# How to Build Correctional Staff
# Coaching Options that are Versatile and Effective (COVE)

**The Need for Coaching Capacity**

The present need for greater coaching capacity across human service agencies has never been greater.  Lived experience within these organizations alone could shed light on the current Human Resources gap that exists; however, there is now rigorous experimental research that supports the NEED for coaching in developing staff skills in certain evidence based practices (EBPs). In addition, the combination of research and experience has also taught us that interaction patterns at various levels of an organization can cause a "ripple effect."  This warrants a need for skillful management of the parallel processes inherent in human services agencies.  The emergent field of implementation science further emphasizes the importance of coaching and beckons us to harness coaching as a compensatory driver of implementation extraordinaire.  Finally, public sector organizations tend to maintain cultures that shy away from deep staff development and higher levels of performance; this can lead to staff choosing to do the "bare minimum" and resist development.  Coaching offers hope for both the low-performing staff and organizational cultures that engender stagnancy in the public sector.  Just as in the very old medieval days it was considered a safe bet that 'All roads lead to Rome', today so many of our real performance issues lead to coaching - or the lack of it.

One might say that the need for coaching as an organization-wide practice is becoming the "elephant in the living-room."  Many human service managers are already aware of the multiple and critical reasons for coaching, and yet they find that the complexity of organizational change creates considerable barriers.  Far too often these barriers limit growth, development and work well to maintain a status quo.  Some elements that could be limiting the implementation of coaching are; high-turnover rates, budget cuts, and poor planning.  Another factor that might also be a barrier is the fact that elements of coaching (e.g., good models, supportive relationships, authoritative insights, practice opportunities, independent feedback) are ubiquitous – and surround us pervasively.  In other words, "coaching" is both a natural hallmark of many relationships (e.g., parent to child) and exist in many informal contexts.  It's possible that this pervasiveness creates an illusion that deliberate models are readily available, and are not needed. The reality is there aren't a lot of models specifically designed for mid-management in human services and creating a *model* for coaching offers the real possibility of applying the elements of coaching deliberately and sustainably.

The table below is a section of the National Implementation Research Network's (NIRN) driver assessment tool; it is used to rate existing coaching infrastructure within an agency.  Reflecting on coaching capacity using this tool can shed light on the common lack of "bench strength" in this critical department.

*Reflecting on the table below, how does your agency stand here?*

**Implementation Drivers: Assessing Best Practices**

| COMPETENCY DRIVER - Coaching | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *To what extent are best practices being used?* | *In Place* | *Partially In Place* | *Not in Place* | *Don't Know* | *Don't Understand* | *Notes* |
| 1. <u>Accountability for</u> development and monitoring of quality and timeliness of <u>coaching services is clear</u> (e.g., there is a lead person who is accountable for assuring coaching is occurring as planned) | | | | | | |
| 2. Coaches are <u>fluent</u> in the innovation(s) | | | | | | |
| 3. There is a written <u>Coaching Service Delivery Plan</u> (where, when, with whom, why) | | | | | | |
| 4. Coaches use <u>multiple sources of information</u> for feedback to practitioners | | | | | | |
| - Coaches <u>directly observe practitioners using the innovation(s)</u> (in person, audio, video) | | | | | | |
| - Coaches <u>review records</u> to obtain information to inform coaching | | | | | | |
| - Coaching <u>information</u> is obtained from interviews with others associated with the practitioner | | | | | | |
| 5. Accountability structure and processes for Coaches | | | | | | |
| - <u>Adherence</u> to Coaching Service Delivery Plan is regularly <u>reviewed</u> | | | | | | |
| - Evidence that <u>practitioners' abilities</u> to deliver the intervention routinely <u>improve as a result of coaching</u> | | | | | | |
| - <u>Multiple sources of information</u> used for feedback to *coaches* | | | | | | |
| a. <u>Satisfaction surveys</u> from those being coached | | | | | | |
| b. <u>Observations</u> of each coach by an expert/master coach | | | | | | |
| c. <u>Performance (fidelity) Assessments</u> of those being coached are recorded for each coach | | | | | | |
| 6. Coaching <u>data are reviewed</u> and inform <u>improvements of other Drivers</u> (feedback function) | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

