IL Count Me In 2020

Census Initiative
Request for Proposals
February 2019

Section I. INTRODUCTION

IL Count Me In 2020 is a collaborative funding initiative of Illinois’ philanthropic community to support a coordinated, statewide campaign to increase participation in the 2020 Census in communities across the State of Illinois that are at risk of being undercounted, known as hard-to-count (HTC) communities. The overall goal of the IL Count Me In 2020 Census Initiative is to increase self-response rates by 4–5 percent of hard-to-count geographic areas and populations at risk of an undercount across the state, and ensure a coordinated, safe, secure, and accurate census count, as well as continue furthering the work of community engagement. In order to achieve this, the collaborating funders invite proposals from nonprofit organizations for activities including, but not limited to public education, outreach, communications, special events, and mobilizing, specifically aimed at increasing the self-response rate to the census in communities across Illinois.

Importance of the Census

The U.S. Constitution requires that all residents (including non-citizens and undocumented immigrants) be counted every ten years through a nationwide census. Census data guide government decisions about where to build schools, hospitals and roads and the location of social services. Census data are also used for drawing congressional and state legislative districts, and monitoring and enforcing civil rights laws in housing, employment, voting, lending and education. Illinois could potentially lose two congressional seats and a significant portion of our state’s annual allotment of $19.7 billion federal dollars, if immigrant and rural communities, as well as low-income communities of color, are not counted in the 2020 Census. The census is essential to ensuring all Americans are represented in our democracy and well served by it. Inaccurate census counts can deprive individuals and communities of their fair representation in Congress and can result in inequitable distribution of federal resources.

Challenges to a Fair and Accurate 2020 Count

Hard-to Count Populations
Historically, the census has undercounted young children, people of color, immigrants, rural residents, and low-income households at higher rates than other population groups. Individuals with disabilities, seniors, individuals experiencing homelessness, college students, and individuals of the LGBTQ+ community are also considered hard to count. The census is going online for the first time. While this is an advantage to some communities in Illinois, it is a disadvantage of communities who lack connectivity at home (https://civilrights.org/new-report-highlights-opportunities-risks-first-high-tech-census/).

Citizenship Question

- The Census Bureau has proposed the addition of an untested question that asks about citizenship. Experts anticipate that the addition of this question will lead to an undercount of immigrants and people of color, populations who are regularly undercounted in the census in general. In Illinois, one in seven residents are immigrants. (At the time of the release of this RFP, there are several legal challenges to the addition of this question pending in federal courts.)

High Tech Census

- The Census Bureau plans to encourage most households to answer the 2020 Census questionnaire via the Internet. The online format will include multiple languages and will be accessible on multiple mobile devices. However, households with poor Internet connectivity or no computer will be at risk of being undercounted. Some communities in Illinois have very limited broadband infrastructure, which may make them a hard-to-count area in 2020, even if the community had historically responded at higher rates during the 2010 paper-based Census. The Census 2020 hard-to-count map application (https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/) highlights tract-level household Internet access based on data from the Federal Communications Commission. IL Count Me In 2020 is soliciting proposals to fund organizations that have the ability to reach these hard-to-count populations and increase the rate of self-responses to the census questionnaire. According to The Leadership Conference (https://civilrights.org/census/), “The nation’s first high-tech census, while offering the promise of cost savings, could lead to poor or uneven participation, technological infrastructure failings, or both, thereby increasing the undercount of groups historically underrepresented in the census. Modernizing the census is important, but technology also comes with new and untested risks that must be addressed now.”

For more Census data information, click here.
Section II. GRANT GUIDELINES

In accordance with federal, state, and local laws, and in keeping with its mission, Forefront will not fund organizations that use race, color, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, veteran status, or any other protected classification as a basis to deny services to qualifying individuals who seek assistance that falls within the scope of the organization’s mission.

Section III. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria, with the weight of each area in parentheses:

(Note: Topics below are not listed in order of priority. Outline numbers and letters are used for reference purposes only.)

