



# What matters. No matter what.

## 2024 ELECTION PREPARATION GUIDE

Welcome! We're thrilled you are here. By downloading this guide, you have already taken a step away from the overwhelm of this current moment. Our goal is to support you to develop practices that nurture connection, care, and focus on what matters, no matter what.

The future is uncertain. And yet, in our day to day, we rely on methodologies that fool us into believing we can predictably produce outcomes for a future that is similar to today. If nothing else, the pandemic upended that certainty. These past few years have given us a wicked lesson in the need to prototype new and often "not enough" solutions to the challenges we face. If we take anything from this post-pandemic, pre-election moment, it is this: we must stay nimble, connected and prepared for change.

# Today you are going on a journey to multiple futures.

Shortly, we are going to leap into three possible futures around the US election. This is not unlike the safety drills many of us participated in school as kids. Back then, we knew there was no imminent danger but going through the motions built our confidence, our readiness, and our ability to act collectively. This “safety drill” also helped us identify what we could do now to prepare in case a real crisis unfolded. That is your goal today: to practice and to prepare.

## before you begin:

In this activity, we recommend that you set aside 90 uninterrupted minutes. Turn off your notifications and really clear your space of all reminders of your to-do list. The exercise can be done digitally or you could go analog (we know, crazy).

**Print out this worksheet** (no peeking!), get some of your favorite pens, and maybe an empty journal. Alternatively, for the most distraction-free digital experience, we suggest entering **Full Screen view mode** in your PDF reader; or close all your **other** applications and windows before you begin. When you are done with the activity, be sure to hit **Save** to save your responses.

If you are doing this as a group, we recommend downloading the [facilitator's guide](#) before you begin.

**Turn the page to begin...**

# ARRIVING

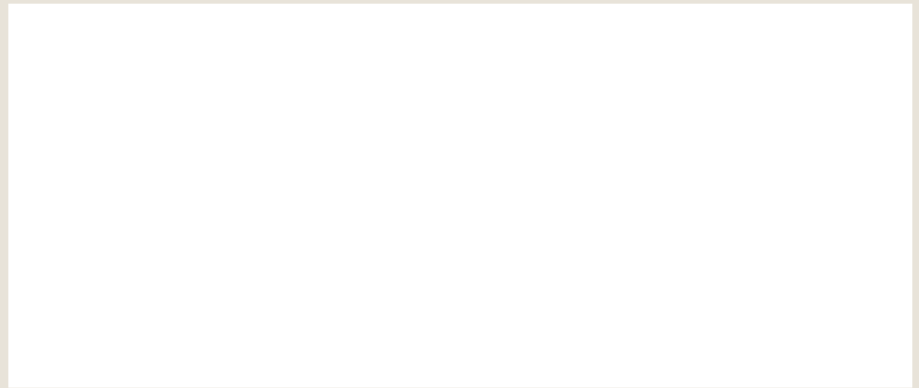
Arriving with intention grounds us in the present moment. When we feel grounded, we often can recognize qualities within ourselves: calmness, connectedness, clarity, confidence, compassion, curiosity, courage, and creativity. These qualities are a gift that steady us and give us the strength we need before visiting future times.

Take a few moments to sit quietly. Put your feet on this earth, close your eyes and take a few moments to transition from what you were just doing. Notice your physical space and your own body. Give yourself some gratitude for taking this time to reflect and learn.

