

## **The Count Question Resolution Challenge Process Stages**

January 13, 2012

### **Program Overview**

The Count Question Resolution – or CQR – Program was created to specifically address instances where a state, local or tribal government believes a boundary, geocoding or coverage error was made in the 2010 Census for their jurisdiction.

The Census Bureau's goal is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place. There are historically a small percentage of cases where a wrong geographic boundary or coding of a housing unit or group quarters was used to produce the official census population, housing and group quarters counts for a local area. There may also be cases where due to processing errors, the Census Bureau mistakenly duplicated or deleted living quarters that were identified during the census.

The Census Bureau must receive all challenges no later than June 1, 2013. Once the challenge is received, it goes through a series of review steps. Typically, it takes several months for the challenge to go through the review process and for a decision to be shared with the affected governmental units. The following list describes the Census Bureau stages the Census Bureau goes through to thoroughly review each challenge submitted. Please refer to the CQR website at <http://2010census.gov/about/cqr> to review the Guidelines for Stateside Count Question Resolution (CQR) Challenges, Guidelines for Puerto Rico Count Question Resolution Challenges, and other information about the CQR Program.

### **Stage 1– Conduct Initial Review of Submitted Challenge Materials**

When the Census Bureau receives a challenge from a jurisdiction, the challenge is assigned a CQR caseworker. The caseworker reviews the documents to verify that the documentation criteria for the type of challenge submitted are met. This includes verifying that all submissions contain an address list of all housing units and group quarters in the challenged area, 2010 census block map(s) showing the location of each address in the block, and that the highest elected official submitted and certified the address information is correct as of April 1, 2010.

Additionally, for boundary challenges, the submission must also include maps showing the correct location of the boundary and the portion of the 2010 Census Boundary suspected of being incorrect, as well as documentation showing the effective date and ordinance number of law that enacted the boundary change and a statement that the boundary is not under litigation. If any of this documentation is missing, the Census Bureau will contact the local official and ask them to provide the missing documentation. A letter will be sent to the local official. If the local official does not provide the requested information, the census staff will close the case in

60 calendar days from the date on the missing documentation letter to the local jurisdiction. The Census Bureau will send the local official a letter stating why the challenge was closed.

## **Stage 2 – Conduct Clerical Review of Challenge Materials**

During this review, census staff will examine the entire contents of the submission for adherence to the program guidelines listed in the 2010 Census CQR Program Announcement. If you wish to review the Program Announcement, please refer to Census Bureau’s webpage at: [www.2010.census.gov/2010census/about/cqr.php](http://www.2010.census.gov/2010census/about/cqr.php).

In Stage 2, the caseworker can discuss specific addresses contained in the challenge with the jurisdiction’s HEO or designee because the information has not yet been matched against census records and, therefore, is not considered Title 13 protected data at this point. This review looks for information that is required to research the challenge and to identify issues that would preclude further action. The Census Bureau identifies issues that, if not corrected, will result in not being able to determine if there should be corrections to the jurisdictions counts. The potential issues include: 1) missing 2010 Census geography (tract and/or block designation) or use of Census 2000 geography); 2) missing group quarters name and/or physical address; 3) missing one or more required columns of data on the address template; 4) missing or combined unit identifiers for multi-unit addresses; and/or 5) one or more submitted blocks are not within the challenger’s jurisdiction.

For a boundary challenge, the Census Bureau must verify the legal documents provided by the challenging jurisdiction. Census staff review the submitted legal ordinances in comparison with what is represented in the Census Bureau’s geographic database (TIGER) for the 2010 Census. Census staff will investigate if the boundary information provided by the jurisdiction was effective on or before January 1, 2010 and whether the change is being disputed in the courts.

When the Census Bureau identifies one or more issues with any challenge, census staff send a letter to the local official identifying information that needs to be provided to the Census Bureau to enable processing of their submission. The Census Bureau will ask the local official to decide within 30 days how they want to proceed. The local official may choose to correct and resubmit the challenge information or they may choose to ask the Census to proceed with their current submission.

