



Planning Guide for Your *Big Table*

A Guide to Help You Host *The Big Table* Conversation

Connect Knox is a community-centered initiative that connects people who have ideas and energies to invest in our community with others who are equally passionate about making big, new ideas happen.

SETTING THE BIG TABLE

Thank you for being a critical part of *The Big Table* on August 23, 2018. *The Big Table* is a community-wide effort, and we are grateful for your partnership as a host.

On August 23, 2018, thousands of people representing different backgrounds, neighborhoods, and interest groups will join more than 150 conversations to connect and discuss the future of our community.

The Big Table is a day of community building designed to bolster understanding of one another in these challenging times. By coming together around tables, everyone has the opportunity to talk, listen, and learn from each other as we continue to work together.

We know that big ideas can spring from small conversations and that people invest in what they help create. While there is no “quick fix” to the many issues facing any community, progress can result from sharing ideas and listening to one another.

Without hosts, this community-wide effort would not be possible. You are the catalyst that will move these conversations forward.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A HOST?

As a host, you believe in each person’s power to make a difference. As an engaged resident of our community, you are committed to convening others so they can collectively explore issues important to our community and share innovative ideas that will build and sustain our community moving forward.

Anyone interested in convening a conversation may host. Your conversation can happen at any time of day in any place where guests are comfortable. Food and drink can range from light snacks to full-course meals. The only requirement is that the hosts provide productive environments for authentic conversations about our community.

The Big Table toolkit is available online and is designed to help you recruit guests, utilize social media, and create meaningful conversations. Find it at www.connectknox.com/the-big-table.

HOST RESPONSIBILITIES

If you haven't already, please register as a host by going to: <http://connectknox.com/the-big-table/>

Hosts will:

- Find a suitable location for the conversation by August 23, 2018. See below under location for ideas!
 - Invite 8 – 10 people to join the conversation. Attendees may be 8 – 10 friends, colleagues, or neighbors. Or, invite 4 – 5 people and ask them to bring one guest.
 - Coordinate food and drinks, ranging from snacks to full meals, to enjoy with your guests during your conversation. Hosts are not required to cover the cost of a meal and can ask that the event be brown bag or at a restaurant. A host may choose to provide food but that is optional.
 - Serve as the conversation guide.
 - Respond to a survey and provide feedback regarding your conversation experience.
 - Encourage your guests to respond to a brief survey and provide feedback as well.
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LOCATION

Conversations can happen anywhere that your group would feel most comfortable. Venues will include homes, churches, community centers, businesses, restaurants, backyards, and picnic areas. When planning your conversation, consider the best atmosphere that you can create for honest and open discussion. The more relaxed that your guests are, the better the conversation will be.

REFRESHMENTS

Like the location, refreshment choices are up to you. Please choose any food and drink that your guests will enjoy together. Refreshments may range from light snacks to full meals and everything in between. If you aren't sure what to provide, consider hosting a potluck so that your guests can share their favorite dishes with each other. Others may simply decide to share the check at a local restaurant. Chips, cookies, pizza, and ice cream – it's all fair game! Have fun with it! Sharing food and drink sets the stage for the conversation to follow so choose something that will help bring your group together to listen and share.

SPREAD THE WORD

Think about how you will use *The Big Table* to bring colleagues, friends, family, and neighbors together to lead change in our community. Connect Knox encourages you and your guests to spread the word via email and social media to encourage other community members to host or attend *The Big Table*.

When sharing on social media, please use hashtag #TheBigTableKnoxville.

INVITING YOUR GUESTS

The magic number of people per conversation is 8-12. *The Big Table* is about giving everyone a chance to share their voice and be heard. Groups larger than 12 people tend to break into smaller groups, dividing one powerful conversation into many disjointed conversations.

If you know more than 12 people who would like to participate in a conversation, please ask a friend or friends to partner with you in hosting conversations so that you can each host a table of 8-12 people. The conversations can still happen at the same location, but make sure you have room for participants to break into groups of 8-12. If there are several tables at one location, please sure that each table has its own host.

Also, when inviting guests, we encourage you to have a good mix of different experiences and perspectives. Consider inviting some people who you may not spend much time with socially.

Use this as an opportunity to extend your network past your normal routine. In fact, you may consider inviting people you don't know at all. Ask a few of your friends or colleagues to bring others you haven't met yet, or invite people from your favorite coffee spots, your child's school, your church, or your community center.

Below is an example of an invitation to send to your guests. Please feel free to use this in an email or letter to your potential guests, or create your own. Guests can be invited in whatever way is easiest for you.

Hello XX,

On August 23, I am joining a community-wide effort called **The Big Table**. On this one day, thousands of people representing different backgrounds, neighborhoods, and interest groups are participating in more than 150 conversations to discuss and imagine the future of our community.

I am hosting one of these conversations, and I would like to invite you to join me and others to come together to discuss priorities for our community.

Location:

Time:

Please bring (if necessary):

Attire:

If you would like more information about The Big Table, please visit:

www.connectknox.com/thebigtable

Please RSVP to me if you would like to attend this fun and casual conversation to talk, listen, and learn from one another.

I look forward to seeing you on August 23 for **The Big Table** Conversation!

QUESTIONS?

Contact us at info@connectknox.com or visit www.connectknox.com/the-big-table.

NEXT STEPS

For more information on how to guide your conversation, check out The Conversation Guide, the next part of **The Big Table** toolkit. The full toolkit is available at www.connectknox.com/the-big-table.