1. Applicant qualifications and organizational capacity (20%):
   a. Applicants must be a registered Illinois not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, described in 509(a)(1), (2), or (3) to accomplish a religious, charitable, scientific, literary, educational, or other permitted public purpose. Please visit http://charitableviewer.ilattorneygeneral.net/ to verify your status with the state.
   b. Applicants that are not 501(c)(3) may apply under a fiscal sponsor that is a 501(c)(3) in good standing.
   c. Applicants should be able to demonstrate established relationships with targeted communities.
   d. Applicants should have good track records working on activities that increase community engagement or civic participation, such as community organizing, public education, outreach, or advocacy.
   e. Applicants should be able to demonstrate stable structures for organizational leadership and financial oversight.

2. Focus on “hard-to-count” (HTC) geographic areas or populations (30%):
   Priority will be given to projects that focus on at least one of the areas or populations listed below:
   a. Hard-to-count geographic area: The Census Bureau defines HTC areas as having a self-response rate in the 2010 decennial Census of 73 percent or less. Maps identifying HTC
areas can be found in Census 2020 HTC mapping application: 

b. Historically undercounted populations: Historically, the census has undercounted young children, people of color, rural residents, and low-income households at higher rates than other population groups. Additionally, people with disabilities, seniors, people experiencing homelessness, and LGBTQ+ people are also considered hard to count. (See Race and Ethnicity in the 2020 Census [PDF].)

c. Groups with socio-economic factors correlated to low self-response rates: Prior censuses or census tests showed that certain populations were hard to count, including "linguistically isolated" households; frequent movers and renters; foreign-born residents; households below the poverty line; large (i.e. overcrowded) households; low educational attainment households and single-parent headed households, as well as rural communities. And, people who distrust government authorities and/or have been or could be targets of law enforcement or heightened surveillance may be less likely to respond to the census. In the Census 2020 HTC application, statistics on these groups for each tract are presented when a tract is selected on the HTC mapping application: https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/.

d. Households with no computer or inadequate Internet access: The Census Bureau plans to encourage most households to answer their 2020 Census questionnaire via the Internet. As a result, households with poor Internet connectivity or, worse, no computer access will be at risk of being undercounted. Some communities in Illinois have very limited broadband infrastructure, which may make them a hard-to-count area in 2020, even if the community had historically responded at higher rates during the 2010 paper Census. The Census 2020 HTC map application also highlights tract-level household Internet access based on data from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC): https://www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us/.

For more Census information, click here.

3. Clear strategies of engagement and measurable objectives (20%):

   The goals of the IL Census 2020 Initiative is to 1) increase the self-response rates by 4–5 percentage points of hard-to-count communities and populations across Illinois, 2) ensure a fair, accurate and inclusive census count for Illinois, and 3) in the long-term, continue furthering the work of civic engagement.

   a. Objectives and activities should be designed to address at least one of the first two goals, and can address all three goals.
b. Activities can include *(but are not limited to)* public education campaigns, media/communications, community outreach, trainings, special events, organizing, advocacy, leveraging and adapting existing materials, and engaging in social media. (Note: The Joyce Foundation is investing in communications research to enable nationally-coordinated messaging for HTC communities. Funds should not be requested for this purpose, but can be requested for tailoring messages to specific communities, e.g. translation, technology, etc.)

c. Activities that are connected to or amplify broader existing or planned civic engagement efforts are encouraged.

d. Creative and innovative ideas are encouraged, especially those used to engage new populations, or using new and culturally relevant outreach and education methods.

4. **Collaboration and alignment (20%)**:  
   Applicants should be able to articulate understanding for a coordinated, safe, secure and accurate census count, addressing concerns and challenges.

a. Collaboration amongst organizations is encouraged, particularly where it allows organizations to effectively reach into larger geographic areas in downstate and Central Illinois.

b. Applicants should demonstrate their awareness and alignment (when appropriate) with the efforts of the Census Bureau, Census complete count committees, local governments, or other national and local nonprofit organizations, especially those active in their targeted geographies or with their focused population groups.

c. Applicants in areas where a Funders’ Collaborative member is located are encouraged to reach out to funders for partnerships and collaboration ideas and opportunities.

