



Chart your future business model with new insights and connections

## Questions from registrants

**Q: Are mergers largely driven by financial stressors? Do they really**  
**smoothen (or) intensify competition? How do they impact the field? Do they**  
**infrastructure merges spite the other potential origins of good**  
**work for the community development and engagement?**

### Nonprofit GPS

A field-driven collaboration led by:

**Nonprofit Financial Commons, BDO Nonprofit & Grantmaker Advisory, and Philanthropy New York** —  
with tools and frameworks from [StrongNonprofits.org](http://StrongNonprofits.org) and insight from regional networks across the nation.



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# If a Nonprofit Merger is the Answer, What is the Question?

## Reviewing Our Interorganizational Options in 2026

June 18, 2026

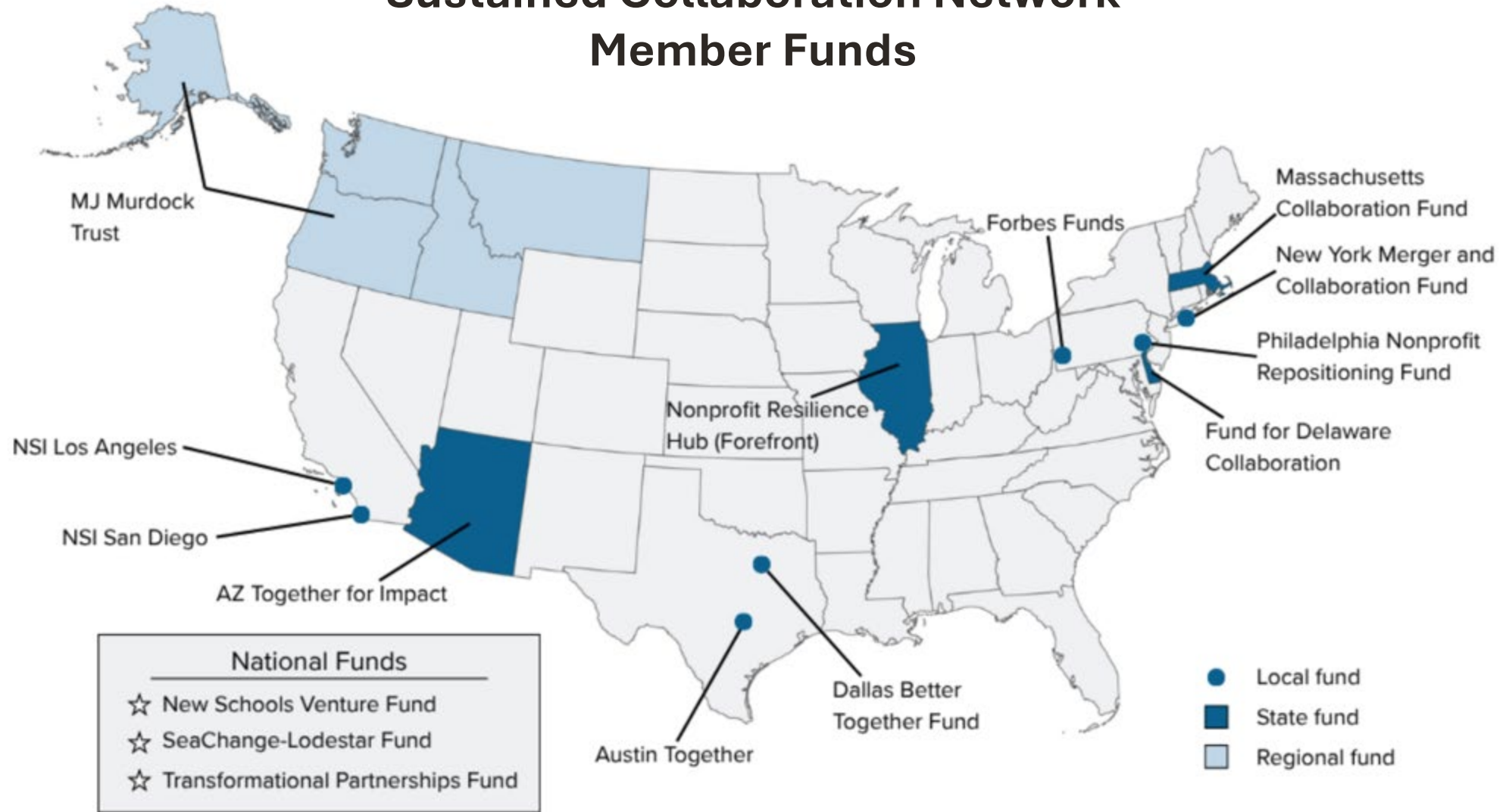
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# Sustained Collaboration Network Member Funds





