

## **Ken Hodges**

### **BACKGROUND ON THE 2010 CENSUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The 2010 Census Advisory Committee (CAC) provides advisory input on the design of the 2010 census, the American Community Survey, and related programs. Committee members represent a range of census stakeholders, and APDU's seat on the Committee provides a channel for APDU members to comment from the data user perspective.

Ken Hodges is your APDU representative on the 2010 Census Advisory Committee, and Bill O'Hare is your alternate representative. This report describes the most recent meeting of that Committee. Contact Ken [khodges@claritas.com](mailto:khodges@claritas.com) or Bill [wohare@aecf.org](mailto:wohare@aecf.org) with comments, questions, or suggestions.

### **MAY 15-16 2008 MEETING OF THE CENSUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

#### **Day One**

#### **Opening Remarks**

Nancy Gordon, the Census Bureau's Designated Federal Official, started the meeting, and introduced Committee Chair Mark Neuman for opening remarks. Neuman observed that a lot has happened since the last meeting, most notably the greatly scaled back plans for the use of handheld computers for field data collection automation (FDCA), and a return to paper based nonresponse follow up (NRFU) for the 2010 census. He described the Census Advisory Committee (CAC) as a strategic group of stakeholders that needs to understand the decisions and consequences of this change in order to best support the Census Bureau in executing the new plan. A consequence of the recent change is the increase in cost, and Neuman explained that he has asked the Census Bureau to provide a detailed timeline, so we can monitor the progress of NRFU and other 2010 census operations. Neuman also expressed regret that the Committee was in the dark as the handheld computer problems unfolded, and commented that the CAC cannot help unless it is informed of what is going on.

Cynthia Glassman, Undersecretary of Economic Affairs at the Department of Commerce, noted the importance of the basic census count, and assured that the Department and the Secretary are committed to working with Census Bureau Director Steve Murdock to address the current challenges.

#### **Census Bureau Update**

*Steve Murdock, Director, U. S. Census Bureau*

Census Bureau Director Steve Murdock joined Glassman in thanking the CAC for its support, and noted that the 2010 census faces challenges beyond those encountered in 2000. Murdock noted that the post-September 11 environment, and the immigration debate may reduce census

cooperation among already hard to count populations. But despite all the negative publicity, Murdock stressed that many 2010 operations are going well. Field offices are opening, MAF/TIGER enhancement was completed on time and on budget, LUCA (Local Update of Census Addresses) is in its final stages, and the census partnership program is progressing.

Turning to the handheld computer problems, Murdock explained that Jay Waite realized there were problems in late 2007, and established a group to review the situation. By early February it was clear there were serious communications problems with the contractor, and a Risk Reduction Taskforce, headed by former acting director Bill Barron, was established to assess the situation, and recommend a course of action. The taskforce concluded that the use of handheld computers for nonresponse follow up (NRFU) posed too great a risk of a delayed or incomplete census count, and recommended that NRFU revert to a paper based operation. However, they recommended that the handhelds be used for address canvassing and the operations control system. These recommendations were adopted by an expert panel convened by the Department of Commerce. Murdock confirmed that they are proceeding with this plan, and expressed high confidence that it will succeed. Asked why this course of action was considered the best of the four alternatives considered, Murdock explained that it offered the greatest reduction of risk.

Murdock then expressed regret at the retirement of Deputy Director Jay Waite after 38 years of excellent service, but was pleased to introduce Tom Mesenbourg, who is now Acting Deputy Director. Murdock also asked that we keep in mind what a superb organization the Census Bureau is, and he described with genuine admiration, the dedication of the Census Bureau staff.

