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# **New York State Census Equity Fund Awards \$500,000 to equip nonprofits for 2020 Census outreach**

*Initial round of grants from a New York Community Trust funder collaboration addresses urgent needs to help organizations across New York State ensure every resident is counted*

**(May 20, 2019) NEW YORK, NY** – The New York State Census Equity Fund today announced its first round of grants totaling more than \$500,000 to six organizations to help support efforts across the state to reach hard-to-count communities in the 2020 Census.

The Fund, which is housed at The New York Community Trust, brings together local, regional, and national foundations and individual donors to support a diverse array of projects that span from Western New York to Long Island.

Historically, some populations—including communities of color, low-income households, immigrants, rural households, and young children—have been undercounted in the census. And nonpartisan experts agree that getting an accurate count in 2020 will be extraordinarily difficult.

“With the 2020 Census less than a year away, this first round of grants will help organizations build their capacity to respond to the unprecedented threats facing an accurate count,” said Patricia A. Swann, senior program officer at The New York Community Trust.

For the first time, census data will be collected primarily online, which will help manage costs and make it easier for those with access to the internet to participate. But the new format is also going to make it harder for people without reliable internet access—most of whom live in areas that are already historically undercounted.

In addition, budget cuts at the Census Bureau will likely result in fewer people getting paid to follow up with households that fail to respond initially, putting more people at risk of going uncoded.

What’s more, there are mounting concerns that immigrants and their families will be afraid to participate in the census—the result of recent efforts by the government to separate parents and children at the border and increased raids by ICE. The government has also announced plans to add a citizenship question to the

census—a move that has only raised fears in immigrant communities that the census will be used as a tool to persecute and deport immigrants.

With that in mind, this coalition of funders has joined forces with individual donors to help New York State address these looming challenges.

“An undercount in New York would have disastrous consequences,” said Sol Marie Alfonso-Jones of the Long Island Community Foundation, one of the funders in the network. “It would result in the loss of billions of dollars each year over the next decade in federal aid provided through programs that are apportioned and distributed to states and localities.” New York’s congressional representation could also shrink from 27 to 25 seats.

“Counting every New Yorker is critical, whether in the Finger Lakes or in the Bronx,” said Randi L. Hewit, President of the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning & the Finger Lakes and co-chair of the Fund’s grant selection committee. “All New Yorkers depend on the same state and federal funding strategies to help local programs take care of our neighbors. Without an accurate count, everyone will lose resources that we need to make our communities great places to live.”

The New York State Census Equity Fund aims to build on what foundations and community organizations learned during the 2010 census, when concentrated outreach efforts made a big impact in census results. In 2010, for instance, the Long Island 2010 Census Initiative invested \$340,000 in census outreach efforts. In turn, 19 of the 23 census tracts in which the Initiative focused its efforts on Long Island showed increased response rates, including a dramatic 21 percent increase in Central Islip.

In addition to grant funding to trusted local nonprofits, the Fund is helping coordinate census-related efforts with other foundations, with the business community, and with appropriate government entities.

“It will be more important than ever for communities to be mobilized to increase participation,” said Maria Mottola, executive director of the New York Foundation and co-chair of the grant selection committee. “We are fortunate to have strong nonprofit partners from across the state who are working tirelessly to ensure every New Yorker is counted.”

#### **The initial round of grants includes:**

**Reaching Asian New Yorkers**—The Asian American Federation will receive \$100,000 to coordinate census training for 75 leaders from pan-Asian American communities in New York City, Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica/Rome.

**Mobilizing Ethnic News Organizations**—\$70,000 to The Center for Community and Ethnic Media at CUNY’s Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism will be used to identify and train local ethnic and community media outlets across the state. As part of the grant, the Center will also offer a census fellowship workshop series for reporters in the New York City metropolitan area.

**Reaching Hard-to-Count Communities across Long Island**—The Health and Welfare Council of Long Island will use \$75,000 to develop traditional and social media campaigns, create a complete count toolkit, and provide training aimed at reaching hard-to-count populations in Nassau and Suffolk counties.

**Providing Internet Access**—\$100,000 to the Digital Equity Laboratory at The New School will help public libraries across the state with digital security training and other preparations to help people complete census forms online.

**Training Organizations in Western New York**—The Partnership for Public Good will use \$58,000 to work with community organizations in Western New York to engage hard-to-count populations and communities in that region.

**Connecting with Immigrants and Refugees in Buffalo, Syracuse, and surrounding areas**—\$100,000 will help the New York Immigration Coalition aid community organizations in Western and Central New York as they encourage immigrants and refugees to be counted in the 2020 Census.

### **About The New York State Census Equity Fund**

The New York State Census Equity Fund (NYSCEF) was established in 2018 in The New York Community Trust to ensure coverage of the State's hard-to-count communities in the 2020 Census.

The Fund makes grants to support complete census count efforts in neighborhoods, towns, rural and isolated areas across the State with large populations that are at risk of being undercounted.

The Fund is led by a steering committee comprised of ten foundations and one funder coalition from across the state, including:

- Brooklyn Community Foundation
- Central New York Community Foundation
- Charles H. Revson Foundation
- Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes
- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- Dyson Foundation
- Engage New York
- Long Island Community Foundation
- The New York Community Trust
- New York Foundation

### **About The New York Community Trust**

The New York Community Trust connects past, present, and future generous New Yorkers with vital nonprofits working to make a healthy, equitable, and thriving community for all. We are a public grantmaking foundation dedicated to improving the lives of residents of New York City, Westchester, and Long Island. For more information, visit us at [nycommunitytrust.org](https://nycommunitytrust.org).