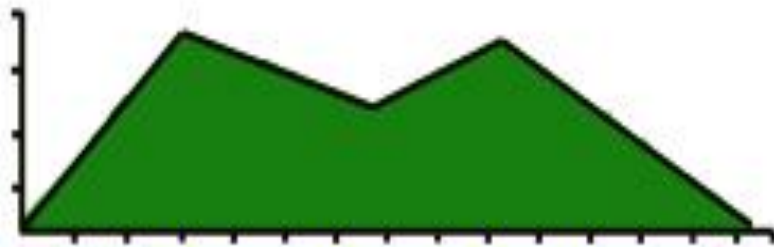


# Cityscape Connections for Enhanced Relevance: The Urban Agenda in Action

## Summary Overview of Evaluation Findings



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# Overview

**Purpose:** Assist the NPS in understanding more about its current urban engagements and areas for further development. This document highlights key findings about the Urban Agenda's three principles and illustrate each with an example from one of the model cities.

**Focus Areas:** Three NPS urban model cities (Boston, Tucson, and Detroit). Each has NPS programs but, among other differences, variation in proximity to a physical NPS park presence.

**Data collected:** To learn from a variety of voices, we interacted with a selection of NPS staff and community organizations.

- In-depth semi-structured interviews (n=63; Sept-Nov 2015)
- Quantitative social network analysis (n=183; May-Oct 2016)

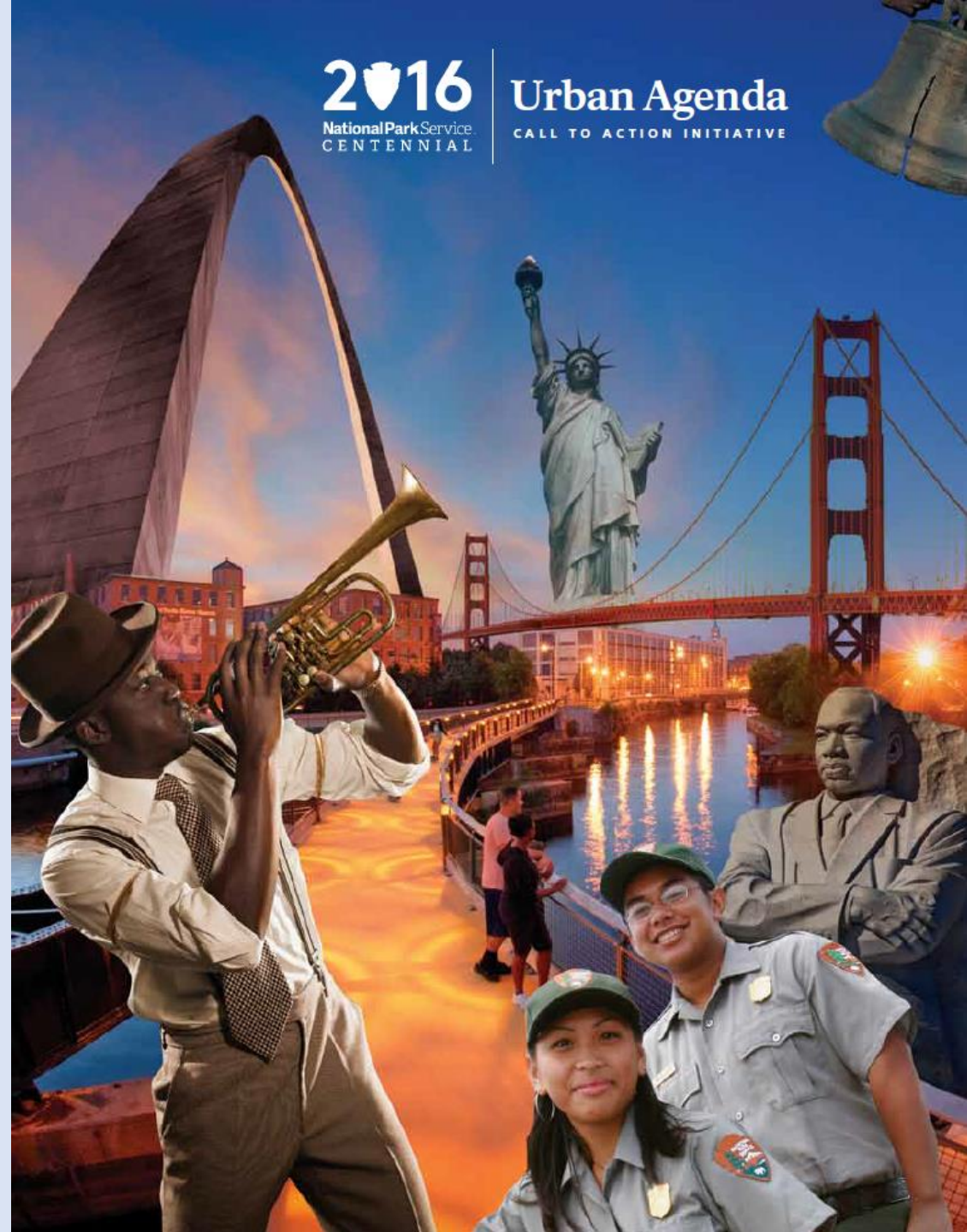
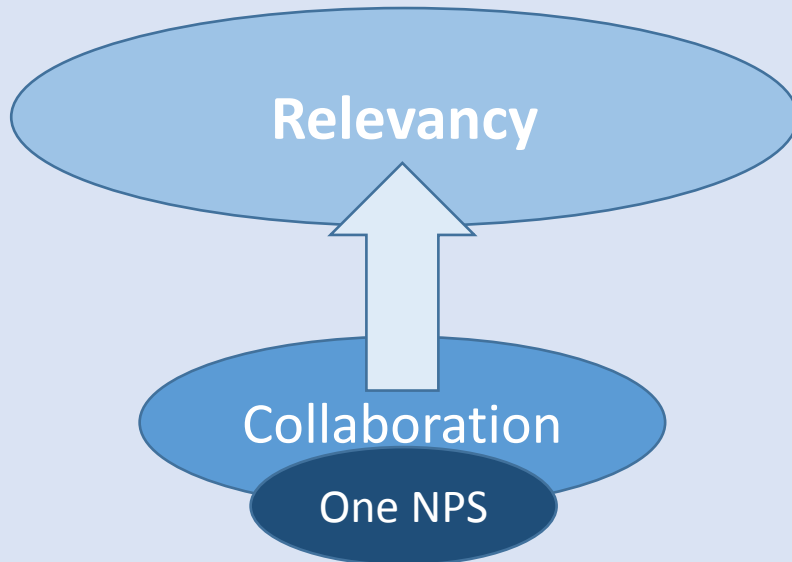


