



# CAUSE CONNECTION

Connecting people who care to causes that matter

## Census 2020 | Where We Stand in Lehigh Valley

While attending a 2019 statewide gathering of community foundation leaders in State College, Bernie Story, LVCF president and CEO, first heard of the concerns about census undercounting. He learned that Pennsylvania is at risk of losing congressional representation and federal funding due to the demographics of the state. It was a strong call to action from the philanthropic community because if communities are starved of federal resources, it will have a ripple effect through government, business, and civil society for at least the next 10 years and set back the goals of many of America's foundations, philanthropists and nonprofits for years to come. Community foundations and other funders will be hard-pressed to make up for the significant loss of resources due to undercounting and so we were called to action.

**LVCF established the Census Equity Fund with its own discretionary grant dollars to support efforts to ensure a complete count in the Lehigh Valley and the region.**

Lehigh Valley  
**Census 2020**

To start, LVCF partnered with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission to co-chair a regional complete count committee (CCC). LVCF staff have been actively involved on all five local CCCs, Northampton and Lehigh counties, Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton. Through this committee work, LVCF is partnering with the region's nonprofit, business, and government stakeholders, and helping fund a regional effort. In addition, we have worked contractually with the City of Allentown and Faces International to implement a plan to target hard-to-count areas in the community.

LVCF partnered with Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley to hold the 2019 "Health Equity Summit: Census 2020" that was attended by over 100 representatives from nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, and others (see photo below). Census 2020 and its impact on Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley was the topic of the fall 2019 meeting of LVCF's Board of Associates. Both events featured a talk by Norman Bristol Colón, executive director, Governor's Census 2020 Complete Count Commission; Pennsylvania Dept. of Community & Economic Development. These events mobilized local leaders to engage with Census 2020.



### Lehigh Valley **Census 2020** LVCF Grantees

Through the Census Equity Fund, LVCF funded four trusted nonprofit organizations, that are located in and serving the traditional hard-to-count areas to engage the community in completing the census. The impact of COVID-19 just as the census completion period was getting underway in March (Census Day April 1) had forced our partners to forgo the many promotional events, face-to-face engagement, and community outreach. Instead we asked them to pivot to a digital approach using social media, email and other means.

**Hispanic Center of Lehigh Valley**, located in south Bethlehem, helps low-income community members connect to social services, employment, English language and



computer skills, healthy foods, affordable housing, and other resources. In addition to holding the Health Equity Summit with LVCF on the Census, HCLV was able to increase awareness and build engagement among the Hispanic population by conducting street outreach working with college networks in February and March before COVID-19 hit the area. HCLV was able to distribute signage and materials to dozens of businesses on Bethlehem's south side. In March, COVID-19 forced a pivot from street outreach to phone banking, assisting clients with completing the census over the phone, and through socially-distanced outdoor engagement in the south Bethlehem community.

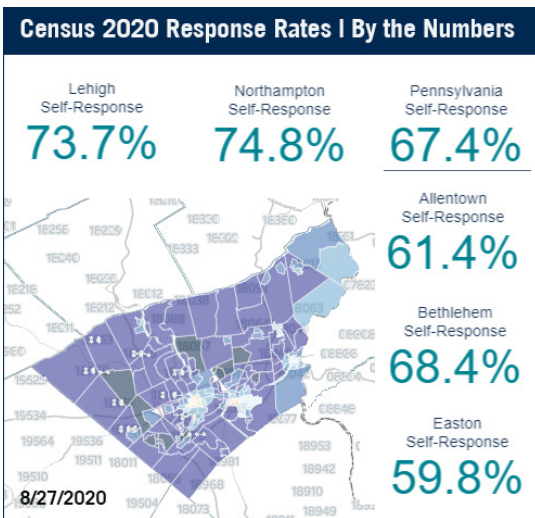


LVCF staff helped raise awareness of the census through the media, appearing on numerous television and radio shows, publishing an op-ed in *The Morning Call*, a thought piece in *Network Magazine*, and contributing to many feature newspaper articles and television news stories.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Pennsylvania right as many of our activities were about to commence, including 17 community census hubs in Allentown, numerous community awareness events, and other face-to-face outreach across the Valley. Knowing we had to shift strategies, we reached out to our grantees and other community partners and asked to them pivot to digital strategies, using social media networks, websites, and email outreach to their constituencies to encourage census participation. Many have done a great job of amplifying census messaging that completing the census is easy, safe, confidential—and important.

To monitor our success, we've been using the [Census Bureau tracking map](#). In Lehigh and Northampton counties we are currently at a 74.25% response rate which is significantly ahead of the state's rate (67.2%), and Pennsylvania is running ahead of the national rate (64.6%). So that's good news and a reflection of the work that is being done in our area.

For both Lehigh County and Northampton counties the final response rate was 84% in 2000 and 81% in 2010. In 2020, we are fighting a general downward trend in census response and COVID-19 that totally removed the census from the public's mind in mid-March. Allentown, for example, finished at 68.3% in 2010 and it's currently at 61.4% so we have a lot more work to do—in all our cities. The Census Bureau enumerators are now going door-to-door to visit non-responding residences and have until September 30 to complete their work.



grant supported a promotional video through Viamedia that ran for six weeks on television, streaming services, and as a pre-roll video on news and network websites when accessed in the Lehigh Valley. See the video here: <https://youtu.be/myW2Z8CHTgA>. It generated over 250,000 views and hundreds of clicks to [my2020census.gov](http://my2020census.gov). We're working with Faces International to do phone banking using Allentown's census ambassadors to call households in the hard-to-count zip codes. We're sending thousands of text and voice messages asking people to complete the census (pictured is Sheila Alvarado, Census Ambassador, City of Allentown).



**Thank you to our Census Equity Fund donors who helped LVCF make a difference in the community by supporting our grantmaking and regional digital outreach efforts.**

**LVCF Grantees** Continued

**ProJeCt of Easton** conducts literacy, adult and family education (ESL classes), and workforce training programs with wraparound services. They engaged low-income clients, many of whom are limited English-speaking adults, families and seniors about the 2020 census. ProJeCt distributed census materials and offered linguistic and technological support, through their programs and to 3,500 Food Pantry clients, helping to reach low-income families. Due to COVID-19 they were not able to provide computer labs for people to complete the census in-house; however, they did distribute materials and messaging digitally through email and social media.

**Make the Road Pennsylvania**, dedicated to organizing the working class in Latino communities and building power for justice, shifted their plans to a virtual and digital strategy early on. They provided a “virtual kiosk and walkthrough” assistance for everyone in their membership. They used their networks to send communications and are phone banking to make thousands of calls throughout the region. They have sent out digital postcards to 34,000 in June via personal messenger about the canvassing efforts and why the census is important—in both English and Spanish.

**Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV)**, a community organizing agency has been using connectors and outreach with neighbors, and local businesses to increase awareness of the census. While COVID-19 has affected their planned community events, pop-up booths and other initiatives to engage the community, their street team has distributed flyers and other materials safely in hard-to-count neighborhoods. They have used their participation in the recent marches and rallies in Allentown to emphasize the importance of census. PNLV worked with rally leaders to make sure they are promoting the census to their following as part of their overall messaging. They have supported their grass-roots approach with social media and other culturally-appropriate marketing content in Allentown and beyond.