What's Next on Census Engagement Learning from the Minnesota Model

MARCH 2022

Photo of Rep. Dean Phillips MN03 with group of MACS supporters in 2020
Source: https://www.minnesotansforacs.org

MACS

Minnesotans for the
American
Community
Survey
and
2030 Census

CSI UCR
CENTER FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are a slew of organizations at the national level that organize around the work of the U.S. Census Bureau. They work on the decennial census, American Community Survey, and other Census Bureau products—building community awareness, stakeholder engagement, and advocacy around data quality and accessibility that meet community needs.

This work is also essential at the state level, but state efforts are comparatively rare. Until recently, the only significant evergreen statewide effort on the ACS and decennial Census was MACS (Minnesotans for the American Community Survey). The all-volunteer group, founded in 2014, works to inform and educate community members, leaders, and government offices on the importance and necessity of publicly available data, including the decennial Census and ACS.

MACS employs a successful model that focused on "grass-tops" and, more recently, "grass-roots" partnerships and building a state-wide coalition that is both diverse and representative—including Minnesota leaders, policy and decision makers, business and development planners, forecasters, housing and social service providers, educators, and engaged residents. MACS was one of many partners that helped the State of Minnesota keep all eight of its Congressional seats by a very narrow margin, a Minnesota count of just 26 people. This policy victory demonstrates the importance of collective efforts that organize years in advance of the decennial census, with well–designed education and engagement strategies and partnerships with other state, local, and national organizations.

To dig deeper into the MACS model and to better understand how certain features from this model may be replicated in other states or regions, the University of California, Riverside through its Center for Social Innovation conducted a case study of MACS, to better document its origins and evolution over time. Through in-depth interviews and an analysis of secondary sources, this case study breaks down the key features of the MACS model, the key strategies that were employed, the origins and key accomplishments of MACS, and concludes with important recommendations and next steps.

The case study highlights the key features and strategies that appear to have contributed to Minnesota's success on Census and ACS organizing. Importantly, each state has a different landscape of stakeholders, systems, barriers, and opportunities. In order for this model to be successful in other states, leaders in various sectors should consider adapting key aspects of design and strategy from the Minnesota model—adapt-ing and transforming them to suit the needs of various regions, population groups, and stakeholder groups.

MOTIVATION

In 2021, Minnesota was able to retain a Congressional seat by the narrowest of margins, with high self-response rates to the 2020 Census playing a critical role. Contributing to this high level of Census participation was long-term work by a small, all-volunteer group known as MACS - Minnesotans for the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census. MACS is a coalition of Minnesota leaders, policy and decision makers, business and development planners, forecasters, housing and social service providers, educators, and engaged citizens.

MACS achieved a significant impact by focusing its efforts on the Minnesota Congressional delegation, and building a coalition of "grass tops" stakeholders—including businesses, philanthropic organizations, state and local government representatives, and community-based organizations—to educate members of the Congressional delegation about the importance of the ACS and decennial Census, and the need to ensure adequate funding to ensure timely and accurate data collections.

For the 2020 Census, MACS coordinated with key partners to ensure Minnesota's successful Get-Out-The-Count efforts. This included Minnesota's State Demographic Center and a coalition of community-based groups led by the Minnesota Council on Foundations (MCF) to raise awareness, engage communities, and drive up response rates from Historically Undercounted Communities. Together with traditional Census Complete Count Committees and other partnership efforts, Minnesotans were able to achieve the top response rate in the nation. MACS' role in the partnership effort was Congressional office outreach and education. The Minnesota Council on Foundations coordinated and supported grass-roots community based groups who wanted to see themselves reflected in the 2020 Census results.

The success of the State of Minnesota in the 2020 Census and Congressional apportionment demonstrated the importance of an early, coordinated, and strong outreach and engagement strategy. The success of the MCF with community based groups statewide is illustrated by their impact document and organizational toolkit, which can be found at https://mcmp2020.org/.

