

C.O.G.S.



THE COOPERATIVE OPEN GOVERNMENT SYSTEM: AN OVERVIEW

COOPERATIVE OPEN GOVERNMENT
SYSTEMS, LLC

199 Bennett Martin Road
Polkton, NC 28125

704.236.3571
info@cogs.llc

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MEDIA KIT

Welcome to COGS

This media packet introduces the Cooperative Open Government System (COGS). COGS is a modular platform that reimagines how communities make decisions, allocate resources, and hold institutions accountable.

COGS is not just software. It is a new operating logic for democratic governance. One that replaces opacity with clarity, passive consent with active control, and isolated decisions with integrated systems. Built to serve governments, associations, nonprofits, and cooperatives, COGS transforms the chaos of modern administration into a structure people can trust.

This kit is your entry point. Inside, you'll find a system built for the future, but grounded in the realities of today.

SECTION ONE:

WHY MODERN GOVERNANCE FAILS— AND HOW COGS FIXES IT.

ACROSS the country, public institutions are breaking under the weight of their own procedures. The symptoms vary—gridlocked zoning, misallocated budgets, public disengagement—but the root causes are consistent: outdated systems, weak visibility, and decision-making structures that no longer reflect the communities they serve.

In cities, counties, nonprofits, HOAs, and cooperatives, three structural failures show up again and again:

1. OPAQUE BUDGETING

Public budgets, even when published, are nearly impossible to follow. Discretionary and mandated funds are bundled together. Spending decisions happen at a level too granular for elected boards, but too opaque for public review. The result is a system where oversight is reactive at best, and invisible at worst.

2. INSIDER-DRIVEN PLANNING

Ideas shape outcomes—but in most institutions, the entry points for new ideas are undefined or inaccessible. There is no formal path for an ordinary resident, employee, or stakeholder to submit a proposal and see it move forward on merit. Instead, planning decisions are shaped by those already at the table: long-tenured board members, preferred vendors, or established civic actors.

This creates a structural filter that blocks innovation. Small-scale initiatives get lost. Community-generated proposals never reach decision-makers. And meaningful

reform is limited to those who already understand the system—and how to navigate it.

Without a public front door for new ideas, planning becomes a private conversation.

Over time, the absence of open pathways ensures that even well-intentioned leadership remains insulated—reacting to problems rather than tapping into the full range of solutions communities have to offer.

3. WEAK ACCOUNTABILITY LOOPS

Even when public input is collected and acknowledged, there is little infrastructure in place to ensure that commitments are honored, progress is tracked, or results are reported in a usable way. Public promises made during meetings, campaigns, or grant applications often fade without follow-through—not out of malice, but out of structural neglect.

These failures are not the result of bad leadership. They are the result of insufficient systems. Over time, these structural weaknesses produce a deeper outcome: disengagement. Communities that can no longer trace how decisions are made—or how their input shaped the result—will stop showing up. And when that happens, decision-making authority doesn't disappear. It simply consolidates.

COGS is designed to end this cycle. It doesn't just improve governance—it makes its logic visible. COGS turns budgets into live conversations, proposals into structured competitions, and promises into public data. It also empowers new leaders by making their contributions visible, giving communities a chance to see who steps up and delivers. No more fog. No more filters. Just a system that works—because everyone can see it work.

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SECTION TWO:

WHAT COGS ACTUALLY IS

COGS is a modular, integrated operating system designed to bring transparency, clarity, and accountability to collective decision-making. Unlike conventional software tools that offer only partial solutions—such as budgeting apps, surveys, or project management suites—COGS presents a unified platform designed explicitly to restructure how decisions are made and tracked within community-driven organizations.

It is intended to blend structured public participation, real-time budgeting, and robust accountability measures into one cohesive framework, replacing fragmented or informal processes with clear, consistent mechanisms accessible to every participant—including individuals aspiring to lead through public, measurable contributions.

THE FOUR CORE PILLARS

COGS will be built around four integrated components—each handling a critical aspect of the decision-making lifecycle:

- **CHI (Community Hub for Ideas)**
Will serve as an open front door for all community proposals and ideas. Whether small or transformational, any stakeholder will be able to submit and advocate for an initiative, which then moves forward based on transparent, public support rather than insider influence.
- **CCB (Community Controlled Budget)**
Will convert opaque and static budgets into living documents. Members will allocate discretionary funding continuously, making budgets responsive to real community priorities. Every allocation will then be trackable and publicly justified.

