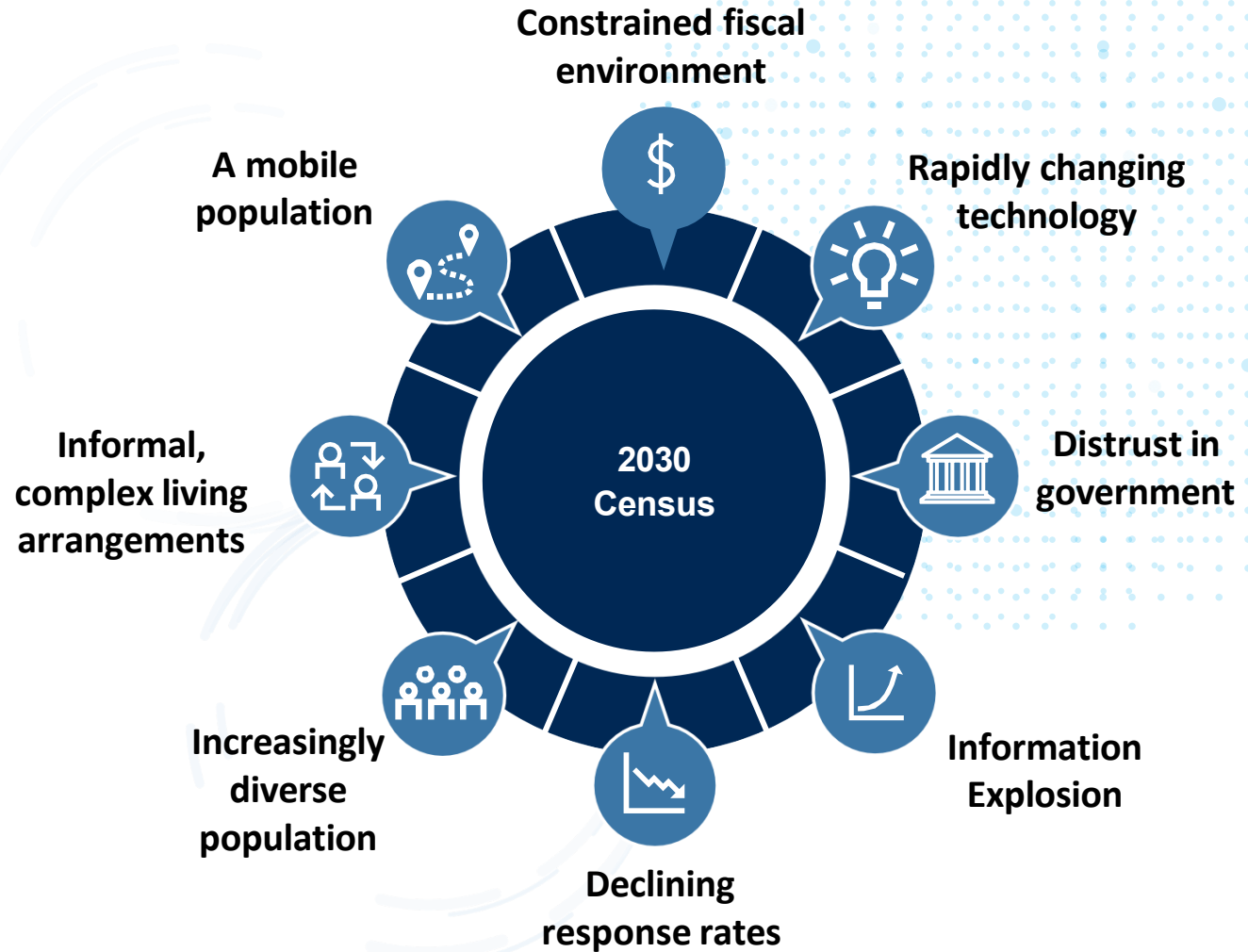# 2030 CENSUS OVERVIEW

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Planning For The 2030 Census Is Underway

The 2030 Census is being conducted in a rapidly changing environment.

It requires a flexible design that takes advantages of new technologies and data sources while minimizing risk to ensure a high- quality population count.

Constrained fiscal environment

A mobile population

Rapidly changing technology

Distrust in government

Informal, complex living arrangements

2030 Census

Information Explosion

Increasingly diverse population

Declining response rates

Sources of Input for 2030 Census Planning and Execution

Census Bureau Staff
- Recommendations from 2020 Census lessons learned, debriefings, and studies conducted under the Evaluations, Assessments, and Experiments (EAE) program.
- Internal solicitation of 2030 research ideas.
- 2030 Census Enhancement Areas research projects.
- Ongoing work and continuous improvement for 2030 Census.

Government Agencies
- Content review by federal agencies with data needs (e.g., DOJ, HHS, HUD, EPA, EEOC).
- Consultations with tribal governments.
- Guidance on the use of administrative data (e.g., IRS, SSA, Medicare/Medicaid).
- Data needs from territory governments.

Oversight Entities
- Oversight and budget from Congress.
- Oversight from the Office of Management and Budget.
- Oversight from the Department of Commerce, including Office of the Inspector General audits.
- Government Accountability Office recommendations.

External Experts and Stakeholders
- Recommendations from Census Bureau advisory committees.
- Recommendations from research entities (e.g., CNSTAT, NCRN, JASON).
- Data needs from federal and state data centers.
- Input from national statistical organizations of other countries.
- Input from community partners.