**Dana Britto**

Moderator

Nonprofit Financial Commons



**Carrie Harlow**

Co-Director

Nonprofit Sustainability Initiative

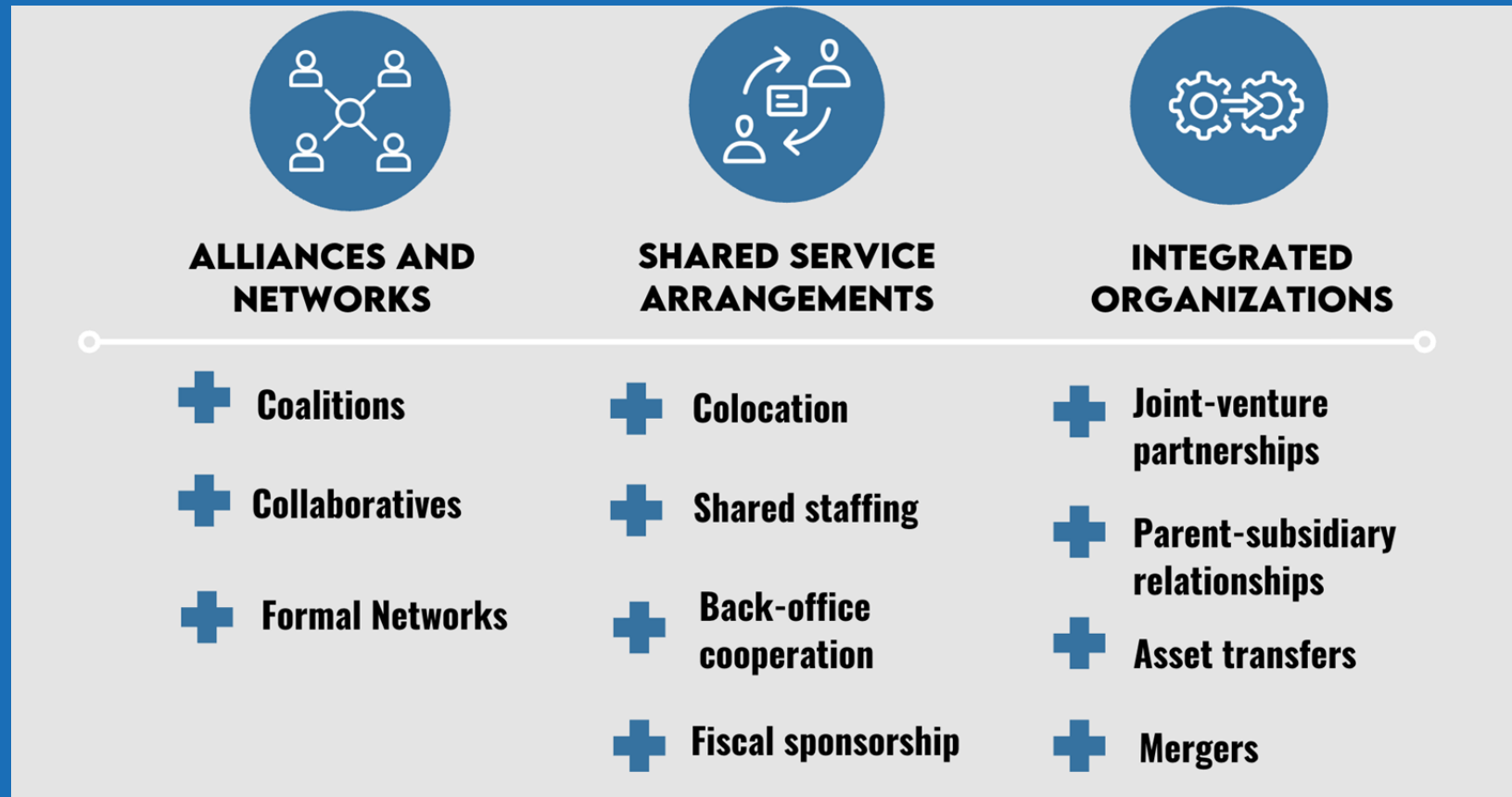
# Defining Sustained Collaboration

Sustained collaboration is a continuum of organizational strategies for structured collaboration that represent