An accurate Census is the key to local and regional decision making. It affects our resources, our planning decisions, investments in our community by others, and more.

Is your municipality ready to help with an accurate Census count?
Why is a Complete Count Important for My Municipality?

Ten years have passed since the last Census count and many things have changed. New Asian, Hispanic, and Eastern European enclaves have grown in communities across the region. The population has grown older. Broadband access has increased for most households, but not everywhere. As the Census format changes and partially moves online, it will be harder to reach certain hard-to-count populations to participate. However, local and regional grant programs, as well as political representation, depend on it.
Learning From My Peers: What Can Towns Do to Achieve a Complete Count?

Municipalities across the Chicago region have been active in engaging their residents and encouraging them to participate in the Census. Many municipalities and complete count committee stakeholders have already identified their hardest to count groups and are implementing ideas to help engage those populations. MMC has chosen to highlight a cadre of these local governments to help guide municipal planning and outreach efforts across the region.
Aurora: Partnering with the United Way to Count Kids

In the City of Aurora, as well as Illinois as a whole, children between 0 and 5 had a higher undercount than any other age group. As the City planned its complete count efforts, it realized that children were a top priority, especially children that live in non-English speaking homes. This is one of several reasons, city officials decided to partner with Fox Valley United Way, whom they partnered with for their Strong Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten program (SPARK). Fox Valley United Way has several programs in place to connect with the parents and plans to use these programs to remind parents to participate in the Census, including census activities for the children. They also will engage their communities by visiting trusted spaces such as laundromats. Laundromats are a space where many parents are accompanied by their young ones, the Aurora Complete Count Committee will have information for parents on the importance of including their young children in their survey responses. Additionally, laptop stations will be made available for parents, giving them an opportunity to complete the 2020 Census.

For more information about counting children 0 to 5: https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2014/demo/2014-undercount-children.pdf
Local Complete Count Committees are fundamental to achieving an accurate count. They build recognition of the census throughout their communities and developing action plans to reach all of its residents. Since its kick off in June 2019, the DuPage County CCC has had a diverse membership of stakeholders that includes county board members, municipal representatives, county entities, non-profits and various organizations that represent potentially undercounted groups, such as the DuPage NAACP, Xilin Association, Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition, and World Relief. Through all of these actors, the DuPage CCC strives to sufficiently conduct community outreach so they may raise participation rates. Some of their efforts to date include the coordination of census job fairs, design of a localized census logo, development of a census events portal and conception of a Census specific Speakers Bureau.
Elgin and Gail Borden Library: The World’s Largest Census Tablet

The City of Elgin and the Gail Borden Library (GBL) have partnered on Census engagement this year. In Elgin, the Library is seen as the heart of that community and over the years it has evolved from a traditional library into a community center. The two entities partnered in 2010 Census outreach and have boosted their efforts this count by growing that partnership and started their 2020 Census outreach in 2018. Through their partnership, which includes many other local agencies, a robust communication and marketing plan has been developed to educate, encourage and engage. As a result of these efforts, the Library proudly holds the world’s largest census tablet which has access to 10 different languages, which was identified as the top ten used in the U-46 school system.
Evanston: Keeping Its Counting Stations Secure

2020 will be the first year that the Census moves partially online. An online Census has created the opportunity for local governments and libraries to create enumeration stations, but it has also created cybersecurity concerns for local networks. The City of Evanston has taken remarkable steps to help a secure collection for 2020 Census responses across its local networks. The City of Evanston plans to mitigate the risk around Census spoof sites and other cyberattacks with a “layer cake” approach, made up of three questions: (1) Are public-facing workstations behind a firewall? (2) Do you have anti-virus software installed on those workstations? (3) Are you using a secure internet DNS gateway to preemptively block access to spoofed URLs?

Highland Park: Counting Its Snowbirds and Seasonal Residents

The City of Highland Park has historically had high Census response rates, but as the community matures, it has a growing population of snowbirds that leave during the winter. To reach this community, the City developed a comprehensive communications and outreach plan. The City of Highland estimates that their snowbird population migrates south around the winter holiday, and returns at the beginning of Spring. Understanding that this seasonal population will reside in warmer areas in key months for Census engagement, Highland Park has developed a Census tagline for their water bill dispatch. This quarterly reminder emphasizes the importance of the Census and stresses key points to make sure residents are counted.
Oak Park: Engaging Multifamily Landlords

In 2010, nationally there was a Census undercount in its multi-family buildings: these residents were undercounted by 1.1%, compared to an undercount of 0.6% for owner-occupants. The Village of Oak Park was an area that saw their lowest response scores in areas with multi-family buildings. This group of renters includes a number of potentially undercounted groups, such as seniors, children under 5, racial and ethnic minorities, and the young and mobile. This count, the Village is proactively partnering with landlords to reach these residents. The Oak Park CCC formed a subcommittee dedicated to multi-family complexes and held a focus group for landlords to learn the most effective engagement tactics for residents. The Village and their community partners will be providing directed messaging and training to landlords at various seminars and meetings. Kiosks will be set up throughout the Village, including at the Oak Park Regional Housing Center and the library, giving residents who don’t have internet access an opportunity to complete the Census. Landlords are being encouraged to set up census reminders in all common areas and to utilize their electronic tenant network to get the message out. The Village saw a gap in their 2010 decennial results and has worked diligently to address engagement needs with multi-family home residents.
Waukegan Public Library: Outreach Across Multiple Languages

The Census Bureau reports that 55.4% of the Waukegan population identifies as Latinx or Hispanic and that 31.6 are foreign-born. Many of these residents may not speak English, and this led the Waukegan Public Library (WPL) to become very proactive in census education in 2017. The WPL leads the Waukegan Complete Count Committee and it has taken several steps: they hired a native Spanish speaking census engagement specialist, developed a census tool kit in Spanish and English, designed a Waukegan specific logo and built a strong social media presence. Inclusivity is central to the mission of WPL and democracy is inherent to the universe of libraries. The WPL leadership believes these things will translate throughout their 2020 census engagement.
These are just a few strategies local communities have pursued to remind their residents to respond to the Census. The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus intends to be a resource to help you learn more. The Caucus hosts a monthly Peer Advisory Network webinar for municipal and CCC stakeholders. This webinar will continue throughout the census outreach timeline and offers several great resources, tools, and best practices. If your municipality or CCC would like to join please let us know.

Contacts:

Kyle Smith  
(312) 201.4507  
KSmith@mayorscaucus.org

LaTiyfa Fields  
(312) 386.8687  
LFields@mayorscaucus.org