

An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide. It features several hands in various colors (orange, teal, grey) pointing towards a central glowing yellow lightbulb with a white 'M' inside. The background is composed of overlapping geometric shapes and patterns in shades of teal, orange, and grey.

# EXPLORING COLLABORATION OPTIONS

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

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- **Collaboration Definition, Facts, and Continuum**
- **Pros and Cons of Various Collaboration Options**
- **Examples from Models in Practice**
- **Strategies to Ensure Success and Mitigate Potential Risks**



## ***Collaboration is .....***

***A well-defined relationship entered into by two or more different partners (e.g. individuals, organizations, networks) coming together from various sectors, groups and/or communities to achieve common goals.***

Source: [www.collaborationcoach.ca](http://www.collaborationcoach.ca)

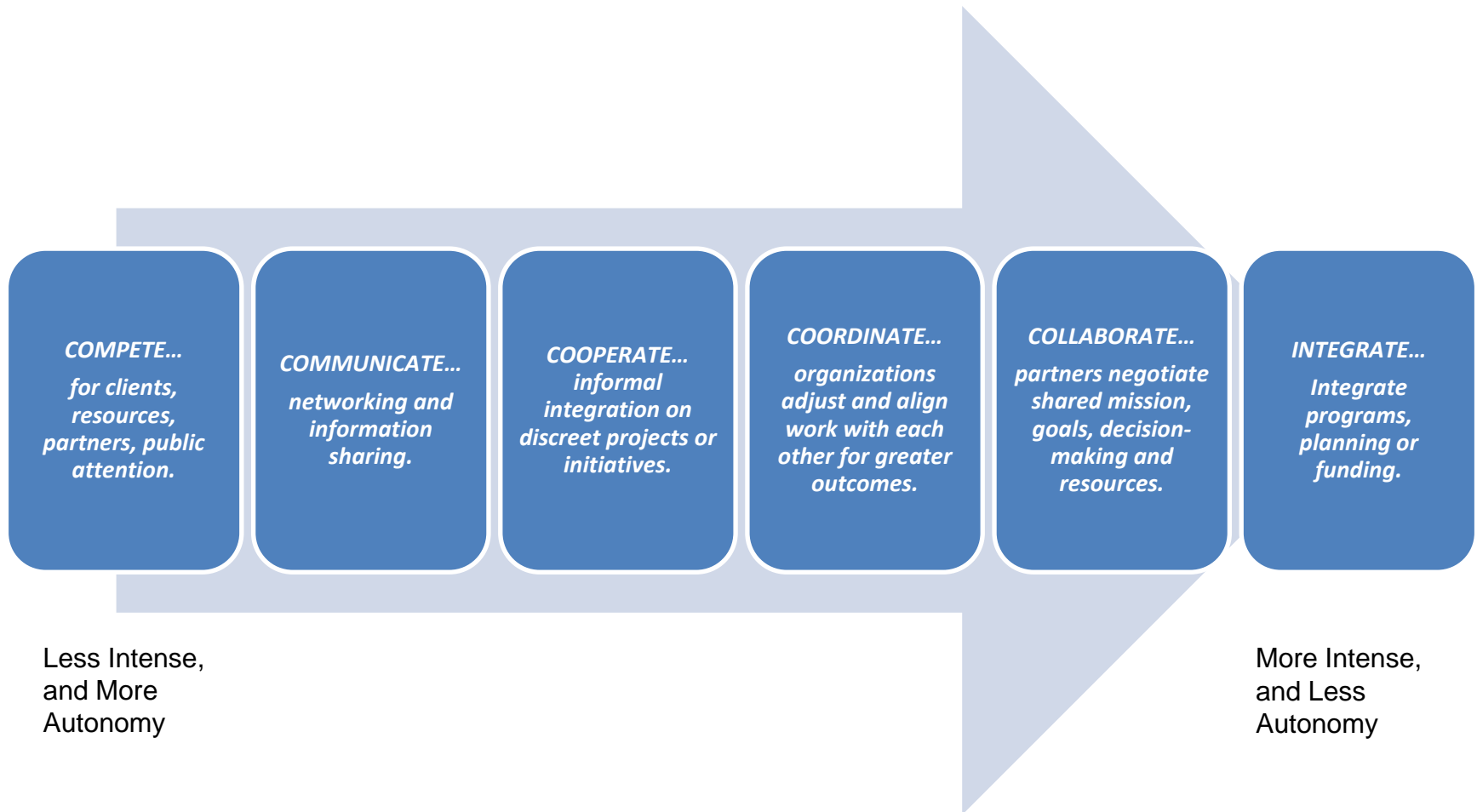
# Facts about Collaboration

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- **A ‘one-size fits all approach’ doesn’t work.**
  - Collaborations form organically, and different supports and resources are required at different stages as the collaboration evolves.
- **Collaborations should be enabled versus mandated.**
  - Research confirms that successful collaborations happen when partners identify a shared need/opportunity, not because a funder requires it.
- **Trust is at the core of successful collaboration.**
  - Need to take the time to build and maintain authentic working relationships.
- **Achieving significant impacts takes risk, time and resources.**
  - Requires the investment of time and resources, and some degree of risk.

# The Collaboration Spectrum: A Continuum of Levels of Engagement

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# OPTION 1: Status Quo

**Action: Continue to support informal relationships already underway.**

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easiest option, no effort required.</li><li>• No change or turbulence at the board, staff or client level .</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May miss out on an opportunity to proactively position yourselves (strong potential partners may make other arrangements).</li><li>• Risky because funders may eventually direct how you should collaborate or integrate with other system players.</li></ul>

# OPTION 2:

## Enhanced Communication, Cooperation, and Coordination

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### **Description:**

Sharing information, cooperating on discreet projects or initiatives, and coordinating work with partner organizations.

### **Potential Opportunities:**

- Joint planning efforts.
- Enhanced referral relationships .
- Sharing public legal education materials/resources
- Sharing of professional development resources.
- Supporting various programs/initiatives offered by one of the partner organizations (e.g. promoting each others programs and services).

