



NESDIS

A graphic consisting of four overlapping circles in yellow, teal, green, and dark blue, followed by a realistic image of the Earth showing the Americas.

OFFICE OF TOTAL WORKER HEALTH

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DESIGNING WORK PEOPLE CAN TRUST

*Total Worker Health[®], Trust, & Psychological Safety
in a Time of Continuous Change*

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The Work System Looked Like It Was Working



The work was getting done.



But what was making that possible?

Work shapes the conditions in which health is **built**—or **eroded**.

-  Income & security
-  Time & recovery
-  Safety & exposure
-  Control & predictability
-  Relationships & belonging
-  Opportunity & meaning



WORK DOES NOT STAY AT WORK.

*Work design is a **public-health** decision.*



U.S. Work Changed. Responsibility Shifted.



Earlier work-system pattern			Today's work-system pattern	
	Pension-centered retirement	→	Worker-managed retirement accounts	
	Greater union representation	→	Less collective and more individualized worker voice	
	Work designed around single-earner households	→	Greater paid-work and caregiving complexity	
	Limited digital connectivity	→	Continuous digital connectivity	
	More direct, visible supervision	→	More data-mediated oversight	
	Stronger place-and-time boundaries	→	More permeable work boundaries	

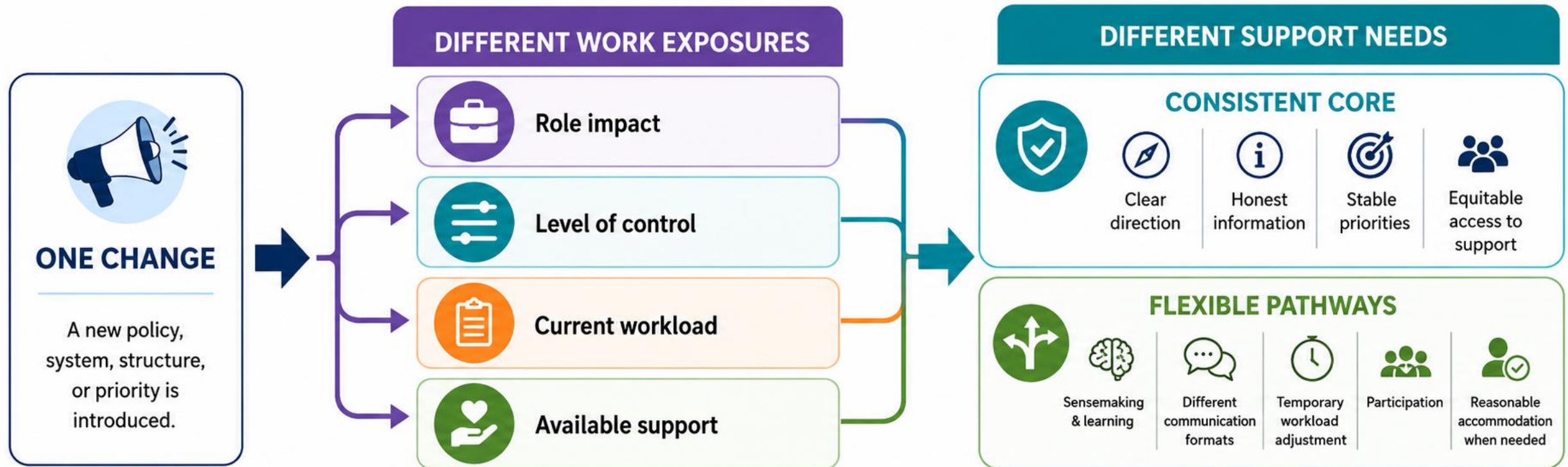


Employees increasingly manage not only the work—but more of the **risk**, **coordination**, and **uncertainty** around it.

The design of work must catch up.

Broad U.S. patterns; experiences vary by occupation, workforce, and period.

The Same Change Does Not Create the Same Experience



Consistent core. Flexible pathways.



Design for the range—not the average.



What is the system asking people to **absorb**?



*Silence is not proof of **safety** or **capacity**.*

If systems do not absorb the burden well, people absorb it informally.



