



CIVIS Open Lab

Bringing Generations Together

**A Practical Toolkit for Designing
Transformative Intergenerational
Learning Communities**

*Building communities where generations learn,
create, participate, and shape civic life together*



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This toolkit has been designed to support practitioners who wish to create spaces where people of different ages can learn with one another, challenge stereotypes, strengthen civic participation, and co-create more inclusive communities.

Whether you are an educator, community worker, municipality officer, NGO practitioner, artist, health professional, researcher, or volunteer, this guide offers practical tools and ideas for designing intergenerational programs that move beyond simple activities and create lasting social impact.

Practice Tip

Before designing any activity, remember:
"The goal is not simply to bring generations together but to create meaningful conditions for relationships to emerge."

Why Intergenerational Learning Matters Today

Many contemporary societies have become unintentionally organised around age separation.

- Children spend most of their time with children.
- Young adults spend time with peers.
- Older adults often participate in separate programs or services.

As a result, many people grow up with limited opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with individuals from different generations.

This separation has consequences.

Research consistently shows links between age segregation and:

- Increased loneliness
- Age-related stereotypes
- Social mistrust
- Reduced civic participation
- Weakened community cohesion

Intergenerational learning programs provide opportunities to reverse these trends by creating intentional spaces where generations collaborate around shared experiences and common goals.

Rather than focusing on age differences, participants begin discovering common concerns, shared aspirations, and unexpected similarities.

"I came expecting to meet people from another generation.
I left realising we were dealing with many of the same hopes and fears."

Practice Reflection

Ask yourself:
How often do people from different generations interact meaningfully in your community?
Not simply sharing a space.
Actually collaborating.
Actually listening.
Actually creating something together

An illustration featuring two stylized human profiles facing each other. The profile on the left is purple and appears to be of a younger person with short, spiky hair. The profile on the right is teal and appears to be of an older person with glasses and a receding hairline. Between them and around their heads are numerous small, colorful triangles in shades of pink, purple, teal, and yellow, creating a sense of dynamic energy or thought. The background is plain white.

Young people are often portrayed as irresponsible or disengaged. Older adults are often portrayed as dependent, technologically incapable, or resistant to change. These assumptions become powerful because they are rarely questioned.

Intergenerational learning creates opportunities for participants to challenge these assumptions through lived experience rather than information alone. People do not overcome stereotypes because they are told to. They overcome stereotypes because they encounter people who complicate those stereotypes.

Template: Stereotype Mapping (fill in during program)

Age Group	Common Stereotype	Reality Encountered in Program	Participant Reflection
 Young people (15–30)	Irresponsible, disengaged from civic life		
 Middle adults (30–60)	Too busy, careerfocused, disconnected		
 Older adults (60+)	Dependent, resistant to change, technophobe		

**Before your program begins,
ask participants:**

“What assumptions do people usually make about your age group?”

Repeat the same question at the end of the program.

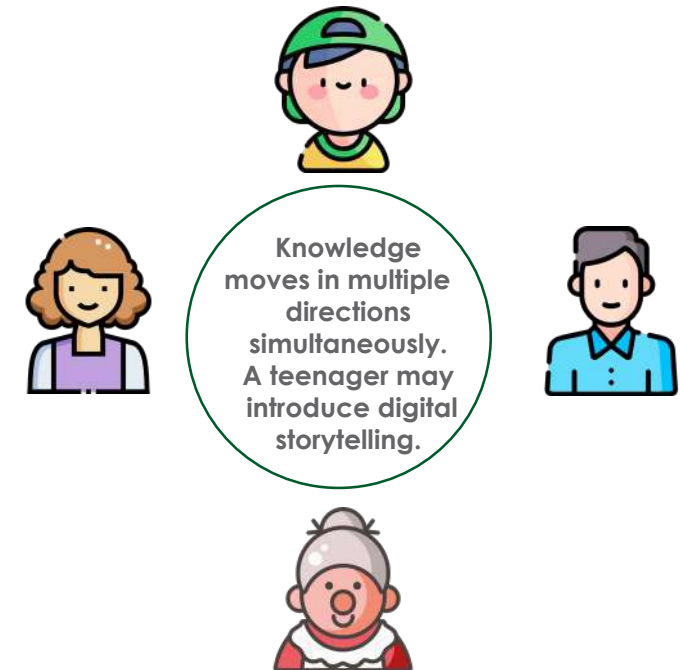
Compare responses and discuss what shifted.

