



a guide to organizing  
for the Census

# What is GOTC?

Get Out The Count, otherwise known as **GOTC**, refers to the collective direct efforts encouraging the completion of the Census 2020.

# Why GOTC?

The Census 2020 will be the first time the survey will be conducted digitally. This change, combined with ongoing public fear about information privacy and federal misuse, jeopardize the full participation of New Yorkers in the Census 2020. An undercount implicates major funding and representation losses for our state and historically underserved communities will be particularly impacted. We encourage organizations, groups, and entities to participate in getting out the count to ensure that the communities we serve don't suffer from the effects of an undercount.

# When is GOTC?

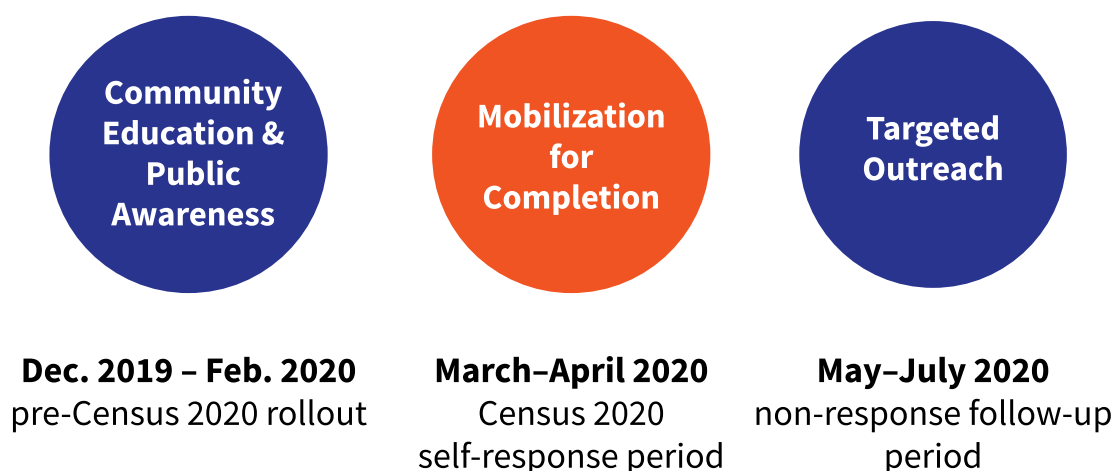
The first of Census 2020 communications will be delivered to New Yorkers on March 12th. GOTC serves to encourage our communities to complete their census forms during the Census Bureau's designated self response period.

April 1, 2020, is the official Census Day, a reference day for completion of the Census.

In May 2020, the Census Bureau will initiate their Non-response Follow-up operation (NRFU), a large scale field operation to enumerate households and canvass addresses from which a response was not received. During this period, Census Bureau field staff or enumerators will go door-to-door to collect a response. Areas such as college and university campuses may be designated by the Census Bureau for early NRFU.

Census operations and in-person visits will wrap-up by the end of July 2020.

The GOTC period consists of three separate outreach phases. This guide focuses on how to Mobilize for Completion during the self-response period and conduct Targeted Outreach during the NRFU period.



## US CENSUS BUREAU OPERATIONAL TIMELINE

### **March 12 - 20, 2020**

*The US Census Bureau will begin mailing postcard invitations to households to complete the Census 2020.*

### **March 16 - 24, 2020**

*A reminder letter will be sent.*

### **March 26 - April 3, 2020**

*A reminder letter is sent to households who have yet to respond.*

### **April 8 - 16, 2020**

*A reminder letter AND a paper questionnaire is sent to households who have yet to respond.*

### **April 20 - 27, 2020**

*A final reminder postcard will be sent to households who have yet to respond.*

### **May 2020**

*The Census Bureau initiates its Nonresponse Followup Operations (NRFU) with in-person visits to households who have not responded. Households would be visited up to six times.*

