



PACE IMAGINATION SPRINTS 2020

Overview

The first half of 2020 delivered no shortage of world-altering events. In the United States, the impact of COVID-19 on our society, economy, and democracy is still being realized and understood. In addition, the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other black Americans seem to be moving us closer to a tipping point in addressing systemic and institutionalized racism in our country. All of this is on top of the many long-standing and interconnected challenges in other sectors and systems that are having real impacts on the lives of citizens, the health of our communities, and the strength of our country.

When a crisis comes on fast, like COVID-19, it puts the status quo in total upheaval. *The previously impossible becomes possible.* Recent crises have challenged us to think differently and change the frame of what's possible about how we live as a society. We believe we have an opportunity to proactively and intentionally envision what we want our "future state" to look like, rather than be pushed into a "new normal." We are left asking, ***where could our imagination lead us?***

Through a series of imagination sprints, PACE aims to create the space to bring meaning and creativity to specific problems across aspects of democracy and civil society. The end goal is to spark new ideas as we seek to understand, reflect, envision, and iterate on particular topics, and to share those ideas and the fruits of imagination with the broader civic philanthropy field.

Here are the details:

- Imagination sprints are three weeks long, and they will take place between July and December 2020:
 - SPRINT 1: July 20 - August 7, 2020
 - SPRINT 2: August 17 - September 4, 2020
 - SPRINT 3: September 14 - October 2, 2020
 - SPRINT 4: October 8 - 29, 2020
 - SPRINT 5: November 30 - December 16, 2020
- Sprints aim to have a diverse group of funders (PACE members, civic philanthropy funders, etc), thinkers (academics, thought leaders, researchers, civic scientists, etc),

and doers (practitioners, nonprofit leaders, grassroots organizers, etc) imagining together. Each imagination sprint will be limited to 12 slots.

- While all participants do not have to be experts, all participants should have at least some experience with the topic and must be curious and willing to imagine.
- PACE members can nominate partners, grantees, or others in their networks to join as non-funder participants. (Note: for non-funder participants engaged in the first/pilot sprint, an honorarium will be offered as a recognition of expertise, value of time, and opportunity cost to organizations.)
- PACE estimates participation in an imagination sprint to take 10-12 hours over 3 weeks (or, 3-4 hours per week on average).
- For those who cannot commit to a sprint but are still interested in the topic, we invite you to follow along with the sprint as we post reading lists and report-outs from imagination sessions. PACE staff will also be sharing our learnings as we go, and we commit to creating opportunities to discuss and add to the conversation.

In our own commitment to learning and experimentation, PACE will revisit and revise the structure and process of imagination sprints along the way, as we learn more about what is effective and meaningful. We recognize we are embarking on an ambitious and experimental journey, and we look to your partnership and feedback as we work to create this space with and for you.

To see more details about imagination sprints, to sign up for a sprint, or to nominate someone to participate, please visit our [website](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

What are imagination sprints?

Imagination sprints are opportunities to fully immerse ourselves in the creative and collaborative process of re-imagining a new reality for our future around particular topics.

Why do they matter?

The first half of 2020 delivered no shortage of world-altering events. In the United States, the impact of COVID-19 on our society, economy, and democracy is still being realized and understood. In addition, the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other black Americans has refueled a critical conversation about systemic and institutionalized racism in our country. All of this is on top of the many long-standing and interconnected challenges in other sectors and systems that are having very real impacts on the lives of citizens, the health of our communities, and the strength of our country.

When a crisis comes on fast, like COVID-19, it puts the status quo in total upheaval. *The previously impossible becomes possible*. Recent crises have challenged us to think differently and change the frame of what's possible about how we live as a society.

Through a series of imagination sprints, PACE aims to create the space to bring meaning and creativity to specific problems across aspects of democracy and civil society illuminated by recent events. We believe we have an opportunity to proactively and intentionally envision what we want our “future state” to look like, rather than be pushed into a “new normal.”

