



# THE OPPORTUNITY PROJECT

2019  
ANNUAL

REPORT

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# A Letter from The Opportunity Project (TOP) Team

Dear TOP stakeholders,

We are publishing this report during unprecedeted times, and first and foremost we hope you are all safe and well. One of the things we value most is bringing people together in the face of our greatest challenges, and this year our work may be more virtual than ever, but will continue that spirit.

To help us communicate with the incredible community of TOP stakeholders built over the years, we are pleased to share the inaugural **TOP annual report**, in which we offer a summary of the significant milestones and achievements of the TOP team and our collaborators in 2019. As our community expands, we continue to seek ways to stay connected and jointly celebrate our cross-sector collaboration and the remarkable innovation and impact it catalyzes.

For those of you less familiar with [The Opportunity Project](#), TOP is an innovation program at the U.S. Census Bureau that brings together technologists, government, and communities to rapidly prototype digital products that solve real-world problems for people across the country. To date, TOP's 12-week technology development sprints have catalyzed **100 consumer-facing digital products — a milestone we reached in 2019** — that leverage open data to address challenges like disaster response, youth and veteran homelessness, the opioid crisis, expanding the innovation economy, and more.

2019 was a significant year for The Opportunity Project. The **2019 sprints**, which focused on themes of **Investing in the American Workforce** and **Innovating the 2020 Census**, brought together 25+ tech teams, 15+ federal agency representatives and data experts, 30+ nonprofits and state and local governments, and resulted in the development of 20+ digital products. In July, bi-partisan authorizing legislation, [The Opportunity Project Act of 2019](#), was introduced in the US House of Representatives. TOP was the focus of a [case study feature](#) on best practices for agile problem solving in government by the IBM Center for the Business of Government. At [Demo Day](#), which saw record breaking attendance, we awarded a total of \$100,000 to five teams through the first [America COMPETES prize challenge](#) in Census Bureau history.

In addition to sprints and the resulting products, in 2019 we also focused on deepening cross-sector collaboration through two in-person user engagement workshops and an inaugural Opportunity Project Summit; extending the reach of human centered design principles with a [Human Centered Design training](#) for Census Bureau managers; increasing accessibility of federal open data through a new [Data Curation Hub](#); and working toward greater program and product sustainability through The Opportunity Project Prize Challenge.

2020 brings a series of new programmatic initiatives. With an emphasis on civic tech product sustainability, the **TOP Impact Network** and **Alumni Community** focus on engaging past participants and providing guidance and support on continued product development, deployment, and impact.

This year, **new TOP sprints** will focus on the **natural and built environment**, including themes like disaster response, sustainable energy and communities, the blue economy, and air quality. We hope that many of you will participate in TOP this year and continue to contribute to the development of digital products that address pressing national challenges through a culture of collaboration, innovation, and community engagement. Thank you for your ongoing support and for being part of this community.

Sincerely,  
The Opportunity Project (TOP) Team at the U.S. Census Bureau

# Our Mission & Values



HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN TRAINING \*SUITLAND, MD

**Our Mission:** To catalyze the creation of digital products that use federal open data to solve pressing challenges for communities nationwide.

**Our Values:**

- Facilitate cross-sector collaboration
- Unleash data-driven innovation
- Advance federal priorities
- Increase reuse and dissemination of federal open data
- Employ human-centered design principles
- Amplify community voices

# Introduction / How TOP Works

TOP works through collaborative technology development sprints. Our process has evolved since the first sprint in 2016.

Today it looks like this:

## 1. Identify Challenges

Federal agencies identify high-priority challenges facing the public.

## 2. Team Up

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

## 3. Build

Tech teams build digital products during a 12 week virtual tech development sprint that includes user research, data exploration, and product development. Past products include mapping tools, apps, websites, games, AI algorithms, network visualizations, and more.

## 4. Launch

At the end of the sprint, products are launched and showcased at an in-person Demo Day press event in Washington D.C.

## 5. Reach End Users

After the sprint, participants help to get the products to end users and move the needle on national challenges. Teams have the option to apply for a financial prize to continue their work.



"TOP is for everybody. We have people from all walks of life involved in this process... It gives us a tool to adapt to this rapidly changing environment"

— 2019 Sprint Participant



"TOP is building something that is new and really powerful. With government as a convener, it can get people together around a problem who wouldn't otherwise be working together"

— 2019 Sprint Participant

# Introduction / Who's Involved

TOP sprints engage cross-sector collaborators



## Federal Agencies

Agencies throughout the federal government define major challenges facing the public. During the 12-week sprint, policy experts and data stewards from each agency provide feedback to the participating teams and assistance working with federal open data.