In response to Committee Chair Neuman's question about the budget shortfall, Murdock explained that the Census Bureau is asking for \$210 million dollars in supplemental funding, but that the total impact is from \$2.0 to \$2.5 billion. Murdock expressed confidence that Congress will provide the needed funding – noting that despite the tone of recent hearings, appropriators have privately expressed support for the census. Ed Spar (Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics) said it would help the CAC support the new plan if we had a breakdown of the \$210 million, and Murdock said they could share that. Arturo Vargas (National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund) expressed regret that the CAC did not sufficiently press the Census Bureau on its handheld computer plans, and commented that the lack of communication undermined the Committee's efforts. He asked how the Census Bureau would keep the CAC engaged so we can contribute support. Murdock apologized for the fact that the Census Bureau did not communicate more, but explained that they needed a clearer idea of the situation, and how they would proceed before communicating. Under Secretary Glassman added that, from the Commerce perspective, the situation developed very quickly, and involved a short period of very intense activity, and that a final decision was not made until early April. Now that the plan is in a roll out period, the Census Bureau can be more transparent.

The discussion of communications with CAC continued, with other reps expressing frustration at not learning the gravity of the situation until the alternative course of action had been decided. In response, Murdock maintained that, while some handheld computer problems had been identified, the Census Bureau truly believed them to be similar to those encountered before any census, and that they were not withholding information.

In response to a question from Kim Brace (Election Data Services) on reports that the budget shortfall might force staff furloughs, Murdock indicated that they have no plans to furlough any Census Bureau employees.

Neuman described the disinclination to talk about the consequences of potential problems as a Census Bureau weakness, and with that in mind, asked what the consequences would be if the supplemental appropriation is not provided. Murdock responded that this would prevent them from completing some of their work, but he reiterated his belief that they will get the supplemental funding. Saying he could not go into details, Murdock said congressional support has been communicated in a number of ways.

*Arnold Jackson. Acting Associate Director for Decennial Census*

*Dan Weinberg. Assistant Director for Decennial Census*

Jackson made brief remarks, commenting on the “tremendous effort” and the many activities now underway in preparation for the 2010 census – including work with Commerce and Congress on the re-plan for NRFU. Jackson agreed that the required funding is likely to be provided, and hopes things will soon return to a normal state, which he said is typically a state of controlled chaos at this stage of census preparation. Immediate activities include the Dress Rehearsal, which Jackson says will provide valuable preparation despite some cut backs from the original plan. FDCA is now in re-plan mode for the paper-based NRFU, and immediate focus is on ensuring a successful address canvassing effort.

Weinberg described the field operational workflow, including tests of replacement questionnaires, which have proved very helpful. The benefits of mailing replacement questionnaires are especially important given the return to paper NRFU, although it will not help with the processing of late returns.

In response to a question, Weinberg explained that there will be no NRFU in the Dress Rehearsal due to the late switch to paper methods. He also confirmed that the replacement questionnaires will be English only, even if the original questionnaire had been bi-lingual. Several reps expressed regret that bi-lingual replacement questionnaires are not being provided. CAC Chair Neuman then noted the importance of the initial mailing, and asked if there has been any outreach to letter carriers to ensure that it is as effective as possible, especially in hard to count areas. Weinberg was not aware of specific outreach, but agreed that it is a good idea. Brian Monaghan, Chief of Field Operations, noted that the census has had postal liaisons in the past, and suggested it is an area that merits more focus. When Elizabeth Jones (American Farm Bureau Federation) encouraged outreach to rural mail carriers, Brian Monaghan (Chief, Field Operations) pointed out that many rural areas do not receive questionnaires by mail, but there was agreement on the importance of rural America to a complete census count.

With no NRFU in the Dress Rehearsal, Kim Brace (EDS) asked about the impact on its data products. Weinberg said Dress Rehearsal products will be provided, but will be useful primarily for formatting purposes, and that users should not believe the data.

