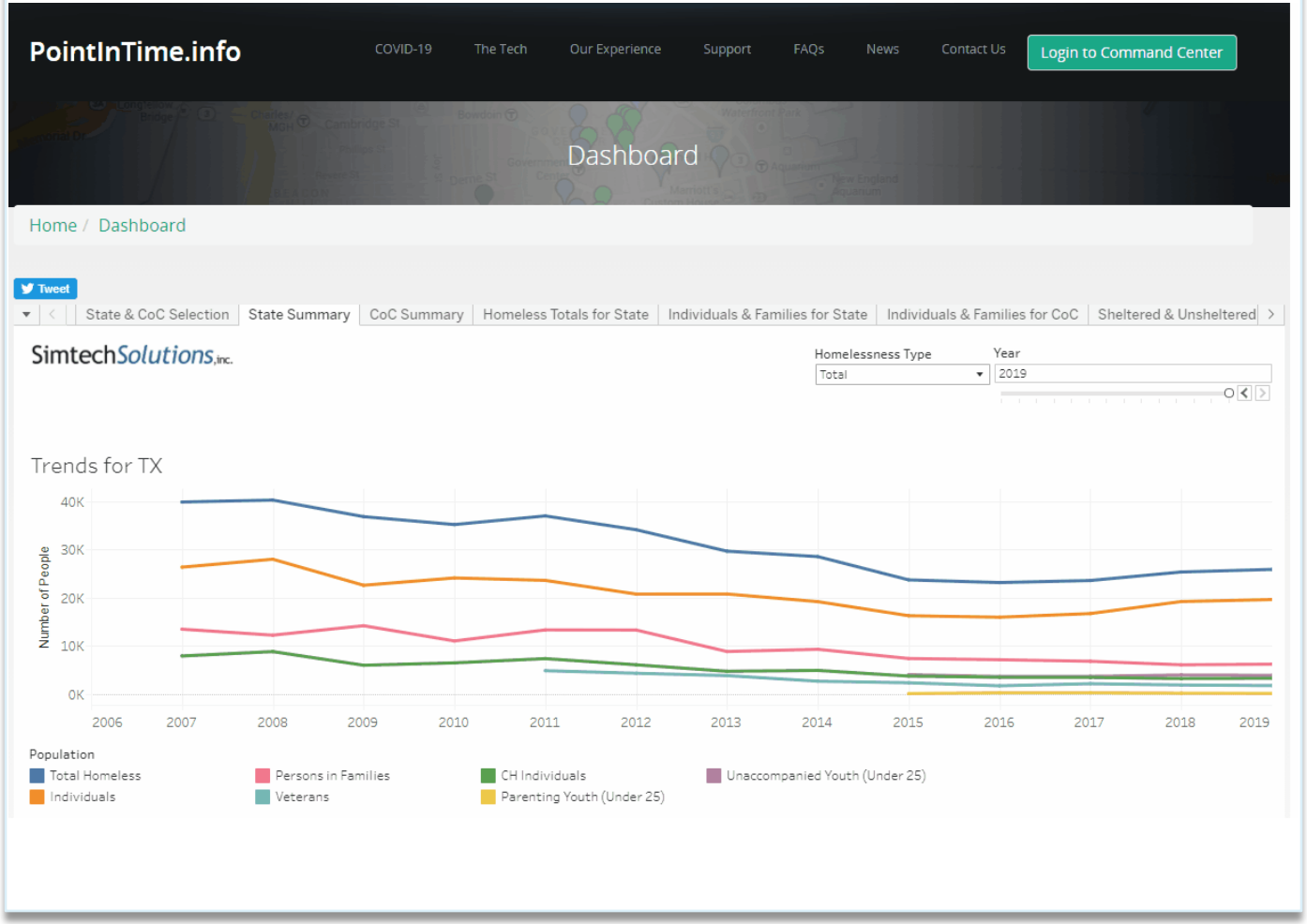
Preparing for an Accurate 2026 Point-in-Time Count

DECEMBER 9TH, 2026

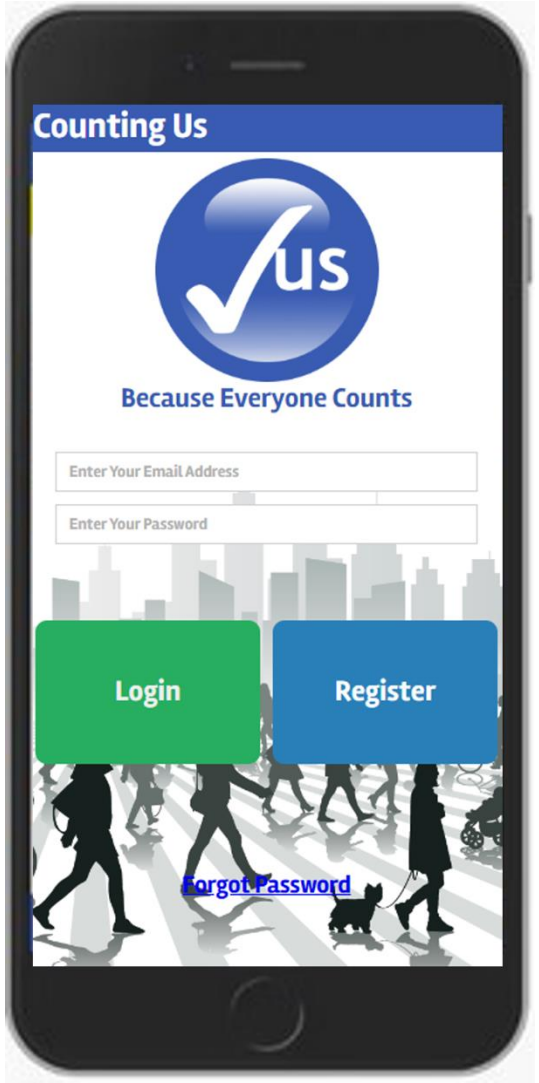
Why do we Count?

- HUD requires it
- Community planning
- Measure progress
- Resource allocation
- Are we connecting with everyone experiencing homelessness?
- Geospatial analysis for future outreach
- Support Research



The Key Benefits of Counting Us…

- Designed specifically for the HUD PIT Count
- Fully integrated solution
- No need for a GIS department
- Simple to install and configure
- Native phone app, not run from a web browser
- Supported by a full team of dedicated professionals
- Industry-vetted tech
- Powered by Amazon Web Services
- True offline capabilities



Optional Features

- Custom Survey Questions
- Volunteer Registration Portal
- Region & Count Team Management
- Print-Friendly Maps
- Separate Count Activity
- Geographic Sampling and Enumeration
- Shelter Surveys*
- Spanish Surveys*
- Known Locations Survey*
- Disaster Response Survey*
- PIT Evaluation Dashboards
- Formal PIT Report

* Free Features

Founded in 1998, Simtech is a mission-driven for profit. Our work includes…

- **Counting Us** - the most widely used app for the HUD Point in Time Count.
- **HomelessData.com** has supported the reporting & analysis of 3900+ projects across the US.
- **Show The Way**, a mobile app that enables street outreach teams, first responders, & others to better serve people living on the streets.
- Authors of key HUD guidance: **HUD CSV Data Exchange Format** & the **HUD Annual Performance Report Programming Specifications**.

Simtech *Solutions*

Preparing for a Successful PIT Count

- Identifying known locations.
- Recruiting surveyors.
- Training and support.
- Customizing the survey instruments.
- Building out your count team.
  - Use jurisdictional leads? Team leads?
- Sampling versus canvassing.
- Identifying deployment centers.
- Establishing well-balanced count teams.
- Incentives for participation.
- Shelter-based counts for those that do not use HMIS
- Safe parking and safe sleeping.
- Moratorium on Encampment Closures

Key Updates

- **Survey Changes**
  - New sex question
  - Gender is now optional
- **New Regional Shape Files**
  - New HUD CoC shapefiles
- **Volunteer Registration**
  - Logo Management
  - New interface to display more details of each region
- **Command Center Updates:**
  - Known locations updates
  - Ability to change response regions
  - Response grid filters for each column
  - Slider to change grouping radius of map marker clusters
  - Slider for layer shading
- **Reporting and Data Analysis:**
  - Updated PIT Results File Format
  - Updated Vehicle and Makeshift Shelter logic.
  - New PIT Evaluation dashboards

Roles & Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities

- Simtech
- CoC Count Admins
- Jurisdictional Leads
- Team Leads
- Surveyors
- Other Volunteers

Guidance for the various community roles and responsibilities are available on our website: https://pointintime.info/support/roles-responsibilities-for-administrators-volunteers-and-surveyors/

Jurisdictional/Regional Lead Responsibilit

1. **Support the identification of areas where people experiencing homelessness are commonly found.**
    a. Recruit various local experts, including outreach staff, service providers, law enforcement, etc., and encourage them to register for an account using the region's Volunteer Registration Portal. Links to most of the portals can be found here.
    b. During the planning stage of the count, community participants may submit Known Location Surveys to identify the locations where Persons Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) are known to be residing. This information is used by Administrators during the Coverage Planning to ensure that sufficient volunteers are allocated for high-density areas. A quick video with details on this step can be found here.

2. **Plan survey coverage and assign count teams to coverage areas.**
    a. Within the Regional Command Center, Regional PIT Count Leads can create Count Teams and areas within their designated Regions that have been established by the CoC Count Admin. Additional information about this functionality can be found here.

3. **Participate in volunteer recruitment.**
    a. To facilitate this critical aspect of a successful count, Simtech offers packages for support with marketing the PIT and recruiting volunteers. Volunteers can notify of their intent to participate via the Volunteer Registration Portal which is customizable to local branding and community needs. Volunteers create a profile in which they provide their contact information and their volunteering capacity. Volunteers can specify details such as emergency contacts and safety information, areas they are available to canvas, and special accommodations they may need to participate. The volunteer registration portal automatically registers the volunteer with an account for Counting Us, in which the local count leaders can further assign roles and responsibilities.

