



BUREAU OF THE  
**Fiscal Service**  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

# Government Publishing Office Conference 2019 Your Guide to America's Finances

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# Pop Quiz!

# Question 1

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How much money did  
the federal  
government collect in  
revenue last year?

# Answer

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In 2018, the federal government **collected \$3.3 trillion in revenue.**

# Question 2

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How much did the  
government spend last year?

# Answer 2

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In 2018, the federal government **spent \$4.1 trillion.**

# Question 3

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What's the difference  
between deficit and debt?

# Answer 3

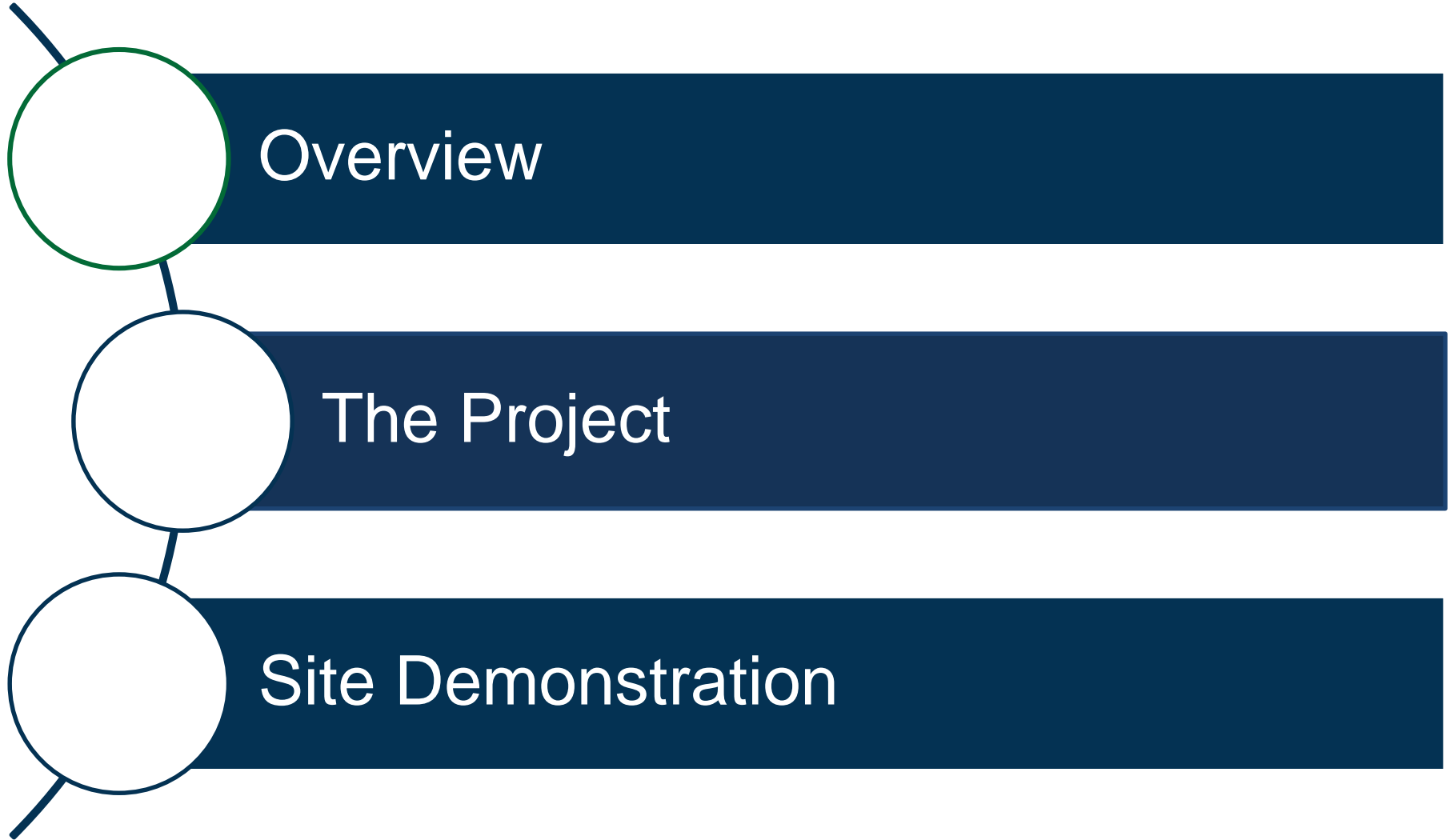
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A **deficit** occurs when the money going out exceeds the money coming in. When the U.S. government has a deficit, most of the deficit spending is covered by the government taking on new debt. The **total debt** that the government owes is essentially the accumulation of deficits over time, minus repayments of debt.



