

# on the table®

## June 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **On the Table Waterloo Region**

Join people from across Waterloo Region as we come together, make new connections, and build more meaningful relationships within our community. By gathering together, face-to-face, and sharing food and conversation, we can learn new things about what connects us and what we wish for our communities.

#### **What is On the Table?**

On the Table is an invitation from Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF) for people, organizations, and communities to come together, share some food, and have conversations about what matters most to them. All the topics and highlights of the discussions will be collected and shared—giving us an exciting snapshot of what's on people's minds across the region right now. It's a fun, meaningful opportunity for people to meet, gather, and share!

#### **When is On the Table happening?**

All On the Table events will take place June 7th to 9th, 2024. We set it up for three days so you have the option of when it works best for you over the course of the Friday to Sunday. That way we can all have conversations around the same time and get a snapshot in time of what matters in our community.

#### **Where should On the Table events take place?**

You can host On the Table in any place that inspires people to talk. It could be your local library or office lunchroom, a neighbourhood restaurant, or a nearby park, church, or recreation centre. Many people will host at home, around their own kitchen table or in their backyard. What matters most is that people come together, share some food, and have a conversation. People need to feel comfortable gathering together and having a chance to talk.

#### **How many people should I invite?**

As many or as few as you like. Last time we found that having about 8 to 12 people per table (if you are hosting a larger event) worked well. This way, everyone has a chance to listen and contribute to the conversation. Your event can have as few as 3 people or as many as hundreds – it is yours to plan! After your event, as part of the feedback survey, we will ask you how many people attended.

#### **Does it have to be a meal?**

Not at all! People should have something to eat, but it doesn't matter what. You can serve something simple like coffee and cake, beer and nachos, or chips and dip. Put together a four-course meal if you want to—or even ask your guests to bring something and make it a potluck. Conversations just seem to flow better with something to eat and drink.

#### **How do hosts decide the theme of the conversation we have?**

Ideas and conversation starters are provided in the On the Table host toolkit that you can download at [wrcf.ca/onthetable](http://wrcf.ca/onthetable). Typically, the host will choose the focus of the conversation or let the topic arise organically from the group around the table. We are hoping to tie these conversations into social infrastructure.

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#### What is Social Infrastructure?

**Physical infrastructure** is the visible, built environment systems of housing, parks, roads, public transit, recreation centres, and the less visible systems of sewers and power grids. It's the systems on which **economic development** traditionally relies.

**Social infrastructure** is the system of organizations, spaces and experiences that enable people to connect with each other, the bridges necessary to build trust and civic participation, to create a sense of belonging and wellbeing. It's the system that enables sustainable widespread **community development**.

#### What can Social Infrastructure do?

What are ways to create meaningful interactions between different communities, different neighbourhoods, different groups, different generations? How can we encourage those sitting on the sidelines to participate in civic life, regardless of when they arrived here?

If we can build enough bridges, we can increase understanding of those around us, we can increase trust, we can increase a sense of belonging and safety beyond our typical boundaries. We can be a community capable of coming together to accomplish big things, important things.

That's the power of social infrastructure. If you want to learn more about social infrastructure, visit [wrcf.ca/socialinfrastructure](http://wrcf.ca/socialinfrastructure).

#### Who provides the food?

Each On the Table host provides the food – or asks their guests to bring something to share or split the bill. It is really flexible, and up to each host how big or small they want their event to be.

#### What kind of information is required to register your On the Table event?

Registration takes place through our website. We will require the host's name, email address, and postal code of where the event will take place. (Your name and email are so we can contact you. The postal code is so we can create a map of where all the conversations are happening in the region)

Registration to host opens on April 10, 2024 at [wrcf.ca/onthetable](http://wrcf.ca/onthetable). Whether you are hosting On the Table as an individual or as part of your organization – or multiple events on your own – you will need to register separately for each event. This will help us keep track of how many events are happening, and make sure each one is supported by its own host toolkit.

#### How can I let my guests know about my event?

Ensure your guests know about your event by downloading and emailing them the save the date notification. We've also created an invitation template that you can personalize for your event and manage your guest list easily. Download both of these from our website. Or you can reach out to our team and we can create a graphic for you. Email us at [onthetable@wrcf.ca](mailto:onthetable@wrcf.ca).

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#### **Why is WRCF doing this?**

We led On the Table in 2019 for the first time, and the community responded by hosting and participating in 42 conversations. We took a pause during the pandemic – and feel now is the time to get people together to talk about ideas, and potential outcomes, that we couldn't reach alone.

Waterloo Region's population is growing rapidly both in numbers and in diversity, and that holds potential but also possible peril. Our growth can be a source of unique perspectives, fresh ideas, and new experiences. It also could cause disruption, confusion, and a loss of shared identity. We must be deliberate that we don't exclude people, neighbourhoods, or communities from the conversations and opportunities ahead.

As our larger society faces trends towards more polarization, isolation, and loneliness, Waterloo Region can instead realize our collective potential by growing into the place where everyone's uniqueness is recognized, supported, celebrated, and part of helping to create something bigger.

What better way to connect with others than through the sharing of food and conversation? That's why, we're inviting everyone across Waterloo Region to be part of a collective set of conversations. On the Table gives us all a chance to spend time with neighbours, friends and in our community. Then, WRCF will get high level summaries back from the discussion hosts and we will share that in a summary report with the community, so we can see if there are some ideas we want to tackle together.

#### **How can I spread the word?**

We encourage you and your guests to share your thoughts and experiences with us before, during and after your event using the hashtag **#onthetablewr**. If you also want to tag us on our social channels: **@WRCommFdn**, that would be great.

We will be advertising On the Table in a variety of ways between April and the launch of the event on June 7th. If you want to share our save the date, posters or other information to help us attract hosts and get the word out, you can download tools or link people to our site here – [wrcf.ca/onthetable](http://wrcf.ca/onthetable).

#### **I'm hosting another event between June 7th and 9th, can I combine On the Table with it?**

Yes, of course! If you already have an event planned between June 7th and 9th please feel free to include On the Table as part of it! Just ensure that the On the Table portion of your event is not used in any way to generate a profit (ie. fundraising).

#### **Can my On the Table event be open to the public?**

Definitely! On the Table is a perfect platform for interacting with a public audience. Set a venue, topic, and open your doors to everyone. If ticketing is required to cover the cost of food provided at your event, that's ok. Just ensure that a profit is not made from your On the Table event (ie. fundraising).

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**I don't want to host an On the Table event but I would like to participate in an event. How do I find out about one that might be open to the public?**

We aren't sure how many public events there will be, but as we learn about public On the Table events that are organized in advance of the launch, we are going to share them in a calendar on our website and on our social channels, so you can check them out and decide if you want to attend. Visit [wrcf.ca/onthetable](https://wrcf.ca/onthetable) to find public event listings.

**Can I have some help with the invitation?**

If you need some help creating and sending invitations, please download our invitation template from our website. If you need support with a social media graphic, please reach out to us and we can help!

**More Questions?** Contact us at [onthetable@wrcf.ca](mailto:onthetable@wrcf.ca)

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