

Funding a Complete Count in 2020: What Community Groups Need

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COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS MUST PLAY A BIG ROLE in getting a full and accurate count for New York in the 2020 Census. This will be the first year in which the Census Bureau asks residents to fill out Census forms online, raising issues about broadband access as well as comfort level with computers. There may be a controversial question added about the citizenship status of immigrants. And, a number of people are feeling hesitant about giving private information to the federal government. More than ever before, trusted community voices will be needed to help build bridges to maximize participation in the Census.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are willing and able to step up, but they will require significant state funding to dramatically expand their efforts in this dramatically different Census year. Some New York residents are particularly at risk of being undercounted: immigrants, people with limited English, people of color, Muslims, low-income residents, young parents, Native Americans, homeless residents, and numerous others.

New York State should invest \$40 million in community-based outreach for the 2020 Census

In previous decades, New York primarily relied on the federal government to do outreach. In 2010, the state invested just \$2 million in community-based organizations, with less than optimal results.¹ A much more extensive state-financed outreach campaign will be necessary in 2020.

A lot is at stake for New York, including federal funding, representation in Congress, accurate planning for schools and roads, and a basic understanding of who we are as New Yorkers that's critical to governments, businesses, and researchers.

The Fiscal Policy Institute proposes that the governor and legislature include \$40 million in next year's state budget for community-based organizations to do outreach around the 2020 Census. This should be in addition to whatever funds the state commits to its own outreach and media campaigns and funding to local governments.

\$40 Million in Proposed State Funding for Census 2020 For Community-Based Outreach

New York State	100% of "Hard to Count" Population		10% of "Hard to Count" Population		5% of "Hard to Count" Population		Total
	Number of People	Basic CBO Outreach @ \$2/person	Number of People	Moderate CBO Outreach @ \$25/person	Number of People	Intensive CBO Outreach @ \$75/person	
Total Population	4,800,000	\$9,600,000	480,000	\$12,000,000	240,000	\$24,000,000	State Funding to Community Based Organizations
19,697,457							\$40,000,000

FIG. 1 FPI analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau as compiled by the Center for Urban Research at The Graduate Center/CUNY, and FPI survey of community-based organizations.

This \$40 million proposal is based on detailed estimates at the state level and county-by-county of what a robust outreach to hard-to-count communities would cost.

FPI's estimate begins with the Census Bureau's own reporting of hard-to-count populations around the state. FPI proposes that all of the people in hard-to-count groups get basic outreach from community based organizations, at an estimated cost of \$2 per person. We propose that a moderate level of outreach, at a cost of \$25 per person, be targeted to ten percent of the hard-to-count population, and an intensive level of outreach, at \$75 per person, be focused on five percent of the hard-to-count population. Figure 1 shows the results of the calculation. (A full explanation of the methodology is found below.)

With a total of \$40 million allocation, \$9.6 million would go to community groups around the state to do a basic level of outreach to 4.8 million hard-to-count people. Twelve million dollars would go to community groups to do a moderate level of outreach to 480,000 people. And \$24 million would go to community groups to do an intensive level of outreach to 240,000 people.

A Full-Court Press, With Funding in Every County

This statewide total is an aggregate of what would be hundreds of local grants to local community-based organizations in every county. To give a better sense of what this might mean in different localities around the state, and to show the kind of impact that could be expected at the local level, we broke down the statewide \$40 million proposal to the county level, and showed how much funding might be allocated in each county.

All 62 counties in New York State include hard-to-count populations. Figure 2, below, shows how much funding would make sense for each county to get, as well as how many people could receive outreach at the basic, moderate, and intensive levels for that amount of money.

The analysis shows, for example, that if a \$40 million allocation were divided according to the share of hard-to-count residents in each county:

In **Steuben County** (pop: 98,000), community-based organizations would get a total of \$164,000, with \$32,000 going to community-based groups to reach the full hard-to-count population of 16,000 people, \$50,000 to follow up at a moderate level with 2,000 people, and \$75,000 going to reach out intensively to the hardest to count 1,000 people.

In **Schenectady County** (pop: 155,000), community-based organizations would get \$304,000, with \$60,000 going to community-based groups to reach the full hard-to-count population of 30,000 people, \$75,000 to follow up at a moderate level with 3,000 people, and \$113,000 going to reach out intensively to 1,500 people.

