

CENSUS INFORMATION CENTER (CIC)

# Core Competencies Handbook





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# Welcome from the CIC Steering Committee

Dear CIC Representative,

The members of your 2018 CIC Steering Committee are pleased to present you with this Core Competencies Handbook. It is intended to be used as a curriculum to guide you in developing the necessary skills to become a more effective CIC. We have compiled a list of census programs, concepts, and data access tools that make up our “core competencies”. The “required competencies” are those areas in which every CIC representative should be skilled.

A second set of programs, concepts, and tools make up our “recommended competencies”. We feel that understanding these areas would be beneficial, but not necessarily essential for every CIC. Each of these programs, concepts and tools is described in terms of its purpose and value, along with a link to additional information and/or access.

We hope you find this handbook to be a valuable resource. We wish to express our sincere thanks to the CLMSO-DUB staff for compiling and weaving together the information to create the content for this handbook.

Wishing you much success with your CIC,  
Your 2017-2018 CIC Steering Committee

Melanie Poulter, Chair  
Dan Ichinose, Vice-Chair  
Joon Bang  
Margaret Lowry  
Emily Makahi  
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**Contact us:**

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# Core Competencies Introduction

## ***What is the U. S. Census Bureau?***

The U. S. Census Bureau is a principal agency of the Federal government responsible for producing data about the American people and economy. The Census Bureau's primary function is to conduct the U.S. Census every ten years, and to continually conduct dozens of other censuses and surveys. The Census Bureau's various censuses and surveys: help allocate more than \$400 billion in federal funds every year; help states, local communities, and businesses make informed decisions; and allocate seats to the U.S. House of Representatives based on states' populations.

The Census Bureau is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce and its director is appointed by the President of the United States. The Census Bureau's mission is to serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy.

The Census Bureau is headquartered in Suitland, Maryland a few miles from Washington, D.C. Much of the Bureau's surveying is coordinated through six Regional Offices. The Regional Offices are responsible for all data collections, data dissemination, and geographic operations. The Regional Offices are located in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia. To find the Regional Office that coordinates your state, go to [Census.gov/about/regions.html](https://www.census.gov/about/regions.html).

## ***What is the Census Information Center Program?***

The Census Information Center (CIC) program is a partnership between the U.S. Census Bureau and 52 non-profit national and community-based organizations, focused primarily on underserved communities who are historically less likely to participate in censuses and surveys.

For a list of current CICs, go to [Census.gov/about/partners/cic.html](https://www.census.gov/about/partners/cic.html).

## ***Why does the Census Information Center Program exist?***

The mission of the CIC Program is to promote and provide timely access to Census Bureau data products through a wide network of organizations to empower underserved population groups. Those organizations effectively process and disseminate Census Bureau data to underserved population groups in easily understandable formats.

## ***How does the Census Information Center Program work?***

The relationship between the Census Bureau and your organization is very important in ensuring that data and data access are available to underserved communities. According to your Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), the Census Bureau agrees to provide members of the Census Information Center (CIC) network with training on the latest tools, products, and services that the Bureau has to offer. This training is conducted during the Annual Training Conference and through several webinars held throughout the year.

To function as an effective CIC, it is essential to understand and have a basic level of competency in a number of key areas, including:

- The Decennial Census
- The American Community Survey
- The Population Estimates Program
- The Economic Census
- Race, Ancestry, and Ethnicity
- Census Geographies
- Title 13
- American FactFinder
- The Current Population Survey
- Margin of Error
- DataFerrett
- The State Data Center Network
- Regional Offices and Data Dissemination Specialists
- Live and Webinar Training Sessions
- SharePoint
- Census.gov

Having knowledge of these areas is pertinent to your role and success as a CIC. This allows you to speak about the Census and its programs, conduct trainings, and answer data requests. The purpose of this handbook is to inform you and to serve as a resource going forward.

# Required Competencies: Programs

## **Decennial Census**

### ***What is the Decennial Census?***

The Decennial Census is the process of systematically counting and recording data about the entire national population. The Decennial Census counts EVERY resident in the United States. The Decennial Census collects basic demographic and housing information, such as age, sex, race, relationship, and housing tenure.

### ***When is it conducted?***

The Decennial Census is conducted every ten years, in years ending in “0”. Because it is conducted every ten years, it is also referred to as “the Census”. It is mandated by the Constitution:

***“The actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent term of 10 years, in such manner as they shall by law direct.”*** -- The Constitution of the United States, Article I, Section 2

April 1 is Census Day. The last census was in 2010. The next census will take place April 1, 2020.

### ***Why is it important?***

After the data are tabulated, the Census Bureau has to hand deliver the population counts to the President of the United States by December 31 of that same year.

The data from the Census determine how the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are divided among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and guide decisions about redistricting. Redistricting is the process of changing electoral district and constituency boundaries, usually in response to periodic census results.

