

Census 2020 Placer Counts Final Report

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 Re: Placer Counts Final Report

Introduction

Placer County made a commitment to strategically focus its effort on hard-to-count communities to ensure the 2020 count was full and complete. In order to measure this effort, we have evaluated the local response outcome related to the investment made by California Complete Count and Placer County. Included below is a reflection on lessons learned, best practices, and how partnerships could influence a more effective and positive outcome for the 2030 Census and future collaborative efforts.

Local response outcome

Overall, Placer County succeeded in exceeding the 2010 response rate as an entire county, however, fell short in a few HTC tracts that were targeted for outreach. Table 1 below shows an overview of the county's 2020 rate in comparison to the 2010 rate, along with some comparisons to the U.S. and State of California self-response rates.

Table 1 – 2020 Self Response Rates in Comparison to 2010

Area	2020 Rate (%)	2010 Rate (%)
U.S. Self Response	67	66.5
CA Self Response	69.6	68.2
Placer County Response	72.7	67.5
Incorporated Cities		
City of Auburn	79	73.2
City of Roseville	79.6	74.2
City of Rocklin	80.1	75
City of Lincoln	84.9	80.6
City of Colfax	62.1	51.8

Historically Undercounted Focus Areas		
Auburn Greens, North Auburn	70.8	66.9
Vernon St., Roseville	64.1	65.2
1st St., Roseville	72.7	63.9
Kings Beach	29.1	42.2
North Tahoe Region ¹	17.9-29.1	18.7-42.2

¹ Represents the communities of Tahoma, Homewood, Tahoe City, Dollar Point, Carnelian Bay, Kings Beach, etc. The lowest rates in the range represent the Tahoma tract and the highest rates represent Kings Beach.

As noted in Table 1, the target tracts that performed the poorest and fell short of the 2010 rates include a tract along Vernon Street in the City of Roseville and the Kings Beach tract. These locations were already identified as hard to count by the Placer Counts Coalition. During the non-response follow-up period, Kings Beach also became a focus, however, despite these efforts, the 2020 self-response rate reflects a significant decline. When the census results are released in 2021, staff will explore the reasons why these numbers are comparatively lower than the 2010 self-response rate.

Canvassing and Phonebanking

Over the course of implementation, Placer County made a \$113,300 investment in canvassing and phonebanking. In November and December of 2019, Communities for a New California (CNC) Education Fund began a phone survey to find out from residents their feelings about the census and to identify barriers to participation and the most effective messages to address those barriers. CNC's initial goal was to reach 19,440 residents and contact 4,536 – a 23% penetration rate. CNC reached out to over 30,000 residents and contacted 4,882, resulting in a 16% penetration rate.

The results from the survey questions provided insights to support canvassing and additional phonebanking that would take place closer to the official April 1 census day. The additional phonebanking around April resulted in 3,863 contacts and 166 direct patch-throughs to the U.S. Census Bureau phone line.

Placer County contracted with Evangelista Community Relations (ECR) to implement a two-phase effort. Phase one took place between December 6, 2019 and March 8, 2020, however, part of phase one and the entirety of phase two took a drastic shift due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The strategy behind the early canvassing effort was to educate and motivate residents in HTC census tracts about the benefits of the census and to ask residents about perceived barriers to and reasons for census participation. In this period alone, ECR knocked on almost 9,000 doors and was able to speak directly with 2,065 households throughout Placer County.

On March 18, 2020, a shift away from canvassing to phonebanking was made as the toll of the Coronavirus Pandemic took its course and Public Health officials required

shutdowns throughout the State and Nation. As a result, most of ECR's work shifted to the "rapid response" period April 1 – June 30, the results of which are reflected in the NRFU section below.

Paid Advertising

Placer County made a \$20,220 investment in paid advertisement, including funds used for print materials on Roseville Transit and Placer County Transit, digital billboards, radio advertisement, and a geofencing campaign on social media outlets.

A total of \$7,170 was spent on radio advertisements, which took place with three stations, including a Spanish version on KTKE in Truckee, Punjabi version on Radio Punjab, and an English PSA with Radio KAHI. Each of these stations served HTC communities within Placer County and resulted in the following total paid spots.

Station	Dates	Total Spots
Kahi	April 1 (4 weeks)	260
KTKE 101.5 Truckee Radio	April 1 (4 weeks)	150
Radio Punjab	April 1 (4 weeks)	200

Placer Community Foundation Partnership

With additional funds from the State of California, Placer County was able to further support the Placer Community Foundation to fulfill a critical role coordinating the outreach partners. Placer Community Foundation did the following:

- Supported the work of community-based partner organizations
- Managed and tracked outreach material distribution to partners and the public
- Shared information with organizations and volunteers about how to help, including management of the content on the Placer Counts website

As a result of their effort, and the effort of several community-based organizations, they accomplished the following:

- 613 total outreach activities ranging in type from presentations, trainings, webinars, and social media campaign posts. As part of that total, 68 outreach events were held, often coordinated with COVID-19 outreach.
- The outreach activities were each designed with target audience in mind. As a result, the activities resulted in outreach to many population types, including the following highlights:
 - 335 activities for Latinx
 - 348 activities for families
 - 249 activities for immigrant populations

- 122 activities for seniors 272 activities in more than one language

Overview of NRFU activities

Placer County's main "rapid response" tactic was to continue a contract with ECR and support phonebanking and canvassing within the areas of the county with the lowest reporting response rates through the period of April 1 – June 30. As projected, these areas included parts of Lincoln, Roseville, Auburn, and North Tahoe. During this "rapid-response" period, ECR's target was to attempt 32,400 calls and contact 8,424 individuals. As a result of their effort, they attempted over 100,000 calls and made 9,028 contacts. Additionally, in this period, they were able to patch 285 households directly through to the U.S. Census Bureau phone survey line. They exceeded the 8,424 target and spoke with over 130 families in this period that needed Spanish language support.

