

THE OPPORTUNITY PROJECT



Sprint Leader

ROLE OVERVIEW

TOP is a sprint-based innovation program that brings together technologists, government, and communities to rapidly prototype digital products—powered by federal open data—that solve real-world problems for people across the country. More than **200 digital products** have been created through TOP to address problems like disaster response, youth and veteran homelessness, reducing ocean plastics, COVID-19, rural economic development and more.

Sprint Leaders are a group of colleagues within a federal agency or non-profit organization that frame the problem statement, manage the TOP sprint, and work on day-to-day operations such as leading milestone sessions and coordinating with tech teams.

→ Read this document to learn more about how it works.

See past products from TOP at opportunity.census.gov/showcase

How It Works

01 – IDENTIFY CHALLENGES

Federal agencies and non-profits identify high-priority challenges facing the public.

02 – TEAM UP

Tech/product teams from industry and universities sign on to create data-driven, digital products or non-digital solutions in collaboration with end users, data and policy experts.

03 – BUILD

During virtual tech development sprints, sprint leaders collaborate with teams and other sprint participants to create new digital products such as mapping tools, apps, websites, games, AI algorithms, network visualizations, and more. Teams may also create non-digital solutions such as toolkits, policy interventions and more.

04 – LAUNCH

Products are showcased at Census Open Innovation Summit, which is an open press event.

05 – REACH END USERS

After the sprint, participants work to ensure products reach end users and move the needle on national challenges. Certain years, teams have the option to apply for a financial prize to continue their work.

→ Your Role

Sprint Leader

The sprint leader role involves the following:

- Developing a problem statement
- Working with the TOP team to recruit sprint participants
- Curating a list of relevant open data & identifying data stewards
- Facilitating bi-weekly milestone calls (using facilitation templates) throughout the sprint process (typically 12 weeks)
- Communicating weekly with sprint cohort to share key activities and expectations (using email templates)
- Collaborating on a launch event to feature work completed in the sprint

Why Participate?

01 Advance Your Mission

Address priorities at the heart of your agency's mission that require data and innovation.

02 Promote Data Access and Quality

Meet requirements to promote the reuse of your data. Engage with data consumers directly and learn about data UX and user needs in order to improve data quality. Connect open data with real world applications.

03 Collaborate with Cross-Sector Partners

Collaborate with cross-sector partners to create digital solutions. Adopt community engagement as a norm and gain community-based insights on mission areas.

04 Build Relationships & Partnerships

Build relationships within and beyond government. Develop partnerships with technologists and community advocates working in the problem area.

05 Media Spotlight and Public Relations

Gain visibility and press from Summit and beyond.

06 Catalyze Innovation Within Your Agency

Learn new ways of working: agile sprints, human-centered design, and lightweight methods of collaboration.

Other Roles

TECH TEAMS

Tech teams are the companies, universities, non-profits, and students who build digital products in the sprints. They design, develop, and launch the products they build, and typically own and maintain the products after the sprints. Teams may also explore developing non-digital products, such as toolkits, policy interventions, social interventions, communication/outreach campaigns and more.

PRODUCT ADVISORS

Product advisors are technology product experts from outside of government who consult product teams on how to develop viable products that can be maintained and implemented after the sprint.

USER ADVOCATES

User advocates are community leaders, advocates, and people with direct lived experience in the target challenges (e.g. state and local government, non-profits, service providers, or individual experts). Their role is to guide product teams in designing solutions that are realistic and useful for the target end users.

FAQs

What makes a good TOP problem statement?

In order to achieve the best outcomes, we encourage sprint leaders to consider problems with the following characteristics:

- High level, big problems.
- Public-facing, with impacts on communities, families, businesses, local governments, etc. Problem statements should not be focused on challenges that federal agencies face internally.
- Open-ended and not prescriptive of solution(s). Problem statements should allow for creativity and innovation; they should not have a specific solution in mind.
- Key role for open data.
- Feasible within a 3-4 month technology development sprint.

What is the time commitment?

The amount of time you dedicate to this process is up to you! Participation in the sprint is part time and can be done completely remotely. In general, we find for sprint leaders that the planning phase of the TOP sprint takes about 5-20 hours/week, the execution phase takes about 15-20 hours/week, and the showcase planning phase takes about 5-10 hours/week.

The most time consuming part of the process is during the recruitment of tech teams, user advocates, and data stewards. Once the sprint actually kicks off, the time commitment will lighten.

Who should be involved with my agency/organization?

The team is up to you, but we recommend building a staff-level facilitation team of 2-4 sprint leaders, who will participate in sprint milestones, address policy and operational questions, and provide feedback on the products to tech teams. The size of your team will depend on each team member's bandwidth, as well as the number of problem statements and tech teams that will participate in your sprint. We also ask sprint leaders to identify at least one senior official at

your agency or organization who is aware and supportive of the sprint and can serve as your executive-level champion. In addition, you may want to coordinate with a partnerships or outreach office, legal counsel, and communications office at different points in the sprint

What happens after the sprint?

- Teams maintain products/solutions: Post-sprint strategy varies for each team, and can include open sourcing, incorporating into existing business channels, or handing off the product.
- Agencies can choose to engage further with teams via contract/procurement, but that is not expected.
- Share the product/solution: A large open press Summit helps us to share completed projects from the sprints. Sprint products can also be featured on opportunity.census.gov and The Opportunity Project blog.
- Track impact: We ask teams to share periodic updates on reach, effectiveness, and utilization so that we can communicate about their impact on end users.
- Optional prize application and post-sprint communities: Certain years, teams can apply for funding to support product sustainability.

Non-Contractual Collaboration vs. IAA vs. Toolkit

- Agencies and organizations interested in running a TOP Sprint have 3 options for involvement:
 - Non-contractual collaboration: Lightweight TOP team support, no IAA, 4-5 tech teams participation, 50-75% recruitment responsibility, 100% milestone facilitation responsibility w/ TOP team 'buddy'
 - IAA: high-level of TOP team support, up to 12 tech team participation, 25-50% recruitment responsibility, milestones facilitated by TOP team
 - TOPx Toolkit sprint: fully independent utilizing the [TOPx Toolkit](#)