Count Day for the 2020 Census is less than a year away. On April 1, 2020 the Census Bureau’s goal is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place! Michigan municipalities have a high stake in making sure everyone is counted. For every resident not counted Michigan stands to lose an estimated $1,800 per person per year in federal funds.

The very first responsibility of the federal government under the U.S. Constitution is a count of all persons living in the United States to allocate seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states. In addition, census numbers impact how legislative districts at all levels of government are drawn, where roads and transit are built in the future, planning for emergency management services, and how more than $675 billion in federal funding is distributed annually across the country.

What are Some of the Changes in the 2020 Census?

The U.S. has counted its population every 10 years since 1790. In 2020, for the first time, every household will have the option of responding online, by mail, or by phone. The controversial citizenship question may be restored. The Supreme Court had not decided on this by print deadline.

There will be twice as many language options as in previous years. And you’ll see fewer census workers in neighborhoods verifying addresses. High resolution aerial and street-level imagery have allowed for continual address updates to occur over the last decade.

Engage, Educate, Encourage

There is still time for your municipality to be an active participant in the 2020 Census.

• Designate a point of contact for census preparedness in your community.

• Work closely with Census Bureau staff and regional offices. Michigan is represented by the Chicago Regional Office of the Census Bureau.
• Create or join a Complete Count Committee (CCC) in your area. The CCC is key to creating awareness in your community. CCC’s act as 2020 Census champions and provide trusted voices as census ambassadors. When community members are informed, they are more likely to respond to the census. CCC’s can be organized at the county, municipal, or community level. Complete Count Committees organize local outreach efforts and provide leadership and support for participation.

Hard-to-Count Populations
In 1790, under the direction of Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, marshals took the census in the original 13 states, plus the districts of Kentucky, Maine, and Vermont, and the Southwest Territory (Tennessee). According to the Census Bureau, both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson expressed skepticism over the final count, expecting a number that exceeded the 3.9 million inhabitants counted in the census. There are several reasons why there could have been an undercount. Historians suggest that dispersed population, poor transportation, and individual refusal to participate all could have been at play.

From the first census on, trends show us that not every household will submit their responses to the census questionnaire. For the 2020 Census, when it comes to reaching hard-to-count (HTC) populations local leaders can help by getting the word out and informing these groups, and those representing these groups, about the census in general, how easy it will be to complete, and the importance of completing it. Let them know that Federal law protects the confidentiality of all the information the Census Bureau collects, and data is only used for statistical purposes. HTC’s include children under 5, rural residents, renters, minorities, recent immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, low-income households, those that distrust the government, and others.

Approximately 8 percent of Michigan’s current population lives in hard-to-count neighborhoods. You can see where these neighborhoods are in the City University of New York hard-to-count map located at Censushardtocountmaps2020.us. These are the census tracts where almost a quarter or more households did not mail back their census questionnaires in 2010. You can use this map to prioritize hard-to-count communities for your educational efforts. The map is searchable by addresses, zip codes, county, state, or legislative districts.

Sharing Census information doesn’t have to be a massive undertaking. Include a census informational insert with your water bill mailing, share information during local festivals and events to encourage participation, post information on your website, work with local nonprofits and community-based organizations to spread the word, and promote the Census through social media.

As a community advancement firm designing award-winning work across the architecture, engineering and planning spheres, we believe in the power of multidisciplinary teamwork. And that redefining client challenges is the key to finding ideas that aren’t just different—they’re better.
Help Recruit for Census Jobs

The Census Bureau is recruiting thousands of people across the country to assist with the 2020 Census count. Share that news in your community and consider posting the recruitment link on your community website, https://2020census.gov/en/jobs. They are recruiting for a number of job types, including field workers. Local field workers know their communities best and are instrumental in conducting surveys with residents on a variety of topics.

Census Timeline

- April 1, 2020—Census Day. When completing the census, you’ll note where you are living on April 1.
- May–July 2020—The Census Bureau will follow up with households that have not responded.
- December 2020—The Census Bureau will deliver apportionment counts to the President.

Let us know what your community is doing to prepare for the Census. We’d love to hear from you. For more information visit mml.org/census

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