- **CAPS (Community Accountability & Performance System)**

Will ensure that promises are kept. Every approved budget line or proposal will be tracked publicly, with clear progress metrics and accountability checks. CAPS will provide an organization a permanent memory, guaranteeing follow-through rather than allowing commitments to fade away unnoticed.

- **OGPS (Open Growth & Planning System) (Optional)**

Will offer an open and structured alternative to traditional zoning and planning procedures. It will enable transparent proposal submission, public debate, competitive bidding, and fair, structured evaluations—ensuring community goals define development, not insider access.

WHO COGS SERVES

COGS is designed to benefit any organization structured around community or stakeholder input, transparency, and accountability. Its modular design is engineered to scale seamlessly, serving:

- Local and county governments
- Homeowners associations (HOAs)
- Nonprofit organizations
- Cooperative enterprises and associations
- School boards and special districts

Regardless of size, sector, or location, COGS will empower communities by placing them directly in control of decision-making.

WHAT MAKES COGS DIFFERENT

COGS is unique because it isn't just about making existing processes more efficient—it redefines them fundamentally. It:

- Will make transparency automatic rather than optional.
- Will turn public participation into continuous, real-time control—not a rare, symbolic event.
- Will create built-in, structural accountability so outcomes are guaranteed, not just promised.

COGS is not designed to improve on old tools—it is built to replace them entirely.

SECTION THREE:

THE CORE PILLARS OF COGS

COGS will not be a monolith—it will be a modular system. Each pillar is intended to handle a specific layer of governance, and together they are designed to form a complete feedback loop: from idea, to funding, to execution, to accountability. While engineered to work in unison, each module will be adoptable on its own.

CHI – COMMUNITY HUB FOR IDEAS

The future front door for every policy, project, and proposal.

CHI will serve as a shared platform where residents, workers, and stakeholders can post, refine, and champion new ideas. Unlike traditional comment periods or static suggestion boxes, CHI is being designed to function as a living, structured space for collaborative planning.

- Every idea will be visible and public from the moment it is posted.
- Support and discussion will be tracked in real time.
- Popular proposals will advance automatically to planning or budgeting tracks.
- No gatekeepers. No backroom filtering.

PURPOSE:

To ensure that power starts with people—not behind closed doors. CHI is intended to bring grassroots innovation directly into the core of formal planning.

CCB – COMMUNITY CONTROLLED BUDGET

A live, transparent model for allocating discretionary funds.

The CCB will be designed to turn budgeting into a continuous, participatory process. Rather than voting once a year, the CCB will allow members to direct allocations of funds toward approved priorities based on merit, support, and verified need.

- Every dollar will be tagged, traceable, and publicly justified.
- Budgets will adjust in response to real-time input—not just administrative inertia.
- Public feedback will be quantifiable and binding.

PURPOSE:

To ensure every financial decision is visible, reasoned, and reversible. CCB will give communities a mechanism to fund what they actually value.

CAPS – COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY & PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

A public memory for follow-through, performance, and trust.

Too often, public processes suffer from institutional amnesia. Promises fade, projects stall, and communities are left in the dark. CAPS is being developed to solve that. Every approved item—whether from CHI or CCB—will be assigned deliverables, deadlines, and checkpoints. Progress will be tracked publicly and archived permanently.

- Every action item will receive a public ledger.
- Delays, deviations, and completions will be tracked visibly.
- Performance metrics will be tied to prior commitments.

PURPOSE:

To create durable trust by making accountability a structural feature, not a matter of personality or press coverage.

OGPS – OPEN GROWTH & PLANNING SYSTEM (*OPTIONAL*)

A transparent framework for planning, development, and procurement.

While optional, OGPS is intended to extend the COGS framework into high-impact arenas where access and influence often dominate. It will provide a structured process for submitting development proposals, infrastructure projects, or organizational changes—placing them into a transparent, competitive review environment.

- Every proposal will be visible to the public from the beginning.
- Jobs and components will be listed clearly and bid out transparently.
- Review criteria will be known in advance; insider access will provide no advantage.

