

## **The Enumeration of New York City for Census 2000: A Regional Director's Perspective**

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### **Introduction**

This paper provides a perspective from the Regional Director of the Census Bureau's New York Regional Office, on the planning, preparation, and execution of operations for the Census 2000 in New York City. Information in this paper will highlight the importance of hiring and developing management staff, preparing and implementing a "regional" operational plan, partnership and promotion efforts, identifying questionnaire assistance centers and Be Counted Sites, and conducting field operations. Most of the information in this paper will focus on first hand account of the Regional Director.

### **Setting Goals**

Our goals for conducting the Decennial Census in New York City reflected the goals for the Census 2000 national program and were tailored to meet the challenges of enumerating New York City:

- Increase the mail response from 1990
- Early preparation for Census 2000
- Use local knowledge/experience from 1990
- Develop partnerships throughout the city
- Recruit/hire a diverse staff for all positions
- Effectively execute field operations

### **Early Preparation**

I always describe New York City as a place where most of the residents know the city better from underground than above ground.

A large portion of the population uses the subway to get to and from specific destinations. They identify the population of a specific area simply by the people getting on at any particular subway stop. Many New Yorkers only know a few particular areas of the city and have never ventured to or read about others. Our major newspapers are broken up by borough. You may never read about local news in the Bronx, if you pick up your Daily News in Brooklyn! It is imperative that the Regional Director and other high level managers have good knowledge of the

City and its neighborhoods to direct the early planning for decennial operations.

### **Recruiting Knowledge and Experience from the 1990 Census**

The most important and challenging task in the early planning stages was the recruitment of the management team for the Regional Census Center. This would be the Census Bureau "command post" for all Census 2000 operations. Census Bureau Headquarters understood the need to have experienced, tough-minded individuals who could handle the unique challenges of working in New York City. I was provided with the support and resources able to hire a management team who had 1990 Census in New York City. I also promoted several survey supervisors from the Regional Office. For some positions, such as Recruiter and Partnership Coordinator (in charge of outreach operations), we hired candidates from outside the Census Bureau. The competitive pay rates we were able to offer played a key role in our ability to attract and hire good candidates for all decennial census positions.

With our management team in place, we next identified the challenges and barriers to conducting census operations. Our management team came up with the following challenges and barriers for New York City:

- Locating Local Census Office Space
- Developing partnerships throughout the city to promote participation in the Census
- Projected low mail response rates
- Need for Advertising and Promotion
- Increasing number of ethnically diverse and linguistically isolated households
- Need for competitive wage rates
- Indigenous hiring from all communities with language skills needed
- Educating community on Census confidentiality to reduce fear and mistrust
- Large number of vertical living structures

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<sup>1</sup> This paper reports the results of research and analysis undertaken by Census Bureau staff. It has undergone a Census Bureau review more limited in scope than that given to official Census Bureau publications. This report is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion of work in progress.

- Security buildings with doormen and gated communities

#### **Locating Local Census Office Space**

The Census Bureau had a Memorandum of Understanding with the General Services (GSA) which included leasing Local Census Office space for Census 2000. Finding space for 22 Local Census Offices that met all of our requirements at an affordable price in New York City proved to be quite a challenge for GSA. The trained professionals from GSA quickly learned that this endeavor called for an open mind and a lot of creativity. Some examples of this creativity included successfully converting an old Woolworth's Department Store in Brooklyn, the executive offices of the Hard Rock Café on 57<sup>th</sup> Street (Manhattan), an old furniture store in the Bronx and a former bank in Queens into suitable Local Census Office space.

#### **Developing Effective Partnerships throughout the City**

Probably the most crucial barrier for us to overcome was the Census Bureau's lack of name recognition among the elected officials, community and religious leaders and the private sector in New York City. We recruited a partnership staff with broad-based and well-established community connections, and was representative of our numerous racial and ethnic communities. Competitive pay rates, helped us hire 25 Partnership Specialists very capable of carrying the full menu of options of partnership, promotion and outreach activities with the following diverse groups: African American, Bangladeshi, Caribbean American, Chinese, Dominican, Filipino, Asian Indian, Indo-Caribbean (Guyanese of Indian decent) Italian, Japanese, Jewish (orthodox), Korean, Mexican, Nigerian, Polish, Puerto Rican, and Russian. The partnership staff and I kept up with the social and political changes in communities, and that helped in planning our partnership promotion and outreach for the City. Our Partnership Specialists attended meetings with community, business and religious leaders, translated written material, participated in cultural activities which allowed us to speak or distribute information on Census 2000.