*\*Dates above are provided by the US Census Bureau*

## CENSUS 2020 GET-OUT-THE-COUNT TIMELINE

### **Nov - December 2019 : Establish Infrastructure**

- Hire or designate a staff lead
- Create a plan with attainable goals
- Identify local partners
- Acquire tools and technology
- Identify available training and resources
- Understand do's and don'ts

### **December - January 2020 : Fill In The Gaps**

- Train staff and volunteers
- Gather or create necessary in-language information
- Develop or Gather GOTC paraphernalia (pledge cards, buttons, etc.)
- Kick-off with town halls and community
- Purchase and set up tools and technology for GOTV
- Train staff and volunteers on GOTV program and tools

### **Feb 2020 : Build Out The Program**

- Train and re-train staff and volunteers on GOTV programs
- Kick-off your GOTV program
- Send out mailers and pledges
- Host or promote Census events

### **March - April 2020 : Run The Program**

- Train and re-train staff and volunteers on GOTV programs
- Kick-off your GOTV program
- Send out mailers and pledges
- Host or promote Census events

### **May - June 2020 : Wind Down Program**

- Wrap up canvass efforts before NRFU operations begin
- Ramp up efforts to households have not responded to the Census 2020
- Increase promotional activities in census tracts with low response rates
- Review processes and data
- Debrief with staff, volunteers, and community members
- Evaluate the program and timeline
- Prepare post-Census reports and analysis

## Who is GOTC for?

The Census Bureau has designated pockets of communities as hard-to-count (HTC) communities. These are communities that historically have had low census self-response rates and have depended on in-person visits from enumerators to each non-responding household to be counted. With decreased federal funding for the Census and a scaled-down NRFU operation across the nation, it is critically important to capture these HTC communities in our GOTC operations during the self response period.

In New York State, the self response rate in the 2010 Census was 75.8%, ranking at 45th in the nation, but a look at individual counties and census tracts is more revealing about the response rates in each community. We recommend using the Census 2020 Hard To Count Map developed by the CUNY Graduate Research Center to better understand who and where to target our GOTC efforts in 2020.

## How do we GOTC?

Institutions interested in participating in Get-Out-The-Count can engage in the following ways:

### Digital Access Points

The Census Bureau's regional offices will not be public-facing during the Census 2020. In addition, this will be the first-ever digital census. There is an anticipated need for digital access in hard-to-count communities. We encourage commonly frequented locations such as local libraries, hospitals, community centers, etc. to consider serving as a digital access point for census completion.

We recommend the following for any locations hosting a kiosk for census completion.

- 1 Review Preparing for the First Digital Census Manual by the Digital Equity Lab
- 2 Provide staff with extensive training on data security, data management, and data proficiency.
- 3 Provide staff with training on Census completion assistance.
- 4 Ensure kiosks are enclosed and staffed at all times. Staff should be available to help answer any inquiries about Census completion. (*Please note:* Information that is shared with kiosk staff is not protected by Title 13.)

### Informational Hotlines

The Census Bureau will run a toll-free hotline available in 12 non-English languages. The number and hours of operations has not been released at the time this guide was drafted.

The NALEO Education Fund runs a national bilingual hotline in Spanish and English (877-EL-CENSO / 877-352-3676) available Mondays through Fridays 8:30 AM to 8:30 PM E.T.

If there is a local number such as 311 available for hard-to-count communities to dial, institutions should share and encourage the use of these hotlines.

### Community Events

It is important for communities to be regularly exposed to the Census 2020. Community events and public gatherings are great opportunities for sharing information on the

Census broadly. While community events can be a great place for the community to voice inquiries, community concerns, and other sentiments, it does not create a space for deeper one-on-one conversations.

Tools such as Mobilize offers organizers an opportunity to both take accurate attendance of participants as well as capture important data that will allow organizers to conduct post-event follow-up and Census completion reminders.

