The Opportunity Project Problem Statement

Helping local leaders navigate federal funding
White House Office of Management and Budget
U.S. Department of the Treasury

Challenge:

Create digital tools for Federal financial assistance that help local leaders navigate and manage Federal grants.

OMB/Treasury Policy Priority:

Maximize the return on investment of Federal grant dollars, build on the results of the recent pilot required under Section 5 of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act) by providing digital tools and data in an accessible format to reduce administrative burden, and build public trust by appropriately publishing data that links spending to performance.

What is the problem?

State, local, and tribal governments, nonprofits, and universities complain that, despite the plethora of public data available, it can be difficult to navigate information about federal programs, funding opportunities, and current awards to find the best available resources to address their most pressing challenges. This is especially true for lower capacity entities who may not have as much experience partnering with the Federal government. Further, to manage and report on these awards, these organizations must interface with multiple Federal reporting requirements and systems, creating expensive administrative burden. The results of the DATA Act section 5 pilot indicate that burden is reduced when recipients are required to interact with fewer systems to partner with the Federal government, and when identical data can be entered once and reused as necessary.

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Why is this problem important?

The Federal government spends more than $700 billion annually on Federal financial assistance, equivalent to 20% of the Federal budget and 5% of the United States gross domestic product. There are more than 40,000 organizations across the country that rely on Federal financial assistance, which often accounts for 20-30% of a state or local government's revenue. Federal grants support everything from local firefighters, police officers, elementary schools, buses, bridges, housing, school lunches, community health centers, research to cure cancer or invent technology, and even the pipes we use to drink water or flush toilets. Unfortunately, while there are multiple Federal data sets and websites about these resources available to the public, not all local leaders are able to find and access the resources that could most benefit their communities. Further, these resources are managed in a siloed way, authorized ad hoc over time by Congress, and administered by separate departments within agencies, with separate goals and requirements. For a single local government managing multiple awards, the required reporting processes add up. This fragmentation results in missed opportunities for alignment among complimentary Federal programs. Our taxpayer dollars could go much further faster if those who use them could access and manage them more seamlessly.

Our Vision

Leaders across America maximize return on Federal investments by navigating quickly to the resources best positioned to help them solve their toughest challenges, and access tools to efficiently manage this partnership.

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Potential Data Sets:

Government-wide sites:

- USAspending.gov (beta website until fall 2017: beta.USAspending.gov)
- SAM.gov, including CFDA.gov
- Federal Audit Clearinghouse
- Grants.gov
- Performance.gov
- Benefits.gov
- USA.gov
- FSRS.gov

In addition to Government-wide sites, most agencies have agency-specific sites that include additional information (and in some cases more helpful information) regarding their assistance awards, below are a few examples:

- Tracking Accountability in Government Grants System (TAGGS)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Grants and Loans
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Finance

Performance-related agency sites (some agencies post performance and outcomes related to assistance awards online, while others have this information internally—generally this type of information is difficult to find):

- Fish and Wildlife (TRACS)
- USDA NIFA Data Gateway

The Opportunity Project

OMB/Treasury Cohort Participants
Helping local leaders navigate federal funding

Agencies:

- White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- U.S. Department of the Treasury

Federal Data Stewards:

- Census Bureau
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Tech Teams:

- eCivis
- True Impact
- others TBD

User Advocates:

- Los Angeles Promise Zone
- Urban Institute
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- others TBD

The Opportunity Project Sprint Timeline

Dates	Milestones	Activities
September 1	Sprint begins	User Advocates, tech teams, and agency POCs connect • Slack channel launches • TOP team connects with UAs about their role and engaging with tech teams • Tech teams, UAs, and agency POCs work together to hone problem statement through end user engagement
Sept 4 – 8	Conduct user research User research session (9/8)	Teams conduct end user research Teams join web hangout to share strategies for user engagement that will inform design of their digital solution
Sept 11 – 15	Data Exploration Data Dive/Q&A (9/14)	Data dive Q&A (call/web hangout) with data stewards to answer questions on federal and/or local data that teams are planning to use
Sept 18 – 22	Build week	Teams begin prototyping/designing products
Sep 25 – 29	Alpha demos (9/28)	Participants come together for a virtual demo of the tools in progress. Teams share concepts, wireframes, and works in progress, and there is typically wide variation in product maturity. Sprint participants provide feedback on the tools in development.
Oct 2 – 6	Build week	Teams continue building products
Oct 9 – 13	Beta demos (10/12)	Teams come together to showcase and share feedback on more mature versions of their products. Typically, tools have reached at least wireframes and have some functioning features.
Oct 16 – 20	Teams conduct user testing	Teams continue building and incorporating user and cohort feedback on products
Oct 23 – 27	Final Products (Date TBD)	Teams share MVP with TOP team prior to collective rollout
November	Collective Launch (Date TBD)	Cohort showcases new tools through a collective rollout event