



# The COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz: Marshaling social entrepreneurship to rapidly respond to urgent grand challenges

Sophie Bacq<sup>\*,^</sup>, Will Geoghegan<sup>^</sup>, Matthew Josefy<sup>^</sup>,  
Regan Stevenson<sup>^</sup>, Trenton A. Williams<sup>^</sup>

*Kelley School of Business, Indiana University, U.S.A.*

## KEYWORDS

COVID-19;  
Entrepreneurial hustle;  
Grand challenges;  
Social entrepreneurship;  
Virtual idea blitz

**Abstract** In response to societal grand challenges, professors have unique opportunities to effect change, repurposing their expertise to deploy relevant, timely, practical, and research-backed knowledge for the betterment of communities. Drawing on scholarship on postcrisis organizing, entrepreneurial hustle, and social entrepreneurship, we provide a firsthand, real-time case description of a three-day “virtual idea blitz” organized in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The event was organized and executed in less than a week and ultimately involved 200 individuals, including entrepreneurs, coders, medical doctors, venture capitalists, industry professionals, students, and professors from around the world. By the end of the weekend, 21 ideas with corresponding pitches were developed in five thematic areas: health needs, education, small businesses, community, and purchasing. We describe how the community was rapidly rallied, and we discuss the key learning outcomes of this spontaneous entrepreneurial endeavor. We provide evidence from participants and mentors that showcases the value of the time-compressed virtual idea blitz in accelerating social entrepreneurial action. We offer practical guidance to academic, community, and professional institutions that would like to replicate or build upon our approach to stimulate the formation of community and to coordinate efforts to thwart the ongoing threat of COVID-19, as well as other societal challenges that might emerge in the future.

© 2020 Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

\* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: [bacqs@iu.edu](mailto:bacqs@iu.edu) (S. Bacq), [wgeoghe@iu.edu](mailto:wgeoghe@iu.edu) (W. Geoghegan), [mjosefy@iu.edu](mailto:mjosefy@iu.edu) (M. Josefy), [rstev@indiana.edu](mailto:rstev@indiana.edu) (R. Stevenson), [trenwill@iu.edu](mailto:trenwill@iu.edu) (T.A. Williams)

<sup>^</sup> Authors contributed equally and are listed alphabetically

[COVID-19] is like a natural disaster happening in slow motion. We're often used to things like earthquakes and hurricanes that very quickly come and then, they're gone here we're dealing with the aftermath. Here we're dealing with changes in the way we go to work and go about our daily lives, this kind of disruption is probably going to be happening for weeks or months—and we're not used to that disruption. (Komo News Staff, 2020)

## 1. A grand challenge

The world was caught off guard in early 2020 as a novel coronavirus, later named COVID-19, began to spread around the globe. The COVID-19 crisis emerged rapidly, severely disrupting social, economic, and health systems. While this crisis emerged simultaneously across many nations, it had similarities to natural disasters, which are “acute collectively experienced events with sudden onset,” and which result in a “catastrophic depletion of resources” (Kaniasty & Norris, 1993, p. 396; Shah, 2012; USAID, 2020).

The scope of COVID-19 quickly warranted classification as a “grand challenge” to society, a problem that, like poverty, climate change, and diseases such as cancer, calls for focused effort by entire disciplines and communities (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016; Hilbert, 1902). While most grand challenges are by nature longstanding and call for multiyear, coordinated efforts among corporations, governments, charities, and other nongovernmental entities, the rapid spread of the deadly virus COVID-19 in late 2019 and early 2020 emerged as an *urgent* grand challenge with no clear solution. Thus, this pandemic led to a global crisis that uniquely embodied both the momentary and devastating nature of a natural disaster and the wide scope and prolonged magnitude of a grand challenge.

Surprisingly, despite the loss of resources that could prime self-interested behavior, major crises have regularly been shown to “unleash not the criminal [in society], but the altruistic” (Quarantelli, 1985, p. 5), including prosocial behaviors and the creation of emergent organizations to address human suffering.<sup>1</sup> One stream of research focuses on emergent responses (i.e., irregular tasks launched by new or existing structures), which are common in reaction to crises and typically consist of individuals and organizations that were directly affected by a crisis event (Drabek & McEntire, 2003). While emergent responses are common in the aftermath of a crisis, COVID-19 presents unique challenges in that

the crisis is still unfolding, with no clear end in sight. The urgency of this unprecedented societal grand challenge calls for novel emergent responses that adopt impact-oriented, innovative, and potentially unorthodox approaches to alleviate suffering.

This article aims to shed light on such approaches by highlighting the emergence of efforts to address the extreme problems created by COVID-19 through virtual, collaborative events seeking to quickly identify and develop solutions to create social value. We share a detailed case study of one of the earliest such responses, a “virtual idea blitz.”<sup>2</sup> This rapid-response initiative was led by a group of management and entrepreneurship faculty from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. The team conceptualized and delivered the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz, a three-day event that involved more than 200 individuals from five continents, 10 countries, and many U.S. states. The case study details these efforts, in which, over the course of only 7 days, the faculty group coalesced around the idea of rapidly applying the best entrepreneurial tools and thinking to generate a communal, high-impact response to COVID-19. Integrating principles and methodologies from design sprints (Knapp, Zeratsky, & Kowitz, 2016), startup weekends (Nager, Nelsen, & Nouyrigat, 2011) and hackathons (Briscoe & Mulligan, 2014; Komssi, Pichlis, Raatikainen, Kindström, & Järvinen, 2014; Trainer, Kalyanasundaram, Chaihirunkarn, & Herbsleb, 2016), this rapid, collective response to COVID-19 was among the first of scores of similar events that later emerged in response to this societal grand challenge.

To understand more fully such collective, emergent responses, we rely on an extreme case study that demonstrates in detail several organizing principles being applied in a novel context. Extreme cases “often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229). The organizing team, composed of a small group of faculty, initiated this project in hope of alleviating suffering and having a positive social impact—goals consistent with research on compassionate post-crisis organizing (Dutton, Worline, Frost, & Lilius, 2006; Williams & Shepherd, 2018) and social entrepreneurship in the face of grand challenges (Bacq & Aguilera, 2019). The team drew upon existing resources (e.g., expertise, social networks) to bring a novel program to market for a set of stakeholders who were not perfectly definable at the outset of the project. These efforts are representative of

<sup>1</sup> See Drabek and McEntire (2003) for a review.

<sup>2</sup> Online details related to the initiative and format of a virtual idea blitz—a novel idea-development tool that emerged from this initiative—are available at [www.virtualideablitz.com](http://www.virtualideablitz.com).

*entrepreneurial hustle*: urgent, unorthodox actions that are intended to be useful in addressing immediate challenges and opportunities under conditions of uncertainty (Fisher, Stevenson, Burnell, Neubert, & Kuratko, 2020). Exploring in real time the efforts to launch the virtual idea blitz, this study seeks to answer two questions: (1) What organizing principles enabled the Kelley School faculty to respond so rapidly to the unprecedented crisis, and (2) how might this approach be replicated in addressing the ongoing challenges imposed by COVID-19, as well as other societal grand challenges?

We answer these questions in three specific ways. First, we explore the Kelley School's virtual idea blitz as a case study of how faculty members organized resources, identified relevant skills, and deployed the virtual idea blitz to accelerate efforts by individuals and communities seeking to pursue social entrepreneurial initiatives. We provide a chronological overview to shed light on the organizing principles and idiosyncratic features that enabled the Kelley School's faculty to respond to the emerging crisis in a timely and effective manner. Second, we provide evidence of value creation both for participants and for the targets of the social initiatives that emerged from the virtual idea blitz; these outcomes included a successful digital innovation, virtual community building anchored in a strong sense of collective purpose, and the rapid prototyping, deployment, and operation of several ventures. Third, we provide details of the event in hope of spurring other organizing groups, whether academic, community, or professional, to take similar action to address this multifaceted crisis or other current societal grand challenges by coalescing entrepreneurial communities. Finally, we discuss practical implications of the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz.

