The Alliance Continuum

An alliance is a relationship between partners that is strategically formed to accomplish goals that benefit the community while strengthening the partners’ organizations.

Types of alliances:

COOPERATION is the least complex relationship and is characterized by short term informal relations that exist without any clearly defined mission, structure or planning effort. Information is shared only about the subject at hand and resources are kept separate. Authority is retained by each organization and there is virtually no risk to anyone.

COORDINATION is more complex and is characterized by the sharing of some resources. Interaction is usually longer term, often focused around a specific task or program. Some planning and division of roles is required and enough information is shared about the participants to enable cooperation. Authority still rests primarily with individual organizations, but there is increased risk to all participants.

COLLABORATION connotes a more durable and pervasive relationship. There is a common mission to achieve something greater than a single project or task. Such relationships require comprehensive planning and greater — and sometimes unequal — sharing of resources and power. Authority is determined by the collaborative structure and risk is much greater because each partner is contributing its resources and reputation.

Definition: Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well defined relationship of two or more individuals or organizations which enables a service or product that cannot be created alone.

MERGER is the result of two organizations that become one organization. Mergers are strongest when the two organizations share the same vision, mission, strategies for achieving the mission, geographic service area, services, and values for providing those services. Mergers are the most difficult, and rarest of alliances.