



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION
WORKFORCE & EDUCATION
INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Q U A L I T Y O F L I F E

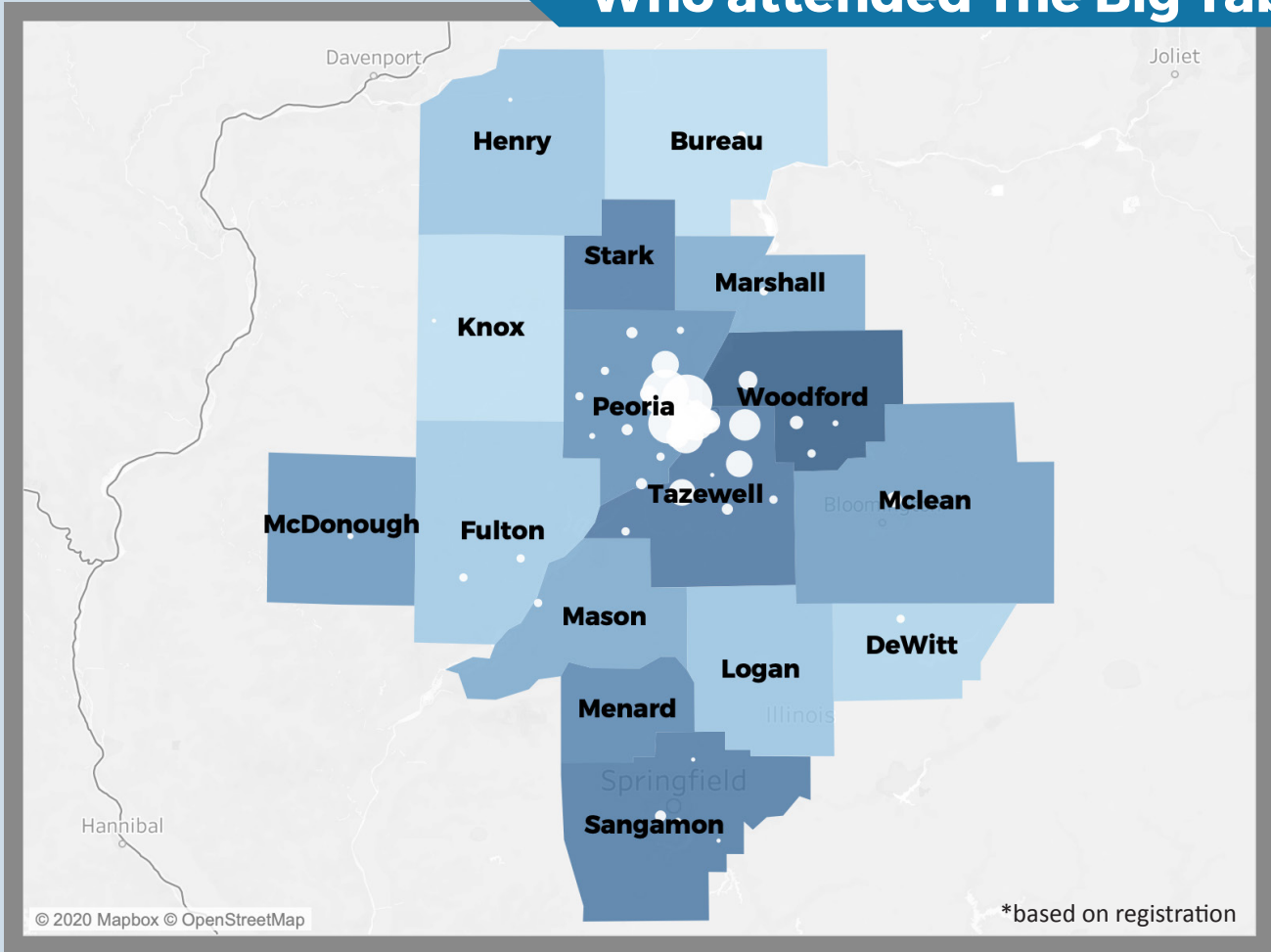
4 Days

748
Participants

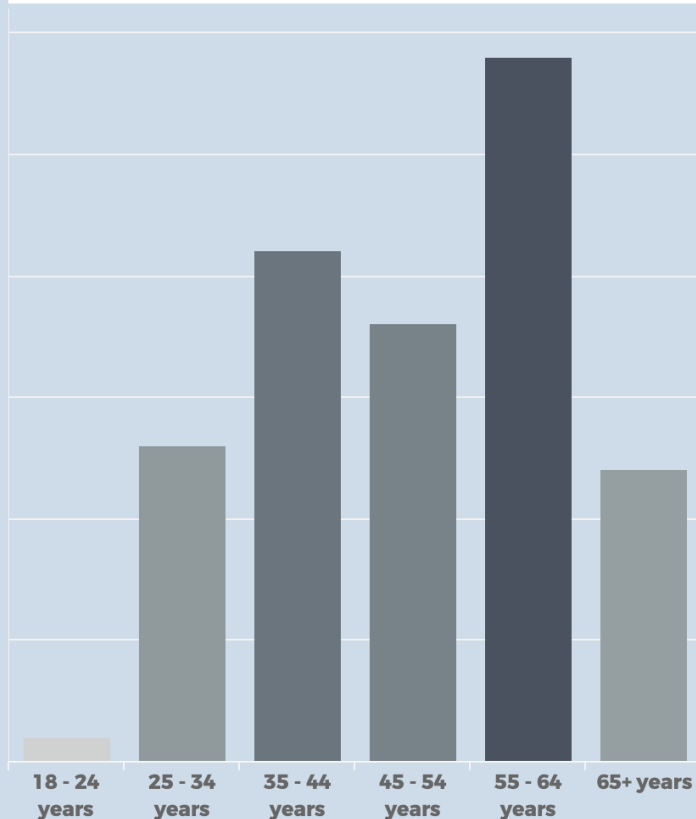
from

55
Zip codes

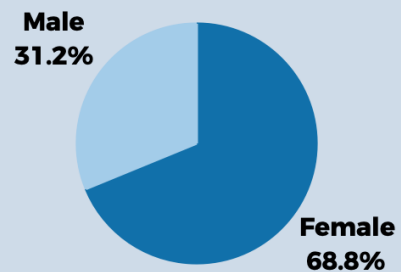
Who attended The Big Table



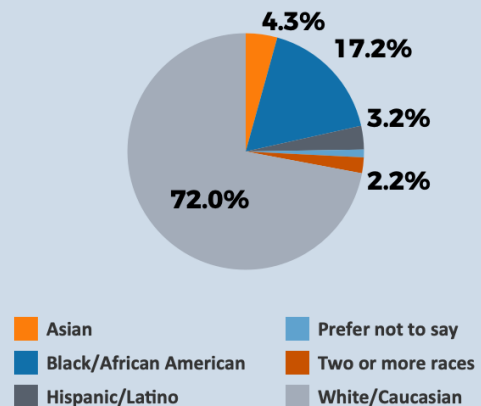
Age



Gender



Ethnicity



*based on exit survey results

Big Table Survey Results

Participants of The Big Table were asked to fill out a survey on their experience at the virtual event. This feedback will be used to help develop future events to have increased participation and accessibility. The results below are based on the 95 surveys that were completed.