### ***How does the Census impact your community?***

The data from the Census help determine how federal funds are allocated. Legislators use these data to understand where community services are needed. This includes services for the elderly, new roads and schools, job-training centers, and more.

### ***How can you access Decennial Census data?***

To learn more about the Decennial Census data, go to: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/data.html>

To access Decennial Census data, go to:

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=t>

The Census Bureau offers live and recorded webinar training sessions to help users access and understand our data. For more information, go to: <https://www.census.gov/data/training-workshops.html>

# The American Community Survey (ACS)

## ***What is the ACS?***

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about our nation and its people. The ACS is a supplemental survey of the Decennial Census, replacing the "long form" that previously was sent to a percentage of households once every 10 years. The ACS is distributed randomly to households, and participation is mandatory for the households who receive it.

The ACS customizes a community survey for Puerto Rico, and produces it in English and Spanish.

## ***When is it conducted?***

The Census Bureau randomly mails hard-copy questionnaires or emails instructions for online responses to more than 250,000 households every month. Unlike the Decennial Census, the ACS is an ongoing and random survey so not everyone receives it at one time.

## ***Why is it important?***

The ACS serves the nation by providing a consistent and cohesive collection of population, social, housing, and economic characteristics that are comparable across all U.S. geographies.

Data collected through the ACS are much more detailed than those collected through the Decennial Census, and include such items as income, language, educational attainment, job type, number of vehicles, length of residence, etc., and help communities understand and appropriately provide services for their populations.

## ***How does the ACS impact your community?***

Information from the survey generates data that help determine how more than \$400 billion in federal and state funds are distributed each year. Some examples of how the ACS impacts your community are:

- Throughout the federal government, agencies use ACS estimates to inform public policy, distribute funds, and assess programs.
- Information from the ACS is critical to state and local agencies. Planners and policymakers use the up-to-date estimates to evaluate the need for new roads, hospitals, schools, senior services, and other basic services.
- ACS estimates are available to the public, and are routinely used by researchers, nonprofit organizations, and community groups.

- ACS estimates are available for tribal planners and administrators, as well as national organizations serving American Indians and Alaska Natives, to use in planning for future economic development, housing needs, and access to health and educational services.

The ACS creates period estimates, which means they represent the characteristics of the population and housing over a specific data collection period:

- **1-year estimates:** 12 months of collected data, for areas with populations of 65,000+
- **5-year estimates:** 60 months of collected data, for all areas

### ***How can you access ACS data?***

To learn more about ACS data, go to <https://Census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html>.

To access ACS data, go to <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.

The Census Bureau offers upcoming and recorded webinar training sessions to help users access and understand our data. For more information, go to: <https://www.census.gov/data/training-workshops.html>.

### ***How do questions become a part of ACS?***

The U.S. Census Bureau must balance the information needs of a growing, changing nation with respect for the privacy and time of the American public. In order for questions to become part of the ACS extensive testing, reviews and evaluations are conducted. Below are steps used to change the survey. Please note that these steps may need to be modified:

