



BACKGROUND

Clear and accurate census data is the life blood for a strong Ohio. But inadequate funding and other policy decisions could place Ohio's communities at risk of an inaccurate count in the 2020 census, limiting their political power and federal funding for the next decade. The accuracy and adequacy of the 2020 census is threatened by a variety of challenges including federal funding shortfalls that caused delays, cancellations, and cutbacks in census planning activities and field tests; record distrust of the federal government in many communities; a new online response approach; and fear, confusion, and uncertainty fueled by the inclusion of a question on citizenship.

The uncertainty and challenges that threaten a complete count in Ohio called for the formation of a collaborative of organizations and individuals to ensure that every person in Ohio is counted.

ABOUT THE COALITION

The Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition (OCAC) is a nonpartisan network of statewide nonprofit organizations, advocacy organizations, and trusted faith, business, education, and community leaders working to prepare for and conduct outreach to encourage full participation in the 2020 census, with a focus on historically undercounted or "hard-to-count" ("HTC") populations.

The coalition will be the coordinating body of non-profit organizations including statewide municipal associations, grassroots organizations, and direct service organizations mobilized to support statewide census efforts. The ultimate goal of the OCAC is to secure a complete census count in Ohio.

OCAC also seeks to maximize the efficiency and reach of census efforts in the state as well as financial support from the philanthropic community by ensuring the development of a coordinated and comprehensive plan where efforts are directed towards the same goals in a very transparent and collaborative manner.

IMPACT & EVOLUTION

In the last year, OCAC has grown into a structured body with growing community and financial support. OCAC is run under the direction of an executive committee comprised of Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, Ohio Voice, Innovation Ohio Education Fund, ASIA-Ohio, and Philanthropy Ohio. OCAC achieves its goals in outreach, communication, and advocacy through its five work groups, coordinated by the OCAC steering committee, which serves as the liaison between the executive committee and the working groups.

In the last year, members have developed communication tools about the census that have touched hundreds of local governments, policymakers, advocates, media and other interested parties. We have conducted several in-person presentations and webinars as well as a media briefing event targeting major traditional and ethnic media outlets to raise awareness and engagement on the census. In fact, in the aftermath of communication and education efforts to encourage local governments to participate in the Census Bureau's 2020 Local Update of Census Address Program (LUCA), 11.36% more local governments signed up for the 2020 LUCA program than for the 2010 LUCA program – an increase of 41 local governments.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Going forward, we designed a multi-year strategy to advocate for the Census from 2018 until the census count begins. Our plan identifies the major challenges of reaching our at-risk communities, the weaknesses in our federal funding, and the gaps in our state and local infrastructure which could hold us back from a fair and accurate census count. Our plans also match recommendations and opportunities from state and national partners and utilize partnership resources from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Our goals, objectives, and activities are organized as outreach and communication goals and advocacy goals:

Outreach and Communication Goals

- Engage Ohio communities, particularly the hard-to-count communities, to learn insights and co-create messages that address their concerns and challenges in participating in the census.
- Implement effective census communications and engagement to build awareness of the census, compel people to participate as a civic duty, and drive critical support in local communities and neighborhoods.
- Execute an effective statewide and local “Get Out the Count” (GOTC) campaign in partnership with local and community organizations to reach hard-to-count populations in our urban and rural areas of the state, targeting specific hard-to-count communities including young children, ethnic and racial minorities, immigrant communities, homeless individuals, and low-income neighborhoods.

Advocacy Goals

- Secure sufficient federal funding and supportive policies.
- Secure sufficient state funding and supportive policies enabling effective census operations on a statewide level.
- Secure sufficient local funding and supportive policies enabling effective census counts in our communities throughout the state of Ohio.

PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

Initial activities of the OCAC are fueled by generous support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the George Gund Foundation, and the Columbus Foundation. However, needs still exist and we are seeking additional partnerships to close the gaps in efforts throughout Ohio.

Learn more at www.ohiocensus.org or contact us at info@ohiocensus.org