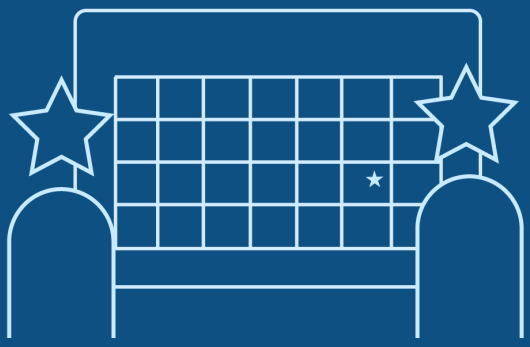
The Opportunity Project
Sprint Leader Role Overview



Sprint Leader

ROLE OVERVIEW

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.

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

Sprint Leader

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

A sprint leader's role includes:

- 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.

FAQs

What makes a good TOP sprint topic?

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

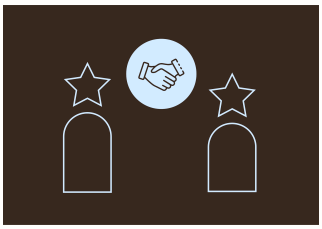
Agencies and organizations interested in running a TOP Sprint have 3 options for involvement:

- 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

Other Roles

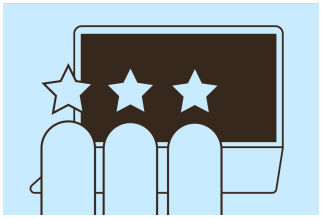
User Advocates

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.



Product Advisors

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.



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.