## 2. The COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz: From vision to execution

### 2.1. Chronological overview of an emergent response to an unprecedented challenge

In March 2020, the world was grinding to a halt as a new virus, for which there was no known cure, was spreading rapidly. Though, at that point in time, total fatalities were only approaching 100 in the U.S., the pandemic had killed at least 3,000 in China—according to Chinese Government reports—and was killing hundreds per day in Italy. It was becoming increasingly likely that many European countries and the U.S. were only days or weeks behind other countries in experiencing a similar exponential infection rate. Thus, the

COVID-19 crisis had quickly become an unprecedented grand challenge that created many social, health, and economic problems on a global scale (Gates, 2020). These problems overwhelmed existing healthcare and governmental organizations, which elicited the need for independent social entrepreneurial ventures—organizing efforts centered on opportunities to create social value (Bacq & Janssen, 2011)—to participate in a large-scale response.

In light of these alarming and rapidly evolving events, one Kelley School faculty member began considering whether and how he and fellow faculty in the Management and Entrepreneurship Department could facilitate—if not lead—efforts to respond to the COVID-19 situation. Specifically, this individual took stock of his prior experience accelerating entrepreneurial startups, and other skill sets in the department—including leading week-long “live” case analyses, facilitating social entrepreneurship, and conducting design sprints—and determined there was an opportunity to make a difference by organizing a virtual idea-acceleration project. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the concept was framed in the first internal discussions as follows:

A rapid entrepreneurship accelerator and matchmaking program that brings together students, faculty and alums to generate ideas and build solutions related to issues that have arisen due to COVID-19 (could include tech applications, social distancing products/service, remote working, repurposing of facilities/resources).

The faculty initiator shared via email on a Monday night this concept of a virtual effort to identify, accelerate, and prototype ideas to address problems resulting from COVID-19 with a small group of colleagues. The initiator distributed a low-fidelity sketch of what the landing page for the initiative could look like and confirmed initial interest from a small group of student entrepreneurs. The email (see [Appendix A](#)) also specified a clear call to action for those who wanted to get involved. The initiator also reached out to those who could serve as “supporters of scale,” that is, groups and individuals who had the experience or financial capacity to fund or carry on with any viable solutions that may come out of this initiative.

The next day (Tuesday), a group of seven management and entrepreneurship faculty gathered on a Zoom video conference to discuss what might be done as a collective. After a brief discussion, and given the escalating urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic, the group decided to immediately pursue launching the virtual idea blitz and to run it

over the upcoming weekend. The group also surmised that, unlike traditional programming that typically requires extensive course planning and several stages of committee reviews, the urgency of the situation required rapid and unorthodox actions in order to address the immediate challenges of the crisis—a situation reminiscent of entrepreneurial hustle (Fisher et al., 2020).

Following this meeting, the organizing team began to develop the schedule and explanatory material to add to the landing page.<sup>3</sup> The team executed several intense days of logistics, content preparation, and promotion. First, they drafted a call to action to solicit ideas and program participants (see Appendix E). The organizers dedicated a significant portion of their time before the event began, agreeing to themes and principles to focus on during the workshops. They began advertising the event on professional and social media on Wednesday evening. This timeline allowed only 48 hours to garner ideas and recruit participants before the event's start on Friday at 5:30 p.m.

## 2.2. Objectives, assumptions, and hopes for the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz

The overall objective for the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz was to surface and prototype high-potential, high-impact ideas that would help solve many of the challenges caused by the virus. The organizing faculty also hoped to encourage teams to publicize prototypes to attract further development by individuals or organizations with relevant expertise. The organizing team's assumption was that, at a minimum, the local student community would desire to respond to the many challenges caused by the rapid spread of the coronavirus, and that students would therefore be willing to assist, perhaps by applying skills such as coding, website creation, design, and social media marketing. The organizing team hoped that by actively encouraging current and past students, they could identify at least 50 participants.

There was some uncertainty, however, regarding participant response, as the launch date fell on the closing weekend of the university's official spring break, and all students had recently and unexpectedly been notified that they would need to move out of their dorms and begin virtual classes. Partly to address any potential shortfall in student response and to obtain participants with greater professional experience, the team decided to launch the project as an open call, soliciting ideas and participation from beyond the student

body. The level of interest exceeded expectations: Engagement snowballed quickly, with 95 proposed ideas in the 48-hour window, and more than 200 highly qualified individuals from around the world indicating their interest in participating through the website portal. The breakdown of participants was approximately 17% residential MBA students, 18% Kelley Direct MBA students, 21% Indiana University undergraduate students, 10% Indiana University staff and faculty, and 34% with no direct affiliation with Indiana University. All participated on a voluntary basis; no compensation or course credit was offered.

## 2.3. Foundations of a virtual idea blitz: A tool for rapidly stimulating innovation

Based on the diverse experiences and expertise of the organizing faculty team, the concept of a virtual idea blitz emerged as a marriage between three distinct approaches that have been widely used to accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship in compressed time windows. These include design sprints, startup weekends, and hackathons.

The virtual idea blitz anchored much of its conceptual grounding and framework in the design-sprint methodology popularized by Knapp et al. (2016) at Google Ventures. A standard design sprint is traditionally conducted over a period of 5 days in an effort to minimize the time required to solve critical business questions and to validate and then implement an idea. Design sprints are traditionally held in person, as they require extensive, uninterrupted collaboration between a team, usually of seven to eight hand-picked individuals who bring different skill sets to bear. The five-phase design-sprint process draws upon principles of business strategy, innovation, and consumer behavior, with an overarching goal of solving big issues quickly so as to avoid idea churn and reduce risks when bringing a new product, service, or feature to the market. Sprints have successfully been applied by organizations including LEGO, Lufthansa, Slack, the United Nations, Prudential Financial, the British Museum, and the Australian social enterprise Thankyou, among others. Importantly, previous efforts had demonstrated that the design-sprint process is highly malleable; for instance, others have previously adjusted the timeline from a 5-day process to a 3-day process. One of the organizing members teaches this process to Kelley MBA students in the course of a 7-week class.

Startup weekends share some elements with design sprints, though they are typically used to launch new organizations rather than to advance

<sup>3</sup> [www.covid19ideas.org](http://www.covid19ideas.org)

existing ones. A startup weekend is an event during which individuals form teams to develop an entrepreneurial idea as much as they can within a single weekend (Nager et al., 2011). In-person startup weekends date back to at least 2007 and have been pioneered and popularized by groups such as Techstars Startup Weekend and 3 Day Startup.

Finally, hackathons—a portmanteau that implies the pursuit of exploratory solutions during an intense event (Briscoe & Mulligan, 2014)—are an even longer-running approach, particularly prevalent in technical communities and among programmers. With events dating back to 1999,<sup>4</sup> the goal of a hackathon is for small teams to create working software prototypes within a brief, continuous working period, potentially by working through the night (Komssi et al., 2014). Generally, hackathons help otherwise geographically dispersed individuals to come together, thereby providing important community-building benefits in addition to seeking solutions to a specified problem (Trainer et al., 2016). Hackathons are a regular occurrence within many technology-focused companies. One Facebook vice president, Deb Liu, described the challenge of hackathons as one of passion: “In two days, what can you convince people to be excited about?” (Weinberger, 2017). Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg described them as a central element in the company’s culture and history (Mihalcik, 2020).

Drawing on these principles, the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz organizing team decided to blend design-sprint methodology, startup-weekend objectives, and a hackathon approach. The organizing team considered multiple ways to manage logistics and organize participants by incorporating the best aspects of each of these foundational models. Importantly, adaptations were necessary to transition to a fully virtual environment.

## 2.4. Structuring a virtual, collaborative, and innovative environment

When this event launched, several U.S. states—and several other countries—were either requesting or mandating that people shelter in place. Accordingly, the organizers quickly concluded that the entirety of the program would need to be completed virtually, with Zoom video conferencing serving as the primary platform for online collaboration. This constraint was notable given that the models described above are rarely if ever conducted entirely in a virtual format; even

in virtually organized events, participating teams are generally colocated.

