

Host
Guidebook
2026



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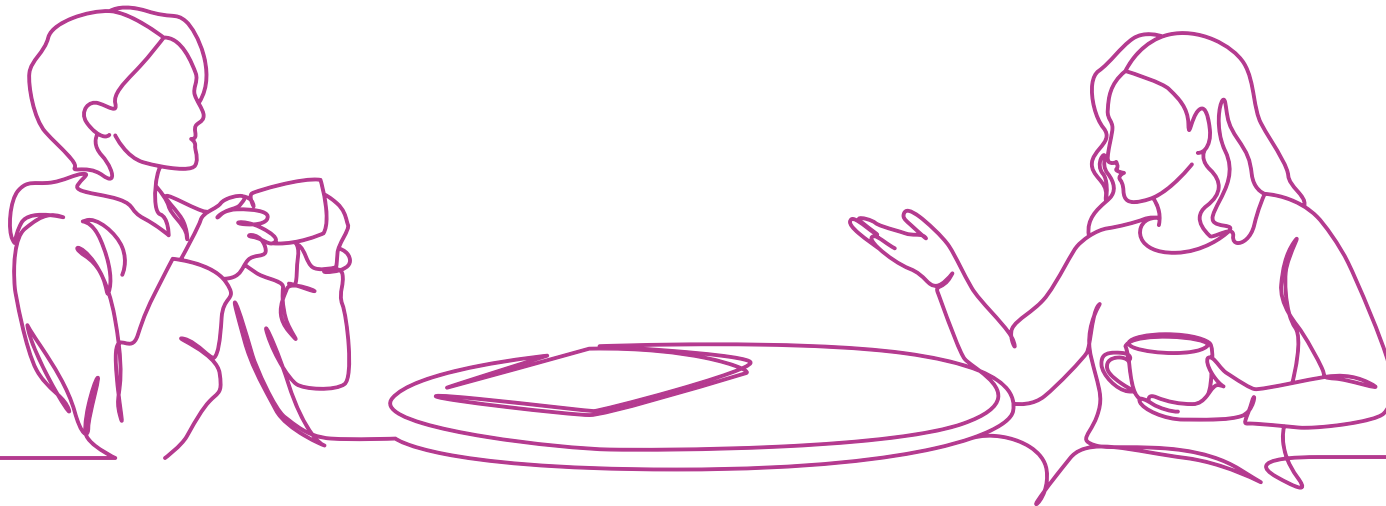
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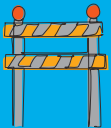
Research shows...



We're increasingly spending more time alone, disconnected from one another and our communities.



Most people value and are interested in connecting with those different from themselves to work toward a shared goal.



The most common barrier cited for meeting new people is a lack of opportunity.

Everyone has a seat at **The Big Table®!**

Now in its tenth year, The Big Table is an opportunity to bring people together, hear new perspectives, and actively listen to our neighbors.

We invite you to add **YOUR** voice during this annual community-wide day of conversation. Together, we can help build a kinder, more connected community—one conversation at a time.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| WHEN: | Tuesday, September 29, from sunrise to sunset |
| WHO: | Everyone: individuals, organizations, and schools |
| WHERE: | Across central Ohio |
| HOW: | Host your own Big Table conversation or attend a public table. Registration opens Thursday, August 13 at columbusfoundation.org/thebigtable . |

Big Table Formats

The Big Table is flexible, accommodating different approaches to connection and conversation. Most conversations are around one hour, but can be longer. Typically, table discussions will include 4-10 people to ensure all voices are heard. Ideally, some or all participants will be meeting each other for the first time. Common formats for Big Table conversations are below.

A small group of 4-10 people.



A multiple-table event with independently hosted conversations at each table.



Rapid round connection: participants explore conversation prompts 1:1 in a speed-dating style.



An emcee leads a Big Table event with multiple tables, and each table is a breakout group with a facilitator following the lead of the emcee.



Big Table Topics

Big Table conversations can have a predefined community-focused topic, a more open-ended approach using provided conversation cards, or follow the interests of the group. Each Big Table host helps guide the direction of their conversation!

