

The International Census Forum – One Example of a Cooperation Model

Arona L. Pistiner
International Cooperative Programs Officer
Policy Coordination Office
United States Census Bureau

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Conference of European Statisticians
Meeting of the Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses
Geneva, Switzerland
4 - 6 October 2017

Presentation Outline

- A Brief History
- Membership
- ICF Liaisons
- Meetings and Hosting
- Planning and Preparations
- Meeting Structure
- Communities of Practice
- ICF on Administrative Data Research
- Summary



A Brief History of the ICF

- Historical debates on the origins of the ICF.
- Early 2000's, bilateral meetings organized by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Statistics New Zealand – first internet censuses.
- Statistics Canada joined meetings, then the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics.
- Recognition that all of the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) needed to work together for their first internet censuses to be successful.
- First ICF held February 2003, in Canberra, Australia – general desire to learn from each other and their 2000 census experiences.



A Brief History – Continued

- First meeting very informal, with presentations, from each country, held over four days.
- 2003 ICF in Australia adds immense value for participating countries and leads to three more forums over the next 12 months.
 - 2004 ICF is the initial forum for the United States.
- In November 2005, arranged as a technical peer review of the UK's 2011 Census.
 - Gains international credibility.
 - Initial forum for Northern Ireland and Scotland.
- February 2007, Melbourne, Australia hosts ICF.
 - Initial forum for the Republic of Ireland.
- Over time focus shifted from census management to methods and operations.
- Underlying principle: Have completely open and honest discussions.

Membership

- Stabilized around 2011/2012: Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, the UK*, and the United States.
- Early on, sometimes other countries attended, such as: France, Hong Kong, Singapore.
- 2013 ICF, discussions on opening up the membership.
 - Consensus to limit number of ICF countries.
 - Enables greater interaction and openness among the participants.

*The UK represents England and Wales at the ICF. Usually, but not always, Northern Ireland sends their own representative. Scotland, while a part of the UK, sends their own representative and is considered the 7th ICF country.



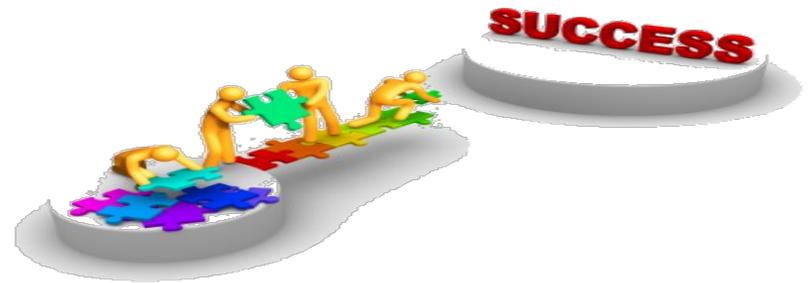
ICF Liaisons

- Starting with the 2013 ICF, each NSO selected an ICF Liaison who serves as the ICF point of contact for their NSO:
 - Conduit for general communication concerning the ICF and general census updates;
 - Responds to data/information requests among ICF countries;
 - Receives preliminary information on the coming year's ICF;
 - Participates in environmental scan teleconferences between forums.



Meetings and Hosting

- The ICF met every year since 2003, except for 2006 and 2011, when many of the countries conducted their censuses.
- Originally met every 15 – 18 months; in the last two to three years, the ICF has met every year.
- Hosting rotates among ICF countries;
- Meeting chair is usually the census manager/director for the current host country.
- Chair/host country negotiates the host country for the next ICF.
- 5-8 September 2017, most recent ICF, hosted by U.S. Census Bureau.



