



COMMON GROUND



Each year, Common Ground brings people across Northeast Ohio together for a day of community conversation. Common Ground participants connect with one another and take action on the issues they care about. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Common Ground will be held virtually this year in order to promote the safety of participants and the health of our community as a whole – Common Ground’s mission to build, engage and steward community is more important than ever. This year, residents, neighbors, families, and organizations across the region will host virtual conversations about the future of our shared home. United by a common theme, all Common Ground conversations have the same goal: to create spaces where meaningful connections are made and purposeful actions begin.

CLEVELAND
Foundation

[Clevelandfoundation.org/commonground](https://clevelandfoundation.org/commonground)

Welcome to Common Ground

This year, community members, neighbors, families, and organizations across the region will host conversations about the future of our shared home through the lens of this year's theme "Count Me In." To prevent the spread of COVID-19, all Common Ground 2020 conversations will be conducted virtually or by telephone. While we hope to safely resume in-person events in future years, it would contradict the values of Common Ground to jeopardize the health of participants during this pandemic. At its core, Common Ground is about engaging with one another respectfully and promoting the wellbeing of the broader community. Each Common Ground virtual event is put together by passionate community members like you, and we thank you for being a part of this special day.

This guide will help you plan and prepare for the conversation you want to have this year. It defines the different ways to participate in a Common Ground conversation, outlines the unique elements of a Common Ground event, and presents tools to help hosts plan. It is meant to be a guide, not a rulebook. Only three elements are required of every Common Ground 2020 event:

- 1. The event happens at a time of the host's choosing this year**
- 2. Hosts conduct their conversation virtually and/or by telephone**
- 3. All participants are asked to complete a short survey following the event**

Each Common Ground event is as unique as the people creating them, and this guide is meant to help you create the Common Ground experience that works best for you.

What is my role in this Common Ground event?

There are several different ways to participate in a Common Ground event. Whether you would like to host, volunteer to help lead the conversation, or just attend, there is a place for everyone at a Common Ground conversation.

Which role will you play?



Host

They are passionate community members who take action to bring people together for conversations that matter. They are taking time out of their days to plan, organize and engage members of our community this year. They build, connect, and share.



Facilitator

They are guides who make sure all voices are welcomed, heard, and respected. The best facilitators talk little but keep the group focused on one conversation. They work with the host to craft the best possible experience for participants, and work with participants to find the best path toward connection. They guide the way and ensure that all voices are heard.



Participant

They are curious and looking to uncover something new. They are open to hearing things they have never heard before. They may observe, participate, or ask probing questions. They come to Common Ground to meet, connect, and discover.

I'm excited to be a part of Common Ground 2020! Now what?

Consider this year's theme: Count Me In!

Every year, Common Ground shares a theme to help guide hosts as they build their events. Each host has the freedom to interpret the theme to reflect their own goals for their Common Ground conversation.

Common Ground invites Greater Clevelanders to explore what it means

to be counted and what it means to count. We all bring something valuable to the table. Our experiences enrich the communities in which we live. When we come together to share these experiences, connections are made that improve our neighborhoods and our lives. This year, Common Ground is asking Greater Cleveland to say, "Count me in."

We want to count you in. Count you in on the opportunity to reflect on our community. Count you in for taking steps to support and improve this place we call home. Count you in on connecting with the amazing people and good work being done in Greater Cleveland. This year, participants in conversations across the region will ask, "Are you in?"

Preparing for your Conversation

Now that you have an idea for a conversation and are planning to host or facilitate a Common Ground event, what's next?

There are a few things that are important to do before:

- Register your event at clevelandfoundation.org/commonground
- Keep an eye out for your Host Newsletter for updates and tips
- Register for a virtual Host Orientation or Conversation Training at CommonGroundCLE.org. You only need to attend one of each, but it will be a huge help!
 - Host Orientations help hosts learn the basics of hosting, setting up your event, and making decisions about your conversation. Join us:
 - June 18, 6 p.m. – 7 p.m.
 - July 2, 6 p.m. – 7 p.m.
 - Conversation Trainings dig into conversation facilitation and building a high-quality event for your participants. Join us:
 - June 25, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
 - July 11, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
 - July 23, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
- Decide what conferencing platform you want to use to host your virtual event: There are dozens of video, phone, and app-based conferencing options available. Feel free to use our preferred tool, Zoom, or choose your own. Hosts that prefer to use Zoom can qualify for reimbursement for Zoom Premium accounts from the Common Ground Stipend process.
 - **Zoom** (accommodates up to 300 participants, provides a dial-in option) *Preferred Platform*
 - **Google Meet** (accommodates up to 150 participants)
 - **Facebook Messenger Rooms** (accommodates up to 50 participants)
- Decide if you want to have facilitators to help with your conversation.
 - Be ready to find facilitators for your event. Common Ground organizers will work to help recruit facilitators, but supply may be limited!
 - Communicate ahead this year with your host or facilitator – and invite them to join you at a Conversation Training.