#### **Step 1.**

A federal agency proposes a new or changed survey question

#### **Step 2.**

OMB and Census Bureau decide whether the change has merit

#### **Step 3.**

Create wording options

#### **Step 4.**

Test different ways to ask the question

#### **Step 5.**

Evaluate question performance in a field test

#### **Step 6.**

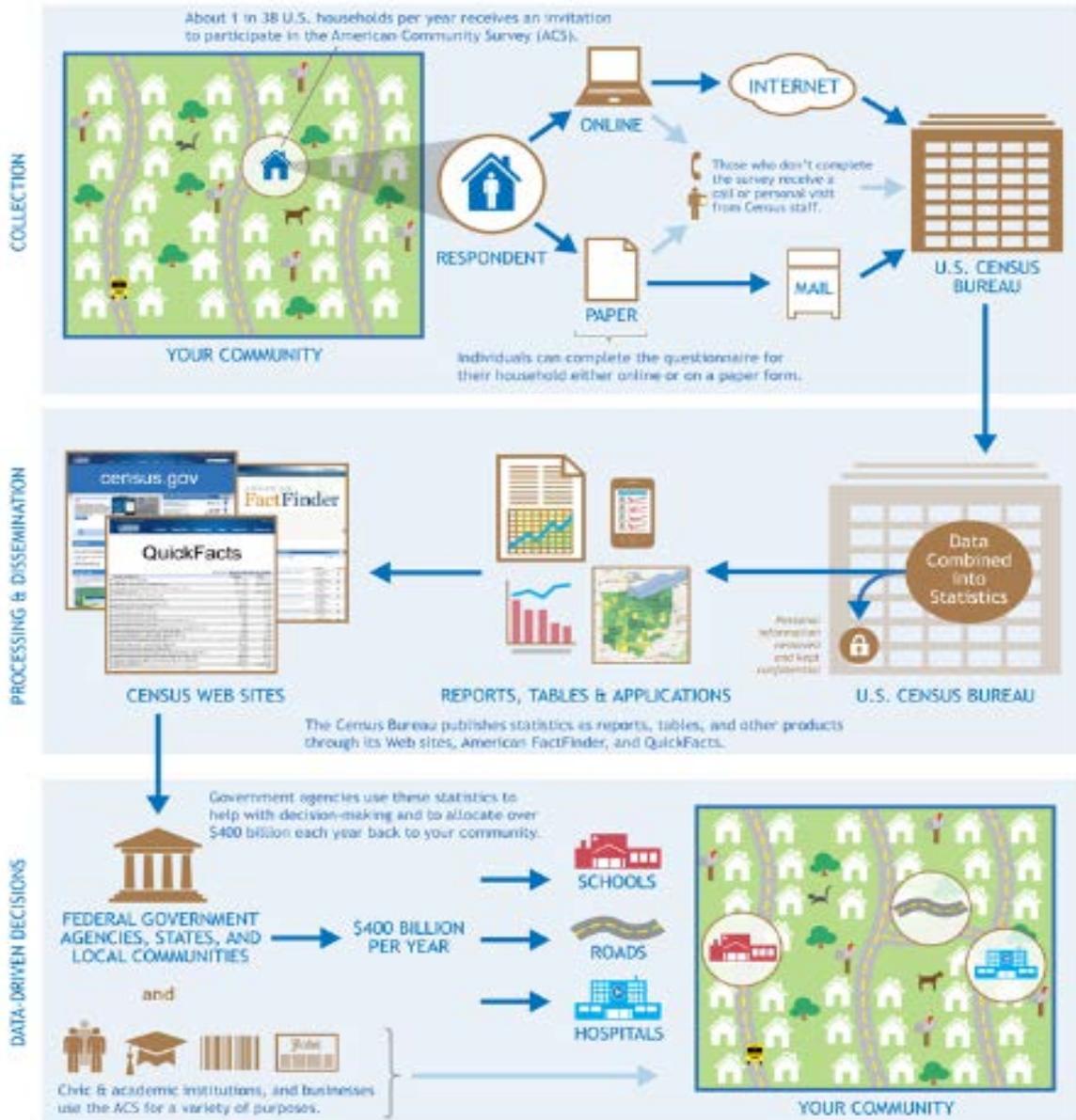
OMB solicits public comment; approves or rejects change

#### **Step 7.**

Census Bureau implements the change

Here is an infographic that helps explain how the ACS works for you and your community:

## How the American Community Survey Works for Your Community



# **The Population Estimates Program**

## ***What are Populations Estimates?***

The Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program (PEP) produces estimates of the population for the United States, its states, counties, cities, and towns, as well as for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and its *municipios*. Demographic components of population change (births, deaths, and migration) are produced at the national, state, and county levels of geography. Additionally, housing unit estimates are produced for the nation, states, and counties.

The PEP utilizes current data on births, deaths, and migration to calculate population change from the time of the most recent decennial census, and to produce a time series of estimates of population, demographic components of change, and housing units. The annual time series of estimates begins with the most recent decennial census data and extends to the vintage year.

## ***When is it conducted?***

The PEP is conducted annually. The PEP produces July 1 estimates for years after the last published decennial census.

## ***Why is it important?***

The PEP produces estimates that are used each year as the official population and housing counts for cities, counties and states across the nation. These PEP estimates are used in Federal funding allocations, in setting the levels of national surveys, and in monitoring recent demographic changes.

## ***How does the PEP impact your community?***

These estimates are used at the state and local level to support decisions on funding and other resource distribution, school districting, reporting, non-profit grant proposals, liquor board and commercial permits, communication to constituents, and to compare jurisdictions.

## ***How can you access PEP data?***

To learn more about and to access PEP data, go to: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>.

## **The Economic Census**



### ***What is the Economic Census?***

The Economic Census is the U.S. Government's official five-year measure of American business and the economy down to the geographic levels of county, city, and zip code. The data produced are used for planning and key economic reports, and economic development and business decisions.

### ***When is it conducted?***

The Economic Census is conducted every five years, in years ending in 2 and 7. Large, medium and small businesses from most sectors are required to participate in the Economic Census.

The last Economic Census took place in 2017. The next Economic Census will take place in 2022.

### ***Why is it important?***

The Economic Census informs legislation and guides policy decisions, advances economic vitality, encourages economic growth, fosters job creation, supports deficit reduction, and otherwise provides for effective government.

### ***How does the Economic Census impact your community?***

Entrepreneurs can use statistics from the Economic Census to research the industry in which they are considering starting a business and for related industries at the local level in their business plan.

Local economic development organizations, trade associations, and chambers of commerce rely on these data for economic development and business decisions.

Business owners and managers can analyze information for their customers at the local level to identify unsaturated or emerging/growing markets for their products and for opportunities for expansion.