Many programs unintentionally position older adults as recipients and young people as helpers. This model limits learning.

Transformative intergenerational learning begins from a different assumption:

- Everyone has knowledge.
- Everyone has experience.
- Everyone has something to contribute.
- Everyone has something to learn.

**A retired teacher may contribute historical memory.
A child may introduce creativity and spontaneity.
An older participant may contribute resilience and
perspective.**



Template: Stereotype Mapping (fill in during program)

Participant Group	What They Bring	What They Gain	Activity Link
 Children / Youth			
 Young Adults			
 Middle-aged Adults			
 Older Adults			



Practical Rule

Whenever you design an activity, ask:

“Who is teaching?”

If the answer is only one generation, redesign the activity.

Every encounter should position all participants as both teachers and learners.

The Seven Principles of Transformative Intergenerational Practice

These principles guide every aspect of program design, from the first planning meeting to the final evaluation. Use them as a checklist and a compass.



Reciprocity

Definition: All participants both give and receive knowledge, skills, and care.

Why it matters: Reciprocity prevents dependency and validates every voice in the room.

Example: Instead of “students teach technology to elders” participants co-create → digital life stories.

Facilitator action: Design each session so every generation leaves having learned something new.

Red flag: Only one generation is visibly “helping” the other.



Co-Creation

Definition: Activities and outcomes are shaped by all participants together, not designed for them.

Why it matters: Co-creation builds ownership, motivation & authentic learning.

Example: A mixed-age team decides together what community story to document and how.

Facilitator action: Offer meaningful choices at every stage of the program.

Red flag: Adults or facilitators plan everything in advance without participant input.



Inclusion

Definition: Every participant feels genuinely welcomed and able to contribute in their own way.

Why it matters: Exclusion -even unintentional- undermines trust & learning.

Example: Providing materials in multiple formats (visual, oral, tactile)

Facilitator action: Audit every activity for participation barriers before delivering it.

Red flag: Participation requires specific abilities or prior knowledge.



Accessibility

Definition: All participants both give and receive knowledge, skills, and care.

Why it matters: All participants both give & receive knowledge, skills & care.

Example: Holding sessions in spaces reachable by public transport; offering largeprint materials.

Facilitator action: Complete an accessibility checklist for every session & venue.

Red flag: Accessibility is assumed without being verified.



Reflection

Definition: Participants are supported to think critically about their experiences and assumptions.

Why it matters: Without reflection, activities remain entertaining rather than transformative.

Example: Ending every session with structured reflection circles or written prompts.

Facilitator action: Always build at least 15 inutes of guided reflection into every session.

Red flag: Sessions end without any structured reflection time.



Dialogue

Definition: Communication is built on genuine listening, curiosity, and respect across differences.

Why it matters: Dialogue -not debate- is the foundation of intergenerational understanding.

Example: Structured dialogue protocols: Socratic dialogue, fishbowl conversations.

Facilitator action: Establish dialogue agreements with participants at the start of the program.

Red flag: Conversations stay surface-level; difficult topics are consistently avoided.



Joy

Definition: Programs make room for play, laughter, creativity, and genuine enjoyment.

Why it matters: Joy creates emotional safety. Emotional safety enables risk-taking and learning.

Example: Opening each session with a playful, non-threatening warm-up activity.

Facilitator action: Design activities you yourself would genuinely enjoy participating in.

Red flag: The program feels like a formal obligation rather than a meaningful experience.

Mapping Your Community Ecosystem

Before planning activities, identify existing community assets. Intergenerational work becomes sustainable when it builds on existing relationships and resources.

Community assets include:

- Schools and universities
- Libraries and archives
- Community centres
- Parks and public spaces
- Cafés and local gathering places
- NGOs and civil society organisations
- Artists and cultural practitioners
- Local historians and storytellers
- Sports clubs and recreation groups
- Citizen groups and neighbourhood associations
- Healthcare organisations

Mapping Exercise Using the template above, mark on a physical or digital map:

1. Spaces where generations already meet naturally.
2. Spaces where generations remain separated.
3. Possible new partnership opportunities.