Connection

Do you feel more connected to what is happening in our region after the event?



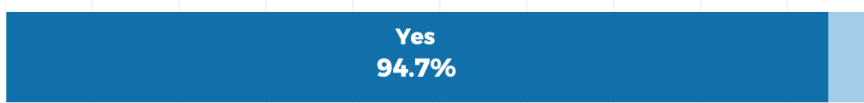
Optimism

Do you feel more optimistic about the next 12 months after the Big Table?



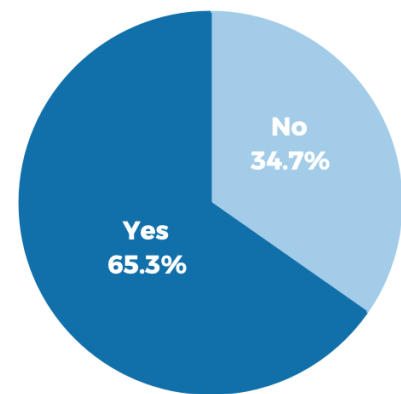
Satisfaction

Were you satisfied with your Big Table experience?



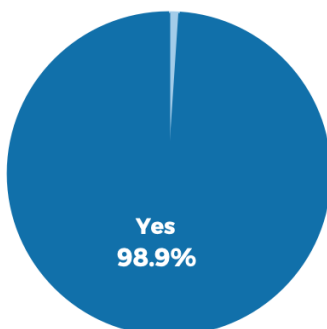
Ideas

Do you feel like your breakout discussion developed an idea that could help strengthen/improve our region?



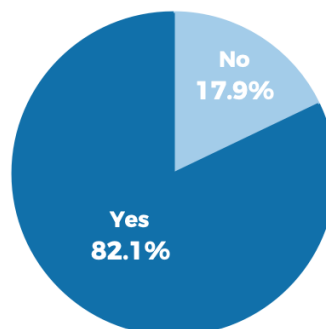
New Faces

Was there someone you did not know in your breakout discussion?



