



May 26, 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Robert M. Groves
Director
U.S. Census Bureau

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd J. Zinser".

FROM: Todd J. Zinser

SUBJECT: Recommendations from *2010 Census: Quarterly Report to Congress, May 2010* (OIG-19791-4)

This memorandum transmits recommendations based on our review of 2010 Census activities between January and March 2010. We conducted this work pursuant to the explanatory statement accompanying the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008, which required the Census Bureau to submit to the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations a detailed decennial plan and assessment of associated risks, and also required OIG to provide quarterly reports on the bureau's progress against this plan. Our fourth quarterly report, which presents an update on Census 2010's schedule, cost, and risk management activities, was issued on May 5, 2010. We have included the report as an attachment to this memorandum.

In our review, we covered the status of the Paper-based Operations Control System (PBOCS) and its relationship to the success of several Census operations (see page 3 of the attachment), especially nonresponse follow-up (NRFU); the status of the 2010 Census budget and spending of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funds; and an update on program-level risks to the census, including the development of contingency plans and tests of physical security at key Census facilities. We also observed several Census operations during this quarter, including update/leave (U/L), update/enumerate (U/E), enumeration at transitory locations (ETL), and service-based enumeration (SBE), which is part of group quarters enumeration (see page 11 of the attachment).

Recommendations

1. For the 2010 Census, we recommend that the bureau take the following actions to address the findings in our quarterly report:
 - PBOCS presents a risk to the cost of the NRFU operation, its timely completion, and the accuracy of its population count. Census should ensure clerical workarounds are being performed properly by having local Census offices, regional centers, and headquarters increase manual and automated checks of workaround procedures as well as



questionnaire control and tracking. Census should also take larger samples in already-established quality-control procedures.

- In Census’s monthly financial management reports (FMRs), only the month in which the FMR is issued shows the bureau’s current financial performance. Because surplus funds are no longer visible in subsequent reports, it is impossible to identify the project or division to which the funds have been assigned. Therefore, the Census Bureau should improve the transparency of its budget process, especially the presentation of surplus (or elimination of the surplus) as shown in the FMRs.
2. In order to ensure a successful 2020 Census, we are also recommending that the bureau’s planning include the following:
- Census currently uses a “verbatim” training methodology, wherein recently trained crew leaders read to trainees from a manual, word for word, how to conduct a census operation. This “one-size-fits-all” approach does not provide employees with the necessary information to accomplish their jobs, and may have contributed to some of the inconsistent enumeration practices we observed in several operations. Census should thoroughly review and improve its decennial training process, including the use of more visual aids, electronic media, and unscripted role playing.
 - Census did not clearly inform the public about the different enumeration methods used in the decennial. Based on their address type, members of the public could receive census forms via mail out/mail back or by field operations such as U/L or U/E. Since many people did not know about the different operations, they were unaware of the various ways they might participate in the count. For example, the public could also pick up their forms at Be Counted sites or contact the bureau through its hotline for enumeration assistance. The bureau should improve its communication with the public on the various methods used for census enumeration and better inform people who did not receive forms at their homes how they might participate.
 - During our review we observed that many enumerators had difficulties with their assignments due to inaccurate, incomplete, or unusable maps. The bureau should review both its address canvassing practices and post-data collection processing to minimize errors on the maps that support subsequent operations.
 - Managers at many local Census offices commented that, for SBE, the partnership staff missed deadlines and provided poor-quality site lists for specific enumerations. To compensate, local Census offices were forced to use their own staffs to identify sites for enumeration. Census should improve its advance coordination with partnership organizations, ensure the alignment of partnership specialist skills with project requirements, establish procedures to mitigate the risk of duplicate records, and institute a more effective process for selecting and confirming sites to enumerate.
 - According to Census, “frontloading” its workforce (i.e., hiring and training more enumerators than necessary in order to offset turnover) is a cost-saving measure. During

the ETL operation, crew leaders overestimated the number of Census staff needed to enumerate transitory locations, thus increasing the cost of operations. In another operation, we found many enumerator teams to be unnecessarily large—an average ratio of one enumerator for just seven homeless respondents. We observed significant periods of enumerator inactivity at certain locations, which increased the operation's direct labor and travel costs. Census should reevaluate its practice of frontloading and develop a better process to estimate workload and cost assumptions. A more streamlined enumeration process could reduce training and travel costs and be more responsive to changing economic conditions.

Please advise us of the actions you propose to take in response to our recommendations by June 25, 2010. If you have any questions, please call me at (202) 482-4661 or Ron Prevost, Assistant Inspector General for Economic and Statistical Program Assessment, at (202) 482-3052.

Thank you for the courtesies extended to my staff during this review.

Attachment

cc: Rebecca M. Blank, Under Secretary for Economic Affairs
Nancy Potok, Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Affairs
Thomas L. Mesenbourg, Jr., Deputy Director, U.S. Census Bureau
Andrew Moxam, Comptroller, U.S. Census Bureau
Arnold Jackson, Associate Director, Decennial Census Programs, U.S. Census Bureau
Frank Vitrano, Chief, Decennial Management Division, U.S. Census Bureau
Pam White, External Liaison Branch Chief, Decennial Management Division, U.S. Census Bureau
Adam Miller, Audit Liaison, U.S. Census Bureau