5. **Vision (10%)**:  
   Applicants with an overall vision aligned with promoting ongoing democracy efforts through civic engagement, and raising critical issues will be prioritized.

a. Priority will be placed on applicants who can demonstrate how their census project is aligned with the purpose, or strengthens the organization, and its long-term work.

b. Applicants should be able to articulate their potential for ongoing community engagement through democracy building, public education, organizing, or future leadership on civic engagement-related issues. This should be demonstrated by the impacts of past community work, and successful collaborations.
Section IV. EXPECTED GRANTMAKING

The Illinois philanthropic community has committed more than $1,600,000 to the IL Count Me In 2020 program. The Funders’ Collaborative anticipates awarding a range of grant amounts (from $5,000 to $150,000) for census activities that will range widely from small community-based initiatives to large, statewide efforts. Larger grants of $50,000 or more will be awarded to organizations that are conducting collaborative census outreach efforts, and funds may be used to re-grant.

The Funders’ Collaborative will separate this work into two tracks: smaller or innovative initiatives ($15,000 or under), and larger ($15,001 or over), more collaborative, county, regional and/or statewide efforts. Applicants should apply to only one track. Note: The Funders’ Collaborative encourages creative, innovative submissions, regardless of the amount of money that is applied for.

No restriction will be placed on the budget size of the applicant organizations; however, the Funders’ Collaborative encourages applicants to be mindful of organizational capacity, and only request amounts relative to the planned work.

Grantees must commit to:

- Reporting on outreach outcomes addressed by the funded work by July 1, 2020.
- Sharing the census work broadly as the IL Count Me In 2020 program, including use of social media and hashtag #ILCountMeIn2020 where available.
- Providing a plan for documentation of the funded efforts including the use of photography, video, as well as in written form.
- Participating in a mid-grant survey report in early December of 2019. This will help Forefront capture a snapshot of the work being done and to be accomplished and assess if any technical assistance is necessary for any of the grantees.
- Providing a final grant report narrative and financial report. Organizations that plan to re-grant the funds will be responsible for sharing additional documentation of the recipient organizations.
- Participating in interviews with the project consultant and/or Forefront staff for program evaluation that will capture accomplishments, lessons learned, and recommendations for the 2030 Census.
- For grantees of $50,000 or more, participating in person, or through video conference or by conference call in census coalition meetings with other grantee organizations to share information, resources, and strategies that intend to strengthen and connect the work of all collaborative, supported efforts. Those who receive smaller amounts are welcome to participate.
- Expending all grant funds between April 15, 2019 and June 30, 2020.
Section V. GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

Grant applications must be filled out on Forefront’s online portal (available on February 1, 2019). Complete proposals will include an online cover sheet, narrative response to application questions, financial information described in the application, and attachments. **Narratives should not be more than five pages;** we are looking for concise, thoughtful proposals. Please note, site visits and/or calls may be requested in advance of grant selection; applicants may also be asked for references.

**Note:** There will be one informational webinar session regarding the application and the Funders’ Collaborative’s process on Friday, February 1, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. The session will be recorded and available on Forefront’s website shortly after. Send questions regarding this RFP to Anita Banerji at ABanerji@myforefront.org by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, January 28, 2019. The Funders’ Collaborative will make efforts to answer during the webinar. To register for the session, please email Yoselyn Ovalle at YOvalle@myforefront.org.

- Deadline for the application is 11:59 a.m. on Thursday, February 28, 2019.
- Grantees will be notified by March 25, 2019.
- All grantees will be required to attend Forefront’s Census Summit at the Memorial Center for Learning and Innovation, 228 W. Miller Street, Springfield, IL on April 3, 2019. Please include related travel expenses into your requested budget.

