Tribes and the Census

Census Begins Recruiting for 2020 Jobs

The Census Bureau has hung out a "Help Wanted" sign. Hundreds of thousands of workers are needed for the 2020 decennial census. Some are needed now, with the bulk of the hiring to come late next year and into the start of full operations in 2020.

In addition, the Bureau needs to ramp up its hiring for Partnership Specialists, staff to provide support to tribes, Native Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), state and local governments and other nonprofits in promoting the coming decennial.

Assisting in this recruitment effort is essential for tribes and Native CBOs. Insuring a full count of all American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people needs to involve Native people to serve as Census takers in Native communities, where they are familiar with the people, housing, customs and languages in these communities.

There is an important role for Native workforce programs in this task. They have day-to-day contact with Native people that need work, including temporary work, and may have the necessary qualifications for the available Census positions.

Details on all aspects of the current recruitment process are available on the Census Bureau's Web site at: https://2020census.gov/jobs.

Like many other aspects of the 2020 Census, the hiring process and the work involved will be very different from what it has been in the past. The agency is automating as much of the coming decennial as possible, including the personnel process.

Applicants must apply for the jobs on-line. The testing will be done on-line. Work assignments will be provided on-line. And pay and mileage reimbursement will be handled on-line. Census workers will be furnished with iPhones to handle their work tasks, including administering questionnaires to respondents in individual households when necessary.

The Bureau very much wants local workers from Native communities. However, the qualifications for the jobs involved will pose problems for some who might otherwise be interested. The list of those qualifications is a lengthy one. Applicants must:

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Have a valid Social Security number.
• Be a U.S. citizen.

• Have a valid e-mail address.

• Complete an application and answer assessment questions. An English language proficiency test may also be required.

• Be registered with the Selective Service System or have a qualifying exemption, if the applicant is a male born after December 31, 1959.

• Pass a Census-performed criminal background check and a review of criminal records, including fingerprinting.

• Commit to completing training.

• Be available to work flexible hours, which can include days, evenings, and/or weekends.

In addition, most jobs require employees to:

• Have access to a vehicle and a valid driver’s license, unless public transportation is readily available.

• Have access to a computer with Internet access and an e-mail account (to complete training).

Tribal and off-reservation Native workforce programs may be able to help applicants to overcome some of the barriers, like providing limited e-mail access, but others depend on the applicant's background.

Once hired, enumerators are to be furnished with iPhones to do the work assigned to them, report results and file time sheets and mileage reimbursement requests. Cell phone connectivity, hard to come by in the more remote rural areas, will also be necessary.

The pay for enumerators will vary with the wage levels in the area. For example, in Corson County, ND, part of the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, the expected rate is $15.50 per hour. In San Francisco, it is $30.00 per hour.

There will be several rounds of hiring as the time for the 2020 headcount draws near. This fall the Bureau is interesting in filling jobs as recruiting assistant, office operations supervisor and clerk positions for the Area Census Offices opening in January.
In January the Bureau will be recruiting for workers in its address canvasing operation, the process of identifying the precise physical location of all housing units that need to be contacted for the 2020 count. Much of this work will be done in Census offices using lists provided by the Postal Service and others, but some of it will require an on-the-ground inspection.

Hiring will peak as hundreds of thousands of enumerators and crew leaders become needed in preparation for the full 2020 Census operations in the spring and summer of that year.

**News Notes**

Last week the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs conducted a hearing on the nomination of Steven Dillingham to the post of Census Bureau Director. Dillingham is currently the Director of the Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning at the Peace Corps. Previously he led the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics.

At the hearing, Senator John Hoeven asked specifically about Dillingham's views on steps to insure a complete count in reservation areas, such as those in the Senator's home state of North Dakota. Dillingham responded that he was aware of the importance of the work of Bureau staff in helping tribes to insure a full count and the need to overcome special obstacles such as limited Internet access in remote rural areas. Senator Hoeven chairs the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, which itself held a hearing last February on the special issues involved in insuring a complete count in reservation areas.

The impact on response rates of the addition of a **citizenship question** to the 2020 Census questionnaire remains a hot topic. There are six court cases that have been filed on the issue, including one, LUPE v Ross, being handled by the Mexican American Legal and Educational Defense Fund (MALDEF) that focuses on the impact of the loss of federal program resources for low income populations, including the AI/AN population.

While any resulting undercount triggered by the use of such a question may not have as large an impact on the Native count as it may on the counts of Hispanic, Middle Eastern and North African and Asian populations, it will nonetheless hit the Native population hard. If state allocations for programs such as Medicaid and SNAP (food stamps) are reduced, the states are likely to further limit access to such programs by all groups, including the needy AI/AN population. More on this in a future newsletter.

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