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# Overview

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- Your Guide to America's Finances is intended to increase the general public's awareness of the federal government's finances, by translating the complicated aspects of federal finance into a simple, straightforward, and engaging product.
- Today's presentation will provide the history and philosophy of the project, along with a site demonstration.
- This is an interactive demonstration, so please ask questions.
- There will be time for questions at the end.

# Origins

- *Your Guide* is a re-invention of the *Citizen's Guide to the Financial Report of the U.S. Government*, a static PDF issued every year by the Treasury Department.
- The idea for the project originated with Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, who proposed the idea of evolving the PDF version of the into a visually appealing and engaging website that explores federal finances.
- The result is a shareable, mobile-friendly site created using publicly available data, as well as open source tools and code.

The screenshot shows the 'Your Guide to America's Finances' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'BETA DATALAB' and 'Visualizations to help you understand government finance'. Below the navigation bar is a large header with an eagle illustration and the text 'YOUR GUIDE TO AMERICA'S FINANCES'. The main headline reads 'How much money did the federal government collect and spend in 2018?'. Below the headline is a sub-headline: 'Interested in learning about the deficit or federal debt? Keep reading or jump to the deficit and federal debt section.' To the right of the headline is a bar chart showing federal revenue from 2014 to 2018. The y-axis ranges from \$0 to \$4.0T. The x-axis shows the years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. The revenue values are approximately: 2014: \$3.0T, 2015: \$3.2T, 2016: \$3.2T, 2017: \$3.3T, 2018: \$3.3T. Below the chart is a text box that says 'In 2018, the federal government collected \$3.3 trillion in revenue.' There is a button that says 'Show me what \$3.3 T is equal to'. Below that is a text box that says 'The federal government collects revenue from a variety of sources, including individual income taxes, payroll taxes, corporate income taxes, and excise taxes. It also collects revenue from services like admission to national parks and customs duties.' At the bottom of the screenshot is a button that says 'Learn more about Federal Revenue'.

| Year | Revenue (Trillion Dollars) |
|------|----------------------------|
| 2014 | 3.0                        |
| 2015 | 3.2                        |
| 2016 | 3.2                        |
| 2017 | 3.3                        |
| 2018 | 3.3                        |

# Inspiration

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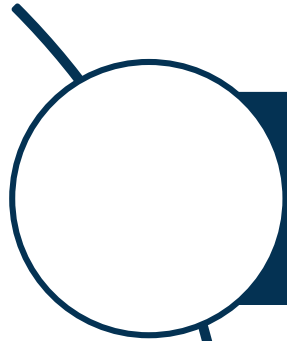
*We might hope to see the finances of the Union as **clear and intelligible as a merchant's books**, so that every member of Congress, and **every person** of any mind in the Union should be able to **comprehend them**, to investigate abuses, and consequently to control them.*



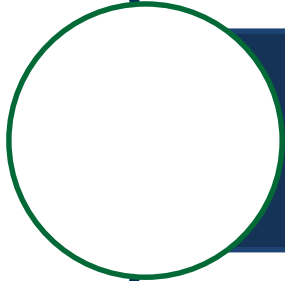
**Thomas Jefferson** to Albert Gallatin, 1802  
(edited)