## Tech Teams

Companies, universities, non-profits, and students build digital products in the sprints.



## User Advocates

A role piloted by TOP in 2017, community leaders, advocates, and people with direct lived experience in the target challenges guide tech teams in designing solutions that are realistic and useful for the target end users.



## Product Advisors

A new role developed in 2018, technology product experts consult tech teams on how to develop viable products that can be maintained and implemented.

# 2019 Sprints / Themes



USER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS \*WASHINGTON, D.C. AND CHICAGO

In 2019, The Opportunity Project sprints focused on 2 critical themes and [8 problem statements](#), with 5 federal agency collaborators:

## 1. Investing in the American Workforce

Catalyzing investment in Opportunity Zones  
*HUD & Council of Economic Advisors*

Modernizing talent discovery for high growth entrepreneurship  
*Economic Development Administration*

Resources to unleash American entrepreneurship  
*Office of Science & Technology Policy*

Helping the American workforce leverage multiple pathways for career growth  
*Department of Education*

## 2. Innovating the 2020 Census

Bridging the digital divide  
Increasing digital literacy  
Promoting 2020 Census jobs  
Reaching hard-to-count communities

The 3 sprints in 2019 included

**25+ tech teams**

**200+ participants**

**15+ federal agencies**

**30+ nonprofits and state & local governments**

**20+ digital tools helping TOP cross the 100 product mark**

"TOP's emphasis on human centered design and the opportunity to speak to all of these different advocates and stakeholders was key in creating a product that would actually help the end user"

— 2019 sprint participant

# 2019 Sprints / Collaborators



In 2019, the more than 200 sprint participants represented more federal agencies, companies, universities, non-profits, investment firms, state and local governments, and others than ever before.

## Government



## Tech Teams



# 2019 Sprints / Collaborators



## User Advocates



**DATA &  
SOCIETY**



Tulane University

**HTTP/** Hispanic Technology & Telecommunications Partnership

**XLerateHealth**



THE OPPORTUNITY  
EXCHANGE



STATE VOICES

**UNIDOSUS**  
STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

**GREATER MSP®**

Minneapolis Saint Paul Regional Economic Development Partnership

**CITYGATE NETWORK**  
MISSION MEMBER  
Welcome to gospel-powered life transformation



PARTNERSHIP  
FOR AMERICA'S  
CHILDREN



**SORTIS**  
HOLDINGS

HARVARD  
BUSINESS SCHOOL

STARTUP  
CHAMPIONS  
NETWORK

United  
Way

United Way  
of the National Capital Area



univision

EQUITYMULTIPLE

ORGANIZED WORKERS  
 OWS  
FOR LABOR SOLIDARITY

HousingNOLA



LOCAL GROWN  
SALADS

NEW  
AMERICA

NLC NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
OF CITIES  
CITIES STRONG TOGETHER

NASWA  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES

bridgepeople.us

cdfa  
Council of  
Development  
Finance  
Agencies

**THE  
GOVERNANCE  
PROJECT**

ECD Capital Partners  
DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD

UCSF



SAN DIEGO  
WORKFORCE  
PARTNERSHIP®

beeckcenter  
SOCIAL IMPACT + INNOVATION

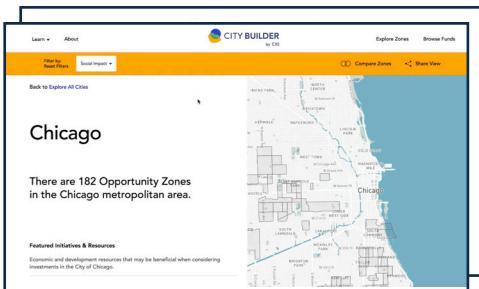
EIG  
GLOBAL ENERGY PARTNERS

# 2019 Sprints / Products



More than 20 data-driven digital products were created in 2019 sprints.

1.