Common Topics

ARTS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	CULTIVATING KINDNESS	EDUCATION
ENVIRONMENT	HEALTH & WELL-BEING		HOUSING
NEIGHBORHOOD OR PLACE-BASED TOPICS			OLDER ADULTS
TRANSPORTATION	VOLUNTEERING		YOUTH

Conversation Prompt Cards

A deck of conversation prompt cards are provided in the Host Kit.



Host Checklist

The Big Table is designed to inspire authentic connection and civic engagement through conversation. Volunteer hosts are the catalysts that help strengthen our social fabric! By committing to be a Big Table host, you will independently organize a Big Table event, invite participants, and facilitate the discussion. The Columbus Foundation provides hosts with supplies for your conversation.

To become a Big Table host:

- Register to host starting August 13 at columbusfoundation.org/thebigtable (you'll be notified when supplies are available for pick up)
- Choose a location and time for your conversation
- Consider community topics for your Big Table
- Invite people to participate and coordinate RSVPs
- Facilitate your Big Table conversation on September 29
- Following your conversation, complete The Big Table Survey

Supplies provided by The Columbus Foundation:


- Name tags
- Guest list
- Notepads
- Pens
- Deck of conversation prompt cards
- Participation stickers
- Tabletop sign

Additional resources are available in the [digital toolkit](#).



Ready, Set, Go!

Below are day-of instructions for hosting your Big Table event.

Step	Action
Prepare	Lay out the name tags, guest list, Big Table notepads, pens, and other supplies.
Welcome	Greet guests, explain the format and purpose. For example:  “Today is about listening and learning from one another. We are here to understand each other, not prove ourselves or solve every problem. I hope you’ll commit to being present, open, and engaged. The pens and paper are provided so you can take notes!”
Discussion	Facilitate a conversation about a chosen community topic or use the provided conversation prompt cards. Ensure everyone has a chance to participate in the discussion.
Closing	Thank everyone for their time, openness, and interest in community-building. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask your guests: How can we continue this conversation?• Consider posting on social media using #TheBigTable.• Ask all participants to fill out The Big Table Survey.



“The Big Table is a great way to build connections and move forward with positive solutions.”

— Big Table Participant

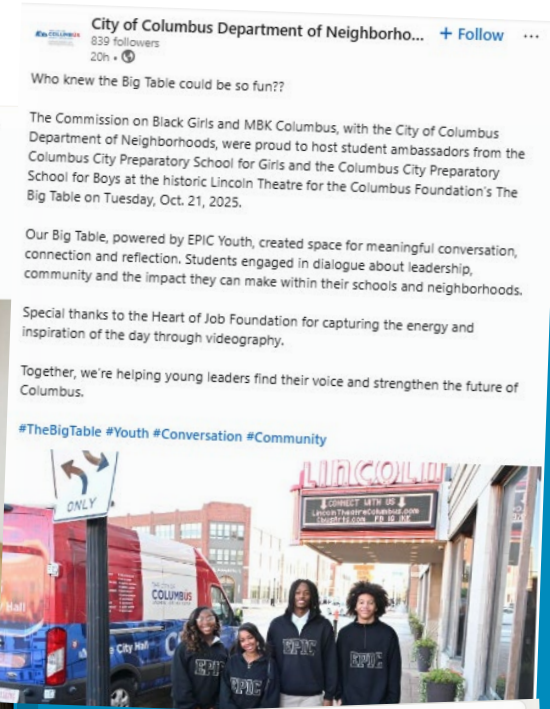
WAYS TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

- Follow-up gatherings
- Community volunteering
- Social media groups, email list, or group text
- Create a list of next steps
- Widen the circle to include others

Social Media Engagement

Use #TheBigTable and tag The Columbus Foundation in your posts!