4. **Train volunteers to conduct surveys and provide guidance for the count…**

Other Roles and Responsibilities

- https://pointintime.info/support/point-in-time-count-faqs/

PIT COUNT TEAM LEAD

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

Confirm Team Members Have the Counting Us Mobile App Downloaded

Check with each team member conducting surveys to ensure they have the Counting Us mobile app downloaded, that they are logged in, and that their team and location assignments are correct

Lead Team to Assigned Counting Area(s)

Every team has one or more location assignments. As team lead, you are responsible for the team getting to their counting area. This may include driving to an area that isn't within walking distance of your meetup location.

Assist in Identifying and Surveying People Experiencing Homelessness

When you arrive to your assigned location there may be many people experiencing homelessness, just a few people, or no people at all. Follow the training guidance for approaching people and conducting surveys.

Verify Team Members Conduct Surveys Correctly & Only in Assigned Locations

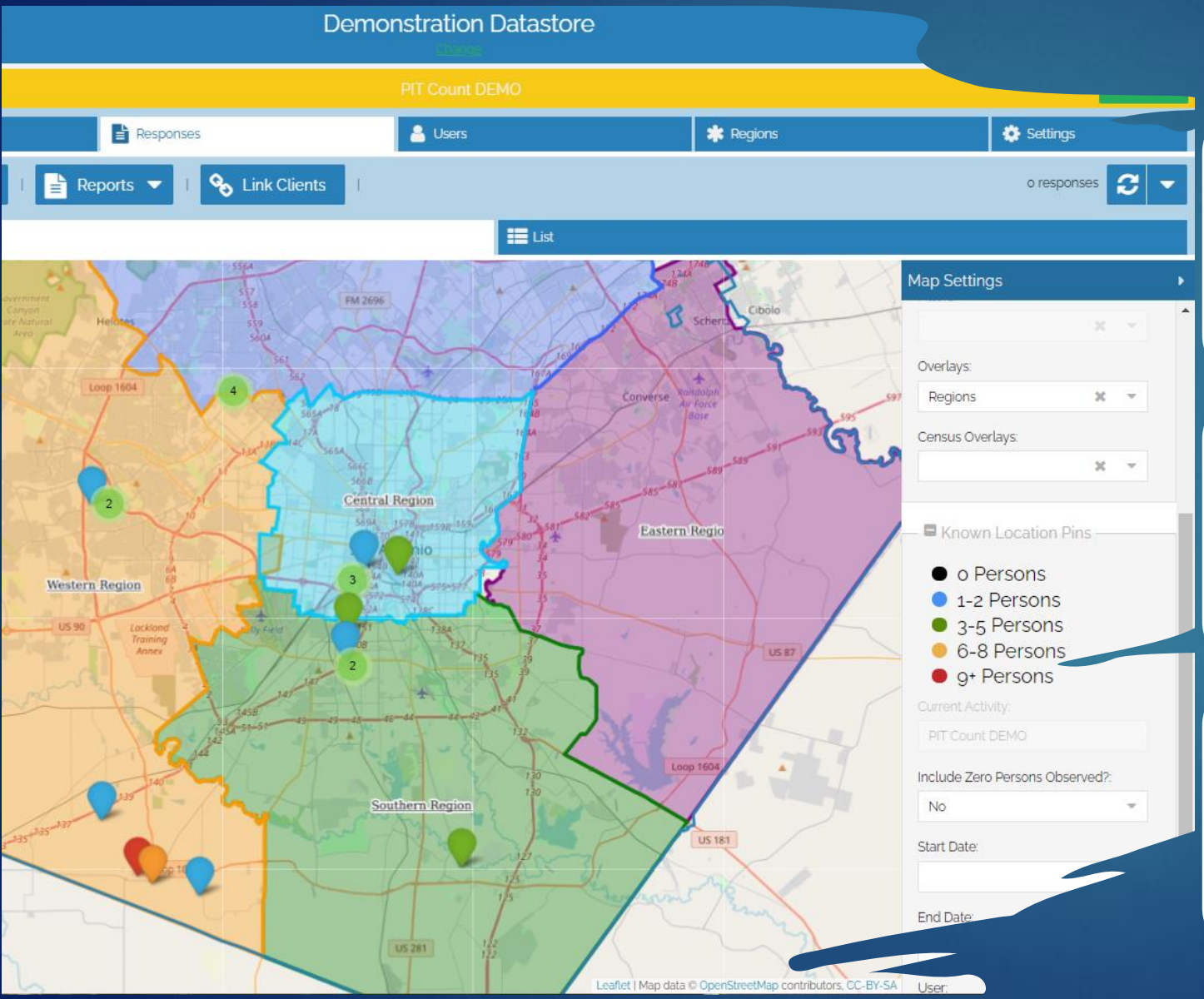
Check with team members to ensure they are conducting their surveys correctly, including submitting any draft surveys remaining on their phones at the end of the shift if necessary. Team members must also stay withing the boundaries of the assigned location. Unsubmitted surveys and surveys done outside of assigned areas will not be counted and can skew results.

Ensure Team Has All Necessary Supplies & Incentives for Survey Completion

Your jurisdiction lead will provide details on supplies for count teams and incentives for people experiencing homelessness who complete a survey. Be sure your team has everything they need before leaving the meetup location. Refer to guidance from your jurisdiction lead on what to do if you run out of incentive items.

Pre-Count Planning

Pre-Count Planning



Determine Coverage Needs

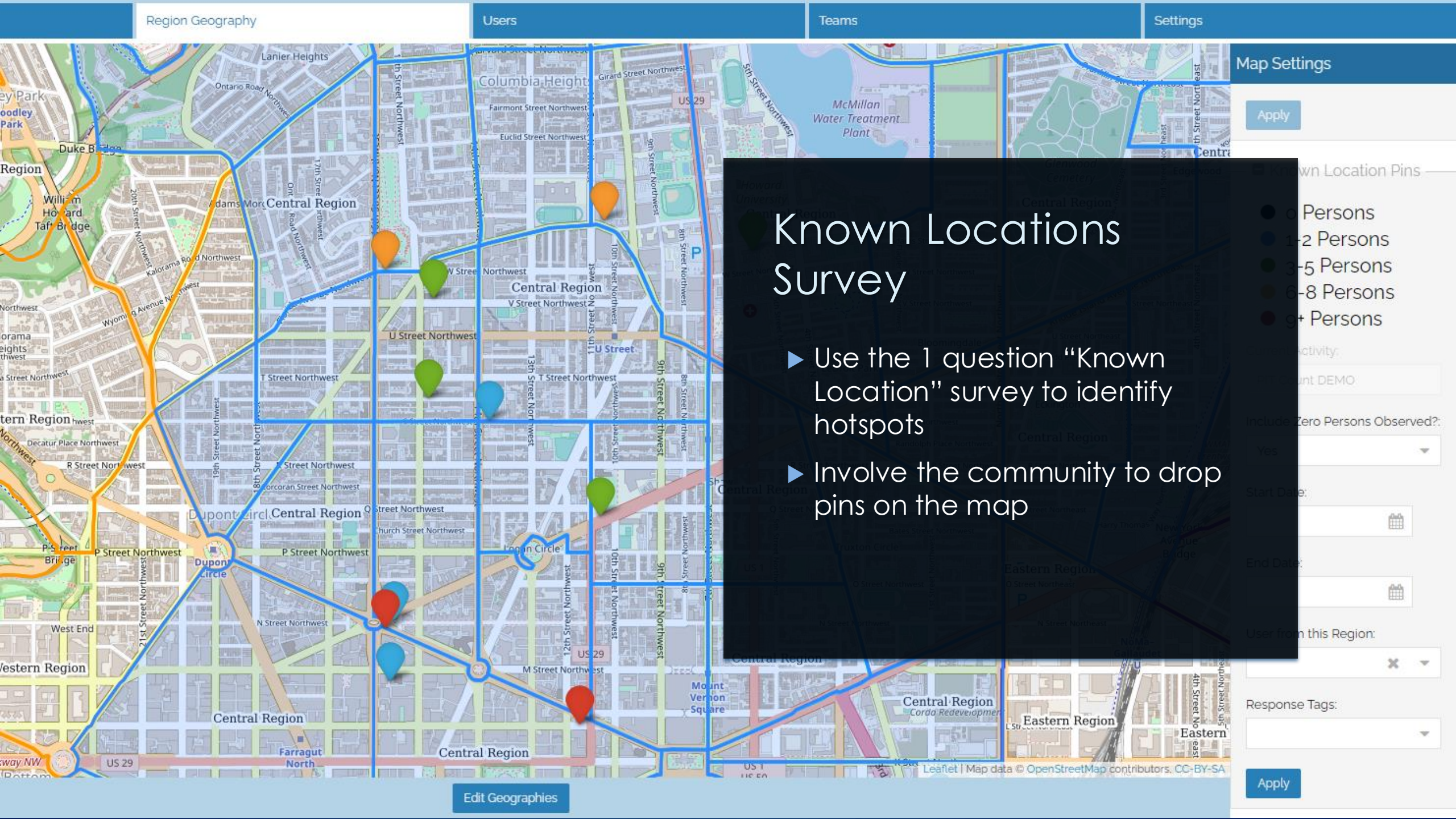
- Identify Locations where Persons Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) are known to be living

