LEARNING LAYER

SEARCHLIGHTS *of* SUNGLASSES

The many faces, many uses of open data

Information is power. It keeps government accountable and businesses transparent. New methods are emerging to make information more accessible.

Flashlight: Explore these projects offering greater access to information:

- Reframe It, Inc. is using Knight Foundation funding to test new journalistic approaches to covering policy and legislation with special research polling.
- The Global Editors Network sponsors the Data Journalism Awards to demonstrate the value of data journalism.
- The U.S. Open Data Institute is a new initiative to improve the standards of the free-flow of information by businesses and government.
- The Columbia Daily Tribune offers guidance on how to reach all a city's neighborhoods through data mapping. http://www.naa.org/News-and-Media/Blog/columbia-daily-tribune-neighborhoods.aspx

Which is your favorite project and why? What project offers the most data about business and government? Which project is most likely to produce information on government and business that citizens can understand?

Spotlight: Assume you are a philanthropist with $50,000 to invest on open-data technology prototypes. Explore the following Knight-funded prototypes. If you could only choose one to fund, which would it be? Could you split your $50,000 among the three projects? If so, how much would each receive?

- Code for America will extend and publicly launch Ohana API, a tool for organizing databases of social services for a community.
- SmartResponse.org seeks to improve transparency of disaster recovery funding.
- Procure.io helps government gain greater access to open-data technology, driving down costs of transparency and engagement.

Searchlight: Open data also means more information is available for researchers and journalists to use to confront health issues. Explore these Knight-funded projects:

- [The Homebrew Sensing Project](#) seeks to create a set of low-cost hardware and free software that citizens can use to measure local health data, such as air and water quality.
- The [New Venture Fund](#) is building a curriculum to help mentors to reporters and editors develop editorial strategies and look for trends in health data.
- [The Open Humans Network](#) will match people willing to share their health data with researchers who would benefit from access to more information.
- [Civic Ninjas](#) are developing [Sitegeist Health](#) to present health data in an accessible format.

What skills do you need to create these prototypes? What sorts of professionals need to be included in the development team? Does your school teach the skills to create these tools? Does your school teach the skills to understand and report the findings from these projects?