Do I need Conversation Facilitators at my event?

Not sure if you want to have conversation facilitators at your event? Here are some things to consider:

If your event has 10 or fewer participants

Then you may not need facilitators at your event. However, if your conversation focuses on a challenging subject, a facilitator can help.

If your event has more than 10 participants

Then you will want to consider having a facilitator to help manage the conversation. We encourage hosts to separate their participants into smaller groups at some point during their event to have more manageable conversations. A facilitator should be assigned to lead each small group conversation.

Elements of a Common Ground Conversation

Each Common Ground event has the same elements: Welcome, Check-In, Conversation, and Closing & Sharing. We outline the different elements and their roles in your conversation here, and afterward you will build your unique agenda for the day using your own goals and creativity.

1) Welcome Your Participants

Just like setting a table for a meal, you set the stage for your Common Ground conversation by creating a welcoming atmosphere for participants and establishing expectations at the beginning of the event. Common Ground provides several elements to help set expectations at the start of your conversation.

Civility Rules

Common Ground occurs when diverse people come together to engage in a shared commitment to civility. All Common Ground conversations are shaped around our Civility Rules, a group of shared principles. At the start of each event, we ask each participant to consider and take to heart these principles as you share in this day of civil conversation.

Civility Rules Pledge

We are here to explore ideas.

We are here to learn from others.

We are here to connect, not to conflict.

Common Ground conversations are meant to be a dialogue, not a debate. In debate, people listen to others in order to counter their point and win an argument. In dialogue, mutual understanding is the goal.

By participating in Common Ground, I pledge to participate in a forward-looking conversation with these values in mind:

- **Value all voices:** Make sure there is room for the quietest among us to be heard in the conversation.
- **Listen to understand:** Strive to understand each other, even across differing points of view.
- **Speak from experience:** We build understanding by replacing generalizations with personal observations about ourselves and our own lives.
- **Respect everyone:** We all want what's best for our community, and even if we disagree, we aren't disagreeable.
- **Look forward:** Focus on possibility, on how to start, and who can help.
- **Question kindly:** Each unknown is an opportunity to grow. If you disagree, try to learn. Ask questions. Be kind.



Elements of a Common Ground Conversation

2) Check-In

Check-in introductions create space for Common Ground participants and facilitators to introduce themselves and set up the conversation. Check-ins can be focused on the conversation's topic or not, but it's best if they allow the participant to share something about themselves. Each person should share their name, their Civility Rules button choice, and a very brief answer to the check-in question.

Sample Check-In Questions:

- Why is being here today important to you?
- What is one thing that brings you joy today?
- In one word, how does today's theme, "Count Me In!" make you feel?
- What does it mean to you to be counted?
- Who do you count on or who counts on you?

3) The Conversation

Every year, Common Ground shares a theme to help guide hosts as they build their events. Each host has the freedom to interpret the theme to reflect their own goals for their Common Ground conversation.

Common Ground invites Greater Clevelanders to explore what it means to be counted and what it means to count. We all bring something valuable to the table. Our experiences enrich the communities in which we live. When we come together to share these experiences, connections are made that improve our neighborhoods and our lives. This year, Common Ground is asking Greater Cleveland to say, "Count me in."

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4) Closing & Sharing

Just as you set the stage for the beginning of your conversation, hosts should provide closure and next steps after the conversation comes to an end. In many cases, your participants will want to keep going and continue the connections built at your event. This is a good thing!

To encourage guests to continue the conversation, we ask guests to consider the experience they just had, and then share with the group what they will be taking with them from the conversation. This check-out opportunity helps close the conversation and gives an opportunity for next steps to emerge.

There are also resources available following the conversation to help participants continue their Common Ground experience. Before ending, hosts and facilitators should make sure each participant is aware that they will receive information about a post-event survey and Common Ground 2020 action support via email.

How Will the Theme Shape Your Conversation?

Each year, Common Ground conversations interpret the year's theme across a wide variety of topics.

In this unique year, there are topics that may be especially relevant to hosts and their participants:

the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our region and the 2020 census.