# Three Principles in Action

1. Be Relevant for all Americans
2. Activate One NPS
3. Nurture a Culture of Collaboration

Participants suggested the three principles are an interrelated process.

Relevancy is the overarching goal, collaboration aids in reaching toward relevancy, and One NPS is a type of collaboration looking inward.

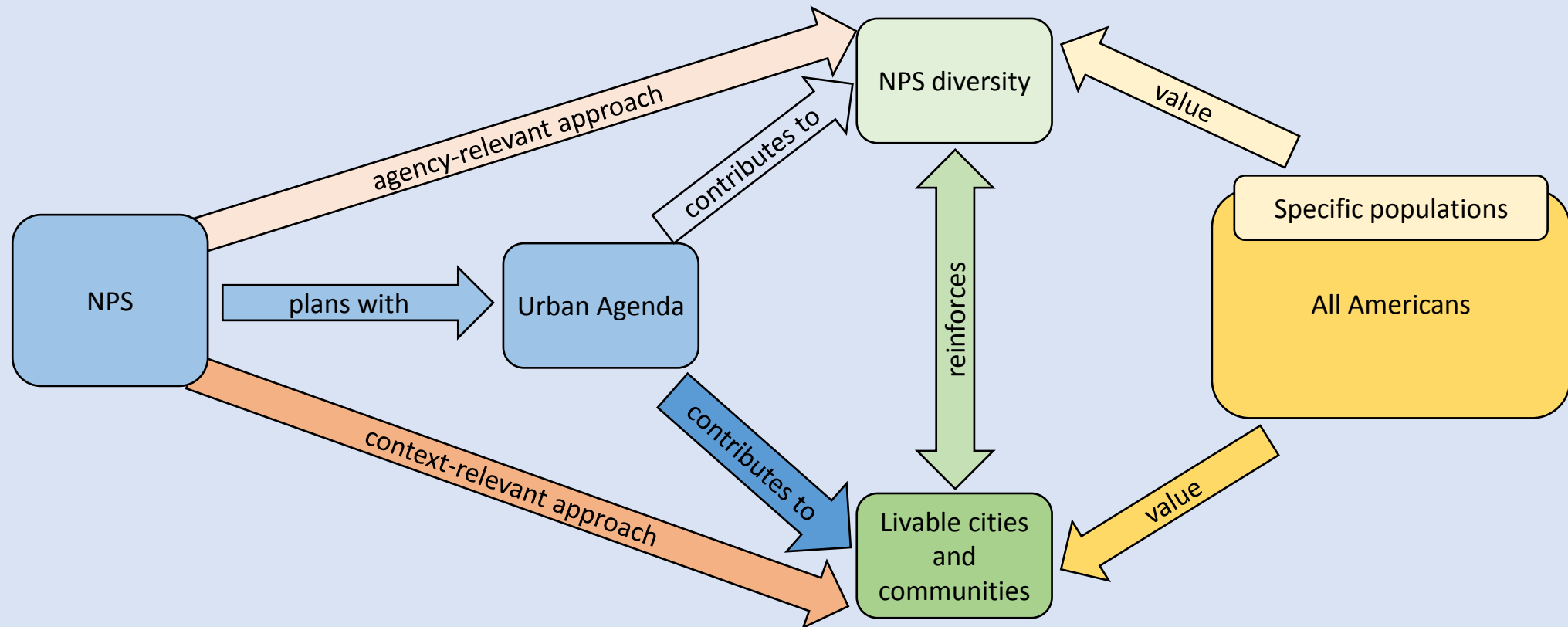


2016  
National Park Service  
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Urban Agenda  
CALL TO ACTION INITIATIVE

# Relevancy

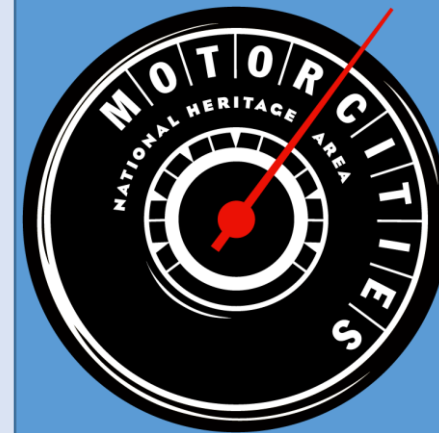
Relevancy is often defined on an agency-specific level. Because relevancy transcends boundaries, framing goals to encompass how the NPS contributes to a broader context is welcomed and sustainable. Emphasizing connections between the agency goal of NPS diversity and the context goal of livable cities is an integrated way to reach all Americans.



# Relevancy Example: Detroit

Programs in Detroit have engaged organizations and communities by emphasizing efforts to be inclusive of the city context, working not just with the community, but *in* the community. For example:

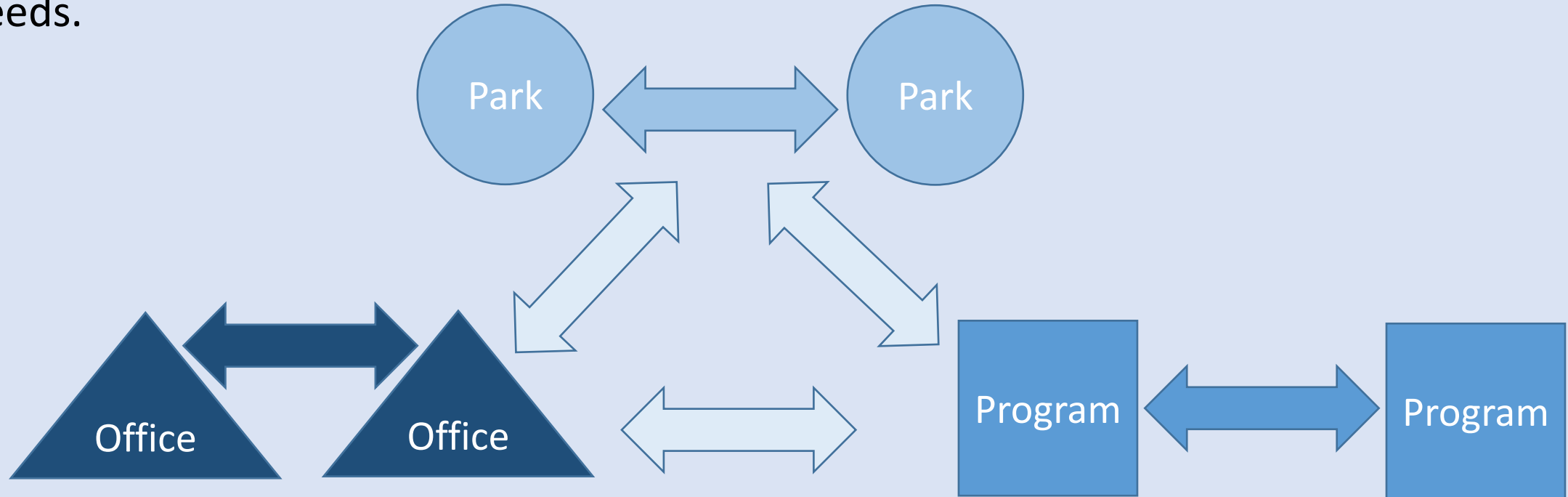
- The NPS program Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) collaborated with AmeriCorps VISTA and the City of Detroit to share parks and recreation staff who serve as liaisons between community, civic, and NPS structures and goals.
- Motor Cities National Heritage Area undertook a process to recognize place pride, seeking community stories on local histories to highlight on sidewalk interpretive displays.



“The built environment again is an area where we have a lot of possibility to recreate ourselves differently and thoughtfully here. So to the extent that the Park Service was involved in those conversations, and bringing its own depth of experience and history to them, I think it would be very positive and would help support that for the city.”