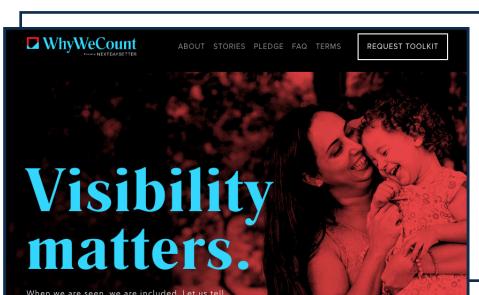


## [City Builder](#) by Citi Ventures

Brings transparency to the Opportunity Zone ecosystem for investors, fund manager, wealth managers, and cities

**Data used:** Census Bureau; Department of Agriculture; Department of Education; Securities and Exchange Commission

2.

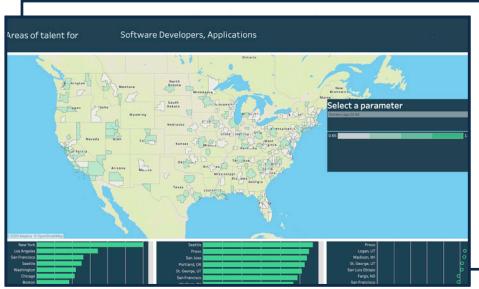


## [#WhyWeCount](#) by NextDayBetter

Defines demographic profiles and psychographic barriers to design culturally relevant stories that community organizations can use to engage seniors and young adults from the Puerto Rican and Filipino diasporas and raise awareness of how the Census impacts their lives

**Data used:** Census Bureau Response Rates; Low Broadband Access; Barriers, Attitudes and Motivators Study

3.



## [Talent Finder Tool](#) by Emsi

Solves talent discovery issues for entrepreneurs and small businesses seeking to hire high-tech workers

**Data used:** Bureau of Labor Statistics; StatsAmerica; American Community Survey; Internal Revenue Service

# 2019 Sprints / Products

4. California Latino Power Map  
by Measure of America  
Showcases Latino leadership across California and helps anyone working to improve the quality of life for Latino and Hispanic residents of California to understand both the opportunities and the challenges of Latino communities.  
**Data used:** Public Use Microdata Sample of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey
5. Census Intelligence Center  
by Civis Analytics  
Empowers local leaders and Census coordinators to run data-driven outreach campaigns and avoid an undercount.  
**Data used:** American Community Survey; Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators studies; Civis Analytics' survey and message testing technology
6. Civic Software Foundation  
Uses the CIVIC Sandbox tool to visualize geographic federal open broadband data, which allows public officials and policymakers to understand where there are gaps in broadband and Internet access. **Data used:** Census ACS S2801; FCC Form 477 data
7. Community Connect Labs  
Crowdsourced questions related to the 2020 Census and provided answers using official Census language and community insights to supply grassroots organizations leading 2020 Census outreach with the information they need to accurately count their communities. **Data used:** 2020 Census Q&A
8. Community Counts by Excella  
Helps Area Census Office Staff visualize and verify potential locations of individuals experiencing homelessness for enumeration. **Data used:** Department of Housing and Urban Development; Community partners
9. Community Led Opportunity Zones  
by Public Democracy  
Ensures that community priorities inform Opportunity Zones strategies employed by policy decision-makers, economic development officials, and investors in Birmingham, Alabama. **Data used:** American Community Survey; Proprietary enterprise level marketing systems data; survey data
10. Inclusive Development Dashboard  
by Burning Glass Technologies  
Assists regional workforce and economic development conveners develop strategies and prioritize initiatives to achieve inclusive development in their regions and to build an inclusive development network that includes leaders from the civic sector, government, and industry. **Data used:** Department of Labor; US Census Bureau; US Cluster Mapping Project; proprietary Burning Glass data on labor market demand.
11. Inclusive Growth Score by Mastercard  
Provides community leaders with local, data-driven insights that measure the degree to which place, economy and community in a given Opportunity Zone benefit from equitable growth. **Data used:** Open-source public data; Mastercard's anonymized and aggregated transaction data
12. Allogy  
Connects active duty military individuals to career opportunities once they enter the civilian workforce, specifically for people with medically focused military occupational specialty (MOS) codes and expertise.  
**Data used:** BLS Occupational Employment Statistics, ONET data
13. Job Opportunity Tool by Redfin  
Helps Redfin's millions of users better understand the opportunities and tradeoffs in terms of housing, employment and other factors when looking to relocate for work or find workers for startups. **Data used:** Bureau of Labor Statistics
14. Kanarys  
Creates more inclusive, nontoxic workplaces for individuals and their employers. **Data used:** Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Census Bureau
15. Motivf  
Maps specific cultural messaging by census tracts, to show how specific messaging can be more effective than general messaging to diverse communities in 2020 Census outreach efforts. **Data used:** Census tract data, Hofstede Insights data
16. Tract by Tract  
by Columbia University  
Supports policymakers in resource allocation by predicting decennial Census response rates by day for each census tract, and comparing them to the true rates. **Data used:** Census Bureau response data
17. Rural Startup Scout  
by Center on Rural Innovation  
Reveals Opportunity Zones with emerging tech sectors so investors can discover promising rural startups ready to scale that otherwise would have been overlooked. **Data used:** American Community Survey; HIFLD; FCC Form 477; data about education attainment and patent activity
18. Solve by Solve.is  
Helps small businesses, nonprofit resource centers, and institutions to better connect skills, certifications, industries and outcomes of training programs towards the right jobs in the right industry. **Data used:** North American Industry Classification (NACIS) codes; National Certifications Table; Department of Labor O\*NET Database
19. Practical Business Skills by Visa  
Chatbot that empowers growth-minded entrepreneurs with the financial and business knowledge to better manage their money and make confident, informed business decisions. **Data used:** Small Business Administration 'Find Local Assistance' resource
20. Amava  
Utilizes the Amava platform for connecting retirees to job opportunities to connect Amava users to Census jobs nationally, using the National Spotlight feature, and locally, using the Go Local functionality. **Data used:** Census enumerator recruitment information