Why PACE?

PACE is a member-centric philanthropic laboratory for funders seeking to maximize their impact on democracy and civic life in the United States, and particularly in this moment, philanthropy has a unique role to play in advancing civic life. PACE has four roles—learning, experimenting, collaborating, and modeling. While many organizations work to react and respond to the ways COVID-19 and other crises require our immediate attention, PACE believes a group also needs to be thinking about how we model the process of learning, experimentation, and collaboration in order to imagine a stronger future for our communities and country.

In some ways, it is a privilege to have the space, time, and mental energy to put into imagination during a crisis. But as the world transitions from response to a “new normal,” PACE believes we have a window to be proactive if we—the people—want to assert civic agency into the process of creating that new normal. PACE also knows that not every sector has the resources or support to both respond and imagine. As stewards of “[patient capital](#),” this is one of philanthropy’s major assets to offer. We hope the sprints PACE conducts over the remainder of 2020 inspire funders to take the time to imagine, model imagination for their communities, and create similar space for their communities and grantees.

What is the end-goal or deliverable?

We believe the power of imagination sprints is the process. The very act of imagining requires a community to engage in a collaborative and creative process *without* a pre-prescribed destination in mind. The process will spark new ideas as we seek to understand, reflect, envision, and iterate; that is the end-goal—for now. We also see imagination sprints serving as a major input into PACE’s decision about where to put resources for future [Learning Labs](#) by assessing topics with the most potential. Learning Labs are how PACE will turn imagination into action and provide avenues for collaboration and experimentation.

Additionally, to document our journey, provide resources for the broader field, and stay true to our principle of “learning out loud,” PACE commits to designing and managing the sprints in a way that provides a window into the richness of the imagination process, including regular and timely report-outs of what the imagination sprints produce.

Who can participate?

Sprints aim to have a diverse group of funders (PACE members, civic philanthropy funders, etc), thinkers (academics, thought leaders, researchers, civic scientists, etc), and doers (practitioners, nonprofit leaders, grassroots organizers, etc) imagining together. We believe that

having the right mix of divergent thinkers and subject matter experts makes for fruitful imagination. We also know that imagination is most successful in small groups where trust can be built and ideas can flourish.

Each imagination sprint will be limited to 12 slots. The goal is to have a balanced group of funders, academics, practitioners, and thought leaders. While all participants do not have to be experts, all participants should have at least some experience with the topic and must be curious and willing to imagine.

For non-funder participants engaged in the first/pilot sprint, an honorarium will be offered as a recognition of expertise, value of time, and opportunity cost to organizations.

We invite you to follow along with the sprint as we post reading lists and report-outs from imagination sessions. PACE staff will also be sharing our learnings as we go, and we commit to creating opportunities to discuss and add to the conversation.

What will recruitment look like?

Imagination sprints aim to have a balance of funders, academics, practitioners, and thought leaders, and recruitment for each will look different.

- **Funder participants:** PACE will recruit from its membership of philanthropy partners first. Non-PACE members are also invited to participate, and they can sign up on our [website](#).
- **Non-funder participants:** PACE will leverage its network to get the word out about imagination sprints and direct academics, practitioners, and thought leaders to sign up on our [website](#). In addition, PACE members can [nominate a grantee or partner](#) to join a sprint.

Recruitment for sprints will be on-going, and participants will receive confirmation when they have reserved a slot in the sprint.

For non-funder participants engaged in the first/pilot sprint, an honorarium will be offered as a recognition of expertise, value of time, and opportunity cost to organizations.

What is the commitment for participants?

Imagination sprints are designed to be an appropriately-sized lift for participants. We recognize that imagination is most effective when participants can immerse themselves in a topic, while also recognizing participants have other professional and personal demands on their time.