#### **Developing Partnerships with Elected Officials**

Office of the Mayor – New York City

We started with the highest elected official in the City to get our partnership campaign off to a good start. In 1996, we began discussions with the office of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani regarding Census 2000. The Mayor hosted a "town hall"

meeting on Census 2000 in late June 1996. He invited a cross section of individuals from City agencies, religious leaders, community organizations and businesses. We discussed our plans to have everyone involved in promoting the Census. It was greeted with mixed results. We encountered a lot of "we heard that before" type of comments. This meeting opened our eyes to the fact that we would have to close some "old wounds" before the City would take us seriously.

Our first real "partnership" with the City was the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program. Mayor Giuliani assigned Deputy Mayor Rudy Washington to be our contact person for Census 2000 operations. The LUCA program got off to a very good start. We met frequently with the members of the City Planning Office who were assigned this operation. This operation resulted in the City submitting over 300,000 addresses that they did not see in our Census Master Address File.

Deputy Mayor Washington named Sara Vidal to be a liaison and our direct link to all City agencies and organizations. Ms. Vidal began by organizing a meeting for us with the heads of City agencies. They were instructed to do all they could to help this effort by putting up posters, providing meeting, training and testing space or inserting Census 2000 articles in their mailings to the public. We were then introduced to the heads of the City's Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). BIDs represent the many commercial streets and avenues in the City that have organized to maintain a commercially active, safe and attractive business corridor. The BIDs pledged to get the businesses to put up Census posters and assist with our Questionnaire Assistance Center and Be Counted programs.

Of great value in raising awareness of the Census and promoting participation was the arrangement made by Ms. Vidal for us to have free access to all approved City street fairs and parades. From May 1999 to February 2000 we tried to be represented in as many fairs and parades throughout all five boroughs. We used tables, banners and giveaways to participate in the street fairs. For the parades, we contracted with a company to provide two floats, a truck and a driver. Two floats were needed because there could be as many as two or three parades in the City on a given Sunday. We participated in over 25 parades by the end of February 2000 including the Puerto Rican Day parade and the Caribbean Carnival on Labor Day 1999. Both of these parades had over a million spectators. Seeing so many spectators with plastic Census

bags containing Census 2000 confidentiality literature and a small novelty item was a good sign, as the Caribbean neighborhoods of Brooklyn had one of the lowest mail return rates in 1990.

The following is a list of the other areas where the Mayor's office provided key assistance for the Census 2000:

- Free access to NYC cable station
- Creating and placing their own Census advertising for radio and television
- Assistance with printing and placement of Census 2000 posters on subways, buses, and sanitation trucks
- Organizing door to door campaigns
- Establishing a Census 2000 call in line
- Creating a Braille Census questionnaire
- Coordinating Census 2000 introduction to other "challenged" communities
- Translating and distributing flyers in at least 20 languages
- Assistance with training and testing sites
- Recruiting assistance
- Identifying potential Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Be Counted Sites
- Assistance with all Special Place Operations
- Aid in gaining access to buildings or complexes
- Ensuring that each eligible public school received Census in Schools materials

Ms. Vidal and her staff were a tremendous support whenever we attended meetings in the community. They would always be there to represent the City and to support us. Many of our communities had a complete change in demographics since 1990, and we had to explain the Census process from the beginning to many of these "new" residents who did not live in this country during the 1990 Census. Ms. Vidal and her staff also ensured that the media during Census 2000 remained positive and any negative issues were brought to my attention quickly.

Our number one recommendation for Census 2010 in New York City is to develop a strong partnership with the Office of the Mayor.

