

# BRIDGING GENERATIONS: BEST PRACTICES IN INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING



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## BACKGROUND

Intergenerational interactions, historically a necessary part of life, have declined in modern Western societies. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the divide between generations, resulting in fewer opportunities for interaction. This separation resulted in reduced trust between generations, higher levels of social isolation and increased loneliness.

### INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

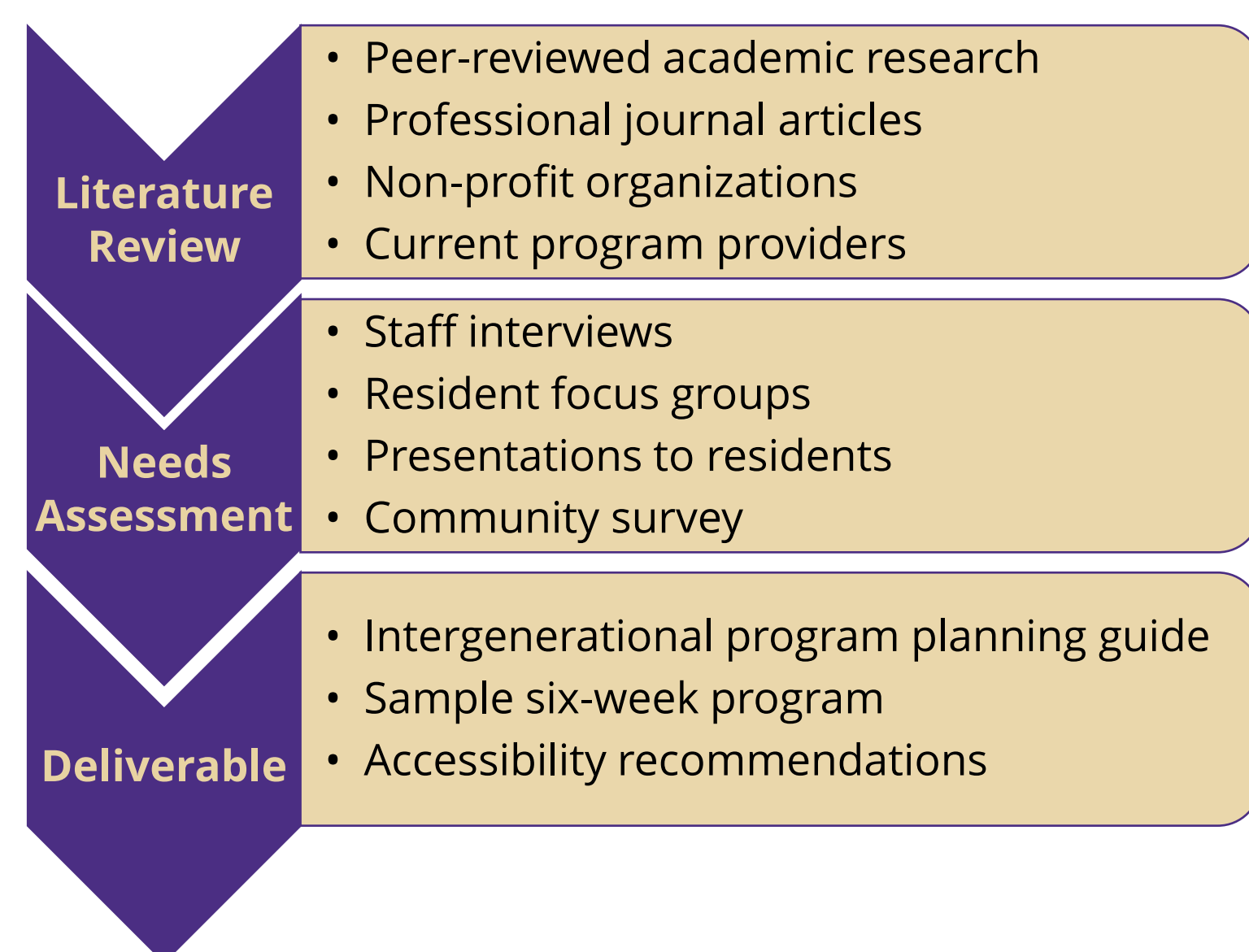
"Intentionally unite the generations in ways that enrich participants' lives and help address vital social and community issues while building on the positive resources that young and old have to offer each other and to their communities."

