

Bob Coats, North Carolina

1) Brief biography.

Bob began working with the North Carolina State Data Center network coordinating agency in 1989. During the mid-1990s, he worked with the News and Observer newspaper in advertising, and, seeing the error of his ways, he returned to the NC SDC network with the lead organization just in time for the build up to Census 2000. He assisted with census publicity activities for the 2000 census and has served as a main resource for census questions and data user training. Bob is currently the Governor's Census Liaison, coordinator of the NC SDC network, and a member of the Demographic and Economic Analysis section of the NC Office of State Budget and Management. Bob also leads the Census Working Group of the North Carolina Geographic Information Coordinating Council, a statewide council of state agencies and stakeholders to improve the geospatial data in North Carolina. Bob served on the SDC Steering Committee from 2010-2016 and has served as committee vice-chair and chair.

2) What special perspective or goals would the nominee bring as a Steering Committee member?

On my last nomination, I answered this question by saying, "The steering committee is the voice of applied data." I still believe that. In the current environment of shrinking state and federal resources, the role of the Steering Committee is more important and more difficult to achieve. Ensuring a balance between the Bureau's expectations of the network and the support it provides to its vital SDC partners. The SDCs are the trusted, local faces of Census data helping local users put information to work. Supporting that work is a common goal for both the Census Bureau and the SDC network.

The Census Bureau and SDC network are going through a time of change. Budgets are tightening. New applications and technologies are becoming available. Needs and expectations are also changing. My primary goal would be to work with the Census Bureau to find a balance between changing needs and expectations that supports both the SDC network and the Census Bureau. A balanced partnership that uses resources wisely will help both the SDC program and the Census Bureau grow stronger and serve data users better.

3) What is your vision for the SDC network and our partnership with the Census Bureau?

The Census Bureau relies on SDC local partners to meet data needs, review data visualization products, and especially to prepare for the 2020 Census through programs like the Boundary Annexation Survey, Local Update of Census Addresses, Census Redistricting, Participant Statistical Areas Program, and 2020 Census promotion. For local governments, their SDCs are the trusted local face of Census data. My vision is that the Census Bureau will see the increasing importance of the SDC partnership and provide more support throughout the decade to improve Census data and products. The SDC Steering Committee is vital in making this vision a reality.