Phase 4 Report

Building for Recovery CMHC Solutions Lab

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Introduction and Purpose of Phase 4

The Building for Recovery CMHC Solutions Lab, led by Porchlight Counselling and Addiction Services, is examining the feasibility and design of a recovery home village model on land made available by Wanner Mennonite Church in Cambridge. Building on Porchlight's existing recovery home model, the Solutions Lab brings together people with lived experience, community partners, and housing and systems stakeholders to co-develop a person-centred, scalable, and sustainable model. Engagement is embedded throughout the Lab as a core design principle to ensure that the model responds to lived realities, supports implementation readiness, and builds shared ownership across partners.

Phase 4 marks an important evolution in the Lab's leadership and governance. At this stage, I Sky Consulting joined the Overlap team as a co-lead alongside Porchlight. This co-leadership model strengthens the Lab's capacity to integrate systems-level housing expertise with deep social work, equity, and lived-experience-informed approaches to evaluation, accountability, and implementation readiness. The addition of I Sky Consulting supports a more explicit focus on power, decision-making, and alignment between values and practice as the project moves closer to implementation.

This section situates Phase 4 within the broader Solutions Lab journey (Phases 1–3). Earlier phases focused on research, engagement, and co-design to inform initial concepts. Phase 4 builds on this foundation by testing, refining, and validating the model to strengthen it prior to implementation.

The purpose of Phase 4 is to test, refine, and validate the recovery home village model to support informed decision-making and readiness for implementation. Evaluation at this stage is critical to confirming feasibility, identifying risks, and ensuring alignment with the project's intended outcomes.

A key feature of Phase 4 is refining the Lab's core guiding questions. These questions provide a shared framework for evaluation and decision-making and reflect priorities surfaced through engagement with people with lived experience. Refining them at this stage ensures the evaluation remains focused on what matters most as the project moves toward implementation:

- How do we offer agency to people who choose to enter recovery?
- What are the current states of development of the model(s)?
- How do we actualize and scale the model?

Together, these refined questions anchor Phase 4 evaluation work, ensuring that feedback, analysis, and decisions remain grounded in lived experience, operational realities, and long-term impact.

Enhanced Environmental Scan

This section situates the prototype evaluation within the broader evidence base developed across the Solutions Lab. Earlier scanning conducted in Phases 1–3 focused on understanding how recovery housing and recovery-oriented models are being implemented in Canada and globally, and identifying early assumptions about what contributes to strong outcomes. Phase 4 added a different type of evidence through testing and validation activities, alongside targeted operator and system reach-outs. This enhancement strengthens the scan's practical value by clarifying which assumptions hold under implementation scrutiny, which require refinement, and what readiness conditions shape feasibility, scalability, implementation readiness, and learning.

What Was Updated and Why

The Phase 4 scan enhancement was prompted by implementation questions that remained active as the prototypes moved closer to readiness. These questions included how agency is sustained in day-to-day practice, what operational features hold safety and stability over time, which dependencies constrain feasibility, and what elements are transferable versus locally contingent. New sources added in Phase 4 were used to deepen the scan in direct service, operational, and systems contexts, so the scan supports decision-making rather than duplicating prototype descriptions.

Key Findings

Participant agency: Agency remained a consistent indicator of model strength. Phase 4 validation sharpened this concept by showing that agency is sustained through practical enabling conditions, including continuity through transitions, non-linear pathways that do not destabilize housing, and reliable access to community-based supports. This refinement positions agency as an operating requirement that must be designed and resourced, not only a guiding value.

How models evolve: The scan identified a pattern in which models evolve from single-site offerings toward more integrated ecosystems over time. Phase 4 validation clarified that collaboration is often a dependency that shapes feasibility, not an optional enhancement. Partner reliability, shared expectations, and clear operating interfaces influence whether wraparound support functions consistently and can be sustained beyond early momentum.

State of development markers: Earlier scanning identified markers of maturity such as coherent delivery models and sustainability mechanisms. Phase 4 added implementation-level specificity by surfacing a small set of readiness indicators that determine whether a model can move from concept to delivery. These include site feasibility, governance clarity, sustained staffing and operations, and contingency planning for predictable disruptions and service gaps.

