



January 11, 2019

California Library Directors:

Census 2020 Planning – State Support for County Outreach and Upcoming Deadlines

Libraries play a crucial role in the census. They're trusted messengers as well as locations where some of the Californians that are in most need of education or encouragement to be counted will come for assistance. Libraries know their communities and the people who live there because they interact with them daily.

While the peak census survey completion period won't begin until the spring of 2020, like Ben Franklin supposedly said: "By failing to prepare, you're preparing to fail."

The State Library has begun meeting with California's census team. They know libraries are key players in ensuring as complete and accurate a count as possible. A complete count is important because census numbers help determine the distribution of billions of dollars to California across more than 70 federal programs that deal with education, health and human services, and libraries.

Later this year, the State Library will create an easy-to-find place on our website for library-centric census information and updates.

This note is simply a heads-up on some key, upcoming dates, which a number of you are probably already aware of us as members of your local complete count committees.

About one-third of the state's census-gathering funds -- \$26.5 million -- is earmarked for counties to conduct outreach. Counties must tell the state they want to accept their share of these outreach funds by February 9. A list of how much is available to each county can be found here.

By March 19, counties seeking outreach funds must provide a strategic plan that, among other things, identifies major hard-to-count populations and details strategies on reaching those populations as well as answering questions from Californians who speak languages other than those census materials are provided in.

Libraries are ready-made partners in addressing numerous elements of the strategic plans sought by the state. If you haven't already, please connect with your county government to ensure libraries are identified in their strategic plans -- and are given the resources to succeed.

For example, will there be enough computer terminals available during those peak survey months (March -- June, 2020) to accommodate demand? Staff will require at least some training on answering basic questions as well as helping patrons understand their privacy protections and the importance of an accurate count.

You're in a better position than the State Library to answer those questions and offer concrete examples of how local branches can host outreach staff, share information with different communities and ensure hard-to-count individuals get counted. But as a possible starting point in drafting your communication to the appropriate county officials, a sample letter is attached.

Please let the State Library know how we can be of more assistance to you. Thanks, as always, for everything you do for California.

--Greg Lucas, California State Librarian

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