# Demo Day Highlights

## / Speakers

On December 10, over **250 collaborators** from the tech industry, academia, government, and communities gathered at the U.S. Census Bureau for an annual showcase of digital tools built through TOP.

The day's keynote speakers included:

Government:

			
<b>Ron Jarmin</b> Deputy Director & Chief Operating Officer of the Census Bureau	<b>Scott Turner</b> Executive Director of the White House Opportunity & Revitalization Council	<b>Chris Liddell</b> Assistant to the President & Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Coordination	<b>Suzette Kent</b> Federal Chief Information Officer

15 tech teams and community advocates gave lightning talks on products created through TOP, including:

			
<b>Matt Dunne</b> Founder & Executive Director, Center on Rural Innovation	<b>Arturo Franco</b> Vice President, MasterCard Center for Inclusive Growth	<b>Mandy Price</b> CEO and Co-founder, Kanarys	<b>Denice Ross</b> Fellow-in-Residence, Beeck Center for Social Impact & Innovation, Georgetown University

# Demo Day Highlights

## / Prize Challenge Winners



PICTURED: PRIZE WINNER BURNING GLASS TECHNOLOGIES WITH RON JARMIN & SUZETTE KENT

Civic tech product sustainability is a key focus of TOP. To that end, in 2019, we developed and launched **the first America COMPETES prize challenge in U.S. Census Bureau history**. This opportunity allowed teams who have participated in The Opportunity Project to compete for funding to expand their impact, deploy tools to end users, and deliver on critical problems facing the public.

At Demo Day, Census Bureau Deputy Director and COO, Ron Jarmin, and Federal Chief Information Officer Suzette Kent awarded five prizes totaling \$100,000 for products created through TOP.

Honorable mentions were given to Ovela, Emsi, Public Democracy and Girls Computing League.

"One of the most challenging components of civic technology is product sustainability and deploying tools so that they can deliver real impact to communities and end users"

— Drew Zachary  
Census Open Innovation  
Labs Co-Director &  
Director of TOP

One winner was selected in each of the following categories:

**2020 Census: Reaching Hard-to-Count Communities**  
[DATA2GO.NYC](#)  
by Measure of America

**Creating Resilient People and Places**  
[PRADOS](#) (Puerto Rico Address Database Operations Support)  
by iCASA PR

**Revolutionizing the Workforce**  
[Inclusive Development Dashboards](#)  
by Burning Glass Technologies

**Building Thriving Communities**  
[City Builder](#)  
by Citi Ventures

**Creating the Future of Health**  
[CURA Patient](#)  
by Composite Apps

# The Opportunity Project Summit

TOP convenes cross-sector collaborators to create new ways of unleashing data to improve the world we live in. To create another opportunity for brainstorming on that subject, on December 11, The Opportunity Project facilitated the first ever **Opportunity Project Summit**, a half-day conference that brought together collaborators from across sectors. Opening speakers included **Cori Zarek, Director of Data & Digital, Georgetown University Beeck Center for Social Impact & Innovation**, and **Afua Bruce, Director of Engineering, New America**, who discussed TOP's growth since its inception, and the continued relevance of TOP and cross sector collaboration for challenges the world faces today.



