



# KITCHEN TABLE CONVERSATION GUIDE

**What Helps Create a Sense of  
Belonging in Oregon College and  
Training Programs?**



[WWW.OREGONSKITCHENTABLE.ORG](http://WWW.OREGONSKITCHENTABLE.ORG)



This guide is for anyone in Oregon who wants to organize and host a Kitchen Table Conversation with their family, friends, neighbors, or any group about **what helps students feel like they belong in college and training programs.**

We hope this Guide provides helpful ideas for organizing a community conversation, a structure for what to talk about during the conversation, and a clear way to summarize what people shared and get it to OKT.

If you need support or assistance, please reach out! Email [info@oregonskitchentable.org](mailto:info@oregonskitchentable.org) or call (503)725-5248.

# CONTENTS

Our Approach

---

Gathering People

---

Purpose / Background

---

Guiding the conversation

---

Gathering input

---

Tips and templates

---

# OUR APPROACH

Oregon's Kitchen Table invites all Oregonians to share their ideas, opinions, and beliefs to improve Oregon and its communities. For us, all Oregonians means all Oregonians, and we want you to have a say in the decisions that affect your lives!

We work with organizers, translators, and interpreters so materials and online and in-person consultations are available for Oregonians who speak a wide variety of languages and learn in a variety of ways.

Oregon's Kitchen Table creates community engagement opportunities to allow Oregonians to influence the decisions that impact their lives. We believe in offering many different ways for people to participate in these decisions, from activities that require little time or effort to activities that invite people to come together over longer periods of time and deliberate with one another. We also believe that no one way of participation is better or more important than another.

One of the approaches we use is what we call a Kitchen Table Conversation: a group of people gathering together to learn from each other and share what they think in the language, setting, and format that is most comfortable for them.

# GATHERING PEOPLE TO TALK

## INVITATION

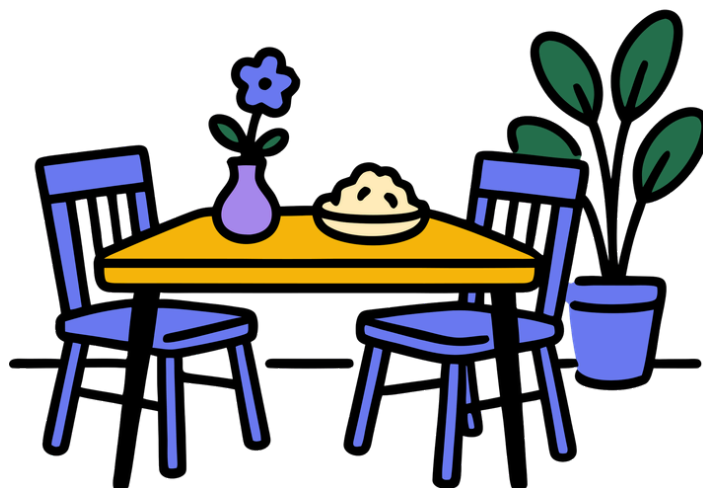
Use whatever method people will pay attention to, but make sure it feels warm, welcoming, and inviting. It might be a text, a phone call, What'sApp, a social media post, or an email. Some people set up e-invites. Make clear the time, place, purpose, what to expect (food or participant incentive), and if they need to RSVP.

## GROUP SIZE

10-12 people is a nice size. But larger groups can be broken up into smaller groups. And you can still have a good conversation with 2-3 people.

## FORMAT

You can meet in person, over Zoom, or group chat (people have used WhatsApp before, for example). You can talk while planting trees or clearing out invasive species. You can have the conversation on a bus during a field trip. Hold the conversation in a space that is easy and comfortable for people in your community.



# WELCOME

## HOST

Think of yourself as the host, welcoming people at your table,

## FOOD

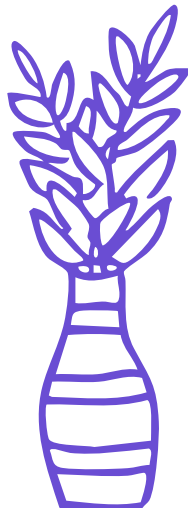
If you are in person, have food! Even a simple snack (popcorn, cookies, water, fruit) will help people feel welcome.

## FUN

If you're in-person or virtual, have some element of fun and joy that makes sense for your group: music, a short game, decorations.