Planning and Preparations

- Before a forum concludes, time is spent to discuss the next ICF, including:
 - Potential agenda topics;
 - Location of the next meeting; and
 - Hand-off from the current host to the next host.
- Planning for an ICF, requires a minimum of 9 – 12 months.
- Responsibilities of the planning committee:
 - Appoints a chair; confirms members.
 - Selects the meeting dates and confirms availability with the ICF Liaisons.
 - Determines meeting venue and set-up, hotel accommodations, food, transportation, etc.
 - More logistics... and still more logistics.
 - Develops Agenda.
 - Communicates plans and arrangements with the other ICF countries.



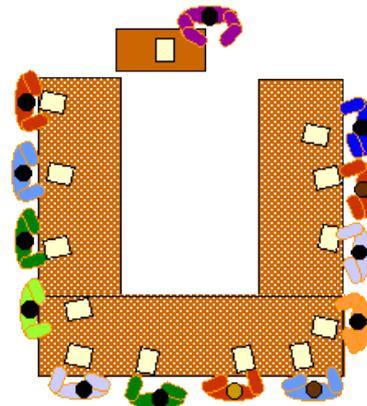
Planning and Preparations – Continued (2)

- Developing the agenda occurs collaboratively among the countries, beginning with a list of topics prepared at the end of the prior year's forum.
- Countries volunteer to present on the selected topics and presenters are selected.
- Chairing responsibilities of the sessions is shared equally among the countries.
- ICF cultural experiences and country variations unique to host country:
 - 2012 ICF, participated in Maori welcoming ceremony (Statistics New Zealand)
 - 2014 ICF, observed kangaroo mob (Australian Bureau of Statistics)
 - 2016 ICF, learned to paddle a waka (Statistics New Zealand)



ICF Meeting Structure

- On average, 20 to 30 participants, one to four participants per NSO.
- Generally census directors, managers, ICF liaisons and senior census staff;
- Only people seated at the table can participate, often a “U” shaped table arrangement.
- Countries, including the host, may have additional staff present, usually as observers.
- Observers do not participate in discussions or ask questions.



ICF Meeting Structure – Continued (2)

- Meetings last for three and a half days.
 - Tuesday to Thursday – full days, Friday – half a day.
- The goal is to have an open and honest communication about the state of countries census. What is discussed at the forum stays at the forum.
- Informal social side complements the formal agenda; the emphasis remains on sharing information.
- No papers for the meeting, only presentations.
- No formal record of proceedings.
 - Each country takes away its own notes.
 - Only action items and next ICF agenda topics are prepared by the host and distributed.
- The meetings are conducted in English.
- Pre- and post-ICF meetings with host NSO staff.



ICF Meeting Structure – Continued (3)

- Day 1:
 - Opening remarks.
 - Country census updates (What's new since last ICF).
- Day 2 and 3:
 - Presentations and intensive discussion.
- Day 4:
 - Possibly one topic.
 - Anything else to discuss?
 - Summary of meeting.
 - Action items and topics for next ICF.
 - Next ICF host announced and possibly timing.
 - Hand-off to next ICF host.



Communities of Practice

- Established in May 2014.
- Approximately 6 – 12 active technical working groups.
- Role of Coordination Group (all the working group chairs).
- Meets via teleconference, group determines frequency.
- Groups start-up, as needed, then dissolve, as decided by the group; organic in nature.
- The main purpose is information sharing and serving as a sounding board for new ideas.



ICF on Administrative Data Research (ICF-ADR)

- 2016 ICF meeting proposal to have a parallel forum on the administrative data/register-based censuses.
- Coincided with UNECE Task Force on Register-based and Combined Censuses.
- Statistics Canada hosted the first ICF-ADR, in Ottawa, 12-14 September 2017.
- Focus on register-based and combined census models using administrative data, share experiences, and initiate collaborative projects.



Summary

- The model is working:
 - Enables individual countries to choose the best census methods and practices.
 - All components of a census implemented by at least one other country.
 - Strengthens all of our censuses.
 - Allows for open and honest exchanges.
 - Enables quick access to expertise on individual census issues.
 - Builds and maintains effective partnerships.
 - Supports our censuses and each other.





THANKS

