

COVID-19 Data Challenge: Navigating Life and Work in Border Communities

Organized by the Border Solutions Alliance and West Big Data Innovation Hub

****Submit a project info sheet by September 13 to be eligible for \$5,000 in prizes****

Data has the power to help us see challenges through different lenses, discover solutions that may not otherwise be evident, and put tools into the hands of those who need them most – empowering communities to work together in new ways. As COVID-19 causes us to rethink priorities, we believe that co-creating data-driven solutions – with a focus on equity and trust-building – will give communities new skills and tools for problem-solving with limited resources. In response to this need, we invite you to sign-up to join our data challenge as a [team member](#), [mentor](#), [judge](#), or [lightning talk speaker](#).

The Challenge

Communities along the U.S.-Mexico border have been hard hit by COVID-19. While researchers race to develop a vaccine, life and work must continue. How can we confidently and transparently decide what is safe? Can we more efficiently mine existing data and/or gather new data for analysis to assess the risks of activities in different spheres of life, and thus more effectively direct resources and interventions? Specifically, how can we better understand risk levels in real-time for different situations and communicate them to the public?

There is no specific format for project submissions. For example, a team could build an [app](#) or a [website](#), create a [dashboard](#), make a poster or video that uses [data storytelling](#), or propose a [pilot project](#) to gather new data. Submissions must meet two requirements: 1) support data-driven decision making in border communities and 2) focus on assessing risk-levels related to a particular sphere of life, such as:

- *Travel*
 - Border crossings
 - Public transportation
- *School and work*
 - Factories, agriculture, and construction
 - Schools and childcare
 - Offices (and elevators)
- *Congregate settings*
 - Assisted living facilities
 - Prisons and detention centers
 - Shelters
- *Leisure*
 - Restaurants and bars
 - Community gatherings – e.g. concerts, church, and sports events
 - Outdoor activities – e.g. playgrounds, golf, and beaches
 - Spending time with family and friends
- *Retail and services*
 - Essential retail
 - Essential healthcare (not related to COVID-19)
 - Shipping and delivery services
 - Non-essential retail
 - Non-essential healthcare
 - Self-care – e.g. nail salons, hair salons, and gyms

Project Teams

Anyone from either side of the border can participate in this online challenge and we encourage teams to consider cross-border dynamics. Participants can sign-up as a team or sign-up individually to be matched to a team. Students will work alongside community leaders, government partners, researchers, and private sector data scientists on projects. Team members can bring diverse skills to each collaboration including practical knowledge about a specific sphere of life, technical skills, or communication skills. Each team will have access to data sets and subject-matter and data science experts to accelerate progress.

Key Dates and Activities (all times PST)

- Data challenge kickoff – 9 AM on Thursday, August 27
- Lightning talks – daily during the week of August 31
- Team matching events – 9 AM on Thursday, September 3 and Thursday, September 10
- Office hours with mentors – from September 8 – September 25
- Project info sheets due – 10 PM on Sunday, September 13
- Project submissions due – 10 PM on Sunday, September 27
- Pitch competition – Tuesday, September 29

For more information, contact Melissa Floca at mfloca@ucsd.edu

About the Organizers

Border Solutions Alliance

The Border Solutions Alliance is a partnership that includes research universities from the four U.S. states at the border with Mexico. The coordinating institutions – UC San Diego, the University of Arizona, New Mexico State University, the University of Texas at El Paso, and the University of Texas at San Antonio – have ongoing research projects with Mexican universities and frequently collaborate with community, government, and industry partners. The Alliance works to create a backbone for research grounded in robust public and private sector partnerships by:

- Fostering collaboration between universities and the public and private sectors to contribute to regional sustainability, health and well-being, and productivity
- Bringing together the best and brightest researchers from the four states that border Mexico, with Mexican counterparts, to engage in public impact research focused on use-inspired research questions grounded in the daily challenges faced by service providers, practitioners, and policy makers
- Focusing on data-driven research in science, medicine, and engineering, as well as data science-focused education and workforce development

West Big Data Innovation Hub

The Hub's mission is to build and strengthen partnerships across industry, academia, nonprofits, and government to address societal and scientific challenges, spur economic development, and foster a national big data ecosystem. The West Hub – coordinated by UC Berkeley, UC San Diego and the University of Washington – serves the thirteen western states from Montana to New Mexico and everything west, including Hawaii and Alaska. The Hub's projects, events, activities, and initiatives span regional thematic areas as well as cross-cutting topics. Thematic areas include metro/urban data science as well as natural resources and hazards with a particular focus on water. Cross-cutting areas include cloud computing, data challenges and storytelling communities of practice, public policy and ethics, responsible data science, security, and data sharing.

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