#TheBigTable



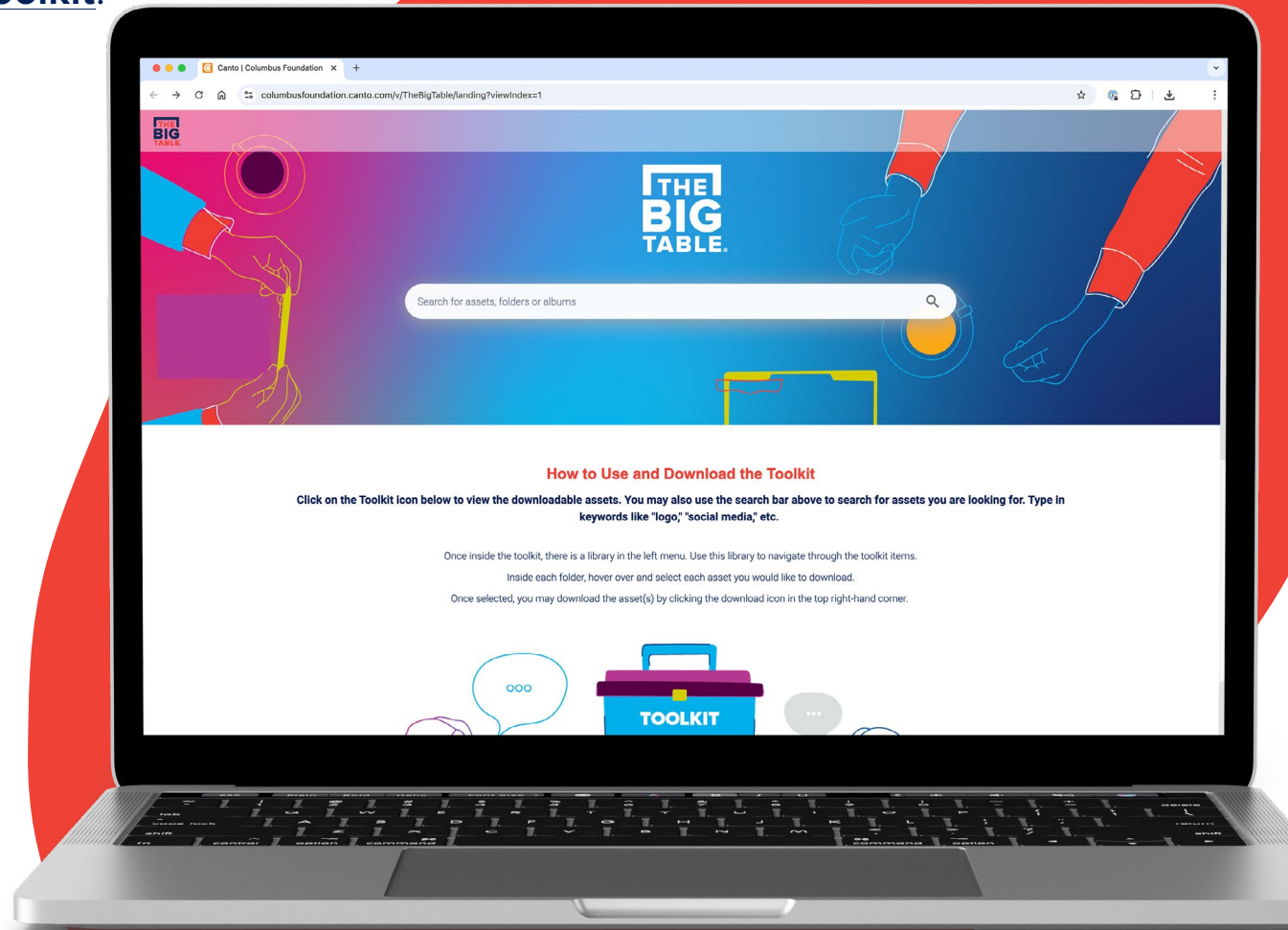
Diving Deeper

COMING SOON: Additional resources can be found in **The Big Table digital toolkit.**

- The Big Table logo for creating your own graphics and promotion.
- Translated Host Guidebooks in Arabic, Nepali, Somali, and Spanish.
- Conversation prompts to help your table get started.
- A guest list for keeping track of your participants.
- ...and more!

Questions?

Email bigtable@columbusfoundation.org
or call **614/545-3232**.



The Big Table is designed to bring neighbors together as a service to the community through listening, sharing, and discussion, not as a platform for the promotion or advertisement of any product, service, or point of view. The views expressed by hosts and participants are shared for informational purposes only and do not constitute an endorsement, approval, or recommendation by The Columbus Foundation.

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THE **BIG** TABLE
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