Understanding the Framework for Recreation and Parks in Canada: Backgrounder and Key Messages

November 3, 2026

For the Framework Leadership Team, the Expert Review Panel, CPRA staff, CPRA members, partners, Forward Together Summit delegates, and anyone speaking or posting about the Framework.

The Framework, the Shared Agenda, and Collective Impact are easy to confuse. They are three different things: an agreement, a model, and the strategy we are building. This backgrounder gives everyone a common way to explain what each one is, how they fit together, and who each one is for, now and into the future.

The three key messages

1. **The Shared Agenda for Wellbeing (the Shared Agenda) is what the sector[1] has agreed to work toward**. It sets out a vision of recreation and parks as a necessary public service, contributing to the public good, accessible, and welcoming to all. It includes seven strategic priorities and the critical shifts to achieve them. It is currently being reviewed by governments.
2. **Collective Impact is the model we use to get there.** It is a widely used approach to systems change. Partners commit to a shared agenda, measure progress together, align their work, keep communicating, and are held together with backbone support. Systems change means shifting how decisions are made and how resources flow, which is why much of this work sits with governments and sector leaders rather than the front line.
3. **The Framework for Recreation and Parks in Canada (the Framework) is the strategy we are building together**: the sector's interpretation and application of Collective Impact applied to our circumstances in Canada that supports advancing towards the Shared Agenda.
   It sets out how the sector is structured and operates, the culture we share, how we show up, and what we stand for. It also includes everything we put in place to bring Collective Impact to life: tools and templates, forums both virtual and in person, measurement tools like CAN Active Insights, and shared reporting. The Shared Agenda is its foundation. As we build the Framework together in Phase 3, beginning in 2027, the sector will shape how it works, and how we describe it. Agreement is the starting line.



[1]By the "sector", we mean recreation, parks, grassroots community-based recreational sport, and arts and culture: one field that communities experience as a whole.

How they fit together. The Shared Agenda is the central pillar of Collective Impact. The Framework is our application of that model. Collective Impact gives us the pillars. The Framework is how we bring them to life in our sector: the structure, culture, and values, and the tools, forums, data, and reporting we build together. Work on the remaining four pillars begins in 2027.

Who each one is for, now and into the future

	What it is	Main audience and focus through February 2027	Main audience and focus beginning March 2027
The Shared Agenda	The agreement: what we've agreed to work toward. The vision, themes, priorities, and critical shifts.	Federal, provincial, and territorial policy makers, for endorsement.	The whole sector, as the shared reference point for planning and action.
Collective Impact	The model: a widely used approach to systems change built on five pillars, with the Shared Agenda at the centre.	CPRA, its members, the Framework Leadership Team, and the Expert Review Panel, preparing the measures, coordination, communication, and backbone support needed for implementation.	Everyone who takes part: sector organizations, partners, governments, and allied sectors aligning their work.
The Framework	The strategy we are building, and everything we put in place to bring Collective Impact to life.	The sector, partners, and governments, to understand where the sector is going.	Leaders and practitioners, who put it into practice, from priorities and budgets to delivery.

Why some of it feels far from the front line. Practitioners may find the Shared Agenda high level. That is by design: it is written for policy makers to endorse, and it is about systems change, shifting the conditions that hold problems in place, such as who makes decisions, how funding flows, and how governments and sectors work together. Many critical shifts therefore sit with governments and sector leaders, not front-line staff. Front-line staff see the results in their communities, and their experience tells us whether the shifts are working. Practical guidance and tools come as the full Framework is built with the sector.

Building out each message

1. **The Shared Agenda.** The foundation of the Framework and the central pillar of Collective Impact. It sets out a vision, three themes (belonging, equity, and Reconciliation), seven strategic priorities, and the critical shifts that move each priority forward. Each community starts from where it is. The Shared Agenda is in review with federal, provincial, and territorial governments, with endorsement sought between October 2026 and February 2027. See the Shared Agenda at a Glance in your Delegate Kit for the full set of priorities and critical shifts.
2. **Collective Impact.** The model we use to coordinate action on the Shared Agenda and achieve its critical shifts. Its five pillars are:
    - **Shared Agenda.** What we work toward together.
    - **Shared measurement.** Three levels of evaluation: how well the collective works, progress on the critical shifts, and the contribution to wellbeing. Indicators will be co-designed with the sector, building on existing systems, including CAN Active Insights.
    - **Mutually reinforcing activities.** Coordinated action among those who choose to work on similar priorities, based on their needs and capacity.
    - **Continuous communication.** Keeping everyone informed and supported: communities of practice, materials in accessible formats, continuous learning from peers and research, and a Resource Hub of tools.

- **Backbone support.** CPRA provides national backbone support, working with its provincial and territorial member associations. It coordinates and convenes; it does not direct.

3. **The Framework.** The strategy we are building, with the Shared Agenda as its foundation. The Shared Agenda already carries shared values and principles, the roles of governments and partners, and our commitment to Reconciliation. It continues a national conversation that began in 1974, when Canada's ministers responsible for recreation recognized recreation as a social service in the same way as health and education, and carried forward through the 1987 National Recreation Statement and the 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada. The new Framework is shaped by more than 2,500 people from every province and territory.

What the Shared Agenda and the Framework are not

- Not a program, and not a spending commitment for any government or organization.
- Not a transfer of authority. Jurisdiction is respected.
- Not prescriptive. Each community contributes in the way that fits its needs and capacity.

The Framework is being developed in three phases

The journey to date:

- **Phase 1 (2024 to 2025): Consultation.** Understand where we are. National consultation gathered input on the sector's current situation, including gaps, opportunities, and successes.
- **Phase 2 (2026): Shared Agenda.** Agree on where we want to go and what needs to change. The Shared Agenda sets our shared direction.

What comes next:

Endorsement of the Shared Agenda by policy makers is the starting line, not the finish line. The next phase builds the structures and supports needed to put it into practice.

- **Phase 3 (2027): Putting the Shared Agenda into action.** Develop the remaining four pillars of Collective Impact, beginning with detailed, resourced implementation planning in spring 2027.
- **The Framework will continue to evolve.** Progress will be reported and the Shared Agenda's priorities reviewed regularly, informed by practitioners' experience.

The ask

Stay involved as we build the Framework together. Consider how your organization can contribute to the Shared Agenda's priorities, and bring your experience and ideas to the next phase of planning.

About CPRA

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) champions the vital role the recreation and parks sector plays in creating healthy, vibrant, and resilient communities across Canada. Its vision is a Canada where vibrant public spaces, parks, programs, and services thrive, enrich every community, and enhance the wellbeing of all who live in Canada. CPRA works in three areas: sector collaboration and leadership, support and development, and advocacy and influence. Its members are the 13 provincial and territorial recreation and parks associations, including the Association québécoise du loisir public (AQLP). Through them, CPRA connects with more than 95 percent of municipalities in Canada.