Share the completed map with your team before finalising program design



Community Asset Mapping / Planning Template

Template: Community Asset Map

Asset Name	Type	Contact Person	Potential Role in Program	Current Relationship
	School			
	Library			
	Community			
	Centre			
	NGO			
	Arts/Cultural			
	Healthcare			
	Other			



Designing Civic Purpose

Transformative intergenerational programs begin not with activities, but with community challenges. Move beyond “What activity should we do?” and ask instead:

“What community challenge are we trying to address?”

Examples of community challenges suitable for intergenerational programs:

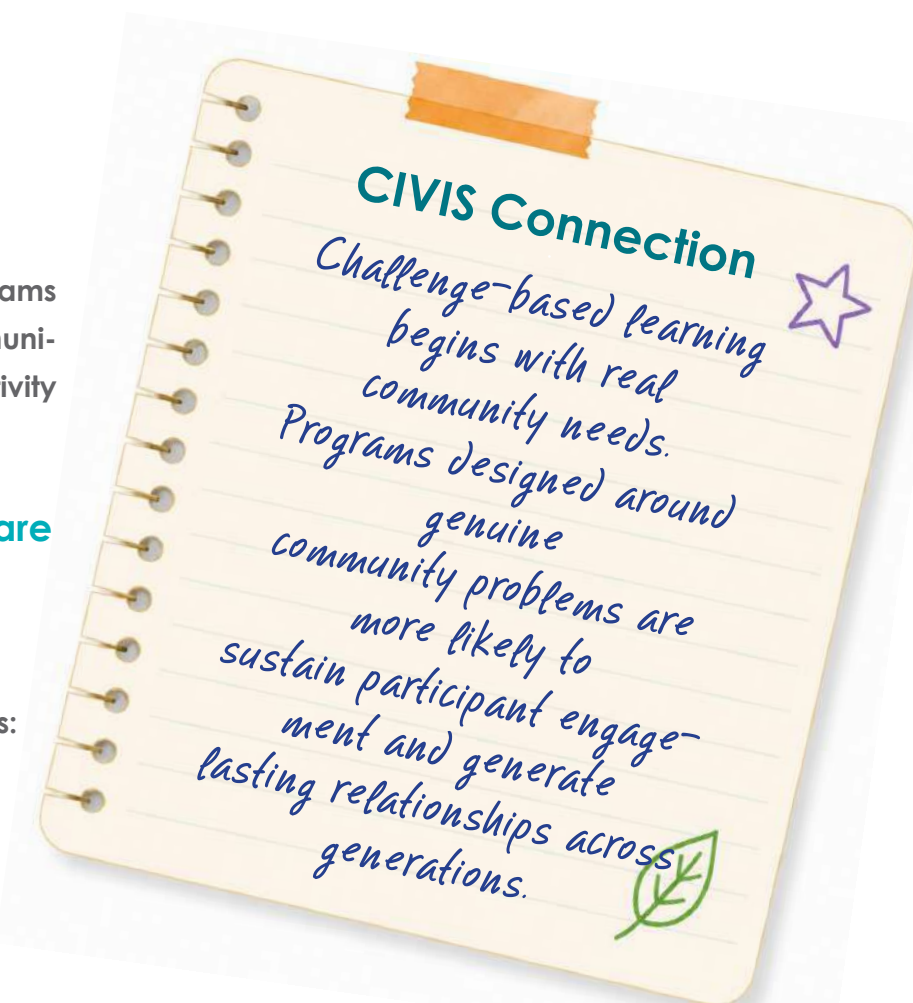
- Loneliness and social isolation
- Ageism and stereotyping
- Low civic participation among specific age groups
- Breakdown of community trust
- Environmental sustainability
- Cultural heritage and memory preservation
- Digital exclusion and literacy gaps

Activities are vehicles. Relationships are the destination. The activity does not matter as much as what emerges between participants while they are engaged in it together.

Program Design Flow / Planning Template

Template: Challenge Objective Activity Impact

Community Challenge	Program Objective	Target Participants	Core Activity	Expected Impact	How to Measure



Designing Inclusive Spaces



Inclusion begins before the first participant arrives. Every design decision -from venue choice to seating arrangement to lighting- communicates who is truly welcome.

