PACE FALL 2026 MEMBER MEETING

Reading the Signals: What Kind of Communities and Country are Americans Telling Us They Want?

November 17-19, 2026 | Detroit, Michigan

The U.S. has been experiencing rapid demographic, technological, political, economic, and social shifts over the last few years. Amid all this upheaval, we cannot assume that what we thought we knew about Americans still holds. Fortunately, Americans are signaling what kind of communities and country they want to live in through their votes, their responses to polls and surveys, and the ways they choose to participate—or not—in civic life. Our work as funders is to read these signals and understand what they are telling us, as well as to imagine and build what comes next.

PACE's Fall 2026 Member Meeting will gather funders together to better understand how Americans are thinking about our democracy right now, drawing on fresh analysis of the **Midterm Elections,** the lived experiences of **Detroit and Michigan** residents, and new research on the **Disengaged Majority**. Underlying all of it—and inspired by the economic and cultural revitalization of our host city—will be a question we know many members are actively wrestling with: What is the role of the **economy** in shaping Americans' attitudes toward democracy and civic life, and what does that mean for civic funders moving forward?

Our time will include great talks by strategists and researchers, huddles on topics of your choice, and casual opportunities to connect with other sophisticated civic funders over coffee and cocktails. We are especially grateful to be in conversation with **Heather Gerken, President of the Ford Foundation**, at the start of our meeting.

The backdrop to our time together will be Detroit, Michigan—a city that offers a shining example of resilience and revitalization. Shaped by the people and industries that transformed it into a global city, Detroit reminds us that thriving communities are built by people, over time, with lots of reinvention along the way.

We are thrilled to be hosting the Fall 2026 Member Meeting with support and guidance from PACE's Michigan-based members and partners: **Kresge Foundation, New Economy Initiative, Song Foundation, Mott Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.** Thank you!

EVENT NOTES

Participants will be primarily grantmakers (with a few expert speakers as exceptions).

A friendly reminder that solicitation is not allowed at PACE events. Please see the non-solicitation policy included at the end of this agenda for a refresher.

The event will not be recorded. We follow the basic principle that what is shared must stay, and what is learned can travel.

Please note that Detroit is in Eastern Standard Time and agenda times below reflect EST.

AGENDA

Tuesday, November 17
Location: *Union Assembly, 2131 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI 48201*

5:00pm-7:00pm — **Welcome Reception**
Join fellow PACE members for drinks and appetizers as we say hello and catch up informally.

Wednesday, November 18
Location: *The Department at Hudsons, 1000 Nick Gilbert Way, Detroit, MI 48226*
Floor 3, Flag Room

8:30am-9:00am — **Arrival & Breakfast**

9:00am-9:30am — **Welcome**
Our interactive opening session will orient participants to the agenda, the space, and each other.

9:30am-10:15am — **A Case Study in Reading Signals: Heather Gerken and Ford Foundation**
How are funders reading the signals Americans are sending and translating those insights into grantmaking? To kick off our exploration, Shannon Green will be in conversation with Heather Gerken, President of the Ford Foundation. Heather is a nationally recognized expert on democracy, federalism, and elections who has spent her career advancing bipartisan efforts to protect the rule of law. The Ford Foundation's newly released strategy offers a case study in how a foundation can interpret the signals of the present day, merge it with the signals of the past, and chart a course for the future—all in support of a thriving democracy. Participants will have ample opportunity to engage directly with Heather during Q&A.

10:15am-10:30am — **Break**

Wednesday, November 18 *(continued)*
Location: *The Department at Hudsons, 1000 Nick Gilbert Way, Detroit, MI 48226*
Floor 3, Flag Room

10:30am-12:00pm

Signal Sense-Making: The Midterm Elections
On the heels of the midterm elections, we will explore what Americans told us through their votes about the types of leaders they want and the issues they care most about in this moment. How much were voters motivated by concerns about democracy, their own economic circumstances, or other factors? What changed from previous elections —and what stayed the same? What can we see in the results nationally, and what does Michigan tell us about where the country may be headed? Importantly, what does all of this mean for civic funders moving forward?
Confirmed Speakers:

- *Elaine Kamarck, Brookings Institute*
- *Rusty Hills, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan*
- *Zach Gorchow, Gongwer News Service Michigan*
- *Aditi Juneja, Democracy 2076*
- *Ade Salami, Democracy 2076*
- *Samantha Tarazi, Voting Rights Lab*

12:00pm-1:00pm

Lunch

1:00pm-2:00pm

Member Huddle #1
PACE members have been consistent in their feedback: Give us an opportunity to turn to each other on topics most pressing to us! Member Huddles are designed to do just that. Case studies, research insights, and big picture thinking make great sparks for huddles. Topics will be selected live during the meeting.