## OPTION 2:

### Enhanced Communication, Cooperation, and Coordination

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PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can build on work already underway (including existing relationships between staff).</li><li>• Creates opportunities to jointly identify needs, and share information/expertise (leveraging existing skills and resources).</li><li>• Can develop formal agreements between partner organizations to support enhanced sharing of information, services and resources (memorandum of understanding; collaboration agreement).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resources will need to be dedicated to develop protocols and shift current mindsets/culture.</li><li>• Must facilitate communication internally in order to support enhanced connectivity (i.e. identify internal liaison person; develop shared information sessions for staff).</li><li>• Not as efficient initially because it requires more and slower decision-making processes.</li><li>• More difficult to sustain over a long period of time.</li></ul>



## Co-location (Public Legal Education Hub)

**Action: Share space and back-office functions with identified PLE partners.**

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responds to opportunities in the environment (calls for more coordination of PLE).</li><li>• Facilitates increased access to shared spaces (meeting rooms; etc.).</li><li>• Creates efficiencies that can augment current core infrastructure and increase access to expertise – HR, IT, Finance, etc..</li><li>• Proximity increases awareness of partner agencies and may facilitate exploration of other collaborative opportunities.</li><li>• Viewed favourably by funders .</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficult to negotiate the shared use of space and staff (each organization has specific functions and needs).</li><li>• Will require the development of some shared policies and protocols (additional resources to coordinate).</li><li>• Change management period (things will work differently than they do now).</li></ul>

## EXAMPLE: Community Hubs

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A Community Hub is a conveniently located public place that is recognized and valued in the local community as a gathering place for people, and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programs, services and events. There are 3 core functions of a Community Hub:

- Shared space
- Coordination of services that respond to local needs
- Public and accessible space for both formal and informal purposes

United Way Toronto Community Hubs have been developed in many of their identified `priority neighbourhoods`, using lead agencies to engage residents.

# OPTION 4:

## Shared Administrative Platform (SAP) Organization

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### **Description:**

Provides comprehensive infrastructure, organizational and governance supports for emerging charitable activities, for projects with limited mandates, and for community coalitions and international charitable organizations seeking a `home in Canada`.