We estimate participation in an imagination sprint to take 10-12 hours over 3 weeks (or, 3-4 hours per week on average). We ask participants to commit to the following:

- Read materials in advance of the sprint's first call
- Attend calls throughout the sprint
- Provide advance notice if you have a conflict

- Start the sprint from the beginning; avoid coming to the sprint late
- Show up with your full self, no matter where you are on your journey

After you sign up for a sprint, a series of calls will be coordinated, and we ask that you try to make arrangements if there are conflicts. A typical week will look like this:

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	Kick-Off Email	Participants read ----->			Call to Understand (1 hour)	
		Call to Imagine #1 (1.5 hour)		Call to Imagine #2 (1.5 hour)		
	Call to Reflect (1 hour)		Call to Action (1 hour)		Wrap-Up Email	

Participants who engage will be named on our website and given credit in all collateral that is published related to imagination sprints.

For those who want to be involved in a sprint and/or want to learn more about a sprint topic but cannot commit to the schedule, we invite you to follow along with the sprint as we post reading lists and report-outs from imagination sessions. PACE staff will also be sharing our learnings as we go, and we commit to creating opportunities to discuss and add to the conversation.

How many imagination sprints will PACE conduct?

In 2020, PACE aims to host five imagination sprints, which balances quantity (wanting to engage in as many topics as possible), quality (wanting to immerse ourselves in topics and provide enough space to imagine and iterate), and the calendar (recognizing the urgency of this work and the need to make decisions in advance of 2021). We view the 2020 imagination sprints as an experiment, and once we have the model down to a science, we are excited to consider future imagination sprints.

How will imagination sprints be designed and facilitated?

Imagination sprints were designed to embody the principles of design thinking and civic science. Design thinking consists of five phases—empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test—and imagination sprints were created to be an accelerated adaptation of the first three phases, while also producing an early roadmap for how we might make investments to explore the prototype and testing phases in the future.

Civic science creates a culture in which people from all walks of life engage with scientific research and its social and ethical implications. It convenes across disciplines, maps the

landscape, and strengthens dialogue, feedback loops, and experimentation. Imagination sprints were designed with these principles in mind, and they will incorporate a civic science lens by including research and science publications into our basis of understanding on topics. We will also aim to include a participant in every sprint cohort that can speak from a civic science perspective.

In addition, PACE does not believe you can truly imagine unless there is a commitment to imagine a different future for *all* people. Each sprint will incorporate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by integrating exercises that help participants think expansively about who we are designing for and what limitations our current systems have to being fully inclusive and equitable.

When will the sprints take place?

Imagination sprints are three weeks long, and they will take place throughout the second half of 2020. Here is the sprint schedule:

- SPRINT 1: July 20 - August 7, 2020
- SPRINT 2: August 17 - September 4, 2020
- SPRINT 3: September 14 - October 2, 2020
- SPRINT 4: October 8 - 29, 2020
- SPRINT 5: November 30 - December 16, 2020

We want to point out two factors in this schedule:

- PACE members will note that 2020 PACE Member Meetings are scheduled for August 12-13 (between sprints 1 and 2) and December 1-2 (during sprint 5). We plan to use time during those meetings to share what we are learning and get feedback from members in order to shape future sprints and strengthen their value moving forward.
- The 2020 Presidential Election is on November 3, 2020. We foresee sprint 5 pertaining to a post-election topic or debrief, but that will be determined as election season progresses.

How were the topics picked?

PACE hosted a virtual event with its members in March 2020 to understand the issues, topics, and ideas they are most interested in—all pertaining to strengthening democracy and civic life. We heard loud and clear that a particular area of interest and exploration for PACE members was civic learning, so we selected that topic for sprint 1. To determine the remaining sprint topics, we scoped 10 imagination prompts (with input from our members, recently published commissioned reports, and current events), and we asked PACE members to vote on the topics they wanted to see become imagination sprints. Sprint 5 is being reserved as a placeholder for a post-election topic, to be determined as election season progresses.