MACS had a four-year start on 2020 Census organizing activities, demonstrating that there is power in organizing interest groups (businesses, large nonprofits, state and local government entities) to build a stronger American Community Survey. Because these types

of grass-top organizations are keenly interested in Census-related data, the ACS is a useful rallying point because it affects the Census Bureau's yearly operations, and does not have the same boom-and-bust cycle of decennial operations.

The University of California, Riverside via the Center for Social Innovation conducted a case study of MACS to examine its efforts and strategies, with a view towards supporting and scaling future Census engagement work in Minnesota, and adapting the model for use in other states. This research includes a mix of interviews and an analysis of primary and secondary sources and data.

The University of California, Riverside via the Center for Social Innovation conducted a case study on MACS to examine their efforts and strategies. This research includes a mix of interviews and an analysis of primary and secondary sources and data.

This case study focuses on the following guiding questions:

- What are the origins of MACS and how did the organization come together?

- What are the key features of the MACS model?

- What kind of strategies were implemented?

- What are the key accomplishments of the MACS model and approach?

- What lessons can other states learn about educating and engaging constituent groups to build awareness and support for the American Community Survey and the 2030 Census?

METHODS

To explore the MACS model further and to better understand the components that helped create its success, we contacted MACS to review the organization's prior published reports and other archival materials going back over a decade. We also explored MACS' partnerships by analyzing old interviews from the MACS Voices campaign and dissecting online content and materials from essential MACS partners like the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the Minnesota Council on Foundations, and The Census Project. This information helped us to better understand the landscape of partnerships and organizations that MACS engaged with during its Census and ACS advocacy efforts.

This case study also reviewed news coverage and other materials that can help us gain insight into the impact MACS had on Census and ACS efforts. In addition, we conducted in-depth interviews with (1) MACS advisory board members, (2) MACS supporters, (3) MACS national partners, and (4) congressional office staffers that engaged with MACS.

While we cannot directly link successes like an increase in response rates to MACS, we do know MACS was a central driver in Census/ACS advocacy efforts, especially at the grasstops level with respect to the Minnesota congressional delegation.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Our interview questions and topics included (1) the history and background of MACS, how the organization initially came together and what important hole it filled, (2) MACS' outreach, communication, and engagement with supporters, board members, and congressional staff, (3) what were the different types of strategies that MACS employed, particularly looking at coalition building and advocacy with the Minnesota congressional delegation, (4) what does the future look like for MACS considering key accomplishments, and (5) what are the most important aspects of the MACS model toward similar models being replicated in other states.

INTERVIEWS WITH ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS
The MACS Advisory Board is a diverse group that includes representation from many different sectors. Many board members have been involved in MACS from the beginning and helped to get the effort started. Each board member brings their own specialty and expertise, but all help MACS by lending their networks, support, thought partnership, crafting messaging and communication, and administrative work.

INTERVIEWS WITH NATIONAL PARTNERS
While MACS is an organization focused on state advocacy, the organization's national partners and supporters are essential to the success of its state-level strategy. Aside from meeting with the Minnesota congressional delegation, MACS also did some outreach in Washington, D.C., with national partners helping to facilitate these meetings. In addition, national partners provided MACS with vital information about Census and ACS operations that helped the organization customize and adapt insights and materials in ways that were locally and regionally resonant.

A major national partner organization is the Census Project. The Census Project is a broad-based coalition of national, state, and local organizations that support an inclusive and accurate 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) (the modern version of the census "long form").

INTERVIEWS WITH MACS SUPPORTERS
Central to the MACS strategy is its diverse and broad group of supporters. These supporters include a wide range of stakeholders in the state of Minnesota. While these supporters have different interests and goals, they all agree on the importance of Census and ACS data. MACS supporters may have different levels of en-

gagement. For example, some supporters with limited bandwidth may only sign letters of support, whereas others participate in congressional meetings, internal MACS meetings, and may even sit on the MACS advisory board.

INTERVIEWS WITH CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS
An essential feature of the MACS model is engagement with congressional office representatives and staffers. We conducted interviews with Minnesota congressional staffers to better understand their experiences working with MACS. MACS was seen as the "go to" organization for Census/ACS information and education for these offices.