National, state, and local government agencies, analysts, and business organizations use Economic Census data for planning and key economic reports.

***How can you access Economic Census data?***

To learn more about Economic Census data, go to <https://www.census.gov/econ/>

To access Economic Census data, go to :

<https://www.census.gov/econ/geography.html>

<https://www.census.gov/econ/survey.html>

or <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=t>

# Required Competencies:

## Census Concepts

### **Race, Ethnicity, and Ancestry**

***The Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity to be two separate and distinct concepts.***

#### ***How does the Census Bureau define race?***

The Census Bureau complies with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) standards for maintaining, collecting, and presenting data on race, which were revised in October 1997. Race is defined as a person's self-identification with one or more social groups. An individual can report as White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or some other race. Survey respondents may report multiple races. An individual's response to the race question is based upon self-identification. The Census Bureau does not tell individuals which boxes to mark or what heritage to write in.

Periodically, the Census Bureau conducts extensive research and testing to assess the need for revisions or additions to the race and ethnicity categories, and recommendations are made to OMB for final approval.

#### ***What region of origin does the Census Bureau consider for each race category?***

OMB requires five minimum categories: White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

White	Black or African American	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Europe	Africa	East Asia	North America	Hawaii
Middle East	Afro-Caribbean	Southeast Asia	South America	Guam
North Africa		South Asia	Central America	Samoa
		India		Pacific Islands

### ***How are data for people reporting two or more races tabulated beyond showing a total number of people reporting two or more races?***

The Census Bureau uses two approaches in its standard data products, to present data for people reporting two or more races.

One approach, which is implemented in selected data products, is to show the 57 possible combinations of the six race groups (*White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race*). These detailed categories can be combined, if desired, to show the number of people with two races, the number with three races, and so forth.

The second approach, which also is implemented in selected data products, is to show the number of times a respondent reports one of the six race categories either alone in or combination with the other five race categories. Thus, the tabulation category "Black or African American alone or in combination with one or more other races" will include all people who reported only Black or African American and people who reported Black or African American in combination with any of the other five race categories.

### ***Are people who report two or more races counted twice?***

Individuals are counted only once. However, in tabulation approaches including the six race groups shown *alone or in combination* with one or more other races, respondents are tallied in each of the race groups they have reported. For example, people who reported *Asian* and *Black or African American* would be counted both in the "Asian alone or in combination" population and also in the "Black or African American alone or in combination" population. Consequently, the total of the six alone or in combination groups will exceed the total population whenever some people in the group of interest reported more than one race.

### ***What is ethnicity?***

Ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not. For this reason, ethnicity is broken into two categories, Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics may report any race.

### ***How are race and ethnicity data collected?***

The Census Bureau collects these data through survey respondents; answers from the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey (ACS).

### ***Why does the Census Bureau collect data on race and ethnicity?***

Race and ethnicity data are critical to policy and funding decisions that affect civil rights and educational opportunities, assess equal employment practices, ensure equal access to health care, and impact legislative redistricting.

### ***What about ancestry?***

Ancestry refers to a person's ethnic origin or descent, "roots", heritage, place of birth, or their parents'/ancestors' place of birth before their arrival in the United States. Ethnic identities might not represent geographic areas.

The Census Bureau currently collects ancestry data through the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS question on ancestry is "What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?" The text after the question provides examples of particular ethnic groups. The response area for the question consists of two write-in lines in which respondents can report ancestry or ancestries with which they identify. The Census Bureau codes up to two ancestries per person. If a person reports more than two ancestries, they generally take the first two. For example, if a person reports German, Italian, and Scottish, then the Census Bureau would code German and Italian.

A person's ancestry is not necessarily the same as his or her place of birth; i.e., not all people of German ancestry were born in Germany (in fact, most were not).

### ***Can the information on race, ethnicity, and ancestry be used to enforce immigration laws on individuals and families?***

No, the Census Bureau adheres to strict confidentiality laws that prohibit sharing of respondent information. The Census Bureau does not share respondent answers with immigration, law enforcement, or tax collection agencies, or any other organization.

To learn more about race, ethnicity and ancestry as a Census concept, go to:

<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race.html>

<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin.html>

<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/ancestry.html>

Access to data: <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race.html>

## **Census Geography**

Geography is central to the work of the Census Bureau, providing the framework for survey design, sample selection, data collection, tabulation, and dissemination. Geography provides meaning and context to statistical data.

Given the diversity of the U.S. population, economic activities, and geographic areas, use of the latest and best geographic methodologies is critical to the Census Bureau's ability to serve as the leading provider of statistical and geospatial data. Geographic area concepts, information, and statistical data must keep pace with the needs of the researchers and analysts who work to understand the changing distribution and characteristics of American people, places, and economy.