Codified standards, fit, and safety in practice: The scan highlighted the importance of standards that formalize safety, fit, and agency. Phase 4 validation refined this by

emphasizing how these commitments are held through daily practice, including predictable routines, clear accountability processes, and non-punitive responses that protect housing stability. This positions governance and operating practices as core elements of readiness rather than downstream implementation details.

Community as an active mechanism of recovery: Community and connection remained central across the evidence base. Phase 4 validation clarified what community looks like when it is being sustained in practice, including consistent routines, shared practices, and expectations that support mutual responsibility. It also reinforced an important implementation consideration: internal community-building should support, not replace, connection to the surrounding community and broader participation over time.

Rights-based and culturally grounded practice: Rights-based and culturally grounded practice continues to be essential to reducing power asymmetries and supporting safety and belonging. Phase 4 validation reinforced that cultural safety is supported through ongoing learning and accountability in implementation, not only through design features. This strengthens the emphasis on consistent practices, governance, and everyday norms that uphold dignity and inclusion.

Access to recovery for culturally-specific groups: Earlier scanning identified that access improves when models are grounded in holistic wellness and self-determination, supported by culturally-grounded governance and practices. Phase 4 validation deepened this by emphasizing that enabling conditions such as continuity, practical access to supports, and culturally-grounded operating practices shape whether access is experienced as meaningful in everyday life. It also reinforced that local constraints and service gaps must be treated as implementation conditions rather than afterthoughts.

Actualizing and scaling: Phase 4 validation reinforced that scaling is experienced locally as a combined capital and operations challenge. It also clarified that replication depends less on copying a single blueprint and more on identifying transferable functions while adapting to local enabling conditions. Detailed trade-offs and prototype decisions related to scaling and transferability are addressed in the Prototype Refinement and Prototype Designs sections.

Engagement and Interviews: Overview and Findings

The engagement in Phase 4 was distinct from earlier phases in both purpose and approach. While Phases 1–3 focused on understanding the problem space, surfacing lived and living experience priorities, and co-developing prototype concepts, Phase 4 shifted to testing and validation. The work moved from "what could this be?" to "what needs to be true for this to work in practice?" This engagement clarified feasibility assumptions, strengthened implementation readiness, surfaced trade-offs and constraints, and identified what was stable versus what remains adaptable as the prototypes move toward delivery and replication.

3.1 Individual Interviews

The individual interviews strengthened the validation of earlier concepts by clarifying what must be true for feasibility, implementation readiness, scalability, and learning.

Participants represented:

- cross-system perspectives connected to family wellbeing and service pathways,
- lived and living experience–grounded perspectives captured through site-level observations,
- external supportive housing operations perspective; and
- external recovery program operators engaged through environmental scan reach-outs.

Continuity as a stabilizing condition: Across interviews, the strongest point of convergence was that stability depends on continuity in everyday life. Participants emphasized continuity of relationships, continuity of routines, and continuity through transitions. Interview evidence reinforced that recovery-oriented housing works best when it reduces handoffs and avoids creating gaps where people are left to navigate complex systems alone, especially at moments of change.

Agency enabled by practical conditions: Interview evidence deepened the implementation picture of what agency requires in practice. Agency was consistently linked to enabling conditions such as reliable access to community-based supports (including transportation realities), clear and predictable pathways through transitions, and support that can hold non-linear journeys without destabilizing housing. Rather than framing agency as a program value, participants described it as something built or undermined by operational design.

The "before and after" housing gap: Several interviews elevated the period before entry and the period after exit as defining system constraints. External operators described these as the most vulnerable points, where limited safe and affordable housing options can undo progress and increase risk. This strengthened the feasibility lens by making clear that recovery housing models are often constrained less by in-program design than by what happens at the edges of the program.

Inclusion and safety as operating requirements: From an implementation readiness perspective, interviews clarified how inclusion and safety are experienced in day-to-day practice. Mixed-gender settings, culturally-grounded access, and family connection were discussed as realities that require clear governance, daily norms, and accountability practices, supported by spaces and roles that can hold dignity, privacy, and safety over time. This shifted the emphasis away from one-time policy choices and toward consistent operating practices.

Sustainability and scaling through transferable functions: The environmental scan reach-outs added pragmatic insight into sustainability and scaling. Interview evidence emphasized the importance of stable operating resources, diversified funding strategies, and partnership arrangements that share risk over time. In this framing, replication is less about copying a physical blueprint and more about transferring core functions such as continuity supports, governance practices, and operational interfaces, while adapting to local housing markets, service ecosystems, and enabling conditions.