ORIGINS OF MACS

MACS began as a simple idea from founder Joan Naymark. During a National Academies of Science workshop on the American Community Survey, someone on the panel had mentioned that congressional offices get at least 5 calls a year from constituents questioning the legitimacy of the ACS questionnaire that was sent to their residences, often accompanied by a negative attitude towards the ACS. Joan posited that if those same congressional offices were to receive 5 positive calls about the ACS and how the data are important and meaningful, congressional attitudes towards the ACS could start to change.

Naymark was already aware of the importance of Census data from her prior professional roles with Target Corporation and the US Chamber of Commerce. From these roles she understood that businesses knew the value of ACS data, but was also aware that not all businesses knew where the data they were using was actually coming from (i.e., the ACS), outside of whatever vendor company was packaging and providing it. Similarly, through her work on national panels and boards, Joan was also acutely aware of the role the business voice can have in getting the attention of lawmakers.

Additionally, Congressional members and community advocates have, for long, engaged in debates about the proper funding for accurate counts in both the decennial census and ACS. Congressional members introduced bills in 2012-2013 to de-fund the ACS and/or make it a voluntary survey . These efforts came on the heels of the Canadian government's 2011 effort to make its nationwide demographic survey voluntary with disastrous results, reinstating it in 2015. MACS was formed to energize support for these census data collections, and to combat misinformation about the ACS and Census through education and advocacy.

In 2013, MACS began targeted congressional engagement with encouragement and assistance from helpful partners like The Census Project and Terri Ann Lowenthal. Importantly, MACS also gained support from energized data

users in Minnesota, who were passionate about the ACS and Census and its importance for a range of policies and issue priorities. Between 2015-2016, MACS partnered with The Bauman Foundation and The Census Project to produce and launch a toolkit about the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). The toolkit was aimed at grassroots supporters and allies of the project to enable them to educate their own senators and representatives about the decennial census and ACS. The toolkit offers information, resources and guidance for local stakeholder organizations who want to create a coalition in their area/state to help preserve a fair and accurate decennial census and a comprehensive ACS.

In 2017, MACS started its decennial Census engagement and officially changed their name to Minnesotans for the American Community Survey and 2020 Census (MACS 2020). This change was intended to highlight the importance of both the ACS and decennial Census. Still, MACS remains an informal organization and not an independent 501c3. In spite of this, MACS has been able to continue supporting their mission of educating Congress about the critical importance of adequate yearly funding for 2020 Census planning and operations and to support a robust American Community Survey. In fact, some of Minnesota's congressional delegation have become census champions helping to advance an accurate 2020 count. Looking ahead, however, MACS is on the cusp of formal incorporation as a nonprofit entity and, like in the prior decade, is adding long-range planning and advocacy around the 2030 Census to its scope of work.

KEY FEATURES OF THE MACS MODEL

There are several key features of the MACS model. This section highlights the most important in terms of modeling this success and replicating it in other states or regions. In addition, we have ranked the following features by their level of necessity in Table 1. Along with each feature we have included possible barriers or weaknesses that may arise in terms of replicating this model. We also include the strengths of each feature in the table below. These features are based on the qualitative interviews we conducted and our original research into the MACS materials that were provided.

ESSENTIAL FEATURES
According to data that we have collected and analyzed through in-depth interviews and other materials, there are five key elements that are essential features of the MACS model: (1) MACS' diverse coalition and network, (2) the strong leadership and expertise within the organization, (3) the need to have coalition members (or a key coalition member) with flexibility in terms of public education, mobilization, and advocacy, (4) keeping