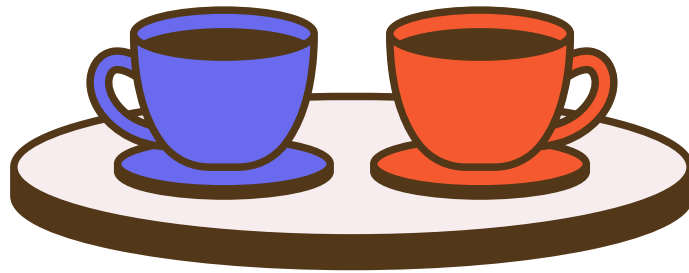
## ACTIVITY

Have an opening activity that allows for all to say something at the beginning so that they can get comfortable. For example, you could invite everyone to share what comes to mind when they think about feeling like they belong.



# ROLES FOR CO-HOSTS

If you are working with a partner or a team to co-host a conversation, decide who will take which role. Here are some common roles. You could also invite participants to join you and take on one of these roles.



**Facilitator:** Guides conversation, asks questions, and helps capture themes, commonalities, or differences.

**Notetaker:** Captures what people say. Bullet points are fine! If the notetaker can get any good quotes, that's great but not required.

**Timekeeper:** Use a clock (phone works!) to help make sure that there's enough time for each part of the conversation. Give facilitator / group time warnings.

**Reporter:** If there are small group discussions, shares a summary of what the group discussed for the whole group.

**Observer:** Helps the Facilitator make sure everyone gets a chance to talk or that no one person takes up too much time.

# PURPOSE FOR GATHERING

Explain why you've invited people from community groups to gather together to talk. Below is a description of what the decision is and why it matters. You can read this or summarize in your own words.

Right now, many people are talking about learning after high school and what the future of that looks like in Oregon. Decision-makers are trying to better understand what kind of learning settings work best for current and future students. Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is one of the decision-makers that are part of these talks.

One thing we do know is that students are more likely to continue their education after high school if they feel like they belong in places of learning.

One of these decision-makers is Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). HECC is the agency that coordinates statewide policy and funding for college and training programs across Oregon. Now, HECC wants to hear from Oregonians about what helps students feel like they belong in college and training programs. HECC is partnering with Oregon's Kitchen Table - a statewide community engagement program - to gather input from people this spring.

Your input is valuable! Share what you think so that HECC and partners can decide what actions to take to help foster a sense of belonging for Oregon students.

# GUIDING THE CONVERSATION

## 1. BACKGROUND

People have different experiences and knowledge about the topic. We honor all of those experiences and knowledge. Share the basic background provided in the "Purpose for Gathering" section.



## 2. QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

OKT has developed a few questions with the decision maker. We usually have a few main questions to ask people. We also have follow up questions if people need some direction in responding or if there's extra time.

## 3. HOW TO SPEND YOUR TIME TOGETHER

It's ok if people want to spend time on just one or two questions. We want to know where their interests and energies are, so that's fine!




## 4. CONFIDENTIALITY

Let people know that their names or anything that identifies them won't be shared. You will give OKT a summary of what you all talked about. OKT will combine all the input from different conversations, surveys, and other ways people share what they think.



# CONVERSATION QUESTIONS





Think of a time when you felt like you belonged in a place for learning. It could be an activity, class, person, a group or some other time. It could be at a school, a university, a community college, a training program, or anywhere else that people learn.

- What happened during that time?
- What about that time gave you that sense of belonging?

If you've had experiences when you felt like you didn't belong in a place for learning, what changed to make you feel more like you *did* belong?

Follow up questions:

- 
- What actions did you take that then helped you feel like you belonged?
  - Who or what did you turn to to help you feel like you belonged?



What are the most effective ways to help students in your community feel like they belong in college and training programs?

What do you think gets in the way of students from your community feeling like they belong in college and training programs?



## CONNECTING BACK

Let people know where their input will go and how it will be used. You can use the timeline on the next page. Also let them know that you will connect with Oregon's Kitchen Table with whatever questions came up and circle back to people with any answers.

## INVITING MORE VOICES

Share information about ways that people can invite others they know to share what they think. Use the flyers with the link and QR code included after the summary templates.

## APPRECIATIONS

Let people know how important their input is and we appreciate hearing their ideas, thoughts, experiences and time on this important issue. You can invite everyone to share their appreciations for each other.

## ACTIVITY

If there's time, you can invite people to share aloud. If there's not time, have post-it notes or cards for people to write or draw their response to a closing question. One example:



**What's one thing that you learned from listening to someone else today?**

# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

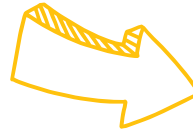
## 1. INVITE PEOPLE YOU KNOW TO PARTICIPATE

We are gathering input through May 27, 2025.