3.2 Staff Interviews

Staff interviews were conducted to test the feasibility assumptions that emerged through Phase 3 operational exploration. Perspectives reflected a mix of roles involved in day-to-day delivery and organizational decision-making, including program delivery and support functions, operational and facility considerations, and leadership-level planning for partnerships and sustainability. Together, these perspectives provided a practical lens on what it takes to operationalize the model with consistency, safety, and continuity.

Operational readiness and feasibility testing

Staff perspectives reinforced that feasibility is determined by the operating model, not only the concept. Interviews emphasized the importance of clear role design, predictable routines, and decision-making structures that can hold complexity without becoming overly rigid. Staff also highlighted that readiness depends on sequencing and resourcing, including how staffing is sustained over time, how partnerships are formalized so that support is reliable, and how day-to-day operations are protected from being overwhelmed by crisis-driven demand. Practical considerations such as intake flow, expectations for participation, and how transitions are supported were consistently described as core to implementation readiness.

Alignment and tensions with lived experience priorities

Staff interviews generally aligned with lived experience priorities around stability, dignity, and continuity, particularly the value of consistent relationships and predictable day-to-day structure. At the same time, staff perspectives surfaced a recurring tension between creating a safe, accountable environment and preserving agency. This showed up in how boundaries and expectations are held, how setbacks are responded to without destabilizing housing, and how inclusive environments are supported in practice. Staff framing reinforced that many lived experience priorities are achieved through operational choices, especially governance practices, routine-setting, and the ways staff maintain consistency across transitions.

Implementation supports required

Staff perspectives clarified the supports required to move from prototype to delivery. These included operational infrastructure such as clear governance and accountability processes, defined pathways for intake and transitions, training and shared practices that reinforce consistency, and explicit contingency planning for predictable disruptions. Interviews also reinforced the importance of partner readiness, including agreements and protocols that reduce informal dependence and support continuity across systems. Finally, staff perspectives emphasized the need for practical enablers that protect agency and access, such as transportation solutions and mechanisms to ensure people can connect with external services without increased isolation.

3.3 Men's Home Focus Group

The purpose of this focus group was to deepen lived and living experience evidence on what recovery housing needs to provide in day-to-day practice, and what design and operating conditions strengthen stability, dignity, and long-term outcomes.

How this input built on earlier engagement

Earlier engagement established the importance of safety, dignity, community connection, and practical barriers to stability. This focus group input expanded those priorities by naming, in more concrete terms, how agency and choice need to be experienced in the model, and by foregrounding culturally safe, family-connected pathways, particularly for Indigenous families navigating multiple systems. The feedback also reinforced that recovery housing is not only a built environment; it is an operating approach that holds structure, community, and accountability in ways that support hope and forward momentum.

Daily experience of recovery housing

Participants described the men's home model as offering structure, community, hope, and accountability. They emphasized that day-to-day stability is strengthened by practical supports and spaces that make routine sustainable, including laundry access, green space, wellness options, and employment-readiness programming.

Space, safety, and community

Feedback reinforced that a safe, supportive environment depends on spaces that enable connection while respecting privacy and dignity. Participants also emphasized inclusive design, including welcoming spaces for queer and gender-diverse people, culturally-grounded spaces for ceremony, and options that can accommodate different comfort levels with mixed-gender living.

Agency, choice, and continuity of care

A central theme was the need for a continuum of care that offers real choice, rather than a single pathway. Agency was framed as having options that match individual circumstances and allow people to stay connected to community and culture as part of recovery.

Family pathways and system navigation

Participants emphasized that family connection and reunification require clear navigation and advocacy supports, particularly for parents engaging with child and family services. This included recognizing and upholding legislative roles and responsibilities when working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit families, and ensuring services are culturally responsive rather than one-size-fits-all.

Core supports required

Participants identified essential supports that strengthen stability and safety, including counselling, access to a nurse practitioner, and staff with mental health and substance use expertise.

