Conversation & Action Guide

Let Your Table Take You Places

TUESDAY, MAY 8, 2018

on the table.
Your voice matters.

THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST
AND AFFILIATES
Thank You for Joining the Fifth Annual On the Table

If you are a brand-new On the Table host, welcome aboard! If you are a returning host, welcome back!

You’re in good company—thousands of Chicago-area residents have participated in On the Table since its launch in 2014, leading to new relationships, elevated civic conversations and genuine pathways toward collaborative action. These are outcomes that make our communities more connected, resilient and resourceful.

We’re happy that you’re joining us as a host on this journey for greater civic engagement.

Find tips here on hosting an On the Table discussion and inspiring action to improve our communities. Get more insights and motivation by joining our new Facebook group for hosts and Acting Up award winners.

Then, let your table take you places.

*In 2016, 6th graders developed a coloring book to tackle sexual assault.*

*For more stories of action and impact that have resulted from past On the Table conversations, please visit onthetable.com.*
About On the Table

On the Table is an annual forum that invites Chicagoans from diverse backgrounds, neighborhoods and perspectives to gather over mealtime conversations to build personal connections and explore how we can work together to make our communities stronger.

Where?

The discussions are held in person in places that will inspire action—this may be your library, church, neighborhood restaurant, office break room or even around your kitchen table. Hold your discussion wherever you can gather, talk and brainstorm with a group of 8–12 people.

Who?

People from Chicago and the metropolitan region, and from all walks of life, host and attend On the Table discussions.

Why?

The Chicago Community Trusts organizes On the Table to unite people from diverse backgrounds to explore how we can strengthen our communities and make people’s lives better. When we come together—face-to-face—to find common ground and common cause on community issues and challenges that matter to people, powerful things can happen.

What’s Next?

If your discussion produces great, actionable ideas that you’re ready to take on, then do it! You might also consider applying for an Acting Up award. Now in its third year, the Acting Up award program has provided monetary awards to help hosts and guests take their ideas from discuss to do. Learn more about the program at onthetable.com, and respond to the call-for-applications starting May 9, 2018.

To educate the next generation about the importance of sustainability, fledgling nonprofit Zero Waste Chicago created a piloted a compost program for preschoolers in Mount Prospect in 2017.
Planning Your
On the Table Event

1. Invite Your Guests

The invite list is up to you. Here are a few pointers:

• Start with a few people you know—friends, family, colleagues and neighbors—then expand your circle.

• Consider co-hosting your event with a local nonprofit organization.

• Try to create a dynamic table by inviting people from your network who don’t already know each other or ask your guests to bring someone. Introduce new voices to others.

• Eight to 12 guests per table is ideal. That way, everyone at the table has a chance to speak and be heard. If you want to host a larger gathering, consider having smaller groups of guests at separate tables—such as three tables of eight guests each—and reserving time during the event for each group to discuss and report out to the larger group.

• Use an online tool like Eventbrite to manage your RSVPs, connect with your guests, and share information about your event.

2. Register Your Event

When you register as a host at onthetable.com, you join a community of people who are leading important conversations across the city. You’ll receive pertinent information about On the Table and we’ll learn about you and your event. It will take you just a few minutes to register today at onthetable.com.

3. Plan Your Conversation

Consider whether you want a theme for your discussion; perhaps there is a particular topic related to your community or workplace that you’d like to explore. How will you use your On the Table conversation to unite your colleagues, friends, family and neighbors to lead change in your organization, neighborhood or throughout Chicagoland? Also, consider asking your guests to ponder this question before they attend: “What will we do to create a stronger community?”

4. Promote Your Event

Use tools found at onthetable.com to promote your event. Download the On the Table logo to use on your invitation. Grab graphics for Facebook, Twitter or text messaging to share with your invited guests. Post news of your event on social media using the hashtag #OnTheTable2018.
During Your On the Table Event

1. Prompt Conversation

The fundamental question is: What can we do together to create a stronger community? Our conversation prompts offer tips on encouraging productive discussion.

2. Encourage Solutions

After your group discusses community challenges that concern them, transition the discussion to possible solutions. After all, that’s why On the Table was created—to seek solutions to community challenges.

3. Plan for Action

Let your table take you places. On the Table is all about figuring out how to move ideas from the table to places all around Chicago to make powerful things happen. We’ve created a Take Action worksheet that can help your group brainstorm and plan next steps to tackle a community challenge.

4. Amplify Your Discussion

Share your commitments, photos and connections using the hashtag #OnTheTable2018.

In the fall of 2017, Operation Warm teamed up with the Chicago Public Library to distribute 300 coats and two books each for children in Chicago Lawn and Woodlawn neighborhoods.
Prompts and Guidelines for Conversation

Guidelines: Dos and Don'ts

**DO:**
- Encourage guests to introduce themselves; consider beginning the event with time earmarked for an ice-breaker activity or general networking.
- Identify a table host who helps ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- Remember the value and benefits of diverse voices: Pass the “mic” around.
- Invite guests to follow-up and expand on their ideas.
- Ask guests to sign in using the sheet provided in this guide.

**DON'T:**
- Micromanage the conversation; let it flow freely.
- Be judgmental or dismissive of any person’s comments or ideas.
- Promote argument of unproductive debate.

Prompts

To help get your conversation started, we’ve compiled this list of sample conversation prompts:

1. What brought you to the table?
2. What are your hopes for our community, now and in the long term?
3. What are the positive qualities or characteristics of our community? How can we leverage those attributes to strengthen our community?
4. What does our community need? What can we do individually or collectively to address those needs?
5. Let’s choose a problem facing our community, neighborhood or region and discuss how we would solve it.
6. Share one important thing we’ve accomplished here. What is one next step you would like to take, either individually or collectively, based on our conversation? (See the Take Action worksheet to help you plan your next steps.)
After Your On the Table Event

1. Thank Your Guests

A day or two after your discussion is over, thank your guests for attending your event. If some actionable ideas came from your discussion, and you or someone from your group plan to spearhead any of them, mention that you’ll be back in touch with information on how to be a part of the action.

2. Share What Happened

We’d like to know the outcomes of your discussion. Share your success stories, challenges and ideas with us:

- Post a comment on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) using #OnTheTable2018
- Leave a message at 866-737-6951
- Email OnTheTable@cct.org
- Send a note: The Chicago Community Trust, On the Table, 225 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 2200, Chicago, IL 60601

3. Send Us Your Guest List

We want to stay in touch with you and your guests. Send us your guest list, so we can share news and funding opportunities. You can send your sign-in sheet to OntheTable@cct.org.

4. Apply for Acting Up Awards

The Trust wants to help On the Table participants put their ideas into action through the Acting Up awards. Over the past two years, nearly $200,000 has been awarded to 135 projects to address tangible community issues. We’ll announce details about the 2018 Acting Up in April.

Thank You for Coming to the Table.
Your Community Matters.

your voice matters.

We want to hear from all *On the Table* participants about what matters to them. Please fill out the survey and ask your guests to do the same by texting ChiOTT to 797979 to receive a survey link. In the coming weeks, we will be sharing the results of the survey with the community.
We want today’s conversation to lead to something; sign in to let us know how you’d like to help.

**Sign-In Sheet for On the Table**

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<th>HOST NAME:</th>
<th>HOST ORGANIZATION <em>(if applicable):</em></th>
<th>CONVERSATION LOCATION <em>(zip code):</em></th>
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**PLEASE NOTE:** Your name and email address will be shared with the On the Table project team at The Chicago Community Trust, the region’s largest community organization. Questions? Email onthetable@cct.org.