

# BUDDY PROGRAM

# WE ARE

2023 WORKPLACE SUMMIT

SEPTEMBER 11-14 | ORLANDO, FL

The team at Out & Equal knows that interpersonal connection matters and that our community has had fewer opportunities to meet and engage with each other in truly meaningful ways over the last few years. For the 2020 Workplace Summit, we launched our “Buddy Program”—an initiative designed to connect attendees, create space for conversation, and foster new and supportive relationships as we envision the future of work. The program was a resounding success that facilitated connections in trios for more than 1,000 people in the virtual environment!

We are thrilled to bring the Buddy Program to its first in-person Workplace Summit, as well as to continue to offer the Buddy Program to our E-Pass attendees! This program will connect you to a few new friends with whom you can share a bit about yourself, dream about the workplaces you want to create, and process your Summit experience before, during, and after the event. This program is designed to build and grow relationships within our community, across companies and industries. We hope the 2022 Summit Buddy Program helps create lasting friendships, a stronger community, and a sense of belonging for all of us.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

- Summit registrants who opt-in to the Buddy Program at the time of registration will be randomly grouped into in-person attendee Buddy groupings or e-pass attendee Buddy groupings approximately two (2) weeks prior to Summit, and provided a guide (see below) on how to engage in meaningful discussions with your group, how to document your shared goals and experiences, and how to share your experience with us.
- Attendees will be grouped into in-person attendee trios and e-pass attendee trios.
- Upon getting your group assignments via email, please connect with each other and agree to a communication platform for your trio (ex. Google Meet, Zoom, FaceTime, WebEx, etc.).
- By leaving communications up to the individual groups, we aim to give you the flexibility to drive your own connection and experience! We hope you make the most of this opportunity and we encourage you to be bold and reach out to your buddies rather than wait for them to make the first move. You never know what kind of connections you might create!

## MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS

- We recommend each group tries to meet three times to make the most of this experience and cement your connection with one another: at least once before, once during, and once after Summit. Schedule your first meeting as soon as you can!
- Participants should commit to showing up and thoughtfully connecting with one another.
- Not all groups may feel (at first or ever) like fast-friendships or likely professional connections and that's O.K. The guide questions are offered to allow you to share yourselves and your stories, and to hear others'—and that may in fact mean connecting with, and learning from, people in a wide variety of ways. Be open-minded to connection, and to the magic of what can happen when you stop to listen to someone who might have a much different experience or story than your own.
- By design, we are not matching participants in any specific ways. We believe that random assignments will allow for the focus to be on human connection rather than any one preconceived idea about who would make the “best connection.”
- Be brave: If it feels right to do so, consider sharing about yourself personally. This will give others permission and confidence to do the same.
- Keep all conversations confidential. And please maintain confidence of anyone and anything that is shared. When in doubt, ask!

If you are meeting online, avoid video recording your meeting. Memorializing your group in a screen shot may be ok but get your colleagues' permission first!

- Make time and space for all participants to speak, contribute, and collaborate. There will naturally be those who are more extroverted, introverted or who always seeks balance. Everyone's voice is important!
- If you have a less-than-ideal group experience, be patient and flexible. Especially in these times where you and your colleagues might be balancing work with an unusual set of responsibilities and stresses. Remember, there is always something that connects us.

## CONVERSATION GUIDE

To get things rolling, we are offering the following questions as a starting place for meaningful, connective, and fun conversations.

### MEETING #1 HOLD THIS CONVERSATION BEFORE SUMMIT IF POSSIBLE

Each member should introduce themselves and consider sharing in an “icebreaker” type of conversation. Have fun with these!

- A source of your connection to/passion for the LGBTQ+ community or your LGBTQ+ “coming out” or “staying in” story.
- Discuss the meaning of work and a job/career for you personally. What is your “work” story? Why/How is your LGBTQ+ or Ally identity important to your “work” story?
- What values around work were communicated to you growing up? What would you communicate to the next generation of workers?
- What is one proud career moment?
- Do you have an important piece of advice you received or gave someone else that made a difference? What piece of advice were you given that shaped your “work” journey?
- What do you love about the LGBTQ+ community and our unique “culture” (whatever that means for you)?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your “work” goals? What changes to the workplace do you think will be lasting?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the LGBTQ+ community from your perspective?
- What are your expectations for Summit? Have you attended Summit in the past? What was that experience like? What is your favorite Summit memory?
- If you want to meet up during Summit week, the first meeting is a great time to talk about that and exchange contact information.

## **MEETING #2** HOLD THIS DURING SUMMIT (SEPT. 11-14)

If you are an in-person attendee, we strongly encourage you to connect in-person if schedules permit. There will be multiple opportunities at Summit for you to meet up. You can attend workshop sessions together, and connect during some of the programming breaks. Go at your own pace and remember to consider each person's level of comfortability with being in-person.

If you are an e-pass attendee, hold this meeting on the communication platform of your preference (Google Meet, Zoom, FaceTime, WebEx, etc.) or on the virtual Summit platform.

- What has your experience at Summit been like thus far?
- What has impacted you?
- What speaker(s) are you looking forward to hearing from? What speakers have really impressed you?
- Have you attended any of our networking events? What networking sessions have you attended and what have been some of the highlights so far?
- What workshops have you attended or are you most excited to attend this week?

## **MEETING #3** HOLD THIS CONVERSATION A FEW WEEKS AFTER SUMMIT

- How was the experience of Summit? How have you been since Summit? What's new?
- What were your main takeaways from the Workplace Summit?
- What did you learn?
- What have you been left curious with that you'd like to follow up on and/or learn more about?
- What are new or exciting discussions around that have either validated or challenged your perspective?
- Was there anything you learned that you have already begun to implement or discuss?
- What are some strategies that you encountered this week that you think would be effective in bettering yourself and/or your workplace?
- After this last outlined meeting, groups can of course keep the conversations going and continue meeting!



## WORKPLACE SUMMIT SURVEY

Out & Equal will send a post-event survey, which will include some questions about the Summit Buddy Program. We would greatly appreciate your feedback on your experience as your insights play an important part in our future Buddy Programs.

## PARTNER SUCCESS

**For any additional questions regarding Buddy Program, please visit our [FAQ page](#) in the [Workplace Summit Partner Success Portal](#).**