- Supervisors



- High-empathy
Colleagues



- Workarounds

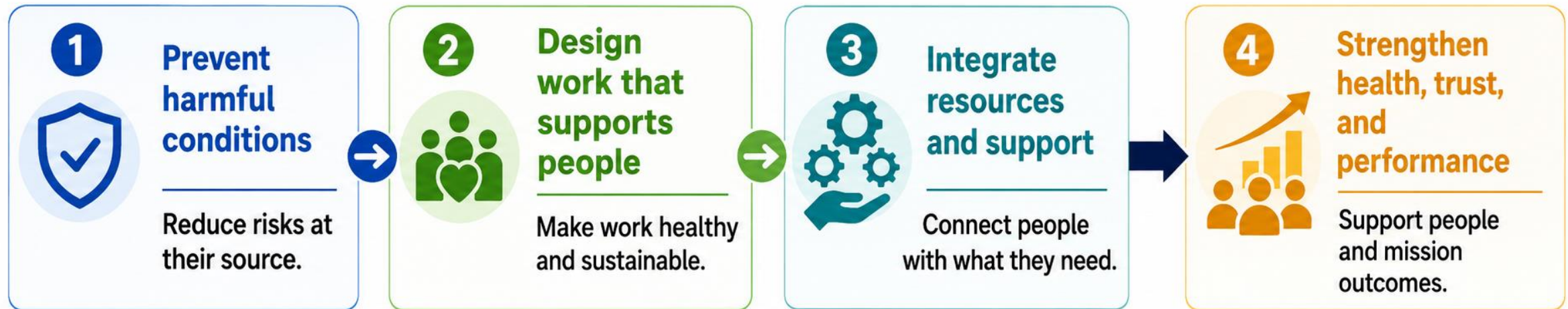


- Silent
Overfunctioning



Healthy work is core work.

DESIGN ACTIONS



RESULT



Address the conditions of work—not only their consequences.

HOW TO OPERATIONALIZE IT



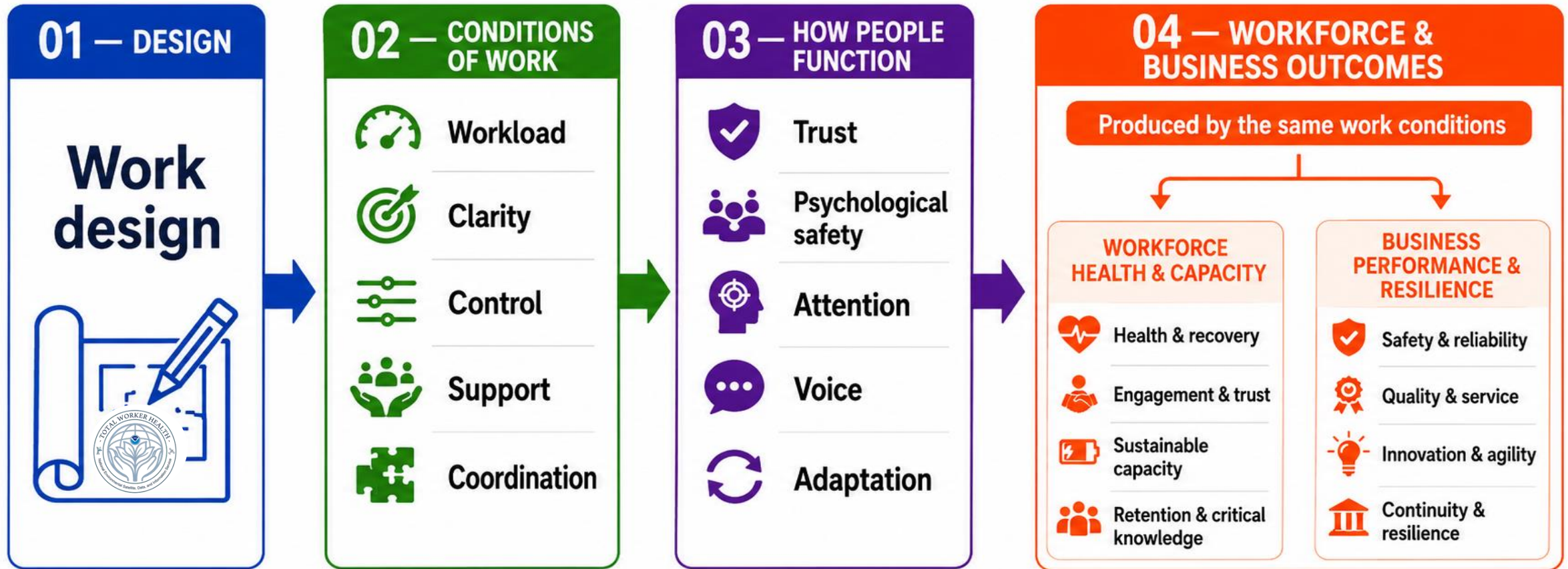
Trust Requires a Credible Response Loop



Trust is built through what happens **after people speak.**



Work Design Becomes Operating Performance



Work design shapes conditions. → Conditions shape how people function. → How people function shapes outcomes.