TABLE #1: ESSENTIAL, IMPORTANT, AND CONTRIBUTING FEATURES OF THE MACS' MODEL

LEVEL OF NECESSITY	FEATURE	STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES
Essential features of the MACS strategy	Having a diverse coalition of stakeholders	Pro: Policymakers want to see that issues being raised are of direct interest to their constituents, and having a variety of stakeholders helps illustrate broad appeal and reasons to support. Con: Large coalition could make consensus difficult to achieve.
	Strong leadership/expertise	Pro: Helps to start with early leaders who are expert on Census/ACS so that they can speak at a deeper level as needed with government agencies, legislative offices. Lessons for other efforts: identify and educate/train champions early. Con: Heavy reliance on one leader is not sustainable in the long-term.
	Need for at least one coalition member with flexibility on ability to advocate	Pro: Educating government agencies and legislative offices may be sufficient. However, if ACS funding is at stake, and there is a specific ask for support on funding, then it will be considered lobbying, and ACS coalitions will need flexibility (c3 up to 20%, c4) in order to be effective. Con: It can be difficult to remain neutral, and the data angle may not always resonate.
	Keeping strategic focus narrow to begin, to be expanded later	Pro: Helpful when you have limited resources; could also be helpful to differentiate in a crowded field (comparative advantage). Con: This may make it more difficult to bring others in due to narrow focus.
	Connection to national partners such as The Census Project	Pro: Help in navigating congressional offices, understanding the landscape, additional resources. Con: It may be difficult to coordinate quick action on topics, national partners may have different interests that do not extend to more local levels.
Important features of the MACS strategy	Non-partisan effort, multi-sector effort	Pro: Essential for it to be seen as an issue affecting the entire community. Con: Census/ACS advocacy is getting increasingly more political in nature.
	Strength and contribution of supporters and board members	Pro: It is helpful to show that supporters and board members come from a variety of professional sectors, and that there are more than just a handful. Con: Limitations of supporters'/board members' capacity.
	Clear and concise messaging/communications (internally and externally)	Pro: Targeted approach. Con: Targeted messaging realistically may not be tailored to the public/ broad audiences (available in different languages, culturally appropriate communications, etc.).
	Incorporating the support of the State Demographer	Pro: The demographer's office brings legitimacy, data experience, and the weight of a government agency that uses the data. Con: Political partisanship can be an issue, the demographer's office has limited ability to do things due to its government position.
	Developing relationships with Congressional office staff	Pro: Congressional office staff have key insights that can be very helpful to guide productive conversations. Con: Staff members may have limited authority and/or influence; possible turnover and replacement.
Additional strategies & features that facilitate success	Including philanthropic partners	Pro: Philanthropy can bring financial support and different types of political clout, leverage, and/or support than corporate entities. Con: Philanthropy often has specific objectives, which can change over time and may not always overlap cleanly.
	Getting support from state government leaders	Pro: State influence and resources can be useful for the work . Con: Investing and cultivating these relationships can be difficult to start.
	Including business & economic development community	Pro: Business input and support can be a powerful voice, and can get the attention of key policymakers. Con: Business interests can be very specific, and business leaders are also very busy.
	Including community organizations as partners	Pro: Community organizations often have their ear to the ground in a unique way that provides key insights. They are often seen as trusted messengers, and can act as intermediaries between organizations and communities for various needs. Con: Community-based organizations are often short-staffed and under-resourced, and may not have the bandwidth to play key/needed roles.
	Ensuring geographic diversity (metro and rural)	Pro: Diverse representation from throughout the state, making the coalition stronger. Con: Difficult to achieve and align stakeholders.
	Incorporating a university research center	Pro: Seen as an authoritative voice on data. Con: Cannot lobby/advocate, and must be careful about political topics.

Source: Center for Social Innovation, 2022

the strategy focus narrow and achievable to start and expanding later, and (5) the partnership and connection to national partners and stakeholders. Other features noted in Table 1 are important, but these elements are essential for the success of the model.

BUILDING A LARGE, DIVERSE, AND REPRESENTATIVE COALITION

The majority of interviewees attributed the success of MACS' congressional delegation advocacy to the expansive and diverse coalition brought together by the organization. This group of stakeholders was representative of different regions and sectors in the state. Having a broad representation of constituents made it easier to book meetings and build relationships with congressional representatives and staffers. This broad coalition was also helpful in that each organization brought their own specific expertise and experience that aided in advocacy knowledge and efforts.

