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2010 CENSUS INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

Submitted by the U.S. Census Bureau, United States of America¹

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The census is an extraordinary initiative and the largest peacetime mobilization in America's history. The 2010 Census count must be as complete and accurate as possible and conducted at a reasonable cost to the American taxpayer. An effective communications strategy is critical to its success.

2. Communications must create awareness about the census and motivate each household to fill out and return the census questionnaire as soon as possible after receipt, as the cost of conducting the census multiplies when forms are not returned promptly. For example, approximately \$85 million in taxpayer dollars are saved for each one percentage point increase in mail response. The 2010 Census mail participation rate for the nation after the mailout/mailback period ended was 72 percent – the same rate that was achieved in 2000, when the Census Bureau used paid advertising for the first time and reversed a three-decade decline in mail response rates.

3. When planning the 2010 Census Integrated Communications Campaign, the Census Bureau faced several challenges, including matching the success of Census 2000, the changing media landscape, a rapidly growing and increasingly diverse population, an increasing mistrust of government and identity theft concerns, and the 10-year gap between censuses. To overcome these challenges and successfully elicit the broadest possible participation to ensure an accurate count, the Census Bureau knew the campaign had to be innovative, flexible and guided by industry best practices. One of the most extensive and far-reaching communications efforts ever undertaken by the U.S. Government, the campaign is comprised of paid advertising, partnerships, public relations/earned media, digital outreach and a Census in Schools program that were designed and guided at every step of the process by research.

4. In order to successfully manage the fully-integrated campaign, the Census Bureau used rapid response methods and guiding principles of contract and project management to ensure the campaign was on time, within budget and within scope. For example, to more effectively harness the expertise of our employees in various program areas, we instituted cross-functional teams from across the Census Bureau.

5. To manage the contract, the Census Bureau applied this same strategy at a broader level to bring together both staff and contractors with specialized skills and knowledge in reaching targeted audiences across the country.

¹ Prepared by Tasha R. Boone (tasha.r.boone@census.gov) and Megan C. Kindelan (megan.c.kindelan@census.gov).

6. The Census Bureau believes this ground-breaking and high-profile multi-targeted, multimedia, multilingual and research-based communications campaign will help ensure we meet our goal of a complete and accurate count of the population.

II. DESIGNING THE CAMPAIGN

7. The goals of the 2010 communications campaign are to increase mail response, improve accuracy and reduce the differential undercount, and improve cooperation with enumerators.

8. The 2010 Census campaign is one of the most extensive and far-reaching marketing campaigns ever conducted in this country. It seeks to motivate every resident of the United States; the District of Columbia; Puerto Rico; and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (collectively referred to as the Island Areas) to participate in the census. The campaign features advertising, promotional materials and other materials in 28 languages created with input from almost 100 focus groups of diverse social and ethnic demographics across the country, including Puerto Rico.

9. The Census Bureau's prime contractor for this campaign is DraftFCB. They along with 15 partner media agencies have worked closely with the Census Bureau to develop this campaign to ensure that 2010 Census messages are seen by the public, particularly during the mail-out/mail-back phase in March and April 2010. DraftFCB, a full-service marketing communications agency with the Interpublic Group, was competitively awarded the 2010 Census communications contract in September 2007. They are based in New York and have worked with other government agencies and nearly 100 Fortune 500 companies.

10. One key building block in all campaign materials was the campaign's three core messages: it's easy, it's safe, and it's important. Residents learned that the form was only 10 questions, that took about 10 minutes; that their information would not be shared with third parties such as law enforcement or immigration; and that census data is used to allocate more than \$400 billion dollars in federal funds annually.

11. The cornerstone of 2010 communications campaign is the availability of detailed tract level information derived from Census 2000 and the American Community Survey, which permits the campaign to identify and target the hard to count segments of our population within media markets and local communities. Using this research and data-driven process, for the first time we can provide the right message, through the right media, in the appropriate language, at the right time.

12. The campaign occurred in three main phases: the "awareness" phase, running from January to February, 2010, served to inform the public about the 2010 Census; the "motivational" phase, running from March to April, 2010, served as a "call to action" encouraging people to fill out and return the questionnaire; and the "cooperation" phase, running from April to May, 2010, served to notify people that census workers could be coming to their door and encouraged the public to cooperate with them.

III. MANAGING THE CAMPAIGN

13. The Census Bureau used both contract and project management to effectively manage all aspects of the campaign and ensure the campaign was on time, within budget and within scope. Additionally, it was important to ensure decisions for key campaign initiatives were based on research, and to have a robust rapid response program to deal with issues that occurred during the census.

14. A Program Management Office (PMO) was established to implement these functions, and had overall responsibility for coordinating communications activities with external and internal stakeholders. Program managers were hired to develop and implement key processes to ensure:

- risks to the campaign were identified, as well as corresponding mitigation and contingency plans to address these risks, so that the Census Bureau was prepared for unforeseen circumstances that could negatively impact the campaign;
- a comprehensive schedule of activities for effective tracking of the major elements of the campaign, so activities started and ended appropriately;
- a budget for tracking expenditures throughout the campaign so overruns would not occur;
- requirements were identified and managed to elevate “scope creep.”

15. The most difficult challenge of all these was managing “scope creep.” This plays out in many scenarios, for example, once requirements are set you move forward on a path that is often constrained by cost and schedule, and then new requirements are identified by someone that must be included in the design. These types of situations happened many times during the planning and implementation phases of the campaign. With constantly shifting requirements, the challenge is to keep the campaign on time and on budget, and yet incorporate, most often, a better vision of how an activity should be designed.