What is making this work harder than it should be?

Look for friction in the **process**, **coordination**, and **capacity**.

PROCESS FRICTION



Workarounds

Detours around the intended process.



Repeated confusion

The same questions keep returning.

COORDINATION FRICTION



Unofficial coordination

People rely on side channels.



Frequent switching

Attention repeatedly shifts direction.

CAPACITY STRAIN



Administrative accumulation

Tasks and processes accumulate



Recovery debt

Demand exceeds available recovery.



These are often signals of **system strain**—**not individual failure**.

Where Is Continuous Change Straining the Work?

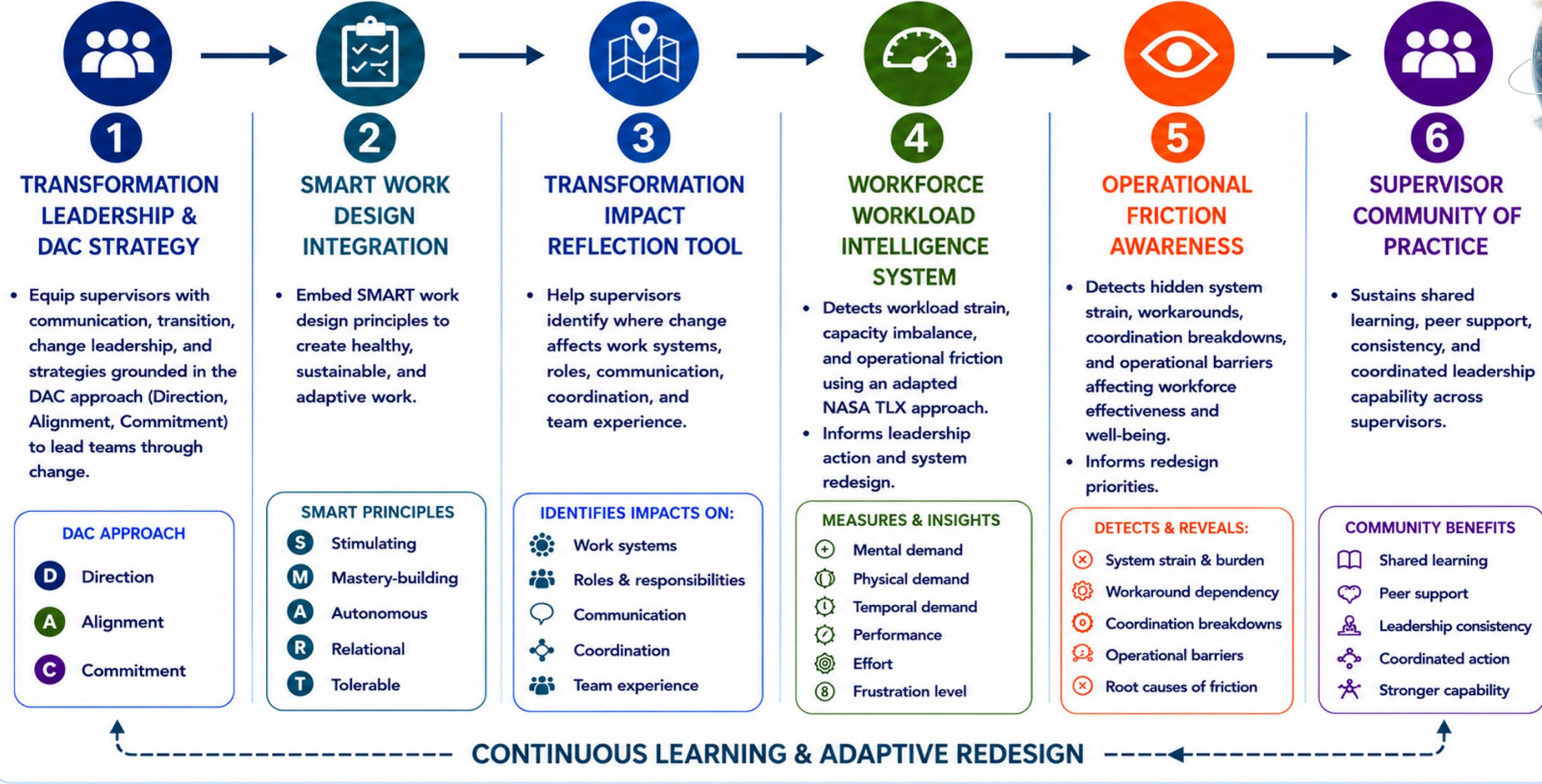


S	M	A	R	T
Stimulating	Mastery-building	Autonomous	Relational	Tolerable
POTENTIAL RISK: Work becomes narrower, more fragmented, or less meaningful.	POTENTIAL RISK: Employees are expected to adapt without enough learning or feedback.	POTENTIAL RISK: New structures reduce clarity, ownership, or flexibility.	POTENTIAL RISK: Reorganization disrupts trusted working relationships.	POTENTIAL RISK: Change pace and workload exceed sustainable limits.
SHOULD WATCH FOR Loss of engagement or reduced sense of contribution.	SHOULD WATCH FOR Hesitation, uncertainty, slower adjustment.	SHOULD WATCH FOR Confusion, bottlenecks, overreliance on escalation.	SHOULD WATCH FOR Coordination problems, isolation, reduced collaboration.	SHOULD WATCH FOR Overload, frustration, workarounds, fatigue.

The work of change is still work.

THE INTEGRATED SUPPORT SYSTEM: SIX CONNECTED COMPONENTS

A continuous cycle that senses, learns, and adapts.



Change Support Must Be a System -Not An Event.

This is How Trust Becomes Operational.

Lead Clearly

Design Healthy Work

Anticipate Impacts

Monitor Workload

Surface Friction

Learn Together



Try the **SMART Work Design Tool** [here](#)

Try the **Workload Assessment Tool** [here](#)

Designing Work People Can Trust



Healthy work does not happen by accident.



Trust does not happen through slogans.



Psychological safety does not happen by request.



They are built through the conditions of work we design.



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Backup Slides



Wellbeing and Organizational Change

The theory and practice of change and employee health



Julie Hodges