**Establishing and Meeting Criteria for the COVE Coaching Model**

How does one determine a 'Good Enough' coaching model? In the past 2-3 decades, coaching models have proliferated to a bewildering extent. The key to selecting a good enough model is setting criteria that, if met, will guarantee that you and your agency get what you <u>really</u> want. After pouring over handfuls of different coaching models and experimenting with them in different agency contexts, we found them wanting. At the risk of over-generalizing, what we found was that agencies need a model that meets three basic needs:

1) *Simple: simple* <u>enough</u> to be applied near immediately - even after very brief instructions;

2) *Flexible: flexible* <u>enough</u> that the model can be applied at all levels (e.g., line staff w clients, supervisors with direct reports, senior managers with direct reports) so that the entire agency can relate to it. It also must be able to both address adaptive as well as technical change issues;

3) *Effective: practical* <u>enough</u> so that anytime the model is applied earnestly, positive changes in skillfulness, confidence or motivation invariably result. The model must work efficiently.

Since identifying a single model that could meet all three of the above criteria turned out to be problematic, we elected to cross-pollinate two different models, one that was very comprehensive and one that was simple and brief.

Vaughn Keller's STAR model is a very comprehensive coaching model capable of focusing on five different dimensions: traits and talents, skills, motivation, role adjustment problems and the socio-technical environment (i.e., the organizational culture and infrastructure issues). The broad scope of the STAR model provides new coaches a larger perspective to refer to when diagnosing performance/ behavior problems, including practical steps to take for common problems in each domain.

On the other hand, Michael Stanier's elegant model, taken from his bestseller, "The Coaching Habit" is the epitome of simplicity, providing only seven sequential questions. Stanier's questions are powerful open questions that rather quickly uncover deeper, strategic coaching issues and often as not, change talk. Though this wasn't Stanier's intention, his seven questions are ordered in a manner quite consistent with moving through the four processes of Motivational Interviewing (MI). This is especially significant because one of the core practices included in the hybrid COVE model, derived from Keller and Stanier's respective models, is skill rehearsal or practice. Shifting into skill practice within the MI paradigm, takes place ideally, after the person has worked into the planning process. The COVE model is designed to support the enhancement of intrinsic motivation as the prerequisite for skill practice.
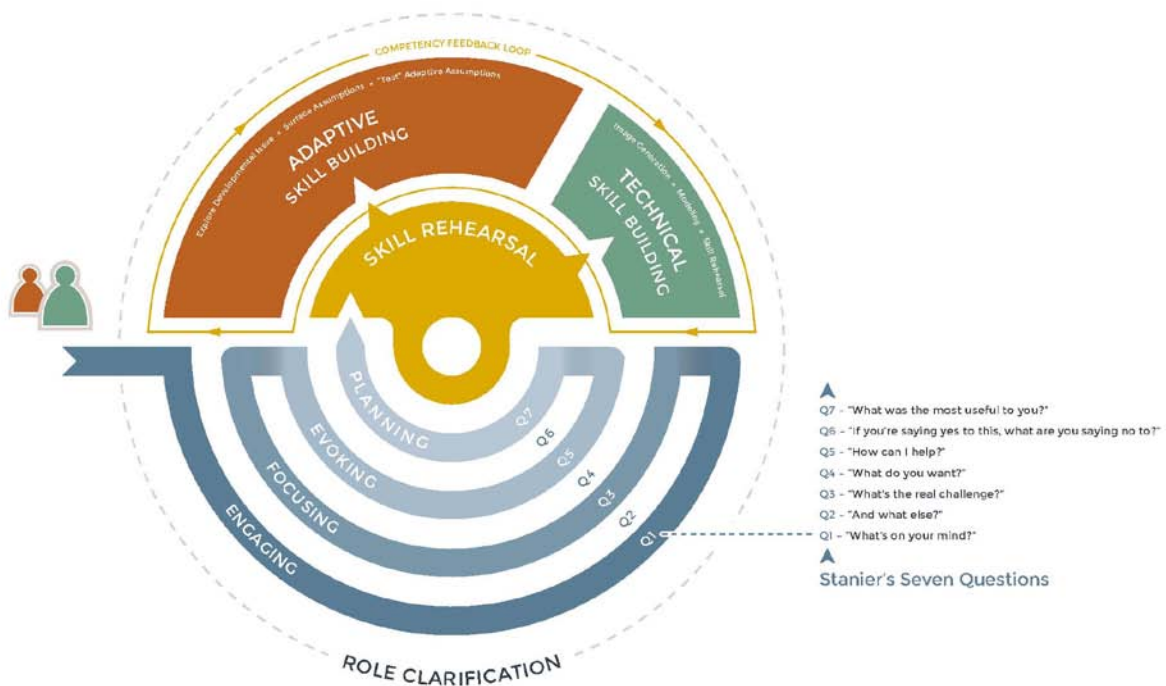
## The Features of COVE