Establish Teams

- Establish well-balanced Regions and Count Teams

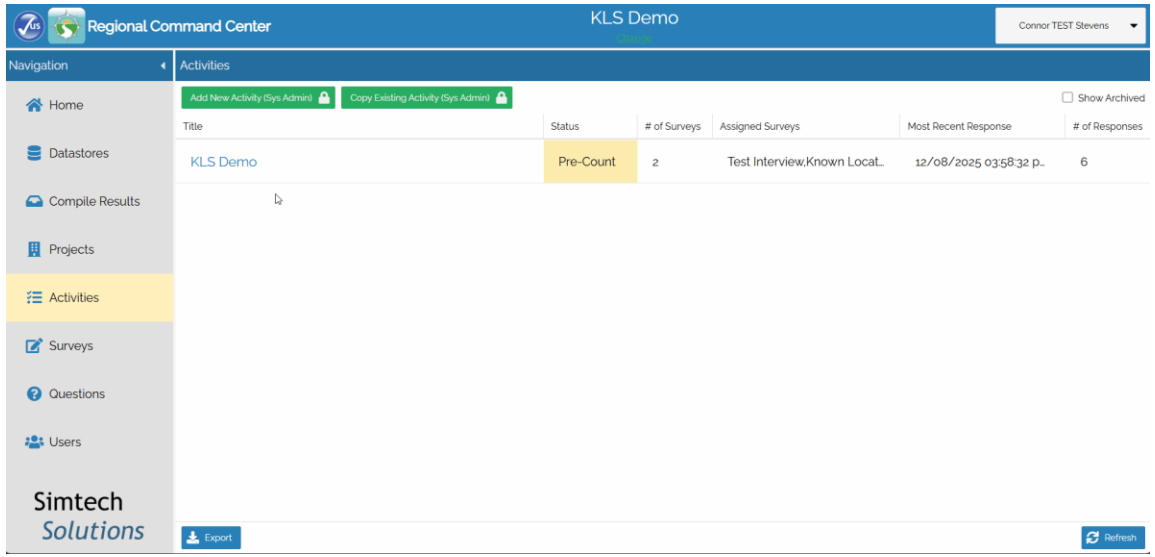
Recruit Volunteers

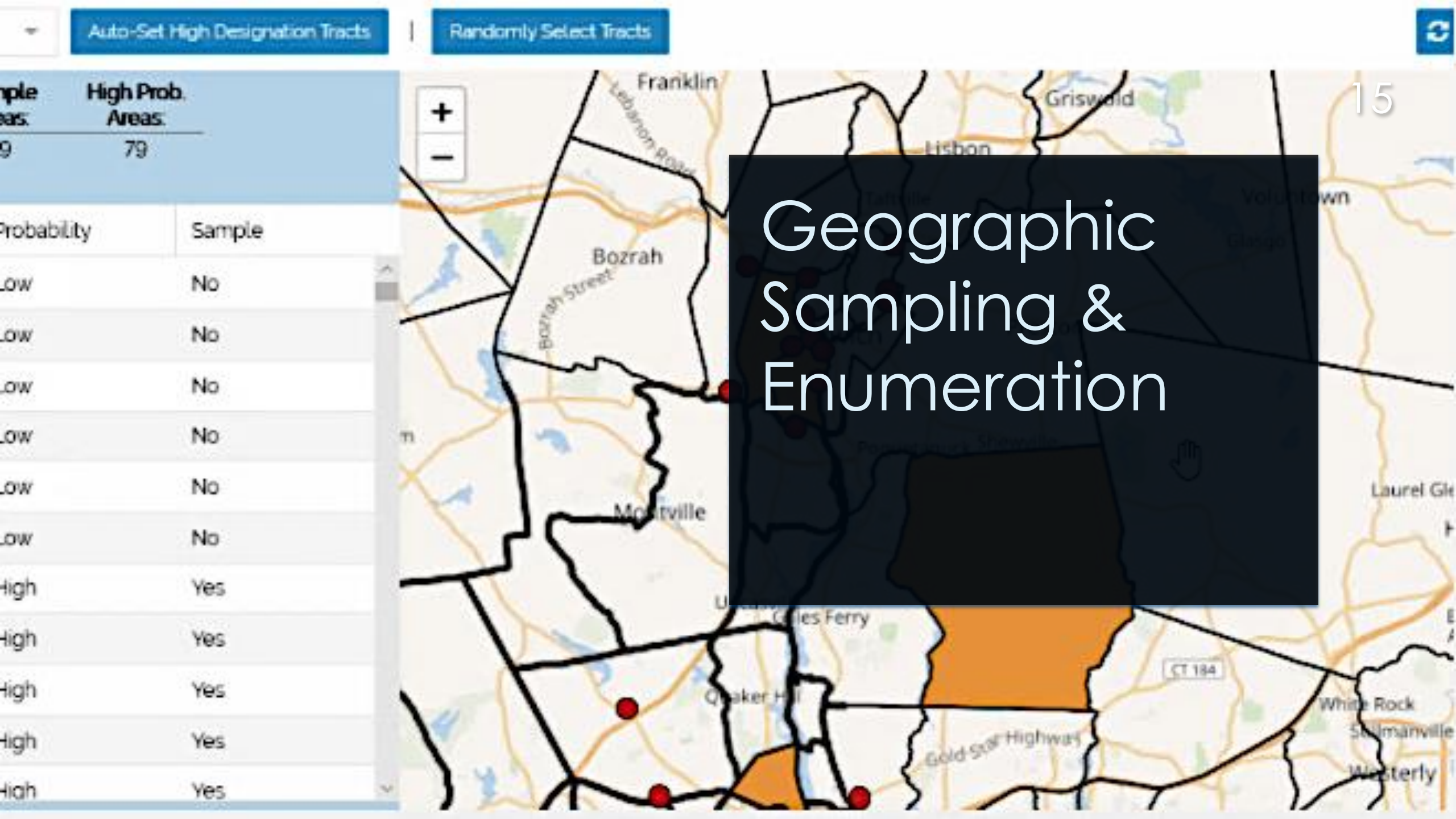
- Launch Volunteer Registration with local branding, key info, quotas, releases, etc.

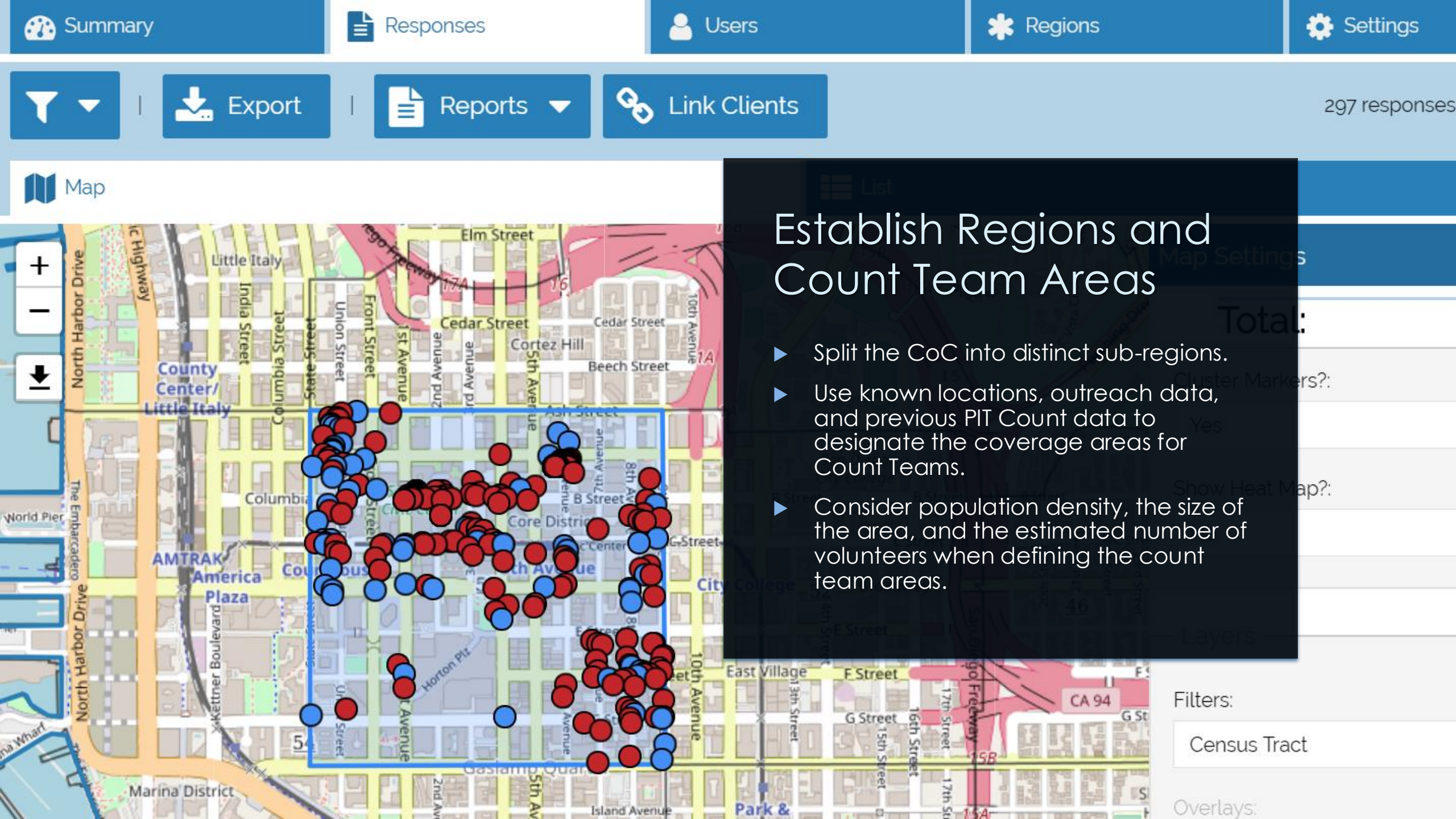

Region Geography
Users
Teams
Settings
Map Settings
Apply
Known Location Pins
0 Persons
1-2 Persons
3-5 Persons
6-8 Persons
9+ Persons
Include Zero Persons Observed?:
Yes
Start Date:
End Date:
User from this Region:
Response Tags:
Apply
Edit Geographies
Known Locations Survey
Use the 1 question "Known Location" survey to identify hotspots
Involve the community to drop pins on the map
Leaflet | Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SA