This year, in addition to supporting events focused on topics like arts & culture, education, environment, neighborhoods, families & youth, and more, Common Ground is offering conversation guidance and question prompts for these two important 2020 topics.

2020 Census Conversations

Throughout the next decade, lawmakers, business owners, and many others will use 2020 census data to make critical decisions about all communities across the nation. This once-a-decade data collection will ensure that Northeast Ohio is given accurate congressional representation and funding for community resources. Common Ground 2020 serves as a unique opportunity to directly address the census undercounting that traditionally occurs in the Northeast Ohio region, which is expected to be even greater due to the impact of COVID-19 and social distancing. Common Ground conversations that are centered on the importance of the 2020 census could potentially help raise awareness about undercounting and hard to count populations.

Sample Conversation Topics

- What makes a community "hard to count"?
- How does the Digital Divide impact the census?
- COVID-19 Impact on census
- Identity, Race, and the census

Sample Questions

- What factors could prevent someone from being counted?
- How can we help others be counted?
- What was your experience completing the census?

COVID-19 Conversations

In recent months, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted our community and our world. This year, consider using the space of your Common Ground Conversation to address the various ways the pandemic has impacted individual lives and define together how we can come back even stronger.

Sample Conversation Topics

- Physical, not social distancing
- Supporting community in quarantine
- Internet accessibility and remote work/school
- Food access
- Unemployment
- Health access and racial disparities
- Housing instability
- Life after COVID-19

Sample Questions

- How do you think life will be different for your community after the pandemic?
- How can we support each other while social distancing?
- What does your community need? How can community members work together to help support, provide, or advocate for those needs?

Creating Your Agenda

Use this outline to help determine the structure and timing of your event. Incorporate as much or as little of this sample as you would like, depending on your event's goals and participants.

Welcoming Participants

Count Everyone In (5-10 minutes)

Welcome the group to Common Ground, introduce yourselves, and set expectations.

- Introduce the structure of the conversation.
- Share Civility Rules! and state your intention for this to be a safe/brave space where people feel respected as they share.
- If you are hosting virtually and have a large group, discuss the options for breaking into smaller groups after the civility rules are shared.

Guidance for using breakout rooms:

- Small groups of 6-8 people are ideal
- You can pre-assign people to breakout rooms or assign them after your virtual event has started
- Assign a facilitator to each small group to help manage the conversation

Check-ins/Icebreaker (10-15 minutes)

Check-ins are an opportunity for people to get to know one another and to model everyone having a voice.

- Make it short. Ask each person to state their name, where they are from, which Civility Rule resonates with them, and to answer the check-in question.
- Sample check in questions:
 - In one word, how does today's theme, "Count Me In!," make you feel?
 - What does it mean to you to be counted?
 - Who do you count on or who counts on you?

The Conversation

Open Discussion (30-40 minutes)

Introduce the three rounds of questions at the heart of today's conversation. You can use the following questions or choose your own. Each question should be given about 15 minutes.

- What does it mean to be counted?
- How do you make your voice count?
- What can you do to contribute to the betterment of your community?

Reflection (10-20 minutes)

- What emerges as the most meaningful takeaway from today's conversation?
- How are you inspired to think and act differently as a result of this conversation?
- Encourage participants to complete the post-event survey that will be shared after your event is over.

What's Next? (10 minutes)

Check out: Are there any steps this group would like to take? This includes:

- Continuing new connections
- Connecting with others
- Taking action

Before ending, remind everyone to complete the post-event survey and share their experience.

Welcoming Participants

**Introductions:
Count Everyone In**
(5-10 minutes)

**Check-ins/
Icebreaker**
(10-15 minutes)

The Conversation

Open Discussion
(30-40 minutes)

Reflection
(10-20 minutes)

What's Next?
(10 minutes)

Before ending, encourage everyone to complete the post-event survey and share their experience.

Your Role as a Facilitator

1. Counting Everyone In

Develop a plan with your host

Smile and enjoy getting to know new people

You will work with the host to create an inviting virtual space. Develop a plan ahead of time with your host for how you will welcome people. It also helps to set your intention for the day: what do you want your guests to take away from this experience? Be the champion of that feeling throughout the conversation.



2. Check-in or Ice Breaker

Share your own perspective

Invite people to open up

Ice breakers will ideally focus on name, where you are from, and the best thing about your community.