Invite other people you know to share what they think!

<https://tinyurl.com/hecc-belonging>

**Scan here with your phone**



## 2. OKT REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

OKT will provide a report of what we heard to HECC. We will post the report and a summary of that report in multiple languages on the OKT website. We will also share it with anyone who gave us their contact information.

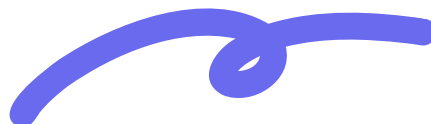
## 3. HOW HECC WILL USE THE INPUT

HECC and other decision-makers will get a report. It will also be based on what people share in surveys, interviews, and conversations that OKT is having with people.

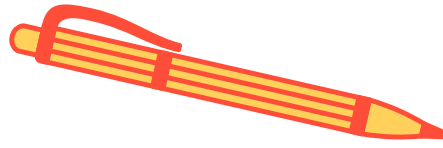
HECC will use your input to identify ways that will help people in Oregon feel like they belong in college and training programs.

**Later this year, there will be other ways for you to share more of your ideas about this topic.**

**We will share them on our website and by email if people provide us with their email address.**



# TIPS FOR SUMMARY



- Bullet points are fine! This is a summary not a formal report.
- Let us know any areas where there is agreement or disagreement in people's perspectives.
- Let us know if there are any unique perspectives (an idea / experience / belief one person shared even if others didn't have it).
- Add your observations/reflections: Feelings, sense of issues, concerns, positive experiences.
- Let us know if there's anyone we ought to follow up with on any ideas they shared.
- Share any questions about the project that you couldn't answer and who to follow up with.
- Include any pictures from the conversation. Make sure to ask permission first!

**SEND YOUR SUMMARY BY MAY 30TH TO SAGILES@PDX.EDU**

# **SUMMARY TEMPLATE**

**Date / Place:**

**# of people:**

**General description of the group (age ranges, languages spoken, any ways the group might identify themselves):**

**Opening activity (what you did, anything anyone shared):**

**Times when people felt like they belonged in a place for learning**

# SUMMARY TEMPLATE

Changes that helped people feel more like they *did* belong

Effective ways to help students feel like they belong in college and training programs

# SUMMARY TEMPLATE

What gets in the way of students feeling like they belong in college and training programs

Closing activity (what you did, what people shared)

# SUMMARY TEMPLATE

Areas of agreement among the group.

Areas of disagreement among the group

Unique perspectives

# SUMMARY TEMPLATE

Areas where someone was persuaded by someone else's point of view

Any observations you had

Quotes

SEND YOUR SUMMARY BY MAY 30TH TO [SAGILES@PDX.EDU](mailto:SAGILES@PDX.EDU)



**WHAT HELPS YOU FEEL LIKE YOU**

**BELONG**

**IN COLLEGE OR TRAINING  
PROGRAMS?**

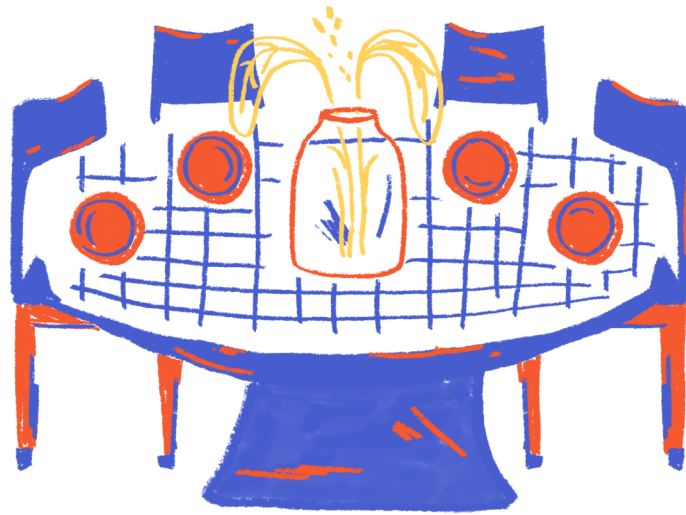
**We want to know from you what gives you a sense of belonging in college and training programs.**

Your input will help the Higher Education Coordinating Commission and partners decide how to better support current and future students.

**[TINYURL.COM/HECC-BELONGING](https://tinyurl.com/hecc-belonging)**

**SHARE WHAT YOU THINK  
THROUGH MAY 27TH**





**QUESTIONS?**  
**IDEAS?**  
**NEED SUPPORT?**  
**CONTACT US!**



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