Known Location Updates

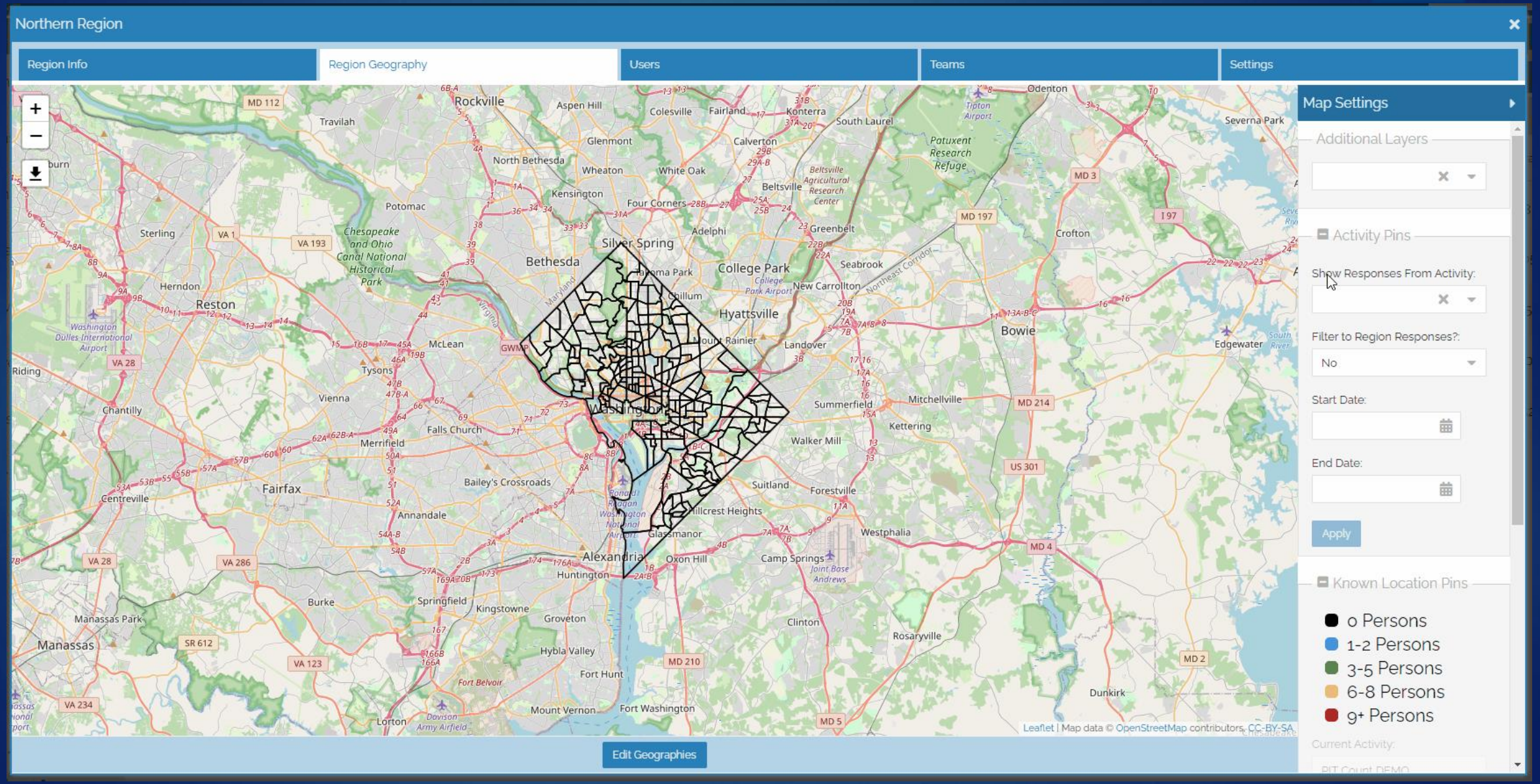
- Added # of people observed to Known Location Pin on the map
- Added cluster size slider to change cluster grouping
- Known Location responses have been separated into new grid with filtering functionality (Coming Soon!)
- Known Location pin are now shown by default when in Pre-Count mode (Coming Soon!)




Auto-Set High Designation Tracts
Randomly Select Tracts
High Prob. Areas:
79
Probability
Sample
Low
No
High
Yes
Franklin
Griswold
Lisbon
Bozrah
Bozrah Street
Lebanon Road
Gales Ferry
CT 184
Gold Star Highway
Laurel Gle
Westerly
Geographic Sampling & Enumeration


Summary
Responses
Users
Regions
Settings
Export
Reports
Link Clients
297 responses
Map
List
Map Settings
Total:
Cluster Markers?:
Yes
Show Heat Map?:
Layers:
Filters:
Census Tract
Overlays:
Establish Regions and Count Team Areas
Split the CoC into distinct sub-regions.
Use known locations, outreach data, and previous PIT Count data to designate the coverage areas for Count Teams.
Consider population density, the size of the area, and the estimated number of volunteers when defining the count team areas.
Elm Street
Little Italy
Cedar Street
Cortez Hill
Beech Street
County Center/ Little Italy
North Harbor Drive
India Street
Columbia Street
State Street
Union Street
Front Street
1st Avenue
2nd Avenue
3rd Avenue
5th Avenue
10th Avenue
B Street
Core District
AMTRAK
America Plaza
Kettner Boulevard
Horton Plz
East Village
F Street
G Street
CA 94
Marina District
Island Avenue
Park &

Region and Team Coverage Areas



Region Assignments

Northern Region

Region Info | Region Geography | Users | Teams | Settings

Northern Region

Users: 33

Volunteer Quota: 100

Deployment Center:

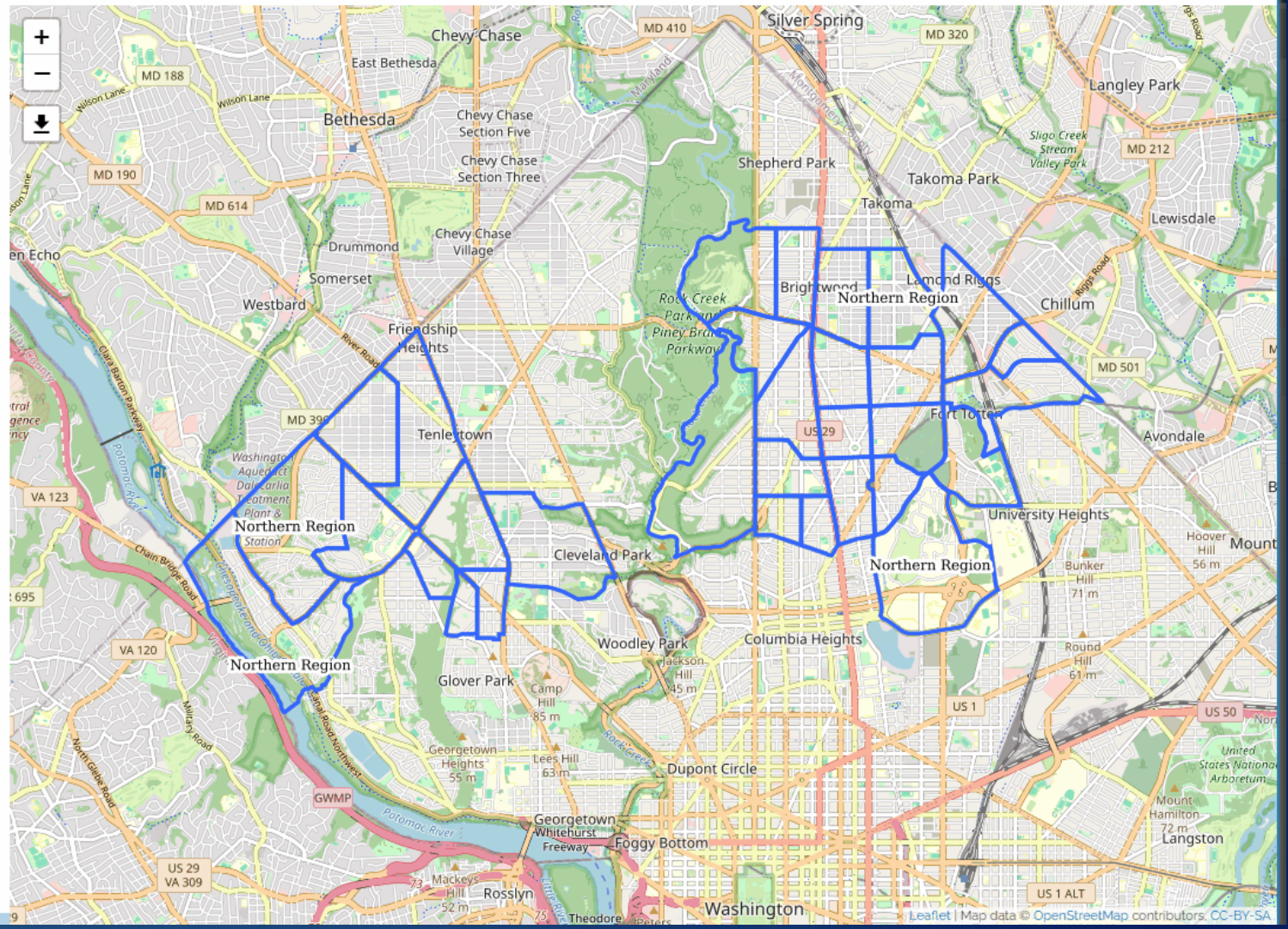
Deployment Test 1 1 Main Street Boston, MA 02127