### **Distinguishing Features:**

- Partner organizations (emerging charities) become part of the shared platform organization which assumes all governing, legal and fiduciary responsibility.
- The SAP provides finance, HR, risk and grant management, eliminating the need to duplicate infrastructure.
- A terms of reference document sets out the responsibilities between the SAP and partner organizations.
- Partner organizations are responsible for setting and achieving strategic directions, managing their work, and raising funds (a portion of which is allocated to the SAP to cover its areas of responsibility).

*SOURCE: Tides Canada Initiatives Society: Charitable Venture Organizations: A New Infrastructure Model for Canadian Registered Charities, The Philanthropist, 2010, Volume 23.2, AND [www.collaborationcoach.ca](http://www.collaborationcoach.ca).*

# OPTION 4:

## Shared Administrative Platform Organization

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supports innovation and inclusive participation for small grassroots groups and initiatives that may otherwise be kept out of the sector.</li><li>• Leads to improved quality by providing access to experts and helping to ensure good charitable practices.</li><li>• Provides economies of scale through the sharing of an existing infrastructure.</li><li>• Manages risk and promotes shared learning for participants.</li><li>• Provides credibility to funders and other key stakeholders.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May cause real or perceived issues of power and influence, resulting in the disengagement of some partners and or create tension about who received credit for accomplishments.</li><li>• Must find funds to pay for the SAP, and to develop the infrastructure for the platform.</li><li>• Partner organizations must share control of the collaboration with SAP.</li></ul>

## EXAMPLE: TIDES Canada

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Tides Canada's mission is to provide uncommon solutions for the common good by leading and supporting actions that foster a healthy environment and just Canadian society. They advance this mission by:

- Creating opportunities to pool ideas and resources to solve complex environmental and social problems
- Partnering with private and public sector donors to facilitate strategic grant-making
- Enabling charitable organizations and people with innovative project ideas to more effectively advance their missions
- Providing philanthropists with tax-efficient vehicles and solutions to amplify the impact and efficiency of their giving

# OPTION 5:

## Formalized Collaboration or Integration

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### Description:

- Partner organizations intentionally work together to negotiate a shared vision, goals, decision-making and resources.

### Distinguishing Features:

- Partner organizations each contribute the competencies, capacities and resources required to accomplish shared goals.
- Involves shared fundraising or proposal development for joint projects or initiatives that advance the shared mission and goals of partner organizations.
- Typically a Steering Committee that is comprised of key staff from each partner organization is established to oversee the work of the collaboration or integration.
- A collaboration agreement is developed to articulate how partners will work together and mitigate potential risks (e.g. roles and responsibilities; decision-making; conflict resolution; evaluation; etc.).
- One partner organization may be designated to take the lead in the collaboration because they have the resources, credibility and or potential access to funds which they can flow through to the collaboration (may be preferred by funders).
- A Coordinator is often jointly hired to support the work of the collaboration.

# OPTION 5: Formalized Collaboration or Integration

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhances or strengthens the strategic position of both organizations (e.g. able to serve more clients; able to leverage more resources for clients).</li><li>• Formalized agreement ensures organizational commitment to and sustainability of the collaboration.</li><li>• Opportunity to proactively explore new opportunities .</li><li>• Viewed positively by funders (Enhances the credibility of proposals developed jointly).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relies on the willingness and capacity of partners to contribute the necessary skills, competencies and resources.</li><li>• More challenging to manage and ensure accountability because of shared leadership and decision-making processes.</li><li>• Requires the investment of time and resources to support and sustain the collaboration.</li></ul>

# OPTION 6:

## Merger

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### **Description:**

The integration or combining of two or more separate organizations into one legal entity. It occurs when one or more organizations dissolve and either become part of another organizations structure or establish a new structure .

### **Distinguishing Features :**

- While a merger may evolve from a collaboration, by definition a merger is not a type of collaboration.
- One of the primary reasons for considering a merger is to preserve the mission of the organizations and therefore the services offered to fulfill the mission. Merging with another organization may help meet the demand for existing services, increase the quality and availability of services, or expand the services to a new geographic area or new and more diverse clients.
- Another reason organizations consider merger is to develop greater organizational efficiencies related to programming, administrative capacity, or fundraising.
- Research suggests that cost savings is not a reason to merge. It may be too late for organizations to consider a merger if they are already mired in financial crisis.