Based on the principles of the three foundational models, but reflecting the urgency of this rapidly organized event, the timeline and structure of the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz (see Appendix B) was set as follows:

- Tuesday: Formalize organizing team of management and entrepreneurship faculty members and develop a loose strategy for the event.
- Wednesday evening: Launch website to solicit ideas from anyone, mostly through social and professional media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter); get people to commit to participate in the weekend event (starting with Indiana University students, but opening the event to anyone; see Appendix E).
- Thursday: Collect ideas; narrow down ideas to focus on the most exciting and valuable ones; assign academic and professional mentors to ideas.
- Friday, 5:30 p.m.: Launch the virtual idea blitz with a brief workshop explaining the process and expectations; participants join a team to discuss pain points and begin to develop the idea; at 9:00 p.m., teams check in with mentors.
- Saturday, 9:30 a.m.: Workshop on the sprint concept and idea-development processes; teams continue their sprints and work on projects throughout the day; at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., teams check in with mentors.
- Sunday, 9:30 a.m.: Workshop on effective pitching; finalize ideas and prototypes, and create pitch videos; at 5:00 p.m., teams submit pitch videos; at 9:00 p.m., all join in a celebratory online get-together.

To run the event virtually, some design-sprint and startup-weekend components were reconceptualized, while other elements were added or removed. For example, the organizers initiated the “identifying of key questions” during the orientation meeting on Friday while grouping participants around common areas of interest, and they began the instruction on Saturday morning by combining the “sketch” and “decide” stages of the design-sprint methodology, while also providing guidance for how teams might effectively prototype and test their ideas. In terms of providing

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.openbsd.org/hackathons.html>

instructional and best-practice content, the faculty decided to focus on simplicity and, given the difficulty of maintaining participants' engagement remotely, to restrict all workshops to a 1-hour time limit. While this restriction limited the ability to build shared practices and understanding among participants, it was important to maximize the workshop time available to the teams. To overcome the lack of colocation, the organizers introduced customized tools using existing platforms (e.g., Google Slides, Google Sheets) so that teams could replace physical documents and the face-to-face collaboration available during more traditional design-sprint settings. These online extensions of design-sprint methodologies were developed nearly in real time as the management and entrepreneurship faculty sought to provide a loose structure that would offer helpful guidelines while not overly restricting teams already managing extreme organizational constraints.

In addition to limiting the duration of workshop sessions to 1 hour, the organizing faculty also decided to limit the number of workshops to one per day on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. As illustrated above, the faculty incorporated core elements of the design sprint into the Friday (about 10 minutes) and Saturday (45 minutes) workshops. They also provided teams with additional tools, videos, and prerecorded material via Dropbox Paper that they could reference as the weekend progressed. The workshops also emphasized customized versions of startup-weekend tools, including actively seeking customer feedback and pursuing rapid prototyping. Finally, drawing on hackathon approaches, the faculty organizers highlighted examples of quickly getting to a solution by sharing news articles each day that highlighted extraordinary and make-do efforts from around the world to address COVID-19 effects.

Early in the process, the organizers recognized the value of mentors who could fill in the gaps of the abbreviated instruction in virtual idea blitzes, and who could serve as external voices to help drive decision making, reorient teams that were getting distracted, and raise emerging issues to the organizing team. Similar to their role during a startup weekend, mentors—primarily composed of faculty, doctoral students, and industry experts—served as a sounding board by answering the teams' inquiries, asking challenging questions, and keeping eyes on the work that teams were developing. Five virtual mentor check-ins were incorporated into the master schedule—two on Friday, two on Saturday, and one on Sunday afternoon—though each team could adapt as needed. The mix of academic and professional

mentors was critical to the success of the initiative. Mentors helped many teams by opening their networks and vetting ideas directly with key professionals in healthcare, retail, and other relevant industries. The detailed schedule was centralized on a Dropbox Paper webpage, and the milestones were detailed per team in active Google Sheets, which all participants could edit as the membership of their teams evolved and their ideas developed (see [Appendices B and C](#) for screen captures of the Dropbox Paper and of a Google Sheet).

### 3. Outcomes of the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz

#### 3.1. Virtual idea blitz: An effective digital innovation

The need to complete the entirety of the program virtually introduced many challenges but also some unique opportunities. While some design sprints, startup weekends, and hackathons may have occurred remotely, these efforts benefited from teams composed of individuals who already knew each other well, which facilitated problem solving across long distances. But the challenge in the present case was that few if any of the participants had ever met one another. Furthermore, no two members of the organizing team would at any time be present in the same room. The organizing faculty thus sought to adapt existing processes, but they did not know whether virtual equivalents would be effective without the option to meet in the same physical space.

Addressing such an urgent grand challenge required innovation and adaptation to facilitate participants' work in a digital environment. Indeed, we found that several unique opportunities arose from the necessity of organizing virtually. First, there was no need to secure a space to meet, as a result of which no funds nor formal approvals were required. This adaptive "meeting" format created the ability to act swiftly, so we could launch the event in a matter of days. Second, hosting the event virtually created the ability to form teams with participants from across the world. Participants incurred no lodging or travel costs and did not need to seek approval or sponsorship from their organizations. Thus, they could make the decision to participate on short notice. Although individuals from around the world were dealing with many constraints, including new working conditions, school closures, and mandatory shelter-in-place orders, it later became apparent that they were looking for a positive outlet through which to channel

their energy toward a social cause; this is consistent with [Williams and Shepherd \(2016\)](#).

### 3.2. Virtual community building: Generating a strong sense of collective purpose

The organizers primarily focused on the potential benefits of identifying and accelerating the development of ideas to urgently address a societal grand challenge. But an unexpected outcome from the program was the emergence of a strong sense of community among participants in the virtual idea blitz ([Feld, 2012](#)). While such feelings of community can be common after individuals work together for an extended period of time, most such events to date have occurred in in-person settings. Initially, the weekend schedule included a concluding event for submitting ideas to potential investors. The rationale for this approach was that the organizers were cognizant of the time constraints of all participants, who were volunteering their time; of the ongoing challenges participants faced, both professionally and personally, due to COVID-19 lockdown orders; and of the many outstanding commitments participants had beyond launching a new venture over the weekend. As such, the organizers initially wanted a prompt and efficient wrap-up that would allow people to return to their personal and professional commitments.

But as the virtual idea blitz progressed, the organizers discussed how they could make this virtual event as much like an in-person event as possible. One of the organizers proposed scheduling a virtual closing reception at 9:00 p.m. on the final day, indicating that attendees should “bring your own drinks, your own food and your own chair.” At 9:00 p.m., more than 100 participants—who had already been working nearly around the clock for the prior 2 days—gathered on Zoom to unwind and share their sense of fulfillment through the work they had collectively accomplished over the weekend. During that virtual party, numerous participants shared unprompted and unplanned testimonials that evinced a strong sense of community (see [Appendix E](#))—that is, “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group” ([McMillan & Chavis, 1986](#), p. 8). This appeared to provide an important benefit to participants who themselves had been struggling with the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak. For instance, one participant summarized:

You know, as of Friday at five, we were all strangers that were assigned together in a

group. And it was pretty, pretty crazy to see everybody coming together for one mission ... This is probably one of the best group experiences I’ve ever had personally and shout out to my team ten and our amazing experience, I think we’ve got a lifelong friendship.

Similarly, another individual explained:

This has been so helpful ... up until this point I would awake every morning and review the latest infection/death counts on Johns Hopkins website ... this gave me meaning and purpose as I haven’t checked the Johns Hopkins case numbers in three days!

Such a strong sense of collective purpose, though established only via virtual interactions, led to intense emotional reactions. Many discussed how the event was a departure from the daily pattern of reading discouraging news as the pandemic spread. The outpourings were expressions of hope, connection, purpose, and gratitude. Some of the comments from the Sunday night celebration follow:

“Super happy to be involved in something that’s taking the initiative to be involved in positive change.”