The Census Bureau collects, aggregates, and disseminates data at multiple geographic levels. Most census geographies are designed to be nested – a number of smaller level geographic areas combine to form a larger geographic area. The smallest geographic area for which the Census Bureau tabulates data is the Census Block. Census Blocks are formed by streets, roads, railroads, streams and other bodies of water, other visible physical and cultural features, and the legal boundaries shown on Census Bureau maps. Census data for these areas serve as a valuable source for small-area geographic studies. A group of Census Blocks make up a Block Group.

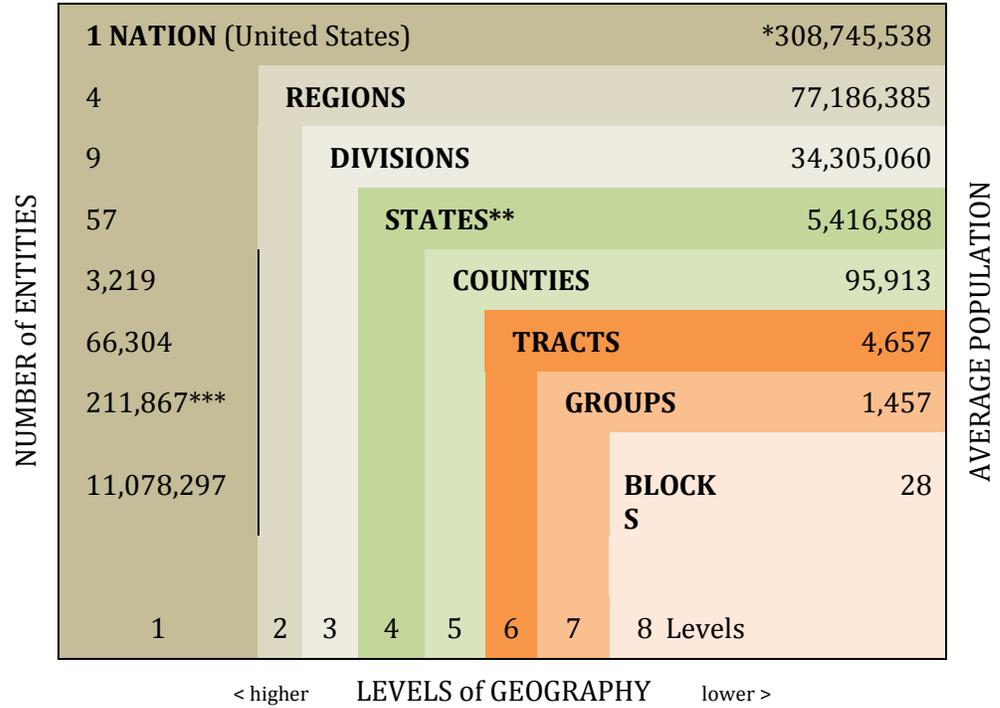
Block Groups are statistical divisions of Census Tracts, are generally defined to contain between 600 and 3,000 people, and are used to present data and control block numbering. A Block Group usually covers a contiguous area. Each Census Tract contains at least one Block Group, and Block Groups are uniquely numbered within the Census Tract. Within the standard census geographic hierarchy, Block Groups never cross state, county, or census tract boundaries but may cross the boundaries of any other geographic entity.

Census Tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county or equivalent entity and generally have a population size between 1,200 and 8,000 people, with an optimum size of 4,000 people.

Then the data are aggregated according to progressively larger groups, County, State, Division, Region, and ultimately National. The next pages provide more visual detail on Census Geography.

Below is a chart explaining the Census Geography Hierarchy for the nested geographies:

