

Chambers of Commerce and Business Organizations Event

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

February 17, 2023

Introduction

- Good afternoon, everyone. It's an honor to be here in my role as your director of the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Yes, I did say your director. Not just because I'm a fellow Latinx, but because this position serves the public . . . it serves our nation. And that's how I'm approaching my role as a public servant who happens to be in a leadership position.

Vision for the Census Bureau

- Now, having introduced myself, let me tell you a little about how I am leading the Census Bureau. First, I think my roots as a statistician, a policy researcher, a fellow stakeholder, and a person of color offer me a unique perspective in leading the Census Bureau.
- I'm a leader who champions diversity, equity, and inclusion. I call these principles DEI. I've lived them over a 40-year career and seen firsthand that innovation and excellence are advanced by embracing DEI principles.
- An important part of our DEI effort includes seeking out and listening to diverse voices. That certainly includes listening to our partners and stakeholders, which of course includes you.
- Now, I believe that we promote excellence by embracing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our workforce, in our policies and practices, as well as in how we engage stakeholders.
- We're committed to producing data that reflects an accurate portrait of America. Census Bureau data are valuable assets that can be used by policymakers and the public to advance equity.
- In 2021, President Biden announced a federal agenda to advance equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. Because this goal "requires a systemic approach to embedding fairness in decision-making processes," policymakers and the public will need quality data about America's people and economy to advance equity.
- The Census Bureau is the leading provider of quality data about the nation's people and economy. Our data can assist federal agencies and others in equitably distributing resources and identifying underserved communities.
- We provide a wealth of data by age, disability, race, ethnicity, sex, income, veteran status, and other key demographic variables to help measure equity. These data are often by geography, which provides meaning and context to the statistical data, and can identify rural and underserved communities.
- The measures inform policy makers working to advance equity and enable them to propose effective, data-driven solutions.

- We're continually striving for excellence. And that can be challenging in our current environment. But even in the face of challenges, I believe that we can find new ways to collect data that are more accurate, timely, relevant, and most of all have utility, as in fit for use.
- Moreover, I believe that we promote excellence by embracing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our workforce, policies, and practices, as well as in how we engage stakeholders and how we gather and incorporate feedback and advice. Let me talk a little more about that:
 - First, we are committed to data equity. We created an Equity Data Working Group to assemble various data sets generated by Census Bureau that can help identify and explore disparities and inequities in our society. We stand ready to work with OMB and others on collecting disaggregated race data if and when the revision of race-ethnic standards comes up for discussion as well as questions on sexual orientation and gender identity.
 - Second, we seek to infuse diversity and inclusion in our workplace. Diverse voices and perspectives can be a potent catalyst for increasing data quality, data relevance, as well as advancing equity. It promotes innovation, critical thinking, and excellence.
 - Third, we will engage with and actively listen to the full diversity of our stakeholders in the United States, which of course includes you. Stakeholder feedback is critical to understanding the needs of our data users. We plan to strengthen existing partnerships and identify new partners. This includes advocacy organizations, folks in philanthropy, state and local jurisdictional officers, community-based organizations, scientific and other professional associations, and so on.
- We are working to develop new ways to collect data that are more accurate, timely, relevant, and most of all meet the needs of the public. We continuously engage in improving how we measure equity and diversity.
- We are constantly assessing how we can improve our statistical programs to better serve and represent underserved groups. We continuously research strategies for improving respondent understanding of questions we ask and the accuracy of the data we produce.
- And as I mentioned, we are conducting ongoing engagement and discussions about our research and findings with stakeholder groups.

Partnership and Data Tools

- That is part of the reason I am here today, to continue and indeed strengthen a sustaining, continuous partnership of mutual benefit. We ask for your assistance with these censuses and surveys so that we use your feedback to improve our data products, which in turn can benefit you.
- The Census Bureau has so much data that can be useful to business owners. We collect data on the population, demographics, business and the economy, education, employment, health, international trade, and more.
- And we use that data to make great tools that can help businesses get information they need in a digestible, timely, and accurate way:
 - **The Census Business Builder** is a great tool that provides easy access to information about potential customers and similar businesses for those starting or planning a business. We present the data in a map-based interface that is interactive and easy to use. It allows users to access demographic, socioeconomic, housing, and business data for a wide range of geographies and industries.
 - For example, if you were interested in opening retail stores in Cook County, you could compare the number of retail stores in Cook County with neighboring counties, such as DuPage, Kane or Lake County.
 - Another tool, **BDS Explorer**, enables comprehensive access to the full depth and breadth of the Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS) data set. It has an intuitive dashboard that lets users

construct tables and charts to compare and rank measures such as employment, job creation and destruction, and firm births and deaths. So for example, you could take a longitudinal look at job creation by establishment age across counties, or rank establishment entry rates across NAICS industry groups.

- We are always open to two-way communication to help understand and fulfil your data needs. But the quality of that data is directly related to the quality of response to our censuses and surveys, and encouraging response is an area I hope we can continue to collaborate on.

Economic Census

- Now, I'm here today to continue and strengthen a continuous partnership with your other organizations and others like them in the business community . . . one that features true mutual benefit.
- I've talked about the data and tools that can help you succeed in your work. After all, relevant data is a key component of data quality.
- But data quality is also directly related to participation our censuses and surveys. So we are hoping that you can encourage response to our censuses and surveys in the business community.
- Specifically, I'm here to ask for your help to promote response to the 2022 Economic Census among your members and partners.
- The 2022 Economic Census is the most comprehensive measure of the U.S. economy.
- It provides information to businesses, trade associations, economic development organizations, and state, local, and tribal governments.
- They need this information to make informed decisions that affect the health of America's economy.
- As trusted voices in your communities, one of the best things you can do is to spread the word to your members and associated businesses that the Economic Census is here.
- Please let them know that their response is important to understanding our nation's economy as well as their local community, and their business and industry.
- Participation ensures that associations like yours have quality, timely data about the industries that affect your members.
- We began mailing of the Economic Census on January 31, 2023.
- There are about 140,000 business locations in Illinois included in the Economic Census invitation to respond. About half of those locations are larger, multilocation companies, and half are smaller single location businesses.
- It is early in the collection cycle, the current response is 3.66 percent, which is running slightly behind the national response.
- We would greatly appreciate your support in promoting the Economic Census to your members.
- Responses are due on March 15. This census is conducted online, and all responses are kept confidential.
- I invite you to visit census.gov/econ to learn more.

Conclusion

- Thank you again for having me, and for helping to get information on the 2022 Economic Census out to your members.
- Your participation and cooperation are really important in helping us to maintain the excellent data quality that we provide.
- We at the Census Bureau stand ready to help you access our wealth of data in any way we can.