

New Report: \$40 Million Needed to Fund Community Outreach for Census 2020

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NEW REPORT

<http://wp.me/p9ibYw-318>

In a new report, the Fiscal Policy Institute details the resources community-based groups will require to maximize participation in the 2020 Census among “hard to count” residents across New York State. FPI proposes that the governor and legislature include \$40 million in next year’s state budget for community-based organizations to do outreach around the 2020 Census. FPI notes that this should be in addition to whatever funds the state commits to its own outreach and media campaigns and funding to local governments. The study was first unveiled at a press conference Monday with the New York Counts 2020 Coalition.

The report notes that community-based organizations must play a big role in maximizing the participation of New Yorkers in the 2020 Census. This is the first year in which the Census Bureau asks residents to fill out Census forms online, raising issues about broadband access as well as comfort level with computers. There may be a controversial question added about the citizenship status of immigrants. And, a number of people are feeling hesitant about giving private information to the federal government.

“This year, in particular, we can’t just count on the federal government and hope for an accurate count, **said David Dyssegaard Kallick, deputy director of the Fiscal Policy Institute.** “More than ever before, trusted community groups will be needed to make sure people understand that filling out the census is safe, and that it’s important.”

In previous decades, New York primarily relied on the federal government to do outreach. In 2010, the state spent just \$2 million in community-based organizations and was widely criticized for underinvesting in their outreach efforts. This year is the time to get it right. New York will have to pick up where the federal government pulls back, and will have to brace itself against substantial headwinds.

Ron Deutsch, executive director of FPI, stated, “There is no question that we need to invest more resources in ensuring an accurate and complete count for the 2020 Census. We need to learn from our past mistakes and dramatically increase outreach funding, there is simply too much at stake not to. Community groups are the best choice to conduct this outreach as they are already engaged and trusted in their local communities.”

“Many people do not know the importance of an accurate count of the census. The political climate may also discourage some people from filing out census forms. Funding from New York State is important because it helps ensure services to some of the most vulnerable populations,” **said Cyierra Roldan, policy analyst at FPI**.

This \$40 million proposal is based on detailed estimates at the state level, and broken down county by county, of what a robust outreach to hard-to-count communities would cost. The estimate draws on reporting of hard-to-count populations in 2010. To estimate the funding needed for outreach, FPI surveyed 32 community groups around the state to find the cost per person of outreach to hard-to-count communities. And we then assumed that everyone in a hard-to-count community got a basic level of outreach (at \$2/person), ten percent got a moderate level (at \$25/person), and five percent got intensive outreach (at \$75/person).

“The data that the Census collects is the data that every level of our government will use, it’s the data that business and universities will analyze, and it’s the most important data that New York State will have about its residents for the next 10 years,” **said Shamier Settle, policy analyst at FPI**. After listening to the outreach plans that community organizations from upstate and downstate have, I am convinced that allocating \$40 million is the least we can do to for our future.”

As the report notes, there is a significant return on investment for these expenditures in federal funding and in political representation: spending \$40 million may bring hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars in federal funds to the state and will ensure that our representatives have a full say in federal policy decisions. But the most important reason for a full and accurate count is that facts matter. We cannot afford to let there be any question about the fundamental accuracy of this decennial count of our population.

The new report is available at <http://wp.me/p9ibYw-318>

The Fiscal Policy Institute is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and education organization committed to improving public policies and private practices to better the economic and social conditions of all New Yorkers. FPI’s Immigration Research Initiative looks at immigration issues in New York State and around the country.