



Young Children and the 2020 Census: 5 Things Early Childhood Funders Can Do

As the Decennial Census approaches in 2020, advocates for children and families are gearing up to raise awareness of the undercount of young children in Census, an undercount which has been growing for 40 years. The 2010 Census missed nearly 10% of young children under the age of 5, the most significant undercount in the Census [resulting in states losing over a half billion a year](#). Facing budget constraints, the Census Bureau is planning to collect a majority of census information online, scaling back door-to-door outreach and canvassing. These changes increase the potential of missing young children, minorities, low-income individuals and other marginalized individuals.

Why Should Early Childhood Funders Get Involved?

[The impact of the 2020 Census will last a decade, because every Census survey sets the sampling process based on population data established by the Decennial Census:](#)

- The **federal government uses census data to help allocate over \$800 billion a year in federal funds** to key programs that serve children and families, including health insurance programs (Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program), education programs (Title I funding to schools in low income communities, IDEA special education funding for children with disabilities), as programs that pay for quality child care, which not only keep kids safe and thriving, but help support working parents and families.
- **When total federal funding is capped**, Census data often determines who gets it (Title 1, Special Ed, CCDBG, Head Start expansion funds).
- **States, localities, and businesses** use census data for community planning, including where to open new stores and distribute school funding.
- **Advocates, including funders**, use Census data to gauge child well-being and progress towards improving the lives of kids and families.

An under-count of young children in the Census is critical to the child's and family's access to resources such as housing, jobs, equitable education, and health care. Early childhood funders also face obstacles in advocating for children and families when Census data is unreliable and misrepresents demographic data. [Related: [Consequences of the Young Child Undercount](#), Count All Kids]

It's Not Too Late for Early Childhood Funders To Get Involved



The undercount of young children is the epitome of a shared enterprise, crossing populations and communities, and having a direct impact on numerous issues and conditions of importance for child well being such as poverty issues, criminal justice, racial justice, education, healthcare, housing and more. And because [young children are most often missed because adults don't count them on their Census forms](#), ensuring they are counted will require different strategies and coordination and collaboration beyond our usual partners. While the obvious strategy for funder involvement is to fund national, state and local grantees and advocates leading Census and undercount efforts, there are other important ways funders can get involved to ensure the coordination among advocates, and ensure a focus on counting young children. [Related: [Why Your Foundation Should Become a 2020 Census Official Partner](#)].

Here are 5 things early childhood funders do to elevate the issue of the young children undercount and ensure your communities and states are prepared to count all kids in the 2020 Census:

1. Join and support advocates who are deep in this work already.

- **Connect with [Count All Kids](#)**, a group of national, state and local children's organizations and allies that have joined together to ensure our nation's children are counted in the 2020 Census. [Sign up now](#) to receive important updates and access to research, resources and tools on the undercount of young children, and to find expert speakers and consultants.
- **Connect with state and local level advocates** focused on the conditions of young children, such as [Kids Count organizations](#) and [Partnership for America's Children state and local advocates](#), many of which are leading local and state efforts to ensure a more accurate count of young children. Find out how you can support their outreach and messaging and connect them with your grantees and partners to do the same.

2. Coordinate with funder colleagues in your state and communities.

- Find out who is working on the Census undercount issue, and **offer your early childhood expertise** to help elevate the importance of the young child undercount.
- **Be a convener to help colleagues (including funders, partners and grantees)** identify and implement a coordinated approach to improving the young child undercount (or for addressing larger hard to count community issues). The [2020 Census Funder Toolkit](#) includes invite and agenda templates for funders to help coordinate census mobilization efforts by being a convener (via stand-alone events or tagging on a Census focus to existing events).
- **Encourage** your state and regional Grantmaker associations to bring this young child undercount message to their members. For example: The Council of New Jersey Grantmakers focused its [2019 Annual Conference for the Social Sector exclusively on the 2020 Census](#) and how it will define the next 10 years.
- **Join the [Funders Census Initiative \(FCI\) 2020](#)**, coordinated by the Funders Committee for Civic Participation to access: forums for funders to learn, strategize and plan together; census timelines, updates and resources funders can use to inform their work. Tailored funder tools include a [Census 2020 menu of Options for Funders](#), and the [2020 Census Funder Toolkit](#).