Inclusion Checklist:

- ☐ Accessible entrance (step-free, ramp, lift where needed)
- ☐ Accessible toilets on the same floor as the session room
- ☐ Clear signage in large print
- ☐ Multiple communication formats available (visual, oral, written)
- ☐ Quiet spaces / sensory break areas provided
- ☐ Mixed-age seating (avoid grouping by age)
- ☐ Flexible participation options (seated, standing, moving)
- ☐ Appropriate lighting (not too dim, no harsh glare)
- ☐ Good acoustics (hearing loop or microphone if needed)
- ☐ Transport information provided in advance
- ☐ Dietary needs considered for any food provided
- ☐ Emergency evacuation plan that includes all mobility levels
- ☐ Session language accessible to all participants
- ☐ Support person / assistant welcomed without requiring justification

Facilitator Question

"Would every participant -regardless of age, ability, language, or background- feel they truly belong in this space?"

If you cannot answer "yes" with confidence, revise the design before proceeding.



Space Layout Planning Template

Template: Session Accessibility Planning

Element	Current Status	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Deadline
Physical access				
Seating arrangement				
Communication format				
Lighting / acoustics				
Quiet / break space				
Transport / wayfinding				
Food / refreshments				

Designing Meaningful Encounters



The quality of interaction matters more than the quantity. Simply placing people of different ages in the same room does not produce transformation. Research on intergroup contact suggests transformative encounters require specific conditions

Conditions for Transformative Contact

Condition	What it means in practice	How to ensure it
Equal status	No generation is positioned as superior or more "expert".	Design tasks where all contributions are equally valued.
Shared goals	All participants are working toward the same outcome.	Articulate the shared goal clearly at the start of each session.
Cooperation	Success requires working together, not competing	Avoid activities where individuals or age groups compete.
Repeated interaction	Relationships deepen over multiple sessions.	Design programs of at least 4-6 sessions, not one-off events.
Institutional support	Organisations actively endorse the program.	Secure visible commitment from partner organisations early.

Contact Quality Comparison

Simple Contact	Meaningful Contact
A lecture attended by people of different ages.	A mixed-age team creating a community podcast together

Reflection Prompt for Program Designers

Review your program plan and ask:

- Do participants share a genuine goal (not just an activity)?
 - Are all generations positioned with equal status?
- Will participants meet more than once?
 - Is there an institution visibly supporting this work?

Arts, Movement & Embodied Learning



Why Embodied Approaches Work

- Movement creates emotional safety before intellectual engagement.
- Creative activities reduce self-consciousness and age-related hierarchies.
- Shared making produces shared belonging.
- Embodied learning accesses memory, emotion, and identity in ways discussion alone cannot.
- Arts & movement activities naturally invite playfulness and joy.



Facilitator Reminder

Participation in embodied activities must always be voluntary. Offer alternatives for participants with movement limitations. The goal is engagement, not performance.

Embodied Activity Toolkit

Activity Type	Example	Age Accessibility	Materials Needed	Notes
Dance / movement	Rhythm circles, intergenerational dance forms	Adaptable for all abilities	Music, open space	
Theatre games	Playback theatre, Forum theatre, image theatre	All ages	Open space	
Visual arts	collaborative murals, collage portraits	All ages	Paper, paint, glue	
Storytelling	Storytelling walks, oral history circles	All ages	Recording device (optional)	
Photography	Photovoice, participants photograph their world	All ages	Cameras or smartphones	
Music	Song sharing, rhythm improvisation	All ages	Simple instruments (optional)	

10 Ready-to-Use Activities

Each activity below is designed to be used as-is or adapted to your context.

Complete the reflection questions after each session.



Movement Dialogue

Purpose: Break down body-language barriers and build non-verbal connection across generations.

Duration: 30–45 min

Materials: Open space, music (optional)

Instructions: Pairs of participants from different generations mirror each other's movements without speaking. Progress from mirroring to leading to co-creating movement together. Debrief in circle.

Reflection questions: What did you notice about communicating without words? What surprised you?



Story Circle

Purpose: Collect and honour diverse life stories; build empathy across life experiences.

Duration: 60 min

Materials: Chairs in a circle, recording device (optional)

Instructions: Facilitator poses a prompt ("Tell us about a time you faced a challenge and what helped you"). Each participant shares. Others listen without interrupting. Group reflects on themes.

Reflection questions: What stories stayed with you? What did you discover that you had in common?



Reverse Mentorship

Purpose: Position younger participants as experts; challenge age-based hierarchies.