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Overview



The Project



Site Demonstration

# The Project Team

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- The cross-functional team was comprised of 2 developers, 1 content creator, 1 financial analyst, 1 UI/UX designer, 1 scrum master and 1 product owner from the Bureau of the Fiscal Service, the Federal Reserve Banks of Kansas City and St. Louis, and Booz Allen Hamilton.
- Key Principles of the Project:
  - Human Centered Design
  - Neutral and Objective Approach
  - Open-Source technology
  - Agile/SCRUM methodology

# Human Centered Design Feedback

- The team spoke with 200+ members of the public in Washington, DC, St. Louis, and Kansas City during summer 2018.
- Discussions occurred at all phases of the product development lifecycle, and feedback included:
  - Site name – preferred “Your Guide” to “Public’s Guide”
  - Navigation preferences – *Does this link take you to the information you are expecting to see?*
  - Terminology – Income vs. Revenue, Debt and Deficit
  - Design feedback on wireframes and visualizations

01 Federal Revenue  
02 Federal Spending  
03 Federal Deficit  
04 Federal Debt

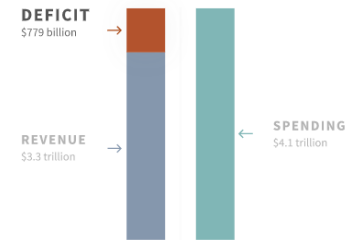
In 2018,  
the federal government  
spent \$779 billion more than it collected,  
**resulting in a deficit.**

[Show me what \\$779 B is equal to](#)

A deficit occurs when money going out exceeds the money coming in. In 2018, the federal government spent more than it collected.

What happens when there is a surplus? +

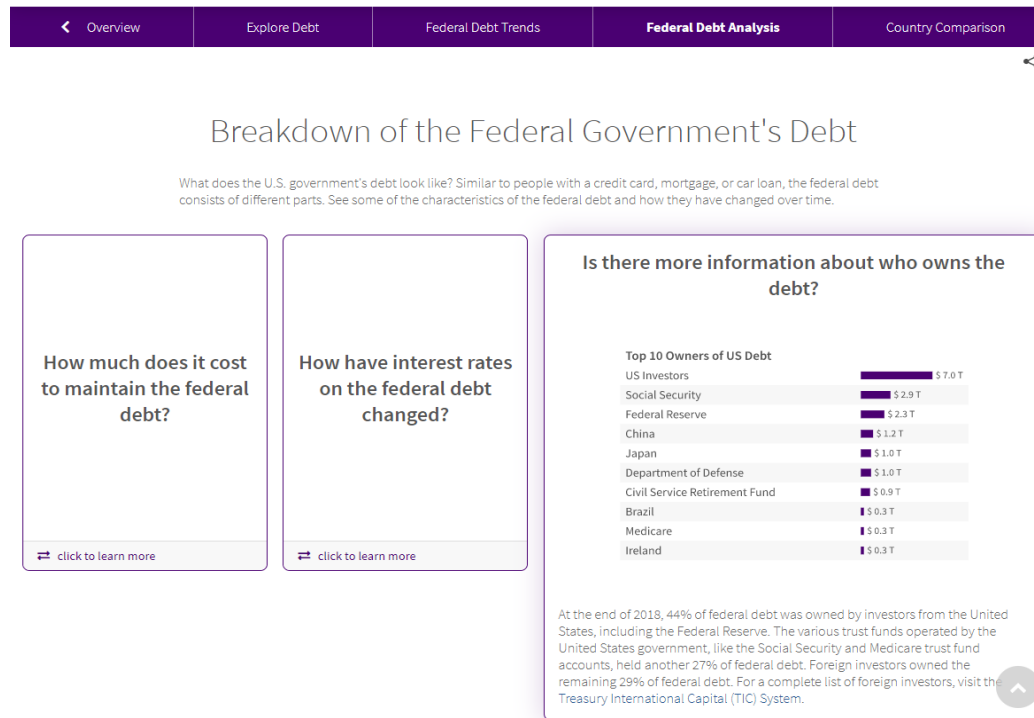
[Learn more about  
Federal Deficit](#)



Data used throughout this site is provided by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and refers to Fiscal Year 2018.