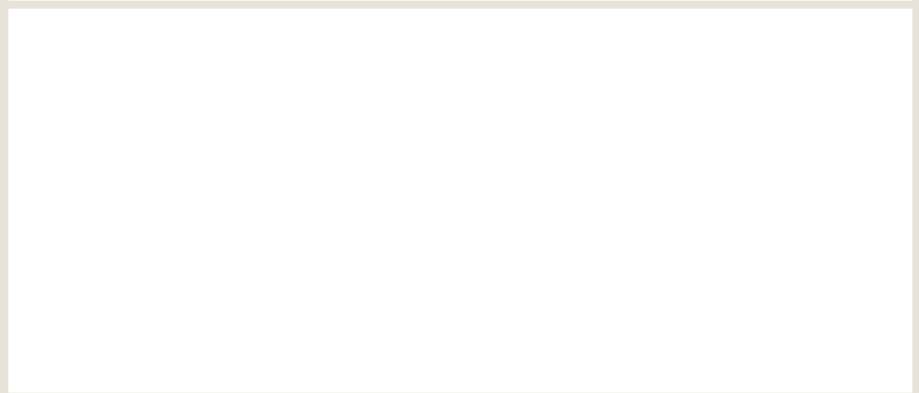
When you feel ready, please respond to the following questions →

# Where am I right now?


In life, **WHO** are the loved ones, ancestors, colleagues and allies who are with me in times of celebration, and in times of change and uncertainty?



What **VALUES** and **COMMITMENTS** are embedded in my life to give me purpose and direction?



What **SOCIAL IDENTITIES** am I empowered by? What groups, tribes and associations give me a sense of belonging?



When I am up against something unexpected, what are the **PRACTICES** that help steady me?



# STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE

**In a few minutes you will be invited into three different futures.** Before you take this leap, we want to say a few words about the futures you will be visiting:

- **The future you are being offered is not up for debate.** We encourage you NOT to spend precious time or brain power trying to question or push back on these futures. These futures are possible and rooted in the imaginings of “experts”. None of the potential futures will be 100% true. Rather they are intended to provoke our thinking and feeling. Try to root yourself in this possible future as much as possible.
- **Your response is real and deserving of attention:** Even though these futures are not happening right now, your response is real. Pay attention to your body’s reactions. You may feel some overwhelm, excitement, or not much at all. This is super important data. You may also be sorting through reactions that emerge from the different roles and social identities you inhabit (leader, parent, immigrant, etc.) This is super important data. Please acknowledge and tend to whatever comes up. Breathe. Feel free to give yourself a timeout before going further.
- **These futures are US-centric.** We decided to narrow our focus to the US Presidential election with full understanding that this is not the only major event underway in our world. These futures are very brief “snapshots” of what might be. They are informed by research but are not meant to be conclusive or comprehensive by design. They are meant to facilitate learning and reflection. We hope, in future, you will use this guide to consider what other ruptures and possibilities shift local or global futures. In fact, you should feel free to customize these scenarios so that they are even more relevant to you.

When you turn the page, you will be given three scenarios that lay out three very different futures. Spend about 15 minutes per scenario. Try to tackle one future at a time, and don’t peek ahead. We recommend you visit all three futures, but if you are short on time, commit to doing two. There’s value in multiplicity.

**Scenario #1 →**

## SCENARIO #1

# INCONCLUSIVE ELECTION

It is November 13, a week after election day, and we still **do not know who has won the election**. Vice President Kamala Harris has won the popular vote, but a credible threat to the election validity emerges in two of the swing states.

A recount begins immediately but there is confusion about the legal entities in charge of this process. It is also unclear how long the recount will take to resolve. Trump makes plans to take office which prompts protests across the country. The financial markets react globally to this instability. This has almost immediate consequences for inflation and jobs in our communities.



# SCENARIO #1 INCONCLUSIVE ELECTION

How did I feel when I encountered this future?



What else might be happening for me, in my community, and in the world when this future unfolds?



How will my work be impacted in the short term? Which of our team's strategies and activities will become more or less relevant in this future?



Over the next year, what opportunities may emerge for me and my work in this future?





