

## Executive Summary

The decennial Census has occurred every 10 years in the United States since 1790. For the 24<sup>th</sup> occurrence of the decennial Census, Arlington initiated its Census 2020 program to ensure every Arlingtonian was counted as of April 1, 2020.

Information collected in the decennial Census impacts federal funding, redistricting, and planning for community services. Federal funding distributed to communities is determined through the decennial Census. When the population is undercounted, jurisdictions don't receive the funding needed for vital community services. Census data are used by state officials to redraw the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts (also known as redistricting); and to reapportion the House of Representatives, determining how many seats each state gets. Census data also are instrumental in helping us plan for future community needs and services, such as emergency services, schools, hospitals, human services, libraries, and transportation services and infrastructure.

A core staff team led a massive countywide effort to educate the public on the importance of participation in the 2020 Census. This effort involved leading the Arlington Complete Count Committee (CCC), a 42-person, County Manager-appointed committee made up of Arlington residents and staff. Together staff and the CCC defined an outreach plan and worked as Census Ambassadors throughout the community.

The CCC and the core staff team focused outreach efforts on the hard-to-count population, those less likely to respond to the Census, recruiting over 370 Census Partners and Champions and attending over 300 events. They also held several special events to train partners, canvas neighborhoods, and count residents.

April 1, 2020  
**Everyone Counts!**  
[arlingtonva.us/census](https://arlingtonva.us/census)

In mid-March, COVID-19 forced the suspension of in-person Census outreach efforts. During this time, the CCC contacted residents through social media, virtual events and sessions, and more. On Census Day, April 1, 2020, Arlington hosted a Twitterstorm, releasing messaging on the importance of the Census and encouraging people to take the Census.

The County also held virtual events with community leaders, Census Bureau leadership and CCC members to discuss current Census operations, encourage partners to continue promotions, and boost Census participation. As a part of the COVID-19 food distribution process, the County included information and giveaways in each bag to reach those in the hard-to-count population.

In July, the Census Bureau resumed operations and partnered with the County to set up Mobile Questionnaire Assistance (MQA) sites. Using social distancing and other safe measures, MQA staff deployed to low response areas and encouraged people to take the Census on site.

The County also held several “get counted” events, during which attendees received free cleaning supplies (hard to obtain during the pandemic) and participants had the opportunity to complete the Census. These events proved successful with thousands of encounters with residents and hundreds completing the Census.

Census operations concluded on October 15, 2020, with an estimated 99.98% of Arlington households enumerated. The results showed 76.5% of Arlington households self-responded to the Census online, by phone, or by mail. The remaining 23.5% of households received visits from Census takers from the Crystal City Area Census Office.

This report will discuss the challenges and victories, both operational and external, that the core staff encountered, as well as lessons learned for the next decennial Census. The final participation rate and population totals will be available in 2021.

## *Considerations for 2030*

### **Administration and Management**

- ***Interdepartmental Core Staff Team:*** Develop a core staff team with 5-7 members starting in Fall 2028. The first duties of the core staff team should be self-education on the 2030 Census, developing branding for Arlington promotions, and recommending members of the CCC.
- ***Dedicated Budget Funding:*** Secure dedicated funding (\$100,000) for use from January 2029 – October 2030.
- ***County Board and School Board Liaisons:*** Appoint a representative from the County Board and School Board to work with the CCC and further the Census messaging throughout the community.

### **CCC and Partnership**

- ***Complete Count Committee:*** Develop a Manager-appointed CCC with influential Arlington residents who represent the hard-to-count population.
- ***CCC Grass Roots Campaign:*** Start CCC operations one year from the count to focus on the phases of education, grass roots campaign development, and campaign implementation.
- ***Arlington Census Partners:*** Establish an Arlington Census Partners program that begins at the Census Kickoff and continue to add partners throughout the engagement process.
- ***Partner with Census Bureau:*** Establish a relationship with the local Partnership Specialists and include them in CCC meetings, planning, and outreach.

### **Communications and Outreach:**

- ***Outreach Schedule:*** Establish a timeline for the campaign that allows for public awareness, education, and be counted operations. Weave Census education and promotions into previously planned events. Remain flexible to adjust operations to reach the hard-to-count communities.
- ***Arlington 2020 Census Branding and Materials:*** Develop an online toolkit that has graphics, talking points, newsletters, videos, and links to Census Bureau materials.
- ***Census in Schools:*** Partner with APS in early 2029, and work with them to integrate the Census in Schools program.
- ***Language Translation and Interpretation:*** Secure funding for translation and interpretation services and determine the most needed languages for translation.