-Generations United (2021)

## PURPOSE

To support Northaven Senior Living in developing intergenerational programming that fosters meaningful connections across generations by applying an occupational therapy lens to promote the design of inclusive activities considering participants, their shared environment, and the occupations in which they engage.

## PROCESS

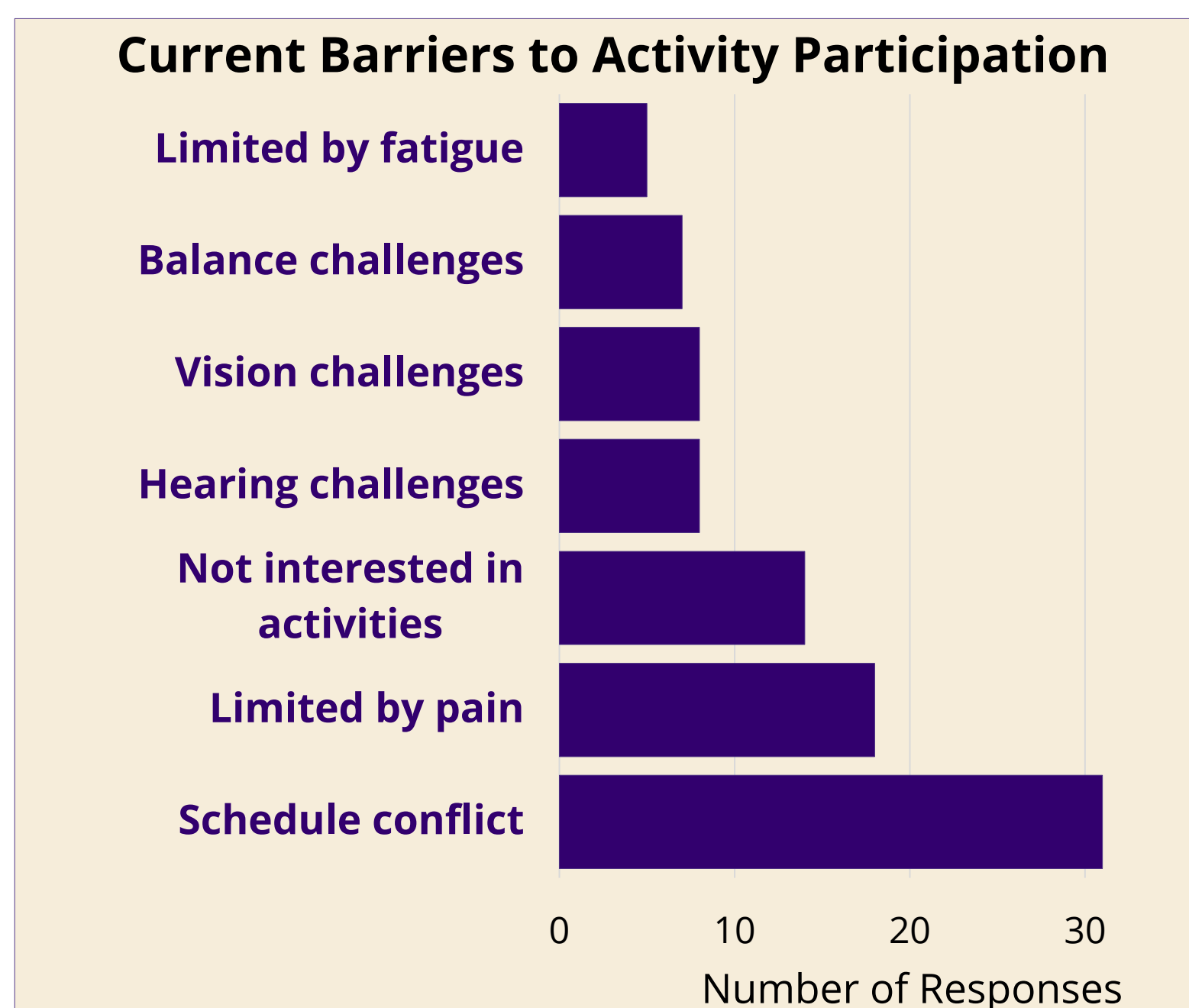


## LITERATURE FINDINGS

Benefits for Older Participants	Benefits for Younger Participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased social connectedness &amp; sense of purpose</li> <li>Reduced isolation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased prosocial behavior (including cooperation, sharing, and active listening)</li> </ul>
Best Practices in Program Design	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer participants meaningful roles (e.g., mentoring)</li> <li>Create opportunities to build connections</li> <li>Ensure facilitators have a good knowledge of participant skills, interests and abilities</li> <li>Plan ahead and set expectations</li> <li>Support participants through accessible design</li> <li>Routinely evaluate and improve programs</li> </ul>	

## SURVEY RESULTS

- Survey distributed to 270 independent living residents; 88 responses received.
- Consensus on interpersonal interaction preference was working in small groups of 3-5 people.
- 20% of respondents expressed interest in either facilitating activities or helping plan them.



## PLANNING GUIDE

**PROGRAM DESIGN**

- Content/Activities
- Building Your Team
- Participants
- Parents & Caregivers
- Scheduling Considerations
- Program Session Outline
- Materials, Supplies & Funding
- Location

**RECRUITMENT**

**SESSION FACILITATION**

**PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT & BELONGING**

**EVALUATION & SUSTAINABILITY**

*"The residents like how versatile the manual is. They're already planning to incorporate it into other activities."*  
 -Northaven Staff Member

### Sample Six-Week Intergenerational Program

A craft-focused program for older adults and children 3 to 10 years old.

**WEEK 4: SCHEDULE**

Time	Activity	Description/Notes
15 mins	1. Ice Breaker 2. Activity Instruction	<b>Ice Breaker Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your favorite memory in nature?</li> <li>What is one joyful memory you have being outdoors?</li> </ul>
