



# Striking a Balance: Cultivating an Agile and Resilient Workforce in Turbulent Times

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Center for the Strategic National Stockpile

National Healthcare Coalition Preparedness Conference

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*Unclassified*

# Today's Speaker



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**ASPR's mission:**  
Assist the country in  
**preparing for,**  
**responding to,**  
and **recovering**  
**from** public health  
emergencies and  
disasters.



# ASPR Priorities



# Agenda

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- Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) Overview
- The Agility and Resilience Arena
- Transforming Organizational Culture: Striking a Balance
- A Coaching Approach: The three R's
- The Way Forward

# SNS Overview



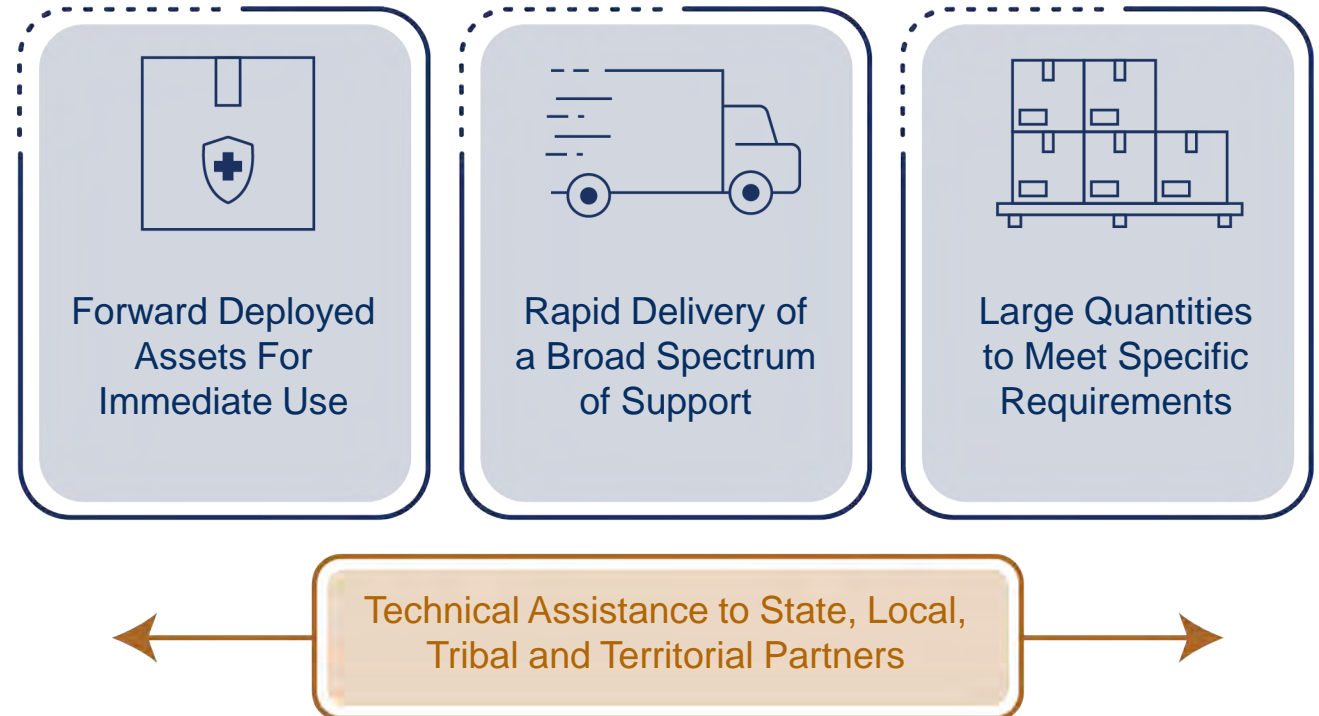
# SNS Purpose and Mission

- **Purpose:** Supplement and resupply state and local public health agencies in the event of an emergency
- **Mission:** Prepare and support partners and provide the right resources at the right time to secure the nation's health



# SNS Quick Facts

- The U.S. federal government's largest repository of emergency medical countermeasures (MCMs)
- Established in 1999 as the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile
- ~\$11.6 billion inventory of MCMs to respond to
  - **Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats**
  - Burn/blast events
  - Emerging infectious diseases and pandemics
  - Natural disasters
- Commercial logistics providers operate SNS warehouses and transportation