### HIERARCHY of KEY GEOGRAPHIES



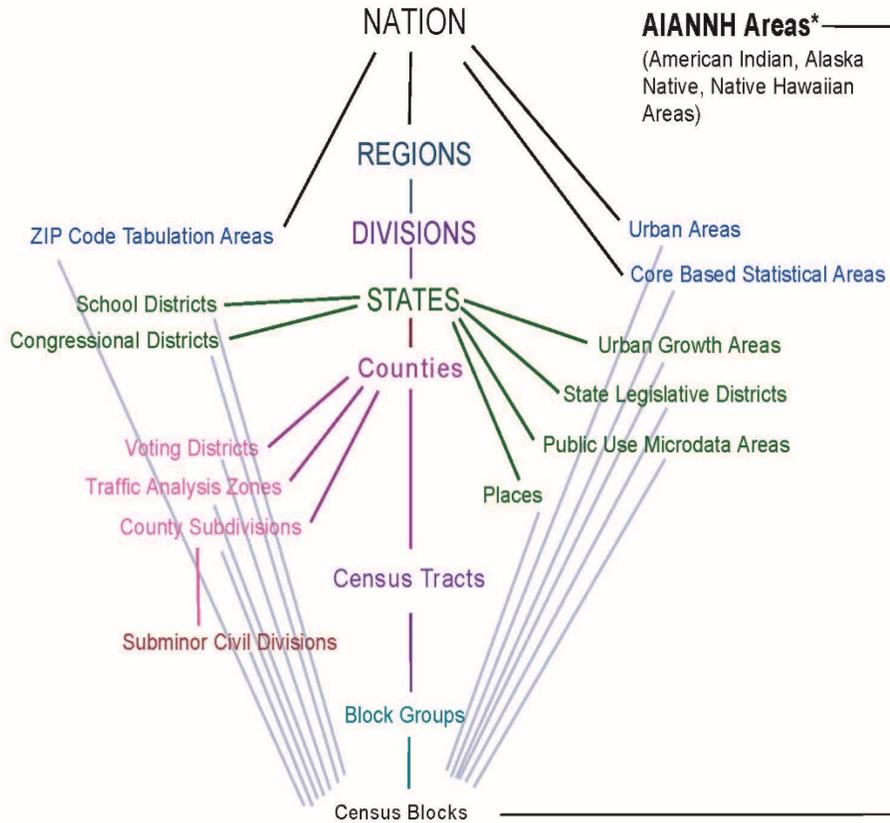
\*2010 Census Resident Population

\*\*States and Statistically Equivalent Entities

\*\*\*Census 2000 tally of Block Groups

Here is a diagram of nested and non-nested Census Geography Hierarchy:

### Standard Hierarchy of Census Geographic Entities



\* Refer to the "Hierarchy of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Areas" on page 2.

### **AIAN/NH Geography**

The Census Bureau tabulates and publishes population and housing data for several geographic entities that cover American Indian and Alaska Native areas (AIANAs) and Native Hawaiian areas. The delineation of boundaries for American Indian and Alaska Native areas poses unique challenges for the Census Bureau. This is particularly true of legally or governmentally defined entities such as reservations and trust lands, the most important geographical units for the tabulation and presentation of Census data for these populations.

The major types of AIANAs are American Indian reservations and trust lands, tribal jurisdiction statistical areas, tribal designated statistical areas, Alaska Native Regional Corporations, Alaska Native Village statistical areas, and tribal designated statistical areas.

American Indian reservations are areas with boundaries established by treaty, statute, and/or executive or court order. The reservations and their boundaries are identified for the Census Bureau by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Trust lands are real property, held in trust by the Federal government, that is associated with a specific American Indian reservation or tribe, or individual American Indians. Trust lands may be located within a reservation or outside a reservation. However, the Census Bureau recognizes and tabulates data separately only for the inhabited off-reservation trust lands. On-reservation trust lands are included as part of the reservation.

Tribal jurisdictional statistical areas (TJSAs) are delineated by the Federally recognized tribes in Oklahoma that no longer have a reservation. Tribal designated statistical areas are geographic entities delineated by Federally and State recognized tribes without a land base, reservation, or trust lands.

Alaska Native Regional Corporations (ANRCs) are corporate entities established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1972 to conduct business and nonprofit affairs of Alaska Natives. Alaska is divided into 12 ANRCs that cover the entire State, other than the Annette Islands Reserve which is an American Indian reservation.

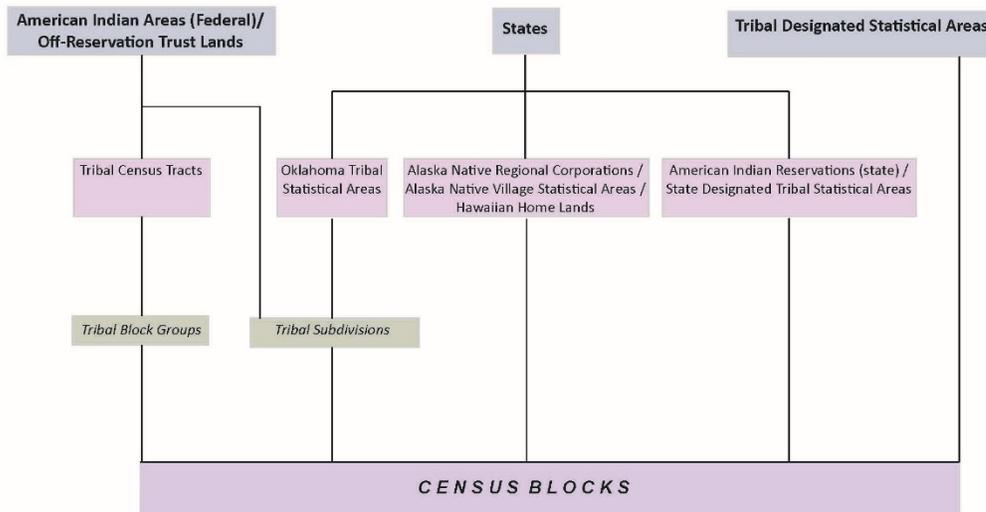
Alaska Native Villages (ANVs) are tribes, bands, clans, groups, villages, communities, or associations in Alaska that are recognized under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1972. The Census Bureau recognizes ANV Statistical Areas as geographic entities for data tabulation purposes.