3. Holding the Conversation

Use a structured format or an informal approach, depending on your needs

Your primary role is to guide the conversation. You are encouraged to use the sample agenda for your conversation, but you are also free to adjust. To ensure everyone gets time to engage in meaningful conversation, we suggest keeping group conversations small, no more than 6-8 people. If you have a large gathering, utilize the tools available through your video conferencing platform to break the group into these smaller conversations. You can bring everyone back together for the last 15 minutes to share across groups.

If you want to take a more informal approach, you can place sample questions on your screen for people to follow, or create self-guided conversation prompts for people to draw from. We recommend having a closing reflection to share what people gained from the experience.



4. Closing the Conversation

Help the group consider next steps

Celebrate what happened and discuss what to do next. Follow the natural course of the conversation. Next steps can include:

- Continuing new connections
- Connecting with others
- Taking action

If the group has an idea for something they want to work on together, they can apply for a small Neighbor Up Action Grant or work with ioby to develop a crowdfunding page.



5. Ending your time together

Encourage everyone to continue the connections developed

Share link to post-event survey and Action Planning schedule

Ask for feedback and close on a high note



6. Share your successes, stories, challenges, and ideas with us

- Via social media using **#CommonGroundCLE** and **#CG2020**
- Leave a message for our team at 216-615-7253
- Email CommonGround@clevefdn.org
- Send us a note at:
Cleveland Foundation, ATTN: Common Ground
1422 Euclid Ave. Suite 1300, Cleveland, OH 44115



Tips for Quality Conversations

From the Facilitating Community Conversations resource guide, developed by the Community Innovation Network, a program of the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University.

What if a smaller group shows up?

When groups are smaller, conversations can be deeper and more intimate. If a smaller group than you anticipate shows up, take this opportunity to allow the group more time and space to share in the conversation. Smaller groups create more space for people to ask questions and connect to one another.

How can I make sure each table is diverse?

When people arrive, you can have table numbers on each name tag and then randomly give name tags to each person to mix it up. Or, you can ask people to sit with someone they don't know. If people are already seated in groups after the introduction, you can ask people to switch tables to sit with people they don't know.

What if people want to talk about something other than the conversation topic?

If it seems like people are off topic, ask a targeted question that connects back to your event's theme. If people continue to talk about a different topic, take the temperature of the group's desired direction by asking if people are comfortable moving back to the stated topic. If everyone seems engaged in meaningful conversation, then there may be a need to continue. It may be the right conversation for your group to continue. Facilitators can help guide conversations along the theme while honoring the wishes of participants.

What if a participant isn't engaging in the conversation?

Try to draw out quiet participants, but don't put them on the spot. Make eye contact. It reminds them that you'd like to hear from them. Look for non-verbal clues to see if they want to speak. You can also go around the table (in order) with a question so that no one has to decide when to speak. Allow people to pass if you do this.

What if I sense a lack of interest or excitement from the group?

Lack of interest/excitement can happen when the facilitator talks too much or does not give participants enough time to respond after posing the questions. It may help to pose a question and go around the circle so that everyone has a chance to respond. Also, when groups are in agreement, sometimes the room gets quiet. If you suspect this is the case, ask if the group is in agreement and wants to move on to discuss the next question.

What if one person is dominating the conversation?

As the facilitator, it is important to create space for everyone in the conversation. If someone is telling a powerful story, it is worth taking the extra time to let them finish. If one or two people are dominating the conversation, change the dynamic by saying, "I want to take a moment for everyone to consider this. If you haven't had the chance to talk, please, step forward. If you have had a lot of time to speak, step back so others can share their story."

How do I handle disagreements or conflicting perspectives?

Name the different perspectives and state that it is healthy for groups to deepen understanding about one another's differences in perception. You can take a more active facilitator role by asking one person to explain their perspective briefly, then asking the other person to explain their perspective briefly. Participants should be reminded to speak from their own experiences and not assumptions they are making about others. After both perspectives have been voiced, ask the group where they see common ground. If more divergences emerge, create space for others to voice their perspective. Encourage participants to view the disagreement using the lens of the Civility Rules.

What if someone says something offensive?

First, remember that they may not know that what they have said is offensive. Presume goodwill on behalf of all participants. Use the practice of calling people in, not out. If this is disruptive, ask the participant to discuss with the host or facilitator following the event. You can also invite the person who feels offended to explain how the comment made them feel. During these moments, it is important that participants work to understand where the other person is coming from. If comments are profane, abusive, or violent, notify the host. Hosts have the right to ask any participant to leave the event.

Take Action!