Duration: 45–90 min

Materials: Devices (if digital topic), worksheets

Instructions: Young participants teach older participants a skill (social media, navigation app, etc.). Older participants teach a skill in return. Both document what they learned.

Reflection questions: What did you learn that you could not have learned from someone your own age?



Human Timeline

Purpose: Map collective and personal history; discover shared and divergent experiences.

Duration: 30–45 min

Materials: Large paper, markers, tape for floor

Instructions: Mark a timeline on the floor (years/decades). Participants stand at the year of a significant personal event and share. Others are invited to join if they share the experience.

Reflection questions: Which moments on the timeline surprised you most? Where did histories overlap? about communicating without words? What surprised you?



Intergenerational Interview

Purpose: Develop listening skills and crossgenerational curiosity.

Duration: 45–60 min

Materials: Interview question cards (see template below)

Instructions: Pairs from different generations interview each other using prepared question cards. Each pair then introduces their partner to the wider group.

Reflection questions: What question would you ask again? What do you wish you had asked? you? What did you discover that you had in common?



Photovoice

Purpose: Use photography as a tool for voice, documentation, and community advocacy.

Duration: 2+ sessions

Materials: Cameras or smartphones, printing access

Instructions: Participants photograph aspects of community life that matter to them. Mixed-age groups curate a joint exhibition explaining their choices. Share with the wider community.

Reflection questions: Whose story is told in these photos? Whose story is missing? you could not have learned from someone your own age?



Community Mapping

Purpose: Co-create a living map of community assets, memories & aspirations.

Duration: 60–90 min

Materials: Large paper, markers, sticky notes

Instructions: Mixed-age groups map the neighbourhood: places of significance, barriers, resources, forgotten spaces. Groups share maps and discuss what they discovered together.

Reflection questions: What did you know that others didn't? What did you learn from other groups?



Future Letters

Purpose: Connect across time; envision shared futures and personal aspirations.

Duration: 30–45 min

Materials: Paper, envelopes, pens

Instructions: Each participant writes a letter, younger participants write to their future older self; older participants write to the community's future young people. Letters are shared or sealed.

Reflection questions: What hopes emerged across generations? What responsibilities did you feel?



Civic Café

Purpose: Facilitate structured intergenerational dialogue on a real community issue.

Duration: 90 min

Materials: Café-style tables for 4–6, discussion cards

Instructions: World Café format: mixed-age tables discuss a community question in three rotating rounds. A graphic recorder captures ideas. Groups synthesise shared proposals.

Reflection questions: Which idea do you most want to act on? What would make it possible?



Shared Playlist Project

Purpose: Bridge cultural and generational difference through music and memory.

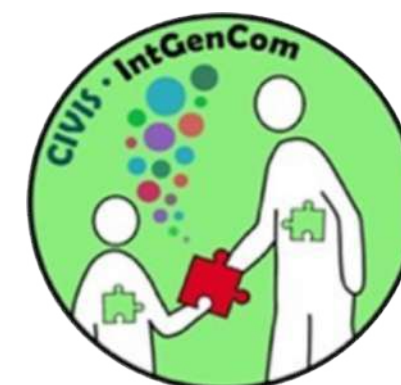
Duration: 45–60 min + optional concert

Materials: Music playback device, playlist sheets

Instructions: Each participant contributes one song with personal significance and explains why. Group creates a shared intergenerational playlist.

Optional: live performance session.

Reflection questions: What emotions did the music bring up? What did a song reveal about someone you didn't expect?



Reflection as Transformation

Reflection is not a final optional step, it is the mechanism through which experience becomes learning. Without structured reflection, participants may have a pleasant time without any lasting shift in understanding.

Reflection Methods

Method	How it works	Best for	Time required
Dialogue circles	Structured sharing in a circle; everyone speaks once before anyone speaks twice.	Group reflection after activities	15–30 min
Reflection journals	Personal written or drawn responses to prompts.	Individual processing; longitudinal tracking	10–20 min
Photovoice reflection	Participants photograph a response to a prompt; images are shared & discussed.	Visual learners; rich discussion	30–45 min
Movement reflection	Participants respond to prompts through gesture, posture, or movement.	Post-embodied-activity processing	10–20 min
Audio diaries	Short recorded voice notes responding to prompts.	Participants who prefer speaking to writing	5–10 min
Exit cards	Brief written responses on a card collected at the end of each session	Quick session-end feedback	5 min

Reflection Journal Pages

What surprised me today?

