

News Release
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New Census Outreach Grant Opportunities Available Through Networks Northwest

TRAVERSE CITY, MI – The next US Census will begin in April 2020. The United States Constitution requires that the residential population of the country be counted every 10 years. Every resident will be given an opportunity to respond online from April to July, with census enumerators following up door to door if they did not and/or were not able to respond online.

Planning for the 2020 US Census process has begun and it is very important for the region and Michigan to be prepared. The more accurate the upcoming census count, the more likely we will optimize representation for Michigan and resources for the region. There are many activities occurring to ensure an accurate count, including within the nonprofit sector. Networks Northwest, in partnership with the Michigan Nonprofit Association, is announcing the "Be Counted Northwest Michigan" program.

"This program will be supporting a variety of local efforts for a complete and accurate count," said Matt McCauley, CEO of Networks Northwest. "Our activities will focus on working with the nonprofit sector to ensure that those who are often underrepresented in the census get counted, our representative democracy is dependent on it."

A complete and accurate count is vital for communities. Census data is used to distribute funding for road repairs, school improvements, and social programs.

"Nonprofits are uniquely positioned to catalyze civic engagement in the communities that they serve," said Donna Murray-Brown, President and CEO of the Michigan Nonprofit Association.

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“They are the ones that actively work more granularly with people in what their concerns and challenges and aspirations are.”

The number and distribution of elected officials are also based on census data. Nonprofit organizations, businesses, and governments use census data to identify community needs and evaluate solutions to difficult problems.

Historically, some populations – including low-income households, seasonal residents, communities of color, immigrants, and young children – have been undercounted in the census. Undercounts happen for many reasons. People may not understand why it is important, may not trust the government, or may not want to share their information. Based on a recent study from The George Washington University, Michigan receives over \$14.5 billion dollars (about \$1,467 per person) from the 16 largest federal programs that disburse funds based on census figures. Without an accurate census count of our entire community, the potential for leaving much needed resources on the table for our 10 county region is at risk.

Networks Northwest is serving as the regional Census Hub Administrator for the Be Counted Northwest Michigan campaign. A Regional Census Hub Advisory Committee is forming to provide guidance to Networks Northwest on their Census 2020 efforts including, but not limited to, grantmaking, advocacy, media and community outreach. This will be a collaborative process with existing nonprofit organizations that currently work and serve our identified populations at risk of being undercounted. The campaign will mobilize nonprofits to encourage participation in the 2020 Census, provide trainings and tools for nonprofits on effective outreach tactics, assist nonprofits in identifying hard-to-count communities, award mini-grants to local nonprofits, coordinate a statewide communications plan, and work with government officials to avoid duplication of efforts and enhance governments’ communication and outreach efforts to ensure a complete count.

Networks Northwest is offering funding and technical assistance for Census 2020 outreach activities to organizations that serve historically undercounted communities in the following 10 counties: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee and Wexford Counties. Grants are available to support projects that will:

- Engage and educate undercounted communities about the importance of the 2020 Census
- Familiarize communities with the census process and changes to the 2020 Census
- Develop and implement effective strategies to boost census participation and support communities beyond the life of the project

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Within these priorities, applicants should design a project that best serves their community. Projects could include knocking on doors and visiting community events, partnering with local businesses to connect with employees and customers, providing opportunities to access online census forms, sharing stories through local media and online networks, and other innovative and effective ways of connecting with people on this issue.

More information about Be Counted Northwest Michigan is available at, nwm.org/BeCountedNW.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by e-mailing Dan Boss at dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?). Or, phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: networksnorthwest.org/media

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10 county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works, Small Business Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our web site, networksnorthwest.org Networks Northwest's member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.