Stripped to its essence the COVE model has three core components:

1. Role Clarification

2. Stanier's Seven Question protocol, and

3. Skill Rehearsal

Each of the above components are *necessary* to successfully meet the three performance criteria (**simple** enough to use immediately, **flexible** enough to use in almost any situation, and, **practical** enough to reliably produce tangible results). However, no single one of these components is sufficient on its own to be entirely successful in fulfilling all criteria. One could also argue that each of the three components embodies or represents one of the three different EBPs, commonly subscribed to as best practice in corrections: Role Clarification, MI, and CBT interventions. In both case, it is the combination of the components or EBPs that produce the biggest effects.

**Component 1: Role Clarification**

**Role Clarification (RC)** comes from the ground-breaking research of Chris Trotter who determined that clarifying our roles in non-voluntary relationships offers a unique value proposition when it comes to aligning better working relationships. Trotter found that officers that routinely 'massage' expectations and better mutual understanding regarding their *respective* roles with their clients have lower recidivism rates. Moreover, when officers frequently and deliberately clarify the agency mission and explore the collective potential he or she and their respective client has for learning, sharing and shaping new, healthier behaviors, they establish greater trust and psychological safety. At a minimum, by foreshadowing in the RC process that the officer is interested in providing coaching and engaging some skill rehearsals, later in the session, this makes transitioning into those roles with a greater sense of safety and respect more likely.

Given the success of RC with involuntary clients, applying RC with defensive staff and their supervisors seemed like a valuable exploration. We've repeatedly observed on tape that when supervisors fully step into RC, sufficient to bring it full-circle, it seems to 'unlock' the relationship from its former more narrowly defined role boundaries. This enables both parties to have the option of stepping into a different realm, where two fallible people can co-create solutions. Full-circle is achieved in the RC process when the supervisor elicits from his or her direct report information regarding what role adaptations the supervisor can make to achieve greater mutual success. Achieving full-circle RC takes practice; it requires the supervisor to share their role possibilities and emphasize some over others, as well as go into what some of their expectations are. In turn, the supervisor also must invite his or her direct report to share their expectations and then elaborate on what roles they might play or adopt to more effectively achieve some of their most positive expectations. Full-circle RC invariably means a higher level of mutual engagement from both parties.

**Component 2: Stanier's Questions**

*Stanier's Questions* serve the coach as both a "guide-rope" and as a vehicle for propelling the conversation forward, into progressively productive areas:

> **The Coaching Habit (Michael Bungay Stanier) Seven Questions**

**"Ask One Question at a Time"**

1) The Kickstart question: ***"What's on your mind?"***
   (Cut the intro and ask the question)

2) The Awe question: ***"And what else?"***
   (Should you ask rhetorical questions?)

3) The Focus question: ***"What's the real challenge?"***
   (Stick with question starting with what)

4) The Foundation question: *"What do you want?"*
   (Get comfortable with silence)

5) The Lazy question: *"How can I help?"*
   (Actually listen to the answer)

6) The Strategic question: *"If you're saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?"*
   (Acknowledge the answer you get)

7) The Learning question: *"What was the most useful to you?"*
   (Use every channel to ask a question)

The first of Stanier's questions, the "Kickstart" question: 'What's on your mind?' uses an open question with sufficient breadth and depth to initiate the engagement. It's also a textbook example of supporting the other person's autonomy; what better way to begin than by suspending our agenda for the sake of engaging the other individual? Whether this question comes first or the RC is academic, because both are designed to support engagement.

Each of Stanier's coaching questions has the potential for moving the coaching session down and through the four processes (engaging, focusing, evoking and planning) of MI. This implies there will be ample opportunity for eliciting *Change Talk* with these questions and indeed there is. However, the questions also provide opportunity to uncover both technical and adaptive change issues. This will mean the discerning coach will need to navigate accordingly, and when ready, mutually determine with the other person what's the most important direction and next step in the session. The process often becomes iterative; as new things reveal themselves, the cycle of questions gets renewed with a new topic.