General Public and Respondents
- Public feedback from the Federal Register Notices on the 2030 Census.
- Public comments at advisory committee meetings.
- Public comments at Program Management reviews.
- Research participants in 2030 Census Research and Testing (e.g., focus groups, cognitive testing).
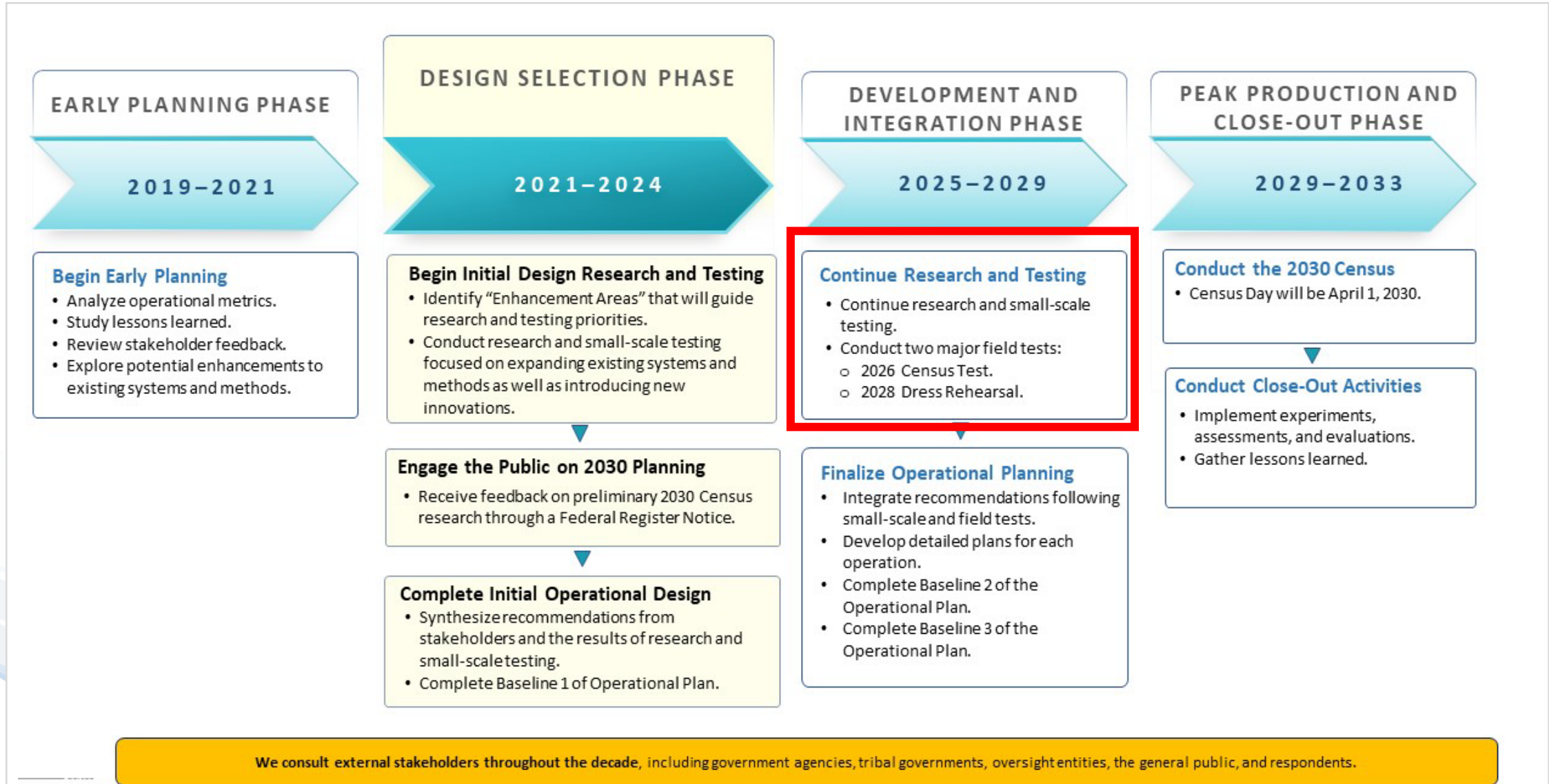
Note:
CNSTAT – Committee of National Statistics
NCRN – NSF-Census Research Network
JASON – Independent advisory group

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2030 Census Timeline

EARLY PLANNING PHASE

2019–2021

Begin Early Planning
- Analyze operational metrics.
- Study lessons learned.
- Review stakeholder feedback.
- Explore potential enhancements to existing systems and methods.

DESIGN SELECTION PHASE

2021–2024

Begin Initial Design Research and Testing
- Identify "Enhancement Areas" that will guide research and testing priorities.
- Conduct research and small-scale testing focused on expanding existing systems and methods as well as introducing new innovations.

Engage the Public on 2030 Planning
- Receive feedback on preliminary 2030 Census research through a Federal Register Notice.

Complete Initial Operational Design
- Synthesize recommendations from stakeholders and the results of research and small-scale testing.
- Complete Baseline 1 of Operational Plan.

DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION PHASE

2025–2029

Continue Research and Testing
- Continue research and small-scale testing.
- Conduct two major field tests:
  - 2026 Census Test.
  - 2028 Dress Rehearsal.

Finalize Operational Planning
- Integrate recommendations following small-scale and field tests.
- Develop detailed plans for each operation.
- Complete Baseline 2 of the Operational Plan.
- Complete Baseline 3 of the Operational Plan.

PEAK PRODUCTION AND CLOSE-OUT PHASE

2029–2033

Conduct the 2030 Census
- Census Day will be April 1, 2030.