[Write your reflection here ...]



What challenged my assumptions?

[Write your reflection here ...]



What did I learn from someone from a different generation?

[Write your reflection here ...]



What would I do differently next time?

[Write your reflection here ...]



What question am I still sitting with?

[Write your reflection here ...]





Facilitator as Relationship Architect

In intergenerational programs, the facilitator is not primarily a teacher, entertainer, or coordinator. The facilitator is a relationship architect: someone who creates the conditions within which meaningful human connections can emerge.

Core Facilitator Competencies

Competency	What it looks like in practice	Self-rating (1–5)	Development goal
Listening	Active, patient, multidirectional listening to all participants.	1 2 3 4 5	
Conflict navigation	Holding space for disagreement without escalation or premature resolution	1 2 3 4 5	
Inclusion	Continuously noticing who is speaking, who is silent and why.	1 2 3 4 5	
Adaptability	Adjusting the plan in real time based on what participants need.	1 2 3 4 5	
Humour	Using lightness and play to reduce tension and build connection.	1 2 3 4 5	
Curiosity	Modelling genuine interest in every participant's experience and perspective.	1 2 3 4 5	
Trust-building	Creating consistent, predictable conditions of safety over time.	1 2 3 4 5	

Practice Scenario Boxes, What Would You Do If...?



Scenario: Two participants have a heated argument about a political topic during a dialogue circle.

Suggested response: Acknowledge the tension; invite others to share a different perspective. Use a “think-pair-share” break to reduce direct confrontation. Return to agreed dialogue norms.



Scenario: A participant becomes visibly emotional during a storytelling activity.

Suggested response: Slow down. Create space without drawing attention. Check in quietly after. Have a co-facilitator available for individual support. Never rush through emotion.



Scenario: One older participant consistently dismisses young people's contributions.

Suggested response: Gently highlight the younger participant's contribution: “I'd like us to stay with what [name] just offered.” Speak with the participant privately at the break.



Scenario: Half the group is disengaged & on their phones.

Suggested response: Pause the activity. Ask the group directly: “Is this working for you? What would help right now?” Adjust based on their answer.

Evaluation Beyond Numbers

Meaningful intergenerational programs require evaluation approaches that capture what matters -belonging, trust, attitudinal shifts- not only what is easy to count. Use both quantitative and qualitative methods

Sample Indicators

Dimension	Indicator	Method	When to Measure
Belonging	Participants report feeling genuinely included	Survey + story collection	Mid-program + end
Trust	Participants report increased trust across generations	Likert survey	Pre/post
Age attitudes	Shift in stereotypic assumptions	Attitude scale (pre/post)	Pre/post
Community participation	Participants take on new civic roles	Interview + observation	Post-program followup
Relational quality	New crossgenerational friendships reported	Story collection	End + 3-month followup
Creative engagement	Level of active participation in creative activities	Observation rubric	Per session
Facilitator effectiveness	Participants feel heard and supported	Survey	Mid-program + end

Space Layout Planning Template

Template: Session Accessibility Planning

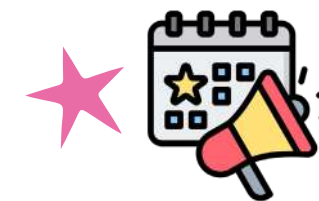
Session #	Date	Activity	No. Participants	Energy Level (1-5)	Key Observation	Adjustment for Next Session



Creative Evaluation Ideas

Photovoice evaluation: participants photograph what they gained from the program. Story collection: brief written or recorded testimonials from participants. Body maps: participants draw or colour a body map showing where the program affected them. Before/after drawings: what did you imagine "other generations" looked like before and after?

Common Challenges & Creative Responses



Challenges are not interruptions to intergenerational work. They are learning opportunities, for participants and facilitators alike. The following scenarios are drawn from real program experience.

Challenge 1 Low or uneven attendance

Response: Revisit scheduling with participants. Offer flexible participation options. Address transport barriers. Appoint peer ambassadors within each generation to encourage attendance.

Ask yourself: Was attendance discussed with participants before the program began?

