

Comments on Federal Register Notice, Volume 83 No 248. Friday December 28, 2018

From: Council of Professional Associations for Federal Statistics (COPAFS)

The Census of Population is the largest peacetime operation conducted at one time in the United States. Because it is only conducted every ten years, the operations need to be reexamined and redesigned to meet the changing societal needs, as well as the technology that is most efficient in enumerating the population. We are pleased to learn of new innovations and procedures in the methods and operations. Our comments will address the design changes in four key areas.

Address Canvassing Operation. The methods used for the past seven censuses have been primarily focused on an address canvassing procedure that precedes the census enumeration, using a listing process. Numerous studies have demonstrated that it is not feasible to achieve a “gold standard” list exclusively using this process. The last two censuses have augmented the previous census list with the USPS Delivery Sequence File as well as input from state and local governments and other third parties prior to a listing operation. The innovation for this census is the use of geospatial information and federal administrative records. These additional sources may identify housing locations that otherwise might be missed. These two additional sources should contribute to identification of housing locations that might otherwise be missed. A high-quality address list is critical to the success of the enumeration of occupants

Optimizing Self-Response. Finding methods of increasing the ability and accessibility of individuals and households to respond to the census has been a goal of the Census Bureau following the 1990 Census, beginning then with an effort to make the paper questionnaire more user-friendly. This has been followed with efforts to assist response on the internet, by phone, on in person. Facilitating a high internet response will be a good indicator of a high-quality enumeration. Additionally, the options for responding have been increased and tailored to meet more different members of our society who might not respond on the web. Of critical importance are the partnerships with ethnic and other communities where language and culture are different.

Utilizing Administrative Records and Third-Party Data. As noted above the Census Bureau will use administrative records in compiling the final address list, Master Address File, for the 2020 Census. However, for the 2020 Census administrative records will be used to reduce follow-up on vacant housing units, on household that do not self-respond and whom the Census Bureau is not able to contact by mail. This approach is an improvement upon proxy response by neighbors, postmen, etc. and should be given high priority in the development of specific enumeration procedures.

Re-engineering Field Operations. The goal is to optimize the use of technology and reduce the use of paper. This requires that computer software and hardware be utilized in as many operations as feasible and implemented for the most part in mobile devices. This goal makes the initial process of data collection and the subsequent process of processing and summarization more efficient and leads to a higher quality operation. We commend the Census Bureau in striving to achieve this goal.