

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties receives \$40,000 to support a full and accurate census count in the two counties.**

*Early census outreach and education efforts underway to ensure all communities are counted*

KENNEWICK, Wash – Each person not counted in the 2020 Census is \$2,000 lost in Federal funding per year for the next decade. That includes funds for highways, water and sewer systems, public transit, school lunch programs, Medicaid and more. With so much at stake, it is critical to get the most accurate count possible. Washington Census Equity Fund has awarded \$40,000 to United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties to support 2020 Census outreach, education and resources to ensure a comprehensive census count in the bi-county area.

“Our United Way partners with Tri-Cities Counts!, a growing group of local volunteers committed to educating everyone about the importance of the census and its ongoing impact on our lives,” said LoAnn Ayers, president of United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties. “This grant fuels that work by paying for posters, radio messages, and more—all to help people make an informed decision about responding to the census.”

The [Washington Census Equity Fund](#), a statewide pooled fund managed by Philanthropy Northwest, awarded a total of \$800,000 to 28 organizations and tribes supporting communities across Washington.

“We know that an overwhelming number of Washington organizations and tribes are ready to engage their communities on the 2020 Census with early funding to catalyze census planning and mobilization in hard-to-count communities,” said Kiran Ahuja, CEO of [Philanthropy Northwest](#). Washington State received a total of \$16.7 billion from 55 federal programs in 2016. Each person counted leads to significant resources to support critical programs and services including transportation, health care, education and housing.

Risks to the success of the 2020 Census include a new online format and a shortage of federal funding for outreach. The new online format increases the potential to overlook those with less computer literacy or broadband access, and to undercount [hard-to-count populations](#) including people of color, rural populations, low-income residents, and non-English speaking residents.

Washington has more than 1.6 million residents at risk of being undercounted and potentially missing out on funding and resources directly affecting their communities. This includes the potential for Benton and Franklin Counties to be undercounted by as much as 40%, which would mean significantly less funding for schools, public transportation, health care programs, and

many other services. The funding from this grant will increase the reach of community organizations already positioned to improve census participation by hard-to-count communities.

“Even with the removal of the citizenship question there is significant fear, mistrust, and confusion that are barriers to a fair and accurate 2020 Census,” said Ayers. “Our organization will continue to strongly engage to ensure everyone is counted.”

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**About United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties**

[United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties](#) strives for a community where all individuals and families achieve their potential through education, financial stability and healthy lives. We partner with local nonprofits, businesses, and government and social service agencies to address our community's greatest needs and build pathways for individuals and families to independence and happiness.