Based upon the local official’s decision, the Census Bureau will either research the challenge with their current submission “as is” or, upon request by the local official, the Census Bureau will wait to receive the requested information up to 90 calendar days from the date on this letter. If the Census Bureau does not receive a response to the letter within 30 calendar days from the date on the letter, the challenge will be submitted for processing “as is”. The Census Bureau may not accurately process every address in a challenge if the local official does not provide all required documentation to the Census Bureau prior to the start of Stage 3. The end

of the clerical review does not indicate whether the challenge will result in a change; rather this review attempts to obtain the basic required information (certified address list, 2010 Census map with mapspots, and legal documentation (only for a boundary challenge). When all required items are submitted to the Census Bureau, the submission is available for Stage 3 work.

### **Stage 3 – Challenge Submission Becomes Protected by the Provisions of Title 13**

In this stage, the Census Bureau accepts the submitted information as meeting the basic CQR submission requirements, and the challenge becomes a case that moves forward into CQR Program automated processing. The Census Bureau will match the submitted addresses to 2010 Census addresses, which are protected under Title 13. Because of this matching, the submitted address records also then become protected under Title 13. This section of U.S. Code guarantees that personal information will be kept confidential. From this point forward, the Census Bureau can no longer discuss specific addresses with the submitting jurisdiction or anyone else outside the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau will not be able to respond to requests for information from anyone about the research outcomes for specific addresses included in the challenge.

During Stage 3, valid boundary updates are also processed, verified and digitized by census staff. The Census Bureau also conducts final quality assurance (QA) and other processing steps on the boundary changes in order to generate the CQR block map(s). The Census Bureau creates a CQR block map when boundary changes are made based on CQR challenge documentation. For CQR boundary challenges, the Census Bureau begins the automated processing, which includes matching of the challenged addresses to the 2010 Census addresses records for all types of challenges, after boundary challenges results are finalized. Any challenges that include boundary corrections may take longer than challenges without boundary corrections due to the significant number of processing steps required to update boundaries in Census Bureau records. All challenges move into Stage 4 when the processed address files are delivered to the appropriate census staff to begin the challenge research.

### **Stage 4 – Research Challenge Documentation**

Next, the Census Bureau will use the documentation submitted in the challenge to investigate if an error may have occurred that is in scope for a CQR correction. The challenge documentation will be researched against existing census records. The reviews in stages 1 and 2 do not use official census records, but are the processes needed to determine the completeness of the submission based on the challenge type. The research involves the use of official census records.

During this stage, the Census Bureau conducts research, which varies in duration depending on the level of complexity and the type of CQR challenge submitted. There are three types of challenges which can be made under CQR:

- 1) **Boundary** — Inaccurate reporting or the inaccurate recording of boundaries legally in effect on January 1, 2010. In Stage 4, the addresses associated with a boundary challenge are researched. The Census Bureau conducts boundary research and validation research in Stages 2 and 3, described above, prior to address list research, which is conducted in this stage.
- 2) **Geocoding** — Challenges affecting the placement of living quarters and associated population within the correct governmental unit boundaries and census tabulation blocks.
- 3) **Coverage** — Challenges, if upheld by the Census Bureau, resulting in the addition or deletion of specific living quarters and persons associated with them identified during the census process, but erroneously included as duplicates or excluded due to processing errors.

When the Census Bureau has verified a boundary change in Stage 2 and the required updates are made to the TIGER mapping system during Stage 3, census staff must then review existing addresses on the census files to determine the correct geography of addresses affected by a boundary change. Once these addresses have been assigned to the correct geography, census staff will then conduct a review of all other addresses submitted by the local officials and compare them to existing 2010 Census records.

For a geocoding challenge, Census staff will research addresses submitted in the challenge to determine if it is in 2010 Census records, and to identify its current tabulation block. To determine if there is a geocoding error, the researcher will use census records and the information provided in the challenge to determine if the placement of the specific address in the census files is correct, or to support a move of the address to a different tabulation block.

For a coverage challenge, census staff researches whether there may have been a processing error in the census that caused an address that was identified and already included in the 2010 Census universe to be erroneously excluded from the final 2010 Census results.

### **Stage 5 – Outcomes of the Research of Census Records and the Challenge Documentation**

Challenges will be resolved in one of three outcomes: 1) eligible CQR corrections will be identified and updates to census records will be made, 2) no CQR eligible corrections were found and no updates to census records will be made, or 3) challenge submission did not meet one of the three types of submissions and was out of scope of the CQR Program.