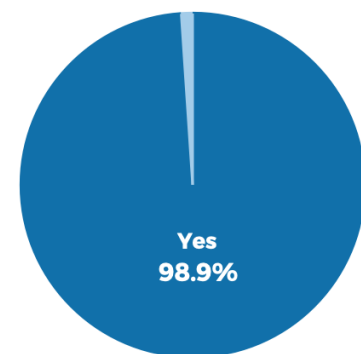
Initiatives

Did you learn about a new initiative or project already ongoing in our region?



Next Year

Would you attend this (or a similar) event in the future?





Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Oct 19 - This session featured the following speakers:

Dr. Rita Ali, *Illinois Central College*

Brian Ray, *PNC Bank*

Joshua Gunn, *Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce*

The Big Table 2019 Results

- Coordinate Gather Around Justice Series
- Increased engagement Diversity, Equity & Inclusion session
- City/County of Peoria taking action by creating [Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity](#)
- Increased partnerships formed with the Peoria Hispanic Chamber and the LGBT Chamber of Commerce Illinois

Common Views

- Big Table 2019 opened the conversation and now we are seeing action being taken
- Organizations are doing Diversity & Inclusion trainings for their employees
- Individuals are open to learning and taking action
- Now more than ever more individuals are open to learning from each other's experiences
- There is a need to discuss the difference between diversity and inclusion

“We’ve started to notice an awakening of our peers.”

- Dr. Jamel wright, Eureka College

Barriers

- Food insecurities (especially related to COVID-19)
- Access to funds and services
- Keeping facilities healthy for the aging community
- Limited access to transportation and childcare
- Establishing a vision with next steps laid out
- Ensuring equity for people with disabilities

“There’s a lot of work to do and **The Big Table** is a crucial part of that work. I am proud of Peoria for stepping up and taking this challenge head on.”

- Joshua Gunn, Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce

Ideas

- Create a list of who is specialized in diversity and inclusion work within our community
- Recruit workforce that looks like students, clients, and patients
- Design behavioral interventions and processes for guiding people to helpful resources

Where we are going

By continuing to foster conversations that are engaging, intentional and policy-focused, we hope to keep equity issues at the forefront. Our region has the opportunity to become a place that shares the practices and models that promote and champion equitable practices at all levels. Through the Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity and by directly addressing equity issues in the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), we can become a region that uses policy and programs to address equity issues.

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Workforce & Education

Oct 20 - This session featured the following speakers:

Dr. Sheila Quirk-Bailey, *Illinois Central College*
Laraine Bryson, *Tri-County Peoria Urban League*

The Big Table 2019 Results

- Continued work of the Regional Workforce Alliance, including the [Workforce Equity Initiative](#)
- [GPEAK](#) System Build out which launches in January 2021 to help workforce develop essential skills

Common Views

- Regional Workforce Alliance is dismantling the barriers of social injustice in the region
- Teaching basic computer skills can upskill older generations
- Interpersonal skills are key to career development
- The working alliance organizations need to come together to understand the “new normal” post-pandemic
- Remote working as a result of COVID is changing professional expectations

Barriers

- Reliable and convenient transportation
- Lack of opportunities to connect with professional mentors
- Having a record of substance abuse or minor criminal records
- Little or no access to WiFi or broadband in certain homes
- Some students are not connecting to career pathways early enough for future careers

Ideas

- Leverage local organizations to expand WiFi/broadband and provide public access
- Create a model for virtual internships
- Increase commitment to connecting younger students to career pathways
- Increase support for individuals with multiple barriers in gaining living-wage careers

Where we are going

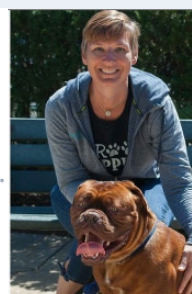
While the Regional Workforce Alliance continues to drive and develop many workforce development efforts, there are still vast opportunities for organizations and individuals to get involved and take on the challenges of an evolving working environment. By engaging our future workforce and expanding accessibility to resources, workforce development will play a vital role in both economic recovery and in making our region a more equitable place to live.

“Economic development *is* workforce development.”

-Dawn Koeltzow, Illinois Central College

“There is a big need for training and education regarding communication skills, from the beginning of a job search through the career journey.”