## Canvassing Homes

The US Census Bureau traditionally has hired a large number of enumerators to conduct an in-person Non-Response Follow Up to households who have not completed the Census during the initial rollout phase of the Census 2020.

Going door-to-door and calling home-to-home has been effective methods to turnout or mobilize communities as seen in traditional voter engagement campaigns. These are persuasive tactics and the same tactics should be used to persuade individuals to complete the Census and to relay information on how to complete the Census.

The grassroots approach of going household-to-household to encourage hard-to-count communities to complete the Census 2020 is a highly effective method of getting-out-the-count. Institutions and groups who will be canvassing in 2020 should have established pillared trust within the communities. We do not recommend institutions or groups to conduct canvass operations if they previously have not conducted similar operations and are infrastructurally not equipped to manage accounts, train staff and volunteers, and make quick operational adjustments.

This operation is a labor-intensive undertaking and we strongly make the following recommendations for canvassing operations:

### Timeline

Canvass operations should run from March through the end of April of 2020 to encourage self-response. Community canvass operations should not coincide with the US Census Bureau's Non-response Follow-up operation that will commence in May 2020.

The GOTC timeline will coincide with electoral voter engagement work from various campaigns. While there are concerns about canvassing the same doors and belaboring community members with different messaging, it is important to note that your GOTC list should focus heavily on hard to count communities, who are often not the voting population. Organizations should always identify their affiliations immediately at the door and we encourage wearing or carrying paraphernalia that can help community members identify the canvasser.

### Tools

The NGP VAN 8 platform is widely used for data management, list creation, and other targeted outreach efforts in civic engagement activities. The tool uses commercial and voter data to create a collective database of individual and household information. The platform has an integrated mobile canvassing application, predictive dialing services, and a virtual phone bank.

Institutions interested should inquire about the NGP VAN tool with their local State Voices administrator or Census 2020 funder.

## Operational Tips

- Review Preparing for the First Digital Census Manual by the Digital Equity Lab
- Designate a staff person to oversee your GOTC work and manage all accounts. When managing accounts, every new user should be well-trained on the platform and should understand the restrictions on sharing information captured from the platform.
- Unlike GOTV, GOTC's unit of measure is not the individual, but rather, the household. When cutting lists, you should "household" your list to minimize having multiple listings of the same address appear on your list. Canvass responses should be recorded by households and not individuals.
- Names are not needed. It can be helpful to include any names on your list for ease of canvassing, but not every household will have an accurate list of names or names at all.
- When creating lists, we encourage creating lists by census tracts. Smaller turfs can be cut within a census tract, but not across census tracts.
- Enter all of your canvassing data as soon as the daily operations are over. Cross-reference your canvass operations with the US Census Bureau's real time updates of census tracts.
- Use the US Census Bureau's Real Time Response Rate Reports to inform which parts of your community need to be prioritized in your canvass operations.
- Canvassers should be discouraged from helping individuals complete the Census 2020 at their doors. The federal privacy protections of Title 13 do not extend to individuals who are not employed by the US Census Bureau.
- Canvassers should be equipped with effective scripts, referential images of the Census 2020 postcard invitation, and the official dial-in number for Census 2020 completion by phone.

### Helpful Mapping Tools:

- CUNY Graduate Center Census Hard To Count Maps
- US Census Bureau Response Outreach Area Mapper (ROAM)

## Phonebanking

Running phonebanks is a common tool for persuasion campaigns. Campaign generated lists of targeted phone numbers are called through by volunteers. In recent years, phonebanks have become more sophisticated and departed from paper lists to digital lists, individual dials have transitioned to predictive dialers.

We encourage the usage of phonebanks as a complementary tactic to canvass operations driving out the count. Phonebanks can target households that are not easily canvassed and can be streamlined for targeted in-language persuasion. Phone lists should be pulled from databases such as NGP VAN or PDI, but can also include organizational membership lists.

