

GENERAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&As) ON FIELD REALIGNMENT

Where will the regional offices be?

The six regional offices that are remaining open are Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia. The six regional offices that are closing are Boston, Charlotte, Dallas, Detroit, Kansas City and Seattle.

Why are you doing this?

We are doing this to reduce the cost and improve the quality of the hundreds of surveys the Census Bureau conducts annually. This is very important now given the tight budget constraints our country is facing. We must also keep pace with current development in survey work worldwide. As we have done historically every ten years, Census Bureau leadership has been engaged in a review of the cost and quality features of all Census operations, including the work of our 12 regional offices. It is our judgment that we have an opportunity to increase efficiencies by simultaneously reducing the number of regional offices, increasing the quality of management information systems, and implementing changes in supervisory structures.

Why are you doing this now?

Every ten years at the Census Bureau, we consider improvements to survey operations and look to develop new processes to reduce costs, become more efficient, and improve the quality of our surveys. Having just completed the 2010 Census, the time is right for reevaluating the way we do business and implementing necessary changes. This will better position the Census Bureau to meet the challenges it will face over the coming decade and give us time to build a tested and reliable field infrastructure before scaling up for the 2020 Census. With this decade's advances in technology, we also have new opportunities for efficiencies. Also, keep in mind that these changes won't be taking place immediately. Over the next 18 months, we will work with staff to carefully coordinate the transition and refine the new management plan. We will also offer other opportunities and extensive resources to staff affected by the office closures.

How did you decide which regions to close and which to keep open?

We developed and used an objective set of criteria to determine where changes would make sense. We looked to design the new regions so there is an equitable distribution of workload across regions, contiguous states in each region, and with no states divided in a region. The decision had nothing to do with performance of individual offices. The decision was based on minimizing the cost of survey operations; improving data quality; creating a real-time, information-rich and more flexible management environment; and supporting multiple response modes more flexibly.

When will this occur?

It is important to understand that these changes will not occur immediately. The transition to six regional offices will take 18 months to complete.

When will the doors close?

The six regional offices will not close until January 1, 2013.

What do you hope to accomplish?

We hope to accomplish many things with this restructuring to include reducing costs, improving productivity, improving the quality of our censuses and surveys, and using technology to streamline our business processes and more effectively manage our field staff.

How much do you plan to save by doing this?

The restructuring is projected to save \$15 to \$18 million in annual savings to the Federal government beginning in FY 2014.

When will this be announced?

This decision has already been announced. On Wednesday, June 29th regional office and field staff were notified by their Regional Directors. At the same time, the Director, Dr. Robert Groves; the Deputy Director, Thomas Mesenbourg; and other leadership at the Census Bureau announced this decision to headquarters staff, our stakeholders, and our partners. The media and general public were notified via a news release and information posted on our website.

When will you do this again?

We have no idea when there will be a need to do this type of restructuring again. A lot will depend on advances in survey collection and technology that evolve over time and increases in cost. However, the current structure of 12 regional offices has been in place since 1961. It is impossible to predict if this new structure will continue to meet the needs of the Census Bureau over the next several decades.

What are you doing in other places in the organization besides field?

Changes at headquarters will be implemented to strengthen the ties between headquarters management and field operations under this new structure. Also, assessments are being made at

headquarters to look for ways for the Census Bureau to work smarter and better. The Census Bureau has implemented a program “Improving Operational Efficiency (IOE)” where employees can make direct suggestions on better ways of doing things. These ideas are voted on by staff and to date 20 IOE suggestions are in development. We continually look for other efforts to increase efficiencies in all areas to save money and save time.

What are you doing to support the people who are losing their jobs?

We will offer employment opportunities elsewhere in the Census Bureau, and employees will be strongly encouraged to apply to job opportunities for which they qualify. Job opportunities in the growing regional offices will be made known to all regional office staff nationwide as they become available. We will also help affected employees search for other Federal opportunities and provide training in resume building and interviewing skills.

We recognize that not everyone will be able or eligible to relocate or move. So, we are seeking authority from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to offer early retirements, or “Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA),” and buy-outs, or “Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VSIP),” to provide incentives for employees to voluntarily retire or resign. In addition, the agency will also seek authorization from the Department of Commerce (DOC) to conduct a formal reduction-in-force (RIF) in the six offices based on the regional office restructuring. Staff in the six offices that are affected by the RIF and receive a notice will be given priority placement consideration for vacancies they qualify for in their commuting areas for all Federal employment. Communication about RIF procedures and rights; impact on employment; benefits and retirement; employment opportunities; training; career transition assistance; current development about restructuring, etc. will be ongoing and frequent to keep employees informed throughout this major change. And, a RIF will not be implemented until late in 2012.

The Human Resources and Field Divisions at Census Headquarters are also standing up specialized teams of employees dedicated to assisting affected employees and making the transition as smooth as possible.

How many surveys does the Census Bureau do?

The Census Bureau conducts more than 150 surveys. Many of these, like the American Community Survey, are used to produce important Census Bureau statistics. However, the Census Bureau also provides statistical services to other Federal government agencies. We design the surveys, collect the data, process the completed questionnaires, and assist our clients as together we fulfill our mission of providing statistical information to the country.

How much of the Census Bureau’s budget comes from other agencies?

On average, between 20 and 25 percent of the Census Bureau’s survey work is funded each year through agreements with other Federal Agencies. We help those agencies produce the wide range of statistics the public and policy makers rely on including economic indicators, the unemployment rate, statistics on poverty, and information about health insurance coverage.

Why don’t those agencies conduct their own surveys?

The Census Bureau produces the address list and manages the trained, professional national field interviewing force needed for conducting the surveys and censuses that produce federal statistics. It would not be practical or cost effective for other agencies to attempt to maintain the infrastructure necessary to do this work.

How will these changes affect Puerto Rico?

The only change for Puerto Rico is that survey and census operations now will be managed out of the New York Regional Office, instead of the Boston Regional Office, which is closing.

Will these changes affect operations in the territories?

No. All census and survey operations in American Samoa, Guam, CNMP, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are managed out of Census Bureau Headquarters according to Memoranda of Agreement with each territory.

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