

# Bridging Leadership

An overview



SYNERGOS  
Building trust works

Bridging leadership is a leadership style that focuses on promoting multi-stakeholder processes to address complex social, institutional, and environmental challenges.



Bridging leadership is about leading collaborative action to bring about change by convening stakeholders to the problem (*ownership*).

It is a tool which helps stakeholders to adopt a social innovation that leads to a social outcome, and carries it out through new institutional arrangements (*co-creation*).

It is a process of dialogue and engagement that enables stakeholders to arrive at a common vision and collective response to the challenge (*co-ownership*).



The concept of bridging leadership was developed by an international group of researchers and development practitioners convened by Synergos.

Today, the concept incorporates our experiences of more than 30 years promoting cross-sector collaboration, as well as experience and research of colleagues in places including the Philippines, Latin America, and Africa.



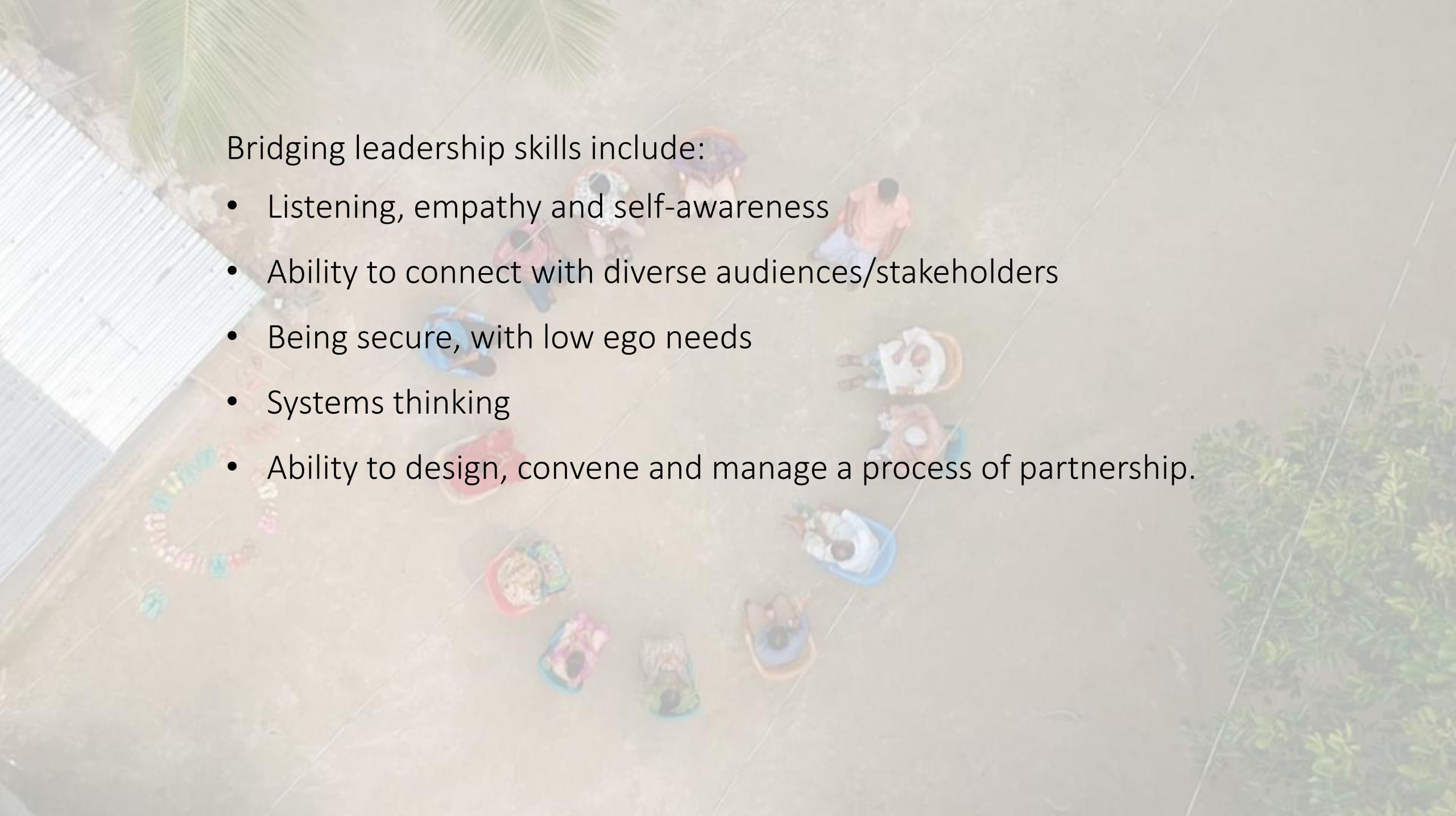
Bridging leadership represents a paradigm shift in thinking about leadership.

From leader as	To leader as
Commander and controller	Facilitator and convener
Sole owner of the problem and the solution	Prime mover, but a co-owner of the problem and solution
Having all the answers	Creator of the conditions where answers emerge
A single intelligence	Focuser of collective attention and the distiller of collective intelligence
Head of one organization	Ligament between organizations and institutions
Expert	Non-expert, mobilizing the expertise and inner-knowing of others
Holder of power	Distributor of power, enabler of new things to emerge



**Bridging leadership builds trust  
and is based on trust.**

No bridging leader or process  
will be successful without  
trust in both the leader and the process.

An aerial photograph showing a group of approximately 15 people sitting on the ground in a loose circle. They are in an outdoor setting, possibly a courtyard or a paved area, with a corrugated metal roof visible on the left and some greenery on the right. The people are dressed in casual, everyday clothing. The overall scene suggests a community gathering or a meeting.

Bridging leadership skills include:

- Listening, empathy and self-awareness
- Ability to connect with diverse audiences/stakeholders
- Being secure, with low ego needs
- Systems thinking
- Ability to design, convene and manage a process of partnership.

# The Synergos Approach: Bridging Leadership

Solutions to social problems are too often built in silos. Our approach—centered on bridging leadership—helps diverse stakeholders build trust and collaborate across divides to co-create more tailored, durable interventions.



## BRIDGING LEADERSHIP



### PERSONAL REFLECTION AND INNER WORK

- Increasing awareness of the self, others, and the larger system
- Aligning individual intentions for authentic action
- Removing personal obstacles to effectiveness as a leader



### SYSTEMS THINKING

- Using proven tools to look at social problems from diverse perspectives, analyzing them systemically
- Selecting leverage points for action



### BRIDGING AND INCLUSIVE COLLABORATION

- Working with key stakeholders to leverage collective resources and action
- Building sustainable relationships that can carry the partnership forward



# Help us create a world built on trust.

Synergos offers advisory services, learning journeys, retreats and other special events, custom training, and knowledge resources to individuals, families, and organizations.

To learn more, contact us at [collaborate@synergos.org](mailto:collaborate@synergos.org).