35 mins	Activity: Nature collection and scavenger hunt	<b>Guiding Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the scavenger hunt to guide!</li> </ul>
10 mins	1. Reflect on the activity 2. Reminders for next week	<b>Reflection Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you find everything on your scavenger hunt card?</li> <li>What was one thing you enjoyed about being outdoors? Could be sights, sounds, smells, etc.</li> <li>Share one of your favorite things that you collected today and why you like it.</li> </ul> <b>Reminders:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring back your collected materials next week</li> <li>Keep collecting materials throughout the week if you want</li> </ul>

**Nature Hunt**  
 Cross off the items when you find them!

something pointy	something smooth	something rough
something that smells good	something shaped like a wand	something surprising

Weekly program schedule (Sample Program, Week 4)

Scavenger hunt handout (Sample Program, Week 4)

## PLANNING TEMPLATES

Fillable electronic and physical pages for individuals to use to guide the creation of an intergenerational program.

Week: \_\_\_\_\_ Activity Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator/Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Objective: \_\_\_\_\_

Space Set Up:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Equipment/Materials Needed:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Ice Breaker:

- \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Instructions:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Reflection Questions:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Reminders For Next Week:

- \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations:

- \_\_\_\_\_

**Weekly Feedback**

Please circle the week: Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5

Please circle your age group: Under 10 11-20 21-50 51-75 76+

1. Did you enjoy the activity? (circle one) Yes No

2. Would you do the same or similar activity again? (circle one) Yes No

3. Was anything difficult to do? \_\_\_\_\_

4. General Comments/Feedback: \_\_\_\_\_

## NEXT STEPS

- Northaven staff and residents begin utilizing the program planning guide for future intergenerational programming and broader programming.
- Future student groups develop opportunities for additional intergenerational programming and evaluate program effectiveness.

## FULL GUIDE & REFERENCES

Please use this QR code for access to our full program guide and reference list.