*Brian Monaghan. Chief, Field Operations*

Monaghan noted that from the Field perspective the 2010 census has already begun. The

Regional Census Centers (RCCs) have all been opened, 150 Early-Opening Local Census Offices will open by Fall 2008, and the remaining 344 Local Census Offices (LCOs) will open by Fall 2009. The recruiting goals are formidable, as approximately 3 million applicants are needed to fill 900,000 temporary workforce positions. Address canvassing will require 150,000 workers in 2009, and NRFU will require 700,000 in 2010. Recruiting Coordinators are onboard at the RCCs, and will coordinate recruiting through the LCOs. Monaghan stressed that there is an emphasis on indigenous hiring, and Jungmiwha Bullock (Association of MultiEthnic Americans) stressed the importance of the multi-ethnic population to the indigenous hiring objective.

To promote recruitment, waivers have been applied for to ensure that federal workers and persons on public assistance will not be penalized for becoming census workers. Jacqueline Byers (National Association of Counties) asked about the status of the waiver to permit the hiring of non-citizens. Monaghan indicated that such an application had not been made, and promised to get knowledgeable comment on that issue. Later in the day, Mark Aldridge (with Human Resources at the Census Bureau) joined the meeting, and confirmed that they have not applied for an exemption permitting the hiring of non-citizens. He explained that with Mexico's recent withdrawal from the Rio Treaty (an inter-American reciprocal defense agreement), it is not legal to pay non-citizens from that country. However, Aldridge qualified the restriction, indicating that current law would permit some hiring of non-citizens without regard to country of origin in specific areas, and suggested that some decisions on this may be made by the Local Census Offices.

*Howard Hogan. Associate Director for Demographic Programs*

Hogan described plans for the editing of race and ethnicity responses in the 2010 census. These steps would be new for 2010, but as always, the intent is to respect both self-report and the OMB standards. For example, if a person marks "some other race," but has a write-in response suggesting a specified race, the response will be edited to the specified race. For example, a response of "some other race" associated with a write-in of "Iranian" would be edited to White. Also, a person indicating Hispanic ethnicity, but with a "Brazilian" write-in, would be edited to not-Hispanic. Persons indicating not-Hispanic, but providing "Mexican" as a write-in would be edited to Hispanic ethnicity.

As Hogan described it, the respondents "have not spent as much time as we have reading the OMB standards." And while the rules are new, he noted that the editing process adds little time over the "hot deck" procedures used in the past. Hogan also noted that the 2010 responses can be linked to 2000 census and more recent ACS responses for individuals, so missing 2010 responses can be assigned based on previous responses. Hogan also reported that Louisa Miller has drafted a 2010 census data product plan that should be available for review soon, and described the formidable challenge of editing multi-year ACS estimates products.

Joan Naymark (attending by telephone for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce) asked how many addresses are being added by the LUCA program. Weinberg said he did not have numbers, but noted that address canvassing is still going on, so it may be too early to assess. In response to a question from Brace (EDS) on how LUCA participation compares with 2000, Weinberg noted that the percent of government units participating has dropped to 29 percent, but that the number of addresses covered is about the same as 2000. Asked how confident the Census Bureau is that

the handheld computers will work well enough for address canvassing, Monaghan acknowledged that there have been some issues, but they are satisfied that they are being addressed, and that the handhelds will be ready to go for address canvassing.

### **Roundtable: 2010 Census Advisory Committee**

Committee Chair Neuman noted that the CAC was very supportive of the Census Bureau's decisions in the handheld computer matter, but that the CAC was not asked its opinion of the plan. He encouraged the Census Bureau to more openly discuss the consequences of potential problems or failures related to its plans. He also described timing issues, and wondered if technological advances which streamline the redistricting process might permit the Census Bureau to devote more time to NRFU and thereby achieve a more accurate count. Clark Benson (POLIDATA Political Data Analysis) cautioned that we not assume a shorter redistricting process, as the political context offsets time saved by technology

Ed Spar (COPAFS) asked about plans to address gross errors in the census count, which were rather high in 2000. Weinberg said procedures are in place to address the gross error problem, but noted how difficult it is to detect and undo duplicate enumerations. Ken Hodges (Association of Public Data Users) expressed the view that automated NRFU is still the way to go in the long-term, and asked what can be done now to make sure that the misstep for 2010 does not deter progress toward automation for the 2020 census. CAC Chair Neuman refined the question, asking whether tests of the handhelds could be worked into the 2010 census operation. Weinberg stressed the importance of an earlier start for 2020, with serious field tests taking place in the 2015 time frame rather than 2017. By then he expects tests would show that field data collection automation would be workable.

