



Adapting and innovating to move Jackson Hole symposium online

October 14, 2020

Thanks to the hard work of many on the Bank's staff, and the flexibility of our Jackson Hole Symposium presenters, discussants and participants from around the world, on Aug. 27 and 28 we hosted a virtual event with guests in 46 countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all of us to become more comfortable with the capabilities of technology. Whether it is working remotely from home and attending virtual meetings or catching up with family and friends through an app, the ways we interact with one another have changed—at least for the time being—in significant ways that at first sometimes felt a bit unusual to some of us.

In the late 1970s, the Kansas City Fed started hosting an annual gathering of the world's central bankers, finance ministers, academics and market participants for a focused discussion about a key issue facing policymakers.

Over time, thanks to the hard work and foresight of the Bank's staff and the engagement of program participants, the Economic Policy Symposium has become one of the world's more anticipated annual gatherings related to the global economy. It has been our distinct honor to host this event, and we have been particularly delighted to do it within the Tenth Federal Reserve District that we serve, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, since 1982.

For those unfamiliar with the event, I should provide some background. While we focus on a high-caliber program, the event environment is decidedly low-tech. For example, it was not that long ago that the host location did not have Wi-Fi and guests were unable to secure a cell phone signal, prompting some to have their devices shuttled daily to a location with signal availability to receive email and messages. Even today, the use of a PowerPoint-style presentation is considered off-limits - in part because we believe it forces a more thoughtful presentation and dialogue among attendees. For the same reason, television cameras are not permitted inside the sessions, although a limited number of reporters are in attendance to ensure public transparency.

This year, all of that was upended. Suddenly, the only option for hosting the event, which is in development for a full year before the opening session, was to move it all online. Thanks to the hard work of many on the Bank's staff, and the flexibility of our Symposium presenters, discussants and participants from around the world, on Aug. 27 and 28 we hosted a virtual event with guests in 46 countries. Because they spanned at least a dozen time zones, local time for participants could be as early - or late - as 1 a.m. when the program began.

With the online format, we also made the event stream available to the public. Those interested in learning about the papers presented during the event and the discussions can read about the event in this issue of TEN or head to the Kansas City Fed's YouTube page where the event video remains available.

This year's event theme, "Navigating the Decade Ahead: Implications for Monetary Policy," fostered some important and thoughtful discussion on such issues as the low level of interest rates, the slow pace of growth, the effects of heightened uncertainty, and how to effectively communicate monetary policy.

While there were a few of the expected technological hiccups that we've all become familiar with during the Pandemic, we were pleased with the results. However, like most of us, I am both eager and hopeful that next year we will be able to gather next year in person in Jackson Hole.

Further Resources

[View historical information as well as the 2020 symposium agenda and video archive.](#)