Conduct Close-Out Activities
- Implement experiments, assessments, and evaluations.
- Gather lessons learned.

We consult external stakeholders throughout the decade, including government agencies, tribal governments, oversight entities, the general public, and respondents.

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Research Projects

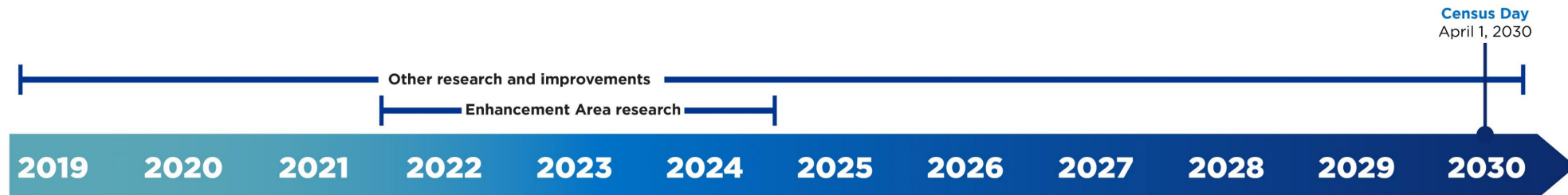To inform the 2030 Census design

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2030 Census Research Projects

Enhancement Area (EA) Research Projects

- Projects are assigned into five EAs.
- Accepted recommendations will be integrated into the first iteration of the operational design, planned for 2024.

Other Research and Improvements

- Informed by lessons learned, stakeholder input, or results of evaluations, assessments, and experiments.

Census Day
April 1, 2030

Other research and improvements

Enhancement Area research

| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |

Enhancement Areas (EAs)

EA 1: Data Collection

- Self-Response
- In-Field and In-Office Enumeration
- Response Data Quality and Questionnaire Content
- Post-Enumeration Survey

EA 2: Modernize Group Quarters Enumeration

EA 3: Integrate Data Collection and Processing in Real Time

EA 4: Streamline Operational Support Infrastructure

EA 5: Continuous Data Collection and Aggregation

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Enhancement Areas (EAs)

EA 1: Data Collection

> How can we enhance our data collection to more effectively reach and count the nation—including historically undercounted populations?

EA 2: Modernize Group Quarters Enumeration

EA 3: Integrate Data Collection and Processing in Real Time

EA 4: Streamline Operational Support Infrastructure

EA 5: Continuous Data Collection and Aggregation

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Enhancement Areas (EAs)

EA 1: Data Collection

EA 2: Modernize Group Quarters Enumeration

➢How do we modernize operations to address complex and evolving living situations?

EA 3: Integrate Data Collection and Processing in Real Time

EA 4: Streamline Operational Support Infrastructure

EA 5: Continuous Data Collection and Aggregation

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Enhancement Areas (EAs)

EA 1: Data Collection

EA 2: Modernize Group Quarters Enumeration

EA 3: Integrate Data Collection and Processing in Real Time

➢ How can we integrate data processing into data collection to address issues and improve quality in real-time?

EA 4: Streamline Operational Support Infrastructure

EA 5: Continuous Data Collection and Aggregation

Enhancement Areas (EAs)

EA 1: Data Collection

EA 2: Modernize Group Quarters Enumeration

EA 3: Integrate Data Collection and Processing in Real Time

EA 4: Streamline Operational Support Infrastructure

➢How do we streamline the operational support infrastructure to improve effectiveness?

EA 5: Continuous Data Collection and Aggregation

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Enhancement Areas (EAs)

EA 1: Data Collection

EA 2: Modernize Group Quarters Enumeration

EA 3: Integrate Data Collection and Processing in Real Time

EA 4: Streamline Operational Support Infrastructure

EA 5: Continuous Data Collection and Aggregation

➤ How can we leverage existing data sources and seek new ones to continuously measure the population throughout the decade, as well as prepare for the 2030 count?

Learn More About Research Projects

https://www.census.gov/2030-census-research-explorer

HOME   ENHANCEMENT AREAS   📕 DOWNLOAD PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

2030 Census Research Project Explorer

2030 Census research projects are grouped into five focus areas we refer to as Enhancement Areas (EAs). These EAs guide the development of the 2030 Census research agenda. The 2030 Census Research Project Explorer can be used to learn more about the research projects being conducted in each EA and explore topics of interest.

Search by project name or keyword   **Filter Projects by EA** ▾   **Read EA Descriptions**

EA 1.1: Data Collection – Self-Response

Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Scope Determination

This project's objective is to determine the optimal design for the Mobile Questionnaire Assistance (MQA) operation such that it provides benefit to the 2030 Census in terms of contributing to response and providing support for communities, including historically undercounted populations,... **(see more)**

EA 1.1: Data Collection – Self-Response

Improving Internet Self-Response and Non-ID Data Collection

This project's objective is to improve the internet self-response data collection instrument, expected to be the primary way of collecting responses to the 2030 Census. This project will research ways to improve the address collection for respondents who may not have a Census ID (the Internet... **(see more)**

EA 1.1: Data Collection – Self-Response

Paper Questionnaire Fulfillment Strategy

This project's objective is to examine the feasibility of implementing a fulfillment operation for the 2030 Census that would provide a paper questionnaire upon request from the public. A paper questionnaire fulfillment function would allow respondents to request a paper questionnaire be... **(see more)**

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Testing Strategy

Building the 2030 Census Testing Strategy

- In 2020, the Census Bureau conducted the most automated, modern, and dynamic decennial census in our nation's history.

