

The BRIDGE Builder's Field Guide

Building relationships that make climate progress possible

BRIDGE helps us become more effective advocates by understanding how people make decisions, listening for the values behind different perspectives, and finding common ground where progress can happen.

Five practices to strengthen every conversation

1. Start with the Elephant

People don't make decisions with facts alone. Before jumping into information or solutions, ask:
What matters most to this person?

Remember: The Elephant usually moves first, and the Rider follows explaining why. When we connect with values, we create more space for conversation.

3. Become an Advocacy Detective

Effective advocacy starts before the conversation.

Ask:

- What do I know about this person's priorities?
- Who do they represent?
- What pressures are they navigating?
- Where might we already have common ground?

Our goal is to understand more about the background of the person we're talking with.

2. Listen for the values behind the words

When someone disagrees with us, there is usually a value or concern underneath.

Instead of asking:

"How do I change their mind?"

Try asking:

"How can I speak to what matters most to them?"

Listen for:

Care — Who might be helped or harmed?

Fairness — What feels fair or unfair?

Liberty — What choices or freedoms matter?

Loyalty — What groups or communities matter?

Authority — What traditions or institutions do they trust?

Sanctity — What feels important to preserve?

4. Stay in Good Conflict

Disagreement doesn't have to become division.

When a conversation gets difficult, practice:

- Asking more questions
- Reflecting what you hear
- Looking for the value underneath the disagreement

Try:

"Tell me more about that."

"How did you come to that perspective?"

"What would a good outcome look like on that?"

5. Move forward together

Relationships are built over time.

Every conversation we have is an opportunity to increase understanding, build trust, and lay the groundwork for future progress together.

Sometimes success looks like moving from:

"I don't trust you" to

"I'm willing to keep talking."

What BRIDGE skill comes most naturally to you?

Select your strength

☐ Listening with curiosity

I try to understand someone's experiences, concerns, and values before sharing my own perspective.

☐ Learning before leading

I prepare by understanding the person I'm meeting with, including their background, priorities, and community.

☐ Sharing my story

I connect climate solutions to my own experiences and why this work matters to me.

☐ Finding common ground

I look for shared values and goals that can help build trust and keep the conversation moving forward.

Skill reflection

Before my next CCL conversation, I will practice...

- ☐ Asking one more question than I normally would.
- ☐ Doing more research about the person before we meet.
- ☐ Listening for the values underneath someone's words.
- ☐ Looking for common ground before sharing my perspective.
- ☐ Sharing my personal story instead of another fact.
- ☐ Following up to continue building the relationship.

One skill I plan to keep developing:

Keep practicing with us

BRIDGE is an advocacy approach we build together over time. The BRIDGE Action Team will meet monthly to practice conversations, learn from real examples, and help each other become more effective advocates.

