

A Community Table 2020

Conversation Overview



Opening the Conversation:

First, welcome everyone and introduce yourself and the event.

- Share your name, background, and why you decided to be an A Community Table host.
- Share a bit about DU Grand Challenges. Information is available at grandchallenges.du.edu and on page 11 of the guidebook.
- Remind everyone of today's goal: Explore our topic, and generate ideas to increase local civic life (involvement) around it.

Second, invite your participants to introduce themselves and briefly share what brought them to A Community Table. If you want to do a virtual icebreaker, do that here!

Third, set out some conversation guidelines to support *everyone's* participation. We suggest:

- One speaker at a time
- Share to increase understanding and invite others in
- Listen to understand. Listen harder when you disagree
- Speak from own *personal experience* ("I" statements) and avoid generalizations
- Be attentive to what space you're taking up
- What's said in the group stays; what's learned, leaves (confidentiality)
- Decide on a way to signal (hand gesture, raise hand feature on Zoom, etc.) for jargon or words you might not know

Facilitation Tips

- Support everyone's focus on goals, roles, and rules (guidelines above)
- Encourage everyone to participate, making space for all to do so.
- Invite guests to follow-up and expand on ideas. (open-ended questions)
- It's okay to model sharing if folks seem stuck on a question, or if you need to redirect the conversation. But don't share to just fill the silence.
- A little silence is OK!
- You got this!! You're hosting a conversation that matters, take time to enjoy the process as well.

Conversation Don'ts & Reminders

- Don't micromanage the conversation; let it flow freely, helping with 3 O's:
 - On Topic, On Time, Opportunity for All to Participate
- Don't promote or allow argument or unproductive debate.
- Don't judge or dismiss any person's comments or ideas; redirect if off-goal/rules.
- Don't be afraid to *not* know something, or to ask if you have questions.
- Name that you aren't meant to be the content expert but are here to guide the process.
 - Even if you are a content expert, the role of a host is to guide the process. Don't omit your voice from the conversation all together, but do not center it either

Conversation Prompts

1. Share a story of how this issue has shown up (or not) in your life.

- This prompt is meant to help you and your guests share your personal connections to the issue. For this prompt, ask *everyone* to share 1-2 minute story (1-2 minutes).
 - Pro tip: Figure out the order in which your guests will share in advance. You can assign a random order, or maybe prompt folks

to write their names in a chat, or share by birth month—whatever works for you and the group.

- Personal stances/beliefs might come out (and that's okay), but the goal should be to connect this question to a story and give tangible examples. Do not stay in a theoretical space about the issue.

2. What are some challenges that prevent you and others from being more actively engaged in local, civic life around this issue?

- This question should narrow the conversation to local impact (shared by participants, not as overwhelming as inter/national)
- “You and others” references that participants have a role in addressing your Table’s issue.
- Consider using these follow up questions to help elicit responses:
 - Share a specific experience/story about when you wanted to be more involved, but you weren’t/couldn’t.
 - This prompt helps participants identify barriers to involvement.
 - Or when you were very engaged?
 - This prompts helps participants think about the absence of barriers.
 - If you haven’t been impacted, why might that be?
 - Use this prompt when people can’t think of a response. It’s another way of pushing them to consider their relationship to the issue.

3. What connections, opportunities and resources do we have to draw or build on to collectively address this issue?

- So as not to get stuck in deficit thinking or dwell on the challenges, this question is meant to name the strengths and assets. Use participants’ responses as a way to move the conversation toward identifying actions that can be taken to address the issue.
- Consider using these follow up questions to elicit responses.

- In addition to the assets that organization and communities have overall, what do individual participants bring?
 - This prompt helps participants identify their own power in relation to this issue.
- What have you observed that has worked before, even in other settings?
- Who are in our networks currently? Or what local organization or projects have you heard about or been impacted by?

4. Thinking about both the challenges and opportunities/strengths we've discussed, what specific actions could the community take together to address this issue?

- This prompt is meant to get participants thinking about how to take actions that are rooted in strengths and assets.
- Don't get caught up in being "realistic" or bogged down in details; instead focus on potential. Encourage specificity, but build off one another's idea--do not 'discard nor cut off' ideas right now. Name this for the group. For example, "Right now, let's dream what this could be like instead of limiting one another. This is about *dreaming*, not brainstorming."
- Consider asking this follow up question to elicit responses:
 - If we had a representative from one of the organizations we identified in question #3 (strengths, connections) on the phone, what would you ask them to do with you? What would you talk about/create together?

5. What are some steps you personally can commit to in addressing the issue? How can DU be a partner in or otherwise contribute to this work?

- It's easy for groups to quickly suggest what other people and institutions can do, jumping past their own responsibility and agency to make change. Start with your guests and the part you all/each can play in

some of the actions you've suggested. Then consider what other resources would help.

- If this group works together already or will continue to meet moving forward, you might ask to what actions the whole group can commit.
- Remember that the onus of solving the issue is not on you. How can we (DU, A Community Table) work together?

Closing & Next Steps

Offer a quick summary of the actions that the group identified, and check to make sure what you've heard is accurate. If you have identified next steps as a group, share a recap of those.

Please also share the link to the participant survey, bit.ly/ParticipantSurvey2020, with your guests, and let them know that it will take less than five minutes to complete. You can share the link in the chat function of your web platform and follow up by sending the link in an email.

Thank you guests for their participation. After the conversation closes, please complete the host survey. You can find it at bit.ly/HostSurvey2020.

And you're done! Congratulations on facilitating A Community Table!