“Putting a skillset and a passion and a drive into something that can make a difference has been a really unique and a really valuable experience. I’ve learned a lot.”

“I feel good.”

“Thank you for encouraging me.”

For others, the event was a learning opportunity:

I’m glad I was able to make a small contribution to this great effort. For me personally, this experience was something I was missing from my MBA education. You guys provided me a perfect opportunity to learn this. Thank you very much.

### 3.3. Project outcomes of the virtual idea blitz

The virtual idea blitz was focused on unearthing and then accelerating ideas to combat the repercussions of COVID-19. That is, the objective was to facilitate the emergence of independent teams capable of developing ideas into prototypes

that could be implemented to make a significant social impact. Indeed, this was the primary driver behind the decisions to help cultivate a systematic idea-development process and to provide independent teams with opportunities to present their ideas and prototypes to those with the resources to financially back their initiatives. We realized early on that we had neither the capacity nor the desire to manage individual ventures; our skill sets were positioned to serve as accelerants to the diverse and novel skill sets of the volunteer teams. For these reasons, we did not specifically quantify the social impacts of each venture, but we have taken several steps to document and evaluate the outcomes of the virtual idea blitz as a whole.

First, we have tracked the outcomes of teams that remained active following the conclusion of the virtual idea blitz. For instance, one of the participating teams, #RealHeroesNeedMasks, has partnered with celebrities, athletes, and key influencers from around the globe to launch a social media campaign to raise awareness about shortages of personal protective equipment and to mobilize public action to get that equipment into the hands of those who need it most: frontline healthcare professionals, who are the real heroes. In a span of three weeks following the event, team #RealHeroesNeedMasks facilitated the donation of over 21,000 masks (see [Appendix C](#)). Similarly, another team, ReScaleMed,<sup>5</sup> has partnered with volunteer critical-care specialists, doctors, and medical-device technologists to increase the number of medical personnel available to set up ventilators and manage intubated patients. They are currently curating key medical training content to help quickly scale up frontline medical resources worldwide. Still other teams are seeking to scale up their efforts, while some teams' ideas have been terminated.<sup>6</sup>

Second, we have also collected evidence that the participating teams were chasing the right problems and generating ideas that will continue to be used by us and others. For example, Dyson has [designed a new ventilator](#) and is planning to build 15,000 of them; GE Healthcare in Madison, Wisconsin is on a hiring surge for more ventilator assemblers ([Merrick & Noon, 2020](#)); New York is allowing multiple

patients per ventilator ([Siegel, 2020](#)); Apple has provided support for teachers moving to virtual teaching ([Dormehl, 2020](#)); steps have been taken to help the elderly; and interventions have addressed the increased risk of domestic abuse during the crisis ([Graham-Harrison, Giuffrida, Smith, & Ford, 2020](#)). In sum, many of the initiatives being pursued through private-public partnerships seek to address the core challenges we raised in our virtual idea blitz, suggesting that the teams were coalescing around some of the most pressing issues related to COVID-19. While the most important priorities will—and should—evolve with changing needs as the crisis unfolds ([Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd, & Zhao, 2017](#); [Williams & Shepherd, 2018](#)), we remain confident that the virtual idea blitz was an effective organizing mechanism for identifying and mitigating the most relevant challenges in the moment.

Finally, we have tracked evidence of the success of the event itself in achieving its specific goals of organizing individuals to generate actionable ideas that would bring about social change and alleviate suffering. We found that the event has been replicated by some initial participants and by other actors, though we expect some of these were developed independently, without knowledge of this particular virtual idea blitz.<sup>7</sup> Yet several higher education institutions, including the University of Cambridge, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and Valdosta State University have reached out to the organizing team seeking guidance on how to organize a similar event. Similarly, incubators and accelerators such as Gener8tor and Entrepreneur Ready have launched their own programs, either in awareness of our efforts or directly with our participants and mentors.

## 4. Practical implications

### 4.1. Virtual idea blitzes as a tool for rapidly stimulating innovation

As described above, virtual idea blitzes integrate aspects of design sprints, startup weekends, and hackathons. We anticipate that the virtual idea blitz will continue to be employed in a variety of contexts. For example, one result of COVID-19 is the mass migration of traditional, in-person courses to an online format. We anticipate that the concepts developed here could be applied in this new context. Indeed, one member of the

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.rescalemed.org/>

<sup>6</sup> While not all ideas were ultimately taken to market (and some are still in the process of seeking backing), we still view the event as a major success. One of the key objectives of design sprints is to vet ideas rapidly to avoid wasting resources on those that will not work. That is, it is better to learn (in a short time) that an idea is infeasible than to spend significant resources on one that should not be pursued. Therefore, terminated ideas are still successes in that they prevent the waste of critical, limited resources (see [Knapp et al., 2016](#)).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Techstars Startup Weekend—with whom we communicated at the launch of our events—has launched a series of virtual events for the first time; for a list, see <https://startupweekend.org/interests/covid-19>

organizing team is doing this right now: teaching an online version of a design sprint to in-residence MBAs at the Kelley School of Business. In addition, faculty could replicate and adapt this concept as a capstone of an online course on entrepreneurship, innovation, or design. Finally, we anticipate a wide range of applications in which traditional innovation collaborations are no longer available (e.g., in-person hackathons, startup weekends). Given its goal to move from idea to minimum viable product (MVP) as rapidly as possible, the virtual idea blitz can aid in innovation efforts in education, industry, and beyond.

#### 4.2. Entrepreneurial hustle: A necessary ingredient for leadership in extreme contexts

Delivering this event required the organizers to act under conditions of uncertainty and under resource constraints in order to bring a novel program to market for a set of stakeholders who were not perfectly identifiable at the outset. This type of action under uncertainty has recently been presented in the literature as “entrepreneurial hustle” (Fisher et al., 2020). Fisher et al. (2020) define entrepreneurial hustle as an entrepreneur’s urgent, unorthodox actions that are intended to be useful in addressing immediate challenges and opportunities under conditions of uncertainty. Their study indicates that such behaviors are quite common in startup organizations and are necessary but not sufficient foundational behaviors for entrepreneurial success. Similarly, prior leadership research has identified that undertaking unorthodox actions to address emergent challenges may be appropriate in extreme conditions or crisis responses (Hannah, Uhl-Bien, Avolio, & Cavarretta, 2009; Reid, Anglin, Baur, Short, & Buckley, 2018). In the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz, entrepreneurial hustling was evident in both the organizing and executional aspects of the planning team and also within each of the idea teams. Inherent to such behaviors is rapid decision making. Our findings suggest several practical questions organizations should consider: How do we encourage entrepreneurial hustle in times of crisis rather than forcing things from the top down? How might we enable people within our organization to build on their unique strengths rather than requiring they follow a playbook provided by corporate officers? And how can entrepreneurs communicate their ability to hustle in responding to emergent customer needs and market opportunities?

#### 4.3. Practical reflections: Strengths, weaknesses, and lessons learned

The dramatic nature of COVID-19 instigated an immediate need for an initiative that could rapidly lead to desired outcomes. As detailed in this article, our virtual idea blitz was conceived on a Monday, and the program commenced just 4 days later. Against the challenging backdrop of a global pandemic, the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz was able to draw on the prosocial motives of participants from disparate groups with complementary skills. The core motivation of all participants was to develop an idea to help resolve a social issue related to COVID-19. Despite the short recruitment window of 48 hours, we successfully gathered multiple audiences across academic, student, professional, and funder groups. The lockdowns and stay-at-home orders created for some participants the flexibility to dedicate a short, concentrated burst of time that would ordinarily not have been available. They also eliminated the prospect of meeting in person and allowed for a collective embracing of a shared virtual mindset that may not have been possible if the event had been organized under previous conditions. These extraordinary circumstances proved a strength for our event.

