



Imagining America National Gathering

The Imagining America (IA) gathering is an annual convening of public scholars, artists, designers, teachers, students, and cultural organizers who are addressing the most pressing issues of our time. The gathering offers participants a three-day immersive experience in which to connect, dialogue, learn, and strategize on the ways in which the arts, humanities, and design are and may be leveraged locally, regionally, and nationally towards transformative action.

Both product and process oriented, the gathering planning process is intended to serve as a vehicle to forge and strengthen partnerships within the host city. The IA staff works closely – in person and virtually – with its gathering partners to identify and support local and regional leaders as they organize around one or more issues of particular concern to their communities. It is our hope that this work extends the gathering's impact by building capacity to democratically transform civic life.

Set forth below are the roles and responsibilities of the gathering planning team.

IA Staff

- **Manage overall logistics**, including event registration, conference hotel(s), venue booking, and transportation.
- **Form and co-chair the Gathering Steering Committee (SC)** in collaboration with the host institution and with input from already identified SC members.
- **Develop the gathering theme, structure, and curate content** in collaboration with the SC. IA handles curation of certain aspects of the gathering specific to the IA consortium such as the Randy Martin Spirit Awards and the Member Liaison Lunch.
- **Draft the Call for Participation and review proposals** in collaboration with the SC. IA is responsible for national distribution of the Call for Participation, notifying applicants of acceptance or rejection of proposals, and managing related communications.
- **Determine site visit structure and schedule**, as applicable, in collaboration with the SC.
- **Plan gathering schedule and logistics** in collaboration with key partners (KP). IA manages event flow and addresses accessibility, audio-visual, and supply needs. IA co-manages the identification of appropriate programming spaces and transportation with designated KP staff/student assistance.
- **Plan the Opening Night Reception and Gathering Plenaries** in collaboration with the SC. IA handles related logistics with assistance from designated KP staff or students.
- **Train event volunteers** with assistance from designated KP staff or students.
- **Staff the gathering** with assistance from volunteers identified by the SC.
- **Select booksellers and community groups to table during the gathering** in collaboration with the SC. Per past practice, a small number of local and national publishers, bookstores, and community groups are provided venue space in which to distribute and/or sell work on two days of the gathering.
- **Manage gathering marketing, promotion, and communication.** IA promotes the Call for Participation and related deadlines, registration information (early bird, regular open, and close) and related communications to boost national and IA network attendance, develops the event website and hard copy programs, identifies and manages event technology to deepen participant experience, and determines and handles event documentation. Artwork for the gathering posters and programs is selected in collaboration with the SC. IA handles logistics for printed marketing materials.

- **Develop and manage gathering budget and all legal and financial aspects related to event logistics**, including contracting with and payment of vendors and all related accounting. In prior years, a major source of gathering income derived from a host campus and registration fees. To defray costs and increase the gathering's accessibility, IA also seeks sponsorship and contributed income from other sources.
- **Plan IA Leadership Forum** with assistance from relevant KP. The IA Leadership Forum is generally scheduled on the first day of the gathering. IA co-manages the planning process with the IA Leadership Council, and all logistical aspects are managed by IA staff with the assistance of a KP Office of the President/Chancellor (as applicable).
- **Plan the IA National Advisory Board (NAB) meeting, Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows summit and PAGE lightning talks.** The NAB and PAGE each meet separately the day before the gathering begins and then come together for lunch. IA handles planning and logistics for these two meetings and a subsequent gathering session where PAGE Fellows provide lightning talks.
- **Evaluate gathering experience.** IA assesses evaluation needs, designs evaluation instruments, and manages the data collection, cleaning, and analysis process. In consultation with the SC, IA develops and manages logistics for a SC gathering self-assessment and debrief.

