

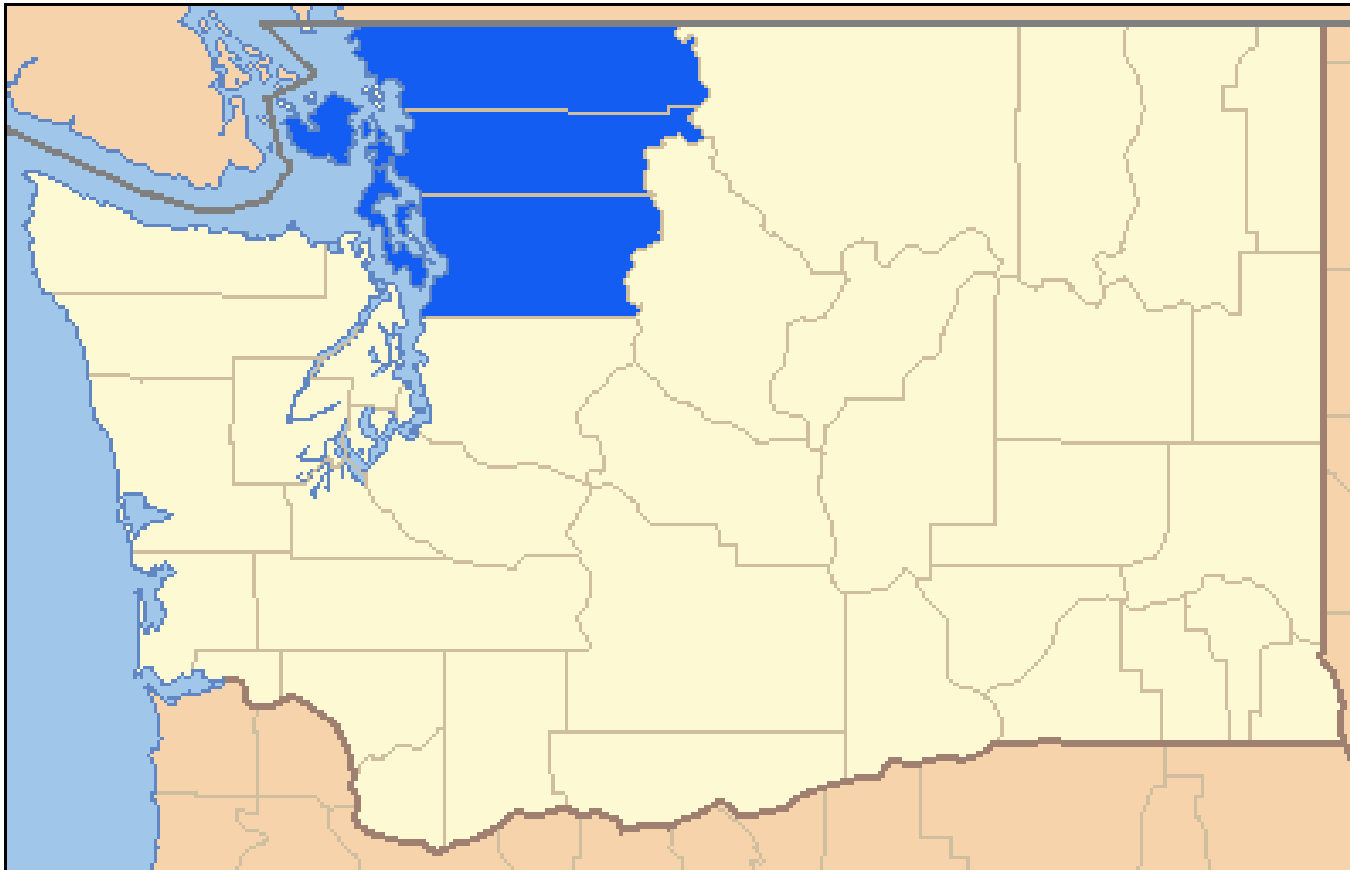
# Opportunity Council: Mobilizing Census Support in the Northwest Region

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# About Opportunity Council

- ▶ Community Action agency based in Whatcom County, but operating in 5 counties: Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan and Snohomish



# About Opportunity Council

- ▶ Counting for Dollars, GWU report → directly impacts our programs and clients

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

## THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

### Counting for Dollars 2020

16 Large Federal Assistance Programs that Distribute Funds on Basis of Decennial  
Census-derived Statistics (Fiscal Year 2015)

#### Washington

Total Program Obligations: \$13,722,789,945

Per Capita: \$1,914 (see note on proper use)

CFDA #	Program Name	Dept.	Type	Recipients	Obligations
93.778	Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid)	HHS	Grants	States	\$8,484,071,438
10.551	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	USDA	Direct Pay	Households	\$1,527,741,099
93.774	Medicare Part B (Supplemental Medical Insurance) – Physicians Fee Schedule Services	HHS	Direct Pay	Providers	\$1,053,323,016
20.205	Highway Planning and Construction	DOT	Grants	States	\$663,499,896
14.871	Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers	HUD	Direct Pay	Owners	\$476,585,000
84.010	Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies	ED	Grants	LEAs	\$221,863,797
84.027	Special Education Grants (IDEA)	ED	Grants	States	\$219,509,831
10.555	National School Lunch Program	USDA	Grants	States	\$193,566,596
93.600	Head Start/Early Head Start	HHS	Grants	Providers	\$180,224,537
10.557	Supplemental Nutrition Program for	USDA	Grants	States	\$148,442,776