Using Stanier's questions with fluency takes practice and obtaining feedback (e.g., tapes, transcripts, shadow coaches).  Coaching and/or community of practice reinforcements can go a long way to expedite achieving this. Part of this fluency is realizing when and which Stanier question can serve as a segue into the third COVE practice, Skill Rehearsal.

**Component 3: Skill Rehearsal**

*Skill Rehearsal* is simply code for cognitive-behavioral coaching that involves skill practice with opportunities for feedback. As such, skill rehearsal is the COVE component where the most overt fruition of coaching occurs – the actual practice and demonstration of improving skills. To get the person coached on-board and to this important phase often can require plenty of activity in the first two components; RC and use of Stanier's question protocol.

There are three important stages to skill practice:

1. Image creation
2. Action Generation
3. Practice

Image creation or establishing an adequate image of the skill set in question can be done in a variety of ways, depending on the learning style of the coachee/performer.  Options for image creation include: demonstration, story-telling, step by step instruction, probing questions, and use of modeling. When a person is asked to rehearse when they have an inadequate image, they are much less likely to demonstrate the skill in a way that it can be refined.

After the image is sufficiently transmitted and drills/simulations/exercises have been established, the action generation stage has begun as the person begins to exercise the skill. The skill-practice drills and exercises should scaffold in the degree of difficulty based on adapting to the needs of the coachee/performer and their skill level.  Adapting skill-practice to the needs and skill level of the coachee/performer while providing on-going feedback is the third stage of skill practice (practice).

Initially during skill practice, the person's ability to demonstrate the simplest form of the skill comes into question and is practiced.  The next focus then becomes the question of self-correction, and if the person is capable of that.  The final stage is guiding the skill practice through differing degrees of environmental difficulty, and monitoring the person's capacity to do so.  At all times during skill practice, there is ample opportunity to offer concrete, specific and reinforcing affirmations. Ultimately, as the coachee/performer begins to master and refine the skill, the coach must tease out the need for improved timing, flexibility-range, style (warmth, humor, etc.) and power/ authenticity.

The three core practices of COVE form a nucleus or platform to which other skill sets can be very appropriately introduced. For example, dialogue skills would only enhance the practicing coach's probable impact. When working within a community of practice context, drawing upon the language of Vogelvang's Building Block Model would certainly facilitate building new norms of shared higher performance. More on these later below, when implementation is discussed.

**Advantages of COVE**

Because the COVE model for coaching is both comprehensive, but, at the same time fundamentally simple, it can be used to support many kinds of staff growth and development. One use for the COVE model is skill development, where the coach is in the expert role. However, when the coach does not have genuine expertise around the skill-set in question, the COVE model still allows for effective coaching that moves beyond skill acquisition.  The leveling that begins with RC and continues through the exploration with the Stanier questions can suffice for staff to better prepare themselves: 1) motivationally, 2) in his or her alignment with existing or new roles, as well as 3) desirable adjustments in the individual's perspective on the organizational culture.  When the client or job performer has greater expertise than the respective coach (in a skill set he or she wishes to improve in), it still does not preclude skill rehearsals together. It means the two can co-create, share and learn more collaboratively, providing the coach can work transparently within his or her own limitations. Doing this will also enable the coach to make more appropriate referrals so that the coachee can also access the specific coaching expertise they might ultimately require.

The COVE approach can be applied at all levels within an agency. Thus, an agency that adopts COVE can begin to untangle entrenched problems resulting from parallel processes that have gone too long unexamined. When senior managers are uneasy addressing any adaptive change issues with their direct reports, it shouldn't be very surprising that mid-managers become leery of dealing with similar issues with their direct reports.  Of course, the *piece de resistance* is when, in turn, line staff reporting to those mid-managers, adopt tactics that mirror their supervisors and emphasize technical aspects of supervision (e.g., terms and conditions, executing timely referrals, etc.) over digging into client adaptive, often developmental issues. These, often, unconscious processes can be managed entirely differently to beneficial effects when there is stronger engagement via coaching, at each juncture.