### **2010 Census Integrated Communications Plan**

Jennifer Marks, Chief of the Census 2010 Publicity Office, described the journey of the Integrated Communications Plan as beginning with last October's joint advisory committee meeting, and continuing with contractor DraftFCB's presentation of a draft proposal at a February webinar, and the delivery of the final proposal to the Census Bureau in April. She acknowledged that the 343 page proposal is very long, but stressed that it is a blueprint, and still subject to revision and improvement based on advisory committee input.

DraftFCB and its subcontractors attended in force, with about a dozen on hand for the presentation of the proposal. The proposal starts by listing three major goals, 1) increasing mail response, 2) improving accuracy and reducing the differential undercount, and 3) improving cooperation with enumerators. The challenge, they note, is how to weave these objectives into a holistic plan.

The proposed approach recognizes the growing distrust of government, and sense of self-reliance in the population, and seeks a repositioning from the "government's census" to the "people's census." In doing so, the program intends to "ignite" conversations about the census with a

multiplier effect – one conversation leading to others, and increasing the population’s willingness to participate in the census. More specifically, DraftFCB proposes to segment the population into eight clusters based on their propensity to respond to the census, and linked to Simmons survey data on media habits. DraftFCB stressed that the clusters are based on actual data on census response.

The process for developing communications with these clusters involves meetings with regional census staff and primary research. Research findings so far suggest that messages emphasizing benefits (what’s in the census for me or my community) are most effective, and additional research will focus on census barriers as well as attitudes and motivations relative to census response. The presenters talked repeatedly of the challenges posed by distrust of government, and the immigration debate. They also described the rise of new, often participatory media, with individuals becoming masters of their media consumption, and the trust in individuals over traditional marketers.

To tap into these realities, DraftFCB proposes a campaign with an “It’s In Our Hands” message, and played a sample census video based on this theme. The plan calls for a mix of traditional and word of mouth components, all designed to help people (the most trusted source) tell the story of the census. Partnerships, public relations events, interactive and paid media all are critical in promoting the message and achieving the desired multiplier effect. Subcontractors then presented briefly on what their research suggests will be the most effective ways to promote census participation among specific race and ethnic populations.

### **Advisory Committee Response to the 2010 Census Integrated Communications Plan**

Vargas (NALEO) asked what the price tag is for the proposed campaign, and Marks said it is budgeted at \$270 million, but still requires congressional approval. Hodges (APDU) asked to what extent one could measure the program’s impact on the three goals. Marks said they are seeking a contract for that now, but acknowledged that the impact is difficult to measure. She reminded us, however, that the 2000 campaign stemmed what had been a steadily declining response rate. Amber Ebarb (National Congress of American Indians) expressed concern that the Simmons media data probably are not specific to the American Indian population, and Sabeen Altaf (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee) asked how the census would be promoted to ethnic groups not on the short form-only census. The response was that the focus would be on the community as a whole, and would still allow for messages targeted through American-Arab media, and delivered by voices trusted within that community. Erica Groshen (Federal Reserve Bank of New York) asked why the Census in the Schools program is limited to grades K through 6, and the response was that students at these levels actually take materials home and influence their parents, but that those in middle and high school do not.

Spar (COPAFS) then asked which of the major goals is most important, noting that by increasing mail response, one could also increase differential undercount. Marks responded that they have not yet decided whether to put more emphasis on increasing response rates or reducing differential undercount. Asked to expand on a reference to possible census crises, DraftFCB pointed to issues such as confidentiality and immigration, and described the need to prepare

messages to counter “badvocates,” who may wage campaigns critical of the census. Director Murdock commented that he has lost sleep over such scenarios, and asked for the CAC’s suggestions in how to address them. Spar (COPAFS) referred Murdock to a report issued from a 2005 Census Bureau conference on issues related to data availability and the pledge of confidentiality.