3.4 Webinars

Phase 4 webinars were designed to test and validate the Phase 3 prototype concepts, shifting engagement from ideation toward implementation-level stress-testing. The Phase 3 Prototype Solution Briefs framed three core concepts for testing:

1. Program pathway options for a recovery home (including culturally adaptive and structure-based routines),
2. A "No Wrong Door" service pathway anchored by a coordinated case worker role, and
3. Site configuration variations exploring staged recovery, population-specific options, and the role of shared hub space.

Four webinars were held to support this validation.

- Webinar 1: Internal Board (7 participants)
- Webinar 2: External and Internal Waterloo Region Organizations (21 participants)
- Webinar 3: External and Internal Waterloo Region Organizations (11 participants)
- Webinar 4: National External Organizations (6 participants)

This sequencing supported a progression from internal feasibility and governance considerations to broader system perspectives, including transferability and replication conditions.

Across the webinars, participants engaged with the prototypes as integrated concepts rather than isolated components: connecting built form, program rhythm, governance, and system interfaces. The validation signal was strongest where participants could see how day-to-day operations and cross-system coordination would work together to support stability and continuity.

Areas of convergence

Across internal and external sessions, participants consistently treated continuity as central to the viability of the Phase 3 concepts—continuity of relationships through transitions, continuity of supports beyond a fixed program "end date," and continuity of daily rhythms that support stability. This directly reinforced the intent of the "No Wrong Door" pathway concept (a stable anchor role across stages and systems), and it also strengthened the

emphasis in the program outline concepts on routine, accountability, and predictable daily structure.

Participants also converged on the idea that model quality is expressed through operational design, not only program intent. Webinars repeatedly returned to the lived reality of how homes function: routines, shared expectations, and the practical supports that make stability possible. This aligned closely with the Phase 3 briefs' focus on "attributes to be tested," and it reinforced that implementation readiness depends on clearly defined roles, governance practices, and consistent day-to-day mechanisms, not only a compelling concept narrative.

Areas of concern or uncertainty surfaced through testing

Testing also clarified several recurring uncertainties that shape feasibility and scalability.

1. **Needs for the "No Wrong Door" Model**

   Participants repeatedly highlighted that non-linear pathways are the norm, not the exception. This reinforced the idea of people starting in different places and moving in different ways, while sharpening what needs to be true operationally: the pathway must be able to hold transitions, returns, and service gaps without destabilizing housing or severing relationships.

2. **Operation of Staged and/or Tiered Models**

   The feasibility of the staged and tiered models were questioned, primarily with concerns around the potential instability created by organizing housing primarily by acuity or stage if it requires avoidable movement or disrupts a sense of home. This directly connects to the Phase 3 site-variation questions about flow between stages and the implications of co-locating different levels of support on one site.

3. **Critical Design Questions**

   Testing surfaced that several design choices function as operating requirements that must be specified before implementation can proceed. Rather than debating these as abstract preferences, participants emphasized the day-to-day mechanisms needed to hold dignity and safety in practice, especially for mixed-gender settings, 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion, family connection and child presence, accessibility across aging and mobility needs, and culturally grounded approaches.

4. **Feasibility in Practice**

   Finally, participants repeatedly returned to the local enabling conditions that determine whether any of these concepts can function in practice, including transportation access, the availability of external services, the reliability of partner capacity, and land/site feasibility constraints. These considerations were framed as core readiness conditions that affect both implementation and the ability to scale or replicate in other jurisdictions.

Implications for implementation and scalability

Webinar testing refined feasibility from "does this concept make sense?" to "what must be in place for this to work day-to-day?". Across sessions, participants consistently treated the

most important readiness work as the articulation of: governance and accountability practices; continuity mechanisms that hold transitions; contingency planning for relapse and service gaps; and the practical infrastructure that enables access to community rather than isolation.

From a scalability perspective, webinars strengthened a key distinction already implicit in the Phase 3 briefs: the model is more replicable when it is framed as a set of transferable functions (continuity role, partnership interfaces, governance practices, learning loops) rather than a fixed blueprint. At the same time, testing emphasized that successful replication requires deliberate adaptation to local context—especially service ecosystem capacity, transportation realities, land constraints, and community acceptance conditions. This creates a clear learning agenda for subsequent work: identify which functions are essential, which are adaptable, and what evidence is still needed to validate sustainability under real operating conditions.