COALITION MEMBERS WITH FLEXIBILITY IN TERMS OF ADVOCACY

Another essential feature of the MACS' model is the flexibility in terms of public education, mobilization, and advocacy. Some organizations that support MACS have limitations on the type of advocacy they are allowed to do, depending on how their organization is classified. Some may be government organizations, or other types of nonprofits (e.g., classification as a 501(c)(3) versus as a 501(c)(4)). MACS and other coalition members were able to advocate where other organizations could not because of their status or other limitations. Additionally, MACS was able to facilitate the meetings between constituents and congressional members, opening up space for education, relationship building, and more communication between representatives and their constituents.

STRONG LEADERSHIP & EXPERTISE

Another essential feature of the MACS model is the strong leadership and expertise that is exuded by MACS' leader Joan Naymark. In every interview we conducted and analyzed, Joan's leadership and knowledge was consistently ranked as a top component for success. Aside from leadership and expertise, passion and drive is also necessary to move the work forward.

For us to try and create a concrete blueprint for MACS replication, it was essential to dig deeper into what specific assets and skills Joan brought to MACS. First, many interview participants noted Joan's ability to organize and lead. To maintain and grow the vast and diverse MACS coalition, a strong leader is needed. Joan also brings previous industry experience and knowledge about census/ACS data and how that data are utilized by different sectors, in particular the private sector. A strong MACS leader needs to under-

stand the interests and needs of each stakeholder in their coalition. Joan also brought to the table her contacts from her previous work experience. Joan's initial contact list was a good starting point in terms of building the coalition from the ground up. As more supporters signed on, the network grew as each new supporter brought their own networks and contacts.

KEEPING A NARROW STRATEGY FOCUS WITH ACHIEVABLE GOALS

Another essential feature of the MACS model that we would like to note is MACS' strategy early on that kept their focus narrow and goals achievable. In the early days of MACS, the focus was very concise and narrow, surrounding the ACS. This helped in terms of rallying organizations around a clear and direct goal. Eventually, MACS was able to expand their focus and outreach to include 2020 Census efforts.

CONNECTION & PARTNERSHIPS WITH NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

The final essential feature that we identified was the connection and partnerships with national stakeholders. MACS entered into a partnership with The Census Project and had other national level advocates assisting them with outreach. These partnerships were essential in helping MACS to navigate congressional relationships and the overall landscape of Census/ACS decision makers.

IMPORTANT FEATURES

This section of the study lays out the features of the MACS model we have identified as not essential, but still very important to its success. These features include (not in ranked order of importance): (1) The fact that Census/ACS advocacy has historically been a bipartisan issue, (2) MACS has tapped into the strengths and contributions of MACS supporters and board members, (3) MACS has had consistent clear and concise messaging and communications for both internal and external audiences, and (4) MACS had developed meaningful relationships with congressional office staff and a strong reputation for expertise in the Census and ACS.

NON-PARTISAN EFFORT

Both nationally and at the state level in Minnesota, Census/ACS advocacy has generally been a non-partisan issue in the past. Because the Census and ACS help to direct federal and state funding, both parties have an incentive to support an accurate count. Having a well funded and accurate count will help filter down funding to local state districts.

More recently the non-partisan nature of the Census/ACS has been shifting. There have been some privacy and fiscal concerns that have been flagged largely by some republicans and libertarians. This may present a challenge in the

TABLE #2: POSSIBLE FUTURE LEAD ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE MACS MODEL

Organization	Strengths	Weaknesses
State Demographer's Office	Stable funding, expertise/knowledge, capacity to maintain coalition and grow.	Limitations of being a government office, not as accessible for business sector; cannot lobby.
University/Higher Education Center	Built in network, may have different types of connections to help with coalition building, typically viewed as fairly neutral and bi-partisan; strength in data and education.	Lack of advocacy power, may have some funding limitations, university structure may not be as conducive to what a MACS-type organization would need to be able to do.
Community Organizations	Would be able to draw upon contacts and build coalitions, potential to draw in a wide base.	Limitations in terms of capacity and lobbying efforts; may have some difficulty in bridging with government and corporate stakeholders; not clear how stable funding would be.
Foundation/Philanthropy	Likely has relationships with government and corporate stakeholders, unique position in the community, likely would be able to build coalitions, funding.	May not be able to lobby, would potentially "take on" the foundation/organization's goals which may differ somewhat from what MACS is doing right now.