Host Partner(s)

- **Serve as a thought partner** to IA, working in collaboration with IA on initial gathering framing and providing crucial intellectual support to the planning process. The host partner(s) will articulate to IA their own goals with respect to the gathering.
- **Form and co-chair the Gathering Steering Committee (SC)** in collaboration with IA and with input from already identified SC members. The host partner(s) will work with IA to identify initial potential members of the SC and to recruit these individuals to serve on the SC.
- **Provide one or more staff members to assist with the logistical aspects of the gathering** such as identifying venues, undertaking site visits, and initial scouting of transportation options, food, and local communications channels for gathering promotion. Designated host partner staff will provide regular support to IA, with one or more local graduate/undergraduate student(s) and/or other staff handling the daily gathering organizing work. Expectations for "regular" support will vary throughout the planning period, with a greater amount of hourly support needed during the initial planning process in January-March and immediately leading up to the gathering in August-October.
- **Serve as a host and donate space for one or more SC meetings.**
- **Undertake other roles and responsibilities of a Key Partner and Steering Committee member.** These areas of work are listed below.

Key Partners (includes Host Partner(s))

- **Secure in-kind and/or discounted support for planning meetings and gathering venues and event planning and related services.** Examples of this area of responsibility include in-house conference event services, office, community, exhibition, and performance spaces, audio-visual technology, security and maintenance personnel, in-house design and print services, communications and marketing personnel, and general time release for faculty and/or staff.
- **Provide one or more undergraduate and graduate students and/or staff members to handle the daily (local) gathering organizing work and to serve as the primary logistical partner of IA.** This/these individual(s) handle such regular planning activities as scheduling, shaping agendas, and notetaking for SC meetings and generally serving as the principal local gathering contact for the SC and other interested community members, investigating event venues, food

options, and transportation between venues, serving as the main communications contact for vendors, recruiting and training volunteers to help staff the gathering, implementing a plan for local marketing and promotion, and otherwise supporting the gathering's logistical needs. Responsibilities further include leading efforts to identify local artists for the gathering program cover and poster art with input from the SC. In past years, these roles were handled by a graduate student dedicating 20 hours per week to gathering planning work.

- **Plan the Opening Night Reception and Plenaries** in collaboration with IA. IA handles related logistics with assistance from designated KP staff or students.
- **Host the IA Leadership Forum.** Applicable only to higher education KPs, provide space and assist with event logistics for this annual convening of college and university presidents and other campus leadership. The KP also provides a monetary contribution toward the cost of catering, space rental (as applicable), transportation (as applicable), and supplies (as applicable). In past years, this amount has been \$5,000.
- **Research and apply for campus funds** (as applicable) that may be used to support faculty and student attendance at the gathering.
- **Identify and seek sponsorship** for the opening night reception in collaboration with IA and maximize the gathering's accessibility to community members.
- **Undertake other roles and responsibilities of a Steering Committee member.** These areas of work are listed below.

Local Steering Committee (includes KP)

- **Provide local voice and perspective throughout the gathering planning process.** Ensure local voices and perspectives are embedded in the planning process, which includes the identification and recruitment of key stakeholders not already part of the planning process to be members of the SC or otherwise be involved in gathering planning.
- **Develop the gathering theme, structure, and curate content** in collaboration with IA.
- **Draft the Call for Participation and review proposals** in collaboration with IA. The SC further assists with the local and regional dissemination of the Call for Participation.
- **Determine site visit structure and schedule**, as applicable, in collaboration with IA.
- **Plan the Opening Night Reception and Plenaries** in collaboration with IA.
- **Select booksellers and community groups to table during the gathering** in collaboration with IA. Per past practice, a small number of local and national publishers, bookstores, and community groups are provided venue space in which to distribute and/or sell work on two days of the gathering.
- **Identify local artists to contribute to gathering art.** Selected in collaboration with IA, artwork will be used in marketing materials (e.g. posters, programs) and should reflect and highlight local imagery and culture.
- **Support gathering marketing and promotion.**
- **Identify and recruit volunteers to assist throughout the event.** All volunteers receive free registration to attend the gathering.
- **Build local collaboration, community, and energy** around the upcoming gathering using local connections.