- This experience informs our approach to testing the 2030 Census design.

Build on the experiences and innovations of the 2020 Census → Expand systems to leverage existing functionalities while introducing innovations through small-scale testing → Anticipate potential challenges and the evolving world → 2030 Census testing strategy reflects this context.

2030 Census Testing Strategy

Ongoing small-scale testing

- Refine the operations and technologies that worked successfully for the 2020 Census.

- Introduce smaller-scale innovations that are new for the 2030 Census.

Two Major field tests

- Integrate new and enhanced features.

- Ensure end-to-end operational viability and cohesion.

2026 Census Test
April 1, 2026

2028 Dress Rehearsal
April 1, 2028

Census Day
April 1, 2030

Ongoing small-scale testing

| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |

Two Major Field Tests in 2026 and 2028

2026 Census Test

Testing Operational Viability

- Testing new and innovative systems and methods to ensure feasibility and a cohesive census design.

- Collect data for future response and cost models for our census operations.

2028 Dress Rehearsal

Testing End-to-End Cohesion

- Start-to-finish run of operations and the hand-offs between them.

- Last chance to fine tune processes and systems at scale and ensure readiness before implementation.

- Details about the scope of operations, strategy for sites, and key milestones to be determined throughout the decade.

2026 Census Test:
Scope

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2026 Census Test Overview

We will test new and enhanced processes and methods we are looking to implement for the 2030 Census.
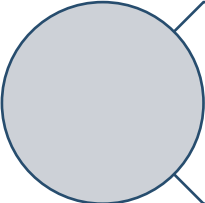
We're building on and refining our efforts from the 2020 Census to work toward a complete and accurate count of all segments of the population.

The test will include: (a) six test sites that, as a group, cover all operational areas in-scope for the test and (b) nationally representative self-response testing that will allow us to study self-response and contact strategy improvements.

The test scope covers six operational areas. The operational areas being tested include aspects that directly or indirectly help us enumerate historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations.

Next, we will determine the requirements and resources that will be necessary to conduct the test.
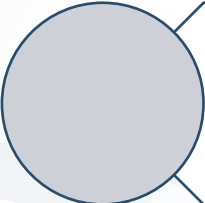
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Nation-Wide Self-Response Testing

This component of the test involves mailing materials to a nationally representative sample of households, inviting them to respond to the test online, by phone or by mail.

This builds upon the Census Bureau's ongoing small-scale testing to improve the online questionnaire and invitation materials sent to households.

It will also provide insight on self-response rate trends, which will inform 2030 Census planning for field infrastructure, communications, and other operations.

What Is In-Scope For The 2026 Census Test?

The 2026 Census Test allows us to study changes in several operational areas:

- Self-Response
- In-Field Enumeration
- Group Quarters Enumeration
- Communications, Partnerships, and Engagement
- Cross Operational Support and Infrastructure
- Near Real Time Response Processing

To be considered "in-scope," or selected for study, two criteria must be met:

- Operation must include improvements or innovations that require investigation of operational viability of those changes.
- Operation must be feasible based on available budget, systems and other resources.

Self-Response

Self-Response

- Focus on innovations designed to make it easier for people to respond on their own online or by paper questionnaire.
- Implement revisions to mailed materials to communicate the importance of self-response and provide quick access to the questionnaire response website, as well as sending paper questionnaires upon request.
- Test methods to increase participation among historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations and monitor the environment in which we talk with respondents to identify additional opportunities to engage with the public.

In-Field Enumeration

Group Quarters Enumeration

Communications, Partnerships, and Engagement

Cross Operational Support and Infrastructure

Near Real Time Response Processing

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In-Field Enumeration

Self-Response

In-Field Enumeration

- Combine In-Field Enumeration operation.
- Allow enumerators to make basic changes to the address list.
- Provide respondents the option to self-respond with an enumerator to guide them.
- Cross train enumerators for In-Field and Group Quarters Enumeration operations.
- Automate tools to move cases between In-Field and Group Quarters operations.
- Update contact strategies to include early In-Field enumeration.

Group Quarters Enumeration

Communications, Partnerships, and Engagement

Cross Operational Support and Infrastructure

Near Real Time Response Processing

Group Quarters Enumeration

Self-Response

In-Field Enumeration

Group Quarters Enumeration

- Enumerate group quarters (GQs) using an automated survey instrument that links individual responses to the GQ.
- Improve contact strategies for GQ management and residents.
- Allow residents of some noninstitutional GQ types to self-respond via a specially designed "group quarters internet self-response" option.
- Improve methodologies for GQ administrators to assist with data collection.

Communications, Partnerships, and Engagement

Cross Operational Support and Infrastructure

Near Real Time Response Processing

Communications, Partnerships, and Engagement

Self-Response

In-Field Enumeration

Group Quarters Enumeration

Communications, Partnerships, and Engagement

- Expand methods to reach hard-to-count and historically undercounted households.
- Implement messages directed towards GQ populations.
- Network and meet with community leaders, organizations and trusted messengers to promote awareness, education and response for the 2026 Census Test.
- Use technology to identify the most critical locations to host Mobile Questionnaire Assistance events.

Cross Operational Support and Infrastructure

Near Real Time Response Processing

Cross Operational Support and Infrastructure

Self-Response

In-Field Enumeration

Group Quarters Enumeration

Communications, Partnerships, and Engagement

Cross Operational Support and Infrastructure

- Test effectiveness of virtual office infrastructure with administrative and IT support working from home.
- Test virtual hiring processes.
- Test process of mailing equipment and materials to virtual employees' home addresses.
- Test virtual training for staff.
- Test ways of gathering, storing and analyzing administrative data.

