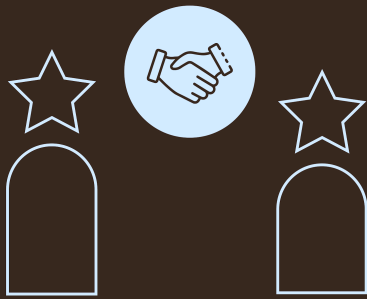




The Opportunity Project Product Advisor Overview



Product Advisor

ROLE OVERVIEW

Product advisors are technology product experts (i.e. designers, consultants, product managers) from outside of government who consult tech teams on how to develop viable solutions (digital or analog) that can be maintained and implemented after the sprint.

Learn more about The Opportunity Project sprint process and participant roles at: opportunity.census.gov/sprint-process

How TOP Works

01 – Identify Challenges

Federal agencies identify high-priority challenges facing the public.

02 – 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.

03 – Build

During virtual product development sprints, agencies and stakeholders collaborate with tech teams and other sprint participants to create new digital products such as mapping tools, apps, websites, games, AI algorithms, network visualizations, and more. Sprints typically include user research, data exploration, and product development.

04 – Launch

Products are launched at a public-facing showcase 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

Product Advisor

Product advisors are Subject Matter Experts or technology product experts from outside of government who are available to consult product teams on how to develop viable products that can be maintained and implemented after the sprint and reaching the hand of end users and the communities they are intended to serve..

Product advisors are part of the TOP Product Advisor Network, a curated network of leading experts who advise TOP product teams.

FAQs

What is a product advisor?

A product advisor guides tech/product teams on how to develop tools that have the greatest chance of success after the sprint process ends. Individuals in this role come with experience on the business side of technology, such as product management, product strategy, business development, and venture capital. Throughout the sprint, the product advisor helps tech teams to translate user research into actionable development requirements, as well as to clarify their longer term strategy.

Why is being a product advisor important?

Product teams report being so focused on completing an MVP within the 12-week sprint, that they don't think enough about how the product will grow or even be maintained over time. Product advisors come with the strategic mindset and outside perspective to think critically about the big picture of the project. Product advisors also help the developers and engineers on tech teams to think about a clear use case/user scenario, and to solicit and incorporate the perspectives of user advocates and other end users. Product advisors should have experience working with both engineers and users and can help them see each other's perspectives and limitations. Finally, product advisors may be in a position to partner with the tech teams or help them identify sustainability partners after the sprint to pilot, deploy, or expand their products.

Where do product advisors fit into the process?

Product advisors plug in at several stages in the sprint process. Early on at the user research stage, they can help tech teams process input from user advocates and end users into actionable product insights. During the design and build-out of the tools, product advisors can help teams clarify their end user, use case, and long term product strategy, as well as guide technical decisions such as hosting platform and data integration, as well as user-facing choices such as design, language, and discoverability.

What is the time commitment to be a product advisor?

Each product advisor will be paired with 2-3 tech teams to advise throughout the sprint. The time commitment depends on availability, but product advisors should plan to provide feedback to tech teams during the 5 milestone sessions which include a user research call, concept pitch, beta demo, MVP demo, and the product sustainability milestone. Product advisors should also actively participate in the Slack channel and plan for 2-3 individual phone calls with each team they are working with during the sprint.

What kind of feedback do user advocates provide to tech teams?

Anything you want to share will be helpful, but in particular, you may want to focus on your experiences or your community's experiences with the problem statement. As a user advocate, you have a valuable perspective on a community or stakeholder's experiences that the tech teams want to learn from. When reacting to a prototype, you can share whether you find it useful and why or why not, what works and doesn't work, what you like and why, what you'd change, etc. When interviewing you or asking for feedback, tech teams will prompt you with specific questions; however, any way you can represent an end user's needs and experiences will be helpful.

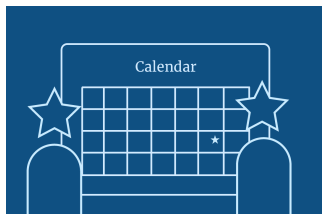
How often should I interact with the tech teams?

We encourage user advocates to check in with the tech teams regularly through email or any other preferred channel of communication. Since user advocates have a pivotal role in shaping the usefulness of the product, more communication can only result in a better product.

What is the time commitment to be a user advocate?

Time commitment is up to you and can range during different sprint phases from one to three hours per week. In general, more communication and involvement the better as user advocates have a valuable and pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of the product.

Other Roles



Sprint Leaders

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.



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 tech teams in designing solutions that are realistic and useful for the target end users.



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 solutions they build, and typically own and maintain the products and associated IP after the sprints.