Another strength originated from the institutional resources and competencies at Indiana University. While recruiting and coordinating the involvement of diverse participant and stakeholder groups was daunting, the organizing faculty were able to creatively leverage several internal resources and competencies. Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business has a long history of entrepreneurship education, emanating out of the Johnson Center for Entrepreneurship, led by Dr. Donald Kuratko, the Jack M. Gill Distinguished Chair of Entrepreneurship. A 12-year review of academic entrepreneurship research designed to identify leading scholars and universities ranked Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business as having the greatest impact on the field of entrepreneurship (Xu, Chen, Fung, & Chan, 2018). A sample of the portfolio of innovative programs presently offered include: the Clapp IDEA Competition—a campus-wide idea competition that solicits novel ideas from across the campus; the “spine sweat” course—a semester-long effort to develop promising ventures that concludes with pitches to venture capitalists in Silicon Valley; and several other notable cocurricular entrepreneurship programs. Further, several faculty in the department help run a residential week-long program called Kelley Connect Week for its online MBA program, Kelley Direct. Kelley Direct has a long tenure of innovative online delivery and is ranked as the best

online MBA program in the world ([U.S. News & World Report, 2020](#)). Thus, while the program was organized quickly, it was able to draw on the department's existing strengths in entrepreneurship education and online education.

We also acknowledge a number of weaknesses and areas where things might need to be done differently. First, while we cite the relatively speedy reaction by the organizing team as a strength, more time would have allowed for more effective coordination of coaches, mentors, and seminar leads. Second, the online portal allowed anyone to sign up with minimal barriers. As a result, many of the idea submitters were not screened carefully for their understanding of or commitment to the multiday event, nor for their ability to contribute meaningfully to an entrepreneurial team. Because registration was left open and the time window was short, teams were formed on the basis of interest and not with a view to the functional backgrounds of team members. Therefore, a registration cutoff and more time would allow organizers to assign teams more effectively. Some similar events incorporate a competitive element, including announcing winners and providing prizes or funding at the conclusion of the event. This could provide teams with legitimacy as they pursue their ideas further. The organizing team, however, decided not to employ a competitive design, both because of the collective desire to see social solutions emerge and to avoid disappointing participants who did not win. This was a difficult decision, as the organizing team also recognized the potential benefits to team members' motivation and commitment were a competitive element involved. Future organizers should particularly consider these trade-offs if implementing a virtual idea blitz, particularly in other contexts where there may be less interest.

Finally, although most of the idea leads performed spectacularly well, they were selected predominantly on the basis of their idea submissions and not on their leadership characteristics or professional experience. In some instances, the idea leads did not have the skills of a manager or entrepreneur to motivate and direct the rest of the team, or they had little experience managing team members who had substantially more overall experience or topic-specific knowledge. Future events may benefit from a more deliberate process of evaluating and assessing the leadership capabilities of the group prior to assigning idea leads. Another possibility would be to separate the role of idea lead from the role of team leader, which could be assigned separately in advance or even elected by the team following the first meeting.

## 5. Pathways to replication

While the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz is a unique response to an unprecedented grand challenge, the results of the event suggest the concept is transferable to a number of different contexts. We discuss some general guidelines that may orient others who would like to replicate or extend this concept at their institutions or organizations.

### 5.1. Before the idea blitz

A series of discrete steps taken in the days preceding the COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz now, in retrospect, appear to have been critical to its success. These steps included establishing a champion and an organizing team comprised of advocates to energize different stakeholder groups; a portal to direct any interested parties; a rapid and realistic outreach strategy; and a strategy to sort and prioritize ideas submitted by participants and to select idea leads. The first step was taken by the champion, who initiated the idea and then gathered a set of like-minded advocates who became the organizing team. Together, the champion and the organizing team energized different stakeholder groups to bring them aboard the project. In this case, the champion issued a call to action to other motivated members of the department while simultaneously building a coalition of external supporters composed of well-respected and influential business professionals.

Second, a portal was established to collect information from potential participants. The portal allowed for two different paths: one for those who had an idea or had identified a pain point, and a second for those who wished to become involved as team members, mentors, or funders. The portal and the respective paths were created in Qualtrics as a survey with idiosyncratic question sets contingent on the self-identified paths (see [Appendix D](#)).

Third, due to the short timeline and unknown circumstances regarding participation and scale, the organizing faculty decided to recruit participants exclusively by publicizing the event on their professional and social networks.

Fourth, three members of the organizing team met virtually for approximately 4 hours to narrow the scope of the virtual idea blitz to the most promising ideas. The members sought both to minimize the possibility that those who had submitted ideas would not participate should their own idea not be selected, as well as to identify the highest impact ideas on which the participants should focus. The organizing team sought to balance these two goals by

abductively identifying key themes from the submissions and systematically generating an organizing framework; this is consistent with best practices in qualitative research methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Ultimately, the organizing team selected five overarching idea themes to organize the 95 submitted ideas or pain points, and it selected 11 general ideas that fit into these themes. For each idea, one to three idea leads—that is, the individuals who had submitted pertinent ideas—were identified and notified that they had been given the opportunity to share their ideas with working teams. Idea leads were also notified that they were welcome to invite other colleagues or friends to enroll for the weekend to assist, which provided the event a core group of idea evangelists from the very start.

## 5.2. During the idea blitz

Several components proved essential to the effective execution of our virtual idea blitz. First, the kickoff meeting was of utmost importance in aligning and orienting diverse stakeholders to the shared objectives of the event. Knowing that as many as 200 individuals would attend the kickoff on a Friday night of their own volition, the organizing team wanted the kickoff meeting to generate excitement and energy to preserve the participation of as many participants as possible. Thus, the organizing team instilled a number of guiding principles to demonstrate focus and cohesion. All kickoff presentations centered around a clear call to action regarding responding to the multiple salient problems created by the crisis.

Second, organizers stressed outcomes and goals heavily and included a set of five minimal goals: (1) to do some immediate good by alleviating feelings of helplessness; (2) to socialize with, work with, and develop groups of new colleagues, friends, and mentors (i.e., to reduce the impact of social distancing); (3) to learn some entrepreneurial tools and techniques from some of the world's best faculty in the discipline; (4) to understand what an idea blitz is and to develop an idea to MVP in 2 days; and (5) to develop a video startup pitch by Sunday with a group of highly motivated people. Organizers also discussed a set of "gold standard" or aspirational outcomes. These included getting funding for an idea, enlisting innovation partners to further develop a concept past the weekend (e.g., via innovation centers, incubators, and accelerators), and scaling up an idea without constraints. As part of this discussion, the presenters delivered two 20-minute seminars on relevant topics.

Third, clear timelines and milestones were established to ensure teams were advancing their

ideas appropriately and to allow mentors to intervene as necessary. Specifically, the organizing team designed the overall process of the virtual idea blitz to align with synchronized clock time (Saunders, Van Slyke, & Vogel, 2004), which provided structure and time pressure to help motivate teams to achieve certain steps as the event proceeded. Most teams had two academic mentors and two industry or professional mentors; these consisted of volunteers who wished to add their expertise to the weekend and were primarily angel investors, venture capitalists, or individuals with experience in accelerators.

Fourth, organizers prioritized having an editable document with which participants could regularly update their progress. This was implemented using a Google Sheet in which each team had its own tab. By navigating each team's spreadsheet tab, the organizers could see ideas pivot. This system also allowed latecomers to catch up on materials or information that they had missed.

## 5.3. After the virtual idea blitz

The organizers decided to hold a virtual celebration at 9:00 p.m. Sunday evening, after the event's official conclusion. The organizing team featured several items during the celebration, including a website with all teams' video pitches edited to include intro and outro slides with music; a highlight reel recapping the weekend that included brief clips from several of the teams' pitches; and recognition of individuals who were not part of the organizing team but who played important supporting roles over the course of the weekend. After the event, the organizers decided to publicize the teams' ideas and prototypes for two reasons. First, publicity can attract new team members or critical support (e.g., technical skills) to the teams that elected to implement their prototypes, which could help them execute their ideas more rapidly or at greater scale. Second, it can also help attract funding. The focus on disseminating ideas that could create social value was a key distinction compared to events that prioritize commercialization and protection of intellectual property. [Appendix F](#) provides details and screenshots of these publication efforts.