- Angie Houck, Junior Achievement



Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Oct 21 - This session featured the following speakers:

Chris Setti, *Greater Peoria Economic Development Council*
Jake Hamann, *Peoria Innovation Alliance/Distillery Labs*
Samantha Hutchinson, *Bear's Bites*
Eric Sampson, *Illinois SBDC at Bradley University*

The Big Table 2019 Results

- Distillery Labs facility and programming development
- Return to Better, eCommerce initiative

Common Views

- Emphasis should be put on recognizing small businesses as a key driver of economic recovery and growth
- Having a sustainable region for small businesses to survive and thrive allows for a sustainable long term growth
- Innovation in the agriculture, manufacturing and healthcare industries are key to boosting economic growth
- Small business can work with bigger businesses to help foster new ideas

Barriers

- Lack of training to fill certain workforce gaps
- Retaining small businesses through COVID
- Lack of recognition of small businesses in the community, especially minority-owned businesses
- Lack of young entrepreneurs/students engaged in growing & testing their ideas in the region

Ideas

- Network within the entrepreneurial community to find resources
- Value and highlight innovative efforts and ideas to the larger community
- Emphasize the importance of buying locally to keep our dollars circulating among the region

Where we are going

As the Distillery Labs facility and programming continues to come together, more attention and resources should be spent on supporting small businesses as the a key driver of our community. Institutions can help by engaging with small business to foster mutually beneficial relationships. Individuals can continue to shop and buy local, promote and embrace [Shop Local 365](#) values, and explore more ways to keep their dollars here in Greater Peoria.

HEADLINES IN 5 YEARS

Peoria is **THE** place to come to start and grow your business.

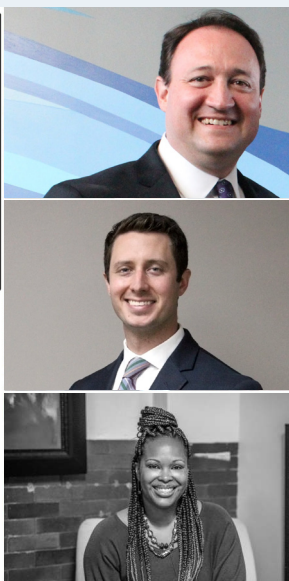
Opportunity for everyone in Peoria!

The Medical Center of America

It's Made, It Plays, and it Stays in Peoria

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Quality of Life

Oct 22 - This session featured the following speakers:

Nikki Romain, *ART Inc*

J.D. Dalfonso, *Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau*

John Morris, *Peoria Riverfront Museum*

The Big Table 2019 Results

- [Discover Peoria](#) brand was born
- Black-owned business initiative launched

Common Views

- COVID has brought an outpouring of community support
- Lack of big city congestion is a big asset for our region
- Our region offers rural, urban, and suburban lifestyles, all 15-20 minutes away from everything
- Our region has a rich history that is celebrated through the Peoria Riverfront Museum and other institutions
- We are a friendly, welcoming community with strong values
- The art community is a growing asset in our region

“ I personally believe Peoria can be an art mecca.”

- Nikki Romain, ART Inc

Barriers

- Connecting those suffering from poverty, homelessness, and substance abuse with appropriate resources
- Outdoor spaces are being lost and are not promoted adequately
- Food deserts are growing
- Transportation needs improvement
- Community events need to be more inclusive

“ We are the people that can be responsible for solving these critical health problems.”

- Brandon Lewis, The Salvation Army

Ideas

- Individuals can spread awareness of regional assets through social media
- Promote Shop Local initiatives to bolster community pride and keep dollars circulating here
- Continue telling the story of our evolution from whiskey to Cat to medical innovation

Where we are going

As the driving narrative of our region continues to evolve, we can relate Peoria's resilient and adaptive spirit to the world. We can continue promoting the assets that make our region a valued destination and a great place to live and work. By addressing social and income issues, there is tremendous opportunity to raise the quality of life of our residents, keeping our population here and attracting new talent to the region.

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GATHER AROUND JUSTICE

A BIG TABLE DISCUSSION SERIES

The Big Table: Gather Around Justice seeks to foster mindful conversation around how we can use our individual power and privilege to make the changes our region needs to correct historic racial, economic, and social inequities.

The idea for this discussion series came about following peaceful protests and demonstrations around the region and county in response to the killing of **George Floyd** by the Minneapolis police. The Big Table reached out to leaders from social causes, local law enforcement, and individuals focusing on racial equity in the hopes of bringing this timely and much needed discussion to the forefront.

This evolved into virtual series which also included discussions focused on **Criminal Justice Reform** and **Equity through HR & Organizational Policy**. Recordings of these discussions can be viewed at www.bigtablegp.com.

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Discussions

444
Participants