



QUICK START GUIDE



Quick Start - 5 Steps

Let's get this thing started! While it will take some time to go through the entire kit, here are the top five tasks you will need to begin to set the most fruitful table possible.

1. Form your team.

Whether you're setting a short or really long table, we'd love for you to invite 7-8 people from across your community to help plan the table event. Ideally, these people represent different parts of your community (business, a city/town representative, faith, neighborhood, social (Rotary), non-profits, etc.)

This team will oversee the table gathering and ensure it's the best it can be!

Invite these people personally (phone call or in person), share the vision, and invite them to be part of creating the table gathering together – welcoming their ideas and contributions.

Generally, each of these teammates can oversee a different aspect of the table. The main areas are:

- Food and drinks
- The physical tables and chairs
- Inviting co-hosts
- Table decorations
- Photo, video, story collection
- Promotion
- Fundraising (if needed)

LONGER TABLES





2. Determine the size of the table you want to set, where you want to set it, and on what date.

Length - A table sits the same number of people as the length of the table (50 people = 50-foot table). We encourage you to invite 10-15% more than you can sit, for last-minute no-shows.

A Note on Table Size // *While we love ambitious, really long tables, we encourage you to set a smaller sized table for your first table gathering. Beyond neighborhood tables of 8-12 guests, a table of 50 - 120 guests works really well and is long! A table up to 250 is ambitious, but can be done!*

Tables over 250 guests will require fundraising and sponsors, vendors and more highly committed volunteers.

Where - We encourage you to set the table outside (weather permitting), in a neutral place, such as a park, city street, community center, etc.

When - Lunch or dinner is great. Think about the best time for weather and a time and day a majority of your community (guests) will be able to attend. Many will attend on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday evenings, as well as Saturday. Remember to set your table between May and November 2026.

3. Decide potluck or catered, and where you will source tables and chairs. These two items determine the largest parts of your budget.

Potluck works great for under 120 guests. In fact, we encourage potluck, as it keeps overall costs low and allows your guests to contribute to the gathering (as well as share their Grandma's recipe!)

For more than 120 guests, we recommend a local restaurant or caterer. (TIP: Remember to source food from locally-owned businesses as much as possible!) For simplicity, we recommend having only one caterer or food provider.

For beverages, we recommend inviting guests to bring their own water bottle and you provide water refill areas. Guests should always be welcomed with a drink (mocktails or a beverage reflecting your community.) TIP: We do not recommend serving alcohol for many reasons, including liability and additional costs.



For tables under 120 guests, a school or faith community may be able to loan tables and chairs. (Give them a shout-out/sponsorship for their in-kind gift!) Over 120 guests, you will most likely need to rent from a local company. (MATH TIP: 8 guests sit at an 8-foot table, and 6 guests sit at a 6-foot table.)



4. Budget.

Now that you have an idea of food and beverage, as well as number of tables and chairs – you'll have an idea of your overall budget.

For larger tables, this is the time to start fundraising, through both in-kind and cash sponsors. See our Sponsorship Training for all of our support guidance in the Large Table guides inside virtual community.

Table decorations, linen rental, signage and promotion will be part of your budget as well. Find our easy to use budget guide to estimate your total budget in the Large Table guides inside the virtual community.

5. Next Steps

Once your team decides on these items, it's time to start getting the word out, by:

- Inviting a cross-section of individuals, businesses, faith communities and non-profits to be co-hosts.
- Raising money (if needed)
- Talking to vendors (caterer, rental company, etc. if needed)

We have detailed guides on each of these areas! If you're setting a small table (under 120), go to Guide - Small Tables. For larger tables, go to Guide - Large Tables.

