

Our Journey to Find Leverage:

Building on our research and exploration of the system we identified key Levers of Change within the system where we may have the greatest potential to create positive change while working within organizational constraints.

The Design Approach: Working Within Constraints

The research based solutions landscape has significant breadth. Yet, a solution to the wicked problem remains elusive since many potential interventions are difficult to implement due to factors such as:

- Resource constraints
- Limited capacity
- Competing priorities
- Socio-economic ideology
- Organizational and cultural inertia.

These factors, among others create a gap what could create change in theory and what can be implemented in practice.

The Design Approach: Qualities of an Effective Lever

Levers of Change are strategic and practical interventions that meet the following requirements:

- Feasible: works within current organizational resources and capacities
- Actionable: can be piloted or tested quickly
- Scalable: able to grow and adapt over time
- Systemic: influence multiple parts of the system.

When these necessary qualities are combined with the realities of the practical constraints that interventions must operate within, it not surprising that solutions to wicked problems remain elusive.

The Design Approach A Snapshot of the Intervention

The full scope of the intervention will not be presented in the present forum. Instead a snapshot of the package of deliverables, including its three components are presented on this poster. The bottom line is that each component of the overall intervention has been developed using this following framework:

- Grounded in research and inform by the problem landscape
- Responsive to organizational realities
- Designed for piloting, learning and adapting over time
- Focused on relational and reflective practices, not administrative processes

Transition from the Transactional to the Transformative: Building Capacity Through Reflective Mentorship

Reflective Mentorship Pilot

While early career social workers benefit from supervision, this is usually an administrative process, not reflective. The objective is to develop a structured approach to pairing early career social workers with experienced practitioners to engage in a **non-evaluative, reflective mentor relationship**. This pilot will intentionally create a safe space for:

- Reflective conversations about practice that focus on improving reflective and relational skills by discussion and review of difficult files, difficult relationships and difficult conversations
- Navigating complexity and uncertainty
- Building confidence, competence and professional identity
- Supporting emotional and relational development
- Building organizational resilience from the bottom up.

Unlike traditional supervision this model emphasizes reflection over evaluation and learning over performance.

The performance and retention rates of those in the program can be evaluated yearly.

Companion Guides

Reflective mentorship may be new to many of the experienced staff. Further, some mentors may find themselves in a dual track mode where they perform administrative supervision duties and may also be a reflective mentor. For the early career social worker, reflective mentorship may be an unexplored concept.

Two companion guides will be created. The first, in the form of an instructional facilitation guide, provides the mentor guidance and structure for the initial meetings, and other supports. The second, in the form of an instructional workbook, provides the mentee guidance on how to utilize the mentorship program.

Sector Brief

In addition to the research dossier, a Sector Brief or White Paper will be provided to Trellis Leadership that synthesizes the current research on early career social worker burnout and retention. The emphasis will be on the positive changes that Trellis and other non-profits can incorporate into existing structures that are high-leverage, low-resource interventions. These can be implemented today, monitored for effectiveness and adapted or modified in the future.

The central message: through intentional organizational design, capable social workers will develop the resilience and skills to thrive while increasing organizational capacity.