**Scenario #2 →**

SCENARIO #2

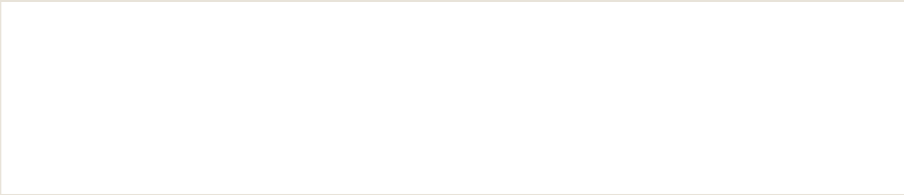
# REPUBLICAN VICTORY

In the early hours of November 6, we learn that former President **DONALD J TRUMP has won the Presidency**, despite losing the popular vote. Massive protests erupt, disrupting local business and overwhelming local law enforcement. President Biden calls up the National Guard in California after protests at a local immigrant detention center turn violent.

Immediately after he takes the Oath of Office in January, President Trump pardons the January 6th insurrectionists, fires dozens of DA's across the country (starting with Fani Willis of Georgia) and moves to begin mass deportations.

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What else might be happening for me, in my community, and in the world when this future unfolds?



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Over the next year, what opportunities may emerge for me and my work in this future?





**Scenario #3 →**

SCENARIO #3

# DEMOCRATS WIN THE ELECTION

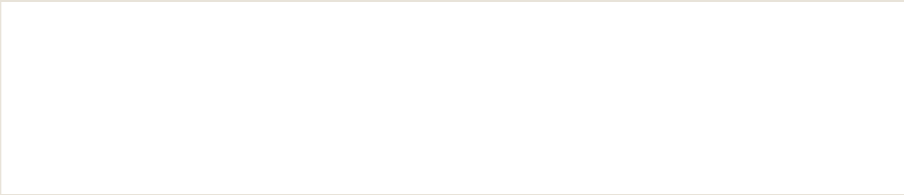
In the early hours of November 6, we learn that **KAMALA HARRIS has won the Presidency** by a clear margin.

Former President Trump refuses to concede, citing election fraud once again. President Biden establishes a special prosecutor at the Justice Department to examine and quickly dispel Trump's accusations. The country prepares to inaugurate President Elect Kamala Harris, and Trump's supporters prepare to defend Trump's claims with local and national protests on the day and anniversary of January 6.



# SCENARIO #3 DEMOCRATS WIN THE ELECTION

How did I feel when I encountered this future?



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Over the next year, what opportunities may emerge for me and my work in this future?





**Returning to...**

# PRESENT DAY

Welcome back from the future. If you haven't already, now is a good time to take a short break. Come back to this last worksheet when you've had a moment to stretch and look away from the guide.

Now that you are back, be reminded that the primary reason we consider multiple futures is to harvest insights about our own resilience and what we can do NOW to prepare for the future we want. What did your visit to the future illuminate about what it means for you to prepare for the future?

## REFLECTION

What insights did I have about my visit to the future? What felt similar or different across the three different future scenarios?

What personal and leadership practices seem to steady me in the face of uncertainty and rapid change?

*We recommend revisiting the practices and values you listed before diving into these future scenarios.*

What could I invest in doing now that makes sense no matter the outcome of the election?

*This could look like a set of activities or strategies. It could also look like a set of intentions or dedicated time together as a team.*

What are the commitments I want to make before the election and in its immediate aftermath that will help me stay focused, grounded and connected to others?

## acknowledgments + notes

**Our thanks:** This guide is inspired by our learning from many democracy analysts, futurists, and activists. We want to especially lift up the amazing [Lisa Kay Solomon](#). Our first election guide grew out of her scenario planning work during the 2020 election (described [here](#)); and from her work connecting future-centered design to shifting civic futures (read that [here](#)).

A word about the scenarios in this guide. We read lots of studies and articles that outlined possible trends, threats and opportunities following this election cycle. It was not fun reading. Some of the most insightful articles we read were Protect Democracy's [playbook](#) and a [report](#) by the Democracy Funder's Network. Please feel free to use what we've offered here with acknowledgement and adapt the scenarios to your needs. And we'd love to hear what you do, so be in touch.

**About us:** WithIn collaborates with leaders and communities to transform systems and create a more just and joyful future for all. Learn more about the work of the WithIn Collaborative at [www.withincollaborative.com](http://www.withincollaborative.com)