During this period, Placer County also launch a social media and advertisement campaign with OnScreen Media to geotarget low-performing and HTC census tracts through June, July, and early August. A total \$10,000 was spent on the geofencing campaign, which resulted in 2,396,747 impressions and 1,213 click-throughs to the U.S. Census Bureau website. The geofencing campaign was targeted within the county's top four HTCs, including parts of Roseville, Lincoln, Auburn, and North Tahoe.

Placer County focused on increasing the response rate in the North Tahoe region and working with the CEO office to push messaging to business associations and the business community. Sierra Community House fulfilled their contract with the Placer Community Foundation (PCF) through October, and County Staff continued to provide support and coordination between these organizations, Nevada County, and the Tahoe Truckee Community Collaborative to ensure a complete count in North Tahoe. Despite efforts to host mobile questionnaire assistance booths and a final push in July to safely canvass some neighborhoods, Placer County fell short of the 2010 response rate.

Finally, as part of "rapid response" Placer County continued to work with PCF to convene the Placer Counts Coalition monthly. Many of the Coalition participants were non-profits committed to working beyond the terms of their contracts with PCF given their missions and the importance of the census. While those contracts were managed under PCF, Placer County continued to be a partner at the table and to convene people and resources through the final response period of the census.

Lessons learned and best practices that may inform 2030 Census outreach effort

Placer County and Placer Community Foundation convened the outreach partners at a November 6, 2020 debrief and celebration. Additionally, Placer County Staff convened with Placer Community Foundation staff to speak candidly about the successes, shortfalls, and room for improvement during future campaign efforts. The following lessons and best practices were identified:

- Overall, nothing replaces in-person contact and the connections we are designed to make when speaking together in-person. Everything about this mode of communication is important and difficult to replicate with a phone call, video conference, through social media outlets, etc. That being said, the campaign and partners successfully delivered information through these channels, including incorporation of critically important delivery of aid and services related to COVID-19.
- Dedicated County Staff is critical to the success of the campaign, not as the voice and face of the outreach effort, but as convener, facilitator, and strategist. Critical staff includes Health and Human Services, Public Information Office, Community Development Resource Agency and/or County Executive Office staff to establish the work program and convene key organizations and agencies. It is also important for County's to begin the effort as early as possible and consider the staff time and effort needed to support a census campaign. More critical than that, selecting staff that values partnership and collaborative and understands the importance of the effort and the importance of building support from outside organizations is paramount.
- While staff utilized SwORD for reporting purposes, Placer County has robust GIS capabilities and would recommend a GIS Analyst is part of the 2030 effort as they were in 2020.
- The Placer County allocation from the State of California and the ACBO allocation to Placer Community Foundation were small, so from the start the team treated these funds as one pot of money and decided that pooling and coordinating these resources would be important. This worked well because each organization's funds were spent within their respective areas of expertise (e.g. PIO took leadership to develop marketing materials from State templates and strategize advertising buys), and there was coordination and transparency between how they were spent.
- The strategic plan was critical to the outreach effort. It set the standard that the campaign *could not be everything to everyone* and needed to have clear parameters. As a result, the strategy revolved around focusing efforts only in the historically undercounted census tracts. This is a highly recommended strategy for the future because increasing numbers in these areas not only supports the county as a whole, but it also directs the outreach effort to the populations that are often at a disadvantage to receiving information, due to language barriers and other factors.
- The County's investment in phonebanking and canvassing is a highly recommended strategy for the future. This type of outreach, when coordinated by professionals and done using technical methods for outreach and strategized messaging, is highly effective. Not only were our contractors able to geotarget the hardest to count tracts, but they coordinated this effort using software that documented pulse surveys from respondents in order to get a sense for their understanding of the census and willingness to take it. This information proved

valuable for every conversation that occurred with that household/individual, depending on their opinion and position.

- For the future, a more coordinated outreach effort for Truckee and North Tahoe is advised. Placer County fell short of its 2010 response in this area, which has historically seen declining population due to cost of living and lack of affordable housing. As such, an earlier effort with Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation, Nevada County, and the Sierra Community House is advised. Additionally, North Tahoe might benefit from the identification of local champions in their region, to serve as a trusted voice for the communities and diverse populations that live in the area.
- Due to the impacts of the pandemic, Placer County never launched its Questionnaire Assistance Centers. While these were an excellent idea, it was difficult to have them at locations other than government facilities due to standards to host them safely and securely. Any future effort should retool this concept because these could be critical locations for trusted people, organizations, and institutions.

Evaluation, criteria used, for further recommendation in 2030

Placer County's strategic plan identified several criteria to measure success in 2020, which included a quantitative analysis of the response rate as well as targets for paid efforts such as canvassing and phonebanking. In addition to these points of data, a more qualitative analysis was framed and included the following questions:

- What worked well?
- What influenced participation?
- What was hard? How well were challenges overcome?
- How, if at all, did relationships influence success, or lack thereof?
- To what degree did the Placer Counts Coalition stimulate involvement?
- What changes are needed to make the Placer Counts Coalition better?
- What did we need more of?
- How might we leverage new partnerships and approaches to inform other efforts?

We would recommend continuing to use these questions for evaluation and consider the following for the future:

- Exceedance of 2020 response is a good marker but should not be the only target for success.
- Consideration for HTC population use of social media and messaging that resonates with population, including quality of message type of social media platform.