#### Borough Presidents

The five Boroughs serve as separate functioning counties: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx, Staten Island. While we were developing a strong relationship with the Office of the Mayor, we were also working hard to get the Borough Presidents to embrace Census 2000. Obtaining an endorsement from the Borough President was paramount. We also sought the support and assistance of their agencies and

organizations. We discovered that the people who came to the Borough President's meetings were not always the same people at a meeting given by the Mayor.

We obtained Census 2000 endorsements from all Borough Presidents. Borough President Howard Golden of Brooklyn had served in this capacity through the 1980 and 1990 Censuses. He provided full time liaisons, hosted many Census meetings, attended the meetings of other Brooklyn officials, created a Census Task Force, charged each community board with working with the Census, assisted with recruiting, and arranged for many of his Census related events to get televised on the Brooklyn Cable station. His office also nurtured the efforts of the Haitian community who were creating their very first Census task force, and provided a critical link to the Hasidic Jewish communities. This support provided another vehicle to educate the community on Census 2000 and bring the Census message deeper into the community.

#### Congressional Representatives

We were very proactive in reaching out and developing strong working relationships with our Congressional representatives. All of the representatives were receptive to actively promoting the Census. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, a minority member of the House Census Subcommittee, worked very hard in her district to ensure that everyone knew the importance of the Census. She promoted the Census in Schools program by visiting a classroom in her district. Ms. Maloney attended numerous meetings throughout Manhattan and Queens to support and promote the Census. She rode with our Census Road Tour Vehicle through Greek neighborhoods of Astoria, Queens.

Congressman Gregory Meeks contacted our office very early and quickly began a very productive working relationship and involved all of his staff. Mr. Meeks directed the New York City Black Advisory Committee on Census 2000 (NYCBLAC). This group was supported by all of the African American Congressional representatives in New York City and included representatives from major organizations such as the NAACP, businesses, religious leaders other African American elected officials and the offices of all Borough Presidents. The NYCBLAC was very inclusive and represented New York City residents of African American, Caribbean, Caribbean American and Black heritage. The NYCBLAC was very successful in hosting conferences throughout the five

boroughs, securing radio spots on Black radio, door to door campaigns, flyer distribution, and most of all word of mouth on all of activities, including recruitment and availability of Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Be Counted Sites.

Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez was very concerned about the Latino and Asian constituents in her district. She indicated that she would support Census 2000 in anyway she could. She invited us to meetings throughout her district at churches, community centers, and educational facilities. She assisted our office with recruiting of key staff at all levels. She promoted the Census on Spanish radio and television, attended press conferences and outdoor events.

Congressman Nadler helped find Local Census Office space in Manhattan. Congressman Crowley undertook special efforts to promote Census 2000 in the ethnically diverse neighborhoods of Jackson Heights and Elmhurst, Queens. Congressmen Owens and Towns organized a successful Census 2000 motorcade in Brooklyn very close to Census Day.

Assembly Persons, Council Persons, State  
Senators

Members of the State Assembly, State Senate and the City Council sponsored many special events and activities to raise community awareness of Census 2000 and the importance of being counted. The City Council issued a proclamation to support Census 2000 and worked hand in hand with our office and the office of the Mayor. Members of the State Assembly and State Senate supported us by hosting or attending our meetings and speaking positively on the Census 2000. State Senator Markowitz of Brooklyn invited us to speak at many meetings, donated his airtime on radio, and provided speaking opportunities at outdoor summer concerts that he hosted in Brooklyn. Because they featured big name performers, they allowed us to spread the Census message to a wide audience including Caribbean, Latino and Russian populations.

Office of Governor Pataki

The Office of Governor George Pataki positively supported Census 2000 through each of its major phases by engaging all state agencies to include Census 2000 messages in their mailings. They created and distributed their own posters, bumper stickers, public service announcements, and provided the means for placing free Census 2000 advertising on buses, subways, trains serving the City. The Governor's office worked in

collaboration with the office of Mayor Giuliani. Both offices were very careful to ensure that their promotion and outreach efforts were coordinated, unique and never a duplication of effort.