16. Beginning with the planning stages of the campaign, the Census Bureau instituted cross-functional teams that enabled us to utilize the knowledge of “subject matter experts” in divisions across the Census Bureau. We believe this eliminated a common problem for us – “working in silos” and compartmentalizing areas of work – and enabled us to facilitate an integrated campaign that used the expertise of our employees to the fullest. Examples of these teams included our creative review team, which reviewed all paid advertising from conception to production, and the subject matter experts that reviewed all promotional materials to ensure messages and themes were consistent and appropriate for the target audiences.

17. Examples of key campaign components included the national and local partnership program, the “Portrait of America” Road Tour and the “Take 10” response rate campaign. Our more than 226,000 national and local partners (e.g. Target, Google, MTV, Telemundo, NAACP, and NALEO) used their influence and existing networks to motivate their constituents to participate in the 2010 Census. For the Road Tour, the team executed large-scale, experiential traveling exhibits (13 vehicles in all) which required frequent communication, exhaustive preparation and cross-team collaboration within a very limited time-frame. The “Take 10” campaign, an innovative program to inspire increased mail participation in the 2010 Census, leveraged innovative technological tools to create awareness about the program, activate community leaders and inspire change. An interactive online map powered by Google allowed communities to look up their mail participation rates, which were updated on a daily basis.

18. The “Take 10” campaign also tied into the overall campaign’s rapid response efforts. Using the daily participation rates, the team identified areas of low response (15% below the national average) and developed a five-level rapid response plan to increase participation in these areas. From the first level of response, distributing news release templates and e-mail alerts, to the fifth level of response, placing newspaper, radio or digital ads, we were able to quickly target areas that were of concern with the appropriate response mix. These response options had to be implemented quickly in order to be effective, and the team responded to this challenge by instituting daily morning and afternoon data meetings (utilizing information from Smart Suite²) with team leads from across the Census Bureau to ensure swift decision-making, and by dedicating around 10 percent of the total campaign budget to rapid response efforts. These funds were used during all three phases of the campaign, but were particularly crucial during the mailout/mailback period. The daily participation rate data was used by the team to effectively and efficiently target the funds for maximum impact.

² Smart Suite is a data dashboard that was used to monitor response and participation rates nationally down to the tract level so we could immediately investigate low response rates and promptly respond.

19. Each of the above components of the communications campaign was built upon a solid foundation of research. We researched all elements of the campaign across audiences to ensure that we had an all-encompassing segmentation model for our target audiences, and that messages resonated with the targeted communities. The creative executions and promotional materials are based on validated communications strategies, ensuring that the overall intended messages are clear, compelling, and persuasive and, more importantly, culturally relevant and sensitive.

IV. MANAGING THE CONTRACT

20. Contract management is often referred to as the supervision or administration of a contract. Upon award, the contract has to be administered to provide assurance that all decisions and services are provided within the scope of the contract and that the contractor's performance meets contractual requirements in a manner that is fair and reasonable to both parties.

21. Market research for this contract started in 2005 and continued for a year. The request for proposal process elicited many proposals from companies attempting to win this business. This process started in 2006 and the evaluation and selection process continued for a year until contract award in 2007. Should this type of campaign be implemented again for the 2020 Census using contractors, it is anticipated the contract process would start earlier to allow the contractor more time for campaign development and planning.

22. To manage a contract of this scope, size, and complexity, the Census Bureau hired staff and contractors with specialized skill sets and understanding about how to reach targeted audiences across the country who worked together to shape this campaign.

23. From a contract management perspective, this integration worked to ensure that this large contract with many moving parts was cohesive and in line with our campaign goals. The PMO had a lead contractor officer technical representative (COTR) whose sole responsibility was to ensure all the federal contracting policies and procedures were applied to the communications contract. The lead COTR had several COTRs reporting to her to help manage all the components for this campaign. The PMO staff worked very closely with program managers throughout the Census Bureau to ensure the contract was implementing the campaign in accordance to the program design determined by the program managers. The staff also worked closely with the Acquisition management staff that had the similar responsibilities as those in the PMO office.

24. Again, the most difficult challenge from a contractual perspective is managing evolving requirements during the planning and implementation phases of the communications campaign.

V. CONCLUSION

25. We believe the 2010 Census communications campaign has been critical to increasing the public's awareness of the 2010 Census and motivating participation in the decennial enumeration.

26. In the short term, and in time to meet the needs of the communications campaign, we established an active communications presence that catapulted the 2010 Census into the public sphere in a positive, personal manner. The increased awareness and education this campaign brought to the Census Bureau ultimately helped us increase the 2010 Census participation rate to achieve an accurate and complete count.

27. We believe the success of this campaign provides a blueprint for other statistical agencies to follow when planning and executing a public-facing, diverse, multi-faceted and media-centric program. This campaign also serves as a model for cross-department coordination and collaboration and government transparency. The communications campaign team worked across the Census Bureau to lay the groundwork for the campaign

strategy and then implemented that strategy collaboratively in time to meet mission critical goals of the 2010 Census communications program.

28. Our communications activities reached millions of new Census Bureau data users and provide an unprecedented opportunity for the Census Bureau to interact with the public, openly share information, engage advocates, and promote the 2010 Census. While the Census Bureau has responsibility for conducting the census, a successful census requires that the American public embraces the census as both a civic and an individual responsibility.

29. As we now look forward to 2020 and begin our planning process anew, it is this public engagement that we must build on during the intercensal years. We have learned that a successful communications campaign requires that each person feels like they are a crucial part of the census, because at its core, the decennial census is really a local phenomenon.