Trestle, Inc.
Thesis and mission

SUMMARY

Our mission is to build the default communication rails for social services.

The US spends $3T/yr on social services. 20¢ of every dollar goes to the cost of handling information. This cost precludes the sector from achieving its mandate.

Agentic integration unlocks backward compatibility with legacy systems. For the first time, we can re-design the core infrastructure behind social services.

We are building communication rails that collapse the cost of information. They will become the default and transform the sector.

THESIS

In social services, the cost per datum drives impact per dollar. We have a unique opportunity to collapse the cost of information. Doing so requires a new set of infrastructure primitives.

Collapsing the cost of information would transform social services

Every year, people spend millions of hours navigating billions of dollars in administrative systems. That burden reshapes the sector around bureaucracy: schedules, spaces, and even programs are optimized for administration rather than the people they serve.

Eliminating administrative burden would save the pain and resources currently allocated to it, and resolve the nth degree effects resulting from it.

More damaging than the realized costs of information are the benefits lost to avoiding it. If information was easier–easier to request, easier to produce–we could gather radically more of it than we do today.

Better information would give frontline staff the context to deliver more effective services, enable broad, cross-organization coordination around more ambitious goals, transform what transparency looks like in the sector, and build a rich body of research to determine how our services can better meet their mandate.

Agentic integration unlocks backward compatibility with legacy systems

New communication methods cannot spread if they require simultaneous adoption; the coordination costs are too high. Often, new methods address this through "backward compatibility": integrating with legacy infrastructure so that one actor can adopt while another continues to communicate through the old system.

Backward compatibility has been prohibitively expensive in social services. Today's infrastructure is a sprawling mess of bespoke portals, databases,

and documents, each requiring custom integration. Agentic system integration radically reduces the cost of integrating with legacy systems. For the first time, then, we can move social services to new communications rails.

We must change how we communicate to collapse the cost of information

Everyone should have a canonical record of their own information, and communication should mean moving information from one record to another.

Consider someone managing their benefits. Today, applying for and renewing those benefits means repeatedly supplying the same personal information to each system set up by each benefits provider.

As long as that person has no record of their own, it's remarkably difficult (if not impossible—no one's really done it yet) to envision a world without this administrative burden.

Once that person has their own record, they can just maintain their own, personal information (it should often be maintained automatically) and automatically communicate whatever information is necessary to whichever benefits providers they choose. Applying for SNAP becomes a button.

When everybody has their own record, the complexity of connecting parties to one another decomposes into simpler relationships and makes previously intractable problems almost trivial.

New primitives to make this possible

We need a new set of primitives to realize this vision. First, everybody needs an **operating record**, an authoritative platform on which to maintain their information.

Second, there needs to be a **common network** that represents the canonical state of communication between parties. Consider compliance and reimbursement for in-person social services.

Until now, interoperability (e.g., as in healthcare) requires "standards." Standards suck: no one can agree on them, and if people do agree, then they've prevented themselves from asking for the new information that they need.

To achieve interoperability without requiring everyone to adopt fixed standards, you need a live representation of what's required, mechanisms for interoperability around those requirements, and a shared method of updating them over time. For that representation to be canonical, it must be shared across every participant. In our terms, a common network is the infrastructure that serves as this source of truth.

MISSION

To build the default communication rails for social services.

Our rails are built on two new infrastructure primitives: operating records, where people and organizations maintain their own information, and common networks, which coordinate the movement of information from one record to another.

Where adopted, these rails collapse the cost of information. As they become the default, our rails will transform the sector.