Near Real Time Response Processing

Near Real Time Response Processing

Self-Response

In-Field Enumeration

Group Quarters Enumeration

Communications, Partnerships, and Engagement

Cross Operational Support and Infrastructure

Near Real Time Response Processing

- Integrate collection, processing and analysis.
- Address suspected irregularities and improve data quality in near real time.

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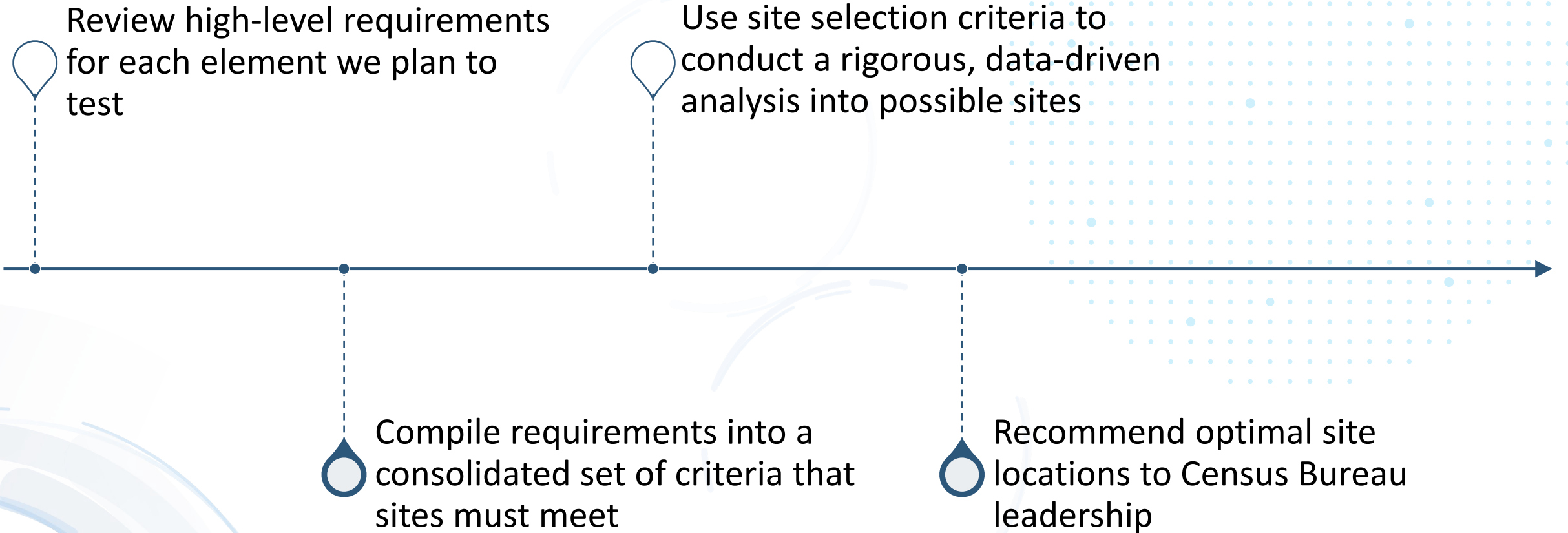**Census**
Bureau

Why Site Selection Matters

✓ Ensure we meet the test's objectives.

✓ Provide optimal opportunities to implement the full test scope under real conditions and on a larger scale.

✓ Support our focus on improving the count of historically undercounted and hard-to-count populations.

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Our Data-Driven Approach To Selecting Test Sites

Review high-level requirements for each element we plan to test

Use site selection criteria to conduct a rigorous, data-driven analysis into possible sites

Compile requirements into a consolidated set of criteria that sites must meet

Recommend optimal site locations to Census Bureau leadership

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Site Selection Criteria

Geography

- Locations across 2 Census Bureau Regions
- Rural area with:
  - High percentages of historically undercounted populations and
  - Historically lower self-response rates
- Area with a colonia
- Tribal area
- Area with nonmailable addresses

