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## **TOPx: Facilitated by [Agency]**

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[Insert theme-relevant photo]

**The Opportunity Project (TOP)** 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.

TOPx is a program through which federal agencies employ the model developed by the TOP team at the US Census Bureau to **facilitate virtual technology development sprints** that address challenges at the heart of their missions. This year, [agency] is facilitating a TOPx sprint focused on challenges related to [sprint topics].

# **How TOPx Works**

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|  |  | 1 | **Identify challenges**  [Agency name] identifies high-priority challenges facing the public. |
| **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. | 2 |  |  |
|  |  | 3 | **Build**  Tech teams build 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. |
| **Launch**  Products are launched and showcased at an in-person Demo Day event. | 4 |  |  |
|  |  | 5 | **Reach end users**  After the sprint, participants work to ensure products reach end users and move the needle on national challenges. |

## **TOPx Roles**

**User Advocates:** The community leaders, local or national advocates, and people with direct lived experience in the target challenges. User advocates serve a critical role helping tech teams, federal agencies, and other partners understand the everyday people and communities The Opportunity Project seeks to empower. Past user advocates have represented state and local government, non-profits, service providers, or individual experts. Their role is to communicate the needs, concerns, and realities of the communities they belong to or work with closely, ensuring that the perspective of end users drives how tech teams solve problems, designing solutions that are realistic and useful for the target end users. A user advocate’s role includes:

* Provide insights to tech teams based on their expertise and community connections to shape the products that are built through the sprint
* Answer questions on user needs to ensure products solve real problems
* Provide feedback to tech teams on their products throughout the sprint
* Join “milestone” calls (User Research, Alpha Demo, Final Demo)

## **Tech teams:** 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.

**Government:** [Insert agency name] defines major challenges facing the public within our mission areas. The agency facilitates a 12-week sprint, during which policy experts and data stewards from the agency provide feedback to the participating teams and assistance working with federal open data.

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## **FAQs**

**What is a User Advocate?**

A User Advocate is a sprint participant who is a member of, or works closely with, the target audience of the tools being developed during the sprint (i.e. an “end user” of the products being built by the tech team). They can be service providers, community leaders, organizers, or people with direct lived experience of the problem being addressed.

**Why is being a User Advocate important?**

User advocates represent invaluable first-hand knowledge about the problem statements focused on during sprints. This knowledge is invaluable because without understanding their end user’s real problems, tech teams cannot build meaningful solutions. Having collaborators with direct knowledge of their community’s pain points, perspectives, and experiences, allows tech teams to build products that solve real needs, rather than products that are only useful in concept.

**Where do I fit into the process?**

User Advocates have a role at every stage of the sprint process. At the beginning of the process, you can provide much-needed context for the problem statement to help tech teams better understand the central issues and narrow down their focus. During the sprints, tech teams may ask you for more information to better understand your community by conducting interviews, focus groups, workshops, or online surveys. Tech teams may also ask you to connect them to other members of the community you represent to connect with a broader user research base. Throughout the sprint, you will have the opportunity to provide direct feedback on products in development. Once the tech teams have an initial prototype, User Advocates play a critical role in collecting reactions and feedback from their communities either on their own or by connecting tech teams with members of their community to conduct user testing. User testing allows tech teams to know first-hand how useful their product is, what works and doesn’t work, and most importantly, what to change for the next iteration.

**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.