

**DATE:** September 24, 2019  
**TO:** Census Counts Campaign + States Count Action Network  
Democracy Funders Collaborative Census Subgroup  
Funders Census Initiative  
**FROM:** Beth Lynk, Census Counts Campaign  
Karen Narasaki, Democracy Funders Collaborative Census Subgroup  
Jocelyn Bissonnette, Funders Census Initiative, FCCP  
**RE:** U.S. Census Bureau Guidance on Door-to-Door Canvassing

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The U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) recently released guidance to its partners on how to support Self-Response during the 2020 Census ([Guidelines for Partners: Supporting Self-Response in the 2020 Census](#)). Since then, stakeholders and funders have contacted us to relay concerns that aspects of the guidance are inconsistent with the Bureau's earlier advice and inconsistent with many organizations' Get-Out-the-Count (GOTC) campaigns to encourage households to complete the census. Specifically, the guidance in question is that "Partners should not go door-to-door to promote the census. . ." during the initial Self-Response phase, March 12 - April 30, 2020, or during the Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU) phase, May 13, 2020 - July 2020. **The Census Bureau has stated that the guidance is a preference and not a mandate.**

We have informed the Bureau that the guidance against door-to-door promotion during Self-Response is overly broad and unrealistic given what many believe will be necessary to successfully engage the most fearful and distrustful households. **Organizations planning for GOTC strongly believe that given the barriers to a fair and accurate census -- including the digital divide -- significant, in-person outreach by those with longstanding, established trust is critical, particularly in historically undercounted communities.**

Stakeholders and funders appreciate the intent of the guidance to guard against scenarios -- either real or perceived -- that could undermine Title 13 confidentiality protections or lead households to confuse stakeholder organizers with Bureau staff, particularly because Bureau staff will be in the field working on a variety of operations during Self-Response. For these reasons, we would not encourage stakeholders to do door-to-door census canvassing during the NRFU phase, so as not to interfere with on-the-ground efforts of Census Bureau enumerators or create confusion among households. (Additional guidance on activities for organizers is forthcoming -- see resource information below). We agree with the recommendation that "Partners should not attempt to collect 2020 Census data through websites or apps, over the phone, or in person." Even organizations doing educational door-to-door canvassing should be extremely careful to avoid any action that might undermine Title 13

confidentiality protections. This caution also will help protect community-based groups from accusations, spearheaded by foes of an inclusive census, that they are somehow encouraging or facilitating false responses, or otherwise manipulating the count.

The Census Counts Campaign is developing a comprehensive GOTC Toolkit that will be finalized in late October and distributed both online at [CensusCounts.org](https://censuscounts.org) and through our networks. The Toolkit will include guidance -- developed by the Census Counts Campaign's Field Working Group -- for stakeholders engaging in census door-to-door canvassing. This field guidance will be released ahead of the full Toolkit on the Census Counts/FCI Census Operations Webinar Part 6: Tips for Organizers on October 16 at 1pm ET. Register for the webinar [here](#).

If your organization is developing a GOTC plan and would like to provide input on the specific field guidance, please contact Diali Avila [avila@civilrights.org](mailto:avila@civilrights.org) with the Census Counts Campaign's Field Working Group by Wednesday, October 2.

Please contact Beth Lynk [lynk@civilrights.org](mailto:lynk@civilrights.org) or Jocelyn Bissonnette [jbissonnette@funderscommittee.org](mailto:jbissonnette@funderscommittee.org) with questions.