a **permanent change to the business or operating models** of two or more nonprofits.

The goal is not fewer nonprofits, it's **greater mission impact**.

# What does Sustained Collaboration look like?

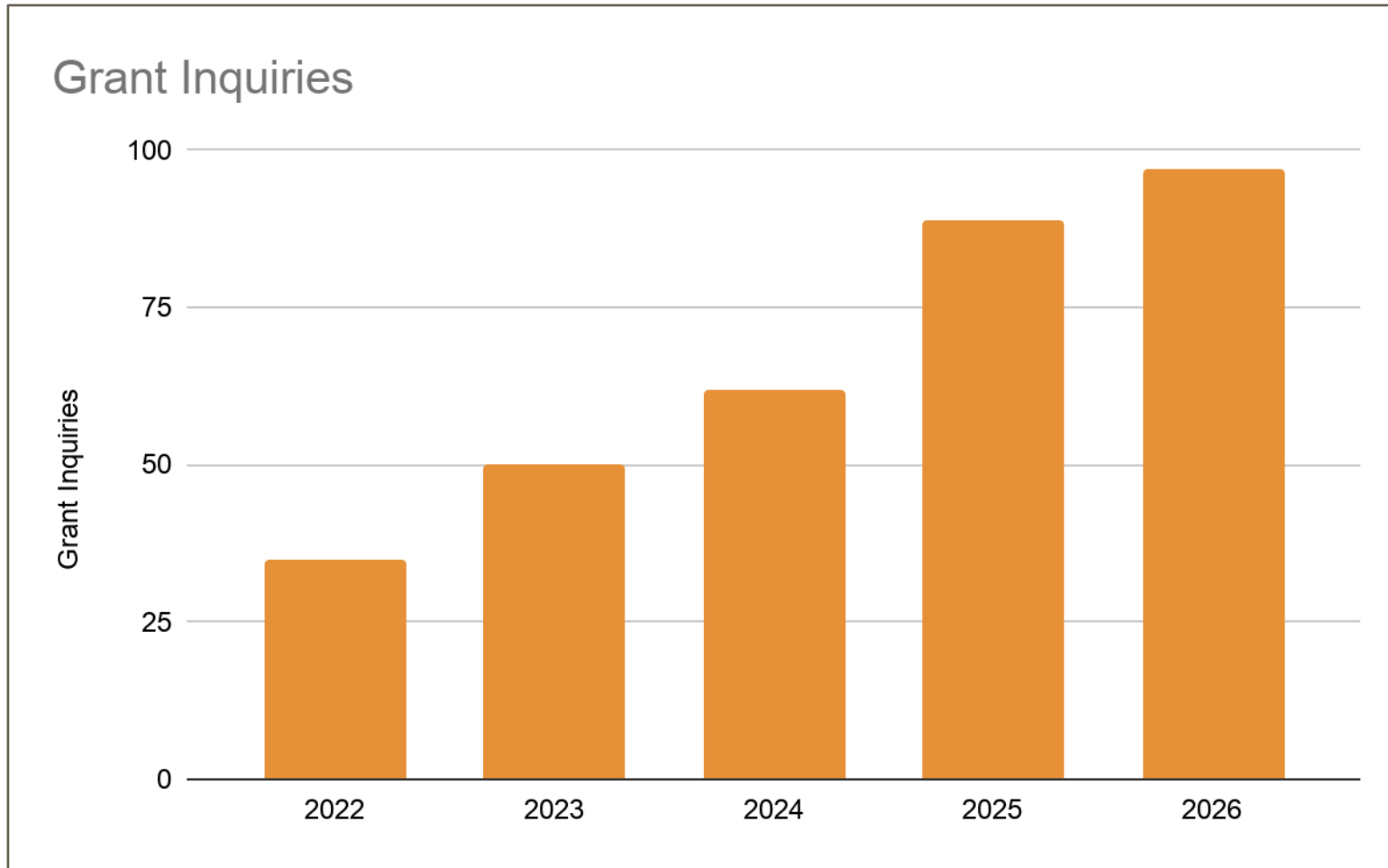
Not all partnerships are mergers. Collaborations can take many forms:



