

TO: Colleagues in philanthropy

FROM:

Patrick Gaspard, Open Society Foundations
Barbara Picower, The JPB Foundation
LaJune Montgomery Tabron, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Darren Walker, Ford Foundation

RE: Support for the 2020 Census

Dear colleagues:

We are eleven months out from Census Day, April 1, 2020, when the decennial count will begin. This means we are at a critical moment when advocates, organizers, activists, faith, business, community leaders, and elected officials from around the country are coming together to launch a massive and coordinated “get out the count” effort focused on the most hard-to-count communities. As foundations supporting work towards a full and accurate census, **we have identified a \$10 million gap to fill to support these efforts.**

Census data is used to distribute more than \$800 billion dollars in federal funds, as well as to apportion congressional seats and design and draw local, state and congressional legislative districts. It is relied upon by researchers, demographers, businesses, governments and philanthropy to understand who lives in our country and in our communities. It drives decisions by funders and nonprofits concerned about local services, from public education to healthcare to housing. In short, a lot is at stake.

Philanthropic support to assure a fair and accurate count at the national and state level has been tremendous over the last few months. Many of you have made significant and generous contributions to this work, recognizing the myriad ways both your foundations and your grantees rely on accurate census data, especially from communities that are traditionally undercounted.

Because so much is at stake this year, our foundations have each pledged an additional \$5 million to support the national work planned by the funder collaborative. We now ask you to help us meet the remaining \$10 million deficit. To date, over 90 funders have supported this work by contributing what they can, from \$15,000 to \$5 million.

Here are a few examples of what your dollars will support:

- A network of 17 national hubs focused on different communities that are hard to count. These hub organizations are doing public opinion research to help shape messages, coordinating efforts between the local, state and national organizations, and distributing multilingual materials and tools to community groups and local trusted messengers.
- A strategic communications effort to create and distribute materials and information to reach the hardest-to-count communities, counter online disinformation, and educate and engage local and ethnic media.

- A Census Equity Fund that is supporting coordinated campaigns by state and local groups in at least 13 states that have large hard-to-count populations and limited local philanthropy.
- New digital organizing tools, platforms, trainings, and strategies that will help state and local groups working to “get out the count” scale their efforts to reach hard-to-count households, and strengthen their civic engagement work well beyond 2020.

We encourage you to contribute to the Census 2020 collaborative fund, housed at New Venture Fund, or make grants directly to organizations who are working in alignment with this larger effort. Each of us has program officers who are deeply engaged in this work and are standing by ready to share information and answer questions, or you can reach out to Gary Bass at the Bauman Foundation, who is chairing the funder collaborative. We have listed their contact information below.

Even though the focus is on Get Out the Count efforts, the funder collaborative continues to support work to ensure the Census Bureau has adequate governmental resources to successfully implement the census, and that the online census works properly. Additionally, the Supreme Court heard arguments on April 23 about whether the citizenship question will be on the census and is expected to make its decision in June. Either way the decision goes, we must be prepared for a strong Get Out the Count effort.

Please join us and help us fill the \$10 million funding gap. Every grant makes a difference.

For more information, please reach out to any of our colleagues:

Evan Bacalao, Open Society Foundations, evan.bacalao@opensocietyfoundations.org

Gary Bass, Bauman Foundation, gbass@baumanfoundation.org

Regina Bell, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Regina.Bell@wkkf.org

Angela Cheng, The JPB Foundation, ACheng@jpbfoundation.org

Erika Wood, Ford Foundation, e.wood@fordfoundation.org