

CENSUS 2000 PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Overview

For the 2000 Census, the U.S. Census Bureau embarked on a comprehensive Partnership program with state, local, and tribal governments as well as community-based organizations and the private sector. The intended purpose of the program was to improve census response rates.

The Partnership Program involved as many as 140,000 organizations. The focus was to mobilize grass roots efforts to boost participation in the census. Organizations were asked to place the census on their meeting agendas and participate in public awareness initiatives. The Program involved promotional activities with national/umbrella community, religious and educational organizations; trade associations; labor unions; foundations; and Fortune 500 companies. The 2000 effort also included a Colonias Initiative, Rural Initiative, Minority College and University Initiative, Large City and State Initiative, Special Language Initiative, Natural Disaster Initiative and the African and Caribbean Immigrants Initiative.¹

Partnership activities were conducted nationwide during every major phase of Census 2000 operations: Master Address File (MAF) Development, Recruitment, Identification of Hard to Enumerate Areas, Service Based Enumeration, Multiple Language Mailing, and Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU). More than 600 Partnership specialists were hired in the 2000 Census to coordinate activities between headquarters, regional offices and the local census operations. The Bureau spent \$142.9 million on Partnership activities between October 1997 and September 2000.² These funds were complemented by state and local resources, as well as creative in-kind contributions from Non Government Organizations.

Given the size and scope of the program, this report reviews the program as conducted in two fast-growing and diversely populated states, Georgia and California, and seeks to evaluate its effectiveness. The Monitoring Board held field hearings in Atlanta, Los Angeles and San Diego specifically on the partnership program; our analysis draws upon testimony presented in those hearings.

GEORGIA

Regional/State Profile

Georgia falls within the Bureau's Atlanta Region, which in addition to Georgia, comprises Florida and Alabama, 12,895,935 housing units, 168,751 square miles, 41 congressional districts and 55 local census offices.

The Regional Office identified a common set of challenges including extensive areas of Non English speaking Asian and Hispanic populations, the growing homeless population, residents who live in recreational vehicles and move frequently, isolated communities reachable only by boat, multiple families living in public housing projects, "snowbirds," people who move south for the winter, and pockets of communities with low literacy rates.

¹ Partnership Report, Volume I, U.S. Census Bureau, March 2000.

² 2000 Census: Review of Partnership Program Highlights Best Practices for Future Operations, GAO August 2001.

Goals set by the Atlanta Regional Office were uniform for Georgia, Florida and Alabama and were: using partners to help set priorities; managing expectations; offering a wide-ranging menu of partnership opportunities; developing an approach based on the interests, needs and benefits of individuals and organizations; seeking to help where it was needed the most; and providing assistance to customers.³

Regional Office's Partnership Efforts For Georgia

While the Atlanta Office developed a set of common goals to motivate census participation and developed a regional strategy based on shared enumeration challenges, the office clearly had a tailor-made strategy for Georgia. It took into account state demographic trends including an increase of about one million residents since 1990 and a rapidly increasing Spanish-speaking population.

The Regional Office actively sought partnerships with state and local officials as well as numerous business representatives and community leaders. The Regional Office offered program ideas, material support and partnership specialists dedicated to community outreach, especially in hard to count areas in the metropolitan Atlanta area and throughout the state. The Office provided a structured framework in carrying out the partnerships, though a principal objective for the office was to allow local groups autonomy in performing their work.⁴

More than 3,000 partnerships were officially recorded statewide; however, census observers in the state estimate that the number is a mere fraction of the total number of partnerships that were actually generated. Many of the census partnerships were formed during the 1990 Census and have been ongoing; some had roots in other collaborative efforts and re-emerged in Census 2000; and others were virtual start-ups that proved highly effective.

The following are examples of Best Practices involving collaborations at every level and were the focus of a Monitoring Board hearing held in Atlanta on September 11, 2000.

Best Practices in Georgia

Governor Roy Barnes' Outreach Plan

In preparing for Census 2000, Georgia Governor Barnes appointed a 40-member Complete Count Committee comprised of a broad cross section of business and community leaders. Approximately \$3.5 million of state funding was used in developing a marketing and media campaign aimed at raising awareness of the census among different population groups.

The States' outreach efforts proved to be successful, in large part because of a "three tiered" outreach strategy involving the State, 16 Regional Development Committees (RDCs) and local community groups. The RDCs, especially helpful in the development of address lists and the Local Update of the Census Addresses (LUCA) program, played a pivotal role in the Partnership effort from beginning to end. Working to enhance public participation in the census, the State sought to build on pre-existing relationships with major organizations operating within the State, i.e. the Georgia Homebuilders Association and the Poultry Association (both of which have close ties to the Hispanic community in Georgia), the Bankers Association and the Public Service Commission.