Following through on the need for candid discussion of weaknesses, Committee Chair Neuman asked what the Census Bureau sees as the weaknesses of the proposed plan. The response pointed to the need to manage the expectations of stakeholders, and anticipating who might derail the plan. The fact that much of the program’s funding comes later in the process also was cited as a risk.

Bullock (AMEA) argued that multi-ethnic persons are not represented sufficiently in the draft and other early materials, and expressed concern that the Census Bureau may be pressured to pull ads that portray multi-race couples and families. Marks assured that the Census Bureau would not pull ads in response to such pressure, and asked for guidance on which media to focus on in the portrayal of multi-racial families.

## **Day Two**

Nancy Gordon started Day Two of the meeting by introducing Dan Weinberg, who followed up on a Day One request by distributing a table detailing the \$210 million supplemental budget request. The big increases are in address canvassing (where additional handheld computers and staff are required) and “Common Support,” which includes a variety of activities not specified in the table.

The meeting was then opened for public comment, but no one had signed up, and no one opted to comment at that time.

## **REAC Update**

K. V. Rao, the CAC representative from the Race and Ethnic Advisory Committees, reported that with five committees, each with nine members, the REACs have become concerned that their meetings do not provide enough time for questions and comments from all interested representatives. They continue to focus on differential undercount, and are concerned that some populations may be especially hesitant to respond (or respond accurately) to the census in the post September 11 and immigration debate environment. There is particular concern that insufficient resources are being devoted to counting the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population.

Rao noted that the REACs are concerned that the DraftFCB proposal is long and repetitive, and that the presentation at the REAC meeting did not provide enough time for Q&A from the representatives. There was also concern that the hand logo (part of the “It’s In Our Hands” theme) might be interpreted by some cultures as an indication to “Stop” or not respond to the

census. Marks explained that the logo is not final, and was used in meeting materials in order to get this type of feedback.

Other concerns focused on the need for NRFU workers speaking languages other than English, and the fact that the census has not been exempted from laws permitting immigration authorities to impersonate other federal officials. The concern is that immigration authorities could conduct sting operations while posing as census officials seeking to help the foreign-born respond to the census.

## **Congressional Update**

Darryl Piggee, with the Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census and National Archives, spoke briefly – noting the importance of the supplemental census appropriation, conveying the subcommittee’s confidence in the new Census Bureau leadership, and remarking that the 2010 communications program is a priority. He then called for questions.

Vargas (NALEO) asked if there is any danger that the Census Bureau will not get the supplemental appropriation, and Piggee responded that Congress has always provided what the Census Bureau needs, and that they just want some questions answered before proceeding. Piggee clarified that the questions relate to the details of where the additional costs come from, not doubts that they are real. Asked what census related hearings might be in the works, Piggee described a hearing on the re-plan (NRFU etc.) scheduled for June 11.

Relaying a question from alternate rep Bill O’Hare, Hodges (APDU) recalled the controversy over adjustment for undercount surrounding the 2000 census, and asked if things are really as quiet as they seem on the adjustment front for 2010. Piggee said they are always listening to stakeholders, but noted that much of the 2000 debate related to the sampling issue. Hodges recalled that there was much controversy over 2000 adjustment even after the sampling issue was settled, but stressed that he was just asking a question, not making an APDU recommendation.

## **ACS Program Update**

Susan Schechter, Chief, American Community Survey Office, described the areas of emphasis for the ACS in 2008.

Under “management of ACS resources,” Schechter noted that the FY08 budget includes full funding for conducting the ACS, but does not provide for a 2008 Methods Panel – forcing the cancelation of some planned tests. The 2009 budget request includes funding for a Methods Panel.