A final advantage of COVE is it appears to be giving staff the wherewithal to cut through habitual interaction patterns that have a very rote or circular quality to them. For example, the client that continues to recount what they have paid in restitution, how much they have in savings, or what violations they might have had and what excuses they believe in, with no sense, much less urgency, about progress on a target behavior. Or similarly, the Probation Officer (PO) that routinely talks through one case after another with all their client problems addressed as if they are all technical problems and the PO not once identifying any problems they personally are having with aptitude, skills, motivation, roles, or the prevailing agency culture. COVE is helping folks speak the things that need to be said, even when the other party doesn't necessarily want to hear those things.  Furthermore, COVE is helping the coachees begin to find a more authentic voice that enables them to tell their coach what they (the coach) needs to know to be of real help.


**Long Term Anticipated Benefits of COVE**

In today's era of unpredictable change, mid and senior level managers are learning the limitations of trying to address adaptive change issues by improving existing mindsets and organizational designs. However, the fundamental change that is needed is *how* we think, not what we think. While it's too early to say whether COVE will assist in this shift, we believe it will.

Once coaching becomes an established norm, senior managers are much more likely to have some new success in influencing their organization's culture because they have new abilities for guiding the parallel processes that abound within their agencies. More deliberate engagement of the parallel processes will make the organization more engaging and this, in turn, will promote more distributive leadership – more people ready to solve problems and less apt to be the problems. Tapping this potential for distributive leadership leads to multiplier effects for achieving the agency mission.
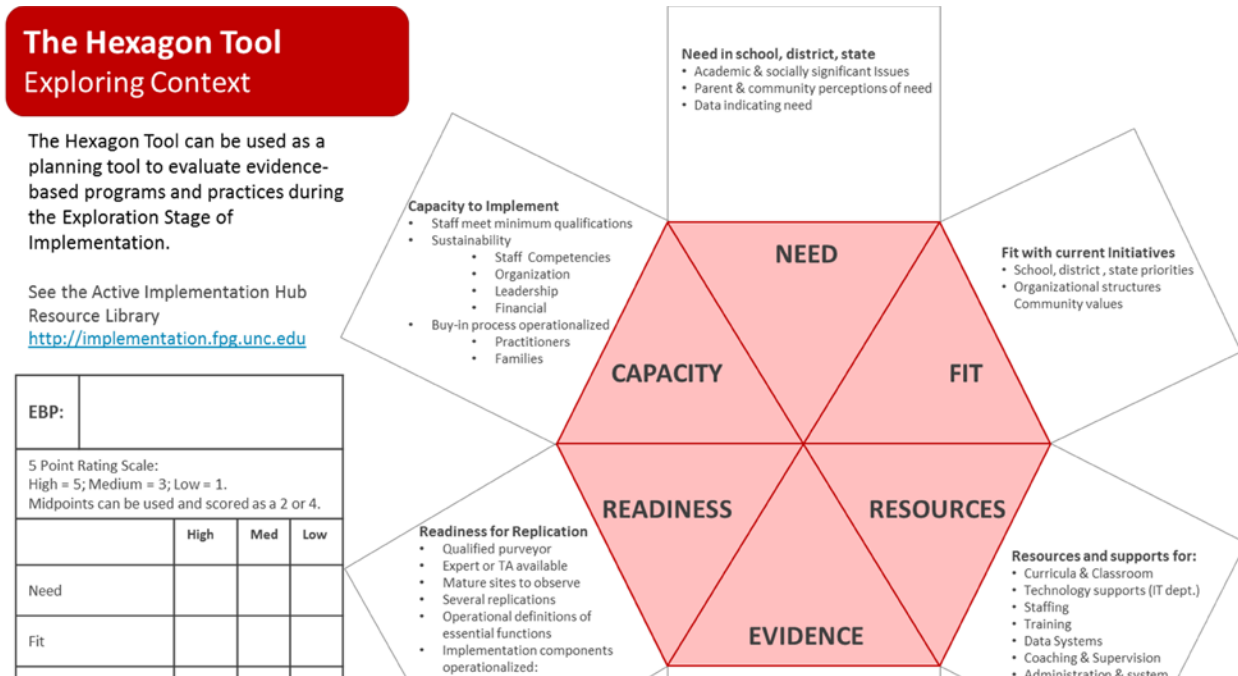

**Implementing COVE**

Any attempt at implementing or bringing COVE to scale in an agency (50% or more of staff become proficient) without considering implementation science would be more than just ironic.