Finally, the organizing team committed to maintaining momentum with mentors and other supporters after the fact. More than 40 volunteer mentors were engaged all weekend, and each leveraged their extensive networks and skills to help not just their own teams but also the other 20 teams. At times, mentors called on other mentors for support, whether to join the conversation, to

help disseminate surveys, or to identify important professional contacts.

## 6. Tackling evolving challenges

The emergence of COVID-19 can be considered a “black swan” event: a rare event with extreme consequences for people and organizations that is difficult to predict using typical models (Taleb, 2007). While we hope pandemic threats will receive greater attention, better scenario planning, and more rapid mitigation going forward, this article is intended to help entrepreneurship, management, and business scholars and practitioners to collectively consider how we can draw on our research expertise to stimulate community responses to a variety of acute and chronic societal grand challenges facing our world (George et al., 2016). Our experience suggests that universities can play a valuable role in linking professionals, students, and researchers in shared endeavors that can achieve substantial societal benefits. This article describes how such efforts can be rapidly mobilized and can lead to high-impact results. In recounting this experience, describing the integrative and community-building approach, and providing a detailed description of specific actions and tools, we hope to encourage and inspire other organizers, to provide them with a guide to accelerate their efforts, and to point out shortcomings they might avoid. As we write this, we remain unsure of the final health consequences and economic losses that will result from COVID-19. But we hope that other organizers, including professors, professionals, and students, can use this article to stimulate their own progress in tackling the evolving challenges posed by this pandemic and the many other societal grand challenges they are sure to confront.

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Editor, Greg Fisher, for his thoughtful guidance, and two anonymous reviewers for their constructive and insightful comments. They also would like to thank Don Kuratko and the Johnson Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation. The authors gratefully acknowledge the departmental support provided by Tim Baldwin, Chair of the Management and Entrepreneurship Department. Regan Stevenson acknowledges the financial support of the John and Donna Shoemaker Fellowship with which some of this

research was supported. Trenton A. Williams acknowledges the financial support of the Olsan Family Faculty Fellowship with which some of this research was supported. Finally, the authors gratefully acknowledge funding provided by the Office of the Vice President of Research, Indiana University to support grants to accelerate entrepreneurial responses to COVID-19.

## Appendix A. Initial email

**Subject:** Your input - COVID-19 Social Entrepreneurship Initiative (later renamed “Virtual Idea Blitz”)

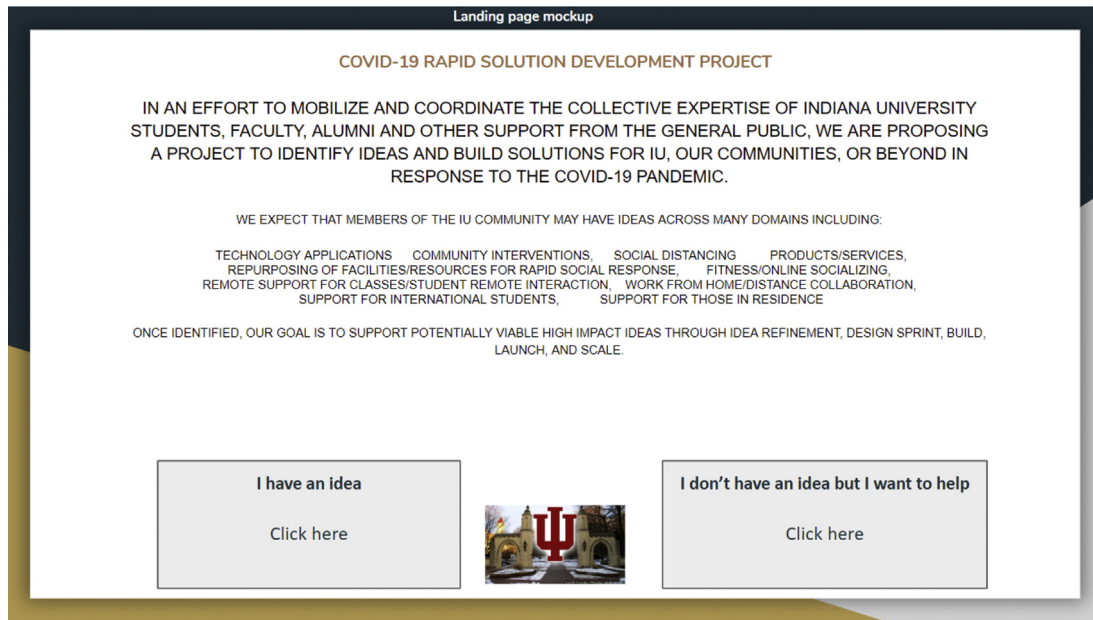
Team,

I’ve been trying to brainstorm a social entrepreneurship initiative that we could lead in response to the COVID-19 situation. Essentially what I’ve come up with is facilitating a rapid entrepreneurship accelerator and matchmaking program that brings together students faculty and alums to generate ideas and build solutions related to issues that have arisen due to COVID-19 (could include tech applications, social distancing products/service, remote working, repurposing of facilities/resources-see link below). Think of it like a digital startup weekend focused on entirely on COVID-19 solutions of all types (note: this was later renamed a “Virtual Idea Blitz”).

I have sketched this as a landing page/place to save ideas—still fine tuning (see here). This program would draw on our entrepreneurial toolkit and workshop strengths. The goal would be to move ideas into the prototype stage rapidly.

I’ve vetted the concept with some student entrepreneurs who have tech/coding skills and they have interest in participating. In general they believe other students would rally to assist in any way they can (e.g., design, web, social media marketing, etc.). I also have some initial interest from groups and individuals that would want to fund/support viable solutions that may come out of this initiative. Beyond that, I think that our alumni and community would quickly rally to support any viable initiatives that emerge.

Please share thoughts/concerns via email if you have any. If this is something you want to participate in please let me know if you can jump on a Zoom call at 10:00 am tomorrow to discuss/vet/adapt this concept.



## Appendix B. Full schedule

### Friday

5:30–6:30 p.m.	<b>Kickoff Meeting &amp; Workshop #1: Social Value &amp; Idea Sprint Principles</b> <i>All participants join session to receive instructions and overview</i> ON ZOOM - <a href="http://www.virtualideablitz.com/">http://www.virtualideablitz.com/</a> <b>Welcome &amp; Idea Blitz Overview</b> —led by <a href="#">Regan Stevenson</a> <b>Situation/Case Overview</b> —led by <a href="#">Matt Josefy</a> <b>Creating Social Value</b> —led by <a href="#">Sophie Bacq</a> <b>Idea Sprint Principles</b> —led by <a href="#">Trent Williams</a>
6:30–7:00 p.m.	<b>Breakout Instructions: Team Assignments, Mentors &amp; Introductions</b> <i>All participants join session to receive instructions</i> Led by Will Geoghegan Teams have been identified according to <b>complimentary skill sets, problem category, and the choice they made earlier about the idea they would like to work on.</b> Each team has an assigned team/idea number and a series of mentors to assist them in developing their idea throughout the weekend (see the “Teams, Coaches & Mentors” table below). <b>Breakout Process:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When instructed, participants and mentors <u>accept the breakout room</u> of the team number they have been assigned.</li> <li>After brief team introductions, the mentors will help teams develop their own system of online communication and workflow, including setting up an independent Zoom link hosted by the team lead. This Zoom link will also be shared with the mentor for later check-ins (e.g., @ 9:00 p.m.).</li> <li>Once the independent link is established and shared, teams will leave the call and join their “independent” Zoom calls to start the event.</li> </ul>
7:00–7:30 p.m.	Optional break: We suggest you eat something!
7:30 p.m.—flexible	<b>Team Working Session #1:</b> Research on pains/solutions in other locations, ideation, map MVP, identify customers and weekend deliverables.
9:00 p.m.	<b>Mentor Check-in #1:</b> Each team consults with assigned mentors on Zoom.