In **Suffolk County** (pop: 1.5 million), community-based organizations would get \$3.6 million, with \$732,000 going to community-based groups to reach the full hard-to-count population of 366,000 people, \$925,000 to follow up at a moderate level with 37,000 people, and \$1.4 million going to reach out intensively to 18,500 people.

How the Calculations Were Made

The “hard to count” population is based on the number of households in each county that did not return their Census forms by mail in the last Census, in 2010. This is a standard way of identifying areas that need additional attention and outreach. We take the non-response rate from the 2010 Census, as compiled by the Center for Urban Research at the Graduate Center/CUNY. We multiply that by the most recent population numbers available for all counties, from the 2016 American Community Survey.² Our result shows 4.8 million people in New York State in this hard-to-count population, and it allows us to give a breakdown of the hard-to-count population in each county. (A national map of the very localized areas that are hardest to count is available at <https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/>.)

The per-person cost for outreach is based on a survey conducted by the Fiscal Policy Institute of community-based organizations expecting to do outreach for the 2020 Census. FPI got 32 responses to the survey from CBOs around the state. The survey was confidential, and was conducted online and with follow-up phone calls.

Twelve groups offered what we called basic outreach at an average of **\$2 per hard-to-count person**. Outreach plans for these groups included public forums, providing information to people who came to their institutions, and some level of direct outreach. To give some examples: one group suggested that it would spend \$10,000 and reach 10,000 people, another said \$15,000 and 8,500 people, and one said \$78,000 and 12,000 people. Our cost estimate suggests that all hard-to-count populations get a basic level of outreach, which would target 4.8 million people.

Eleven groups offered a moderate level of outreach, at an average cost of **\$25 per hard-to-count person**. This level of outreach allows not only for public forums and broad outreach, but also for multiple in-person discussions with people in hard-to-count populations. Examples at this level included groups proposing to spend \$120,000 to reach 10,000 people, \$500,000 to reach 20,000 people, or \$20,000 to reach 500 people. FPI's proposal is that ten percent of the hard-to-count population get a moderate level of outreach, which would target 480,000 people.

Nine groups offered an intensive level of outreach, at **\$75 per hard-to-count person**. This allows for high numbers of contacts, and for some longer sessions explaining the process, including in-language discussions for households with limited English, outreach to homeless populations, and work with people who do not have access to the internet or are not familiar with filling out computer forms. Examples in this category included groups proposing to spend \$75,000 to reach 1,500 people, \$250,000 and reach 5,000 people, and \$100,000 to reach 1,000 people in particularly hard-to-count communities. FPI's proposal is that five percent of the hard-to-count population get an intensive level of outreach, which would target 240,000 people.

The survey included a broad range of organizations with organic ties to the populations traditionally undercounted in the Census: community organizing groups in low-income communities, organizations in communities of color, groups serving specific immigrant communities, libraries, refugee resettlement agencies, health care providers that serve young parents, and worker's centers. There were eight respondent groups in upstate New York, 21 in New York City and the downstate suburbs, and three statewide organizations. Some organizations responding were large (with total budgets of over \$1 million), some medium-sized (\$100,000 to \$500,000), and some small (under \$100,000).

FPI agreed to keep responses confidential, but the suggested funding amounts and outreach goals looked to us both reasonable and realistic. The sum total of the amount these 32 organizations proposed to spend was \$6 million. It seems highly reasonable to imagine that the organizations surveyed represent just a fraction of the groups that would be involved in Census outreach.

\$40 Million Is a Good Investment in New York's Future

For the next decade, the Census count will influence our political, economic, and social lives as a state. Annual surveys such as the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey take as a starting point the prior decennial Census, so if the 2020 count is off the subsequent years will be unreliable by the same factor until a new count in 2030.

In numerous federal funding formulas, as well as in determining the number of seats a state gets in Congress, what matters is New York's population relative to other states. Yet, there is