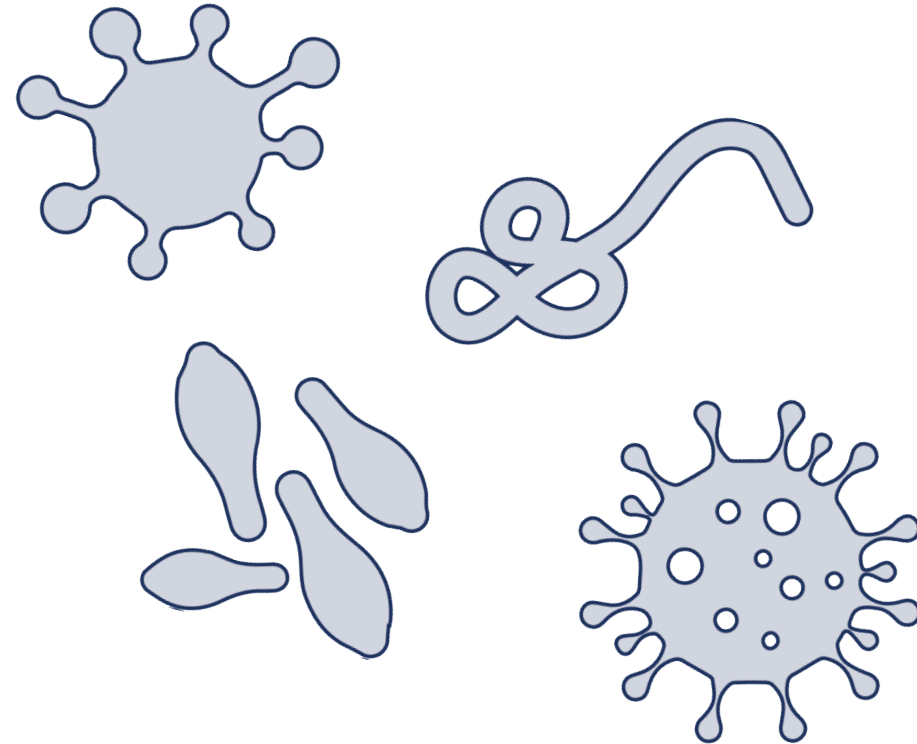
# Rationale for Stockpiling

- MCMs are normally held for one or more of these reasons:
  - No commercial market exists to ensure production
  - A product is available but not in sufficient quantities
  - Commercial supply chain not optimized to dispense a product in the right time or amount
- The U.S. pharmaceutical and medical material supply chain is broad but shallow
  - Less than 30-day supply for most pharmaceuticals and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Stockpiling may be addressed through multiple means to ensure access in times of need



# Priority Threat Categories

- Category A threat agents
  - Smallpox
  - Anthrax
  - Botulism
  - Viral hemorrhagic fevers
  - Plague
  - Tularemia
- Chemical nerve agent
- Radiation/nuclear/blast & burn
- Pandemics, including influenza
- Emerging infectious disease
- Natural disasters