## Saturday

9:30–10:30 a.m.	<b>Workshop #2: Customer Validation, Prototyping</b> Led by Trent Williams
10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	<b>Team Working Session #2:</b> Refine MVP concept, start building,
12:30–1:00 p.m.	Optional break: Eat some lunch.
1:00–2:00 p.m.	<b>Mentor Check-in #2:</b> Each team consults with assigned mentors on Zoom.
2:00–7:00 p.m.	<b>Team Working Session #3:</b> Pain-Product validation, iteration, keep building.
5:00–6:00 p.m.	Optional break: Virtual dinner, anyone?
7:00 p.m.	<b>Mentor Check-in #3:</b> Each team consults with assigned mentors on Zoom.
8:00 p.m. –flexible	<b>Team Working Session #4:</b> Finalize MVP, Discuss business model (if applicable), and begin mapping out the structure of the pitch.

## Sunday



9:30–10:30 a.m.	<b>Workshop #3: Effective Pitches</b> Led by Greg Fisher
10:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m.	<b>Team Working Session #5:</b> Continue to validate and iterate, work on pitch.
12:30–1:00 p.m.	Optional break: Eat some lunch.
2:00 p.m.	<b>Mentor Check-in #4:</b> Each team consults with assigned mentors on Zoom.
3:00–5:00 p.m.	<b>Team Working Session #6:</b> Finalize presentation.
5:00 p.m.	Teams record and submit their final presentations.
	CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING THE SPRINT!
9:00 p.m.	<b>Optional Virtual Reception</b> (Bring Your Own Drinks. And Your Own Food. And Your Own Chair.) Join us to look at some highlights of our collective efforts and to give us a chance to thank you for your investment in this initiative.

## Appendix C. Screen captures of some of the successes of one of the teams

### #RealHeroesNeedMasks



## Appendix D. Qualtrics landing page

 Share
  Tweet

# Using Idea Contagion to Combat Virus Contagion: Online Social Entrepreneurship Weekend Accelerator in Response to COVID-19 (March 20-22)

In an effort to rapidly apply the best entrepreneurial tools and thinking to our communal response to COVID-19, a group of Indiana University Entrepreneurship & Management Professors are coordinating a collective "idea sprint" weekend with the goal of surfacing -- and ultimately implementing (if viable) -- ideas with the highest potential for helping the community navigate this virus.

We anticipate that there may be many ideas out there to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic across many domains including but not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology applications</li> <li>• Community interventions</li> <li>• Social distancing</li> <li>• Work from home/distance collaboration</li> <li>• Personal fitness/online socializing</li> <li>• Support for international students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for in-residence students</li> <li>• Support for at-risk populations</li> <li>• Support for existing businesses</li> <li>• Repurposing of facilities/resources for rapid social response.</li> <li>• Products/services (e.g., alternative tissue, other supplies)</li> </ul>
---	---

**OPEN CALL:**  
This is your chance to make a meaningful impact in the world's fight against COVID-19 while collaborating with a cross-functional group of like-minded individuals.

## WILL YOU JOIN OUR EFFORT?

I HAVE AN IDEA OR A PROBLEM THAT I THI...

I WANT TO PARTICIPATE/HELP IN SOME WAY

---

Once ideas are identified, we will use existing entrepreneurship tools, workshops, and mentoring to support potentially viable high impact ideas. We will host online collaborative workshops Friday - Sunday (3/20-3/22) on idea refinement, design sprint, and build (similar to a startup weekend but focused on social responses to COVID-19). The goal is to move ideas to mock-up by Sunday.

**STEP ONE:** IDEA GENERATION - CLICK THE IDEA BUTTON ABOVE (DEADLINE THURSDAY MARCH 19TH AT 5 PM).  
**STEP TWO:** IDEA SELECTION & INITIAL ONLINE MEETING BETWEEN IDEA LEADS AND BUSINESS COACHES.  
**STEP THREE:** TEAM FORMATION AND SPRINT TO GO FROM IDEA TO PROTOTYPE/MOCK-UP (March 20-22).  
**STEP FOUR:** FUNDING, LAUNCH, IMPLEMENTATION, AND SCALE (IF VIABLE).  
**STEP FIVE:** ARMY OF VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT VIABLE INITIATIVES.

Original landing page: [www.covid19ideas.org](http://www.covid19ideas.org)  
 Current webpage: [www.virtualideablitz.com](http://www.virtualideablitz.com)

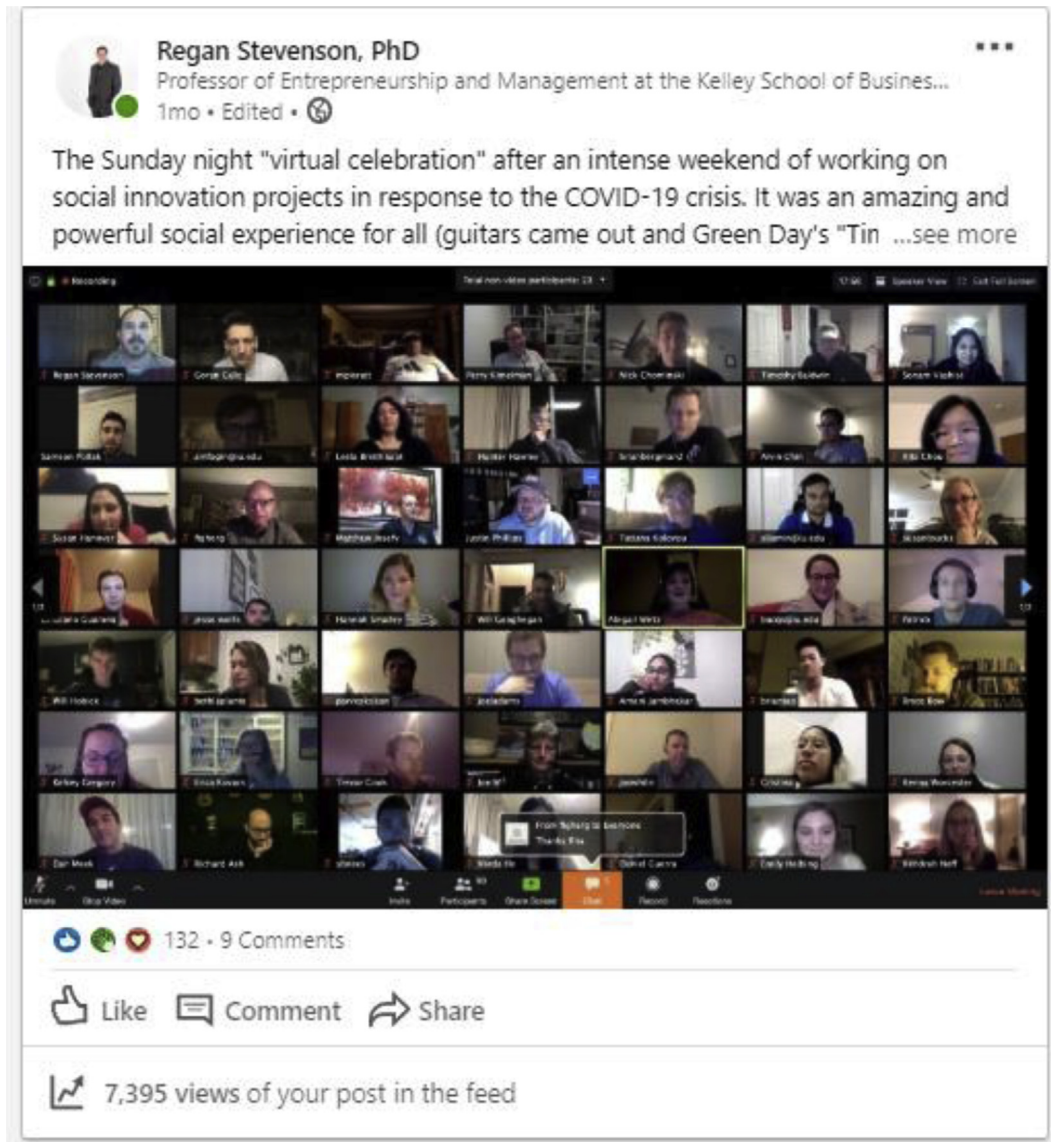
## Appendix E. Screen captures of the call to action on LinkedIn