The delineation of boundaries for Native Hawaiian Areas also poses unique challenges for the Census Bureau. Hawaiian Home Lands (HHLs) are areas held in trust for Native Hawaiians by the State of Hawaii, according to the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920. An HHL is a tract of land with a legally defined boundary that is owned by the state and can be leased to one or more Native Hawaiians for residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, pastoral, and/or any other activities authorized by state law. The Census Bureau obtains the names and boundaries for Hawaiian home lands from State officials. The names of the HHLs are based on the traditional ahupua'a names from which the lands were designated or from the

local name for an area. Being lands held in trust, HHLs are treated as equivalent to off-reservation trust land areas.

American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian areas cannot overlap another tribal entity. An exception is made for tribal subdivisions that subdivide some American Indian entities, and Alaska Native village statistical areas that exist within Alaska Native Regional Corporations. In cases where more than one tribe claims jurisdiction over an area, the Census Bureau creates a joint-use area as a separate entity to define this area of dual claims.

### Hierarchy of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Areas



U.S. Census Bureau  
Last Updated July 19, 2010  
<http://www.census.gov/geo/www>

United States  
**Census  
2010**  
IT'S IN OUR HANDS

## Required Competencies:

### How Does the Census Bureau Protect Data

#### **The Census Bureau's Commitment to Confidentiality**

##### ***What is the Census Bureau's Confidentiality Message?***

"Your information is protected by law. The law requires the Census Bureau to keep your information confidential and use your responses only to produce statistics. We cannot publicly release your responses in any way that could identify you, your business, organization, or institution."

In addition to removing personally identifiable information such as names, telephone numbers, and addresses from data files, the Census Bureau uses various approaches to protect personal information, including computer technologies, statistical methodologies, and security procedures.

Security procedures ensure that only a restricted number of authorized people have access to private information, and that access is granted only to conduct the official work of the Census Bureau. Every person who works for the Census Bureau is sworn for life to uphold the law. Violating the confidentiality of a respondent is a federal crime with serious penalties, including a federal prison sentence of up to five years, a fine of up to \$250,000, or both.

#### **Title 13**

##### ***What is Title 13?***

Also known as The Census Act, Title 13 of the U.S. Code is a federal law that protects the confidentiality of all data collected by the Census Bureau. Violating this law is a crime with severe penalties.

Specifically, Title 13 dictates that the Census Bureau and its partners and affiliates cannot disclose, release, or publish any information that is sensitive or can be used to personally identify an individual. All Census Bureau employees, partners, and affiliates are sworn for life to protect the confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information. This includes CICs.

For more information on Title 13 of the U.S. Code, go to:

[https://www.census.gov/history/www/reference/privacy\\_confidentiality/title\\_13\\_us\\_code.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/reference/privacy_confidentiality/title_13_us_code.html)

# Required Competencies: Tools and Resources

## **American FactFinder**

American FactFinder (AFF) is currently the primary tool to access aggregate level Census data on the Census Bureau website. The data in AFF come from several censuses and surveys.

To access AFF, go to [FactFinder.Census.gov](https://factfinder.census.gov). Or, from [Census.gov](https://www.census.gov), click on Data → Data Tools & Apps → American FactFinder.

American FactFinder has several features. You can use Community Facts to find popular facts and frequently requested data about your community, Guided Search if you need assistance framing your search, Advanced Search to find in-depth tables and other files, and Download Center to capture custom datasets or pre-packaged data.

The Census Bureau has created several tutorial webinars that will guide you through using AFF, available at: <https://www.census.gov/data/training-workshops/recorded-webinars/listing.html>

**The Census Bureau is in the process of integrating AFF and other Census data access tools with the development of a new tool called CEDSCI (Center for Enterprise Dissemination and Services and Consumer Innovation.)** Anticipated to be the Census Bureau's single access point, CEDSCI is intended to streamline and simplify the data user's experience. Also referred to as *Data.Census.gov*, this tool is currently in beta mode. As a CIC, you might be asked to participate in usability testing.

You can test the tool here: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/search>

However, we caution you not to use the data findings as we have not fully migrated all Census data yet.

# Recommended Competencies: Programs

## **The Current Population Survey**

### ***What is the Current Population Survey?***

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). It is the primary source of labor force statistics for the population of the United States.

### ***When is it conducted?***

The CPS is conducted monthly, randomly across the country.

### ***Why is it important?***

The CPS is immensely important, providing information on many of the things that define us as individuals and as a society – our work, our earnings, and our education.

### ***How does the CPS impact your community?***

In addition to being the primary source of monthly labor force statistics, the CPS is used to collect data for a variety of other studies that keep the nation informed of the economic and social well-being of its people. This is done by adding a set of supplemental questions to the monthly basic CPS questions.

Supplemental inquiries vary month to month and cover a wide variety of topics such as child support, volunteerism, health insurance coverage, and school enrollment.