# Human Centered Design Feedback (cont'd.)

- From a technology perspective, participants stated the product:
  - must work well on mobile devices
  - should be accessible through search
  - should lead with visualizations





# Sample Feedback

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- *I would assume it's just for general information for the public...it's for everyone.*
- *I can't imagine that anyone actually understands what a trillion dollars is, it's such a huge number.*
- *I can't say that I actually know where money is spent that we are paying in taxes?*
- *I would like to see personalized examples... like average family contributions.*

# Neutral and Objective Approach

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- Treasury is viewed as a source of objective, unbiased information about federal finance
- *Your Guide* does not include value judgements
- Language is neutral
- Data is provided and the user is allowed to explore it through visualizations or .csv download

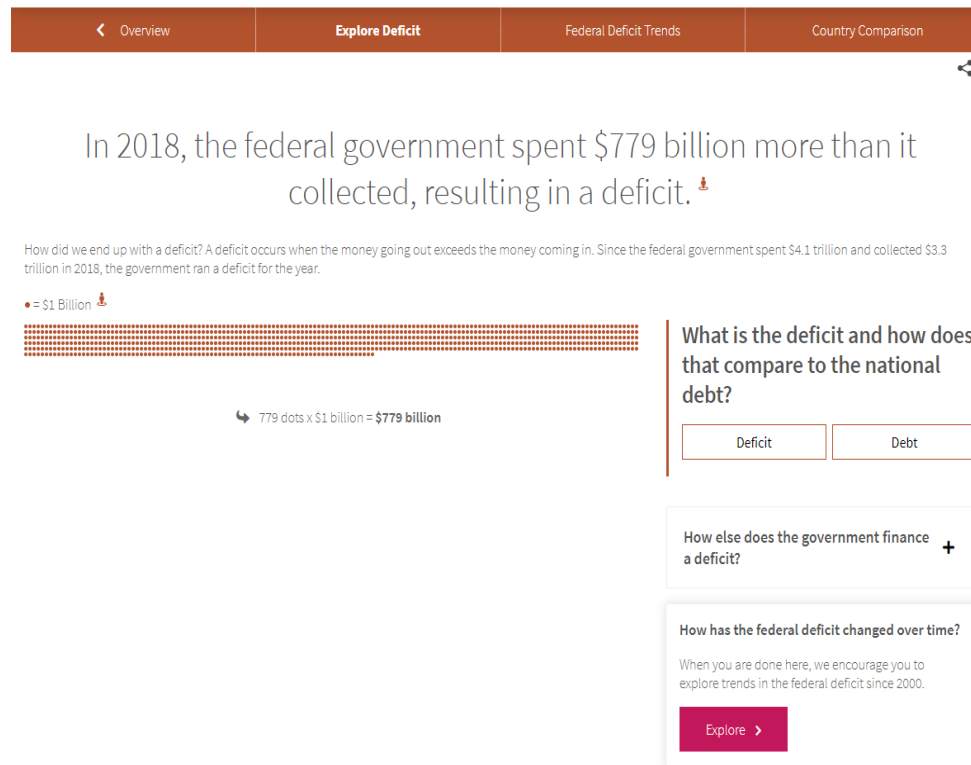
# Data Sources and Methodology

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- Data Sources are cited and linked throughout the website.
  - U.S. Treasury Department reports
    - Monthly Treasury Statement
    - Monthly Statement of the Public Debt
  - U.S. Census Bureau Data
    - Population Clock
  - Bureau of Economic Analysis:
    - GDP Data
    - National Income and Product Account Handbook