3.5 Municipal Consultation (Mayor's Office)

Engagement with municipal leadership, specifically Mayor Liggett, her Chief of Staff, and the new Director of the Building Department, was conducted to clarify feasibility assumptions related to site development, approvals, and capital funding pathways. This consultation shifted the focus toward concrete implementation readiness and local enabling conditions.

- **Navigating the Development and Approvals Process**

  Municipal feedback, reinforced by Building Department leadership, emphasized the importance of sequential, implementation-ready planning. Validation clarified that readiness depends on submitting a comprehensive application only after receiving a formalized municipal checklist, rather than accelerating the preliminary application currently being prepared by Glenn Reinders (architect). Furthermore, scalability and site feasibility are strengthened by framing the development as a deliberate, phased approach, rather than attempting to construct all units simultaneously.

- **Funding Feasibility and System Constraints**

  Engagement clarified current system constraints regarding capital and operational funding. The prototypes do not currently align with the municipality's affordable housing fund criteria, and flow-through provincial or federal funding via the City is unlikely at this stage. This constraint necessitates a strategic pivot toward philanthropic funding models to ensure long-term sustainability.

- **Partnership and Municipal Support**

  The meeting affirmed the Mayor's office's support for the recovery village model, confirming a municipal commitment to supporting the project's progression through the planning process. To address the identified funding constraints, the Mayor recommended exploring specific philanthropic partnerships, highlighting the Peterson Foundation as a viable avenue and offering her endorsement as an introductory connection.

Prototype Refinement

Purpose of Prototype Refinement

Phase 4 moved the work from conceptual alignment to implementation-minded refinement. Earlier phases established the problem framing, lived and living experience priorities, and prototype concepts. Phase 4 testing used webinars, interviews, and site-based learning to validate what resonated, clarify what was missing, and tighten the concepts into a more delivery-ready direction. The emphasis shifted from "does this make sense?" to "what must be true for this to work in practice, and what do we need to decide now versus learn next?"

Key Themes Guiding Refinement

1. Continuity through transitions

Origin in earlier phases
Earlier work emphasized stability, dignity, and reducing drop-off through better coordination, particularly at transition points.

What Phase 4 clarified or shifted
Testing reinforced continuity as a make-or-break condition. Participants consistently emphasized that fewer handoffs and sustained relationships reduce risk, especially before entry, during transitions, and after exit.

Resulting changes to the prototype
Prototypes were refined to more clearly define continuity as an operating function. This includes clarifying who holds responsibility for navigation, follow-up, and transition planning, and how connection is maintained beyond a fixed program endpoint.

2. Non-linear pathways and safe "return points"

Origin in earlier phases
Earlier phases recognized that pathways vary and that support needs change over time.

What Phase 4 clarified or shifted
Participants emphasized that recovery is non-linear and testing elevated the need to design for setbacks and service gaps without destabilizing housing.

Resulting changes to the prototype
The pathway concept was refined to include explicit non-linear movement, including return points and contingency planning. This influenced how stages, exits, and re-entry are described, as well as how policies and supports are structured to preserve stability.

3. Governance and day-to-day operating practices

Origin in earlier phases
Earlier work highlighted safety, fit, and community as core conditions, alongside the importance of predictable environments.

What Phase 4 clarified or shifted
Phase 4 moved governance from an implicit assumption to an explicit requirement. Participants repeatedly described safety and dignity as something enacted through routines, accountability practices, and consistent ways of working, not only through screening or rules.

Resulting changes to the prototype
Refinement focused on specifying governance and operating practices as part of the model. This includes clarifying house culture mechanisms, expectations, accountability processes, and how the model responds to conflict or setbacks while maintaining dignity.

4. Built form linked to lived experience priorities

Origin in earlier phases
Earlier engagement emphasized dignity, privacy, accessibility, and the role of shared space in belonging and accountability.

What Phase 4 clarified or shifted
Testing strengthened the link between physical design and operational success. Participants described daily life needs that influence whether routines and community practices are sustainable, including practical infrastructure and spaces that support both connection and rest.

Resulting changes to the prototype
Refinement emphasized design features that enable daily stability, such as accessible layouts, appropriate shared and private spaces, and practical supports like laundry, green space, and wellness-oriented amenities where feasible.

5. Transportation as a feasibility and agency constraint

Origin in earlier phases
Transportation barriers were consistently identified as limiting access to services, employment, and community connection.

