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Lessons for Making Sure Everyone Still Counts

Nonprofits led outreach efforts for the 2020 Census to ensure every person was counted because every person counts. Now, state associations of nonprofits are sharing what they learned from the 2020 Census to raise voices of underrepresented populations and guarantee lessons learned are aggressively applied in the future.

Michigan Nonprofit Association is utilizing insights from its census campaign to promote racial equity so communities of color have greater voice and more equitable representation in elections. The association recognized that the census has historically and disproportionately missed people of color, immigrant communities, and low-income populations, which led to inequality in political power, government funding, and private-sector investment for these communities. MNA's new [Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission \(ICRC\) campaign](#) builds on work by Michigan's nonprofits during the 2020 Census that helped historically uncounted and undercounted populations get counted.

"MNA is now mobilizing nonprofits again using this same model to transparently achieve fair and impartial district maps for Michigan, specifically to promote racial equity so that communities of color have a voice and are not locked out of the important decision-making that occurs at the local, state, and federal levels," according to the ICRC. The campaign will push to [mobilize nonprofits and help them](#)

[understand](#) how the redistricting commission works, what is at stake, and ways communities can participate.

Also looking to build on what was learned from the 2020 Census, **Forefront**, the state association of nonprofits in **Illinois**, recently issued a report on get out the count efforts for the 2020 Census and how to make 2030 even more of a success in the state. The [IL Count Me In 2020 Executive Summary and Recommendations for 2030](#) shares initial findings, challenges faced in receiving an accurate count, and recommendations for a successful 2030 Census count and beyond. Collaboration and concerted efforts by Forefront and a diverse group of partners resulted in “the highest self-response rate of the ten most populous states in the country.”

The Forefront report celebrates how “continually changing and adjusting tactics at the local and national level” allowed the Illinois census coalition, one of the largest private/public partnerships in the country, to be powerful and resilient. The report shares learnings from myriad challenges: the citizenship question, timeline changes, exclusion of undocumented residents, the COVID-19 pandemic, spread of misinformation, and cross-sector coordination. For 2030, Forefront recommends creating a backbone organization, starting planning earlier, providing adequate and flexible funding, maintaining consistent engagement with collaborators, and creating effective and inclusive messaging.

Looking to the past allows for a clearer future. Nonprofits are building upon these lessons so all can be counted and represented equitably in political representation and government funding going forward. Because everyone still counts.