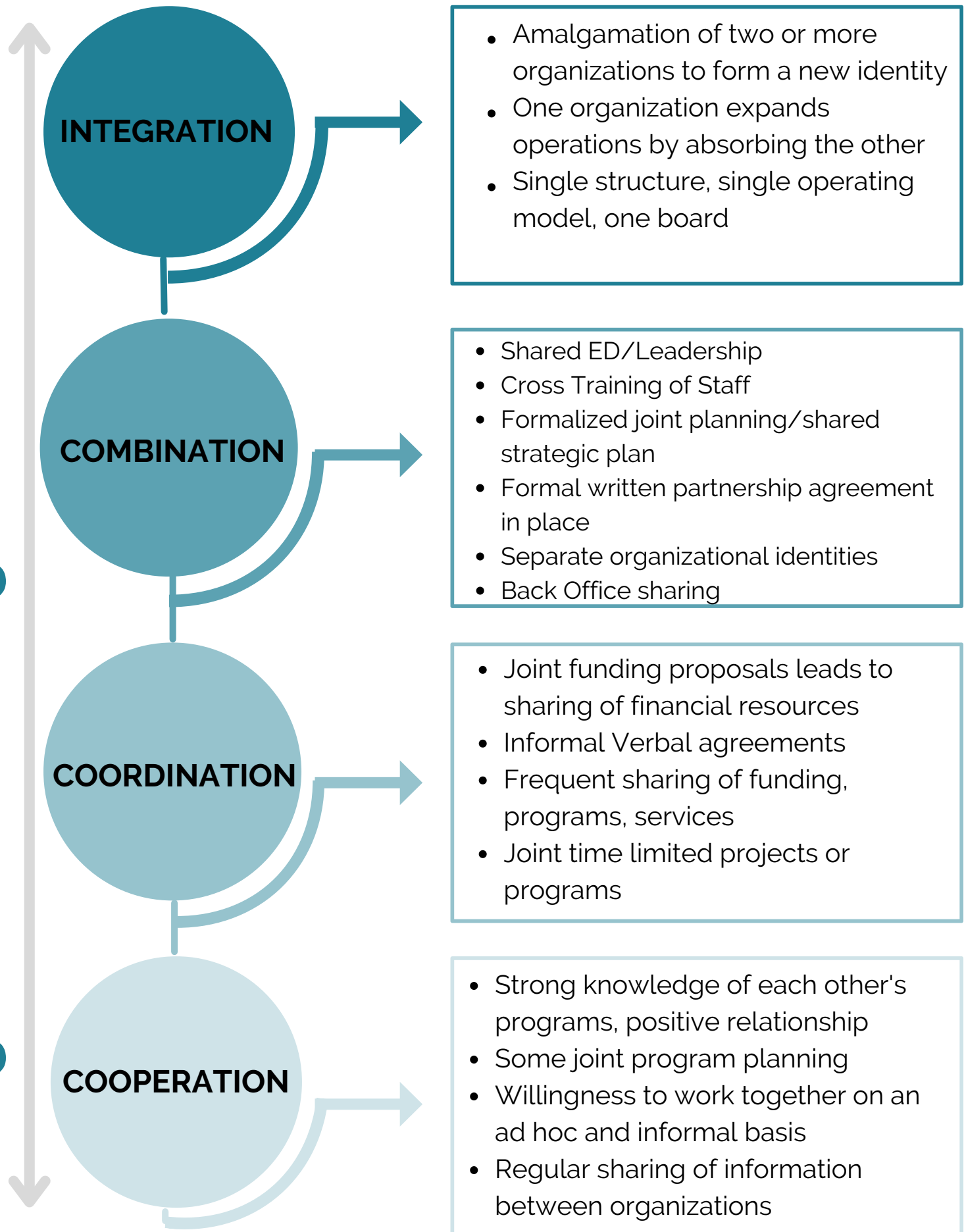
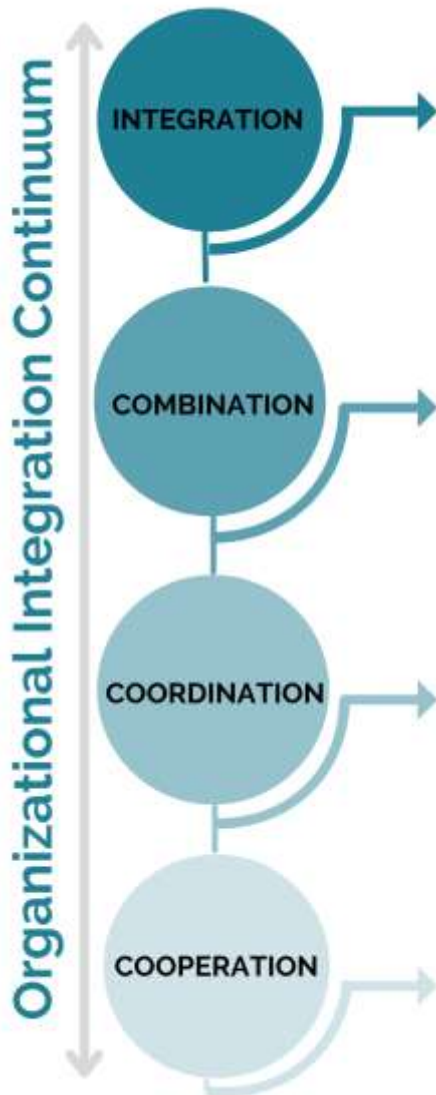


