



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 involved and confident that your knowledge will help make this event a success. Thank you for your leadership at this youth-driven event! The Summit 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, youth and adult alike, who will facilitate discussions around one topic for each of the four sessions; as well as floating Environmental Professionals, who will have the opportunity to move to different tables and take part in discussions around four different topics.

Preparing to Host

There are several things you can do to prepare to host a table.

Explore your topic. Do some research on the topic you'll be discussing. Who are the stakeholders? What are their perspectives on the issue? What is the history and wider context of the issue and what other issues might intersect with this one? How did we get to where we are today with the issue? How do environmental justice and climate change interact with the topic?

Visuals. While it's not required it is often helpful to provide graphs, charts, graphics, etc. to share information and appeal to participants in multiple learning styles. Visuals also serve as a good reminder of information for you. Bring fully charged laptops or tablets if using digital visuals. There are very few available outlets in the Campion Ballroom.

Keep the Guiding Questions in mind. These questions will be posted at each table and will be used to guide the conversations at the Summit (See "Discussion Sessions" section for the guiding questions in bold).

It's ok to say "I don't know!" The topics are very big, and many people spend their entire careers studying one topic without even scratching the surface. It's ok not to know everything about a topic, and it's ok to say so! This gives other participants an opportunity to share what they know about the topic or for the group to think about how they could learn more about the issue.

Lean on your co-host(s). You may have a co-host and it's good to lead as a team. Each of you will bring a different perspective to the issue and a different knowledge base. You can even research different aspects of the issue so that each of you has expertise on a different part of the topic. Ask for support!

Check out the "Tips for Engaging Participants" section at the end of this guide. This section is chock full of tips and tricks to lead a conversation and engage everyone at the table.

Take Notes. It's often helpful for Table Hosts to jot down quotes, questions, or notes to help carry forward successful talking points, themes, and examples from one session to the next.

At the Summit

The big day is here! The following sections outline what the schedule for the Environmental Leaders Summit looks like and your responsibilities during each session.

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. Participants can also share why they are interested in this event.

During this time, please...

- Encourage everyone at your table to make stories personal, for example "My time spent exploring the North Cascades with my brother" rather than "I studied this topic and then studied that topic."
- **Begin the Icebreaker with your story** – Model a good length for the story, less than 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 share with the group your role in your school or at your organization, 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?*
- How do environmental justice and climate change connect to this topic?*
- Why do or should you and the community 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 an opportunity for youth to lead and direct the course of the conversation, and the environmental professionals and adults at the table should move back to center youth in the conversation.
- **Feel free to ask direct questions** – roundtable discussions might be intimidating for some participants. Invite them into the conversation with a direct question!
- **Address *who* is impacted most** – YESC emphasizes equity and environmental justice in our work. Your topic is influenced by equity issues and environmental justice in this region. Discuss ways to encourage equitable solutions which consider who is actually impacted most within the region.
- **Address climate change** – most environmental issues are connected to larger issues of climate change, whether the environmental issue is local, national, or global. Highlight those connections and discuss ways that solutions to your topic can make an impact on climate change.

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 whiteboard markers provided, ask everyone to write down one word describing a takeaway the placemat on the table. A takeaway could be something from the discussion they learned, an idea that will stick with them, or an action they want to take regarding the issue.

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 transition 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 & Opportunity Fair

Lunch will begin at 12:30 with a catered buffet. During this time we encourage you to continue your conversations. Youth leaders are often excited about the prospect of getting involved with other clubs, schools, and organizations or collaborating to begin new environmental service projects at their schools. This is the time to share contact information and additional ideas. After lunch, the Opportunity Fair will begin. Organizations that have reserved a table will be able to share information about their organization and opportunities for youth to engage with them while youth are still in high school. This may include jobs, volunteering, youth programs, internships, etc. Additionally, some colleges will be sharing information about post-secondary programs. Formal networking at the fair as well as informal conversations will continue at this time. Many teacher groups will need to leave before the formal end of the fair at 2:00 in order to return to school in time for end-of-day transportation.

Tips for Engaging Participants

Different backgrounds. Participants are coming from across Western Washington. Keep in mind the following:

- **Socioeconomic and Identity Diversity:** participants may have different life experiences that shape their view of the world or environmental movement
- **Geographic Location:** participants will be coming from urban, suburban and rural settings
- **School Environment:** participants 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! Participants are excited to be here and 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 people 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! There's also a lot of value in youth seeing adult mentors say they're not sure, and thinking with them about how they can learn more. This is another opportunity for participants to share their knowledge and thoughts with the group or discuss how they might go about researching the issue.

Stay on topic! Participants 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 the group. You can use the prompt (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.