³ Partnership Report, Volume I, U.S. Census Bureau, March 2000.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Local Grant Program

In recognition that the Bureau would publicly announce the mail back response rates for the state and each county in the state, a local grant program was launched that offered a \$10,000 grant to the county in each of the RDC's with the highest percentage increase from 1990. The program was developed on the basis that it would enhance community interest in the census and that the grant money would ultimately be used for the equipment and recreational facilities benefiting children in the local area.

Census in the Schools

Georgia, like other states, deployed a Census in the Schools Initiative developed by the Bureau. As a first step in implementing the program in Georgia, a former employee of the State Department of Education worked to ensure that the program was able to be formally included in the state's school curriculum. Secondly, the generic census information provided by the Census Bureau was modified to include information more applicable to Georgians. A leading state official said the 8-page packets students were provided in the classroom made their way home at high rates and that the program succeeded like no other program in getting census information to hard to count households.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

In October 1998, the Phi Alpha Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority partnered with the local census office in Atlanta in "spreading the word about Census 2000." Committing itself to a two-year outreach plan, the sorority worked to enhance African American participation in the census by focusing its attention on four areas: the church, schools, the metro Atlanta community and the sorority itself. Speaker training offered by the Census Bureau helped in communicating their message.

The Omega Chapter completed a total of twenty-five projects over a two-year period. Activities included sharing census information in local schools, PTA's and churches, hosting information booths and distributing fliers and promotional items at a local housing project. In addition, information was provided to the homeless community.

The Census Bureau recognized the chapter as an "extraordinary" partner for its census outreach efforts and awarded them two grants which were used to produce and disseminate Census 2000 memorabilia such as personalized Phi Alpha Omega cups, T-shirts and mugs.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), Regional Office

MALDEF focused its outreach efforts in five population groups identified as hard to enumerate. These included apartment dwellers and transients, migrant workers, people who worked at poultry plants and factories, the elderly and children. Activities included distributing brochures, posters and videos to 12,000 employees in the poultry industry, most of whom were Hispanic. MALDEF worked cooperatively with state officials and the Poultry Association to maximize available networks to the Spanish-speaking community.

Georgia Power Company

The Census Bureau contacted Georgia Power Company in early 1999 to coordinate efforts in educating minority communities of the value in census participation. Georgia Power embraced the proposed partnership, and recognizing that outreach efforts in the African American and Hispanic communities were relatively well advanced, chose to concentrate its minority outreach to Asian Americans. The company's goal was to add value to the census campaign where it could.

In concert with the Census Bureau, Georgia Power identified a few key leaders in the Asian American community and worked closely with them in organizing an Asian American Census Summit. More than 150 leaders participated in the event. The event drew widespread media attention and led to a number of local initiatives within the Asian American community.

Georgia Power also advertised census jobs and the importance of the census in people's everyday lives through bill inserts to their customers. This initiative contributed significantly to the state's public awareness efforts given the company's large customer base.

CALIFORNIA

Regional/State Profile

The Bureau's Los Angeles Region covers California's 39 southern counties (and Hawaii) and the Seattle Region covers California's 39 northern counties (and Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington). In this report we limit our examination to Partnership efforts in two of the largest and most diversely populated southern counties—Los Angeles County and San Diego County.

The Regional Office cited numerous challenges in motivating people to participate in the census. They included the inflow of immigrants who often fear and mistrust government, communities that are either non-English speaking or have low literacy rates, large homeless populations, and multiple families living in single-dwelling housing units.

The over-arching goal set by the Regional Office was to meet these challenges and “acquire an accurate count of all residents including previously undercounted population groups—African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and American Indians through extensive partnerships.”⁵

Regional Office Partnership Strategy For Southern California

The Bureau's Los Angeles Regional Office began reaching out to local jurisdictions in March 1997, thus enabling the establishment of strong local Complete Count Committees early in the census process. Booklets offering useful recommendations on how the committees could be structured and on types of activities that could be undertaken were offered. In addition, with support from local community groups, the Regional Office aggressively advertised local employment opportunities relating to the census. In Los Angeles County alone, the applicant pool reached 315,000; more than 63,000 candidates were appointed.