Living Quarters Characteristics

- Seasonally vacant housing
- Complex households
- High instances of new construction
- Multiunit structures and/or hidden housing units
- Wide range of group quarters types
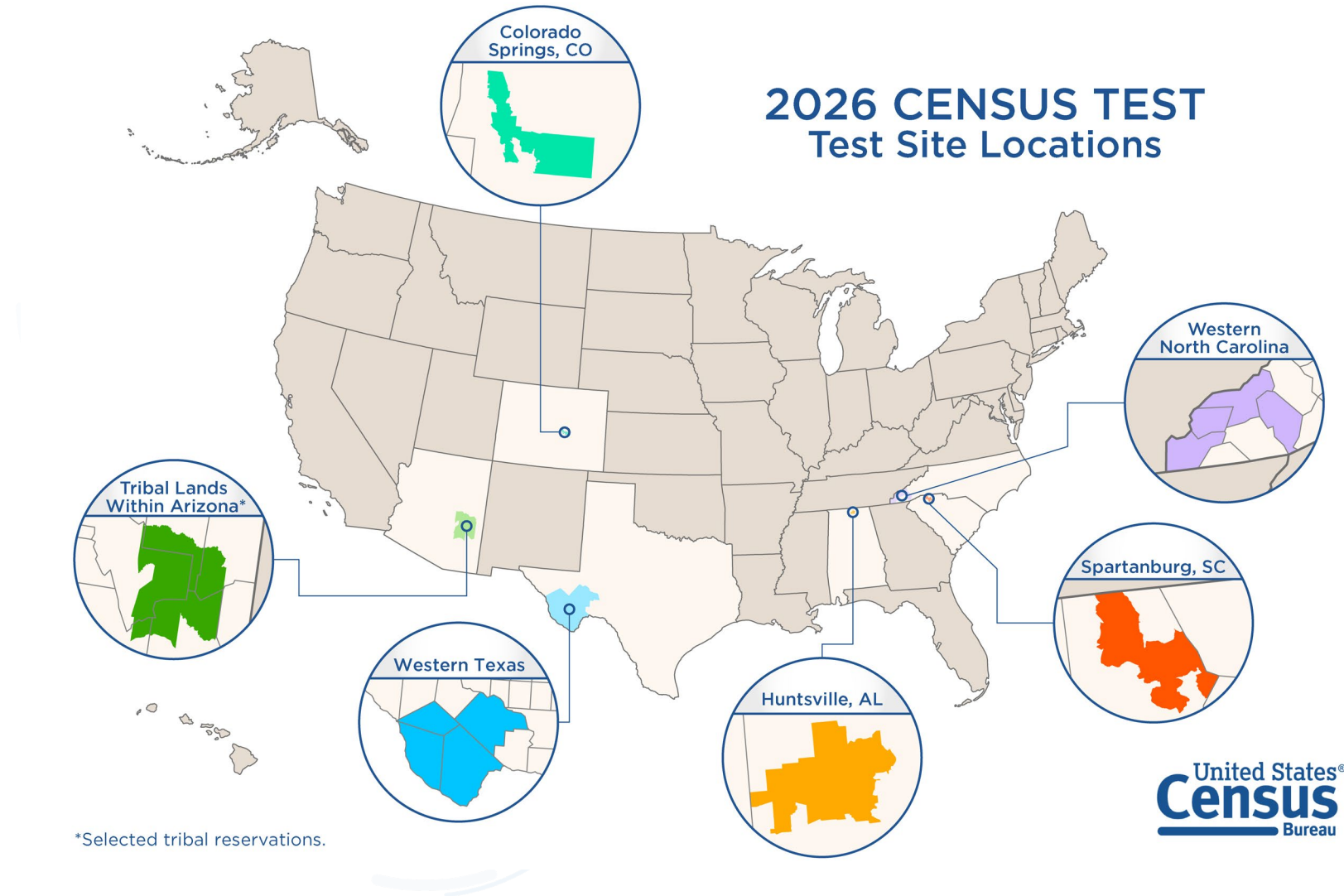
Staffing

- Sites where recruiting field staff has been historically challenging
- Sites with different levels of unemployment rates

Technical Characteristics

- Little to no cell phone or internet service
- Comprehensive and minimal administrative data

2026 Census Test Sites

- Western Texas
- Tribal Lands Within Arizona, which includes selected tribal reservations

- Colorado Springs, CO

- Western North Carolina

- Spartanburg, SC

- Huntsville, AL

2026 CENSUS TEST
Test Site Locations

Colorado Springs, CO

Western North Carolina

Tribal Lands Within Arizona*

Western Texas

Huntsville, AL

Spartanburg, SC

*Selected tribal reservations.

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Summary of Sites Selected

TEST SITE CRITERIA

TEST SITE CRITERIA	DENVER REGION			ATLANTA REGION		
	Western Texas	**Tribal Lands Within Arizona***	**Colorado Springs, CO**	**Western North Carolina**	**Spartanburg, SC**	**Huntsville, AL**
GEOGRAPHY						
Rural area with historically undercounted populations and lower self-response rates	X	X		X		
Area with a colonia	X					
Tribal area		X		X		
Area with nonmailable addresses	X	X		X		
LIVING QUARTERS						
Seasonally vacant housing	X	X		X		
Complex housing units			X	X	X	X
High instances of new construction			X			
Multiunit structures and/or hidden housing units			X	X	X	X
Wide range of group quarters types			X	X	X	X
STAFFING						
Recruiting field staff has been historically challenging						X
Low unemployment						X
TECHNICAL						
Little to no cell phone or internet service	X			X		
Comprehensive and minimal administrative record data			X			

* Selected tribal reservations.
Note: This table summarizes how testing requirements are distributed across the six test sites. These locations provide optimal opportunities for us to implement all of the changes and enhancements we have planned for the test.

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Administrative Data in the Census

Defining Administrative Data for the 2030 Census

Administrative Records refers to data collected and maintained by federal, state, tribal, and local governments, as well as some commercial entities. This information is called "administrative records" because data collected and maintained by agencies or firms are used to administer (or run) programs and provide services to the public.

We are further defining the term ***Administrative Data (AD)*** to include: (a) administrative records defined above and (b) data from census collections for statistical purposes (internal data) and data from publicly available sources.