# Organizational Integration Continuum



The Organizational Integration Continuum is our way of thinking about the different ways two or more groups or organizations intentionally come together. Different ways of coming together are appropriate for different types of situations. There is no “right” answer. It all depends on the situation, the organizations, and the moment in time. While the level of intentionality and complexity increases as you move along the continuum, the intent is not to imply that there is greater value in being in one place over any other. Wherever your organization is at in this moment is exactly where you should be.



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**Cooperation and Coordination** as depicted in this model, could be thought of approaches to partnership.

**Combination and Integration** cover the various approaches to amalgamating or blending two or more organizations.

**Cooperation** often occurs rather passively, without too much intention by any particular stakeholder. It could be as simple as representing your organization at a larger committee and sharing information or offering to participate in an ad hoc activity or project. These types of cooperative relationships increase your knowledge of other organizations, the people involved and the services they offer. When cooperating with others, it is still relatively easy to end the specific arrangement or to separate yourself and your organization from the relationship or agreement. For example, purchasing a few hours of administrative support from a larger organization is easier to end or step back from than if your organization has a coordinated plan or agreement to share an administrative support position.

**Coordination** is used here to define relationships that are more intentional or where organizations actively seek each other out to work together on short-term projects or in a time-limited way. This could include co-hosting a guest speaker session, submitting a funding proposal together, or jointly making a bulk purchase. Coordination relationships require trust between the stakeholders involved and more specific knowledge of another organization’s structures and processes to ensure the coordinated activity benefits both groups.

**Combination** could also be called “partial integration”. The examples of combination on the graphic reflect situations where each organization maintains separate governance (i.e., board of directors) which means also separate legal and financial structures. In some cases, these separate governance and other structures may be behind the scenes and not fully known by all stakeholders.

Conversely, **integration** in this model is about the merging of all aspects of two or more organizations. Full integration is a process unto itself. If your organization has moved through an integration process with another organization, this history will be valuable experience, but no longer thought of as two organizations intentionally coming together in a specific way, as the two organizations at some point both in systems, processes, and culture will

become one.

The image is not meant to imply that in any specific situation with a specific organization you must move through the continuum in a linear way, the continuum is not linearly progressive. You may find that with one organization you are in a position to jump from a cooperative relationship to a combination relationship. However, if you have no experience, and cannot identify examples of cooperating with or coordinating with other organizations moving to a combination type relationship may be more challenging and or take more time for your organization.

Ways you can use the continuum include:

- To explore the variety in the ways your organization comes together with other organizations
- To consider your organization’s readiness and experience with more intentional, active, and long-term ways of working with others

As you consider the various situations your organization is involved in and where they fit on the continuum, your organization may be able to identify situations where you fit into several of the categories. Perhaps with different organizations or perhaps in different ways with the same other organization. You can be on multiple places with different organizations along the continue.

Wondering where you are on the continuum? See our self-assessment tool to help you explore the various parts of the organizational integration continuum.

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Download a one page [Integration Continuum](#) resource to quickly share with others in your organization to bring others into the integration continuum conversation.