According to Regional Director John Reeder, the following three census programs led to the high response rates in Los Angeles and San Diego Counties: the first-ever national advertising campaign bolstered by complementary advertising efforts carried out at the state and local level; the nationally-run Census in the Schools initiative which was especially welcome in the Los Angeles Unified School District; and finally, targeted outreach efforts by the Local Census Offices (The Santa Ana Office in particular) including “neighborhood walks” timed with the March 2000 mass mailing of census questionnaires to residents. Reeder acknowledged that community outreach efforts at the local level are indispensable in an undertaking as large and personal as the census.

⁵ Partnership Report, Volume I, U.S. Census Bureau, March 2000.

The following are Best Practices as carried out in California. They were highlighted in Monitoring Board hearings held in Los Angeles (June 26, 2000) and in San Diego (June 27, 2000).

Best Practices in California

Governor Gray Davis' Outreach Plan

The State of California spent \$24.7 million to increase the Census 2000 response rate among its citizens. The funds were distributed to local groups demonstrating an ability to carry out outreach programs in an effective manner. The State's Complete Count Committee, created in the Fall of 1999, met regularly to ensure census promotion efforts were being implemented and that funds were allocated appropriately.⁶

L.A. County Efforts

Beginning in 1998, Los Angeles County worked closely with the Census Bureau in updating local addresses for Census 2000. In that first year, the County provided 78,000 address updates (more than half the addresses were accepted by the Bureau). In 1999, the County provided about 3,000 new rural addresses and in 2000, 77,000 new addresses were added to the lists. These technical efforts were made possible through partnerships with all 88 cities falling within the County's jurisdiction.

In addition, L.A. County supported other Bureau address list programs including the Consolidated Boundary Initiative designed to ensure that those counted in the census were attributed to the appropriate city or unincorporated community in the County. More than 2,000 boundary adjustments were made in L.A. County because of the program. The County's participation in the Bureau's Special Places Survey for the homeless led to the addition of approximately 3,000 address sites as well. These efforts are said to have been successful due to the dedication of the County's diverse Complete Count Committee, as well as the commitment of leading county agencies including the Department of Social Services.

In terms of promoting the census, the County trained upwards of 800 employees to become "Census Ambassadors." The employees were trained to speak with authority about the census and emphasized the confidentiality aspect of the undertaking to allay fears people may have had about personal information being misused by Government. Moreover, the County set up a web site, listed toll free phone numbers so that people could have questions answered, posted links to other census web sites including the Bureau's, and enlisted "Walking Man," a local organization that distributed census fliers to doorsteps. The fliers, printed in English and Spanish, informed residents that enumerators would be visiting their homes and that they should be welcomed.

Los Angeles County received \$1.75 million from the State of California for outreach.

Los Angeles City Efforts

The City of Los Angeles established close ties with a broad network of groups to account for those typically missed in the census. Using state and city funds, the L.A. Outreach Project developed carefully crafted messages concerning the census. The city also prepared an educational video in six different languages that saw wide circulation.

⁶ CMB-P Board Member, Lt. Governor Cruz M. Bustamante, served on the California Complete Count Committee.

The City played a lead role in updating local address lists, and considerable time and effort was spent to ensure that the city's homeless encampments were properly identified. The city allocated approximately \$330,000 to implement the Bureau's Non-Sheltered Outdoor (TNSOL) program. In doing so numerous homeless sites were identified for the Bureau to visit.⁷ In a complementary effort, more than 300 homeless Outreach Workers were hired, ultimately serving as "cultural agents" who not only sought to encourage census participation among the homeless but also accompanied census enumerators during NRFU to increase the response rate. City employees themselves were encouraged to work part-time as enumerators, as well.

Long Beach City Efforts

The City of Long Beach, falling within the Los Angeles County jurisdiction, partnered with a wide range of representatives of predominantly minority neighborhoods, community groups and organizations throughout the city in an effort to reduce the undercount rate in the area. As in Los Angeles, city agencies and employees were tasked to use their positions in promoting the census.

Long Beach enhanced momentum for the Bureau's Census in the Schools program and reached out to local students in many other ways, as well. For instance, to capture the public's attention, the city launched an "It's Cool to be Counted" campaign that involved "Census Guy," who became a recognizable icon appearing on census materials distributed throughout the Long Beach area. Moreover, special efforts were made to ensure that the Bureau's scholastic materials were distributed to all schools in the Long Beach Unified School District rather than merely to schools with 50 percent or more of their school children in public-free lunch programs, as the Bureau originally planned.

Other innovative activities carried out by the city included the development and placement of banners, theater slides, and bus advertisements. The local Complete Count Committee paved the way for census promotion as well, by making \$500,000 in grant money available to soccer teams, neighborhood associations and churches for the purpose of disseminating educational census materials.