Proposed NY State Funding for Census 2020 Outreach, By County

New York State	Population	"Hard to Count" Share	Basic Outreach to 100% of "Hard to Count" Population		Moderate Outreach to 10% of "Hard to Count" Population		Intensive Outreach to 5% of "Hard to Count" Population		Total State Funding
			Number of People	Basic Outreach @ \$2/person	Number of People	Moderate Outreach @ \$25/person	Number of People	Intensive Outreach @ \$100/person	
County	Number of People	Percent of Households that Did Not Respond by Mail for Census 2010	Number of People	Basic Outreach @ \$2/person	Number of People	Moderate Outreach @ \$25/person	Number of People	Intensive Outreach @ \$100/person	Proposed State Funding to CBOs
Kings	2,606,852	33%	861,000	\$1,722,000	86,000	\$2,150,000	43,000	\$3,225,000	\$8,400,000
Sullivan	75,818	31%	23,000	\$46,000	2,000	\$50,000	1,000	\$75,000	\$227,000
Queens	2,310,011	30%	685,000	\$1,370,000	68,000	\$1,700,000	34,000	\$2,550,000	\$6,700,000
Bronx	1,436,785	29%	412,000	\$824,000	41,000	\$1,025,000	20,500	\$1,537,500	\$4,100,000
Orange	376,242	26%	99,000	\$198,000	10,000	\$250,000	5,000	\$375,000	\$977,000
Richmond	473,324	26%	123,000	\$246,000	12,000	\$300,000	6,000	\$450,000	\$1,200,000
Greene	48,069	24%	12,000	\$24,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$117,000
Suffolk	1,498,130	24%	366,000	\$732,000	37,000	\$925,000	18,500	\$1,387,500	\$3,600,000
Westchester	969,229	24%	235,000	\$470,000	23,000	\$575,000	11,500	\$862,500	\$2,300,000
Dutchess	295,905	23%	70,000	\$140,000	7,000	\$175,000	3,500	\$262,500	\$690,000
Nassau	1,356,801	23%	310,000	\$620,000	31,000	\$775,000	15,500	\$1,162,500	\$3,100,000
New York	1,634,989	23%	370,000	\$740,000	37,000	\$925,000	18,500	\$1,387,500	\$3,700,000
Ulster	180,505	22%	41,000	\$82,000	4,000	\$100,000	2,000	\$150,000	\$404,000
Jefferson	117,966	22%	26,000	\$52,000	3,000	\$75,000	1,500	\$112,500	\$263,000
Essex	38,598	22%	9,000	\$18,000	900	\$22,500	450	\$33,750	\$85,000
Rockland	322,642	22%	71,000	\$142,000	7,000	\$175,000	3,500	\$262,500	\$708,000
Montgomery	49,667	21%	11,000	\$22,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$105,000
Putnam	99,408	21%	21,000	\$42,000	2,000	\$50,000	1,000	\$75,000	\$208,000
Franklin	51,007	21%	11,000	\$22,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$106,000
Tompkins	104,268	20%	21,000	\$42,000	2,000	\$50,000	1,000	\$75,000	\$209,000
Oneida	232,858	20%	46,000	\$92,000	5,000	\$125,000	2,500	\$187,500	\$460,000
Albany	307,891	20%	61,000	\$122,000	6,000	\$150,000	3,000	\$225,000	\$606,000
Erie	922,129	20%	181,000	\$362,000	18,000	\$450,000	9,000	\$675,000	\$1,800,000
Rensselaer	159,959	20%	31,000	\$62,000	3,000	\$75,000	1,500	\$112,500	\$314,000
Schenectady	154,845	20%	30,000	\$60,000	3,000	\$75,000	1,500	\$112,500	\$304,000
Otsego	60,979	20%	12,000	\$24,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$120,000
Delaware	46,480	19%	9,000	\$18,000	900	\$22,500	450	\$33,750	\$91,000
Clinton	81,505	19%	16,000	\$32,000	2,000	\$50,000	1,000	\$75,000	\$158,000
Columbia	61,860	19%	12,000	\$24,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$120,000
Schoharie	31,667	19%	6,000	\$12,000	600	\$15,000	300	\$22,500	\$61,000
Hamilton*	4,697	19%	1,000	\$2,000	100	\$2,500	50	\$3,750	\$9,000
Cortland	48,713	19%	9,000	\$18,000	900	\$22,500	450	\$33,750	\$92,000
Monroe	749,236	19%	139,000	\$278,000	14,000	\$350,000	7,000	\$525,000	\$1,400,000
Onondaga	468,050	19%	87,000	\$174,000	9,000	\$225,000	4,500	\$337,500	\$872,000
Niagara	213,374	19%	39,000	\$78,000	4,000	\$100,000	2,000	\$150,000	\$397,000
St. Lawrence	111,529	18%	21,000	\$42,000	2,000	\$50,000	1,000	\$75,000	\$206,000
Chenango	49,286	18%	9,000	\$18,000	900	\$22,500	450	\$33,750	\$90,000
Broome	197,381	18%	36,000	\$72,000	4,000	\$100,000	2,000	\$150,000	\$362,000
Madison	72,089	18%	13,000	\$26,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$132,000
Allegany	47,700	18%	9,000	\$18,000	900	\$22,500	450	\$33,750	\$87,000
Cattaraugus	78,506	18%	14,000	\$28,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$142,000
Warren	64,911	18%	11,000	\$22,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$116,000
Herkimer	63,558	18%	11,000	\$22,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$113,000
Fulton	54,297	18%	10,000	\$20,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$96,000
Oswego	120,513	17%	20,000	\$40,000	2,000	\$50,000	1,000	\$75,000	\$206,000
Chautauqua	131,748	17%	22,000	\$44,000	2,000	\$50,000	1,000	\$75,000	\$224,000
Chemung	87,742	17%	15,000	\$30,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$149,000
Lewis	27,107	17%	5,000	\$10,000	500	\$12,500	250	\$18,750	\$46,000
Steuben	98,151	17%	16,000	\$32,000	2,000	\$50,000	1,000	\$75,000	\$164,000
Washington	62,465	17%	10,000	\$20,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$104,000
Orleans	41,938	16%	7,000	\$14,000	700	\$17,500	350	\$26,250	\$68,000
Wayne	91,874	16%	14,000	\$28,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$146,000
Genesee	59,053	16%	9,000	\$18,000	900	\$22,500	450	\$33,750	\$93,000
Saratoga	224,929	15%	34,000	\$68,000	3,000	\$75,000	1,500	\$112,500	\$349,000
Seneca	35,036	15%	5,000	\$10,000	500	\$12,500	250	\$18,750	\$52,000
Livingston	64,622	14%	9,000	\$18,000	900	\$22,500	450	\$33,750	\$93,000
Tioga	49,649	14%	7,000	\$14,000	700	\$17,500	350	\$26,250	\$71,000
Wyoming	41,239	14%	6,000	\$12,000	600	\$15,000	300	\$22,500	\$58,000
Cayuga	78,783	14%	11,000	\$22,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$112,000
Ontario	109,450	14%	15,000	\$30,000	1,000	\$25,000	500	\$37,500	\$152,000
Schuyler	18,336	13%	2,000	\$4,000	200	\$5,000	100	\$7,500	\$24,000
Yates	25,106	11%	3,000	\$6,000	300	\$7,500	150	\$11,250	\$29,000
New York State	19,697,457	24%	4,800,000	\$9,600,000	480,000	\$12,000,000	240,000	\$18,000,000	\$40,000,000

