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NATIONAL STATE DATA CENTER STEERING COMMITTEE

*Representing a Network of 1,800
SDC/BIDC Data Centers and Affiliates Nationwide*

We Bring Value-Added Census Data and Education to the User

Julie Hoang (CA)
Jane Traynham (MD)
Barbara Ronningen (MN)
Leonard Gaines (NY)
Will Sawyer (VT)

State Data Center Steering Committee Conference Call Meeting Minutes Tuesday, December 9th, 2008

The conference call meeting commenced at 2:00 pm Eastern Standard Time on Tuesday December 9th. All Steering Committee members were in attendance except Jane Traynham. CLMSO was represented by Frank Ambrose, Barbara LaFleur and Samantha Proctor and the DADS staff was represented by Marion Brady and Richard Hulkenberg.

Agenda:

1. Advanced Query System
2. February Steering Committee Meeting
3. Adding Tools to the Clearinghouse Website
4. By-laws Amendment
5. ACS Multi-Year Data Release
6. ACS Training
7. ACS Focus Groups
8. Other items

Advanced Query System

The Advanced Query (AQ) System has been shut down. The shutdown of the system was due primarily to the aging of the system and the Bureau was unable to incorporate new security features into the system. The system was shut down on Friday December 3, 2008. The (security) issues were immediate and did not allow the Bureau to accommodate a 30 day or 60 day notice prior to the shutdown.

Alternatives that have been discussed are DataFerrett and the ability to request special tabulations. CLMSO is researching how many State Data Centers logged onto the AQ system on a regular basis. Steering Committee members inquired about the turnaround time for Census-Bureau produced special tabulations, as the SDCs are accustomed to being able to provide their AQ clientele with data very quickly. CLMSO will report more information later about possible alternatives to the Advanced Query System.

Follow-up from Steering Committee Strategic Planning Session

The Steering Committee began conversations in October with several Census Bureau divisions about strengthening SDC-Census Bureau partnerships. Since those initial conversations, the Steering Committee has several questions about the particular tasks each side will agree to do in a strengthened relationship. Linda Franz hopes to be able to get back to CLMSO by the end of this week with answers to questions from the Steering Committee. CLMSO has heard from Tim Olson and expects to receive more information from him soon. MCD (Building Permits) have not gotten back to CLMSO yet regarding the items that were discussed at the strategic planning session. BAS is getting ready to send something out to the SDC leads, as BAS is currently in the field. The Steering Committee wanted to know the time line for SDCs to help with non-response follow-up and Geography is in the process of pulling this information together. The Steering Committee would like to know the time line for encouraging local governments

to respond to the Building Permit Survey. If both divisions of the Census Bureau want SDCs to conduct nonresponse follow-up at the same time, that could be problematic.

The Steering Committee wants this to be a true partnership and is hopeful that the network will be able to work with various areas of the Bureau by improving and expanding current activities. As the Steering Committee receives clarification from the Census Bureau on several issues, we will report to the membership.

February Steering Committee Meeting

CLMSO is scheduling time on the agenda for the SDC Steering Committee to have a joint session with the FSCPE Steering Committee and the ACS staff to discuss the next steps in reviewing ACS data. Some specific state SDCs and FSCPEs were asked to review data and ACS will review this process with the Steering Committees at the February Steering Committee meeting. We hope for additional time in February to discuss the larger issue of SDC feedback to the Census Bureau regarding the American Community Survey.

Adding Tools to the Clearinghouse Website

The Steering Committee is working with Rachel Justice at the Indiana SDC to determine what new tools can be incorporated into the Clearinghouse website to facilitate better communication, including logging and tracking topics. These items may include a blog.

By-Laws Amendment

Using Survey Monkey, a voting application was created. Thirty SDCs responded so far to the issue before the group concerning amending the SDC by-laws and Dan Veroff will follow-up with the states that have not yet responded. Only one vote per state is allowed and voting will end on December 20th.

ACS Multi-Year Data Release

ACS multi-year data were released this week and there has been positive feedback on the profiles that were on the embargo profile site. There have been questions about the data, but so far nothing alarming or unexpected has been reported to the Steering Committee.

ACS Training

The Census Bureau is planning on taking the ACS training package on the road in 2009 to the Regional Offices. The ACS staff is working to determine a schedule for these meetings. SDCs will be invited to attend the training session at the Regional Offices. The training will not be offered in places other than the Regional Offices. SDCs in each region will have to travel to the Regional office city to receive the training.

ACS Focus Groups

The Census Bureau recently held ACS Focus Groups in Maryland and Vermont. The SDC lead agency in each state invited the participants and Census Bureau staff from Headquarters conducted and/or observed the focus groups. These focus groups addressed the forthcoming 5-year estimates for smaller geographies. The attendees in Vermont consisted of local planners and other partners that valued local data. Most attendees were in favor of any reliability tools that could be put into American FactFinder. They understood how MOEs could help them when writing a grant, but were concerned about the new residence rule. The attendees were asked if they would prefer 5-year data (reliable) or annual data (current), and overall they were in favor of more reliable data. There was support for increasing the sample if that would be possible in the future. The two focus groups in Vermont grasped the nuances of the data once it was explained.

Attendees in Maryland wanted to ensure that all localities would be treated fairly when competing for grants, even though different areas may have access to 1-year, 3-year or 5-year data.

The sessions were recorded and may be summarized. Education about the ACS and how to use it appropriately is the key, and at the local level users need to have more information on how to use these new data.

Other items

CLMSO will send out Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reminders soon and SDCs that have not responded by the end of the year (2008) will have embargo access removed.

Given the recent unexpected demise of the Advanced Query System, CLMSO will review the MOU to determine if an addendum needs to be drafted since the Advanced Query system is no longer available and it was specifically mentioned in the original document sent to SDCs for signature as a benefit of SDC participation.

Adjourn

The steering committee conference call adjourned at 3:20 pm.