



TRUST FOR
PUBLIC
LAND®

Programming with Purpose: Bridging Divides

February 12, 2026

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Welcome!

Introduce yourself in the chat. Share your **name** and **pronouns**, your **agency**, and your favorite park amenity.

Forest Ridge Park, Raleigh, North Carolina →

One of a series of activities hosted by Raleigh Parks to increase participation in recreation programs by under-resourced communities



¡Hola!
Hello!

Programming with Purpose

Bridging Divides Agenda

Webinar (1 hour)

- What is “Bridging”?
- Programming strategies to support bridging
- Case Study: Chattanooga, TN
- Q&A

Committed Cohort (30 minutes)

- Small group discussions
- Report out
- Closing and next steps



Programming with Purpose

Path to
Participation

October 16

Bridging
Divides

February 12

Measure
What Matters

June 11



**First
Impressions**

December 11

Maximize
Programming

April 9



December Recap

First Impressions

Consider what steps you can take

Before your program starts

During your first day of program

After your first session

to make participants feel welcome.

People want to connect



7/10 Americans want to connect across difference



People lack opportunities to connect

Parks are the opportunity!

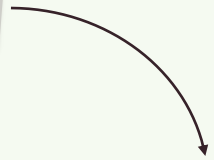




**People want
to connect**



7/10 Americans want to connect across difference¹



**People lack
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**Parks are
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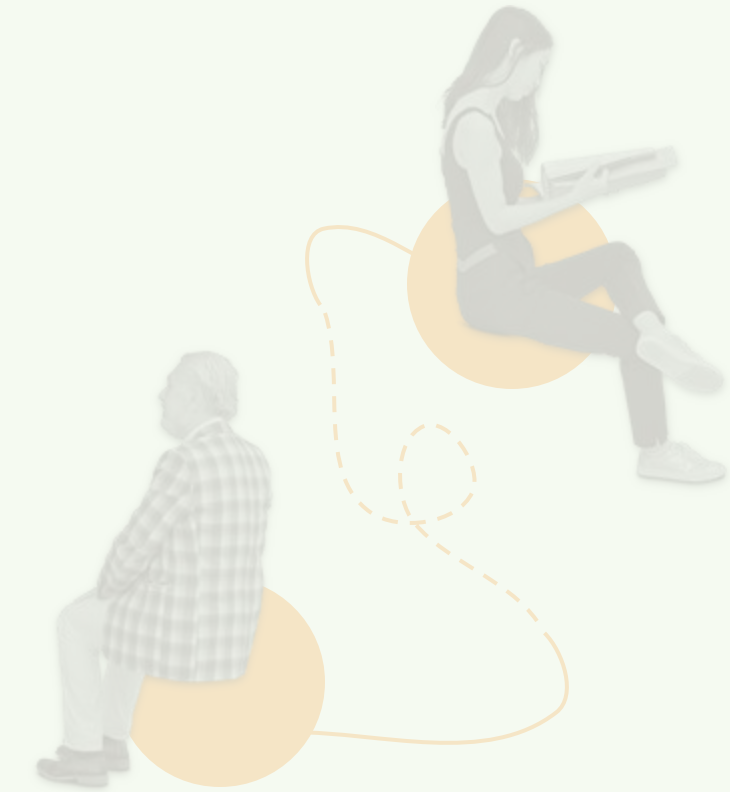




People want to connect



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People lack opportunities to connect

Parks are the opportunity!



What is Bridging?

Bridging is a practice where members of different social groups are not only brought into contact, but build social connections and rapport...**The heart of bridging is listening to and learning from and about the person perceived as different or even as “the other.”**

-Belonging without Othering: How We Save Ourselves and the World, john a. powell



Bridging

Strategies

Establish group norms and model cooperation and respect.