Source: Center for Social Innovation, University of California, Riverside.

"THIS MODEL HAS BEEN PROVEN AND IT'S BEEN… BUILT ON FROM PAST SUCCESS"

- Interview, government representative

"THEY [MACS] HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REALLY PUT TOGETHER A TREMENDOUS COALITION, AND A MEANINGFUL COALITION THAT HAS CONNECTED WITH THE PUBLIC"

- Interview, government representative

future if Census/ACS advocacy continues trending toward partisanship. However, the MACS model has provided some evidence that through education and additional information congressional offices are willing to meet and talk about the Census/ACS despite their party affiliation.

STRENGTH AND CONTRIBUTION OF MACS SUPPORTERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Another feature of the MACS model that is important is the strength and contributions of MACS supporters and board members. MACS supporters utilized their own networks to expand MACS' reach and utilized their specific knowledge and expertise to help MACS be extremely efficient and effective. Additionally, MACS is able to tap into the expertise and knowledge of their diverse group of board members. This is extremely beneficial especially in terms of gaining insight into best practices and strategies for building relationships with congressional offices.

CONSISTENT, CLEAR, AND CONCISE MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout this case study, MACS' ability to provide consistently clear and concise communications and messaging was a common theme. In terms of internal communication, both MACS supporters and board members are kept well informed. The messaging coming out from MACS is crafted internally and is a collaborative effort. Clear and concise communication was particularly important during the congressional delegation meetings. Interviewees told us that prior to each meeting with a congressional office, each MACS participant knew exactly what their role was and what they were expected to execute on during the meeting.

In terms of external communications and messaging, MACS was able to craft direct and concise communications for congressional offices and staffers. Much of these materials were Census/ACS facts, budgetary information, and updates in terms of the census count and what was happening on the ground within the state. MACS helped to inform the congressional offices both in terms of updates at the federal level and state level census/ACS progress. MACS was able to develop and cultivate a reputation as a source of credible and reliable information about the Census/ACS in Minnesota that was particularly useful for the congressional delegation.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE STAFF

The relationships that MACS was able to establish and cultivate with congressional office staff in Minnesota and their policy staff in Washington DC was extremely important for their success. These relationships helped to open the door for MACS to engage with representatives and deliver timely and relevant information about the ACS/Census. According to our interview analysis, this information was greatly appreciated by congressional staff. Additionally, MACS started building a reputation as a trusted source of information in the state on ACS/Census matters.

CONTRIBUTING STRATEGIES & FEATURES FOR SUCCESS

There are additional factors relevant to the ability of initiatives to effectively engage on the ACS and 2020 Census. These include the involvement and support of: (1) philanthropic partners, (2) state government leaders, (3) the business and economic development community, (4) community based organizations, (5) partners from geographically diverse areas, and (6) university research centers. Our research indicates that MACS was successful in engaging with all of these actors, although as we note later, significant philanthropic investments in the organization did not materialize until very recently.

KEY STRATEGIES

This section highlights the key strategies that MACS utilizes for ACS/Census outreach and advocacy. These four strategies include: (1) grasstops organizing around ACS investment, (2) legislative advocacy and involvement, (3) coalition building and diverse representation, and (4) contact management and outreach.

GRASS-TOPS ORGANIZING AROUND ACS INVESTMENT

By utilizing a "grasstops" strategy, MACS was able to create specific means of communication for their advocates and in turn more effectively activate key segments of their supporters. MACS supporters and advocates were willing to rally their networks to recruit other individuals and/or organizations that would be interested in supporting ACS/Census advocacy. Importantly, MACS was able to facilitate dialogue and engagement between advocates helping to understand each member's specific preferences and contributions they bring to the table. Then, MACS was able to segment tasks according to those needs, employing selective participation in terms of legislative office visits and engagement.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AND INVOLVEMENT

A key strategy of MACS is the engagement with congressional delegation offices. MACS partners and provides Census/ACS information and education to congressional offices. MACS works to illustrate that ACS data are useful to many constituencies, highlighting various uses for the data, including its importance for economic development. According to our interviews with congressional delegation offices, MACS was seen as the "go to" organization for Census/ACS information and education for these offices. In fact, some offices mentioned that through MACS' support their office's tasks of ACS advocacy was made easier by providing

real world examples of the usefulness of ACS data. MACS developed a reputation with the Minnesota delegation as a trusted source of information in part because of their foundational partners, including Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and the MN Council on Foundations, which have engaged with congressional offices on many issues over the years. Each member of the coalition is deeply connect-ed with the community, and has a proven track record of serving the public interest. One staffer noted, "We know that we can rely on the information they [MACS] present, and the outreach they do within the community."