## Appendix F. Posts detailing the outcomes and the celebration event

After the event, organizers sought to publicize the ideas and prototypes in order to help attract new team members or critical support (e.g., technical skills) for implementation of prototypes, and to help attract funding. Specific publicizing efforts included:

- All members of the organizing team shared summaries of the event and its outcomes on LinkedIn, posting links to the website and sharing posts by participant teams that often linked directly to their videos. In addition, a LinkedIn post with a screenshot of the final reception, showing dozens of participants on the video call, was shared by each member of the organizing team (and, in turn, reposted by dozens of others who had been involved in the project).
- One participant offered to write a blog post to be shared on her department's website. The organizing team supported this effort by supplying quotes and photographs.
- Progress and updates were shared regularly with the Indiana University and Kelley School media teams so that they could draft a press release for dissemination.
- The organizing team hired a video editor to create a 10-minute highlight reel of the weekend for participants and a second 4-minute promotional video to be added to the main website.



## References

- Bacq, S., & Aguilera, R. V. (2019). *Responsible governance in the organizational pursuit of societal grand challenges*. Bloomington: Kelley School of Business [Working paper].
- Bacq, S., & Janssen, F. (2011). The multiple faces of social entrepreneurship: A review of definitional issues based on geographical and thematic criteria. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 23(5/6), 373–403.
- Briscoe, G., & Mulligan, C. (2014). *Digital innovation: The hackathon phenomenon*. London, UK: Creativeworks [Working Paper No. 6].
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dormehl, L. (2020, March 26). Apple's on-staff educators will guide teachers through challenges of online learning. *Cult of Mac*. Available at <https://www.cultofmac.com/696373/apples-on-staff-educators-will-guide-teachers-through-challenges-of-online-learning/>
- Drabek, T. E., & McEntire, D. A. (2003). Emergent phenomena and the sociology of disaster: Lessons, trends, and opportunities from the research literature. *Disaster Prevention and Management: International Journal*, 12(2), 97–112.
- Dutton, J. E., Worline, M. C., Frost, P. J., & Lilius, J. (2006). Explaining compassion organizing. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 51(1), 59–96.
- Feld, B. (2012). *Startup communities: Building an entrepreneurial ecosystem in your city*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Fisher, G., Stevenson, R., Burnell, D., Neubert, E., & Kuratko, D. (2020). Entrepreneurial hustle: Navigating uncertainty and enrolling venture stakeholders through urgent unorthodox action. *Journal of Management Studies*. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12584>

- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219–245.
- Gates, B. (2020, Feb 28). Responding to COVID-19: A once-in-a-century pandemic? *New England Journal of Medicine*. Available at <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2003762>
- George, G., Howard-Grenville, J., Joshi, A., & Tihanyi, L. (2016). Understanding and tackling societal grand challenges through management research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(6), 1880–1895.
- Graham-Harrison, E., Giuffrida, A., Smith, H., & Ford, L. (2020, March 28). Lockdowns around the world bring rise in domestic violence. *The Guardian*. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/28/lockdowns-world-rise-domestic-violence>
- Hannah, S. T., Uhl-Bien, M., Avolio, B. J., & Cavarretta, F. L. (2009). A framework for examining leadership in extreme contexts. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(6), 897–919.
- Hilbert, D. (1902). Mathematical problems. *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society*, 8, 437–479.
- Kaniasty, K., & Norris, F. H. (1993). A test of the social support deterioration model in the context of natural disaster. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64(3), 395–408.
- Knapp, J., Zeratsky, J., & Kowitz, B. (2016). *Sprint: How to solve big problems and test new ideas in just five days*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Komo News Staff. (2020, March 11). *UW Doc: Coronavirus 'like a natural disaster happening in slow motion'*. Available at <https://komonews.com/news/coronavirus/uw-doc-coronavirus-like-a-natural-disaster-happening-in-slow-motion>
- Komssi, M., Pichlis, D., Raatikainen, M., Kindström, K., & Järvinen, J. (2014). What are hackathons for? *IEEE Software*, 32(5), 60–67.
- McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), 6–23.
- Merrick, A., & Noon, C. (2020, March 25). All hands on deck: Volunteers rush in to support 24/7 production of ventilators in Wisconsin. *GE Reports*. Available at <https://www-ge-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.ge.com/reports/all-hands-on-deck-volunteers-rush-in-to-support-24-7-production-of-ventilators-in-wisconsin/amp/>
- Mihalcik, C. (2020, March 25). Facebook, Microsoft, TikTok partner with WHO for coronavirus hackathon. *CNET*. Available at <https://www.cnet.com/news/facebook-microsoft-tiktok-partner-with-who-for-coronavirus-hackathon/>
- Nager, M., Nelsen, C., & Nouyrigat, F. (2011). *Startup weekend: How to take a company from concept to creation in 54 hours*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Quarantelli, E. L. (1985). What is disaster? The need for clarification in definition and conceptualization in research. *University of Delaware*. Available at <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/1119>
- Reid, S. W., Anglin, A. H., Baur, J. E., Short, J. C., & Buckley, M. R. (2018). Blazing new trails or opportunity lost? Evaluating research at the intersection of leadership and entrepreneurship. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 29(1), 150–164.
- Saunders, C., Van Slyke, C., & Vogel, D. R. (2004). My time or yours? Managing time visions in global virtual teams. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 18(1), 19–37.
- Shah, R. J. (2012). *Building resilience to recurrent crisis: USAID policy and program guidance*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government.
- Siegel, B. (2020, March 26). New York approves ventilator splitting, allowing hospitals to treat two patients with one machine. *ABC News*. Available at <https://abcnews.go.com/US/york-approves-ventilator-splitting-allowing-hospitals-treat-patients/story?id=69816167>
- Taleb, N. N. (2007). *The black swan: The impact of the highly improbable*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Trainer, E. H., Kalyanasundaram, A., Chaihirunkarn, C., & Herbsleb, J. D. (2016). How to hackathon: Socio-technical tradeoffs in brief, intensive collocation. In *Paper presented at the 19th ACM conference on computer-supported cooperative work and social computing*. San Francisco, CA: CSCW.
- USAID. (2020). *Working in crises and conflict*. Available at <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict>
- U.S. News, World Report. (2020). *Best online MBA programs*. Available at <https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/mba>
- Weinberger, M. (2017, June 11). There are only two rules: Facebook explains how hackathons, one of its oldest traditions, is also one of its most important. *Business Insider*. Available at <https://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-hackathons-2017-6>
- Williams, T. A., Gruber, D., Sutcliffe, K., Shepherd, D. A., & Zhao, E. Y. (2017). Organizational response to adversity: Fusing crisis management and resilience research streams. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 11(2), 733–769.
- Williams, T. A., & Shepherd, D. A. (2016). Victim entrepreneurs doing well by doing good: Venture creation and well-being in the aftermath of a resource shock. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 31(4), 365–387.
- Williams, T. A., & Shepherd, D. A. (2018). To the rescue! Brokering a rapid, scaled, and customized compassionate response to suffering after disaster. *Journal of Management Studies*, 55(6), 910–942.
- Xu, N., Chen, Y., Fung, A., & Chan, K. C. (2018). Contributing forces in entrepreneurship research: A global citation analysis. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 56(1), 179–201.