- More general information about AD and how the Census Bureau uses it in combination with survey and census data can be found [here](#).
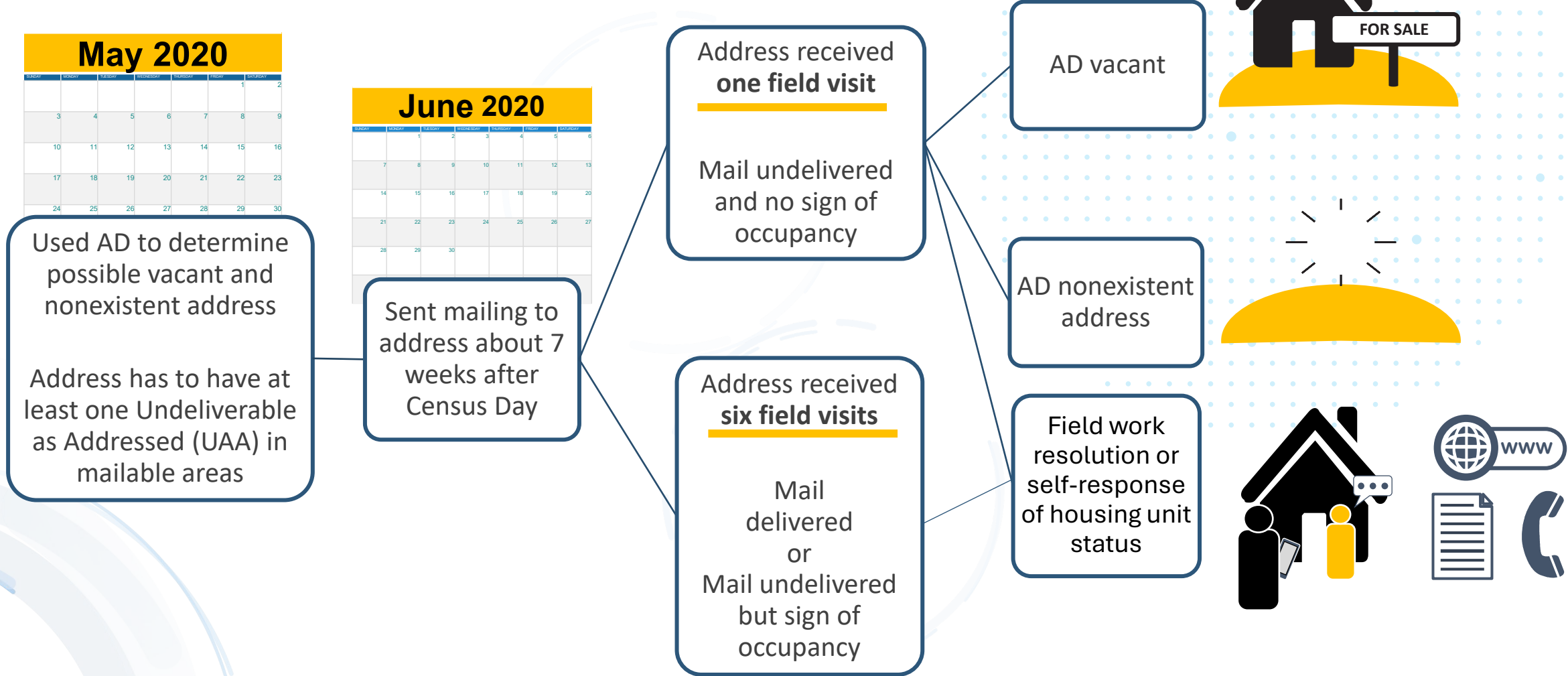
  Link Source: <https://www.census.gov/about/what/admin-data.html>

- A non-exhaustive list of AD sources can be found [here](#).

  Link Source: <https://www2.census.gov/about/linkage/data-file-inventory.pdf>

AD Usage During 2020 Census: Nonresponse Followup (NRFU)

Identification of Vacant and Nonexistent Addresses

May 2020

June 2020

Used AD to determine possible vacant and nonexistent address

Address has to have at least one Undeliverable as Addressed (UAA) in mailable areas

Sent mailing to address about 7 weeks after Census Day

Address received **one field visit**

Mail undelivered and no sign of occupancy

Address received **six field visits**

Mail delivered or Mail undelivered but sign of occupancy

AD vacant

AD nonexistent address

Field work resolution or self-response of housing unit status

AD Usage During 2020 Census: Other

Quality Control

All production household interview In-Field Enumeration (IFE) cases are matched to AD associated with that Master Address Filed (MAF) ID to see if the production interview generally agrees with AD. If so, we conclude the enumerator likely completed the case correctly and render it ineligible for reinterview.