- 1) **Eligible CQR corrections were identified** – When eligible CQR corrections are identified, the census records will be updated and independent Census staff perform a validation of the changes. All addresses that census staff verified as being in the wrong

tabulation block will be re-geocoded and moved to the correct tabulation block in our database. The Census Bureau may move addresses that were not part of a challenge submission if affected by a valid boundary change. When a coverage error is identified for a housing unit, the address and imputed population count will be added to the jurisdiction's counts. When a coverage error is identified for a group quarters, the address and population count on April 1, 2010, will be added to the jurisdiction's count. The resulting revised data and map products undergo a thorough validation and quality assurance process by subject matter experts before any changes are approved as official CQR results.

- 2) No CQR corrections were found – When the research indicates that no changes to a jurisdiction's boundary or addresses should be made, the challenge moves to Stage 6, below.
- 3) Challenge submission was not one of the three types of eligible challenges – When research indicates the challenge is outside the three defined challenge types for CQR, such as challenges to low population counts or to a boundary that was not legally in place as of January 2010, the challenge moves to Stage 6, below.

Additionally, a few other situations are out of scope for a CQR correction. For example, the CQR process will not research whether respondents or census enumerators incorrectly determined an address' occupancy status or household size during 2010 Census field operations. If the information that was collected during our census operations was processed correctly, no review or correction is possible under the CQR Program. It is also important to note that addresses that were not in the census universe to begin with or that were not added during the enumeration process cannot be added at this time and cannot be corrected by the CQR Program.

### **Stage 6 – Prepare Research Results, Inform the Jurisdiction and Public of the Results**

In this stage, the research results are prepared for dissemination to the local officials. Depending upon the outcome of the research, the local official will be informed of the research results as described below.

- 1) Eligible CQR corrections were identified - When there is a change because of a CQR challenge, the challenging jurisdiction and all other affected jurisdictions are sent a letter from the Census Bureau Director, including a table with CQR results that provides the official, revised counts. The Census Bureau prepares a table with revised, official counts for the governmental unit in its entirety. The jurisdiction's CQR results are shown in a table format that includes the original 2010 Census total housing units and total population, the corrected (revised) total housing units and total population, and the change from the original to the corrected counts.

Also, a more detailed table of the CQR results for each affected jurisdiction is created that includes their total population, household population, group quarters population, total housing units, occupied housing units and vacant housing units at the state, county, county subdivision, place, tract, and block levels of geography, as appropriate. Each Monday, starting in August 2011, this table will be included in the 2010 Census of Population and Housing Notes and Errata at [www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/notes/errata.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/notes/errata.pdf). Results will only be posted after the return receipt of the results notification letter is received at the Census Bureau. These results are also posted on American Factfinder at <http://factfinder2.census.gov> and updated on a quarterly basis starting in December of 2011.

For boundary challenges, when the Census Bureau has verified all documentation as accurate, census staff will create a CQR map reflecting the boundary change. The Census Bureau will mail the CQR map to the challenging jurisdiction (and any affected jurisdictions) approximately one week after the challenge jurisdiction has received their official statement of CQR changes. The Census Bureau will also post the new CQR maps on [http://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/CP\\_MapProducts.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/CP_MapProducts.html) at this time.

- 2) No CQR corrections were found - When a challenge results in no change to any addresses, the submitting jurisdiction is sent a letter from the Decennial Management Division Chief stating why the challenge did not result in a change to their 2010 Census counts.
- 3) Challenge submission was not one of the three types of eligible challenges - When a challenge is not one of the three eligible types of challenges, a letter is sent to the submitting jurisdiction telling them the challenge was not accepted. There is no appeal process in the CQR Program. The jurisdiction may submit another challenge with the required documentation that supports one or more of the three CQR challenge types (described in Stage 4, page 4, above) at any time through June 1, 2013.

Finally, as stated in the Federal Register notice, the Census Bureau will not make any changes to the apportionment data, redistricting counts or official 2010 Census data products. Revised counts from the CQR Program can be used by jurisdictions for future programs that require official 2010 Census data. They will also be used by the Census Bureau to calculate subsequent population estimates for that community.

If you have questions about the CQR Program, please contact the CQR Office at 301-763-9329 or at [dmd.cqr@census.gov](mailto:dmd.cqr@census.gov).