

How Your Foundation Can Engage Business & Tech Sectors for a Successful 2020 Census September 22, 2017

Your foundation can play a role in engaging the business sector to help achieve a successful 2020 Census. The business community is a key voice, but initial outreach has revealed a gap in awareness. It is important for business and technology leaders to get involved by: 1) weighing in on Census policy; 2) participating in “get out the count” efforts; 3) providing technical assistance; and 4) providing financial and other support to organizations that are advocating for a fair and accurate Census or will be working to educate their communities on the importance of participating. Below are some suggested ideas with various levels of engagement.

The Democracy Census Subgroup has created a Business Task Force to more deeply engage the business community. The Business Task Force has policy experts and has also retained the help of business organizer Rhett Buttle and his firm Public Private Strategies. The Business Task Force is on hand to help you draft materials, catalyze collaboration, and coordinate logistics to make this an easy and effective effort. Please contact Rhett Buttle at rhett@publicprivatestrategies.com.

Here are some suggestions for ways your foundation could engage the business community:

- *Involve your board members and foundation leadership executives in 1:1 outreach* - Most business leaders respond to individual 1:1 outreach from their peers. Peers can reach out to business leaders including calls, dinners, and other 1:1 communication about getting them to join the effort.
- *Host business convenings* - Foundations are uniquely positioned to bring business leaders together. Trustees or foundation executives can invite business leaders to a discussion on the importance of the 2020 Census. In addition to hosting these events locally, your foundation could partner with other foundations or stakeholders to host events in other regions across the country.
- *Engage corporate foundation leaders* - Encourage corporate foundations to educate their local and state business leaders. Tap into networks and associations of corporate foundation leaders to promote education, awareness, and funding.
- *Engage current grantees* – Many current grantees may be working with the business community or are part of the business community. Invite them to engage in the effort.
- *Fund business outreach* – Provide support for minority and immigrant small business groups, to help educate and engage their members in Census policy and get out the count efforts.

Below are some options for business leader engagement:

Options for Lower Level Engagement from Business Leaders:

- Sign an open letter with other business leaders – The Census Business Taskforce will be launching an open letter of business leaders calling for a fair and accurate Census.
- Make a statement on social media – Utilize social media like Facebook or Twitter to make a statement, promote the open letter or educate followers about the 2020 Census.

- Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor – With support from the Business Task Force, author an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor that focuses on the important role the Census plays for the economy.

Options for Moderate Level Engagement from Business Leaders:

- Serve on the Census Business Task Force- A subcommittee of the independent Census table, the Census Business Taskforce will be focused on engaging business leaders in the effort to make sure the 2020 Census is fully funded and accurate.
- Reach out to business associations (e.g. Business Roundtable) - It will be important to reach out to influential national, state and regional business associations to engage in the 2020 Census. Ask these organizations to weigh in on the 2020 Census or host events to educate their members.
- Engage with Policy Makers – Meet with policy makers to educate them about the importance of adequate funding and fair policies for the 2020 Census to the economy.

Options for a Higher Level Engagement from Business Leaders:

- Serve as key business leader and spokesperson for why the Census is important to the private sector.
- Provide additional financial and in-kind support – Several organizations are looking for support for education and outreach work leading up to the 2020 Census.
- Partner with the Business Task Force on getting out the count – Business leaders will have connections to companies and unique ways to reach the consumers. Partnering with these companies can help reach hard to count communities.