The business sector uses census data to make decisions about what products to make, who to make them for, where to make them, and how to sell them. These strategic and operational decisions are based on the highest quality of data, and billions of dollars and thousands of jobs are at stake. Now more than ever, businesses must reflect a changing America and require the best possible data to make those decisions.

Every 10 years, the US Constitution mandates that every person in the United States be counted. Called the Decennial Census, the next one will happen in 2020. The largest mobilization and operation conducted in the US, it requires years of research, planning, and the development of methods and infrastructure to ensure an accurate and complete count.

The data collected by the census influences the distribution of approximately $675 billion for critical Federal programs nationwide, including almost $74 billion for New York State. The data also helps determine each state’s number of seats in the US House of Representatives, and the data collected helps draw Congressional and state legislative districts.

Businesses Depend on Census Data

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Changes in 2020

Transition from Paper-Based to Mostly Online

For the first time, the US Census Bureau will encourage everyone who lives in the US to complete the census questionnaire online. While this provides opportunities to utilize cost-effective, internet-based tactics to encourage early participation, many New Yorkers either do not have computers at home or don’t have access to reliable broadband. Paper and phone options will still be available.

Substantial Reduction in Census Bureau Offices and Staffing

In anticipation of the efficiencies in the use of technology, the Census Bureau has reduced staffing resources significantly. Regional census centers and area census offices have been cut in half and there are almost 1,000 fewer census field staff nationwide.

Impact of the Discussion on the Citizenship Question

While the proposed citizenship question was struck down by the Federal and Supreme Courts of the United States, and the US Department of Commerce has withdrawn the proposal, discussion of the question has already profoundly impacted the willingness of noncitizens and minority residents to participate in Census 2020. The controversy surrounding the inclusion of the citizenship question is expected to dramatically reduce response rates to the census.

How Businesses Can Contribute to an Accurate 2020 Census

Many segments of the population have been more difficult to count. These include young children, urban areas, immigrants and communities of color. The next census in 2020 will require counting an increasingly diverse and growing population. To get an accurate count, the Census Bureau needs our help in identifying hard-to-count individuals in our communities, maximizing self-response to the census, and to efficiently communicate and follow-up with those who are hesitant to respond. Businesses that interact with these populations as employees and customers can help New York achieve a complete census by encouraging them to respond, and respond early.

On the other side are samples of actions businesses can consider.
Become an official Census Partner.
ABNY provides support and resources through our free “tool kits” to support your 2020 census effort. To join and receive information, visit abnycensus2020.org.

Connect with the U.S. Census Bureau.
The U.S. Census Bureau provides an array of technical and outreach information. Learn more at census.gov/partners.

Join the National Business Network for an Accurate Census. This network is a free, private listserve for businesses. It distributes information and provides opportunities to stay connected at the national level. Learn more at strongnation.org/census.

Utilize Digital Media:
- Post messages, videos and links to official 2020 Census web pages on company websites, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube encouraging participation.
- Use our toolkits to micro-target and motivate new hard-to-reach neighbors online at abnycensus2020.org.

Engage the Media:
- Host a local news reporter at your business to promote the importance of the count.
- Lend an executive, celebrity or high-profile personality to participate in Public Service Announcements (PSAs).
- Promote the 2020 Census on popular television shows, especially those featuring high-profile celebrities.

Support Local Census Efforts:
- Sponsor or speak at events about the importance of the census to build awareness among the business community and the general population.
- Participate in public census events publicizing the 2020 Census and encouraging residents in a given neighborhood to complete their census questionnaires.
- Contribute financially or offer volunteers to efforts promoting the census.

Directly Encourage Employees and Customers to Respond:
- Display posters, flyers and information about the 2020 Census in stores, staff offices, company events and community events sponsored by your business.
- Host periodic “Census Day” through events and public activations including tabling and activities in your company owned public spaces.
- Include inserts promoting the census in bills, statements, or other correspondence with employees and customers.
- Encourage employees to complete their census questionnaires and potentially allow them to do so at work in a private common area equipped with computers or tablets.
- Run promotional messages (in multiple languages) in weekly store circulars or other customer publications.

Contribute Your Expertise and Products:
- Partner with ABNY to identify needs to support the census efforts.
- Donate technology/tools like laptops, tablets, and smartphones necessary to help New Yorkers fill out the 2020 census.
- Lend staff and other resources to support community-based organizations to create and implement census outreach strategies.
- Offer your goods and services to incentivize New Yorkers to fill out the census form.

For more detailed information about how to help New York achieve a complete count in 2020, contact Aliya Bhatia at ABhatia@abny.org.