FIG. 2 *No mail response rate available for Hamilton, so we took the average of the surrounding counties: Essex, Warren, Saratoga, Herkimer, Fulton, St. Lawrence, and Franklin. Figures may not sum to total due to independent rounding. Counties are listed in order of mail form non-response rates.

good reason to think that compared to other states New York would require more, not less, of an outreach effort to ensure an accurate count of its very diverse population. New York has significant numbers of hard-to-count populations, including immigrants, refugees, people with limited English, low-income people, people in rural communities, communities of color, parents of young children, and homeless people, among many others.

During the last Census, in 2010, New York State was widely criticized for underinvesting in funding to community-based organizations for their outreach efforts. This year is the time to get it right. New York will have to pick up where the federal government pulls back, and will have to brace itself against substantial headwinds.

There is a significant and direct return on investment for these expenditures in federal funding and in political representation: spending \$40 million may bring hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars in federal funds to the state and will ensure that our representatives have a full say in making policy decisions that will affect us. But the most important reason for a full and accurate count is that facts matter. The Census is the gold standard for information about who we are as a state, and as a country. The mandate for the Census is in the United States Constitution. We cannot afford to let there be any question about the fundamental accuracy of this decennial count of our population.

¹ “Governor Paterson Announces \$2 Million in Grants for Community Groups, Local Governments to Ensure Every New Yorker is Counted in the 2010 Census,” press release, December 31, 2009.

² We use 2016 ACS 5-year data, to allow us to include populations of smaller counties. We take the share of households not responding to the mail forms in a county and assume that represents a proportionate share of people not responding.

This report was produced by the following Fiscal Policy Institute staff:

David Dyssegaard Kallick, Deputy Director
Shamier Settle, Policy Analyst
Cyierra Roldan, Policy Analyst, Immigration

The Fiscal Policy Institute is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and education organization committed to improving public policies and private practices to better the economic and social conditions of all New Yorkers. Founded in 1991, FPI works to create a strong economy in which prosperity is broadly shared. FPI’s Immigration Research Initiative looks at immigration issues in New York State and around the country.