Region Admins: 2

Number of Teams: 4

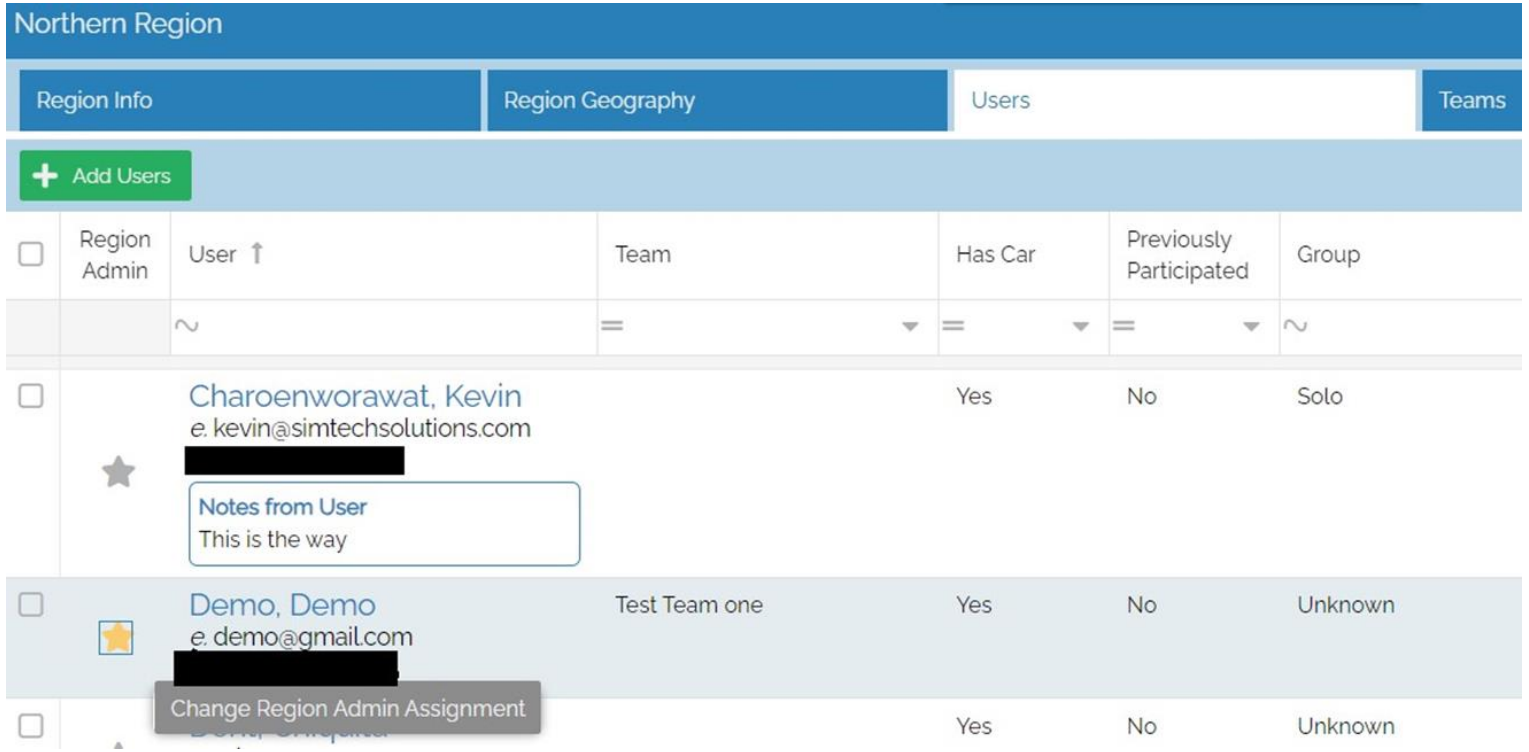
Tracts Covered by Teams: 0

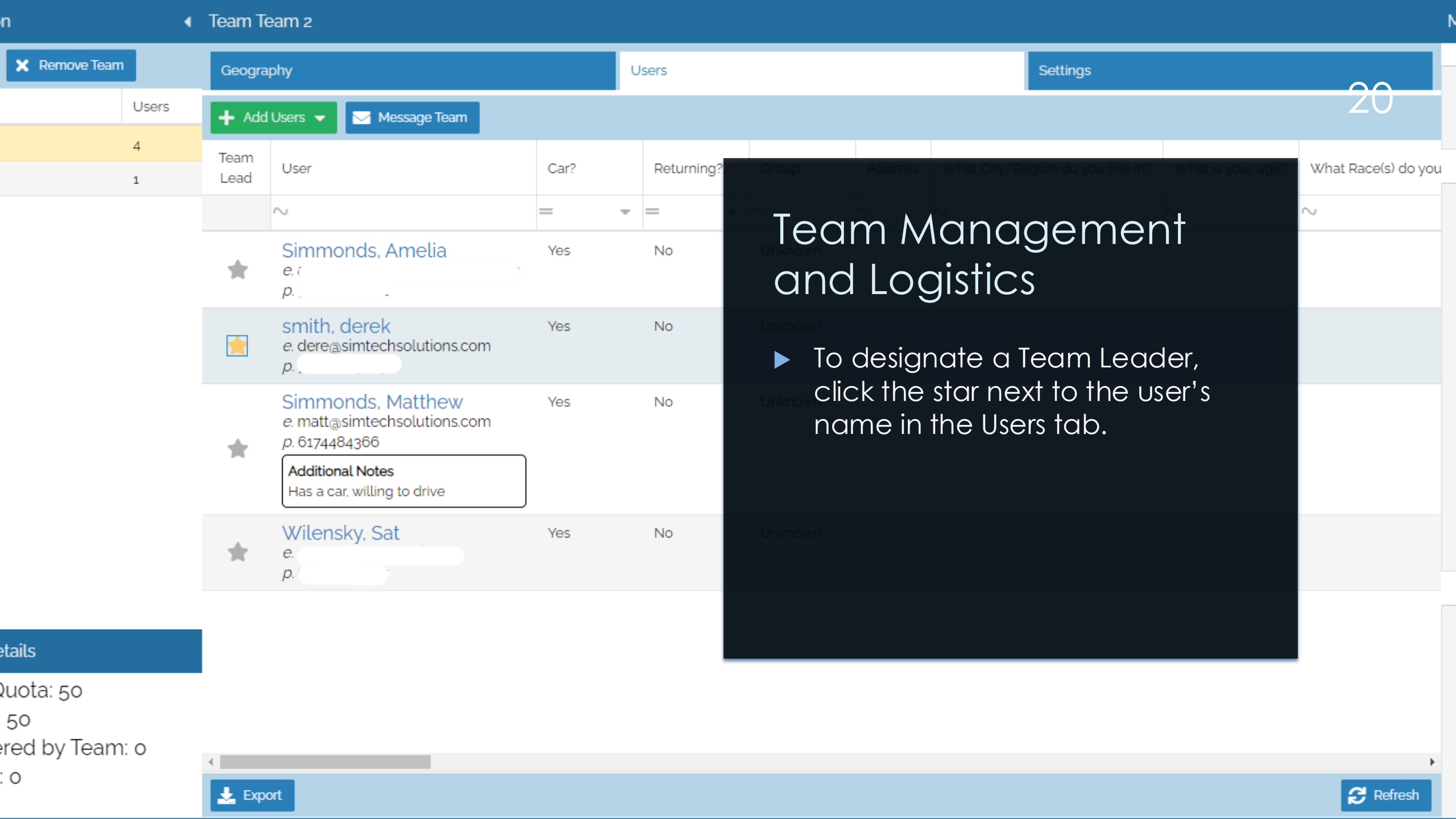
Total Tracts: 31 (10.66 sqmi)



Region Administrators

- Regional administrators can be assigned by clicking on the ★ symbol next to a user's profile

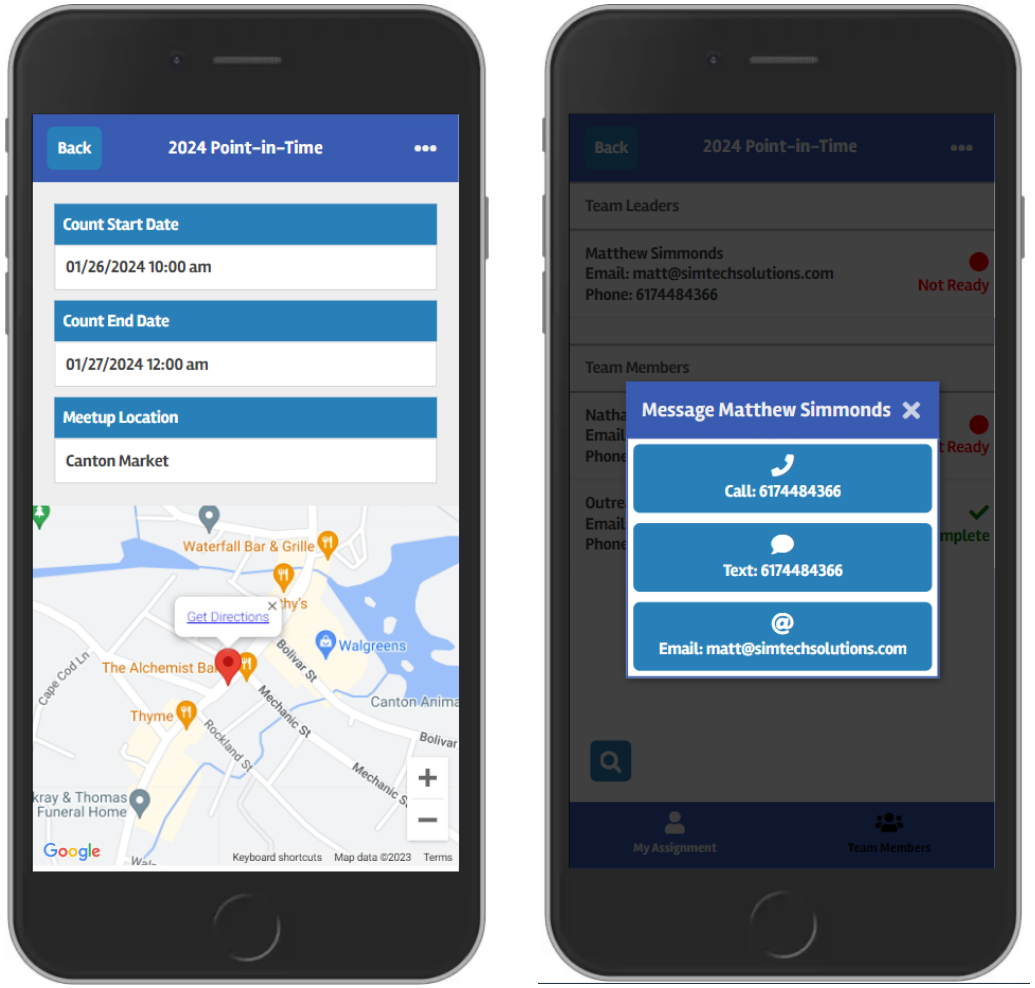




Team Management and Logistics

- To designate a Team Leader, click the star next to the user's name in the Users tab.

Team Management and Logistics



- Team meetup locations can be set within the Command Center and viewed within Counting Us.
- Team members can email, call, or text their Team Leader from within Counting Us.

