

1. Clarify your purpose

So you've decided to host a BING meetup. Congratulations! Take a moment now to consider: Why do you want to bring people together? What do you want to talk about? What are your desired outcomes?

It can be helpful to choose one or two questions to guide your conversation — find a question that matters to you, and that encourages open-ended exploration. Need some inspiration? Check out www.biodynamics.com/bing-questions

2. Pick a time and place

Do you want to create a new event, or host a meetup at an existing event? If there is a conference or regional meeting in your area, you might find space within the event for a BING meetup, or host a meetup directly before or after the event (see www.biodynamics.com/calendar to find out what's happening near you). If you know who might come, you can use www.doodle.com to find times that work best for everyone.

Do you have space to host at your home, farm, school? Libraries, community centers and churches can also be good places to bring people together.

3. Craft and send an invitation

An invitation doesn't need to be fancy, but it does need to tell your guests what you're doing, when and where. If you can, make the invitation personal, and tell each person you invite why you'd like them to come.

It's helpful to include an RSVP date, so that you can plan your space and supplies accordingly. Here's a sample invitation you can modify to fit your needs:

Dear Kelly,

I'm writing to invite you to a Biodynamic Initiative for the Next Generation meetup I'm hosting next month. It will be a chance for some of us working with biodynamics in southeastern Wisconsin to get together, meet each other and explore the question "What is the future asking of us?" I'd love to have you join. Here are the details:

Southeastern WI BING Meetup
Saturday, February 16, 3-6pm
Zinniker Farm, N7909 Bowers Rd., Elkhorn

I'll have some snacks and drinks — feel free to bring something to share, or just yourself! Please let me know if you can join by Saturday, February 1. You can reach me at 262-649-9212 or bing@biodynamics.com

Hope to see you there!

Not sure who to invite? Find others near you through the biodynamic directory (www.biodynamics.com/_directory) or send your invitation through the monthly BING e-news. Just email it to bing@biodynamics.com.

If you get stuck or need inspiration at any point in your process, we are here to help.

Call 262.649.9212 x 5 or email bing@biodynamics.com and we'll figure it out together!

4. Prepare to be a host

Now that the word is out, take some time to plan out the details of your meetup. The World Café is a form that has worked quite well for several BING meetups. You can get a free hosting tool kit at www.theworldcafe.com/tools.html

Imagine yourself in the hosting role, what you will say, and what questions your guests may have. If you're using a new process, try outlining the key components in your own words, or explaining the process to a friend beforehand. You may want to invite others to co-host the whole meetup or specific parts with you. If so, a phone call or meeting before the event can be helpful.

As you plan your agenda, make sure to build in time for people to arrive and get settled, transition time between activities, and a break if you're meeting for more than 2 hours. Think about how you will harvest from your time together, and if there will be any follow up with those who participate.

How to host a BING meetup

www.biodynamics.com/bing-meetup

5. Gather your supplies

The World Café toolkit includes a list of suggested supplies — but you can also be creative with what you have available. Seating can be small tables and chairs, picnic tables, straw bales, pillows on the floor, or a blanket outside if the weather is nice.

Large paper and colorful markers will help the group record and share the insights that come out of your conversations. Have smaller index cards or post-its and pens for individuals to take personal notes if they want to. Flowers, candles, tablecloths or other decorations will help to make the space welcoming. A talking piece can be helpful for circle conversations, and a noisemaker or bell makes it easier to signal transitions.

Don't forget to print sign in sheets, and have a camera ready to record and share what happens.

Plan some simple snacks and drinks like a basket of apples, a bowl of popcorn, sliced raw vegetables, or cheese and crackers, with water, iced or hot tea or coffee.

6. Host your meetup

As your guests begin to arrive, ask them to sign in, encourage them to meet and mingle, and enjoy the snacks and drinks. This is a great time to take a few photos (or find a volunteer to take photos throughout your meetup). Once the group has gathered — or you reach the agreed upon starting time — bring everyone together in a circle to formally begin. You may want to open with a moment of silence, reading a poem or verse, or a brief guided meditation.

Share your inspiration for hosting the gathering, and how you are envisioning the flow of your time together. If you are following a specific format, explain how the process works, guiding principles, and the question or topic you have chosen for your focus.

If you have a small group (less than 6 or so), you'll probably want everyone to be in one conversation together. If you have a larger group, it is wise to divide into conversation circles of 4-5 to make sure each person has a chance to participate meaningfully. Feel free to join in the conversation, but keep in mind your role as host, encouraging everyone to speak up and listen, and letting everyone know when it's time to move on.

As you come to the end of your time together, invite your guests to share their key insights from the conversations. Record these gems in a way everyone can see them — on a large piece of paper, or as a collage of post-its or smaller sheets. You might close the gathering in a circle with a poem or song, and invite people to stay to visit with each other afterwards if they wish. Before everyone leaves, make sure to take a photo of your group.

7. Share your story

After your meetup is over, please send an email to bing@biodynamics.com with photos of the people participating and your harvest, so we can share them with the BING network. We'd also appreciate your thoughts on what went well, what you would do differently next time, and how you would improve this guide for others who want to host meetups. Thank you for helping to grow the BING community!