# SNS Formulary

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Antibiotics

Chemical  
Antidotes

Antitoxins

Vaccines

Antiviral Drugs

Other Life-saving  
Medical Materiel

# The Agility and Resilience Arena

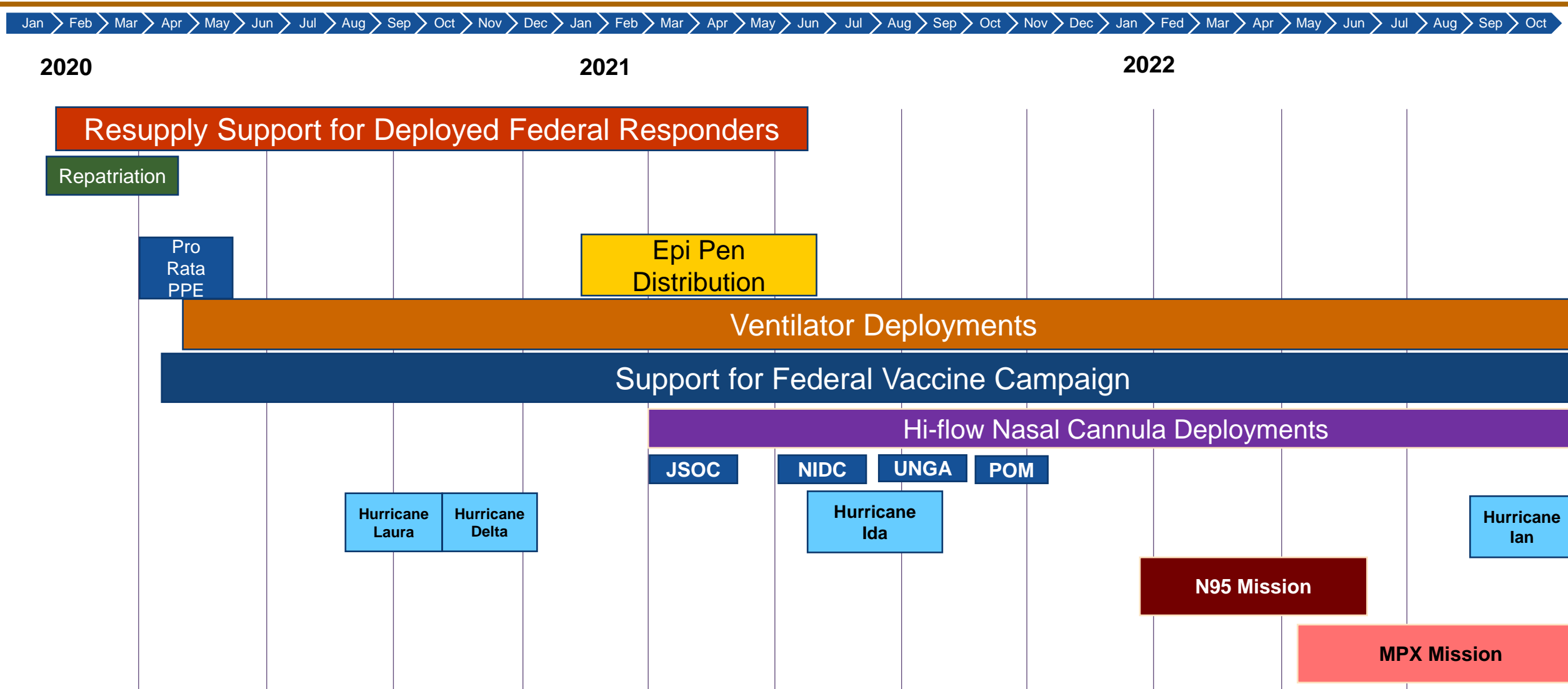


# SNS Workforce Challenges: COVID-19 Pandemic

- Repatriation mission and long-term support of federal, state, local, tribal and territorial responders across 62 jurisdictions.
- 1,200 National Disaster Medical System caches added to SNS inventory; resupply and acquisition support when deployed. (now part of another ASPR center)
- Novel adjudication processes created for requesting scarce resources and MCMs.
- Significant increase in SNS ventilators required adjudication and extended support across all 10 ASPR regions.
- Real-time reporting of SNS deployments to 50 states, four major metropolitan areas, and eight geographically dispersed territories.
- Long-term SNS subject matter support to the White House, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Defense working groups
- 100% virtual SNS workforce for 1,000+ days of national and global responses.

# SNS Response Layers

## January 2020 – January 2023



# Accomplishments: 99.9% Reliability!

- Resupplied 40 federal teams and more than 1,800 personnel deployed across 15 states.
- Supported repatriation of more than 750 Americans with quarantine, screening, and housing services.
- Deployed 71.7 million PPE items to U.S. health care workers: 90% SNS inventory of masks, gowns, goggles, gloves
- Deployed 6,000 tri-wall containers to comprise 30 Federal Medical Stations used nationwide for acute care sites. Supported set up through virtual consultation.
- Increased ventilators from three models (16,600 total) to 12 models (150,000 total); adjudicated, deployed, maintained, and recovered 28,000+ ventilators across the United States.
- Procured and distributed ancillary and mixing kits to administer 1.32 billion COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Procured 30,000 high-flow nasal cannulas and 200,000 epinephrine auto-injectors
- Supported four major hurricanes and four National Special Security Events.
- Distributed ~300 million free N95 masks through 541 retail pharmacy distribution centers and 1,600 Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers. Marked the largest deployment of PPE in U.S. history.
- Mpox global outbreak: Deployed more than one million temperature-controlled vaccine and therapeutics.

# Transforming Organizational Culture: Striking A Balance





# A Practitioner/Academic “Pracademic” Approach

## High Reliability Organization (HRO) Principles

1. **Preoccupation with failure.** Encourage the reporting of errors and pay attention to any failures.
2. **Reluctance to simplify interpretations.** Analyze each occurrence through fresh eyes and take nothing for granted.
3. **Sensitivity to operations.** Pay serious attention to minute-to-minute operations and be aware of imperfections in these activities.
4. **Commitment to resilience.** Cultivate the processes of resilience, intelligent reaction and improvisation. Build excess capability by rotating positions, creating additional sources of knowledge and adding new skills.
5. **Deference to expertise.** During troubled times, shift the leadership role to the person or team possessing the greatest expertise and experience to deal with the problem at hand. Provide staff with the empowerment they need to take timely, effective action. Avoid using rank and status as the sole basis for determining who makes decisions when unexpected events occur.

Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2015). *Managing the unexpected* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

## Learning Agility Factors

1. **People Agility.** The degree to which people know themselves, learn from experience, treat others well, and are calm and resilient under pressure.
2. **Change Agility.** The extent to which people are curious, like to experiment, are passionate about new ideas, and engage in skill-building activities.
3. **Results Agility.** The level to which people achieve results, inspire others, and exhibit a personal presence that builds confidence in others.
4. **Mental Agility.** The degree to which people are comfortable with complexity and ambiguity, think through problems from a unique point of view, and can explain their thinking to others.

Harvey, V. S., & De Meuse, K. P. (Eds.). (2021). *The age of agility: Building learning agile leaders and organizations*. Oxford University Press; Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

# A Coaching Approach: The Three R's – Recruit, Rewire, Reflect



# How is Change Embraced?

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**Agility is the ability to adapt and respond to change. . . agile organizations view change as an opportunity, not a threat.**

Jim Highsmith (1945– ),  
American software engineer and author

# Look for Learning Agile Behaviors In Past Performance

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**Learning Agility**

**The willingness and ability to learn new competencies to perform under first-time, tough, or different conditions.**

# High-Potential Learning Agility Behaviors

## People Agility

- Understands personal limits.
- Eager to learn about self, others, and ideas.
- Can empathize; walk in other's shoes.
- Gives and shares credit verse takes.
- Can change position or mind when presented with counter-evidence.
- Presents ideas and concepts in the language of the target audience.

## Results Agility

- Performs well under first-time conditions.
- Isn't thrown by changing situations.
- Manages innovation change efforts well.
- Builds or contributes to high-performing teams.
- Demonstrates personal drive and adaptability.
- History of successes with limited resources.
- Has a significant, noticeable presence.

## Mental Agility

- Curious, mentally quick.
- Picks up new skills and ideas quickly.
- Looks for the why and how of experiences.
- Good at simplifying complex subjects.
- Analyzes problems and presents contrasts and multiple viewpoints.
- Explains thinking when searching for meaning.
- Comfortable working on ambiguous and complex issues.

## Change Agility

- Continuously tinkering, seeking improvements.
- Understands change is unsettling.
- Can take the heat even if personal.
- Initiates skill-building activities.
- Helps others think and experiment.
- Seeks out and learns from feedback.
- Actively incorporates new skills into their repertoires.

# Anticipate Anomalies; Act on Outliers!

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**An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage.**

Jack Welch (1935– 2020),  
former CEO and chair of General Electric

# Most Crises Foretold By Subtle Cues or “Near Misses”

**High Reliability Organization (HRO) Mindfulness:** Most events that escalate into crises or catastrophes are forecasted by small problems, mistakes, subtle cues, and failures that are unnoticed, misunderstood, discounted, or ignored.

Sutcliffe, K. M., & Christianson, M. K. (2011). *Managing the unexpected*.



### Attune to Nuances, Outliers, Subtle Cues

- What are the critical differences between what was planned to happen versus what happened?
- What are some of the activities or factors that contributed to the difference or variance of what was planned or expected and what occurred?
- Were any “near misses” or potential mishaps observed (e.g., close call, nail biter, workaround, dodged bullet)?

### Analyze Expectations, Assumptions Against Positive and Negative Outcomes

- How would you objectively describe the approach taken to achieve what occurred (e.g., flow chart)?
- What are some of the activities or factors that contributed to the difference or modification of what was planned or anticipated and what occurred?
- What can be done next time a similar situation occurs to repeat a successful result or improve an outcome?

### Rebound with Action and Awareness

- What did you take away from the situation?
- If your teammates could encounter a similar situation, what advice would you share?
- How can we apply what was learned here to future situations?

**Build “Cue” Expertise:  
Ask More; Tell Less**

Barner, R. (2011). *Accelerating your development as a leader: A guide for leaders and their managers*. John Wiley & Sons.



# Step Back, Take Stock, Explore Alternatives

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**Experience is not what happens to a person; it is what a person does with what happens to them.**

Aldous Huxley (1894– 1963),  
English writer and philosopher



# Realtime After Action Reflection: Look Back *and* Forward for Resilience

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- Past:

- Where were we most and least effective?
- What worked, what didn't, what have we learned?
- What new thing did we try today?
- What's the most useful thing we learned today/week/month?
- What opportunity did we miss?
- What are we grateful for?