Challenge 2 Participants self-segregating by age

Response: Redesign activities that require cross-generational cooperation. Use assigned mixed-age pairs & groups for the first three sessions. Celebrate moments of crossgenerational connection explicitly.

Ask yourself: Does the physical space design inadvertently encourage age grouping?

Challenge 3 Language or communication barriers

Response: Use visual and embodied methods. Provide bilingual facilitation where possible. Allow translation support. Never privilege verbal fluency as the measure of contribution.

Ask yourself: Have you assessed communication accessibility needs before the program?

Challenge 4 Intergenerational tension or conflict

Response: Use structured dialogue protocols. Name & normalise tension as a sign of real engagement. Slow down. Do not rush toward resolution. Bring in a second facilitator for support.

Ask yourself: Was community relationship building given sufficient time at the program's start?

Challenge 5 Participant discomfort with embodied activities

Response: Begin with very low-risk movement activities. Always offer seated alternatives. Never require participation. Model comfort yourself as facilitator.

Ask yourself: Were embodied activities introduced gradually or too abruptly?

Challenge 6 Funding ending before community relationships are sustained

Response: Build peer facilitation capacity from session one. Create alumni networks. Document the program as a resource. Connect with municipal or library ongoing programming.

Ask yourself: Was sustainability planning built into the program design from the start?

Digital & Hybrid Intergenerational Learning

Digital and hybrid formats expand the reach of intergenerational programs. They also introduce new accessibility questions and ethical responsibilities. Use digital tools to extend relationships built in person, not to replace them.



Digital Program Examples

	Format	Description	Intergenerational Opportunity	Opportunity Platform/ Tool
	Community podcast	Mixed-age teams record & publish episodes on community themes.	All generations cohost; share knowledge and stories.	Anchor, Spotify, SoundCloud
	Digital archive	Participants digitise & annotate photographs, objects, stories.	Older adults share memories; youth contribute digital skills.	Google Drive, Padlet, Omeka
	Interactive community map	Collaborative digital map of local history & present.	All generations mark significant places & memories.	Google My Maps, Felt
	Community storytelling platform	Participants post short written or video stories.	Cross-generational story exchange.	StoryMapJS, Adobe Express
	AI-supported memory project	Audio interviews processed and archived with AI tools.	Youth facilitate recording; elders share stories.	Otter.ai, Whisper
	Digital exhibition	Online gallery of participant artwork, photos & stories.	All generations curate and present their contributions.	Google Sites, Wix, Padlet

Hybrid Session Planning Template

Template: Session Accessibility Planning

Session element	In-person version	Online version	Hybrid adaptation	Facilitator note
Welcome / warmup				
Core activity				
Reflection				
Closing				



Digital Ethics Checklist

CONSENT: All participants have given explicit informed consent for digital content use.

PRIVACY: No participant can be identified without their agreement.

ACCESSIBILITY: Digital platforms are accessible to participants with varying digital literacy.

OWNERSHIP: It is clear who owns the content created (participants, organisation, both).

DATA: Participant data is stored securely & not shared without consent.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Participants can remove their content at any time.

Building Partnerships Across Sectors

Sustainable intergenerational programs rarely operate in isolation. They are embedded in networks of organisations, institutions & communities. Mapping and building these partnerships is a core program design task.



Stakeholder Mapping

Template: Partnership Canvas

Partner Organisation	Sector	What they contribute	What they gain	Relationship stage	Next step
	Education			Identified	
	Municipality / public sector			Contacted	
	NGO / civil society			In discussion	
	Arts / culture			Agreed	
	Health / care			Active	
	Business / private				
	Media / communications				

Partnership Agreement / Key Elements

- ☐ Shared vision and values statement
- ☐ Clear roles and responsibilities for each partner
- ☐ Contribution agreement (time, resources, space, expertise)
- ☐ Benefit agreement (what each partner receives)
- ☐ Decision-making process agreed
- ☐ Communication schedule established
- ☐ Conflict resolution process agreed
- ☐ Review and renewal timeline set

Co-Design Meeting Protocol

Hold a co-design meeting with all partners before the program begins.



