

Tribal Listening Session: Proof of Concept

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

February 1, 2023

- Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Robert Santos, your director of the U.S. Census Bureau.
- We thank you for taking time to join us today.
- Our work with you is of the highest importance.
- In fact, a priority of ours is to strengthen our nation-to-nation relationships with all tribes.
- Tribal listening sessions like today's are critical to us for serving you.
- We know that it's challenging to have to translate our complex processing methods and data into useful feedback to us.
- But we need that to produce better data for tribes, data that more meaningfully helps in your governance.
- So we're trying to help. That is why we have having this listening session.
- Today's session will assist your preparations in advance of our tribal consultation in 3 weeks.
- We're very much committed to providing tribes with the quality data—data that your communities rely on.
- At today's listening session, our staff will update you on the status of 2020 American Indian and Alaska Native data product developments.
- Specifically, we will be seeking your feedback on the Proof of Concept for the Demographic and Housing Characteristics File A, which we call the Detailed DHC-A, for short.
- This product is new for the 2020 Census and succeeds the American Indian and Alaska Native Summary File produced in previous censuses.
- Yesterday, we released a Proof-of-Concept data product we will be reviewing today.
- It's important to understand this data and how it fits or does not fit your needs.
- So, if you do not understand something about it, please ask today or after our session.
- We are here to help. We are here to listen. And we need your feedback to serve you better.
- Now, in a few minutes our staff will provide a walk through of the Proof-of-Concept data.
- We'll answer your questions today and in advance of our February 23 consultation.
- Our Proof-of-Concept data uses a privacy algorithm created specifically for the DHC-A data product. We call it the SafeTab-P. But the name really doesn't matter.
- What matters is understanding how useful the data is at lower levels of geography for individual tribes, and what its strengths and limitations are.
- And especially what you shouldn't do with the data.
- Our method determines the amount of data each tribe or village will receive based on population size and geography level.
- And it also ensure the necessary confidentiality protections that are required under Title 13.
- As you know, we do have an obligation to protect the privacy of your tribes' members.
- Yet we do have some flexibility to refine these data products.

- We're carefully working to preserve as much as possible the richness of information that you need, while preserving confidentiality.
- But we can't—and we shouldn't—do this alone.
- It's critical to get your feedback to ensure its usefulness to your tribes.
- That's why in this session we're explaining the Proof-of-Concept product.
- And that's why it's so important for you to understand so that your feedback can empower better data.
- Now, to get a better idea of how our privacy measures affect your 2020 Census data, we've generated an illustrative set of data—the proof-of-concept data—that shows you how our disclosure avoidance affects the DHC-A data.
- The proof-of-concept data takes the previous 2010 data and applies our current version of the privacy algorithm to it.
- So you can take the proof of concept data and compare with the actual 2010 data we released a decade ago.
- That comparison will show you the impact of our privacy algorithm we are proposing.
- If the comparison shows that the impact has no effect on how you use the data, that's good.
- But if the comparison reveals differences that can adversely affect your decision-making or your insights, we need to know.
- There's still time for us to adjust our methods to improve the future 2020 Detailed DHC-A data for tribes.
- We just need to know where to look to improve things, and your feedback will do that.
- That way, when the actual 2020 Detailed DHC-A is released, it will better meet your needs.
- We know that tribes need and can benefit from more accurate data at lower levels of geography such as census tracts, block groups, and blocks.
- And achieving this delicate balance has proven to be quite a challenge, not just for tribes, but for all communities in the United States.
- We're confident that by working together, we can better meet your needs and produce useful statistics about the American Indian and Alaska Native population.
- We look forward to a continued partnership with you and our tribal partners.
- Thank you for joining us for this listening session.