# Activating One NPS

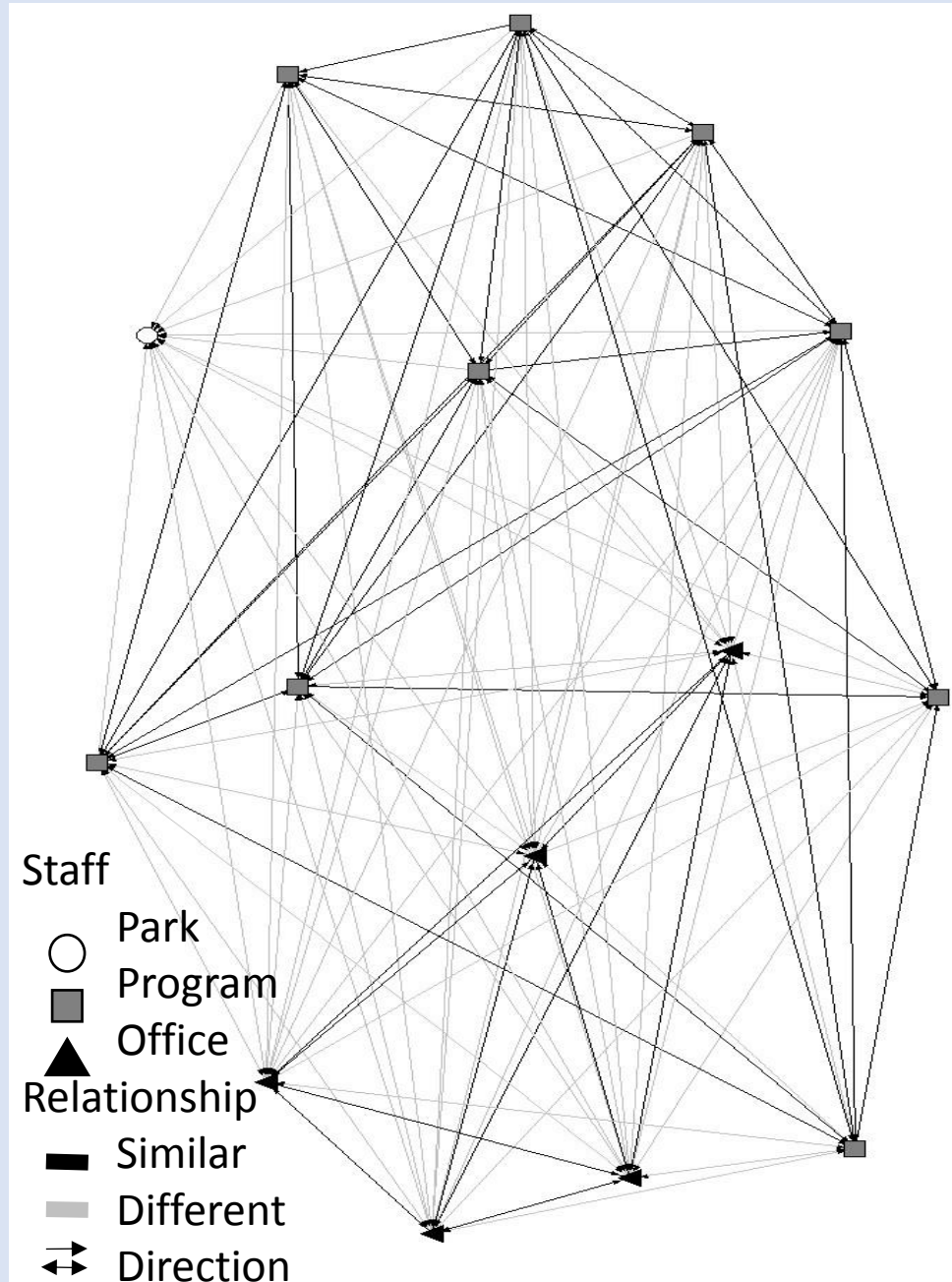
Relationships between parks and programs have great potential for growth and support. Administrative offices are a third important grouping for relationships. Relationships among parks appear the strongest, with well known and utilized supports (details, regional collaborations, etc.). Relationships to and among programs are a particular area of desired improvement. Recognizing present collaborative opportunities and building these relationships helps the NPS better align internal resources and skills to meet community needs.



# One NPS Example: Boston

NPS park, program, and office staff in Boston have frequent informal, and occasionally formal, interaction. This has led to personal connections and project collaborations. Despite noting challenges, staff knew individuals with whom they could creatively find opportunities. For example, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance worked with Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and legislative offices to install temporary art exhibits that attracted new visitors.

“You have these individual units which really are standalone units but even within those parks you have very strong organization structures. What I'm saying is there is not “One NPS,” there is 380 NPS' and then within that it gets multiplied and you end with 10,000 NPS'.”