Developing Partnerships with Businesses and  
Organizations

Organizations and businesses also played a vital role in our outreach and promotion efforts for Census 2000 in New York City. Almost all of the businesses and organizations we approached were very receptive to working with us. We spent time explaining the Census 2000 Partnership Program to those who were skeptical because of their 1990 Census experience. What was most successful was working with them every step of the way, and maintaining continuous communication. They were always encouraged to call us whenever they had a question or an issue. Time was spent ensuring that Census staff was working with our partners by going to meetings and regularly asking...."when you have questions or issues, are we getting back to you?"

In New York City, we had over 3,000 supportive partners. All of our partners made valuable contributions to the Census 2000 effort. The cumulative efforts of all of our partners were effective in reaching large segments of the population that were most hard – to – enumerate.

#### **Advertising and Promotion**

The Census Bureau's advertising and promotion campaign was a major success and greatly contributed to our ability to spread the awareness of Census 2000 and motivate cooperation and participation throughout the five boroughs. The advertising campaign, was a success because the contractors had the ability to create advertising in many different languages to reach many ethnic and linguistically isolated communities. Furthermore, we benefited because New York City has so many newspapers, radio and television stations that do programming in languages other than English. This was a major factor in our being able to penetrate these households and positively motivate their cooperation and participation in Census 2000. From our regional perspective, the advertising campaign motivated mail response in many neighborhoods which experienced large influxes of immigrants over the past decade. For example, the Bellerose neighborhood in eastern Queens is now largely Asian Indian. We were able to reach this community and motivate mail returns through a wide range of advertising in the Asian Indian media including newspapers,

cable television stations and home billboards and posters.

A lesson learned for future advertising campaigns is to prepare in-language advertising and to have the capacity to place it in large Greek, Pakistani (Urdu), and Bangladeshi (Bengali) communities. These communities indicated that they would have gladly accepted our Census advertising in English, even though most of their programming was in language. We offered them recruitment advertising in English which they gladly accepted and translated into their language.

One of the most innovative ideas for our promotion campaign was to give each Region a budget referred to as In-Kind funding to implement its own promotional initiatives.

The promotion funding was another tool for us to engage our diverse community in promoting Census 2000. In-Kind Funding allowed us to work with our partners who could reach a segment of the population that we could not have reached as effectively or persuasively. Our greatest success was purchasing small novelty items with the Census 2000 message in languages other than English. Once the public was aware that we would give out items at events, we became very popular and lines would immediately start forming at our tables when we were at street fairs, outdoor concerts, religious gatherings, and civic and cultural events. Our ability to give something back made the Census 2000 exciting and our partners would continue to ask us back because we brought excitement to their events. It was truly a symbiotic relationship that worked across all communities.

Our number two recommendation is to continue the advertising and promotion campaign for the 2010 Census incorporating the many lessons learned from Census 2000.

#### **Mail Response Rates**

A comparison of the 1990 Census and Census 2000 mail response rates for New York City and the five boroughs is listed below:

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>
New York City	53%	55%
Bronx	55%	56%
Brooklyn	49%	51%
Manhattan	52%	60%
Queens	58%	54%
Richmond	61%	62%

It is believed that the extensive promotion and advertising campaign had a positive impact upon the Census 2000 mail response for New York City. This is significant since the majority of the increases in the population for New York City

were made up of people who were not born in this country, and may or may not speak English fluently. The notable increase in the Manhattan mail response rate may have been at least in part as a result of the advertising and on the ground partnership work in the neighborhoods below 96<sup>th</sup> Street.

#### **Conducting Census 2000 Field Operations**

With competitive pay rates, we were generally able to recruit and hire enough candidates and retain them to keep each major field operation fully staffed. Because of this, the large-scale field operations such as Block Canvassing, Group Quarters and Service-Based Enumeration, and Nonresponse Followup were completed with high quality results, within budget and on schedule.

#### **Establishing Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Be Counted Sites**

Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QACs) were opened in early March 2000 to assist people with their census questionnaires. A QAC could be a storefront or a small area in the space of a service provider with a table, a chair and a trained volunteer who would provide assistance. We worked very closely with our partners to locate QACs in our linguistically isolated areas to aid and encourage participation in Census 2000.