Pre-Count Mode

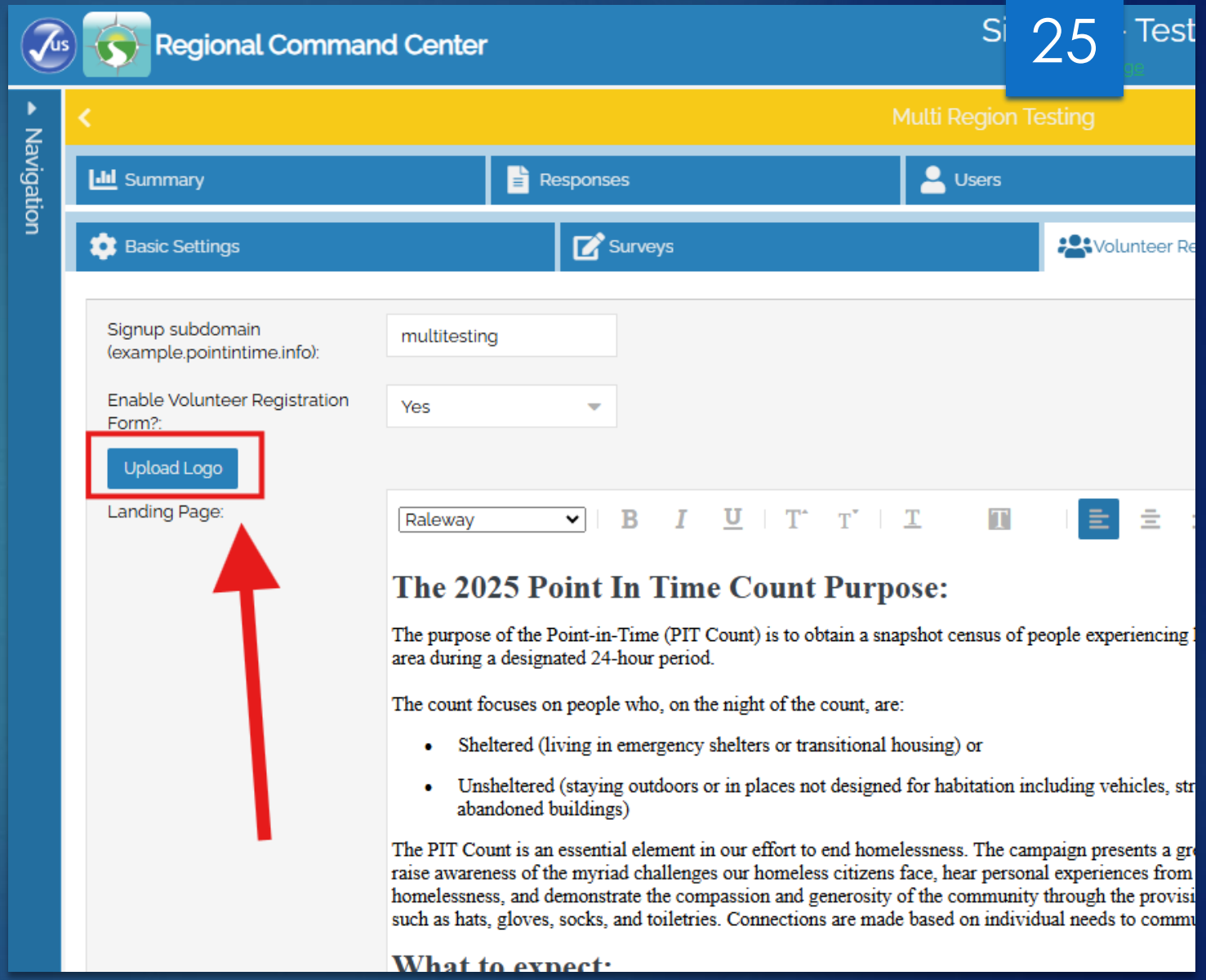
- Training
  - New & existing volunteers can practice with the different surveys to become comfortable.
  - Count & Regional Admins can identify additional training based on volunteer response.
- Known Locations
  - Identify areas of focus for count team deployment.
  - Necessary prerequisite for Geographic Sampling & Enumeration.

Considerations for choosing the Time and Date of Your Count

Volunteer Management

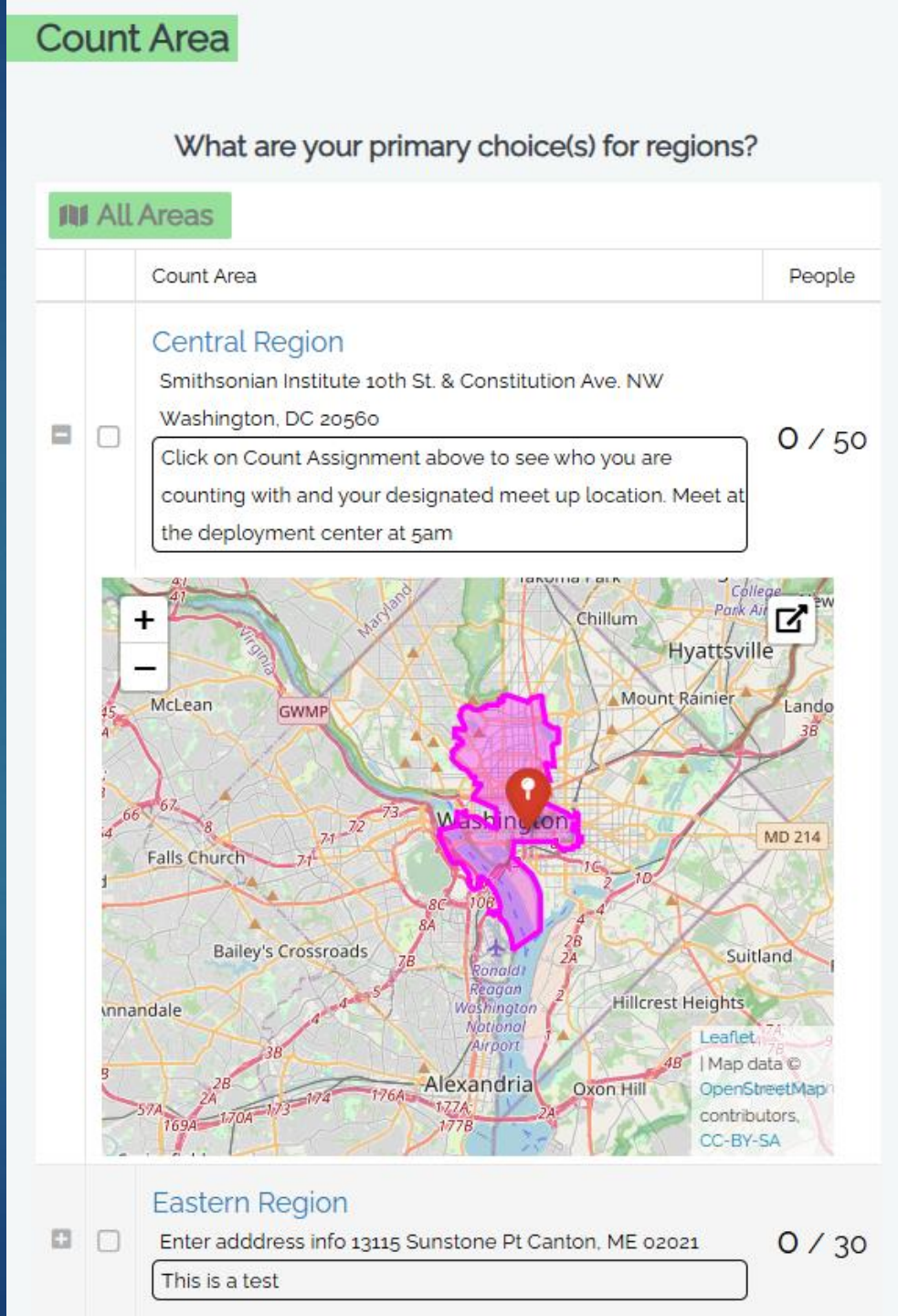
Volunteer Portal Content

- Count administrators can now manage the content for the landing page of the Volunteer Registration portal.
- Welcome email content can also be tailored.
- Sample language is available for both.
- "Set Password" is now a link within the Welcome Email.



Volunteer Registration Portal

- Customizable to meet local needs and incorporate local branding
- Allow volunteers to choose the region(s) they want to volunteer in
- All registrants are automatically registered with an account for Counting Us



Set Quotas for the Number of Surveyors

- What worked in the past?
- Aim high and lean on your city/town leads
- Level of outreach participation
- Set goals for survey vs observation rates

- Other data sets to inform the quotas…
  - Known Locations
  - Outreach interactions
  - Population
  - Census Tract size
  - Volunteer numbers from other COCs

Census Place	Number of Census Tracts	Area of Tracts in Sq. KMs	Sum of Tract Population	Volunteers by Density	Volunteers by Tract	Volunteers by Population	Volunteer Min	Volunteer Max
Antelope	10	16.6	47865	29	20	22	20	29
Arden-Arcade	21	42.9	94585	57	43	44	43	57
Carmichael	16	36.0	69757	42	33	32	32	42
Citrus Heights	21	39.5	92189	55	43	43	43	55
Elk Grove	32	87.6	162224	97	65	75	65	97
Elverta	2	27.7	8397	5	4	4	4	5
Fair Oaks	7	29.0	32359	19	14	15	14	19
Florin	11	20.5	53491	32	23	25	23	32

Sources of Volunteers

- Volunteers from past counts
- People with lived experience*
- Existing provider staff
- Local colleges/ universities
- County or City employees
- Police and Sheriffs offices
- Park Rangers
- AmeriCorps
- The VA
- Mission-Driven Corporations
- Downtown Partnerships
- Civic organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis, VFW, etc.)
- Concerned citizens

