

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENSUS 2020 FUND

How the LA Partnership mobilized its funding network to count children 0-8 Years in LA County's low-income communities in the 2020 Census

WHY THE CENSUS MATTERS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

The U.S. Census is a building block of our democracy. It dictates citizen representation and informs how billions of dollars in critical public programs get funded or do not. In short, the Census allocates money and power.

According to the [Public Policy Institute of California](#), the 2020 Census could have missed more than 1.6 million California residents without concerted efforts to reach hard-to-count populations. Recognizing the pending threat to the hardest to count, children 0-8 years old living in underserved communities, the LA Partnership launched an effort to increase participation in the Census by tapping into trusted networks and organizations already connected to them.

BILLIONS OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS DOLLARS AT STAKE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Los Angeles County is the hardest-to-count county in the nation. With a population larger than the state of Michigan, and over half a million of the hardest-to-count population – children ages 0-8 – billions of dollars were at stake: \$13 billion in federal funds for workforce development, food programs, maternal health and education would be lost on a generation of low-income children who benefit most from programs like these.

Organizers faced acute challenges, beyond the usual, to ensure everyone got counted. Anti-immigrant and racist sentiment flowed from the White House, a global pandemic hit, a new citizenship question was added to the Census, and a racial reckoning coalesced around the precise moment of the Census count. Community fears about participating in the Census reached an all-time high. But without the 0-8 population counted, their fate would be sealed – LA County's young children needed all the help they could get to be included in the Census count.



AN IDEA AND A CAREFULLY DESIGNED PLAN

The LA Partnership recognized the urgency of engaging low-income families with young children in the Census. First, the team leveraged its convening power through a broad network and deep relationships to educate Southern California philanthropic leaders about why 0-8 children needed a dedicated Census outreach effort. The convening immediately sparked among a group of eight funders, and the LA Partnership through its Baby Futures Fund was able to quickly coordinate \$1 million and create the year-long Early Childhood Census 2020 Fund (ECCF) – the first time ever funders have come together in the region specifically to target outreach to families with young children.

“There was no concerted effort to focus on this population. If the LA Partnership hadn’t been involved, there would have been no representation for 0-8 families.”

- JACQUELINE CHUN, THE CARL & ROBERTA DEUTSCH FOUNDATION

The group identified three organizations as “managing funders” so it could be nimble and responsive to the community’s shifting needs caused by the pandemic. Twelve community organizations ranging in size, geography, populations and languages served, and providing services from healthcare and education, to childcare and faith-based community, received grants to undertake Census outreach to families. ECCF provided funding for community-based training programs, communications, outreach and data use to strengthen their long-term civic engagement muscle for local and national advocacy efforts beyond the Census.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENSUS 2020 FUND GRANTEES



BUILDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Grantees reported engaging in **33.9 million interactions with families and individuals** over the course of the grant and shared that the dedicated funding helped them learn lessons on how to better engage families with young children as part of the Census. At the highest level, grantees explained how embedding these civic engagement outreach strategies into regular service activities naturally sparked conversations about the Census with families. Designing proactive Census education and outreach proved to be an effective strategy to bring Census messaging into families' homes in new ways.

The LA Partnership played a unique role in creating and executing the Early Childhood 2020 Census Fund. Its ability to convene and educate funders on the need for a specific Census outreach effort focused on early childhood; the flexible nature of the Baby Futures Fund to pool and quickly disseminate grant dollars; and the staff's time and leadership to bring together funders, community-based leaders and county Census staff for an integrated leadership table to make smart decisions. The combination of these three strengths enabled the effort to come together swiftly, deploy resources efficiently and empower community-based leaders with the support needed to be effective.

ECCF's investment in LA County's youngest children for the Census count is a model for future Census and other civic engagement efforts that shape a child's life.

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“Every one of us [funders] was on the same page about putting the grantees at the center and understanding that we funded them with trust – they knew what they were doing.”

- ALBA BAUTISTA, FIRST 5 LA

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FUNDERS

The Atlas Family
Foundation

THE CARL & ROBERTA DEUTSCH
FOUNDATION

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GROUP

first 5 la

 LA Partnership
for Early Childhood Investment

EROTH
Family Foundation

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Early Childhood
Development Fund
at CCF 

The Welk Family
Foundation

If you would like to learn more about the LA Partnership and investing in children 0-5 in LA County, visit www.investinkidsla.org or contact us at Partnership@investinkidsla.org.