# Approach

- ▶ Working within our networks
  - ▶ Community resource networks
  - ▶ Volunteer center networks
  - ▶ Higher education networks
  - ▶ Internal taskforce
- ▶ Solutions-oriented outreach
  - ▶ Set the context for the issues facing us in 2020
  - ▶ Ask for attendees to offer solutions their organization can implement
    - ▶ Island County office in 2010

# Outcomes: Action plans

- ▶ For Whatcom, Skagit, Island and San Juan Counties – over 60 agencies
  - ▶ Non-profit partners really stepped up to offer support. Much of the actions they agreed to take were simple add-ons to work they already do:
    - ▶ Have case workers/employees provide information
    - ▶ Identify community leaders to help as advocates
    - ▶ Display information in public spaces (bulletin boards, at events)
    - ▶ Tap into their own volunteer base to have them talk with clients while they wait for services
    - ▶ Set up census assistance centers in lobbies
    - ▶ Identified specific languages needed for populations they serve
    - ▶ Provided information about communication channels that they have special access to (newsletters, websites, etc)

# Outcomes: Communications Recommendations

- ▶ Primary barriers to census participation:
  - ▶ Greatest concern: General distrust of government
    - ▶ This was remarked on by all groups we visited regardless of population they served. Some organizations who require personal information for their work noted that clients were hesitant to provide them with information even for critical services, because they did not want to have their information in “the system”.
  - ▶ Second greatest concern: Fear of repercussions
    - ▶ Fear that information may be shared with Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
    - ▶ Fear that information might be used to single out certain racial/ethnic groups.
  - ▶ Confidentiality and privacy concerns
    - ▶ Concerns about online data security and the safety of personal information provided.
  - ▶ Lack of knowledge or apathy
    - ▶ Perceived lack of tangible benefits.
  - ▶ Lack of online access
  - ▶ Lack of time

# Outcomes: Communications Recommendations

- ▶ Primary motivations for participating
  - ▶ Most important: Increasing community funding.
    - ▶ Especially those who utilize public services.
    - ▶ Those who can see the results are more likely to participate.
  - ▶ Second most important: Provides information for local governments to plan for changes in the community including critical services like hospitals and emergency response services.
  - ▶ Determines the number of elected officials that each state has in Congress.
  - ▶ Is used to enforce civil rights laws.
  - ▶ Pride in ethnic heritage.
    - ▶ Want people to know their racial and ethnic groups are present.
  - ▶ Makes our voices heard.
  - ▶ Hope for a better future for future generations.
  - ▶ Is a civic responsibility.

# Outcomes: Communications Recommendations

- ▶ Examples of organizational outreach and advocacy activities
  - ▶ Bellingham Public Library
    - ▶ **Outreach:** Have documents that show that undocumented people the risks and benefits of taking the census.
  - ▶ Bellingham Food bank
    - ▶ **Advocacy:** Volunteers and clients could talk with people while they are in line for food as well as having information at intake desk.
  - ▶ Goodwill
    - ▶ **Outreach:** Share news articles, podcasts and flyers that target specific populations. Provide FAQs
  - ▶ NAMI Whatcom
    - ▶ **Outreach:** Give out information sheets to support groups and classes to inform people about the importance of participating
    - ▶ **Advocacy:** Spread awareness on what type of information will be on census in order to ease the worries of those whom may be struggling with thoughts such as paranoia over usage of data.



# Outcomes: Volunteer Plan

- ▶ We shared the Whatcom County volunteer plan with volunteer centers across Washington state
- ▶ Two main types of volunteer opportunities:
  - ▶ Outreach volunteers:
    - ▶ Represent communities and act as trusted members
    - ▶ Help spread information about why it is important to participate in the census
  - ▶ Response volunteers:
    - ▶ Staff Questionnaire Assistance Centers and provide resources to help with census response

# Outcomes: Volunteer Plan

- ▶ **Examples of Whatcom County organizations with plans to utilize volunteers**
  - ▶ **Opportunity Council of Whatcom County**
    - ▶ **Response:** Volunteers who speak multiple languages help support census walk in hours in our community resource centers.
  - ▶ **Whatcom CERT:**
    - ▶ **Outreach:** Our volunteers need the essential facts and “myth busters” to enable them to effectively represent census.
    - ▶ **Response:** We have over 400 volunteers that can be trusted messengers and staff for question assistance.
  - ▶ **Whatcom League of Women Voters Voting Rights Committee**
    - ▶ **Outreach:** Have census information available at League voter registration tables. Additionally, connect and collaborate with school PTA's, local churches (Assumption's Spanish speaking services), Chamber of Commerce, and Mayors of small cities.
    - ▶ **Response:** Help recruit volunteers to staff computer labs - potentially at Bellingham library skillshare area and other libraries in the county to assist with completing census
  - ▶ **WTA**
    - ▶ **Response:** Have volunteers ride bus to areas with low response rates to encourage people to fill out form (buses equipped with Wi-fi).

# Outcomes: Higher Education

- ▶ Check out [Western Washington University's four-minute video](#) giving you highlights of what to expect in the 2020 Census!

# Next steps

- ▶ Our work with partner organizations helped us identify a few key areas they would need continued support with in order to be successful in undertaking the actions they plan:
  - ▶ Training for staff and volunteers
    - ▶ About the importance of the census and issues we are facing. Goal: to create census advocates
    - ▶ Questionnaire assistance center training
  - ▶ Communications materials support
    - ▶ Giveaways (pens, buttons, etc)
    - ▶ Outreach materials in identified languages (posters, flyers, handbills)
    - ▶ Banners
  - ▶ Questionnaire Assistance Center support
    - ▶ Laptops/ipads and phones
    - ▶ Wi-fi hotspots

# Thank you!

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