### Timeline

Unlike canvassing on the doors, phonebanks can be used through a more flexible timeline. Phonebanks are a great way to target communities that have not completed Census 2020 during the self-response period. The US Census Bureau real time completion maps can identify census tracts with low completion rates to include in phonebanking operations during the NRFU period.

## Tools

Some common tools for predictive dialing include ThruTalk and HubDialer. Predictive dialers are strongly preferred over using traditional lists to increase caller efficiency and increase the connectivity of callers to individuals. Institutions interested in using a predictive dialer should include those costs into their campaign strategy.

## Operational Tips

- Review Preparing for the First Digital Census Manual by the Digital Equity Lab
- Create multiple phone lists by languages spoken and recruit volunteers to make those calls
- Create scripts and responses in languages of the target audience
- Incorporate the ABNY tested Census 2020 [b]messaging into your script
- Train volunteers on having difficult conversations
- Household your phone numbers to avoid calling the same number multiple times in one phonebank
- Regularly clean out your list to remove bad or invalid numbers as well as individuals who request not to be called
- Comply with the Federal Communications Commission guidelines on calling hours.

# Peer-to-Peer Texting

Textbanks have been increasingly common for organizers. It is a quick way to share a customized message to a wide audience. Peer-to-peer texts are different than broadcast messages and allow a humanized touch. Volunteers would be able to respond to individuals and engage in meaningful conversations and answer questions on Census 2020 completion.

## Timeline

Similar to phonebanks, textbanks can be used more robustly throughout the GOTC season. Institutions can use textbanks to collect pledges from their target audience before Census 2020 postcard invitations are mailed out. The same list of individuals can be texted reminders during the self response period. We encourage using textbanks as a way to develop a continuous conversation thread with your target audience.

## Tools

Tools such as ThruText and Hustle allow volunteers to text a broad target audience and respond to inquiries. Most texting tools do not generate lists, textbank lists can be cut from platforms like VAN. Institutions should also include membership lists into their textbanks for a broader reach. Each tool has a cost per text and should be considered in the outreach strategy.

## Operational Tips

- Review Preparing for the First Digital Census Manual by the Digital Equity Lab
- Develop messages and responses in multiple languages.
- Develop return messages to common responses such as “yes”, “no”, and “What is the Census?”



- When responding to messages in textbanks, maintain the topic of Census. Don't let it get lost in the conversation.
- Incorporate a hyperlink to the Census 2020 online completion page in your texts.
- You will encounter many wrong numbers, but unlike GOTV, the Census can be completed by everyone. Take advantage of wrong numbers!
- Schedule your textbanks ahead of time and avoid exhausting the same list too many times in a short period of time.
- Purge your list as you encounter bad and invalid numbers—as well as individuals who request to be removed.

## Other Digital GOTC

Digital organizing is an increasingly popular and effective way to distribute information and activate communities.

**Pledging Tools** Digital tools such as the Community Connect Labs Pledge Text and EveryAction are some of the many ways to collect and activate individuals.

**Relational Organizing** Team is a mobile app that allows organizations to tap into their volunteers and supporters to organize their own personal networks.

**Social Media** Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat are common platforms. However, it is also important to consider other social media platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, WhatsApp, and KakaoTalk.

If your organization is interested in acquiring new tools for your GOTC work we encourage:

- Use trusted tools that have been tested by organizations
  - Does the platform have security and data protocols in place to protect the data?
  - Does the platform or tool integrate with existing tools you are using in your GOTC program?
- Allow sufficient time for trainings and adoption
  - What are the gaps from training that can be improved?
  - Are there new user FAQ's that should be integrated in future trainings?
- Pilot the tool with a small group for feedback
  - Was the tool easy to use?
  - How can you measure impact with the tool?

Any organization, individual, or local complete count committee looking to use these digital organizing tools can contact Wennie Chin at [wchin@nyic.org](mailto:wchin@nyic.org) for more information.