Free social media images at
https://www.pointintime.info/volunteer/

*If you can fairly compensate them

Survey & Question Management

Key Benefits of a Survey-Based Count

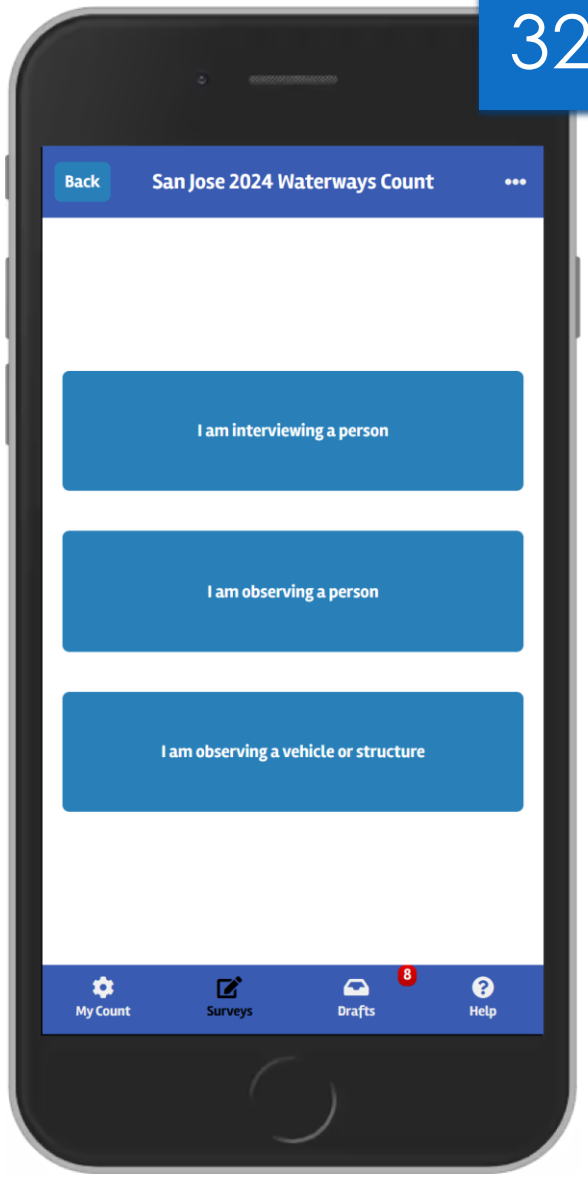
- Build Your By-Name List
- Connections
- Go Beyond Demographics
- Community Awareness
- No sampling site bias

Name	Display Name	Sort Order	Project Based?	IND?	HH?
2023 Point-in-Time Volunteer Regi…	2023 Point-in-Time Volunteer…		No	Yes	Yes
Unsheltered Homeless Survey - 2…	Unsheltered Survey	3	No	Yes	Yes
Unsheltered Homeless Person Ob…	Unsheltered Observation Tall…	4	No	Yes	Yes
Sheltered Homeless Survey - 2023	Sheltered Survey	5	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reunification	Reunification Survey	6	No	Yes	No
Vehicle / Structure Observation T…	Vehicle / Structure Observat…	7	No	Yes	Yes
Known Locations Survey	Known Locations Survey	9	No	Yes	No

Setting the Survey Order and Names

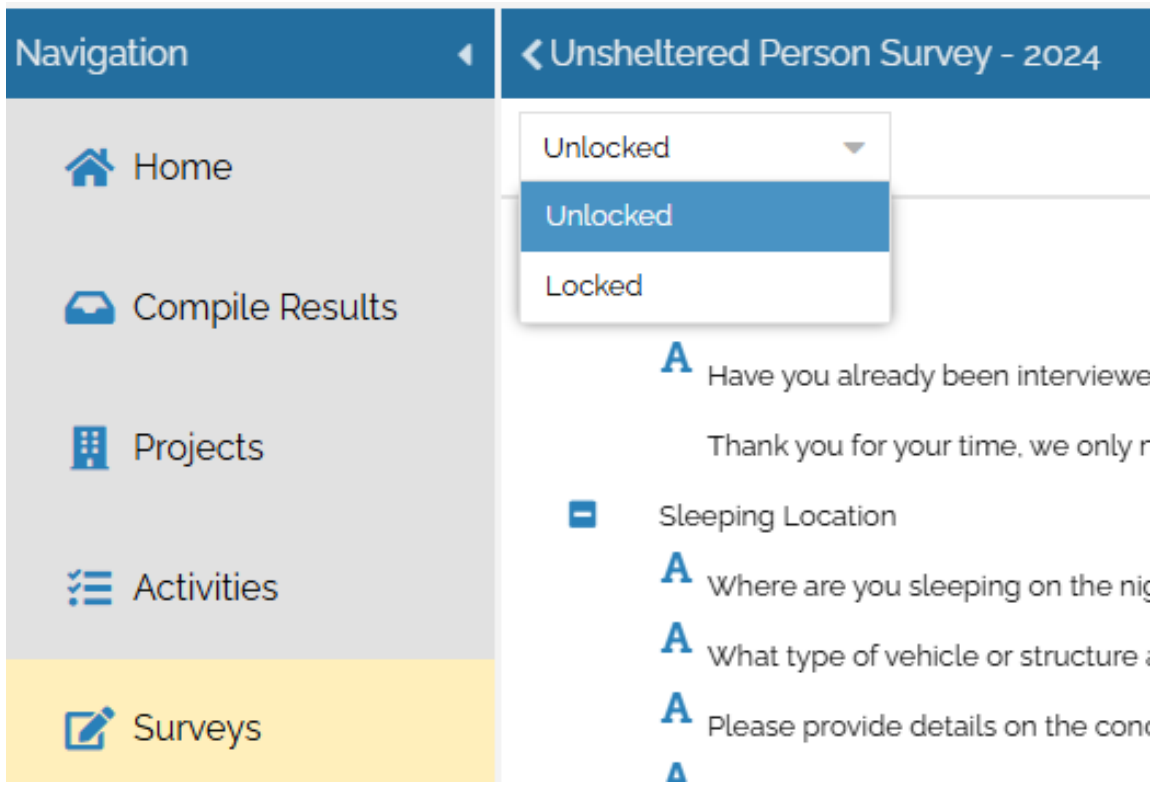
Customizing the Survey Names & Order

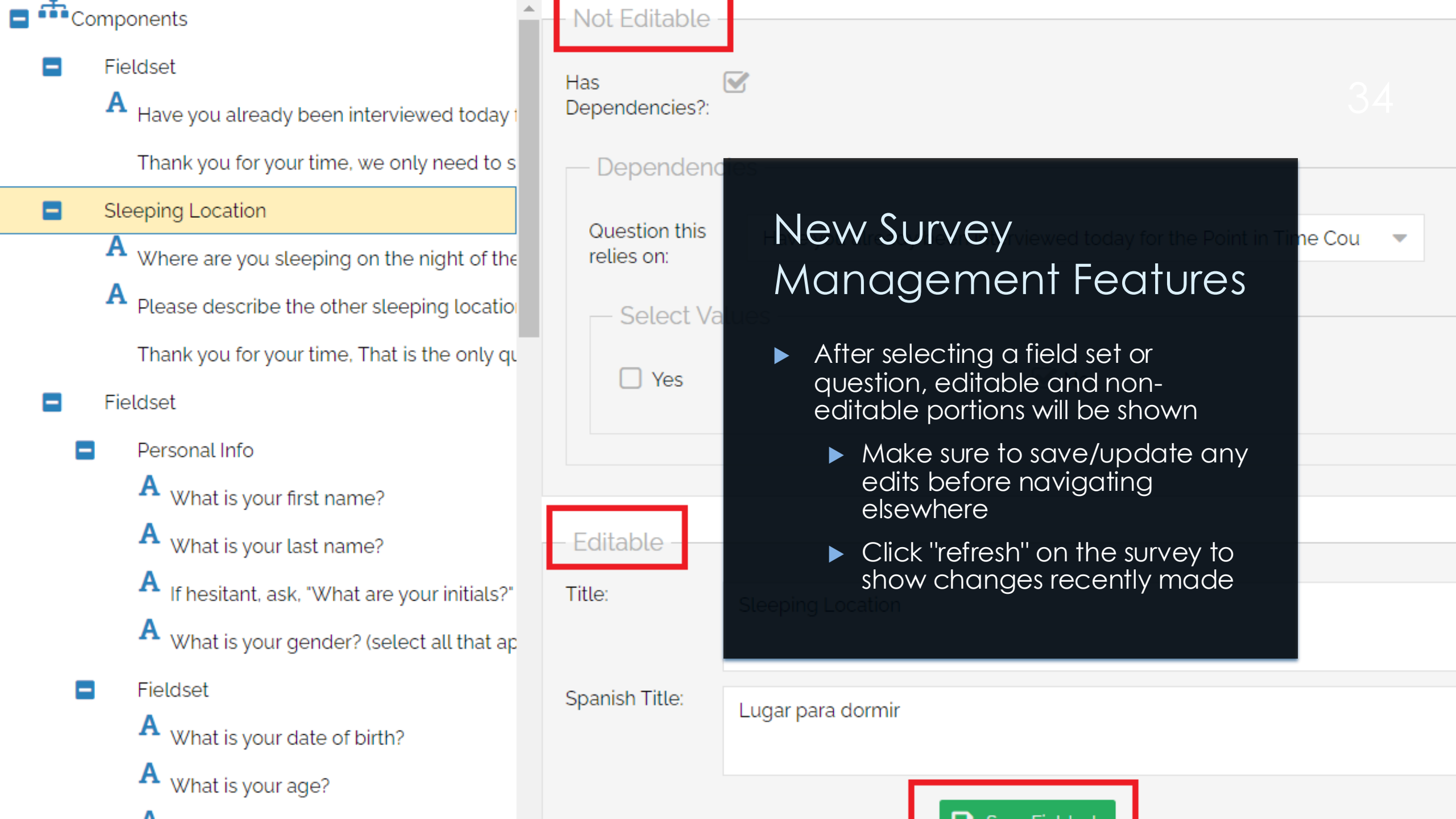
- Surveys can be renamed
- The order of the surveys can be adjusted.
- The "Known Location Tally" is hidden automatically when the count is switched to Active.



Managing Survey Questions

- HUD Questions are locked but the question wording and the labels for the response value labels can be adjusted.
- Other "non-HUD" questions can be edited.
- Lock the survey once it is finalized/approved.





