

In mid-January 2020, the **Promise of Democracy Foundation, Inc (PDF)** in conjunction with our state affiliate, the **Ohio Voter Fund (OVF)** launched a Census 2020 Hard to Count (HTC) Community Outreach Campaign in the cities of Cleveland, East Cleveland, and Cleveland Heights Ohio. HTC outreach efforts targeted residents who had low response rates from the 2010 census. In collaboration with the *Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition (OCAC)* and our regional leads, PDF/OVF targeted zip codes from households who had low responses rates to the early census 2020 survey. The program is being conducted in three phases detailed below.

**Phase I Building Partnerships**

In the early stages of our Census outreach efforts in January though mid March OVF was very active in reaching out to partners to utilize their organizations as platforms for census information and awareness outreach. This outreach helped to re-enforce the message that their clients participation in the census will help ensure their representation and ensure resources to our community from the federal and state government will more accurately reflect the real demographics of their communities.

During this period OVF reached out to local government entities including the East Cleveland, Cleveland Heights City Council, and the City of Cleveland Mayor's office to develop partnership in Census outreach efforts. We also asked local agencies and businesses that interact with local area residents to partner with us to provide their organizations as platforms for census information dissemination and awareness outreach through the end of the campaign.

**Phase II Revised Outreach Plans Post Covid 19**

Our original plans called for locating field outreach efforts in close partnership with agencies, civic associations and local areas businesses that serves HTC communities. However, Ohio’s Mid-March stay at home orders related to the COVID-19 epidemic required us to suspend those efforts and develop plans for converting the program from field efforts. The new phase II of our program will utilize phone, text, direct mail and on-line digital messaging and outreach efforts.

Specifically, our revised HTC targeting plans calls for accessing data from OVF’s VAN and targeting actual residents from HTC zip-codes who have been registered to vote by the OVF field teams since 2016. In addition to this data OVF will target residents from the City of East Cleveland where the census response rate stood at only 32% at the end of June. A special effort will be undertaken to conduct live relational based phone banking to remind fellow East Clevelanders to complete the census form. Phone scripts will be developed that emphasizes the connection between the much-needed funding for human needs in East Cleveland and the importance of responding to the survey before the deadline.

Phase II phone and mail outreach efforts will launch in mid June 2020 and continue through July 31, 2020. The available data of participation rates from our HTC communities will also impact the scope and length of the program’s effort. Development of the PDF/OVF Digital Communication and Messaging component will also take place during this period. This component will be fully engaged by mid June and continue throughout the campaign.

**Phase III Modified Covid 19 Compliant Field Outreach**

Beginning in early August, (depending on the availability of funding and congressional approval of the extended dates), OVF will extend its outreach efforts into the fall through October 31, 2020. PDF/OVF OVF will resume coordination with community partners to identify and conduct *social distancing compliant* outreach in the remaining hard to count precincts with a low percentage of responses. The campaign will utilize our experienced canvas teams to place door hangers on households located in precincts with low response rates. The Phase III campaign’s goal is to reach a minimum of 1,150 households in targeted precincts beginning August 1, 2020 through October 31, 2020.

Depending on the state guidelines, OVF is prepared to resume a modified and Ohio Health Department compliant outreach in conjunction with our pre-established partners by placing Census 2020 literature on-site in high traffic locations for the duration of the campaign. As local areas businesses reopen including Barbershops, Hair Salons, Churches and Community Centers, we will be sending canvas teams to place posters, handbills, Census FAQ and other literature in establishments to remind their customers and residents of the importance of their participation.

**Summary**

The Promise of Democracy Foundation has conducted neighborhood-based voter registration drives in conjunction with the Ohio Voter Fund since 2012 and has capacity to reach HTC communities with field staff who live, work, shop, and worship in those communities. To carry out these efforts, PDF/OVF will re-established its existing partnerships with multiple community-based service agencies, health centers, food banks, shopping centers, civic and faith-based organizations.

We believe OVF/PDF’s many years of voter registration and neighborhood canvassing within these HTC Communities will allow us to gain a stronger foothold in the designated HTC targets as residents have grown accustom to our presence and messaging within their community. Our experienced team can provide direct support for relational outreach and technical assistance to support the outreach efforts as needed.

We thank the Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition, the Cleveland Foundation and our community partners for stepping forward and assisting local grassroots organizations in the Cleveland area with much needed funding to resume our efforts to carry out this important work during this critical window of time in our history. Its not too late to support this critical effort. Please visit our website at promiseofdemocracy.org for more information on how you can support this effort.