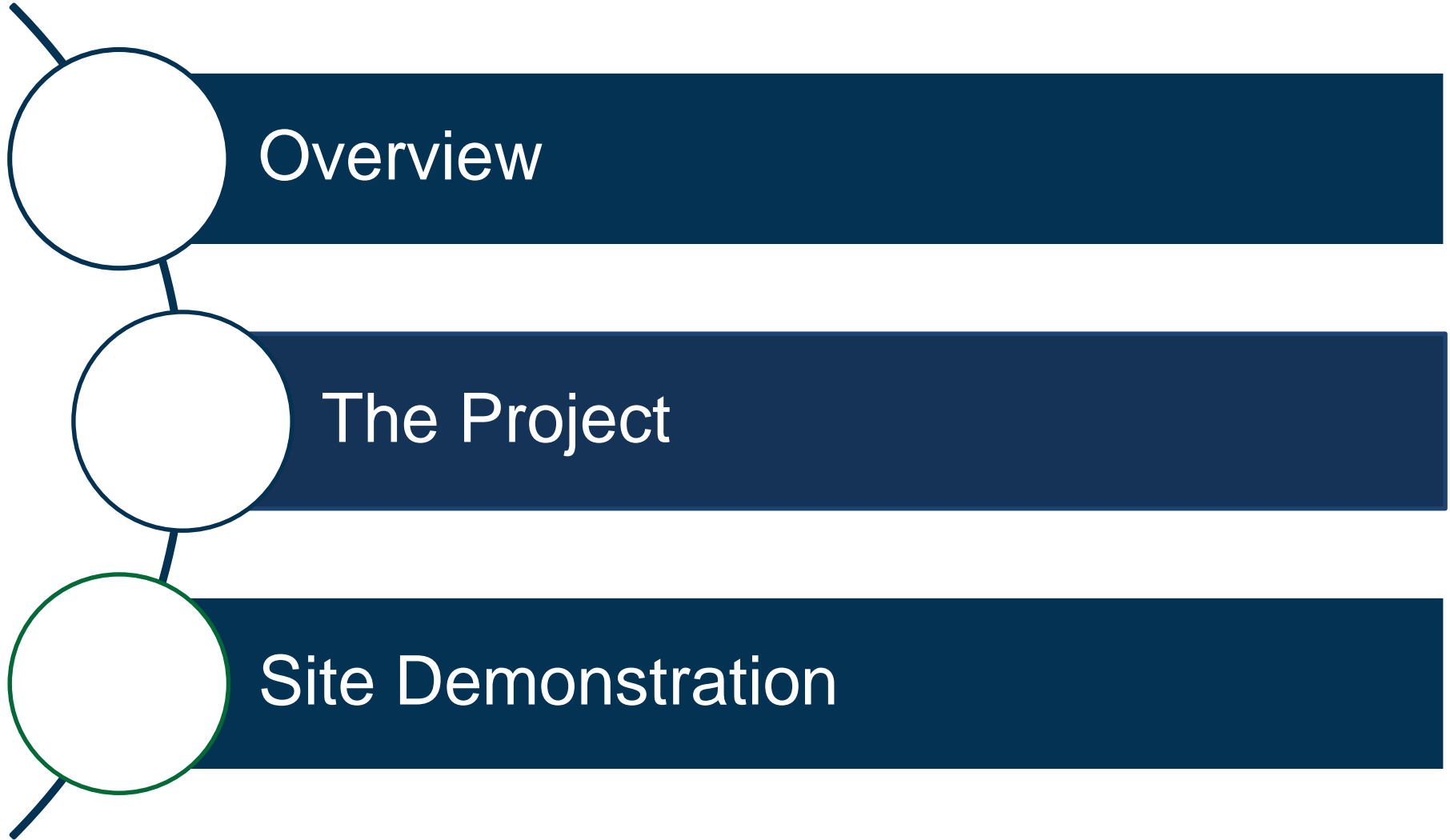
# Open Source Technology

- Analysts and developers can “fork” existing code, and re-use it free of cost as a starting point for their own projects.
- Data is available for download, and its code is available to inspect.



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Visit [\*Your Guide to America's Finances\*](#)  
and check out our sister websites:

