

Shape, Structure, Share

A roadmap to digital public infrastructure in U.S. democracy



Shape. Policy-adjacent communities — a group of public spirited individuals related through relevant skills, information and/or lived experience who act together with sophisticated knowledge of how the government works — help **shape** the informational content and information gathering methods of policy proposals. They also offer advisory input during the lawmaking workflow.

The U.S. legislature is an indirect, representative organization, and the centerpiece of a democratic republic. By supplementing its decision making process with new tech and [data tools](#), policy-adjacent communities can bolster the oversight, evaluation, and monitoring functions of Congress.

Structure. Members of Congress act in their institutional capacity (as representatives and as committee members) to **structure** community feedback so that it integrates into Congress’ specific information channels and [analog or digital](#) workflow mechanisms.

[Congress is modernizing!](#) Its [data](#) is increasingly machine-readable, its functions [accessible online](#). Plus, the institution is in the process of developing an [enterprise information architecture](#). This internal evolution includes standards and space to build [more tools for civic participation](#). This progress also boosts the core [oversight](#) roles of Congress and the information properties of the [Legislative Branch of Government](#).

Share. Congress **shares** information publicly through multiple publishing channels like [Congress.gov](#), [Congressional Research Service](#), [Congressional Budget Office](#), [Government Accountability Office](#) and [Government Publishing Office](#). Lawmaking data is [available to repurpose in bulk download](#) as well.

Congress is the heart of [Article One](#) in the U.S. Constitution and the First Branch of three in the United States Government. The House of Representatives is often known as the “People’s House.” Recently, the House of Representatives updated its [communications standards](#) to include digital media. Hundreds of [member and committee websites](#) also exist, not to mention electronic distribution methods through caucuses, staff listservs, member correspondence management systems, newsletters, and hardcopy publications. The House also has a [Document Repository](#) with all witness testimony in one place.

As Congress continues to update its technology and data infrastructure into a public serving enterprise system, **Shape** → **Structure** → **Share** will yield the evidence and information that we need to build an informed, responsive and effective legislature, one that has the tools to govern on behalf of all communities.