The Robin Hood Foundation, United Way of New York City and Hester Street hosted the Southwest Brooklyn + Staten Island Community Convening to support organizations with their Census outreach efforts. Organizations shared their outreach experiences - both challenges and opportunities- and brainstormed ways to foster group collaboration, engage historically undercounted communities ,and ensure a complete count.

**PARTICIPANT REPRESENTATION**

22 attendees gathered to represent diverse populations, geographies and organizations:

- **17** Organizations
- **8** Robin Hood Grantees
- **3** Citywide Census Grantees
- **6** Additional Organizations
- Top **6** Neighborhoods Represented: Sunset Park, BK, Borough Park, BK, Bensonhurst, BK, West Brighton, SI, Kensington, BK, Bay Ridge, BK

**CHALLENGES**

During discussion, attendees surfaced issues they are experiencing in their outreach:

**COVID-19 Hurdles**
- Houses of worship, which had been identified as key outreach partners, are now closed.
- It’s difficult to discuss Census with residents struggling with pressing financial needs.
- Organizations have limited staff capacity to complete outreach.
- Some communities have had severe postal service delays.

**Hard-to-Engage Populations**
- Households with limited English proficiency and literacy.
- Households with limited internet access.
- Seniors that cannot access technology and are also having issues with the postal service.
- Immigrants, due to fear and mistrust of government.
OPPORTUNITIES

Organizations shared what is working - the innovative strategies they are piloting during COVID-19:

- **Analog Outreach**
  - Include Census flyers with food distribution at food pantries and deliveries at local restaurants.
  - Provide swag or incentives (like gift cards to support local businesses) to complete the Census.
  - Couple Census outreach with personal protective equipment distribution.
  - Organize drive-through events for Census completion from inside cars.

- **Digital Outreach**
  - Use phonebanking and text banking in multiple languages.
  - Incorporate Census into online messaging for houses of worship.
  - Leverage WhatsApp groups for Census messages and images.
  - Partner with DOE to include Census messaging at parent teacher conferences and assignments.

- **Messaging**
  - Generate visually attractive materials and videos for Census outreach.
  - Personal networks of friends and neighbors
  - Faith leaders
  - Traditional medicinal practitioners

NEXT STEPS

Attendees defined their next steps to collaborate with grantees, the City and funders:

- **Collaboration**
  - Collaborate with local houses of worship and libraries on online and local events.
  - Partner with DOE and Parent Teacher Associations.
  - When possible, share staff across organizations (especially from larger to smaller organizations) for collective Census efforts and events.
  - Promote collaboration and support among grantees to translate Census materials.

- **Resources + Outreach**
  - Create messaging and an advocacy campaign for internet service providers to open up WIFI for Census completion.
  - Create messaging and resources around Census and elections for use in late summer and fall, jointly with City and funders.
  - Define funders’ guidelines for using Census grant funds towards incentives for participation.

RESOURCES

**INTERACTIVE CENSUS 2020 MAP**

This mapping tool visualizes relevant data and community assets to inform organizational outreach and track the self-response rate.

To use the map, click here.

If you want a one-on-one training session on the map, schedule it here.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Census Resource Hub by NY Counts 2020
- Census Resource Hub by Hester Street
- Talking About Cens-US by Generation Citizen and United Way of New York City
- "I Count" Video by Witness to Mass Incarceration
- Faith Leader Census Toolkit by FPWA
- Brooklyn Public Library Census team (census@bklynlibrary.org)