



## On the Table '23 – Conversation Guide

Thank you for participating in the On the Table Action Challenge, which offers a range of action items to help you learn more about the community and the people within it, along with how we can collectively help enhance our community, making our neighborhoods stronger, safer, and more dynamic.

It's our hope that by participating, you'll step outside of your comfort zone and learn some new perspectives, along with new ways to engage with the community around you. Unlike past On the Table events, for this installment we're asking residents to participate in a one-on-one conversation with a person you normally don't interact with. When seeking out a conversation partner, you may want to ask a colleague or friend to refer someone. When meeting, we encourage you to set up your conversation in a public place, especially if you don't know one another that well. Another option is joining a partnered conversation in the community (some of which will be posted to [www.onthetableakron.com](http://www.onthetableakron.com) closer to February).

The topics you discuss may be agreed upon between you and your conversation partner, but we encourage you to stay away from overly divisive issues, especially relating to politics and/or religion. Also, make sure you and your conversation partner participate in our follow-up survey so your voice will be heard as Akron Community Foundation determines funding priorities. Register on our website to receive a reminder email.

The following is a guide for participating in a successful and enriching conversation. If you have any questions or issues, please email [cmiller@akroncf.org](mailto:cmiller@akroncf.org). Thank you for your participation and for helping to improve our community!

### On the Table Conversation Tips:

- Allow the conversation to flow, ensuring that no one person dominates the interaction.
- We encourage open-ended conversation, but it may help to establish a few guiding topics or questions to stay focused (*some suggestions include: "What would you like to improve in the community? What could we do to generate*

*positive solutions? What did you learn from participating in the On the Table Action Challenge?”).*

- Establish agreements or rules before you begin (like agreeing not to use cell phones during your talk, establishing a time limit or avoiding certain topics).
- Avoid using stereotypes and divisive or offensive topics (improving our community demands non-partisan solutions that require us to work together).
- Suspend judgment and enter the conversation with humility and an open mind.
- Listen with attentiveness -- avoid using your phone or other distractions while having your conversation. Focus on the other person when they're speaking, including their nonverbal communication.
- Allow your discussion partner to finish speaking before you speak. Be sure each person is listening as much as they are speaking.
- Affirm ideas and questions presented by your conversation partner (example, "Thank you for sharing that. I appreciate your thoughts and input.")
- If at any time you're not comfortable, feel free to leave the conversation.
- When your conversation ends, jot down a few notes to retain some key thoughts and ideas learned during your discussion.
- Don't forget to take the survey at [www.onthetableakron.com](http://www.onthetableakron.com)!