3. Educate and engage your trustees and board members and ask them to play leadership roles in the community.

Ask your trustees to help you reach key audiences they represent who serve and work with parents, families and young children, and their professional peers (such as pediatricians, business owners). For example, founded by the owner of UPS, the Annie E. Casey Foundation leveraged their connection with UPS to support a roundtable in Atlanta to engage business leaders on the importance of this issue. They also engaged one of their board members to make Census a priority among the pediatric community. See the [FCI 2020 Census Funders Toolkit](#) for sample language on how to make an internal case for census involvement.

4. Ask grantees how the Census impacts them, and support them to get involved.

- Local and state grantees providing direct services to undercounted kids and families are essential partners for counting young children. **Help connect them to existing resources and assistance** from those already working to build community and state infrastructure by providing research, messaging information, training, technical assistance, materials, and more to state and local organizations. For example: the [Count All Kids](#) committee and campaign, [Partnership for America's Children](#), and [Get Out the Count Hubs](#).
- **Encourage grantees to collaborate**, crossing boundaries and geographies to prepare and coordinate for counting young children in the 2020 Census. Write collaboration around the Census into your grants (where it makes sense).

- **Augment existing grants** to help grantees to raise awareness, build capacity, and address the importance of counting young children in their direct work with families.
- **Encourage grantees to get involved with Complete Count Committees (CCCs).** CCCs are dedicated to increasing awareness and motivate residents to respond to the 2020 Census, however, they may not have representation or expertise on the young child undercount issue. To find out if your community or state has a CCC: (1) Ask policy makers, other funders and advocates interested in young children, (2) contact your [regional census office](#), (3) see the National Council of State Legislatures [partial list of state CCCs passed by the legislature or created by governors](#).

5. Use market research to develop strategies and outreach.

Market research and tools on the undercount of young children and other hard-to-reach populations and communities include:

- **Funders Census Initiative Briefing Series on Census 2020 Message Testing Results** in partnership with the Democracy Funders Collaborative Census Subgroup shares results of national field partners funded to conduct Get Out the Count messaging research to identify messages that resonate with historically hard-to-count communities. [\[View the Series Archives\]](#)
- **Messaging research on the young child undercount** will be available from Count All Kids in September 2019, and will be featured on a webinar hosted by the Funders' Census Committee. Visit the [Census 2020 Messaging Series](#) page for more information or [connect with Count All Kids](#) now to help think about your own messaging, and to get updates on the upcoming messaging resources.
- **Census Bureau** has spent years researching the undercount of young children in the Decennial Census and those who were missed in 2010 including analysis of complex households, characteristics by age, and geographic distributions.
- The **Hard to Count (HTC) Mapping Project** is an interactive online mapping tool that allows you to zoom to any area in the country, highlight local hard-to-count tracts and provide details about how much of the area's population may be at risk of an undercount. A summer 2019 supplement will add information on where young children are at risk of being missed, advocacy groups working on this issue in each state, and resources for counting young children in each area such as child care centers.

Moving Forward

It's not too late to get involved in ensuring young children are counted in the 2020 Census. No matter how your foundation is or gets involved, it's important to remember to take every opportunity to speak up about the importance of the 2020 Census in child well being for the next ten years, and the impact of Census undercount on your foundation, grantees and communities. As early childhood funders, you play a key role in ensuring strong and equitable distribution of resources for young children in our communities, being leaders and conveners among our philanthropic peers, and being a voice for young children and their families. Do you have a strategy or tool you are using to elevate the importance of the young child undercount? [Connect with ECFC](#) to share your ideas and tools, and to learn more about how we can help early childhood funders connect with each other and with key national resources and tools on the 2020 Census.

Visit ECFC's website for more information on the [2020 Census & the Young Child Undercount](#), and [examples of funder actions to count all kids](#).