PURPOSE:

To ensure that planning and procurement processes reflect public priorities—not private negotiations.

Together, these pillars will allow any organization to move from reactive governance to **proactive, visible, accountable action**—with every participant empowered by design.

SECTION FOUR:

HOW IT WILL WORK

COGS is grounded in a simple but powerful idea:

If people can see the system—and move within it—they will trust and use it.

Each module is designed to flow into the next, forming a complete decision-making cycle. Together, they are intended to create a closed-loop process:

IDEAS → FUNDING → EXECUTION → OVERSIGHT

FROM IDEA TO ACTION

- **CHI** – *Community Hub for Ideas*
A member will propose a project, policy, or improvement. Others will be able to show support. Once an idea gains enough traction, it will advance automatically into the planning or budgeting stage.
- **CCB** – *Community Controlled Budget*
Once approved, the proposal will enter a live, trackable budget. Members will allocate funds based on priority, cost, and impact. The entire process will remain visible—no black boxes
- **CAPS** – *Community Accountability & Performance System*
As implementation begins, CAPS will track each commitment. Deadlines, metrics, and reports will be public. Completion or failure will be documented automatically.
- **OGPS** (*if applicable*)
For development or infrastructure projects, OGPS will provide structured public review, open bids, and full cost transparency—ensuring even large-scale work follows the same visible logic.

THE PARTICIPATION MODEL

COGS is not designed as a one-off engagement tool—it will operate continuously.

Unlike town halls or one-time surveys, COGS will support year-round participation. Members will be able to log in at any time to submit proposals, reallocate funds, review progress, or flag issues.

Major decisions may be formalized annually, but participation will never close.

This continuous model is designed to:

- Encourage low-effort, high-frequency engagement
- Eliminate bottlenecks between public input and execution
- Build a living, searchable record of choices, actions, and results

BUILT-IN MEMORY AND ENFORCEMENT

COGS ensures continuity with a built-in memory—every proposal, allocation, and task is tied to a unique record, keeping participation seamless and accountable across time. This means nothing falls through the cracks, and the system carries every decision—safely, visibly, and without interruption.

IN SHORT:

COGS acts like a living infrastructure, carrying every decision safely, visibly, and uninterrupted. You don't just use it—you step inside a system built for transparency, where journalists, watchdogs, and communities can dig in and hold power to account like never before.

SECTION FIVE:

REAL-WORLD IMPACT

COGS is not being developed as just another governance tool.

It is intended to serve as a practical response to the persistent problems that waste time, erode trust, and drain budgets across organizations of every size.

By making decisions visible, trackable, and participatory, COGS is expected to deliver meaningful improvements in how communities allocate resources, evaluate progress, and engage their members—whether in a rural county, a school board, or a national nonprofit.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Organizations adopting COGS should be able to expect:

- **HIGHER PUBLIC TRUST**

Communities tend to engage more when they can trace the outcomes of their input. COGS is being built to provide transparency not as a value, but as a structural default.

- **FASTER, SMARTER DECISIONS**

Proposals will rise based on merit and measurable support—not insider access. Decision-making processes are expected to accelerate as procedural delays give way to structured workflows.

- **REDUCED WASTE AND DUPLICATION**

With visible oversight and built-in accountability, COGS is designed to reduce redundancy, misallocation, and stagnation. Every dollar will be accounted for. Every action will be logged.

- **INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY**

COGS will create a lasting record of decisions, budgets, outcomes, and context—ensuring operational continuity even through leadership transitions or political shifts.

- **INCREASED CIVIC LEADERSHIP**

COGS empowers new voices to rise through visible contributions, turning participation into a portfolio that can launch future leaders.

ILLUSTRATIVE USE CASES

These examples are intended to demonstrate how COGS might function in practice:

A Rural County Government

A small county seeks to address stormwater drainage in three neighborhoods. Residents submit proposals through CHI. The most-supported project advances into CCB, where funds are allocated transparently. CAPS tracks contractor progress, and the public receives real-time updates. Completion is verified and logged.