## Keynote

The event concluded with a presentation from **Megan Smith, CEO of Shift7 and former U.S. Chief Technology Officer**, who offered inspiring examples of innovation targeting the world's greatest challenges and encouraged the audience to seek opportunities to use "collective genius" and applied technology to change outcomes for communities.



## World Building Workshops

Attendees heard from **Christopher Tucker, author of A Planet of 3 Billion**, on the grim reality of population growth and opportunity facing all of us, which commenced the **World Building Workshop**, where participants considered key questions about how our values and communities evolve with the future of technology and data.

## Product Sustainability Workshops

Tech teams and product advisors attended a speed mentoring session aimed at developing concrete next steps and strategies following product launch, and crafting the narrative around the work they have done with open data and through TOP.

# New in 2019

June 19, 2019

## Leading Agile Innovation in Government

### **Case Study Feature:**

The IBM Center for the Business of Government released a report entitled [Agile Problem Solving in Government: A Case Study of the Opportunity Project](#). The report outlines the key elements and critical success factors of The Opportunity Project, draws insights from several TOP case studies and provides lessons for governments at all levels on how agile problem solving can enable public-private collaboration to address some of their most significant mission-focused issues.

June 27, 2019

## Ensuring Program Longevity

### **Authorizing Legislation:**

Representative Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) sponsored H.R. 3528, [The Opportunity Project Act of 2019](#), to direct the Secretary of Commerce to carry out a program to facilitate the development of digital products for the public, and for other purposes. Representative Tom Reed (R-NY) signed on as a cosponsor. The authorizing legislation is a key step towards institutionalizing TOP in government.

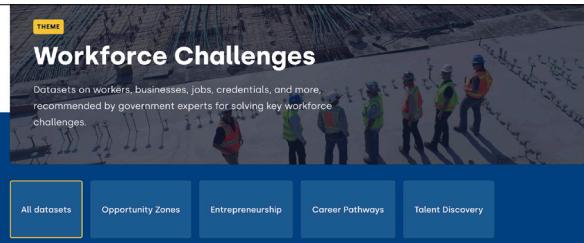


October, 2019

## Extending the Use of Human-Centered Design Principles

### **Training:**

TOP facilitated a three-day [Human Centered Design training](#) for Census Bureau managers. Human-centered design is a proven, research-backed approach to problem solving and idea generation that organizations from all industries – including across the federal government – are using to deliver improved services, experiences and products for customers, users, and respondents.



December 12, 2019

## Increasing Accessibility & Usability of Federal Open Data

### **Data Curation Hub:**

The Opportunity Project launched the [Data Curation Hub](#), a searchable platform that allows users to discover issue-specific data recommended by government experts and test-driven by teams working to solve the nation's biggest challenges. The pilot module on workforce challenges includes useful information and an expert point of contact who can answer questions on 50 workforce data sets.

# Happening in 2020

## TOP Impact Network

For the first time this year, The Opportunity Project has developed multi-month programming to support product sustainability after tech development sprints. This program includes monthly newsletters, webinars and resources for past tech teams focused on themes including product deployment, crafting successful partnerships, storytelling and marketing, and impact measurement.

## TOP Alumni Community

TOP's new alumni community, allows all past tech teams, user advocates, product advisors, and data experts to continue engaging with one another and stay up to date with TOP. The community includes an alumni Slack channel and quarterly newsletters with updates from TOP, resources, spotlights, and more.

## 2020 Earth Sprints: Focusing on Natural & Built Environments

### 2020 Sprints:

TOP will facilitate 3 sprints in 2020 focusing on **the natural and built environment**, including themes of disaster response, sustainable energy and communities, the blue economy, and others.

### 2020 Sprint Timelines:

**Sprint #1**  
June - September  
**Sprint #2**  
July-October

**University Sprint**  
September - November  
For the first time this year, TOP will run a fall sprint for university tech teams, composed of professors, students, and researchers

We are currently seeking collaborators in the following roles in 2020 sprints:

#### User advocates

Community leaders, researchers, advocates, and people with expertise or direct lived experience in challenges of the natural and built environment.

#### Product advisors

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

#### Tech teams

Technologists from private industry and universities build digital products to address natural and built environment challenges.

If you are interested in participating in this year's sprints or in learning more, please reach out to us at [census.opportunityproject@census.gov](mailto:census.opportunityproject@census.gov).