

THE ALASKA CENSUS WORKING GROUP

The Foraker Group – Convener and Catalyst

The Foraker Group serves as the state association and nonprofit capacity building organization for nonprofits and tribes across Alaska. We are dedicated to increasing the leadership and management skills of professionals and volunteers working for Alaska's nonprofit and tribal organizations. Advocacy is central to our mission, and we work strategically to influence public policy at the federal, state, and local levels.

The execution of Census Bureau data collection, particularly the 2020 Decennial Census and the annual American Community Survey (ACS), is a critical public policy issue for our stakeholders. In late 2016, Foraker board members and staff attended a national meeting of funders and state nonprofit associations and learned about the newly emerging risks to the upcoming census. It was immediately apparent to those present that the census was a key issue for Alaska and one that was appropriate for Foraker engagement. Subsequently, our team attended a population and economic data workshop in Anchorage where presenters further articulated the critical importance of accurate Census Bureau data collection and the implications to Alaska communities of inaccurate data. Following these workshops, Foraker's board and staff leaders agreed to take the lead in convening a statewide, cross-sector collaboration of stakeholders, now known as the Alaska Census Working Group, to address issues raised during the workshop.

Purpose of the Working Group

The Alaska Census Working Group was tasked to convene stakeholders, identify and prioritize census-related issues that may affect Alaska, and collaborate with partners around the state to develop and implement appropriate action plans. To date, the working group has convened diverse stakeholders, identified the numerous census-related issues that concern Alaska communities, provided education regarding those issues, and achieved broad consensus on three priority initiatives intended to promote accurate Census Bureau data collections in Alaska, which are articulated in the *Alaska Census Working Group Priority Initiatives*.

Who is engaged?

The Alaska Census Working Group has convened participants from public, private, nonprofit, and tribal entities that represent the interests of people and organizations around the state. A current list of those participants is available in the document titled *Alaska Census Working Group Engagement*.

The working group is staffed by the Foraker's Vice President of Public Policy, Dr. Mike Walsh and chaired by Gabe Layman. Gabe is a member of Foraker's Operations Board, as well as its public policy committee. He is also the Executive Vice President and General Counsel for Cook Inlet Housing Authority, based in Anchorage, where he has directed their census-related advocacy work

for several years. Carol Gore, President/CEO of Cook Inlet Housing Authority, sits on the Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee and is also engaged in the Alaska Census Working Group. Laurie Wolf, President/CEO of Foraker, and Bruce Botelho, a former Alaska Attorney General and former Mayor of Juneau, and a member of the Foraker Governance Board and chair of the public policy committee, are also active leaders in the efforts.