What Phase 4 clarified or shifted
Phase 4 added practical specificity and reinforced transportation as central to autonomy and integration. Participants treated it as foundational, not optional.

Resulting changes to the prototype
Refinement treated transportation as an implementation dependency to be addressed explicitly, including exploring practical solutions that support community access and reduce isolation.

6. Inclusion and safety as operating requirements

Origin in earlier phases
Earlier phases emphasized safety, cultural belonging, and reducing barriers, including for diverse identities and family contexts.

What Phase 4 clarified or shifted

Testing reinforced that inclusion is experienced through daily norms, governance practices, and space use. Participants highlighted the need for environments that hold dignity and safety for queer and gender-diverse people, mixed-gender considerations, culturally grounded practices, and family connections.

Resulting changes to the prototype
Refinement focused on defining inclusion through operational mechanisms. This includes clarifying how spaces and practices support privacy, dignity, and safety, and how cultural and identity-based needs are held consistently.

7. Defining what is transferable versus what must be locally adapted

Origin in earlier phases
Earlier work aimed to build concepts that could inform broader application while remaining grounded in local realities.

What Phase 4 clarified or shifted
Participants repeatedly distinguished between what can be replicated and what is context-specific. Replication was framed as transferring core functions and practices, while adapting to local housing markets, service ecosystems, and enabling conditions.

Resulting changes to the prototype
Refinement strengthened the emphasis on "functions over forms." The work prioritized defining transferable elements such as continuity roles, governance practices, and operational interfaces, while identifying local variables that require adaptation.

8. Scope clarity and realistic service fit

Origin in earlier phases
Earlier engagement raised fit, safety, and staffing capacity as constraints that shape who can be served well.

What Phase 4 clarified or shifted
Testing emphasized that scope clarity is central to feasibility and sustainability. Participants highlighted that acuity, service intensity, and tenure realities are linked, and that being overly broad increases implementation risk.

Resulting changes to the prototype
Refinement focused on clarifying who the model is designed to serve and under what operating conditions, as a prerequisite for sustainable delivery and credible scaling.

Trade-Offs and Decision-Making

Where feedback conflicted

Testing surfaced several productive tensions:

- The desire for structure and accountability alongside the need for flexibility and agency.
- The value of community living alongside the need for privacy, dignity, and safe inclusion.

- Interest in staged or tiered approaches alongside concerns about disruption if people must move between settings.
- The aspiration for replication alongside the reality that local service capacity and enabling conditions vary widely.

How decisions balanced feasibility, lived experience, and scalability

Decisions prioritized lived and living experience evidence about what supports stability in daily life, while also testing feasibility through operational and partner perspectives. Where there was tension, refinements favoured approaches that preserve dignity and continuity, reduce reliance on informal capacity, and make operating requirements explicit. Scalability was treated as the ability to transfer core functions and learning, not the replication of a fixed blueprint.

What remains unresolved and why

Several areas remain intentionally open because they require further learning, local due diligence, or partner commitments:

- The specific configuration of staged supports and how to prevent disruption while meeting different needs.
- The minimum viable package of partnerships required for continuity, including how service gaps are addressed.
- How transportation solutions are operationalized in different contexts.
- The precise model boundaries for who is served, given linked constraints related to acuity, intensity of supports, and tenure/affordability.
- The operating and funding model needed to sustain staffing, governance practices, and long-term delivery capacity.
- Following municipal consultations, capital and operational funding strategies will need to pivot toward philanthropic partnerships and private avenues, given the limited qualifying municipal, provincial, or federal flow-through funds.

Prototype Designs

Prototype 1: The Village

What it is now

A small, home-based village model designed to support stability, dignity, and community through a household environment, with shared space that enables programming, connection, and consistent routines.

How it evolved from earlier concepts

Earlier phases established the need for recovery-oriented housing that balances privacy and community, and supports progression over time. Phase 4 testing refined the Village from a primarily site-and-layout concept into an integrated design-plus-operations model, clarifying that built form only works when it reliably enables day-to-day routines, accountability, inclusion, and connection to external supports.

