RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

The collective work of the last couple of years has made clear that communities are ready to take the next step to shape a Strategy for Belonging that unites people, governments, and sectors around a shared goal: ensuring that everyone feels connected, included, and valued.

This section outlines **5 recommendations** for strengthening and advancing the Strategy for Belonging in 2026 and beyond. These recommendations are grounded in Tamarack's community and partner conversations, reflecting both local insights and system-level opportunities for scale and alignment. They fundamentally build upon the groundwork established in the 2024 Strategy Report.

1. Invest in Community Infrastructure for Belonging

Belonging is built in everyday places where people live, gather, and participate. Alongside our members, Tamarack has explored investing in various types of infrastructure, such as parks, community centers, and other spaces that hold meaning and value for communities. We believe the Strategy should prioritize investment in **social infrastructure** that fosters cohesion. Based on lessons learned over the past decade of building the movement for belonging, we confirm that social infrastructure is dual-sided: it is both physical and relational. Physical spaces facilitate cohesion, while relational capacity enables diverse perspectives to navigate differences and come together. This relational capacity is indispensable to building and sustaining democratic foundations.

Therefore, social infrastructure includes:

- **Community hubs, libraries,** and parks that act as inclusive meeting points.

- **Housing developments** that integrate social connection into design through shared spaces, co-housing models, and mixed-use planning.

- **Digital inclusion programs** that bridge the gap for those excluded from online participation.

- **Neighbourhood safety and restorative justice initiatives** that rebuild trust and belonging in communities facing violence or exclusion.

These investments should be guided by equity-centred principles and co-designed with residents, ensuring that social infrastructure reflects the diversity and needs of local communities.

Tamarack calls on funders to collaborate with communities and invest in partnerships that strengthen place-based collaboration, which is key to build social infrastructure for belonging, as expressed in a joint Open Letter from Canada's Nonprofits and Charities to Corporate and Philanthropic Funders. We issue a bold call to institutions of all sizes, particularly philanthropy and governments: **be mindful of the resources you meaningfully allocate to place-based collaboratives**. While supporting important thematic causes is vital, the impact of these causes remains isolated and less amplified unless it leverages the power of place.

> **"We need to be able to identify the places in our community where people experience a sense of belonging"**
>
> Participant from the S4B Working Group

2. Integrate Belonging into Policy Intersections

The Strategy for Belonging should explicitly address the intersections where belonging connects to other national priorities. Insights from Tamarack's CoPs and partner dialogues point to several critical intersections, which we will be emphasizing in 2026:

- **Belonging and Climate Resilience**: Support community-led climate adaptation efforts that strengthen relationships, build resilience, and grow local capacity to respond to emergencies.

- **Belonging and Housing**: Integrate belonging outcomes into housing policy through community-oriented design, resident engagement, and anti-displacement measures.

- **Belonging and Public Health**: Recognize belonging as a driver of health by expanding access to care and investing in community-based supports.

- **Belonging and Guaranteed Livable Income**: Advance income and employment policies, such as guaranteed livable income, that provide stability and allow people to participate fully in community life.

- **Belonging and Community Safety**: Promote safety approaches centred on prevention, trust, and restorative practices that create safe and connected neighbourhoods.

- **Belonging and Youth Civic Leadership, Employment, and Education**: Strengthen opportunities for youth engagement, learning, and employment so young people can actively shape community and civic life.

3. Strengthen Movement-Building Capacity

Belonging will not advance through policy alone, it requires a sustained social movement. Tamarack's 2025 learnings reaffirmed the need to strengthen the capacity of individuals and organizations to champion belonging in their spheres of influence.

> **"Brave conversations and collaborations with committed people of all ages gives me hope for the future"**
>
> Participant from the S4B Working Group

The strategy should:

- **Expand Networks for Change and Communities Building Belonging** as a national backbone for peer learning and innovation.

- **Provide funding and technical support** for place-based belonging initiatives.

- **Offer training and leadership development** in Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation, as well as other [key areas](#) including Collaboration, Collective Leadership, Community Innovation, Asset-Based Community Development, Community Engagement, and Evaluating Impact.

- **Foster storytelling and narrative change** that highlight belonging as a shared aspiration across Canada.

By investing in movement-building, we ensure that the Strategy remains **dynamic, regenerative, and rooted in lived experiences**.

4. Center Equity, Accountability, and Evaluation

We call on all interested collaboratives and institutions to recognize that building belonging requires much more than simply activating a block party or adding infrastructure to a local park. This movement's distinct power lies in its explicit commitment to **equity as the center of change**. We assert that **belonging and equity are fundamentally unbreakable**; they go hand-in-hand. This commitment drives us to embed [Seeds of Transformation](#), Tamarack's Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation framework, directly into our developmental work.

To remain credible and transformative, the Strategy for Belonging must be grounded in equity and accountability. This means:

- **Reflecting on our goals and roles** to build skills and confidence essential to advancing Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation goals.

- **Reshaping our commitments** to gain an understanding of individual and collective responsibilities and leverage our collection of knowledge and perspectives more effectively.

- **Advancing reciprocal engagement** by establishing participatory methods, including feedback loops between communities and decision-makers to ensure responsiveness and co-creation. It also involves prioritizing reciprocal engagement with equity-denied individuals and organizations to ensure their experiences shape decision-making.

- **Promoting respectful communication** is the essential foundation for enabling trust and transparency. This is particularly relevant when conducting community-based research and evaluation that seeks to capture the rich, qualitative experiences of belonging alongside quantitative data.

- **Conducting systematic reviews** to celebrate success, encourage sensemaking, and adjust based on feedback. We aspire to publish an annual **Strategy for Belonging Report** to track national progress and guide course corrections.

5. Co-Design the Future: A Call to Collective Action

Finally, the next phase of the call for a Canada-wide Strategy should continue its co-design journey with communities from coast to coast to coast. Co-design means more than consultation; it means **shared power and shared authorship**. This process could include:

- **Holding regional belonging dialogues** and design labs to shape and localize the call for the Strategy.

- **Sustaining the inclusion of lived-experience voices** in governance and policy design.

- **Partnering with academic and philanthropic institutions** to sustain research, innovation, and investment.

- **Co-mapping social infrastructure** assets for belonging.

- **Exploring intersectional perspectives** on belonging tied to land and the power of place.

"Belonging has to include how we feel our bodies and engage with the land... getting out of our heads and feel belonging with each other, including with non-human relations"

Participant from the S4B Working Group

A truly Canada-wide strategy will emerge not from a single institution, but from **a network of relationships** committed to a shared vision: a world where everyone can belong, contribute, and thrive.

To read the full Strategy for Belonging Midpoint Report, please click here.