- Future:

- What are my most important priorities tomorrow?
- Do I need to do anything differently to continue making progress?
- What actions do I want to take?
- What will prompt me to do that?
- What feedback do I want, who do I want it from, and how will I make sure I get it?

# Build a Social Engagement Portfolio



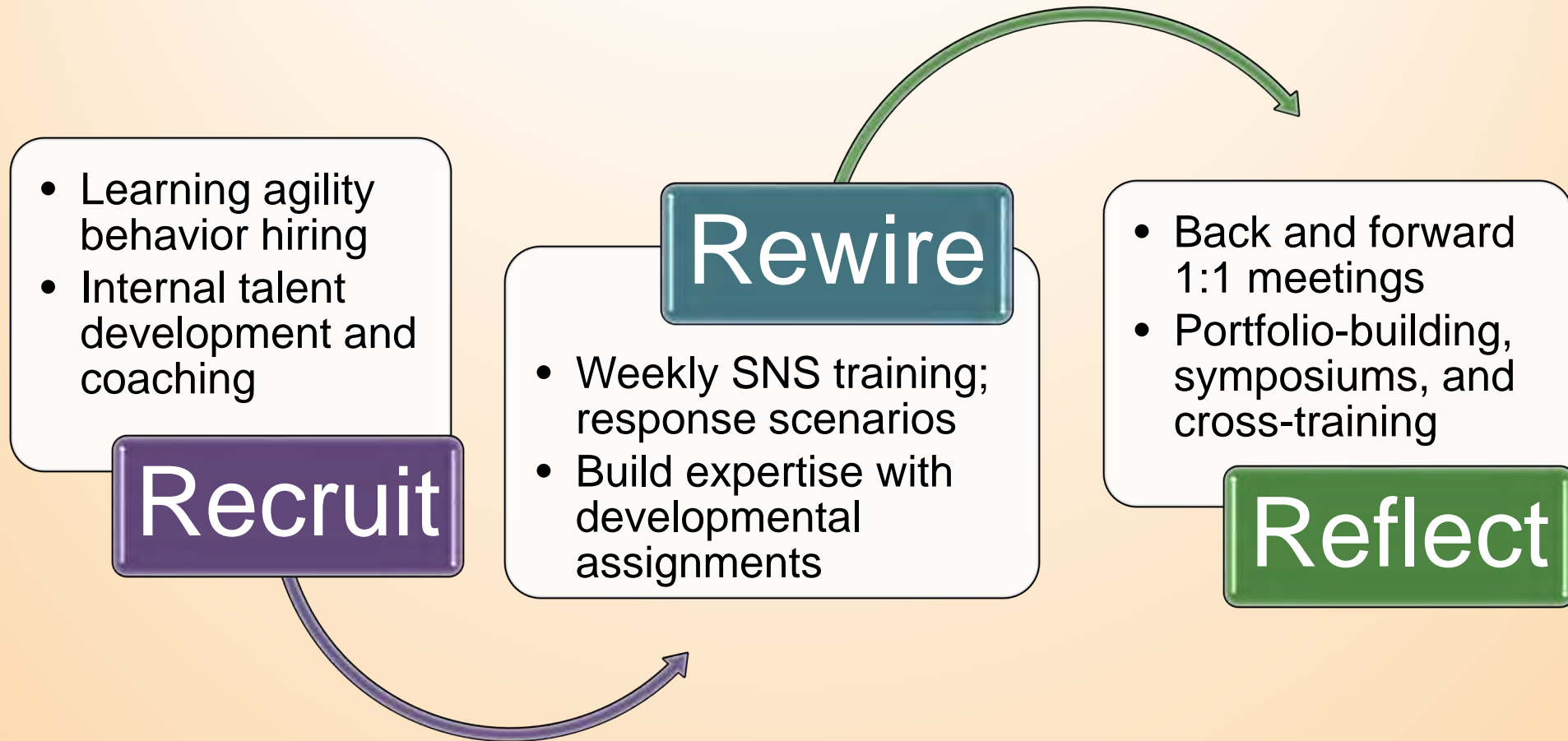
Cultivate a broad set of relationships or “portfolio” of people who can provide access to a tapestry of expertise, assumptions, experiences, and questions which will expand what a leader is reflecting on and help the group make sense of what they are going through.

*Peterson, D. B. (2021). The DNA of VUCA. The Age of Agility: Building Learning Agile Leaders and Organizations, 327*

# The Way Forward



# Building a Resilient and Agile SNS Workforce



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# Questions





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