to speak with for this project? If so, what are their names and emails, if you can provide that information?

APPENDIX: SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Name	Organization	Area Served	Communities Served and/or Services	Involved in local Census efforts?	Wants to be involved in local Census efforts?
Jon Carollo	Volunteers of America	Spokane	Homeless veterans, women, 13-17-year-olds, foster care	No	Yes
Aaron Riley	SNAP- Long Term Care Ombudsman	Spokane	Nursing home residents, adult family home residents (physical and behavioral health issues), assisted living facilities; residents of enhanced services facilities (severe mental illness/frequent hospital and jail stays)	No	Yes
Diana Avalos-Leos	Local Consultant with 20+ Years of Community Experience	Vancouver	(Through consulting) low income individuals, elderly, children, Medicaid, immigrant communities, K-12 parents and students, nonprofit organizations, large organizational systems	No	Yes
Jessica Laughery	Hutton Settlement	Spokane	Children (5-18) In residential care, many are low income, homeless, and/or substance users	No	Yes
Amber Johnson	SNAP	Spokane	Clients are low-income, largely English speakers, Russian is the 2nd most prominent language among clients, followed by Vietnamese and Spanish	No	Yes
Bob Peeler	SNAP Homeless Services	Spokane, Spokane County	Homeless	Yes	Maybe
Elise Menashe	Former Boys and Girls Clubs of SW WA Executive Director	Vancouver, Clark County	Children and families: Hispanic, African American, Micronesian, Russian; many are low income	Yes	Yes
Sean Lawrence	Lummi Indian Business Council	Bellingham, Whatcom County	Serves Lummi tribe members and other tribes. They provide multi-faceted care and services to the Lummi of all ages.	Yes	Yes
Luis Rosales	Trilogy Recovery Community	Walla Walla	Youth and adults (13-40+) with substance abuse recovery	No	Maybe

Name	Organization	Area Served	Communities Served and/or Services	Involved in local Census efforts?	Wants to be involved in local Census efforts?
Faviola Lopez	Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and Northern Idaho	Covers central and eastern WA, mostly rural areas	Clients range from teens to middle age, from all different types of nationalities and ethnicities. Also from different economic backgrounds, but largely low income.	Yes	Yes
Mary Campbell	Community Council	Walla Walla, Walla Walla and Columbia Counties, North East Umatilla County, OR	Umatilla Tribe members, Latinos, Eastern Europeans, African Americans	No	Yes
Laura Armstrong	La Casa Hogar	Central Washington	Latinos	Yes	Yes
Ruth Tollefson	Peace Community Center	Tacoma, Pierce County	Low Income families of color with children ages 7-24. Many are single parent households.	No	Yes
Leon Garnett	Byrd Barr Place	Seattle	Low-income populations at 100-150% of poverty level. Predominantly 55+ African American and Asian American/Pacific Islander.	Yes	Yes
Summer Starr	Opportunity Council	Bellingham, Whatcom, Island, Skagit, Snohomish, and San Juan Counties.	Low-income populations, homeless, children	Yes	Yes
Asa Washines	More Equitable Democracy; Yakima-Yakima 2020	Statewide	Yakima Nation, other tribes in Oregon and Washington, urban Indian populations	Yes	Yes
Lael Duncan		Tonasket	Low income individual, seniors, families with young children, Colville reservation, and Latinos	No	Yes
Andrew Rodriguez	Blue Mountain Action Council	Walla Walla	Latinos	No	Yes

APPENDIX: YAKIMA CENSUS DISCUSSION SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

This document summarizes the discussion that took place at the Census 2020 Yakima meeting on November 2, 2018. Census 2020 Yakima is an emerging nongovernmental coalition dedicated to ensuring an accurate census count. The coalition convened the meeting and invited Washington Nonprofits Director of Public Policy David Streeter to participate as part of Washington Nonprofits' Census 2020 research. Answers are summarized anonymously and grouped into the survey questions in which they best fit. Additional feedback items and questions are included in the additional feedback session.

PURPOSE

The meeting had two purposes: (1) vet the Census survey created by Washington Nonprofits; and (2) get preliminary answers to the survey questions.

PARTICIPANTS

David Streeter, Washington Nonprofits (discussion facilitator)
Laura Armstrong, La Casa Hogar
Matthew Tomaskin, Yakama Nation
Teresa Sanchez, People for People
Caty Padilla, Nuestra Casa
Faviola Lopez, Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and Northern Idaho
Asa Washines, More Equitable Democracy
Mary Lopez, One America
Doru Peralta Baker, Asian Pacific Islander Coalition
Elsa Batres-Boni, Win Win Action (by phone)

PROCEDURE

Participants were seated around a square table and introduced themselves. David Streeter distributed copies of the survey to each participant for discussion. The discussion was held, but the limited meeting time meant that only a few of the questions could be addressed directly. At the end, each participant received a \$25 Amazon Gift Card in exchange for their time.

QUESTION RESPONSES

Question #4: If you could give the people you serve one reason for completing the Census, what would you tell them?

- Equality for people served
- The impact will be long-term, especially as it relates to funding and political representation for historically underrepresented populations
- Census participation is part of being civically engaged, which impacts issues such as immigration rights and environmental justice.
- Because you empower your community when you are counted.
- The Census is an opportunity for communities to do things for themselves.

Question #7: What unique sensitivities or dynamics (cultural, physical, religious, etc...) exist in your community?

- Yakima is a relationship-driven community
 - Trusted leaders can effectively encourage people to participate in the Census
 - The participant cited door knocking and ballot parties as examples of civic engagement activities conducted by trusted leaders known to be effective in the community
- Nuestra Casa, Educational Service District #105, and the Philippine Community Center were cited as trusted messengers and institutions in the community.
- Outreach through summer health care clinics could be effective
 - Yakima Valley Farmworkers' clinic
 - Fred Hutch's local programming

Communication with Local Latino Population

- One participant advised that many in the local Latino population do not use email or social media for various reasons.
 - Face-to-face interactions or phone calls are the most effective means of reaching people.

Yakama Nation

- The Yakama Reservation contains significant internet and cell coverage gaps
 - U.S. Cellular is the only provider on the Reservation
- The Rez to Rez tour on ballot initiatives was cited as an example of effective civic engagement between Tribes

AAPI Community

- The AAPI community was described as a demographic split between middle income professionals and low income farm/cannery workers
- The AAPI community generally comes from countries with significant political unrest and distrust of government, which could impact their willingness to participate

Question #11: We will be putting together a census toolkit for nonprofits, with items like talking points and a poster about the Census. What tools would be most useful to your organization?

- Radio scripts and advertisements for reaching seniors and multi-family households
 - KDNA was cited as an influential radio station in the community
- Resources for reaching out to local Latino media
- Direct mail items from trusted messengers
 - For example, a nonprofit sends a branded postcard about the Census
- Handouts for community centers
- Community meeting scripts and talking points
 - A participant advised building Census content into pre-existing community meetings and events, rather than creating new ones.

- A pool of graphics and translated messages that can be used by multiple organizations

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Funding

- The group indicated that they need funds in order to mobilize around the Census.
Specific wish-list items included:
 - Funding for a central workspace
 - Printing costs
 - Money for individual engagement (ex. snacks at community events, things for kids)
 - Signs
 - Table banners
 - Billboards
 - Phone-banking materials

Language Translation

- One participant advised that non-English items be drafted in the other language, rather than drafted in English first and then translated

Polling

- One participant suggested polling local communities to see if they intend to answer the Census and listen to the reasons for a “no” response.