### ***How can you access CPS data?***

To learn more about and to access CPS data, go to: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html>

# Recommended Competencies:

## Census Concepts

### **Margin of Error**

Margin of Error (MOE) is the measure of probability that a survey estimate is accurate. A Census Bureau survey is a sample, and therefore, different samples will yield different estimates. The MOE is the measure of the possible variation of the estimate. Data users can be confident that the estimate and the actual value differ by no more than the MOE.

Statistics from all surveys are subject to sampling and non-sampling error. Sampling error is the uncertainty between an estimate based on a sample and the corresponding value that would be obtained if the estimate were based on the entire population (as from a census). Measures of sampling error are provided in the form of MOEs for all estimates. The Census Bureau recommends that data users incorporate this information into their analyses because sampling error in survey estimates could impact the conclusions drawn from the results. The data for each geographic area are presented together with margins of error through American FactFinder.

The MOE is used with an estimate to construct a confidence interval about the estimate. The interval is formed by adding the MOE to the estimate (the upper bound) and subtracting the MOE from the estimate (the lower bound). It is expected with 90 percent confidence that the interval will contain the full population value of the estimate.

The following example is for demonstration purposes only. Suppose the ACS reported that the percentage of people in a state who were 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree was 21.3 percent and that the margin of error associated with this estimate was 0.7 percent. By adding and subtracting the margin of error from the estimate, we calculate the 90-percent confidence interval for this estimate:

$$21.3\% - 0.7\% = 20.6\% \Rightarrow \text{Lower-bound estimate}$$

$$21.3\% + 0.7\% = 22.0\% \Rightarrow \text{Upper-bound estimate}$$

Therefore, we can be 90 percent confident that the percent of the population 25 years and older having a bachelor's degree in a state falls somewhere between 20.6 percent and 22.0 percent.

# Recommended Competencies: Tools and Resources

## **DataFerrett**

DataFerrett is a data analysis and extraction tool you can use to customize federal, state, and local data to suit your requirements. DataFerrett is an analytical interface that allows simultaneous access to multiple datasets and variables for instant analysis and retrieval for use in other software. Using DataFerrett, you can develop an unlimited array of customized spreadsheets that are as versatile and complex as your usage demands, and then turn those spreadsheets into graphs and maps without any additional software.

The benefit to using DataFerrett is the ability to create custom tables of data that are not accessible through AFF.

To access DataFerrett, go to: <https://dataferrett.census.gov> using either Microsoft Explorer or Mozilla Firefox internet browsers.

For detailed guidance in using DataFerrett, see user guide:  
[https://dataferrett.census.gov/UserResources/DataFerrett\\_UserGuide.pdf#](https://dataferrett.census.gov/UserResources/DataFerrett_UserGuide.pdf#)

## Other Resources

### **The State Data Center Program**

The State Data Center program (SDC) is a partnership between the Census Bureau and the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas. The program is designed to make Census data available locally through a network of state agencies, universities, libraries, and regional and local governments. SDCs provide training and technical assistance to data users and provide a mechanism for feedback to the Census Bureau on data usability, state and local government data needs, data users' needs, and operational issues. For more information, go to <https://www.census.gov/about/partners/sdc.html>

### **Regional Offices and Data Dissemination Specialists**

Regional Offices and Data Dissemination Specialists (DDSs) play a vital role for the U.S. Census Bureau. They deal directly with the public – individuals, community organizations, government officials, media, and others, as well as CICs and SDCs – to help them understand and work with the data the Census Bureau collects. The population of the United States is very diverse with the geography, cultures, languages, and ancestries represented. DDSs work with these diverse audiences to make Census data accessible through workshops, trainings, and reports. The DDSs work throughout the country, in the field, to make the data localized, informative, customized, and free to the citizens and organizations who need the data.

Feel free to contact the Data User Branch Staff to find out the name and contact information of your DDS.

### **Live and Webinar Training Sessions**

The Census Bureau offers live and webinar training sessions to help users access and understand our data. For more information, go to <https://www.census.gov/data/training-workshops.html>

### **SharePoint**

The CIC SharePoint site is a website that provides a central storage and collaboration space for documents, information, and ideas. This site is a tool for collaboration designed to help CICs share information and work together. For example, a SharePoint site can help you:

- \* Coordinate projects, calendars, and schedules.
- \* Discuss ideas and review documents or proposals.
- \* Share information and keep in touch with other people.

You can access the CIC SharePoint site here:

<https://share.census.gov/teamsites/cds/SitePages/Home.aspx>

If you have problems accessing SharePoint, please contact Toni Hall at [Antoinette.hall@census.gov](mailto:Antoinette.hall@census.gov).

## **Census.gov**

To learn more about the Census Bureau, and the 130+ censuses and surveys they conduct, go to <https://www.census.gov>. The home page offers access to information about Surveys/Programs, Topics, Geography, Library, and much more.