Some specific strategies that were used include: (1) In-person meetings, (2) site visits, (3) targeting and engaging specific lawmakers, staffers, and committees, and (4) sharing personal and regional stories.

COALITION BUILDING & DIVERSE REPRESENTATION
Building a diverse and representative coalition is an essential component for effective advocacy. Through building a coalition, individuals and organizations can attain and maintain significant power and influence. It is also the primary way in which disempowered or marginalized voices can develop their power base and better advocate for their interests, helping to shift the existing balance of power. For MACS there were numerous benefits to building and working in a unified coalition including but not limited to: (1) Heightened effectiveness and community voice, (2) increased access to resources including networks, (3) enhanced legitima-cy, and (4) improved overall community organization and working relationships.

CONTACT MANAGEMENT AND OUTREACH STRATEGY
An important aspect of coalition building is continuous work towards growing and maintaining that diverse network. MACS is armed with an incredibly diverse and representative coalition, but great effort is needed to grow and maintain these relationships. According to internal documents, MACS manages 6 separate sub-groups within the coalition. These groups include: MACS leadership, supporters, congressional contacts, media, prospective supporters, and organizational partners (i.e. MRCC, MCF, MCN, The Census Project, etc). Each group is engaged according to their specific needs.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The United States Decennial Census is an effort to count every resident in the country. Importantly, these data are used to determine how billions of dollars in federal funding are distributed to local communities and the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives. Indeed, estimates from George Washington University have noted that, for every resident not counted, communities

could lose an average of $28,000 in federal funding over ten years (Andrew Reamer, 2020, "Counting For Dollars").

In Minnesota, the 2020 Census was an important opportunity to ensure that historically undercounted communities were recognized, respected, included, and engaged. Counting every person also meant that com-munities and jurisdictions could receive their fair share of public dollars, private investments, and represen-tation in legislative office, from Congressional seats to local elected offices. MACS was able to work with part-ners and supporters to mobilize a broad and diverse coalition to advocate for appropriate Census funding at the grasstops level. In addition, MACS worked alongside the Our Minnesota Census Campaign and the Minnesota Census Mobilization Partnership (MCMP) on the fol-lowing: (1) promoting participation in the 2020 census; (2) creating community-based strategies to engage historically undercounted communities; (3) developing sustainable civic engagement capacity; and (4) engaging Minnesota grantmakers in democracy-building.

While we cannot specifically quantify MACS' direct impact, the broad array of leaders we interviewed all credited MACS with contributing to: (1) larger invest-ment in Census efforts which ultimately lead to better quality data, and (2) congressional and legislative education and buy-in. Minnesota ended up having the highest self-response rate in the nation in the 2020 Census (75.1% vs. the national average 67%, Source: 2020Census.gov), which led to them narrowly holding on to a congressional seat. The MACS coalition, along with other partners in the state, spearheaded collaborative work throughout Minnesota that engaged both grass-tops and grassroots organizations and individuals. The momentum and partnerships built during these efforts created a lasting infrastructure for collaboration that will be especially important as the region prepares for the next Census in 2030.

RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

The current MACS model for ACS and Census advocacy is strong overall, with respect to coalition building and congressional delegation engagement. Our research also revealed areas for growth and improvement.

ADDITIONAL STRUCTURE & RESOURCES

A common theme from the interviews was that al-though MACS functions well, in certain instances it lacks structure. For example, board members could be further engaged in long-term strategy planning and day-to-day operations. It is important to note that several interviewees mentioned that the organization is moving towards adding more structure and organiza-tional capacity in the near future.