We explained to our partners interested in providing a site to serve as a QAC, that it was very important that the site be open many days during the week and during the hours of each day when people in the community were likely to be at home and able to visit the QAC and obtain the assistance they needed.

Each Regional Census Center was authorized a limited budget to fund the payment of staff at QACs. This source of funding was very important and aided our ability to have staffed QACs.

Another Census 2000 program that was developed to provide a means for people to make sure that they were included in the Census and opened another opportunity for partnership was the Be Counted Program. The Be Counted Program provided a means for people to be included in Census 2000 if they believed they did not receive a Census questionnaire or were not included on one. The Be Counted Questionnaire was designed to be respondent-friendly and easy to complete. Be Counted Questionnaires were printed in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog and Vietnamese. They were made available at public locations such as QACs and other places throughout the

community. Many of our QACs elected to be Be Counted sites. Most of the libraries, and many banks also participated. Another notable participant in this activity was the New York City Association of Supermarkets. This association is made up of over 400 small chain supermarkets located throughout New York City. In many cases, these supermarkets were the primary food market in areas that had been hard-to-enumerate in previous censuses. The Association designated 200 of their stores throughout the five boroughs to serve as Be Counted sites. Census T-Shirts and Census buttons were provided to the staff to wear as a reminder to customers to send in their forms or pick one up at the grocery store. This activity was coordinated through the Office of Mayor Giuliani and also received radio coverage on the first Saturday of this program.

#### **Group Quarters and Service-Based Enumeration**

The Census Bureau 2000 operational plan for service-based enumeration was to conduct these operations in three different phases on different days. The approach was easy to implement and easy for our partners and service based providers to understand and support. As noted earlier, we received overwhelming support from the Office of the Mayor. We had time to engage these facilities and gain their cooperation which contributed heavily to the ease of conducting these operations.

The timing and approach to the enumeration of the Targeted Non-Sheltered Outdoor locations prescribed in the Census Bureau's operational plan allowed us to concentrate on this sensitive and critical enumeration. Even the weather cooperated, it did not rain.

For the Service-Based Enumeration, we took a very opposite approach to advertising and publicity. We indicated to the City and to our partners that by advertising when we were going to conduct these operations to the press, we were opening ourselves up to a chaotic atmosphere that might end up chasing away many of the people we were trying to count. The City and partners understood this and provided an appropriate level of low-profile support.

#### **Nonresponse Followup**

Nonresponse Followup is the largest single operation conducted in the Census. Starting the operation fully staffed, and remaining fully staffed has a major impact upon the success of the completion of the operation. For New York City, we had an applicant file of over 30,000 people who had met the qualifications to be hired

as a Census Enumerator. The competitive pay rates attracted the candidates, and they generally remained on the job throughout the duration of their assignment.

The focus of our partnerships shifted to awareness of the enumerators contacting households and the importance of cooperating with them. The promotion and advertising efforts of our partners in support of the enumerators had a positive impact. Enumerators reported a spirit of cooperation from respondents and that respondents were expecting their visit and understood why they were being contacted. We communicated to our partners the areas where their assistance was needed. They concentrated their efforts on those areas by distributing leaflets, conducting door to door campaigns and working with the media to run an article highlight the need for neighborhood cooperation and participation in the Census.

We were much better prepared in all aspects to conduct Nonresponse Followup. Unlike previous Censuses where the operation exceeded the schedule and required staffing assistance from other Regional Census Centers, Nonresponse Followup was completed on schedule by all of the Local Census Offices by a staff only from New York City.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are several noteworthy items that led to the success of Census 2000 in New York City:

- Developing partnerships at all levels
- Improvement of the Master Address File with the assistance of City Office of Planning
- Paid promotion and advertising in many languages
- Competitive wages for the area
- Generally improved mail response rates
- Being operationally ready....applying our lessons learned from 1990
- Keeping Census 2000 as a positive news story in the media and among our partners
- Having experienced staff at the upper management levels
- Using technology wisely....ability to create daily status reports

Finally, the results of all of our efforts:

1990 New York City Population Count	7,322,564
2000 New York City Population Count	8,008,278
Total Population Change	+685,714