Common Ground Projects

Since 2017, Common Ground has provided approximately \$57,000 in funding support to Common Ground-inspired projects across Northeast Ohio. Project support exists to help catalyze community-led action in our region following Common Ground conversations. This year, Neighbor Up will continue its support of Common Ground projects through small grants in Cleveland and East Cleveland. Join our community partner to help make your idea a reality, to get involved, and to do more for Greater Cleveland.

Instructions for hosts/facilitators

At the end of your Common Ground event this year, your participants will complete the conversation with a reflection on possible next steps. If taking action on a community project or other ideas arise, encourage your group to consider applying for a Common Ground 2020 Action Grant.

Common Ground 2019 Projects

In 2019, participants in Common Ground conversations were inspired to go out in their community and get things done. Nearly 40 projects took advantage of Common Ground Action Planning and together received more than \$30,000 in small grants. Of those, 15 crowdfunding projects organized through ioby raised an additional \$22,000 in community support. Here are a few examples:

Cellos for East Cleveland Children

This project will help implement the first phase of a plan to launch a string orchestra for students in East Cleveland. The process will begin with the development of an out-of-school cello program for students at Chambers Elementary School.

Project Leader: Patricia Blochowiak

Urban Railroad: Glenville and University Circle Community Tours

At the Common Ground conversation that took place at One University Circle, a table of participants visualized a series of walking tours for residents of University Circle. They received a grant to develop tours as an opportunity for residents to learn about the surrounding Glenville neighborhood and its assets.

Project Leader: Jason Guo

My Violin Weighs A Ton (MVWAT)

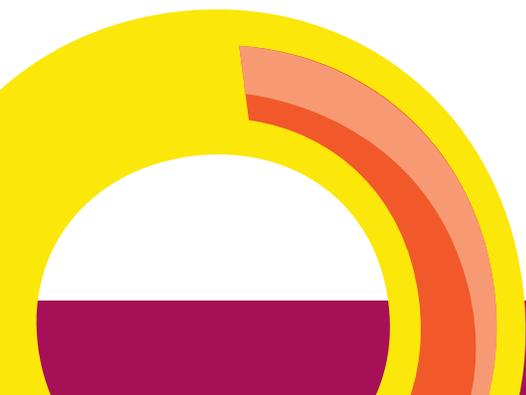
An interactive experience that will allow students to create hip-hop music that includes components of classical music. This initiative was crafted to engage, educate, and provide Cleveland students with a creative outlet to deal with painful experiences and cope with mental illness. The students participating in this project are a part of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. This four-month performance project is a partnership with Lexington-Bell Community Center, an urban youth educational center located in Hough.

Project Leader: Archie Green

We Must Make the Difference: Serving Children with Incarcerated Parents

This project seeks to build a computer lab for children with incarcerated parents. The lab will serve as a resource for children who want to communicate with their incarcerated parents through e-mail and video chat.

Project Leader: Curtis Freed



Questions? Email us at commonground@clevelandfdn.org or call 216-615-7253.

Conversation resources developed in partnership with:



Neighbor Up is a diverse group of 3,000 people in Greater Cleveland and beyond committed to getting involved in our communities, finding solutions to issues that plague our neighborhoods, and creating an extraordinary world right where we live. We're proud to be supported by Neighborhood Connections, the country's largest grassroots grant maker, which has invested \$8.15 million in more than 2,400 resident-led projects since 2003. Find out more at NeighborUpCLE.org or call us at 216-361-0042.



ioby is the premier crowd-sourcing platform for people doing good nationwide. It is more than just crowdfunding. It is community-led positive change. ioby gives leaders the ability to organize all kinds of capital – cash, social networks, in-kind donations, volunteers, advocacy—to build real, lasting change from the ground up. Learn more at ioby.com.



The Community Innovation Network, a program of the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University, is cultivating a new culture of deeply collaborative community change through building capacity, strengthening communities, and connecting people. The Network's practices build a strong foundation between the everyday lives of individuals and the complex systems we live in. Network members include individuals and organizations who work to create thriving communities through understanding and social change. Learn more at <https://case.edu/socialwork/communityinnovation/>.



Established in 1914, the Cleveland Foundation is the world's first community foundation and one of the largest today, with assets of \$2.6 billion and 2019 grants of more than \$114 million. Through the generosity of donors, the foundation improves the lives of residents of Cuyahoga, Lake and Geauga counties by building community endowment, addressing needs through grantmaking, and providing leadership on vital issues. The foundation's program areas include: arts and culture, economic and workforce development, education, environment, neighborhoods, and youth development and social services. Learn more at www.clevelandfoundation.org.

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