Such an effort would be sad and unsuccessful because the volume of adaptive change issues COVE promises to impact is so significant, anything short of a well-oiled implementation plan is likely to fail. Without an appropriate implantation plan, the pushback will be present from the start and create a barrier to success. Thus, establishing a planning process early-on has a tremendous premium.

The planning process should start with enshrining the implementation driver framework in everyday parlance across the agency. The three core practices of COVE need to be carefully unpacked and reassembled in the light of the 7-8 implementation drivers, and how, where and why each driver can impact the application of RC, Stanier's 7-question protocol and skill rehearsal.

The drivers need to be applied differentially, depending on which of the five implementation stages the project of piloting or scaling-up COVE is in. For example, the time to use the following Hexagon Tool is in the beginning, when the project is most apt to actively explore alternatives as well as the COVE innovation itself. Though it may seem as if it takes more time to exhaustively examine the intervention, in the long run it will save time.

Reviewing the features of COVE objectively, after reading this summary, will set the stage for conducting the Hexagon needs assessment. If the needs for COVE are not significant, one should question whether any implementation, much less scaling up COVE is necessary.



**The Hexagon Tool**
**Exploring Context**

The Hexagon Tool can be used as a planning tool to evaluate evidence-based programs and practices during the Exploration Stage of Implementation.

See the Active Implementation Hub Resource Library
http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu

| EBP: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 Point Rating Scale:<br>High = 5; Medium = 3; Low = 1.<br>Midpoints can be used and scored as a 2 or 4. | | | |
| | High | Med | Low |
| Need | | | |
| Fit | | | |

Need in school, district, state
- Academic & socially significant Issues
- Parent & community perceptions of need
- Data indicating need

Capacity to Implement
- Staff meet minimum qualifications
- Sustainability
  - Staff Competencies
  - Organization
  - Leadership
  - Financial
- Buy-in process operationalized
  - Practitioners
  - Families

Fit with current Initiatives
- School, district, state priorities
- Organizational structures Community values

Readiness for Replication
- Qualified purveyor
- Expert or TA available
- Mature sites to observe
- Several replications
- Operational definitions of essential functions
- Implementation components operationalized:

Resources and supports for:
- Curricula & Classroom
- Technology supports (IT dept.)
- Staffing
- Training
- Data Systems
- Coaching & Supervision
- Administration & system

NEED · CAPACITY · FIT · READINESS · RESOURCES · EVIDENCE

If a decision is made to implement COVE, the plan would not only be woven around the drivers, but center around the use of *Performance Assessment*, the linchpin driver. Performance

assessment is integral to how the *Coaching* driver in the competency feedback loop functions, as well as with the *Decision Support Databases*, a key driver in the organizational feedback loop. In short, management will need some measures to guide the implementation.

An example of a Performance Assessment measure for COVE follows below. This Coaching Assessment tool can be completed by an external or internal coach or supervisor. It can also be used by an independent contractor, a peer coach or through self-assessment. While the ratings are anchored in a brief scoring manual, they are intended as 'loose-fitting' markers or flags to guide individuals in subsequent efforts towards mastery of the model. Please note that items 1-3 deal with the MI engaging process, #4 focusing, #5 evoking, #6 planning process, #'s 7-10 focus on skill rehearsal and #11-13 are general issues pertaining to coaching. The spirit for the Assessment Coaching form is more like providing a challenging slalom ski slope, so staff can determine in their next demonstration of the model, which 'flags' they wish to lean in towards, or away from; notwithstanding their conversation partner's preferences.