Contributed to chapter 4 of UK best-selling author Dr. Julie Hodges' book.

Scheduled release date, February 2027

Can pre-order wherever you buy your favorite books

Continuous Change Is Now a Work Condition



	Technology
	Policy
	Workforce shifts
	Economic pressure
	Role change
	Uncertainty



While doing the work,
people are also asking:

-  What is changing?
-  What remains stable?
-  What does this mean for my role?
-  Which priority is real?
-  What might happen next?
-  Can the system still support what it expects from me?

Change is **no longer** an interruption.

Change Becomes Real Through the Conditions it Creates



Workload

- What is being added, removed, or intensified?

Clarity

- What is known, uncertain, or changing?

Autonomy / Control

- What can people influence or decide?

Support & Resources

- What help is available and usable?

Coordination

- How will roles, handoffs, and priorities connect?



**People adapt
to the **work**
they **experience**
— **not** the change
leaders **intended.****

Society Changes = Work Carries More Human Need



 Shifts around work	 What work may increasingly be asked to absorb	 Work-design response
 Less participation in some traditional institutions	→  Greater need for connection and belonging	→  Intentionally design relational work
 Social disconnection and loneliness	→  Greater need for reassurance and support	→  Build psychologically safe, responsive systems
 More complex caregiving and household coordination	→  Greater need for flexibility and predictability	→  Protect boundaries and provide equitable flexibility
 More career and financial risk carried individually	→  Greater need for security, voice, and mattering	→  Clarify expectations and strengthen worker influence
 Digital connection with fewer natural boundaries	→  Greater difficulty separating work and nonwork	→  Protect recovery time and nonwork relationships

Employers cannot replace community.

But they can design work that either deepens isolation—or supports connection, dignity, and healthy boundaries.

NESDIS TWH Program Overview



In this **short video**, discover how NESDIS promotes workplace health and productivity through the Total Worker Health Program, which integrates science-based system designs to strengthen mission capacity and foster a healthier workforce.

Click on image to watch video