A Regional Nonprofit

A regional arts nonprofit wants to prioritize grantmaking more democratically. Staff post project proposals on CHI. Supporters upvote initiatives. Discretionary funds are allocated through CCB, and outcomes are publicly reported via CAPS. Donors see how their contributions were used—line by line.

A Homeowners Association (HOA)

Residents propose improvements—new lighting, speed bumps, landscaping. Through CHI and CCB, all members can see what’s proposed, funded, and pending. CAPS tracks vendor timelines. Transparency helps resolve disputes before they escalate. Satisfaction rises with participation.

COGS is built to be adopted flexibly, but its impact is universal:
Clearer decisions. Smarter spending. Stronger communities.

SECTION SIX:

THE COGS MODEL

COGS is more than a platform—it's being designed as an ecosystem for sustainability, transparency, and scale.

Unlike many civic technologies that rely on continuous consulting contracts or software subscriptions, COGS is being structured for long-term accessibility. It is intended to grow through use, not upsell.

TO BE DELIVERED BY A MISSION-DRIVEN NONPROFIT

COGS is intended to be supported and distributed by a nonprofit organization dedicated to open governance and community-driven infrastructure. The software itself will be available under a one-time license, with no recurring fees, usage caps, or artificial lock-ins.

- **Pay Once, Use Forever** for organizations that want to self-host.
- **Paid services available** for customization, training, onboarding, and hosting.
- **Grants support, public funding, and community investment** will be leveraged to expand access—not restrict it.

This nonprofit delivery model ensures that the people funding, adopting, or promoting COGS are aligned with its purpose: better governance for everyone.

GOVERNANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

COGS is developed and maintained through a hybrid structure designed for long-term public benefit.

The intellectual property is currently—and will remain—held by **COGS, LLC**, a public-benefit-oriented Limited Liability Company that exists solely to initiate, guide, and protect the evolution of the platform. COGS, LLC licenses this technology exclusively to nonprofit entities for implementation, service, and distribution.

A dedicated nonprofit entity—tentatively named the **COGS Foundation**—is planned to lead implementation and support, pending formation and funding. This ensures that COGS is always delivered through mission-aligned institutions, not profit-seeking vendors.

The software itself is **open source but patent bounded**. This means:

- Anyone can inspect, deploy, or contribute to the codebase.
- The system can evolve—but not fracture. For the next 20 years, major deviations from the core design must demonstrate clear, public benefit or improvement.
- The goal is stability, not stagnation: innovation is welcome, but guardrails ensure continuity and coherence.

This structure allows COGS to remain adaptive—serving governments, nonprofits, HOAs, and other sectors—while preserving its core mission: **transparent, accountable governance for the public good**.

SCALABLE ACROSS SECTORS AND REGIONS

COGS is being designed for modular adoption.

- A small-town council could implement CHI and CCB without needing CAPS or OGPS
- A regional nonprofit could use CAPS to track deliverables while skipping the budgeting module
- A school board could integrate the entire stack

Every COGS installation will be:

- **Locally controlled** — data, policies, and access remain in local hands
- **Federation-ready** — regions can optionally link processes or compare outcomes
- **Customizable** — without compromising core structural integrity

From homeowner boards to regional coalitions, COGS supports any group making shared decisions with shared resources.

DESIGNING TO WITHSTAND LEADERSHIP CHANGES

By embedding decisions, budgets, and deliverables into a permanent public record, COGS is being built to ensure continuity even across leadership transitions.

When someone retires, resigns, or is voted out—governance doesn't start over. It carries forward.

COGS turns institutional memory into infrastructure.

Governance becomes structural—not personal.

SECTION SEVEN:

COGS AS A LEADERSHIP INCUBATOR

COGS isn't just a platform for transparent governance—it's a new path to leadership. Designed as a modular operating system, COGS tracks every decision from idea to outcome, linking dollars to documents, projects to people, and policy to the public that shaped it. This creates *social provenance*: a system where every action can be traced to its source, ensuring leadership leaves a visible, accountable record.

A SYSTEM FOR EMERGING LEADERS

In most communities, future leaders are chosen behind closed doors. COGS changes that by letting them rise in public—through ideas that are visible, supported, funded, and finished.

