Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act Advances Federal Open Data Goals

Every year, Federal agencies prepare and submit thousands of in-depth reports to various congressional committees. These congressionally mandated reports are statutory requirements enacted by Congress that direct Federal agency officials to publish reports detailing certain plans, evaluations and studies, or actions taken or forthcoming. Mandated reports are used as a tool for congressional oversight and to inform decision-making.
Why is the Congressionally Mandated Reports Act important and how will it improve Federal data practices?

Thousands of mandated reports are submitted annually. Ability to sort through all agency reports can allow the public as well as Congress to understand how agencies are achieving their policy goals. While many of these reports are disclosable under existing public records laws, the burden is on the public or stakeholders to request the report if an agency chooses not to make it available at the time of submission to Congress. This bill creates the default expectation that reports are open and available, increasing transparency and accountability, and therefore ensuring efficient use of taxpayer dollars, increasing technical capacity in government oversight, and ultimately improving public trust in government.

In addition to the Data Coalition’s endorsement, the Congressionally Mandated Reports Act is endorsed by 29 other organizations as of April 2021.