Host guide

Put your voice in a Memo to the Mayor

TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2019

Thank You for Joining the Sixth 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.

Then, get ready to put your voice in a Memo to the Mayor.
About On the Table

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

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**Why?**

*On the Table* is a day of civic conversation when thousands of people across Chicagoland gather to discuss topics that matter most to them. Chicago’s new mayor will set new precedents in the office, and she faces high expectations for change that brings more socio-economic equity to the Chicago area. Now’s the time to communicate to her!

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**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.

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**When?**

Tables all over the city and suburbs will meet throughout the day on May 14, 2019.

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**Who?**

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

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**What’s Next?**

During your discussion, your group will prepare a [Memo to the Mayor](#) expressing your concerns about an issue and suggesting possible solutions. Your memo will be put into a larger memo containing solutions from other *On the Table* discussions and presented to our new mayor and other leaders in June. Then, The Chicago Community Trust will do a six-month check-in with the mayor on the issues presented in the memo.
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 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?” Conversation guides at onthetable.com can help you consider a topic and prepare to discuss it.

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 #OnTheTable2019.

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. Take action:
Write the Memo to the Mayor
On the Table is all about figuring out solutions for issues expressed at the table. Once your table has come up with ideas, put them in a Memo to the Mayor.

4. Welcome additional action
Your table’s actions don’t have to stop with the memo to the mayor. Members of your table might want to join forces and do other things together to tackle the issue you discussed. The sign-in sheet on page 8 will help you document this.

5. Amplify your discussion
Share your commitments, photos and connections using the hashtag #OnTheTable2019.
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 or 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. What are some potential solutions to the problem(s) we’ve identified today?
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 your group’s Memo to the Mayor
   Please complete your Memo to the Mayor at onthetable.com. There, you can also upload your table’s notes, individual memos, drawings or diagrams you may have used in the discussion, or other supporting materials. Paper memos can be made available by special request. Please contact onthetable@cct.org to request paper memos in advance of your On the Table.

3. 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 #OnTheTable2019.
   - 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.

4. 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.

Thank you for coming to the Table!
Today’s conversation could inspire you to do something beyond writing the Memo to the Mayor; sign in to let us know how you’d like to help.

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<td>(Check one...or more!)</td>
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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 foundation. Questions? Email onthetable@cct.org.