For cases that do not match adequately to AD, we select cases for reinterview via random and analytic sampling techniques.
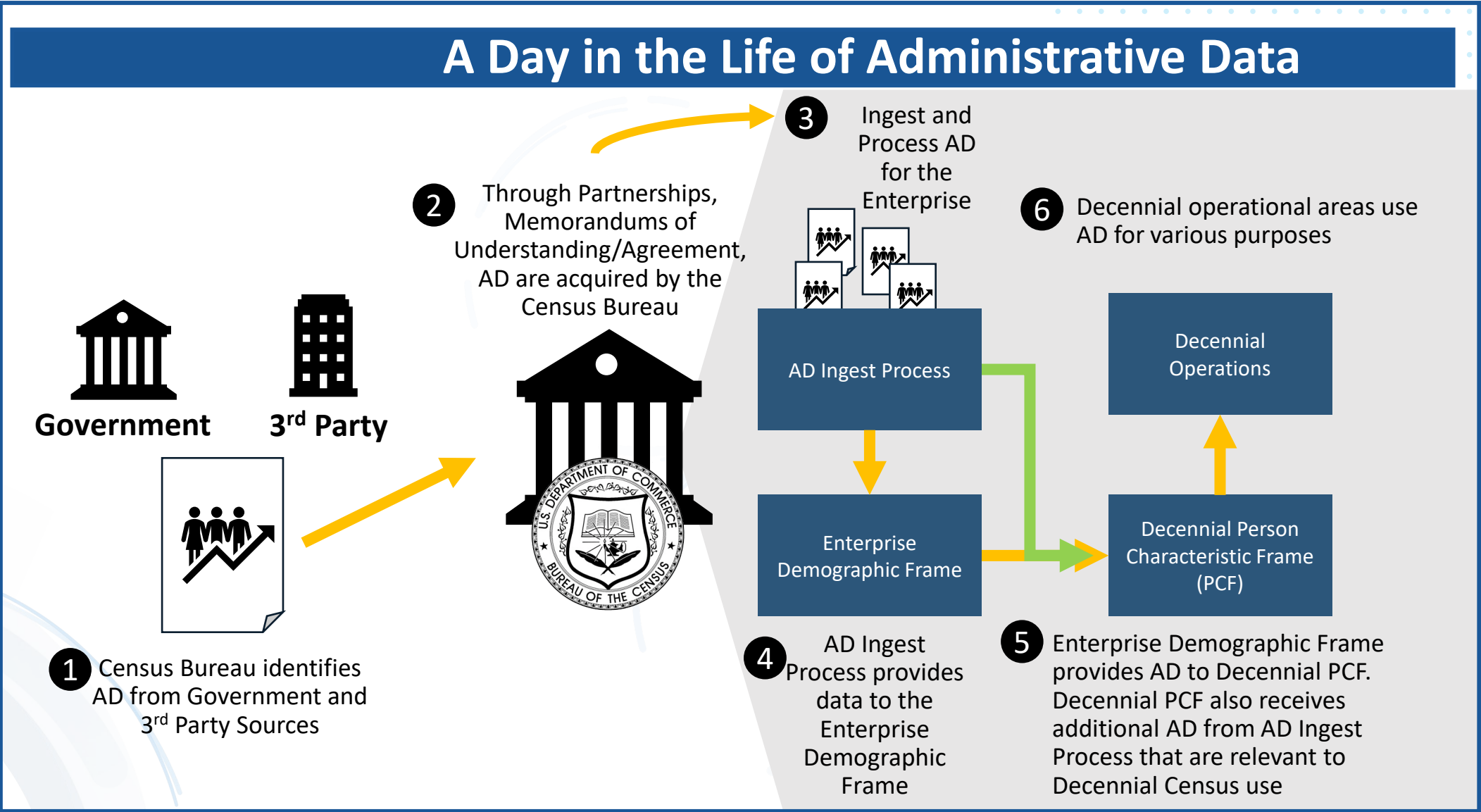
AD – Post Processing

During post processing, a hierarchy was built so that people in AD Occupied units would have characteristics directly substituted from their own past reports to the Census Bureau (which include the decennial census or American Community Survey) or AD data.

These characteristics were only assigned if there were multiple sources confirming the family lives there. If not, only a population count was assigned.

Characteristics include:
- Person-Level (Name, Age and Date of Birth, Sex, Race, Hispanic Origin, Relationship to Householder)
- Household-Level (Tenure)

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Guiding Graphic

A Day in the Life of Administrative Data

Government   **3rd Party**

1 Census Bureau identifies AD from Government and 3rd Party Sources

2 Through Partnerships, Memorandums of Understanding/Agreement, AD are acquired by the Census Bureau

3 Ingest and Process AD for the Enterprise

AD Ingest Process

Enterprise Demographic Frame

4 AD Ingest Process provides data to the Enterprise Demographic Frame

6 Decennial operational areas use AD for various purposes

Decennial Operations

Decennial Person Characteristic Frame (PCF)

5 Enterprise Demographic Frame provides AD to Decennial PCF. Decennial PCF also receives additional AD from AD Ingest Process that are relevant to Decennial Census use
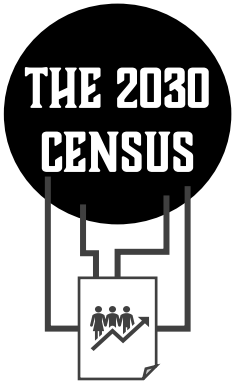
Goals of 2030 Administrative Data Acquisition Efforts

- We are actively looking to research and acquire new AD sources to leverage for the 2030 Census

- New sources are being pursued for multiple reasons, including:
  - Providing corroborating information for individuals already covered in the Enterprise Demographic Frame
  - Expand coverage of AD to those not currently in the Enterprise Demographic Frame, such as HTC/HUP
  - Operation-specific use cases that require certain types of AD

- New data sources are assessed to determine their utility and to perform a cost-benefit analysis

- Decennial-sponsored acquisition work (including tribal, federal, state, and commercial acquisitions) are being pursued to enhance AD coverage for 2030
  - When possible, making agreements broad enough to cover other uses

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Key Themes

THE 2030 CENSUS

The infusion of AD into multiple aspects of the 2030 Census

Careful attention to the affect of AD usage on Hard-to-Count (HTC) and Historically Undercounted Populations (HUPs)

Quality, Quality, Quality

Where to Find More Information

United States® Census Bureau

2030 Census

www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/2030/2030-census-main.html

2030 Census Research Project Explorer

www.census.gov/data/data-tools/decennial/2030-census-research-explorer/

2026 Census Test

www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/2030/planning-management/plan/research-and-testing/2026-census-test.html

2030 Census Webinars

www.census.gov/library/video/series/2030-census-webinar-series.html

2030 Census Advisory Committee

www.census.gov/about/cac/2030cac.html

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