

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MONDAY, MARCH 04, 2019

Census Bureau Unveils 2020 Census Communications Campaign Platform

March 04, 2019
CB19-26

MARCH 4, 2019 – As promotional and outreach activities are ramping up across the nation ahead of the 2020 Census — from establishing local and state complete count committees, to diverse partners coming together to reduce the undercount of children and other hard to count populations — today the U.S. Census Bureau announced its long-planned communications campaign platform: “Shape your future. START HERE.”



“We undertook an unprecedented amount of research to help us learn more about what potential barriers, attitudes and motivators America had about participating in the upcoming census,” said Census Bureau Director Dr. Steven Dillingham. “The 2020 platform arose from that research, and has been rigorously tested to ensure that our campaign effectively communicates that when the public responds to the 2020 Census, they will know they are helping to shape the future of their community for the next 10 years.”

The Census Bureau and VMLY&R — the Census Bureau’s communications contractor — tested the platform in multiple languages and in diverse focus groups across the country. The resulting research was paired with the expertise of VMLY&R’s multicultural advertising agencies, seasoned in reaching diverse audiences. The 2020 Census advertising campaign will be in English and 12 other languages.

The “Shape your future. START HERE.” platform will be incorporated across Census Bureau outreach and partnership awareness materials beginning this April, and then more broadly when the 2020 Census advertising campaign launches in January 2020. In this image, the tagline points to the 2020 Census logo reinforcing the message that the public can shape the future of their

community by responding to the 2020 Census.. The availability of the creative platform will help guide outreach efforts being planned by states, local communities and nonprofit organizations. In addition, it allows partners to determine how they can complement the \$500 million communications campaign created by the Census Bureau and VMLY&R.

This is the third decennial census to include a dedicated advertising and communications operation. In the 2000 and 2010 Censuses, the Census Bureau also utilized advertising, partnership and communications campaigns to increase awareness and participation in the count. Higher self-response rates increase the accuracy of the census and save taxpayer money by lowering census follow-up costs for nonresponding households.

The Census Bureau and VMLY&R are in the process of developing creative materials under the “Shape your future. START HERE.” platform. Those creative materials will be tested extensively around the country before they are built into ads for placement.



The U.S. Constitution mandates that a census of the population be conducted once every 10 years for the purposes of reapportioning Congress. Census data is also used to determine how more than \$675 billion in federal funds are distributed back to states and local communities every year for services and infrastructure, including health care, jobs, schools, roads and businesses.

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