



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Environmental Leaders Summit: Table Host Guide

Thank you for hosting a discussion table at the YMCA Earth Service Corps Environmental Leaders Summit! We are excited to have you on board and confident that your knowledge will help make this event a success. The event will begin at 9:00, but your active role won't start until 9:30 when we begin the discussion sessions. There will be four sessions, each lasting 25 minutes.

There will be a variety of individuals taking part in the Summit. Youth participants ages 13-18 will make up the majority of the people in the room. Some groups of youth will be accompanied by Teachers and School Staff. The rest of the room will be filled by Table Hosts, like yourself, who will facilitate discussions around one topic for each of the four sessions; as well as Environmental Professionals, who will have the opportunity to move to different tables and take part in discussions around four different topics.

Event Icebreaker: The "Ah-Ha" Moment

Before the first session begins, everyone is invited to share their "Ah-ha" moments – the moment when they first became passionate about the environment. Youth can also share why they are interested in this event.

During this time, please...

- Encourage everyone at your table to make stories personal, rather than professional (e.g. "My time spent exploring the North Cascades with my brother" rather than "I went to college, pursued this degree, got this job, got another degree, and now this")
- **Begin the Icebreaker with your story** – Model a good length for the story, usually about one minute, and set the tone!
- **NOTE:** You will only do the Icebreaker prior to the first session.

Discussion Sessions

At the beginning of each session you as the Table Host will be invited to share with the group the work you do, a brief introduction to the topic and a status report of the topic as it relates to Western Washington. Following this short introduction the group will then begin exploring the following guiding questions.

NOTE: The guiding questions are posted at each table.

-What is this topic all about?

-How is this impacting the Puget Sound Region? Neighborhoods? Schools?

-Why do you care?

-What are you, or could you, be doing about it?

-How can we get young people involved?

During each session, please...

- **Help keep the discussion oriented toward youth** – this is a rare opportunity to connect youth with professionals in the field, and the youth should feel engaged and empowered.
- **Feel free to ask youth direct questions** – roundtable discussions might be intimidating for some young people. Invite them into the conversation with a direct question!
- **Address 'who' is impacted most:** YESC emphasizes equity in our work. Your topic may or may not be influenced by inequity in this region. If you feel comfortable, discuss ways to encourage equitable solutions which consider who is actually impacted most within the region.

During the last two minutes of each session, you as the Table Host will ask everyone at the table to complete a short **Reflection Activity**. Using the sticky notes provided, ask everyone to write down the following and add them to the placemat on the table:

Blue Sticky Notes – A takeaway from the discussion, thing they learned or idea that will stick with them

Green Sticky Notes – An action they will take to address the issues discussed

At the end of the session, participants and other professionals will be encouraged to move to a new table, and the process will be repeated. We will conduct a total of four sessions. After the last session your formal role is over and everyone will go into a town hall forum. Here, the facilitators will ask attendees to share observations, insights and takeaways, which you are encouraged to do, but you can also sit back and enjoy!

Lunch & Networking

Lunch will begin at 12:30 with catered salad and sandwiches. During this time we encourage you to make yourself available to young people who want to network. Youth leaders are often excited about the prospect of getting involved with other organizations or collaborating with you to begin new environmental service projects at their schools. This is the time to share business cards and offer your support to passionate young people.

Tips for Engaging Youth

Different backgrounds. Youth are coming from across the Puget Sound. Keep in mind the following:

- **Economic Status:** youth may have different life experiences that shape their view of the world or environmental movement
- **Geographic Location:** youth will be coming from urban, suburban and rural settings
- **School Environment:** youth may be from schools with well-developed environmental programs that support their interests, others may feel like they are the only young person who cares
- **Family Environment:** some young people have family/friends who are very supportive of their interest in the environment, others may not

Ask questions! These young people have lots to say. After you've shared some information ask lots of questions, especially if the group is quiet or only a few vocal youth are contributing. Encourage participants to share alternate views and counter-arguments and praise good discussion points.

Embrace the silence. If you ask a question, give the group time to reflect and develop an answer. If the silence feels awkward, that's ok. It generally takes 15 seconds for someone to form an answer. Be patient before you jump back in and ask a new question.

If you don't know something, admit it! This is another opportunity for youth to share their thoughts with the group or discuss how they might go about researching the issue.

Stay on topic! Youth are at your table because they are interested in the topic. Sometimes enthusiasm gets the better of us, though, and conversations can become tangential. Don't be afraid to redirect conversation. "That's an interesting idea, but since we have a short time for our discussion that might be something to revisit later". Or wrap up long stories. "I love that you have so much to say about that topic, but I want to make sure that others also have a chance to contribute."

Take time to reflect. It can be challenging to end a great conversation, but reflecting on the conversation will create a lasting impact for participants. You can use the prompts (takeaways and actions) described above to guide your reflection or ask your own questions to determine what participants learned, were inspired by or hope to do with this new information.