Over time, collective Performance Assessment results will hit plateaus at various points, as scores increase in elevation. It will then be helpful if implementation specialists can uncover the growth issues and barriers to attaining the next higher level of fidelity.
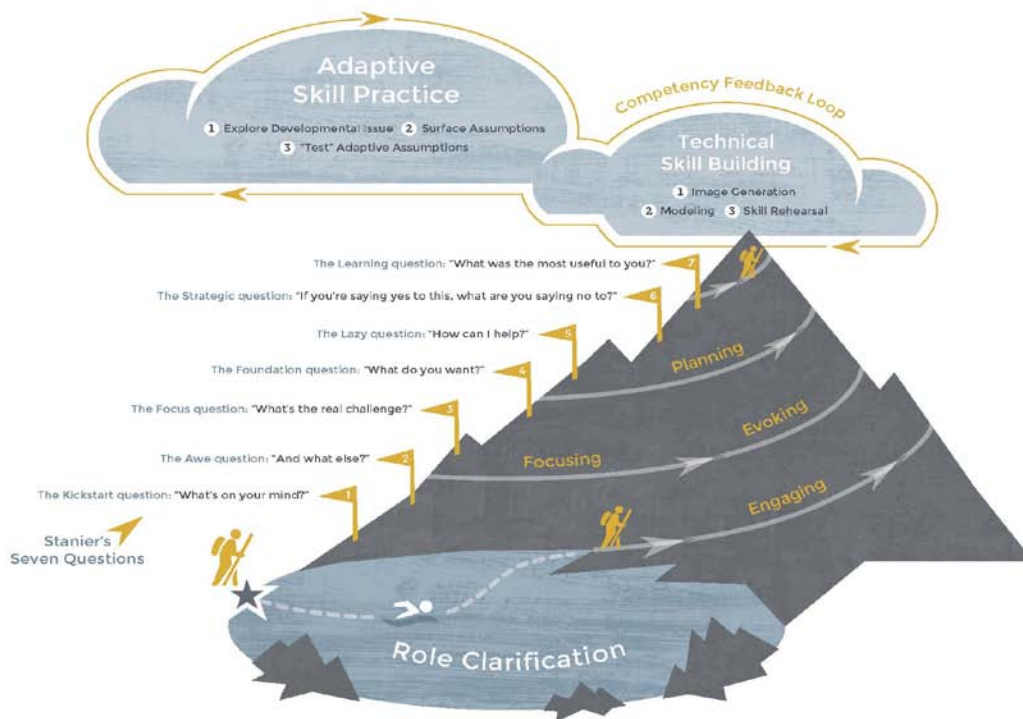
**COACHING / ASSESSMENT:** Coach Name: _____ Performer name, date, & agency: _____

| STEPS | NONE | PARTIAL | ADEQUATE | ABUNDANT | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. *Role Clarification*—Officer lightly reviews:<br>• Agency mission<br>• Coach's roles, aspirations<br>• Performer's role/expectations | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Role Clarification |
| 2. *Engaging / Expressing Curiosity*---Using Open Questions<br>• What is on your mind?<br>• And What Else? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Engaging with the coachee by expressing curiosity and using open questions. Empathy and support. |
| 3. *Reflective Listening*---Reflect and summarizes key points of performer | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Active (Reflective Listening) |
| 4. *Focusing* ---Mutually identified either a Skill Target, or, a developmental change issue for the session.<br>• What is the real challenge here for you? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Agreed focus on the top issue for this coaching session. |
| 5. *Evoking* – *Draws out the performer's ideal for the session focus, and asking what the performer would like*<br>• *What do you want, what would it look like?*<br>• *How can I be of help?* | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Evoking or drawing out an image of the ideal situation from the performer, and how the client is looking to be helped. |
| 6. *Planning – Agrees on a plan of action around the target skill/developmental issue with the coachee after evoking the ideal. The plan includes what will not be done.*<br>• *If you are saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?* | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Helps the coachee articulate a plan of what he or she is going to do and not do. |
| 7. *Verified the Performer had an Adequate Image of the Skill(s) in Question*---Modeled the skill or provided stories, instruction, or sufficient questions for performer to establish skill image | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Co-Created Skill Image |
| 8. *Explored Rehearsal Options*---Supported autonomy and elicited direction | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Set-Up the Rehearsal (Enabling Others to Act) |
| 9. *Conducted Rehearsals or Simulation*---drilled and created opportunity to observe performer's ability to demonstrate skill(s) under varying conditions | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Skill Demonstration |
| 10. *Provided Feedback*---With performer permission, provided feedback on what was strong and true in their demonstration, what was missing, and how they might get there | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Feedback (Exploring the Discrepancies) |
| 11. *Exploring the Developmental Side*---Assisted the performer to identify his or her "leading or growing | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Adjusting Personally with the skill(s) |
| 12. *What Was Most Useful in the Session to the Performer*---Ask the performer to respond in writing to this question in margin below | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Establishing the Value |
| 13. *Determining a 'Next –Steps' Plan for Practicing the* | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Building a Plan |
| **SUB-TOTALS** | | | | | **TOTAL SCORE =** |