*SOURCE: What do we know about nonprofit mergers; Joint research project of MAP for Nonprofits and Wilder Research, March 2011.*



# OPTION 5:

## Merger

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Could help build capacity to address the growing needs or demands for service (PLE).</li><li>• May increase the quality and availability of PLE.</li><li>• Has the potential to achieve organizational efficiencies related to programming, administrative capacity, or fundraising.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk of losing what makes each organization unique and successful .</li><li>• May not lead to cost savings (once salaries and benefits are equalized, and one time transition costs are accounted for).</li><li>• Harmonizing different cultures and governance models is time consuming and costly (difficult to overcome sense that one agency has ‘taken over).</li><li>• Negative public response likely (fear loss of services and identity).</li><li>• Negative impact on existing coalitions (change of players; may threaten current commitments).</li></ul>

## EXAMPLE: Access Programming in BC

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Two organizations merged because of pressure from funders. Conversations with colleagues in BC suggest this has resulted in chaos in the `landscape`, and has had a negative impact overall.

*NOTE: Sarah to report on what information is publically available.*



**STRATEGIES TO ENSURE  
COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS AND  
MITIGATE POTENTIAL RISKS**

# **1. Consider whether your organization is ready to collaborate.**

- ✓ **Prepared to give up some control and power**
- ✓ **Ready to deal with complex accountabilities**
- ✓ **Comfortable managing the conflict that will probably arise**
- ✓ **Able to work well collaboratively within our own organization, and with existing partners**
- ✓ **Can be transparent about our expectations, needs and challenges**
- ✓ **Open to new ideas and ways of working**
- ✓ **Support staff that participate in collaborations**

(<http://www.collaborationcoach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/OrganizationalReadinessToCollaborateChecklist.pdf>)

## **2. Assess the Value of the Potential Collaboration**

- ✓ **Does the problem, issue or opportunity that partners want to address require a collaborative approach?**
- ✓ **Is there a fit between our vision, mission, values and goals/priorities and those of prospective partners?**
- ✓ **Is the collaboration a good fit with our brand?**
- ✓ **Is there an established degree of trust and respect with prospective partners?**
- ✓ **Is the current environment conducive to the collaboration?**

(<http://www.collaborationcoach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/AssessingTheValueOfCollaboration.pdf>)

### **3. Assess the Fit with Prospective Partners**

- **Identify who could share in mutually beneficial relationships and outcomes**
  - **Think about prospective partners that:**
    - ✓ **Have a significant stake in and/or commitment to the identified issue/opportunity**
    - ✓ **Can contribute the skills, capacity and resources required**
    - ✓ **Bring credibility (track record and reputation)**
    - ✓ **Share fundamental values, beliefs or assumptions**
    - ✓ **Have a history of collaborating effectively**
- (<http://www.collaborationcoach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/IdentifyingAndSelectingTheRightCorePartners.pdf>)

## **4. Document your shared understanding in a Collaboration Agreement**

- ✓ **Shared principles, outcomes and strategies**
- ✓ **Responsibilities and accountabilities**
- ✓ **Decision-making processes**
- ✓ **Managing conflict**
- ✓ **Leaving or ending the collaboration**
- ✓ **Evaluation**

**(<http://www.collaborationcoach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/DevelopingACollaborationAgreementB.pdf>)**

**(<http://www.collaborationcoach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/SampleAgreementTemplate-ForASimple-Collaboration.pdf>)**

## 5. Start small and build on your successes

- ✓ Understand the stages of development for a collaboration
- ✓ Invest in building trust and managing conflict with partners
- ✓ Be prepared to hire a neutral facilitator who has experience supporting effective collaboration

<http://www.collaborationcoach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/StagesOfCollaboration.pdf>

<http://www.collaborationcoach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/BuildingTrustAndManagingConflict.pdf>