

Building a Sense of Belonging

Belonging is foundational to a thriving life — but building belonging isn't always easy.

THE CHALLENGE

- A sense of belonging is foundational to a thriving life.
- Northeast Minnesota's population is growing more diverse, with more people moving in.
- Clashes between newcomers and longtime residents, political divides, and differences in faith, wealth, age, and ethnicity can undermine belonging.
- Some longtime residents haven't always felt welcome either.
- There's real appetite to build a denser sense of belonging and connect communities working toward similar goals.
- There is an opportunity to reframe belonging in ways that encourage more productive conversations and avoid triggering negative reactions.

OUR ROLE

This is already an area of collaboration. By mid-2027, Northspan and Northland Foundation will have convened an [Inclusive Leadership Circle](#) (ILC) in every regional county and launched ILC alumni programming, with a related summit planned for May 2027.

TAKE ACTION

REGIONAL

- Engage with groups outside your immediate community that are tackling similar issues

LOCAL

- Consider an Inclusive Leadership Circle — reach out to Amber Lewis, alewis@northspan.org
- Start or support grassroots discussions on belonging
- Support a welcome dinner for new residents
- Develop a welcome wagon through your local chamber