New Survey Management Features

- After selecting a field set or question, editable and non-editable portions will be shown
  - Make sure to save/update any edits before navigating elsewhere
  - Click "refresh" on the survey to show changes recently made

Question: sleeping-location

Question Info | Response Options

Label	Spanish Label	Value	Position	Hidden
Abandoned Building	Edificio/ estructura aba...	1	1	No
Bus, train station, airport	Estación de tren, autobus, o a...	5	2	No
Outdoor encampment	Campamento	7	3	No
Park	Parque	3	4	No
Street or Sidewalk	Calle o acera	4	5	No
Under bridge/overpass	Debajo de un puente	6	6	No
Vehicle/Boat/RV	Vehículo / I		7	No
Emergency shelter	Refugio de emergencia	8	8	No
House or apartment that you r...	Casa o apartamento que alqu...	105	9	No

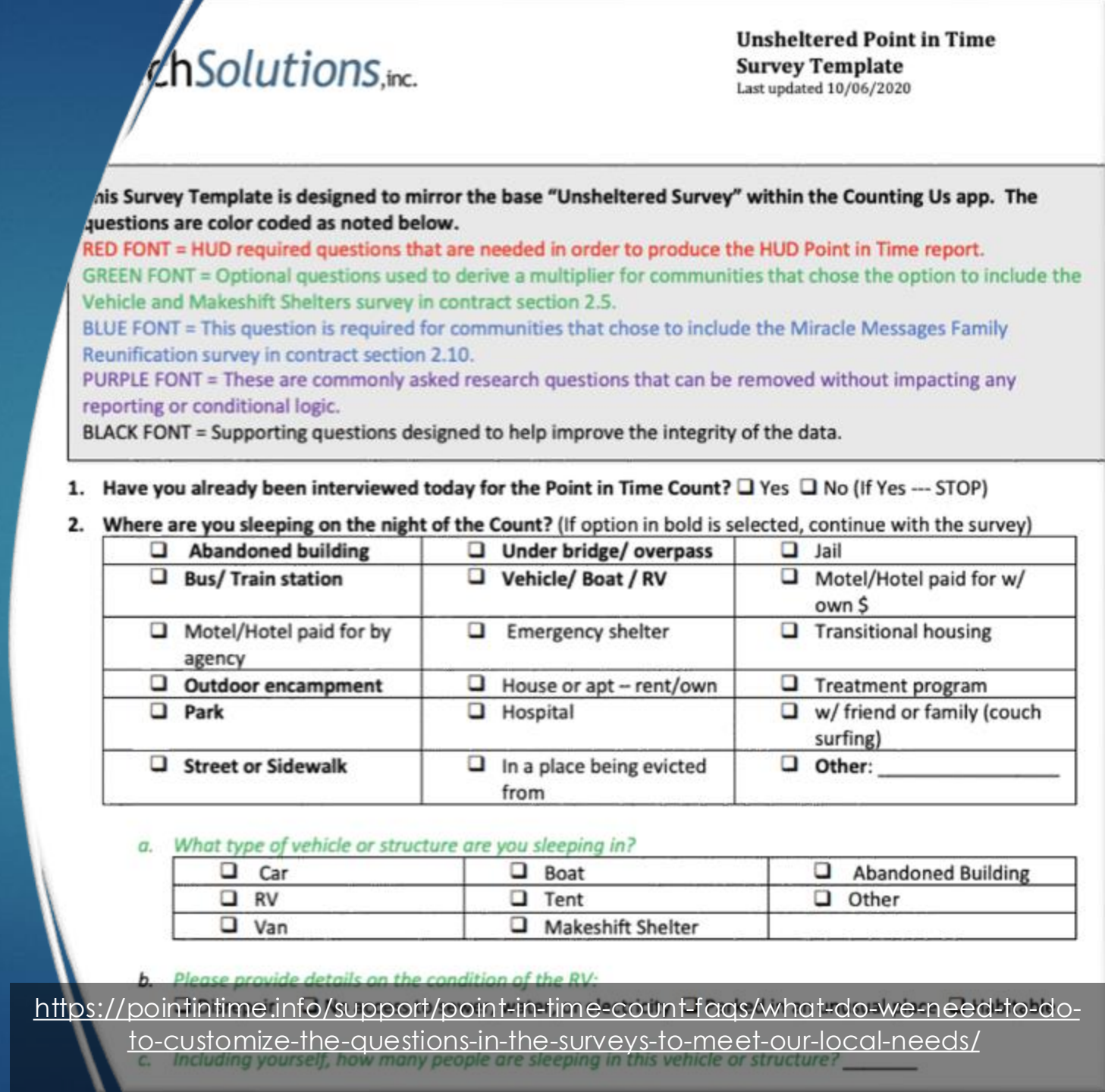
Update Cancel

Ability to Customize Response Labels

- If a question has multiple response values (checkbox, dropdown, radio, etc.) then the response options can also be edited
  - English and Spanish labels can be edited
  - The value, position of the question, and whether it is hidden within the survey must be altered by a Simtech staff

Customizing the Surveys

- Download the Point in Time Homeless Survey from the PointInTime.info website.
- Make changes in Microsoft Word or Google Docs with Track Changes so that your survey meets your local needs.
- Once received, the Simtech Team will update the survey and share for your review and approval.



chSolutions, inc.

Unsheltered Point in Time Survey Template
Last updated 10/06/2020

his Survey Template is designed to mirror the base "Unsheltered Survey" within the Counting Us app. The questions are color coded as noted below.

RED FONT = HUD required questions that are needed in order to produce the HUD Point in Time report.

GREEN FONT = Optional questions used to derive a multiplier for communities that chose the option to include the Vehicle and Makeshift Shelters survey in contract section 2.5.

BLUE FONT = This question is required for communities that chose to include the Miracle Messages Family Reunification survey in contract section 2.10.

PURPLE FONT = These are commonly asked research questions that can be removed without impacting any reporting or conditional logic.

BLACK FONT = Supporting questions designed to help improve the integrity of the data.

1. **Have you already been interviewed today for the Point in Time Count?** ❑ Yes ❑ No (If Yes --- STOP)
2. **Where are you sleeping on the night of the Count?** (If option in bold is selected, continue with the survey)

❑ **Abandoned building**	❑ **Under bridge/ overpass**	❑ Jail
❑ **Bus/ Train station**	❑ **Vehicle/ Boat / RV**	❑ Motel/Hotel paid for w/ own $
❑ Motel/Hotel paid for by agency	❑ Emergency shelter	❑ Transitional housing
❑ **Outdoor encampment**	❑ House or apt – rent/own	❑ Treatment program
❑ **Park**	❑ Hospital	❑ w/ friend or family (couch surfing)
❑ **Street or Sidewalk**	❑ In a place being evicted from	❑ **Other:** _____

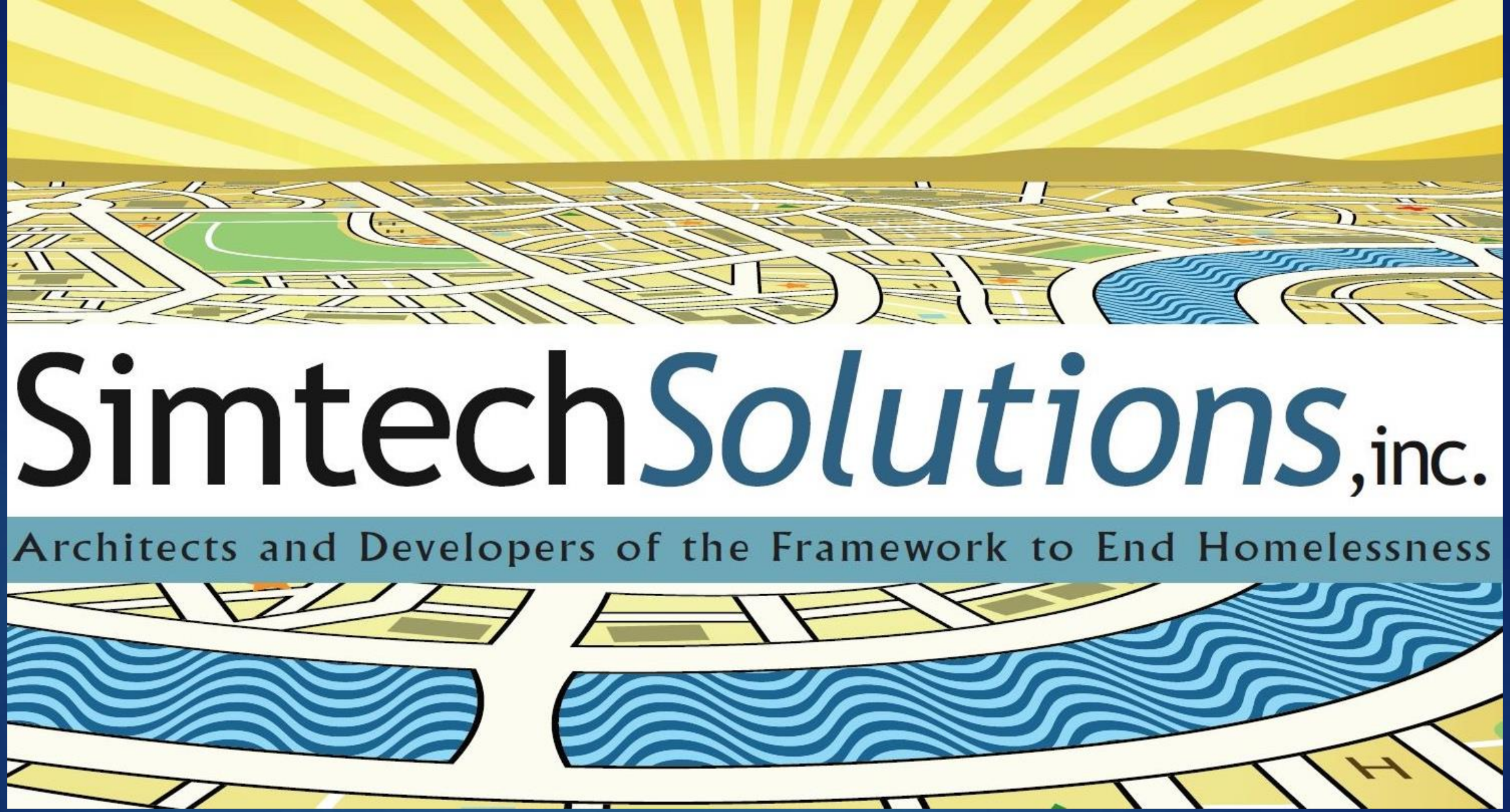
a. What type of vehicle or structure are you sleeping in?

❑ Car	❑ Boat	❑ Abandoned Building
❑ RV	❑ Tent	❑ Other
❑ Van	❑ Makeshift Shelter	

b. Please provide details on the condition of the RV:

c. Including yourself, how many people are sleeping in this vehicle or structure? _____

https://pointintime.info/support/point-in-time-count-faqs/what-do-we-need-to-do-to-customize-the-questions-in-the-surveys-to-meet-our-local-needs/



Contact us for more information or with questions or comments by visiting https://contact.pointintime.info/.