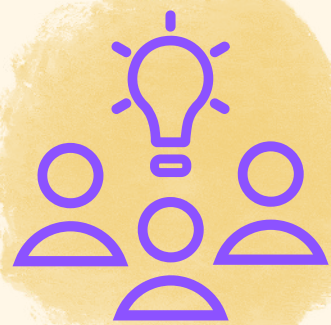# Think Outside of the Box
Being Inventive

Structural social workers in Atlantic Canada, with over 494 combined hours of practice experience, shared that passion alone isn't enough. Successful embodiment of structural social work also requires creativity and imagination.
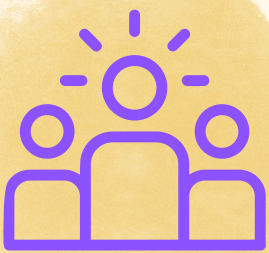
In this research, being inventive was described as: "working in the grey," "blurring the lines," and "being creative" when navigating barriers. There are many policies and guidelines that social workers are required to meet. But being inventive means working creatively within the parameters of the system. Social workers must always be able to justify, explain, and ground their work in social work values, the code of ethics, and service-users' needs.

"It's kinda figuring out, not how to bend the rules but also kinda how to bend the rules sometimes. 'Cause you said it is not necessarily some rules, again, very black and white but for the most part, you know it's a little grey."

"I always wanna look for loopholes because there are always exceptions or creative ways to do things, and I think that's a big part of structural social work too, is trying to figure out how do you- how do you work creatively in systems that initially appear limited."

Structural social work is not about the worker, it is about centering decisions and interventions around the needs of those you work with, as well as the overall community. Being inventive in this way requires significant advocacy. Sometimes this means "asking for forgiveness rather than permission" and "carving out spaces for structural social work."

"So often just looking at what other, you know, conventional other places are doing and always looking for opportunities for advocacy because often when you're working with vulnerable clientele, which we always are as social workers, there's always opportunities to kind of, say there's system gaps."

"And the grey area will often lead you back to the black and white path in terms of you're going to be routed back into your policies and your procedures, and in my current role, I kind of see the grey area being the piece between the policy and the procedure."