Preparations for Census 2000 began in 1997 with the city's development of a well-formed work plan. A prominent city planner credited the federal, state and local partnership for the high response rate in traditionally hard to count communities.⁸

County and City of San Diego Efforts

In Fall 1998, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) formed a Complete Count Committee involving elected officials, city and county staff, educators, the media and a host of other community leaders. The committee met regularly over a two-year period for the purpose of developing and implementing "creative activities" as a means to achieve the greatest possible mail back response rate in the diverse community of about 2.8 million people.⁹

⁷ Local officials in Los Angeles and the city's homeless advocates regret the Bureau ultimately opted not to post the homeless count at the block level.

⁸ The overall mail response rate for Long Beach was a high 66 percent.

⁹ The mail response rate reached a robust 71 percent in 2000 as compared to the 1990 response rate of 67 percent.

The County received approximately \$400,000 in State funding that was distributed to 24 city, county and community-based organizations in the area, for the purpose of census education. Local groups and agencies dedicated an additional \$200,000 for public outreach activities, a majority of which were aimed at already identified hard-to-enumerate neighborhoods.

The City of San Diego established an independent Complete Count Committee and made a conscientious effort not to duplicate efforts of the Regional Committee. The outreach efforts of the committee were geared toward three groups: the general public, city staff and contractors and select, targeted populations. City-sponsored activities included the development of a web site, production and distribution of bookmarks at city libraries, as well as posting banners at libraries, recreation centers, fire stations and many public places. In addition, the city promoted the census by sending out an educational mailing to 11,000 families receiving housing assistance, using its cable-access station for public service announcements and distributing census wash cloths for the homeless.¹⁰

Community Efforts in San Diego

Community efforts to raise awareness and motivate people to participate in the undertaking were extensive.

For example, The Black Health Network organized a number of census activities in recognition of the fact that the African American community has historically been undercounted at a disproportionate rate compared to non-Hispanic Whites. Such activities included producing and distributing census videos to clinics and physicians' offices, collaborations with African American churches, as well as distribution of census materials to beauty salons and other places where residents typically gather.

The Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC), which serves Asian Pacific Islanders and new immigrants and refugees, worked with the National Asian Pacific Legal Center in Washington, D.C. to maximize census participation. Through the network, UPAC was instrumental in translating census materials into 16 different Asian and Pacific Islander languages. The Lao, Cambodian, Hmong, Vietnamese, Samoan and Tongan communities received priority attention based on 1990 results indicating a high undercount rate. The California endowment helped finance UPAC's census efforts.

The San Diego Police Department's Gang Unit worked closely with the Bureau's Local Census Office in Chula Vista whose jurisdiction is home to several gangs. The unit provided enumerators with safety tips including advice on appropriate clothing to wear (some gangs claim certain colors) and which blocks required back-up support. The Gang Unit supplied enumerators with protective vests to be worn in case of shootings. The Unit also offered training on how to diffuse tense situations in the event of confrontation.

Finally, San Diego's neighboring City of Chula Vista worked to promote the census through Census 2000 Street Theatre, which became a popular local attraction. Using grant money provided by SANDAG, the city hired a producer/director who wrote two plays concerning the census, in Spanish and English. The five-to-ten minute skits were carried out in parks, restaurants, at the local trolley station and at other public meeting places. The theatre group made about 70 presentations addressing concerns about confidentiality and other issues that sometimes cause people not to participate in the census.

¹⁰ LA kept its homeless shelters open an extra month to ensure the homeless the opportunity to be counted on Census Day.

Conclusion

The Census 2000 Partnership programs in Georgia and California serve as good examples of how Government and Non-Government organizations can work together for the public good. The programs achieved success stressing local operations and grass roots initiatives. However, the Partnership program was not perfect.

Concerns aired in Georgia were that the Bureau could have committed more resources to advertising buys in non-English media and that there were sometimes problems in filtering materials from Bureau headquarters to the Regional Office in a timely manner. In addition, cooperation between the Bureau and the U.S. Postal Service would have yielded an even higher response rate in the State; the LUCA program (while successful) should have been launched earlier in the process; and the Regional office did not always provide local partners the autonomy they needed.

Concerns aired in California were that more cooperation in translating materials at the national level would have been helpful; State funds could have been distributed earlier, and in large, diverse population areas, the number of partnership specialists should have been allocated accordingly.

Many of the above issues were raised in interviews held with stakeholders in other parts of the country. While we address some of the principal issues in 2010 Recommendations, ongoing study of the 2000 Partnership program and its efficacy are needed so as to ensure the program is further enhanced ten years forward.