Open Government Blog Post – U.S. Census Bureau

Guest blog submitted by: Alexandra Barker and Drew Zachery, Office of the Deputy Director, Census Open Innovation Lab

Census Open Innovation Labs (COIL)

The Census Open Innovation Labs is an office at the U.S. Census Bureau with a big job: catalyzing innovation capacity-building throughout the government and through non-government creative partnerships. By engaging a diverse ecosystem of cross-sector stakeholders from local and federal government, industry, non-profits, academia, and more, COIL sources knowledge and solutions to key challenges with the Census Bureau and the public at large using human-centered design, open data, and technology.

To fulfill its open-government mission, COIL developed a unique portfolio of initiatives that are setting a standard for open innovation across government, such as The Opportunity Project (TOP) and StatVentures:

[The Opportunity Project (TOP)](link) 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. TOP is a proven innovation method that helps federal agencies address challenges at the heart of their mission in building these solutions with the American people. In 2022, TOP sprints focused on measuring wellbeing across the nation, expanding access to grant funding for low-resourced communities, promoting climate resilience, and connecting transit infrastructure to climate resilience. TOP also introduced its first geographically-targeted sprints – TOP Puerto Rico – focusing on renewable energy, local address challenges, promoting youth resilience, increasing parental engagement, and workforce development in Puerto Rico.

In 2022, COIL launched [StatVentures](link) to scout technology through collaborations with innovators outside the government to ensure the U.S. Census Bureau continues to provide the highest quality data. Through multi-phase competitions, COIL invites participants to propose new concepts that could become the next methods and data sources for the U.S. Census Bureau. This competition brings innovation into the data acquisition process and ensures that the Census Bureau has access to the most cutting-edge technology. The first StatVentures challenge seeks ideas to radically improve the way the Census Bureau provides supply chain data. We are currently in [Phase 2](link) of this challenge, and getting ready to launch a geospatial challenge in late 2023.

To learn more and collaborate with COIL, visit our [website](link) or contact us at census.openinnovationlabs@census.gov.