Section VI. COUNT ME IN ILLINOIS 2020 CENSUS INITIATIVE APPLICATION

Part One

a. Cover Sheet—Basic info and summary of project
   i. Organization name:
   ii. Fiscal sponsor name (if applicable):
   iii. FEIN
   iv. Address: (street address, city, state, zip)
   v. Website:
   vi. Executive Director: Name
      1. Is the executive director a member of an HTC community?
   vii. Project Manager: Name
      1. Is the project manager a member of an HTC community?
      2. Phone:
      3. Email:
   viii. Board of Directors:
1. What percentage of board who are members of an HTC community (as defined Evaluation Criteria #2 beginning on page 3): ___%___

2. To which HTC communities do board directors belong? (Check all that apply.)
   ix. Amount Requested: [If amount is $15,000 or less, applicants only need to answer questions 1–4 and supply attachments 1–4.]
   x. Briefly describe your organization’s mission, history, and current programs. [Character limit 500]
   xi. Please list the applicable geographic areas where you will focus your efforts. Please be as specific as possible: (1) city/ies, town/s, or village/s; (2) Chicago community areas; (3) population/s or community/ies.

Part Two – Proposal Narrative

Please answer the following questions in 5 pages (approximately 3,000 characters) or fewer. Be sure to answer all questions and number all answers. Note: Percentages used to indicate weight of response, not used to indicate space allocation.

Applicants applying for $15,000 or less need only answer questions 1–4. Applicants applying for $15,001 or more should answer all questions.

Organizational capacity—20%:
   1. Describe your organization’s work towards promoting community engagement, such as previous census outreach, voter registration or mobilization, community organizing, public education, or community organizing, including the number of years you have engaged in various strategies. Give at least one example of a set of goals and results you were able to achieve.

Focus Community—20%:
   2. Describe the community or geography that will be the focus of your project, and its socio-economic characteristics, especially the barriers that are likely to impede participation of those residents in the census.
   3. Describe your connection to the targeted community area/s, or population/s, including the length of time you have done work with the targeted community area/s, or population/s, and types of activities you have carried out. Describe how you reach your members, constituents, or program participants.

Outreach Strategies—30%:
4. Describe the strategies and activities your organization will employ to increase the 2020 Census self-response rate. Please include specific expected outcomes, how you will measure them, and why you think they will be effective.
   a. Briefly describe the staffing and resources you have/will have for this project.
   b. List any benchmarks you expect to be able to share in early December 2019.

Collaboration & Alignment—20%:
5. Describe how your approach builds on other efforts to increase the 2020 self-responses. Please include information about awareness, monitoring, or participation with the Census Bureau, Complete Count Committees, local governments, and any other national or local efforts.
6. If you are planning to work in collaboration with other entities, please describe how the collaboration will be structured, including responsibilities, process for decision making, how a grant will be allocated, and oversight. Include a brief history of the collaboration (number of members, years in existence, reason for formation, and any successes in carrying out similar campaigns.)

Integrated Vision—10%:
7. Describe how this project is aligned with your overall mission or vision, and how it will strengthen your organization, its programs, or constituents.
8. Describe the commitment your organization’s leadership has to the census. List any long-term civic engagement goals your organization has, and please briefly describe its strategies, and how a coordinated, safe, and accurate census fits in.

Part Three – Budget Information
1. Please provide the total budget for your census project, including expenses that are beyond the amount requested in this RFP. Complete budgets should include income, expenses, and brief narrative explanations. The budget should cover the period of April 15, 2019 through June 30, 2020.

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<th>Income</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Committed, Pending, or Still Need to Raise</th>
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<td>TOTAL INCOME</td>
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<td><strong>Expense</strong></td>
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<td>Fringe Benefits</td>
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<td>Re-granting</td>
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<td>Contract Services or Professional Fees</td>
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<td>Communications</td>
<td>[As noted in the RFP, funds should not be requested for researching communications messaging, but can be requested for tailoring messages to specific communities, e.g. translation, technology, etc.]</td>
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<td>Equipment/Supplies</td>
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<td>Travel Related Expenses</td>
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<td>Indirect Costs</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
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**Part Four – Attachments**

Please include these attachments for your organization or fiscal sponsor. Applicants applying for $15,000 or less need only supply attachments 1–4. Applicants applying for $15,001 or more should supply all attachments.

1. List of board of directors with affiliations.
2. Budget for the entire organization for the current fiscal year with projected expenses and sources of income.
3. Most recent financial statements.
4. List of key staff for the proposed project with brief bio.
5. Most recent audit or 990.
6. Statement on how fiscal oversight is conducted at the organization (who reviews finances and how often). If necessary, please explain any significant variations to the previous year’s budget.