**Tactic: Bellagio History & Traditions**

*Introduce the history and traditions of the Bellagio Center to inspire participants and ground the convening in its legacy of collaboration and innovation—helping the group see what’s possible in a gathering at this storied place.*

**When to Use It:**

For Bellagio Center convenings, use this activity to share a brief history and the impact the Center has created in the world to help inspire participants to see themselves as part of its ongoing legacy. Anchoring in the Center’s traditions helps set a distinctive tone—inviting the group to gather and engage with one another differently than they might elsewhere, with greater openness, curiosity, and shared purpose.

**How it Works:**

**(Optional) Step 1 | Invite Bellagio staff to say opening remarks about the Center**

* For some Bellagio convenings, Center staff will welcome the group to the grounds, and share some of this history. Check with your Italy team contact to see if this drop in is possible.

**Step 2 | Weave talking points into opening remarks**

* See historical context for Bellagio on the next page

### **Helpful Tips:**

* **Read up on the Bellagio Center:** Check out a brief overview at [The Bellagio Center’s homepage on The Rockefeller Foundation’s website](https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/fellowships-convenings/bellagio-center/), or [a longer historical book released on the 50th anniversary of The Rockefeller Foundation’s stewardship of the property.](https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Bellagio-Center-History-Consolidated.pdf)
* **Emphasize relevant examples:** Highlight a moment from Bellagio’s history that parallels your convening—such as a coalition that was formed, a partnership that scaled, or an idea that took root—to help participants see themselves as part of a larger continuum of impact.
* **Acknowledge the privilege of place:** Gently name the exclusivity of being in this room and invite participants to reflect on who isn’t present, encouraging humility, gratitude, and a shared sense of responsibility to represent absent voices through their work.

**Bellagio History & Traditions | Key Points**

| **Overview** The Rockefeller Foundation’s proud history with the Bellagio Center began in 1959, when Ella Holbrook Walker, the American Principessa della Torre e Tasso, offered her Italian villa “for purposes connected with the promotion of international peace and understanding,” and Dean Rusk, the Foundation’s president, accepted her generous donation and embraced its enormous potential.    Since 1959, The RF has hosted over 4,000 residents and over 40,000 convening participants. All of these leaders are committed to promoting the wellbeing of humanity –across a multitude of disciplines and fields. In that time the Bellagio Center has served as a backdrop for many meaningful advances:   * The Center was a launching pad for ideas that underpin modern systems of international finance, including the creation of the field of Impact Investing. (See [*Global Impact Investing Network, GIIN*](https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/bellagio-bulletin/from-the-archives/global-impact-investing-network-giin/)) * It was a staging ground for efforts to mobilize an agricultural revolution that saved a billion lives globally. (See [*Moving From Aid to Innovation – Gary Toenniessen on Leveraging Research to Transform Global Food Systems*](https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/bellagio-breakthroughs/gary-toenniessen-on-leveraging-research-to-transform-global-food-systems/#:~:text=Moving%20From%20Aid%20to%20Innovation%20%E2%80%93%20Gary%20Toenniessen%20on%20Leveraging,to%20Transform%20Global%20Food%20Systems&text=A%20new%20way%20to%20fight,applying%20science%20to%20food%20issues?)*)* * It was the setting for negotiations and agreements that make it easier for people suffering from HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases to access vaccines and drugs around the world. (See [*GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance*](https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/bellagio-bulletin/from-the-archives/gavi-the-vaccine-alliance/))       **Current Purpose and Traditions** Today, the world faces new economic challenges, social strains, and unprecedented environmental threats. Therefore, the Bellagio Center’s work—and way of working—has never been more significant.    The Center cross-pollinates disparate traditions of expertise, inquiry, and innovation by hosting scientists and artists, theorists and practitioners, those who shape policy and those affected by it.     * It fosters dialogue and discovery, conversation and candid, robust exchanges of ideas. * It infuses unorthodox, radical thinking into searches for solutions to critical global issues. * It marries the fundamental functions of right brain ingenuity and left brain rationality. * It brings people together from far and wide, challenging them to find common ground and push the boundaries of collective knowledge and action.     If history is any guide, the Bellagio Center’s extraordinary residents and conference participants will certainly envision and implement some of the next half century’s most innovative ideas. |
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