Agenda items:

- 1. Shared vision:**
What change do we want to create together?
- 2. Asset mapping:**
What does each partner bring?
- 3. Role clarification:**
Who does what, when?
- 4. Risk sharing:**
What could go wrong and how do we respond together?
- 5. Next steps and timeline.**

Sustainability Planning

Digital Program Examples



Sustainability Questions

- What continues after funding ends?
- Who owns the initiative, the organisation or the community?
- Which participant relationships have enough strength to survive without facilitation?
- What resources (space, time, communication) are needed to sustain the minimum viable community?
- Are there participants ready & willing to become peer facilitators?
- What documentation exists that new participants could use to join?



Sustainability Planning Template

Template: Sustainability Action Plan

Sustainability Element	Current Status	Who is responsible	By when	Resources needed
Alumni network / community group				
Community ambassadors identified				
Peer facilitators trained				
Physical meeting space secured				
Online communication channel				
Documentation / handbook available				
Funding pipeline identified				
Institutional host confirmed				

A program that ends when funding ends has produced an event, not a community. Sustainability planning begins at the design stage, not at the final session.



Open Lab Ecosystem

- The CIVIS Intergenerational Learning Communities Open Lab provides:
- A network of practitioners across CIVIS universities.
 - Shared resources, templates, and facilitation guides.
 - Opportunities to co-design programs across cities & countries.
 - Ongoing professional development for facilitators.
- Connect with the Open Lab to extend the lifespan of your program.



Sample Six-Week Program Journey

This is a suggested journey, not a fixed prescription. Adapt the sequence to your context, participants, and community challenge. The arc moves from safety to depth to action.



WEEK 1 Arrival and Belonging

NOTES

Objective: Establish safety, introduce participants, build curiosity about one another.

Core activities: Story Circle (short), Movement warm-up, Community Agreement building.

Facilitator tip: Ensure physical comfort. Move slowly. Do not rush connection.

Watch for: Some participants may feel awkward. Normal. Prioritise warmth over depth.

Success indicator: Participants feel safe enough to return.



WEEK 2 Listening Across Difference

NOTES

Objective: Develop genuine listening; begin surfacing different life experiences.

Core activities: Intergenerational Interview, Human Timeline.

Facilitator tip: Celebrate what participants discover in common.

Watch for: Avoid letting sessions become nostalgic only, link past to present.

Success indicator: Participants are curious about each other's experiences.



WEEK 3 Collaborative Making

NOTES

Objective: Shift from exchange to co-creation; build shared project foundations.

Core activities: Photovoice (launch), Collaborative mural or movement dialogue.

Facilitator tip: Support pairs and small groups / intervene if a generation is being sidelined.

Watch for: Some participants may be unsure of the creative process. Keep it low-stakes.

Success indicator: All generations are actively contributing to a shared output.



WEEK 4 Civic Engagement

NOTES

Objective: Connect personal stories to community challenges and action.

Core activities: Civic Café, Community Mapping.

Facilitator tip: Link the session explicitly to a real local challenge or question.

Watch for: The session may surface strong feelings or disagreements. Welcome them.

Success indicator: Participants identify a shared community concern they want to address.



WEEK 5 Deepening and Risk-Taking

NOTES

Objective: Invite deeper sharing; consolidate trust built over the program.

Core activities: Future Letters, Shared Playlist, Story Circle (deeper prompts).

Facilitator tip: Hold silence after sharing. Do not rush to fill it.

Watch for: Some participants may find depth uncomfortable. Honour their pace.

Success indicator: Participants share something personal they would not have shared in Week 1.



WEEK 6 Celebration and Continuation

NOTES

Objective: Mark what has been built; plan for continuation beyond the program.

Core activities: Photovoice exhibition or community sharing event. Sustainability planning circle.

Facilitator tip: Give participants leadership of the celebration. Step back.

Watch for: Endings can be emotionally complex. Allow space for that.

Success indicator: Participants leave with a relationship that can continue independently.



Practitioner Tip

"Design a journey, not a sequence of activities." Each week should feel like a step deeper into community, not a new event that happens to involve the same people.

Communities thrive not when generations live side by side,
but when they learn, create & imagine the future together



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Respect
Dialogue
Creativity
Participation
Solidarity
Belonging

IMAGINING INTERGENERATIONAL FUTURES

Intergenerational learning is not merely a program model. It is a vision for how communities can become more democratic, connected, creative, and caring. The most powerful outcome is not an event, a performance, or a report. It is a shift in how people understand one another.

- A shift from categories to relationships.
 - From stereotypes to stories.
- From separation to participation.
- From coexistence to co-creation

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