Priorities already completed include the submission of 2010 census and ACS questions to Congress, and the implementation of the new 2008 ACS questionnaire, which includes questions on health insurance coverage, marital history, and veterans’ service connected disabilities. The 2009 ACS questionnaire, targeted for OMB approval in July, will add a question on field of

degree, and restore a question on duration of vacancy. Schechter also described a number of research and evaluation projects on topics such as data quality, estimation, data usability, and operations.

Schechter noted the ACS program's increased focus on data users. With multi-year estimates on the way, the Census Bureau is developing educational materials for users, and planning workshops to prepare regional offices and state data centers for their ACS support activities.

Turning to 2008 data release plans, Schechter explained that the 2007 1-year estimates would be released August - September, and the first 3-year estimates (reflecting 2005-2007) will be released in December – making this the first time that some areas will get two sets of numbers. New data products will include a multi-year PUMS file, and “Comparison Profiles” focused on changes in ACS data from one year to the next. Schechter also described that ACS user handbooks are being prepared for 10 target audiences, and will be made available as .pdf files on the Census Bureau's website.

Hodges (APDU) took the opportunity to reiterate APDU's concern that the ACS sample size needs to be increased to better achieve the goal of long form replacement, and expressed concern that the need for 2010 supplemental funding could negatively impact the prospects. Some other CAC reps expressed support for the larger ACS sample, and Schechter affirmed that the Census Bureau is aware of the importance of this issue.

Asked if ACS response rates are changing, Schechter indicated that the completed response rate (of about 97 percent) has varied, but has not experienced a steady decline. She also indicated that the Census Bureau will become more public in reporting ACS response rates. Jacqueline Byers (NACO) suggested that extra educational effort might be required for areas (such as counties) with populations in the 20,000 to 65,000 range, which will be getting ACS data for the first time. Schechter indicated complete agreement, and made note of the suggestion.

The ACS session concluded with discussion of technical issues, such as how the ACS would reflect persons in civil unions, and how the 5-year estimates would transition to estimates and weights based on a new census.

### **Committee Action Items**

Committee Chair Neuman posed the question of how often the CAC should meet. Spar (COPAFS) suggested that the CAC should meet more often than twice per year, and that joint meetings make it difficult for this diverse group to address specific issues. With a joint meeting of the CAC, REACs, and professional associations advisory committees planned for Fall, Neuman and several other reps echoed the concern that joint meetings are less productive for the CAC.

As for frequency, there was one suggestion for quarterly meetings (two in person and two by webinar), but another for meetings timed with major census activities. A discussion on re-establishing working groups led to the conclusion that working groups worked better when the

committee was larger, and that they lack the positive group dynamic that is evident when the CAC meets as a whole. Neuman also made a case for one-day meetings, as opposed to the current day and a half, noting that some reps leave early on Day Two.

Neuman then presented for discussion some observations and recommendations that he had drafted based on what we had heard at the meeting. These included the following.

- The CAC should support the census re-plan decision and request for supplemental funding.
- The Census Bureau should be more open to discussing weaknesses and the consequences of potential risks and problems.
- The Department of Commerce should be more proactive in informing and seeking input from the CAC on issues such as the handheld computer problems.
- The CAC should weigh in on the Internet response option for nonresponse follow up.
- The CAC should encourage the Census Bureau to reconsider the use of English-only forms for NRFU – especially now that handheld computers will not be used.
- The CAC should encourage Census Bureau outreach to letter carriers to ensure that the initial mailing of census forms is as effective as possible.

There was agreement on most of these positions, but some discussion that the third recommendation should relate to Census rather than Commerce to be consistent with the CAC charter. And some reps were reluctant to formally endorse the Internet response option for 2010 given that it is said to have little impact on response rates, and involves risk of phishing and related activities. However, there was agreement that Internet response is important for the future, and that the Census Bureau should explore ways to make it a low risk option.

In the closing minutes of the meeting, CAC reps also expressed support for the Integrated Communications Plan, and for the importance of rural America in the 2010 census count.