Bridging

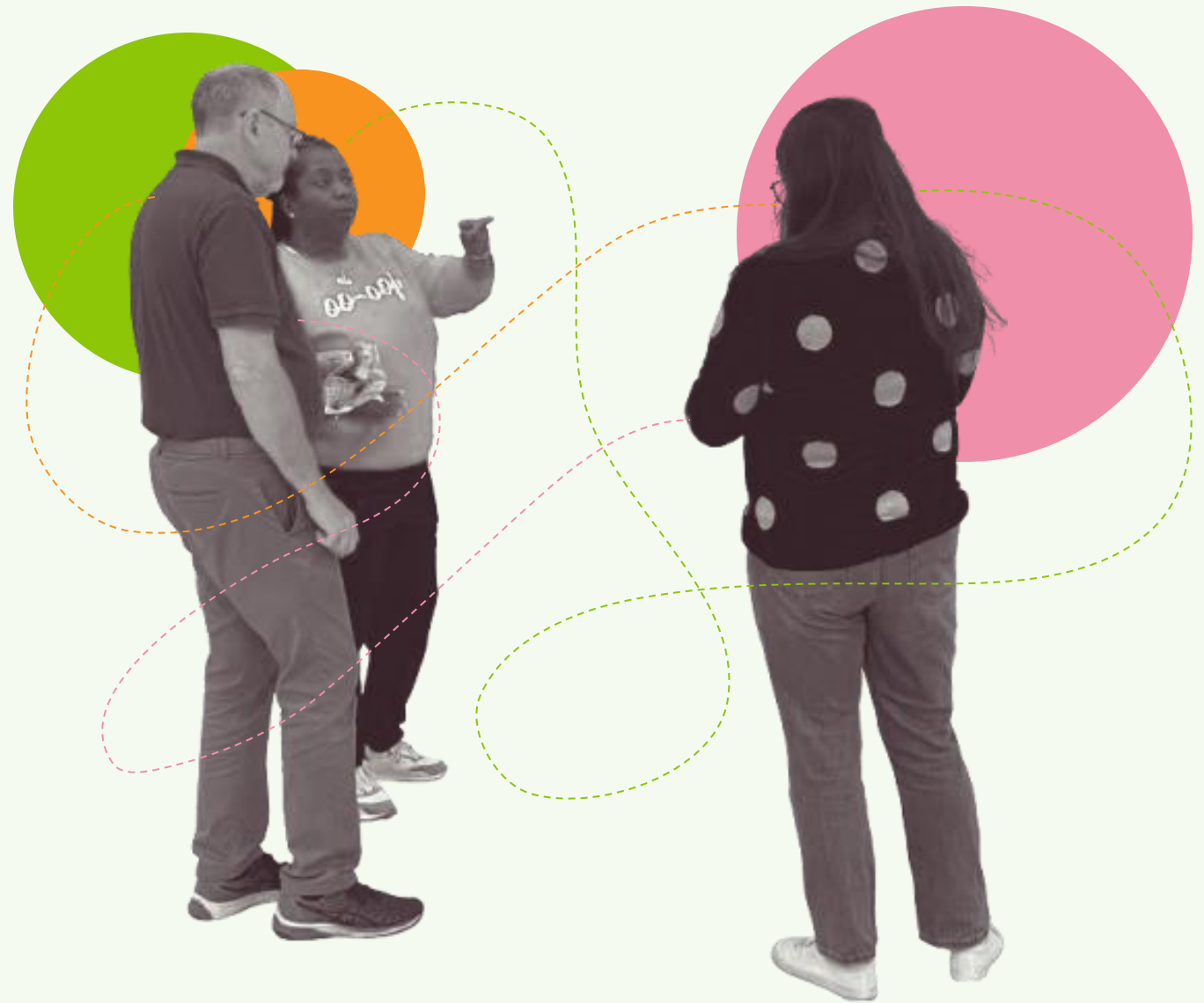
Strategies

**Balance
participation of
people from different
groups**



Bridging Strategies

Make sure people
from different groups
engage as equals



Bridging

Strategies

Make activities **active**
and group-focused
instead of passive and
individual.





Social

Infrastructure

We focus on building the social infrastructure that allows parks and public spaces to thrive over time



From Programs to Practice

Social Cohesion Research

Through a three-year partnership with the University of Massachusetts, School of Amherst, we research how trust, belonging, and connection across difference are built during shared experiences in public spaces.



Chattanooga, TN



Series of Workshops in your Local Parks

All expected to **participate in all three** 2.5-hour workshops, on consecutive weekdays

Workshop 1

Painting murals to cover bases of park benches



Workshop 2

Gluing murals to park bench and waterproofing



Workshop 3

Assembly of parks benches



Parks Can Increase Welcoming & Belonging Across Racial Lines

Why this matters: It highlights that park programming can be intentionally designed to strengthen community trust across divides, addressing one of the most persistent challenges in creating equitable public spaces.



Photo

Participants reported significantly greater sense of belonging and feeling welcomed in parks after participating in the interracial workshops.



Moving beyond “surface-level” exchanges like nods and smiles to deeper conversation and engagement.



These changes show that structured activities in parks can break down barriers, reduce discomfort, and build interracial closeness

Bridging Strategies

1

Establish **group norms** and **model** cooperation and respect.



Bridging Strategies

2 Make sure people from different groups engage as equals



Bridging Strategies

3

Make activities active and group-focused instead of passive and individual.





4 **Balance participation of people from different groups**


Bridging Strategies

Q&A



Supplemental Resources

- *Cultivating Contact*. American Immigration Council.
- *Bridging Differences Playbook*. Greater Good Science Center.
- *The Connection Opportunity*. More in Common.
- Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley



Park Listeners—familiar faces in the community—connect with community members in neighborly places

Thank You!

