



# County of San Mateo

## Inter-Departmental Correspondence

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**Department:** COUNTY MANAGER

**File #:** 19-1277

Board Meeting Date: 1/14/2020

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**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors  
**From:** Michael P. Callagy, County Manager  
**Subject:** Agreement with Storefront Political Media for Census 2020 Media Support

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a resolution authorizing an agreement with Storefront Political Media to provide Census 2020 Media support for the term of January 14, 2020 through August 1, 2020 in an amount not to exceed \$300,000.

**BACKGROUND:**

Every 10 years, the federal government is required to count all people residing in the United States through a national census. The United States Census Bureau has designated April 1, 2020 as National Census Day, the official start date of the 2020 census response period.

Ensuring a complete count of San Mateo County residents is essential for many reasons. The decennial census serves as the cornerstone of our democracy and is written into the United States Constitution. It was included to ensure that everyone is equally represented in our political system and government resources are allocated fairly. Census counts are also used to make important community decisions including where to build homes, parks, schools, and roads and where to offer health, childcare, and transportation services. Businesses rely on census data to determine where to open facilities, what products to develop, and how to market their services.

There are several challenges facing the upcoming census. Census 2020 is at high risk for undercount. Despite declining self-response rates, the Census Bureau will be required to conduct Census 2020 at a lower cost per household than in 2010. There will be fewer local offices, fewer field staff, and the primary strategy for data collection will be via internet.

The Census Bureau has historically faced challenges counting certain households and population groups, regardless of budget and staffing. These groups include recent immigrants, households with limited English proficiency, households with low income, racial/ethnic minorities, children under 5 years old, persons who are disabled, rural residents, renters, and those with unstable or unconventional housing.

California has been the hardest-to-count state in the nation. In 2016, about 75% of all Californians belonged to one or more groups that tend to be undercounted. The County is home to many of these hard-to-count groups.

For Census 2020, there are new barriers to a complete count that will require significant efforts to address, including:

**Distrust & Data Privacy:** There is a widening distrust of government among diverse segments of the population (immigrant and nonimmigrant alike), raising concerns about how census data will be used and whether it will remain confidential.

**Online Survey:** For the first time, the bulk of census responses are expected to be collected online (only approximately 12% of San Mateo County residents will receive a paper version in initial mailings). Heightened data privacy concerns now exist, and in addition to security challenges, this poses barriers for vulnerable communities and populations without digital access and computer literacy.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The projected self-response rate for Census 2020 is 55%, significantly lower than the 63.5% response rate achieved in 2010, as reported in 2017 by the Committee on Oversight and Government House of Representatives. An undercount in Census 2020 would have significant impact on the State of California and San Mateo County, including reduced federal funding for critical community programs, representation at all levels of government, and data used for decision making across all sectors. If segments of the County are not counted in 2020, their voices may not be fully considered when making important budget, program, and policy decisions.

The County's goal for Census 2020 is to maintain or surpass the 75% self-response rate achieved in 2010. Critical components to achieving this goal are to partner with trusted community-based organizations to educate, motivate, and activate historically hard-to-count and least likely to respond (HTC/LLTR) residents in participating in the census and to develop a robust and effective media strategy focused on HTC/LLTR residents.

The County seeks to contract with Storefront Political Media to educate, motivate, and activate all residents to complete their Census 2020 survey.

Based, in part, on a selection process undertaken by Santa Clara County, Storefront Political Media was identified as the appropriate contractor to assist in developing and implementing a Census 2020 media strategy because of their experience using a hyper-localized, tactical approach.

In Santa Clara County, from August 26, 2019 to September 11, 2019, Storefront conducted an in-market digital banner ad test in English and Spanish that suggested that micro-targeted messaging would be highly effective at encouraging census participation. Storefront found up to four times higher engagement rates from the targeted messaging (in Spanish language messaging) as opposed to the more generic county-wide messaging. Moreover, the test suggested that diversifying media channels, including deploying social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, will drive participation.

This localized approach will motivate residents to participate in Census 2020 through support in their communities, and advertising tools to strengthen important peer-to-peer campaigns. This approach has the benefit of being much more relevant to each specific audience and much nimbler in driving

desired behaviors including attending events, texting friends, sharing information on social media, and ultimately, participating in the 2020 Census.

The agreement and resolution have been reviewed and approved by County Counsel as to form.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURE:**

The County of San Mateo and Storefront Political Media will provide communication materials and strategic campaign guidance to the County Office of Community Affairs including audience determination and mailing list segmentation.

Social media posts, banner ads, and pre-roll video ads, in English, Spanish, and Chinese languages, about participating in Census 2020 activities, will be served to site users at least 8,860,491 times before July 31, 2020.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The term of this agreement is January 14, 2020 through August 1, 2020 for a not to exceed amount of \$300,000. This agreement has been included in the FY 2019-20 Adopted Budget.