**Tactic: Toasts**

*Set the tone for the convening by pausing during the opening moments to invite reflection, gratitude, and shared purpose.*

**When to Use It:**

Offer a toast at the very start of the convening—ideally during a shared meal. It helps participants feel genuinely welcomed, marks the shift from arrival into intentional work, and sets the tone.

**How it Works:**

**Step 1 (2 minutes) | Welcome from the host**The convening host(s) stand and offer a short toast that:

* Thanks participants for making the time and effort to be there.
* Names what feels unique or hopeful about this group gathering at this moment.
* Frames the opportunity ahead: why we’re here, why it matters, and what we might accomplish together.

**Step 2 (~20 minutes) | Invite reflections in small groups**After the host’s toast, you can invite participants to add their own short reflections or toasts to the group in plenary with a clear time constraint depending on group size, or in smaller groups such as dinner tables. Use prompts such, as:

* “One hope I have for our time together is…”
* “One thing I’m bringing with me into this convening is…”
* “Something I’m excited to learn or explore here is…”

### **Helpful Tips:**

* **Reinforce your “why.”** Use your own opening toast to reiterate the purpose of the convening. Connect it to the larger arc of the gathering and signal the tone you want to set—curiosity, courage, celebration, etc.
* **Model the tone.** Go first with a toast that’s warm, grounded, and personal—but brief. Your example will shape the contributions that follow.
* **Shift naturally into conversation.** After each person at the table has shared their response to the prompt, invite the group to move into open dialogue. You might say: “Now that we’ve heard from everyone, feel free to continue the conversation—follow up on something that stood out to you, ask a question, or just see where the discussion flows.”