- **Residents don't just speak at town halls—they shape outcomes.** Anyone can propose a project, gain support, and see it through, building a public record of impact.
- **Young leaders don't need permission—they need proof.** COGS makes civic potential measurable: what have you contributed, and did it work?
- **Participation becomes a portfolio.** Proposals turn into platforms, showcasing a leader's vision, follow-through, and results for all to see.

BUILT-IN MEMORY FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

COGS ensures nothing falls through the cracks by tying every action to a unique, searchable record:

- The person or group who proposed it.
- The supporters who backed it.
- The deliberation that shaped it.

- The vote or allocation that approved it.
- The vendor or agency that executed it.
- The outcome—and who followed through.

This means:

- No chasing officials or sifting through cryptic meeting notes—reporters and citizens get instant access to the full story.
- No rewriting history—every decision is preserved, ensuring the truth stays intact.
- No quietly abandoned promises—public commitments are tracked publicly, with no hiding allowed.

A TOOL FOR JOURNALISTS AND WATCHDOGS

For the media, COGS is a goldmine:

- Every issue has a source.
- Every budget item has a story.
- Every public figure has a trail.

COGS acts like a living infrastructure, carrying every decision safely, visibly, and uninterrupted. You don't just use it—you step inside a system built for transparency, where journalists, watchdogs, and communities can hold power to account like never before.

SECTION 8

NEXT STEPS

COGS is not yet built—but the foundation is ready.

What you've read in this packet is not marketing for a finished product. It is an open invitation to shape what comes next. The platform design is complete. The governance model is in place. The legal structure is filed. What remains is execution—and that will require the right people, partners, and backers.

FOR INSTITUTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

If you represent a local government, nonprofit, HOA, or cooperative:

- **Express interest** in participating in early prototyping or pilot planning
- **Offer feedback** on the system's proposed structure or use cases
- **Nominate specific needs or pain points** COGS could be designed to address

Your input will help shape real-world deployment priorities.

FOR FUNDERS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS

COGS is now entering its earliest build phase.

- Seed funding and philanthropic partnerships are actively being sought
- Grants and aligned investment can accelerate development and lower the barrier to adoption for mission-driven organizations
- Collaboration inquiries are welcome, especially in legal, public tech, civic reform, and capacity-building spaces

- Support is especially needed to establish the nonprofit delivery organization that will house public implementations and provide long-term service.

With appropriate seed funding, The COGS Foundation and COGS, LLC are prepared to formalize partnerships as early as Q3 of this year.

FOR PRESS, RESEARCHERS, AND ADVOCATES

If you cover governance, open infrastructure, democracy tech, or systems reform:

- Interviews and briefings can be arranged
- Whitepapers and documentation drafts will be available on request
- Technical and philosophical critiques are encouraged

COGS is being built for scrutiny. Bring it.

CONTACT

For early engagement, investment, or critique, contact:

Christopher Scott Borgstede

Founder, COGS

 info@cogs.llc

 [COGS.LLC](https://cogs.llc)

X/Twitter: [@COGSLLC]

ABOUT THE FOUNDER

Christopher Scott Borgstede

Founder, Cooperative Open Government System (COGS)

Christopher Scott Borgstede is the designer of the Cooperative Open Government System (COGS), a modular framework for transparent, participatory governance. He brings a rare combination of policy experience, institutional knowledge, and personal insight drawn from years navigating both the frontlines and blind spots of public systems.

A former correctional officer in Texas, Christopher witnessed firsthand how bureaucracy and culture breakdowns undermine public institutions. He later helped organize Uber drivers in Lubbock, co-authoring the ordinance that legalized rideshare services and deregulated taxis in 2016. He has also organized low-income tenants in Brownsville, interfacing with property management on behalf of the community.

From 2015 to 2022, he worked as a rideshare driver while developing the early architecture for COGS. A serious, legally fraught, life-threatening incident ended his driving career. It exposed the absence of support systems for independent workers facing crisis. The experience underscored the very problem COGS is designed to solve: systems that claim to serve the public but disappear when they're needed most.

Christopher developed COGS in rural North Carolina during a period of recovery and reflection. The system is grounded in what he's seen, survived, and studied: a governance model not built to win elections—but to withstand them.

He currently serves as founder of COGS, LLC, and is focused on advancing COGS from blueprint to deployment—starting with the communities that need it most.