# Creating a Campaign Plan

## Set Achievable Goals

Develop motivating but realistic goal numbers that takes into consideration the community that your organization currently serves and the needs of the hard-to-count populations in the community.

Consider the following questions:

- Which populations would I like to reach?
- How many people would I like to reach?
- How can I reach this community?
- Will I have the capacity to deliver on these tactics?
- What are the resources I will need to deliver on these goals?
- What resources are already available that might help meet my goals?
- How can I measure my impact?

## Develop a Strategy

Evaluate the needs of your outreach and consider where your organization fits within that context. Understand the role that your organization can play in supporting Census completion.

Consider the following questions:

- What organizational programs and activities can I leverage in our GOTC outreach?
- How can I integrate GOTC into existing work?
- Where in the GOTC timeline will your organization be most active— in education, mobilization, or both?

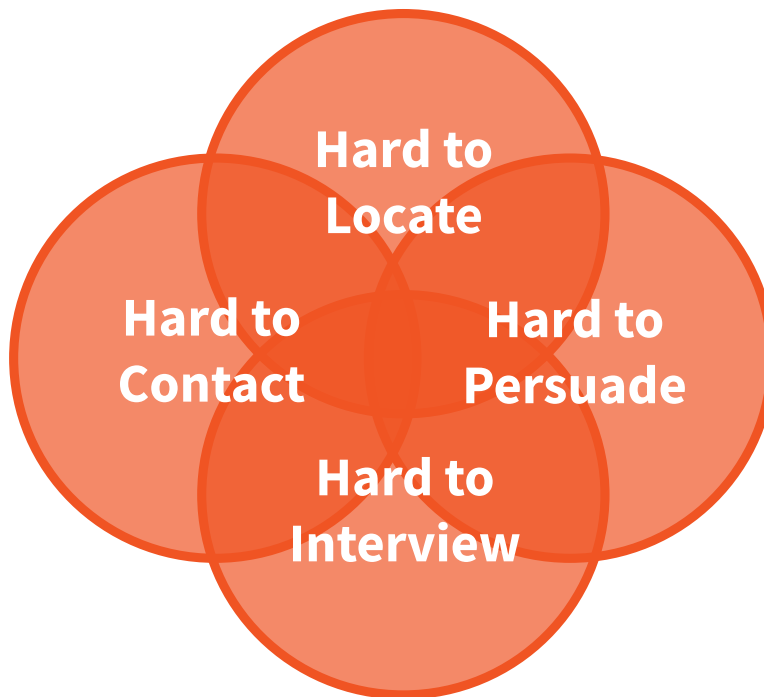
## Determine a Target Universe

Identify the breadth of reach your organization would like to have in your GOTC operations by asking the following questions:

- Who does my existing programs and activities reach?
- Is my existing reach inclusive of traditionally undercounted communities?
- Where are the undercounted populations located within my community?
- Which populations would be responsive to our organization's efforts?
- Which pockets of my community would be otherwise unreached by other groups?

Your target universe may be revisited and adjusted to reflect the needs of your HTC communities, but we recommend a broader universe that is resilient to frequent changes.

## Who is Hard To Count?



## Determine Effective Tactics

Identify the tactics that your organization can be able to do and the tactics that will reach your target universe. Map out your targets and understand what types of outreach and GOTC efforts meets your target audience and is the most effective at achieving your goals of increasing Census completion.

**Example** Launching a social media ad campaign on Instagram, but the target audience is only active on Facebook. Good tactic, but unfit for the audience.

**Example** The target audience is the Chinese speaking community in Binghamton. Your organization develops Chinese language graphics and vigorously shares them through the channels of WeChat and Weibo. A good tactic that can reach your target audience.

**Example** As much of your target audience resides in buildings that are inaccessible to canvassers, consider running a more ambitious phonebank operation to reach those households. Adjusting your tactic to better reach your target audience.

Remember to identify measures of impact and evaluations of program efficacy for each tactic.