What is stable

- A home-like environment that supports dignity, privacy, and belonging
- Shared space that enables community practices, programming, and connection
- Accessibility as a baseline design expectation
- Day-to-day routines and governance practices that sustain safety and stability
- A design intent that avoids unnecessary disruption and supports continuity

What is adaptable

- The number and configuration of homes, based on site feasibility and local needs
- How differing support needs are accommodated without creating disruption
- The balance of private and shared spaces, based on population needs and context
- Specific amenities and facilities, based on operational feasibility and partnerships
- The level of integration with the surrounding neighbourhood, based on local conditions

Prototype 2: Circle of Care

What it is now

A coordinated support pathway that reduces drop-off by ensuring continuity of relationship and navigation across transitions. The Circle of Care is designed to hold non-linear journeys, including changes in need and returns, without destabilizing housing.

How it evolved from earlier concepts

Earlier phases emphasized that recovery journeys vary and that system navigation is a barrier. Phase 4 validation made continuity more concrete, shifting it from a general principle into a defined operating requirement. Testing also clarified the need to design explicitly for transition points where risk increases, including the “before and after” housing gap.

What is stable

- Continuity through transitions as a core function
- Navigation support that reduces handoffs and strengthens access to services
- A pathway designed for non-linear movement, including safe return points
- Clear operating interfaces with external systems and partners
- A focus on preserving dignity and stability during service gaps or setbacks

What is adaptable

- The staffing model and how continuity roles are resourced locally
- The mix and sequencing of supports, depending on local service availability
- How partnerships are structured, based on local capacity
- The tools and protocols used to coordinate supports
- How transition supports are delivered across different contexts

Prototype 3: Framework Manual

What it is now

A practical manual that supports replication through guided adaptation. Rather than templating a fixed blueprint, it identifies transferable functions, outlines enabling conditions, and provides a structured way for communities to design locally while retaining fidelity to the core approach.

How it evolved from earlier concepts

Earlier concepts aimed to support scaling and knowledge sharing. Phase 4 engagement clarified that replication depends on distinguishing what is transferable from what is locally contingent, and that scaling requires explicit attention to enabling conditions such as transportation, partner capacity, site feasibility, and governance readiness.

What is stable

- A “functions over forms” approach to replication
- Core transferable elements such as continuity functions, governance practices, and learning loops
- A focus on documenting operating requirements and readiness conditions
- A commitment to learning through iteration
- A structure for capturing and sharing what works, for whom, and under what conditions

What is adaptable

- Local configuration of housing and supports, based on context and partnerships
- Implementation sequencing and phasing strategies
- Local governance and accountability mechanisms
- How cultural safety and inclusion are operationalized locally
- Local learning priorities and measurement approaches, aligned to shared outcomes

Phase 4 Evaluation Summary

Phase 4 strengthened the Building for Recovery Solutions Lab by moving the work from conceptual alignment into implementation-minded validation. Through interviews, staff perspectives, a focused lived experience-informed session, and cross-sector webinars, Phase 4 clarified what is stable in the prototype direction, what must remain adaptable, and what conditions shape feasibility and implementation readiness as the work progresses toward delivery.

Across engagement streams, continuity emerged as a core stabilizing function. Participants consistently emphasized that recovery housing works best when it reduces handoffs, holds non-linear pathways without destabilizing housing, and sustains supportive relationships through transitions. This reinforced the value of a coordinated Circle of Care and clarified that continuity must be operationalized through clear roles, governance practices, and reliable partner interfaces.

Phase 4 also made readiness more concrete. Rather than treating feasibility as an abstract question, engagement clarified practical conditions that influence whether the prototypes can function day-to-day. These include site feasibility, governance and accountability practices, sustained staffing and operations, contingency planning for predictable disruptions and service gaps, and enabling conditions that support access to community-based supports.

The outcome of Phase 4 is a clearer three-part prototype package: the Village as an intentional recovery environment, the Circle of Care as the continuity and navigation function that reduces drop-off across transitions, and the Framework Manual as the mechanism to support learning and replication through guided adaptation. Together, these prototypes reflect a shared emphasis on dignity, safety, belonging, and agency, while recognizing that replication requires transferring core functions and practices while adapting to local context.

Finally, Phase 4 established a practical learning agenda for what remains open. Several elements remain intentionally adaptable because they depend on local due diligence and implementation sequencing, including how staged supports are configured without creating disruption, what the minimum viable partnership package looks like in practice, and what operating and funding model is required to sustain delivery capacity over time. These are the areas where continued testing and learning will be most valuable as the Lab moves from prototype refinement into implementation planning.