2:00pm-2:30pm

Break

2:30pm-4:00pm

Signal Sense-Making: Economy, Democracy, and Civic Renewal in Detroit
Detroit, Michigan, is not just our meeting location; it is also an important case study in two ways. First, Michigan offers a snapshot of the forces shaping civic life and important clues about what Americans want for themselves, their communities, and our country. Second, Detroit shows us what it looks like to listen and respond to what a community needs and wants over time. Its unusually collaborative philanthropic community has played an important role alongside residents, civic leaders, businesses, and others in the city's ongoing revitalization – offering inspiration for other civic funders.
Confirmed Speakers:

- *Angelique Power, Skillman Foundation*
- *Wafa Dinaro, New Economy Initiative*
- *Darnell Adams, Gilbert Family Foundation*

Wednesday, November 18 *(continued)*
Location: *The Department at Hudson's, 1000 Nick Gilbert Way, Detroit, MI 48226*

4:00pm-5:00pm	**Free Time**
5:00pm-8:00pm	**Dinner: Experiencing Detroit's Revitalization** ***Location: Gilly's Rooftop, 1550 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI 48226*** *Join your fellow PACE members for an evening of fellowship at one of Detroit's newest restaurants in the heart of Downtown. Detroit native and philanthropic leader Dan Gilbert built this restaurant as a tribute to his son, Nick. It showcases what's possible when personal passion and investment come together to revitalize a city.*

Thursday, November 19
Location: *The Department at Hudson's, 1000 Nick Gilbert Way, Detroit, MI 48226*
Floor 3, Flag Room

9:00am-9:30am	**Arrival & Breakfast**
9:30am-10:00am	**Welcome** *Our welcome session on day 2 will recap what we covered the day before, share where we are headed with our remaining time, and help members continue to get to know each other.*
10:00am-11:30am	**Signal Sense-Making: The Disengaged Majority** *In our first two sense-making sessions, we reflected on the signals coming from Americans who voted in the midterm elections and those who are shaping the economic and civic revitalization of Detroit and Michigan. But what about Americans who are disengaged from politics or feel disconnected from their communities? What signals are they sending us? Participants will explore these questions by digging into the data from refreshed, not-yet-released research from More in Common's Hidden Tribes project and newly released research from the Charles F. Kettering Foundation and Gallup's Democracy for All Project. They will also engage with fellow funders to consider how philanthropy can help overcome the barriers that keep so many Americans on the sidelines of civic life.* *Confirmed Speakers:* • *Dr. Fred Duong, More in Common* • *Justin Lall, Gallup* • *Derek Barker, Charles F. Kettering Foundation* • *Stephanie Lotshaw, TransitCenter* • *Vanessa Tucker, Arthur M. Blank Foundation* • *Geri Mannion, Andrew Carnegie Foundation*

Thursday, November 19 *(continued)*
Location: *The Department at Hudson's, 1000 Nick Gilbert Way, Detroit, MI 48226*
Floor 3, Flag Room

11:30am-12:30pm	**Lunch**
12:30pm-2:00pm	**Member Huddle #2 / In-Person Funder Labs** *Participants will have another opportunity to turn to each other on topics most pressing to them. In parallel, members engaged with the Civic Learning Funders Lab and the Civic Culture Funders Lab will meet to advance their respective work.*
2:00pm-2:30pm	**Break**
2:30pm-4:00pm	**Signal Math: What does this all add up to?** *We will have spent much of our time together exploring the signals Americans are sending about the kind of communities and country they want. Our last session will help us turn that learning into action in two ways. First, we will look closely at what these signals mean in terms of new coalitions that are forming. Second, we will spend time determining what civic funders can do in response. We will have time for reflections and next steps as we wrap up the meeting.*

PACE Non-Solicitation Policy

*PACE maintains a **non-solicitation policy** for all meetings and events. Our goal is to create an open, trusting space for learning and collaboration—so **solicitation of any kind is not permitted** during member convenings. This includes requesting business, offering fund management services, distributing grant proposals, or seeking grant funding (except when reviewing proposals as part of a pooled funding initiative).*

Connections made through PACE events may naturally lead to follow-up conversations or collaborations; any such engagement should occur by mutual agreement and at the discretion of individual participants, not through broad or mass outreach.

We encourage relationship-building and sharing about current projects. Please remember that a colleague's enthusiasm for their work does not constitute solicitation.

To maintain the integrity of our space, anyone found to be in violation of this policy may be asked to leave the event, and egregious or repeated violations could affect participation in future PACE gatherings.

Questions? Please reach out to info@PACEfunders.org.