# Culture of Collaboration

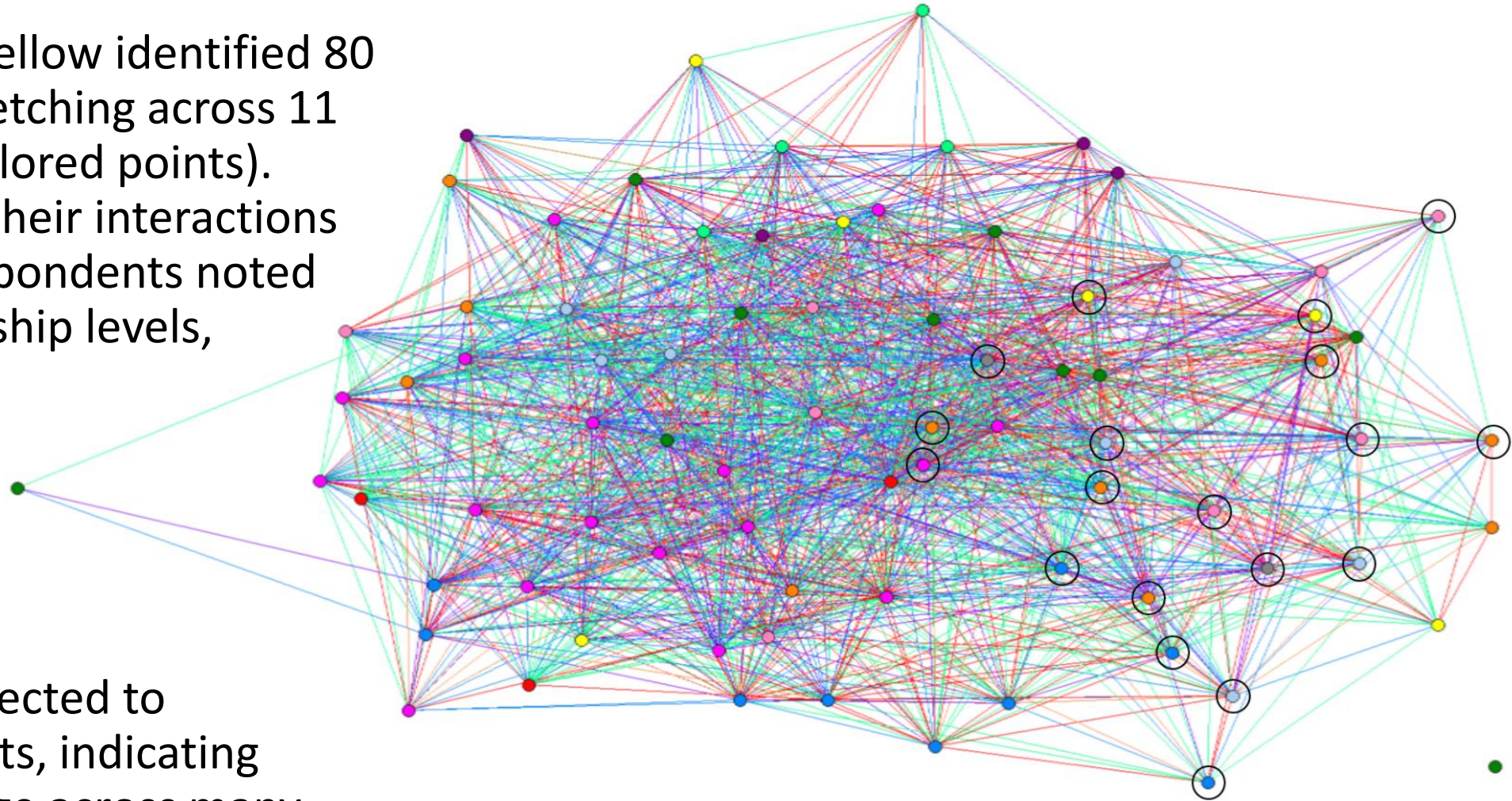
Urban Fellows have built robust networks of diverse contacts. Connections among these contacts suggest that routinely engaging dissimilar organizations helps to embed the NPS in the local context. Fostering diverse networks to reach local communities facilitates deeply understanding communities and vice versa. Monitoring the integrity of this loop is essential for relevance.



# Collaboration Example: Tucson

The Tucson Urban Fellow identified 80 diverse contacts stretching across 11 different sectors (colored points). When asked about their interactions with the others, respondents noted a variety of relationship levels, from conversation to collaboration (colored lines).

NPS staff (circled in black) are well connected to a diversity of contacts, indicating their ability to engage across many sectors and relationship levels.



# Reflection Questions for Enhanced Relevance

The three principles of the Urban Agenda are already strongly at work. To enhance relevancy with all Americans, collaborations within the NPS and with contacts across the landscape should continue to be examined and expanded. Questions to guide these efforts include:

- **How are we structuring goals to be of mutual importance for the dynamic urban population?** Soften the NPS-community edges by considering the range of context goals and audiences.
- **How are we reaching broadly for collaborators, including looking internally “beyond parks” mentality to encompass NPS programs?** Be open to innovative strategies to present a unified portfolio that adequately seeks out and responds to community needs.
- **How are we building genuine engagement with diverse connections?** Examine network variety and strength to expand upon both known areas of strength and untapped areas.

