



TOWN OF ARLINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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MEMORANDUM

To: Jennifer Raitt, Director, Planning and Community Development
From: Kelly Lynema, Senior Planner, Planning and Community Development
Date: June 5, 2019
RE: Establishing a Complete Count Working Group to Support the 2020 Census

As the United States Census Bureau enters its final preparation stages for the 2020 Decennial Census, local municipalities are being asked to join the effort to get a complete count of all individuals in every city and town. Municipalities have an important relationship with the census: they use census data to make informed decisions about policy, their state and local voting districts are determined by census results, and they receive apportioned federal funds as a result of census data; in turn they help ensure the accuracy of census counts.

In advance of the 2020 Census, the Massachusetts Secretary of State Office is asking every city and large town in Massachusetts to establish a Complete Count Committee (CCC). A CCC is a volunteer committee established by a local government and community leaders or organizations to increase awareness and motivate residents to respond to the 2020 Census. CCCs serve as local “census ambassador” groups that play an integral part in ensuring a complete count in their community in the Census. The work of a CCC is focused on designing outreach plans for hard-to-count areas or populations, raising community awareness of the census, communicating facts and dispelling rumors about census data and how it is used, and encouraging individuals to respond to the census by internet, mail or phone.

CCCs have played a major role in decennial censuses since 1980. They are especially critical to the upcoming census, as trust in government is at historic lows and the potential inclusion of the citizenship question (to be decided by the Supreme Court this coming June) threatens to reduce response rates. CCCs are important in encouraging Hard to Count (HTC) populations—lower income households, renters, minorities, households with children under five, non-English speakers and immigrant populations—to respond to the census. Inaccurate counts can result in a reduction of Federal funding, particularly for programs on which lower income residents, households with children, and senior citizens depend.

A Complete Count Working Group for Arlington

The Massachusetts Secretary of State has urged Arlington to establish a CCC, or alternatively, a Complete Count Working Group (CCWG). The CCWG would ideally be comprised of Town staff and local community leaders/stakeholders, particularly those who are connected with HTC populations. The MA Secretary of State recommends that a representative of the following groups participates in the CCWG:

- Town Manager’s office
- Planning and Community Development Department (for project management and coordination of outreach activities)

- Clerk's office (advisory, as the office will also be occupied with presidential primary elections)
- GIS/IT
- Library representative
- School representative
- School representative
- Library representative
- Health and Human Services / Council on Aging representative
- Business community or Chamber of Commerce representative
- Religious and faith leaders
- Tenants association or housing authority representative
- Nonprofit leaders (ex: League of Women Voters or Mother's Out Front)
- Community advocates (perhaps individuals from Envision Arlington or its subcommittees)
- Local media representative (ACMi and/or the Advocate)

Goals and Activities

The goals and activities of the CCWG would be to:

- Identify HTC populations in Arlington
- Develop strategies to increase their likelihood of participation
- Conduct outreach to HTC communities through people they trust (faith-based institutions, local service providers, business leaders, etc.)
- Increase neighbor-to-neighbor fact-sharing about the census
- Increase local leadership awareness of the impact of census responses
- Increase public advocacy for responding to the census (Select Board, TMMs, etc.)

Time Commitment

The bulk of the time commitment for CCWG members would be limited to the latter half of 2019 through early summer, 2020. In the coming summer and fall, the group would develop an outreach plan, identify events and activities at which group members could raise awareness of the census, and attend events and activities as necessary. Activities in 2020 would depend on the outreach plan, although it is anticipated that the CCWG would support census advertising campaigns by continuing outreach, distributing materials to local businesses non-profits, and continuing outreach efforts with leaders in HTR communities. At no time would CCWG members be required to go door-to-door in the community; that work will be completed by census field workers hired by the Census Bureau. Census taking activities

end in July, after which the group would only meet for census close-out activities (thanking participants, communicating census results as data becomes available, etc.).