ENGAGING MORE HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS/LEADERS

Because a large part of MACS' strategy is to engage the existing power structure and stakeholders within the state, intentional efforts need to be made to reach out to historically marginalized groups to lift them up as community leaders with expertise in their own right.

STABILITY THROUGH LONG-TERM FUNDING

All interviewees noted that a weakness of MACS is that it exists without long-term funding and is essentially an all volunteer organization. Joan is a strong leader with the ability to continue this work into the future. Unfortunately, if Joan were to step back or away from the organization it is unclear where MACS would ultimately be housed. Through our own research and recommendations stemming from the in-depth interviews we conducted, we have included several options noted below for the future of MACS.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS/MODELS

While there have been several national advocacy efforts for the ACS, very little work outside of MACS has been done at the state level. Nationally, some champion organizations have been: (1) The Leadership Conference Education Fund, (2) The Census Project, and (3) the Annie E. Casey Foundation's work on improving the Census Bureau's counts of young children. Many of these national level efforts are focused on education about the ACS, but none overtly engage with state level congressional delegation members.

KEY LESSONS FOR OTHER STATE EFFORTS

Even though the operations of the American Community Survey and decennial Census are similar across states, there are important differences in the configuration of power, funding, and stakeholder relationships that suggest adaptation of the MACS model to other states and regions, rather than outright replication.

Based on the MACS model, the following components would be beneficial for building a state-wide coalition for ACS/Census advocacy: (1) Benefiting from, and building upon, a diverse coalition or network, (2) strong leadership and expertise and the passion/drive to move the work forward, (3) having coalition members (or a key coalition member) with flexibility in terms of public education, mobilization, and advocacy, (4) having a narrow strategic focus to begin and expanding later, and (5) building strong connections with national Census partners. It is important to note that each state should have a specifically tailored strategy, with aspect to engaging key stakeholders, building relationships across sectors and regions, and deciding on an initial area of focus.

Importantly, this case study will form an important element of the Census Legacies project that the Center for Social Innovation has incubated, and for ACS organizing work in state-based Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and in Native American communities supported in large part by the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation. Indeed, Census Legacies and AAPI Data have an aspirational goal of having five or more states by 2025 who have adopted and adapted the MACS strategy of robust engagement on the American Community Survey, to meet the important needs of constituent groups and policy stakeholders.

MACS' focus on congressional delegations will be a foundational building block, and we will add other blocks that include engagement with state legislatures (including key committees and staff) and state government agencies such as departments of finance, housing, and economic development.

CALL TO ACTION

The decennial census and American Community Survey are like no other data source available, and they are vital to the work of public and private institutions alike—from advocacy and planning, to resourcing, implementation, and evaluation.

The 2020 Census effort was historic, in that it engaged government agencies, philanthropic institutions, nonprofits, academic institutions and business partners like never before. It is vital for communities and regions to turn to the American Community Survey as the next phase of relationship-building and organizing, since data ranging from housing, to transportation, to poverty, to broadband Internet access all depend on an accurate and reliable ACS. Looking ahead, the abilities of communities and regions to successfully plan, resource, and advocate will rely heavily on sustained collaboration and capacity building—so that communities can better understand why the American Community Survey is so vital, and how they can better organize and advocate for its continued success.

CSIUCR
CENTER FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

The Center for Social Innovation provides a credible research voice that spurs civic leadership and policy innovation. Its reputation is built on the key pillars of social science, strategic policy awareness, innovation mindsets, and deep community partnerships. CSI integrates researchers, community organizations, and civic stakeholders in collaborative projects and long-term partnerships that strengthen shared values of resilience, inclusion, sustainability, and equity (RISE). Importantly, the Center seeks to shift away from a "problem" narrative to an "opportunity" narrative for marginalized communities and localities.

CENSUS LEGACIES

Census Legacies is an emerging network—of funders, nonprofits, businesses, government agencies, and researchers from around the country—seeking to re-purpose Census outreach tables and ensuring that historically undercounted communities have an equal voice in shaping the future of our regions

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, VISIT SOCIALINNOVATION.UCR.EDU/RESEARCH