Next Session: April 9

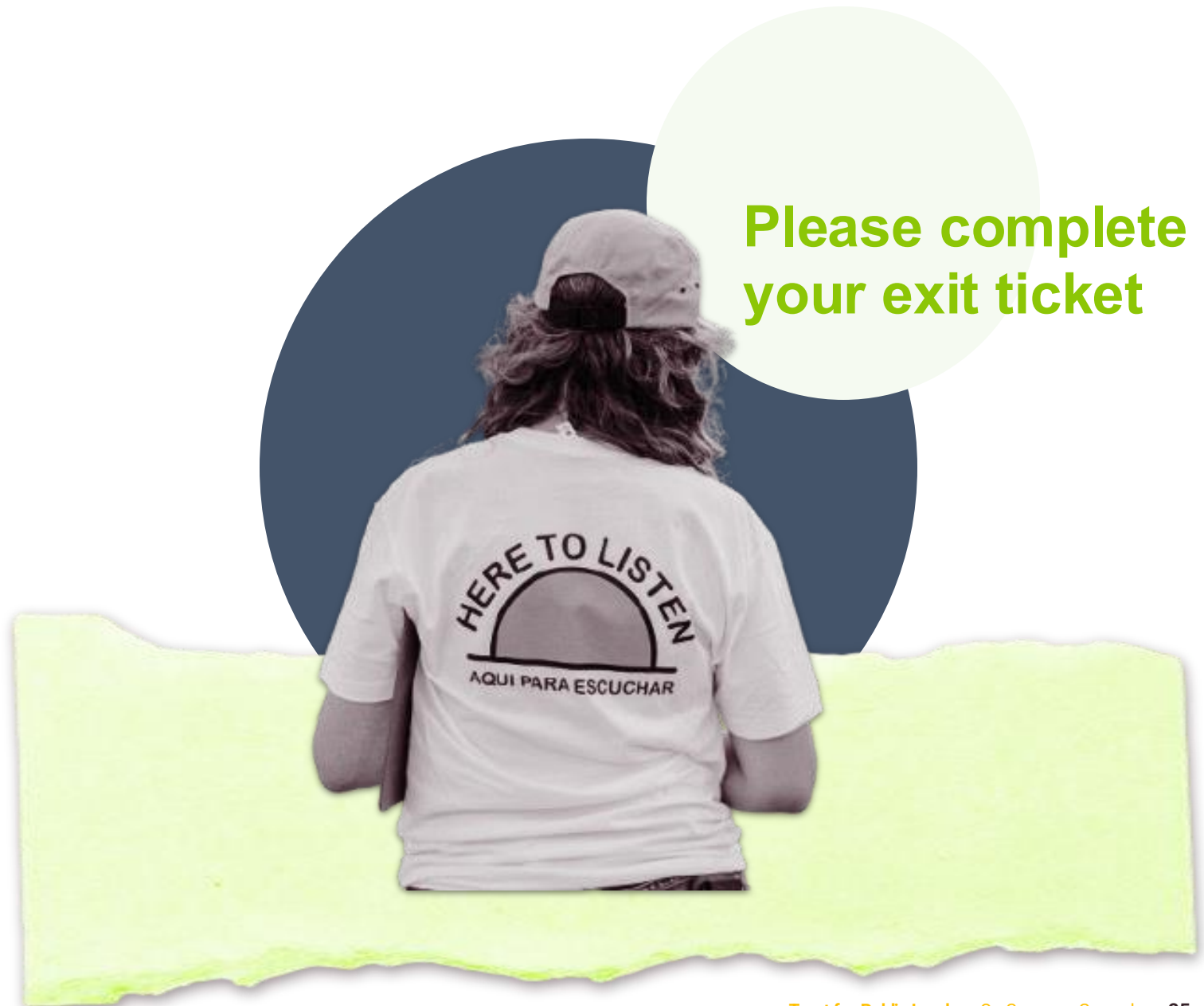
*Playful and Practical: Maximize
your Park Programming*

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**Please complete
your exit ticket**



April 9
Maximizing
Park
Programming

Sign up for
our next
webinar!

Committed
Cohort

Stay on the
line
We will split into
peer discussion
groups shortly!

Bridging

Strategies

1 Establish **group norms** and **model** cooperation and respect.

3 Make activities **active** and **group-focused** instead of passive and individual.

2 Make sure people from different groups **engage as equals**

4 **Balance participation** of people from different groups

Comitted Cohort Agenda

Review & Reflect on
how to apply bridging
strategies in your
programs

Pair and Share to
debrief your ideas



Programming Example

- Describe the program and current participation.

Current Context

- Describe communities you currently engage.
- How can current participation better reflect the larger community context that you work with? Who's missing?

Strategies for Intergroup Contact

- Choose 2-3 strategies from today's presentation that you'd like to bring into your program.
- How could you implement those strategies? What is your next step?