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This report is a document that summarizes the Boundary Quality Assessment and Reconciliation Project (BQARP); ongoing and completed work during FY 2014 and project plans for FY 2015 and beyond.

Background

The BQARP is designed to assess, analyze, and improve the spatial quality of legal and administrative boundaries within the Census Master Address File/Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (MAF/TIGER) System. Ensuring quality boundaries is a critical component of the geographic preparations for the 2020 Census and the Census Bureau's ongoing geographic partnership programs. In addition, the improvement of boundary quality is an essential element of the Census Bureau's commitment as the responsible agency for legal boundaries under the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-16.

The BQARP is a result of a cadastral data pilot project, a three-year assessment of legal boundary quality in MAF/TIGER, boundary data availability nationwide, and a pilot project to investigate how to operationalize assessment and reconciliation of legal and administrative boundaries. The Census Bureau's Geography Division (GEO) has established the BQARP to assess the quality of all State, County, Municipal and School District boundaries. Boundaries are then registered to cadastral data, surveyed point locations and physical features.

The BQARP represents the first effort to systematically target and assess boundary quality within the GEO. Historically, the GEO has relied exclusively on the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) to obtain corrections to legal boundaries. While the BAS has played an essential role in improving boundary quality, it is primarily a boundary *maintenance* project, not a comprehensive boundary quality improvement process. The goal of the BQARP is to establish a new accurate baseline for boundaries within an entire state or county, which the BAS would then maintain by collecting individual annexations and deannexations on a transaction basis as they occur each year.

Requirements of Participants

Success of the BQARP depends largely on partnerships with states. Participating states are asked to provide their available parcel, legal/administrative, state managed lands, address and road centerline data to the Census Bureau. Additionally, state participants are asked to provide

available legal descriptions for their legal/administrative boundaries. The Census Bureau asks that participants provide their data at the state level. The Census Bureau provides participants with a secure data transfer access point. In some cases, the Census Bureau may require clarification and/or feedback for some of the data. In these cases, the state participant is asked to contact a county or local official to answer the Census Bureau's question(s).

FY 2014 Summary

The Census Bureau began work on the BQARP in FY 2014. A summary of the results are as follows:

- The Census Bureau worked with the states of Alaska, Hawaii, Montana and Utah and the District of Columbia in FY 2014.
- This work yielded parcel boundaries for 96 counties, incorporated place boundaries for 105 counties, school district boundaries for 57 counties, public land boundaries for 114 counties and county boundaries for 112 counties.
- Participating states expressed interest in working with the Census Bureau on the BQARP and in some cases, used this as an opportunity to reassess the quality of their own data.
- Completion of the FY 2014 is ongoing, but a limited number of available employee resources in GEO slowed progress.

FY 2015 and Beyond

The Census Bureau maintains a goal of completing the BQARP by the end of FY 2017. Doing so will first require completion of the FY 2014 states. Sufficient employee resources are required to complete the remaining 46 states by the end of FY 2017. Census Bureau staff have prepared a list of states to be worked during FY 2015 and have begun contacting state participants. Those states include Washington, Oregon, New Jersey, Nevada, Virginia, Arizona, New Mexico, and Arkansas, among others. Participants in those states have expressed a willingness to participate in the BQARP and in many cases, have already provided the Census Bureau with the required data. Completing the BQARP in all states will benefit the Census Bureau in the following ways:

- Quality boundaries will assure that households, residences and businesses are in their correct Census Block and Tract.
- Improved demographic statistics.
- Improved efficiency for the BAS in subsequent years.
- Maintaining data partnerships with states.