# Common Catalysts for Sustained Collaboration

- ▶ Executive transition
- ▶ Demand for services exceeds org. capacity to deliver
- ▶ Loss (or anticipated loss) of major revenue stream
- ▶ Policy changes which impact operations / programming
- ▶ Desire to grow / achieve economies of scale

# Trends in Sustained Collaboration



- Increase in catalyzing circumstances
- Signs of scenario planning at scale

**Inquiries exceed this time last year, a record-breaking year for inquiries**

# Defining Success

Nearly 100% of grantee partners, regardless of if they get to an agreement, report value in the process:

## Predictors of Reaching Agreement:

- ▶ Time to devote to process
- ▶ Organizational clarity regarding what the org. aims to gain through process
- ▶ Honest, upfront conversations with partner(s)
- ▶ Compatible missions, organizational cultures, and values
- ▶ Engaged a neutral, third party facilitator

# Organizational Impact

**A MAJORITY OF GRANTEE PARTNERS REPORT  
THEIR PARTNERSHIP HAD A  
POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE FOLLOWING:**



**Programming  
Range / Scope**



**Org. Expertise /  
Knowledge**



**Org. Brand /  
Reputation**



**Quality of  
Programmatic  
Outcomes**



**Geographic Scope  
of Services**



**Fundraising  
Ability**



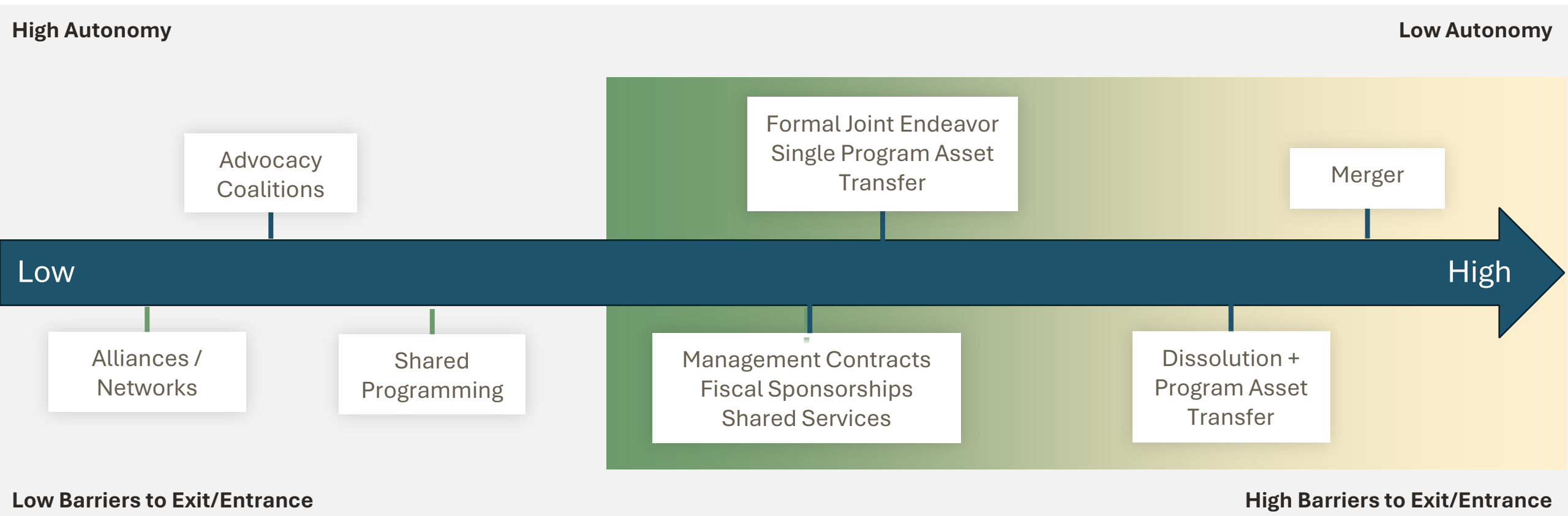
**Talent Recruitment /  
Retention**

54 respondents,  
2 years post  
implementation

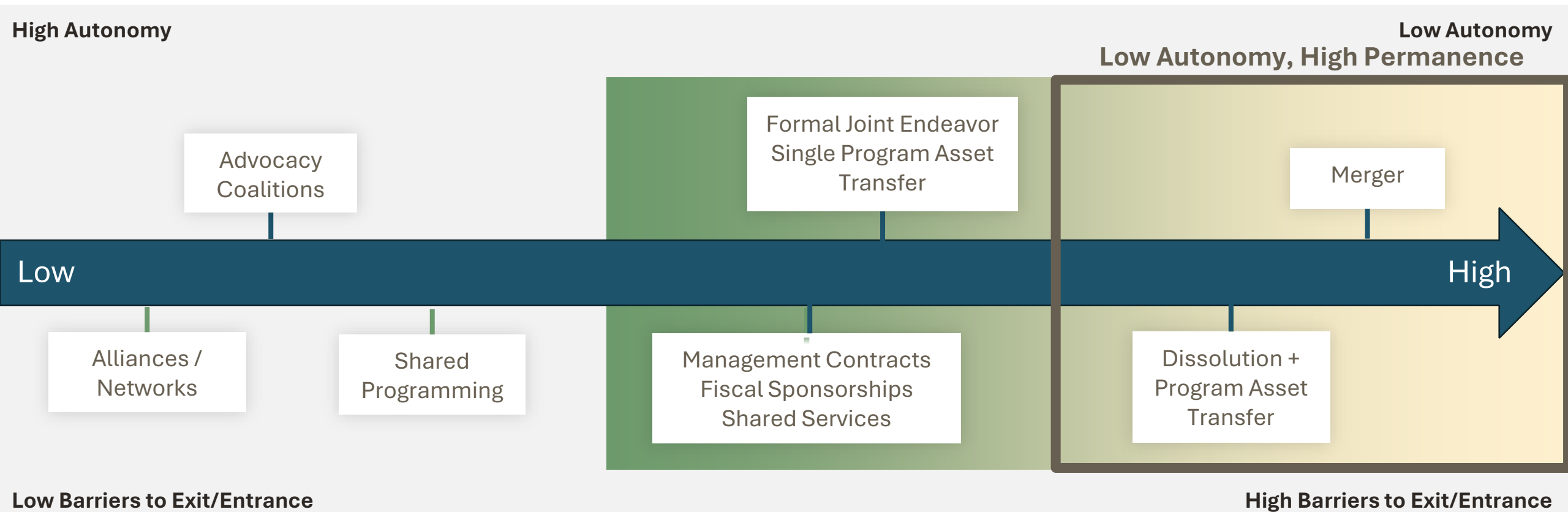
Q & A



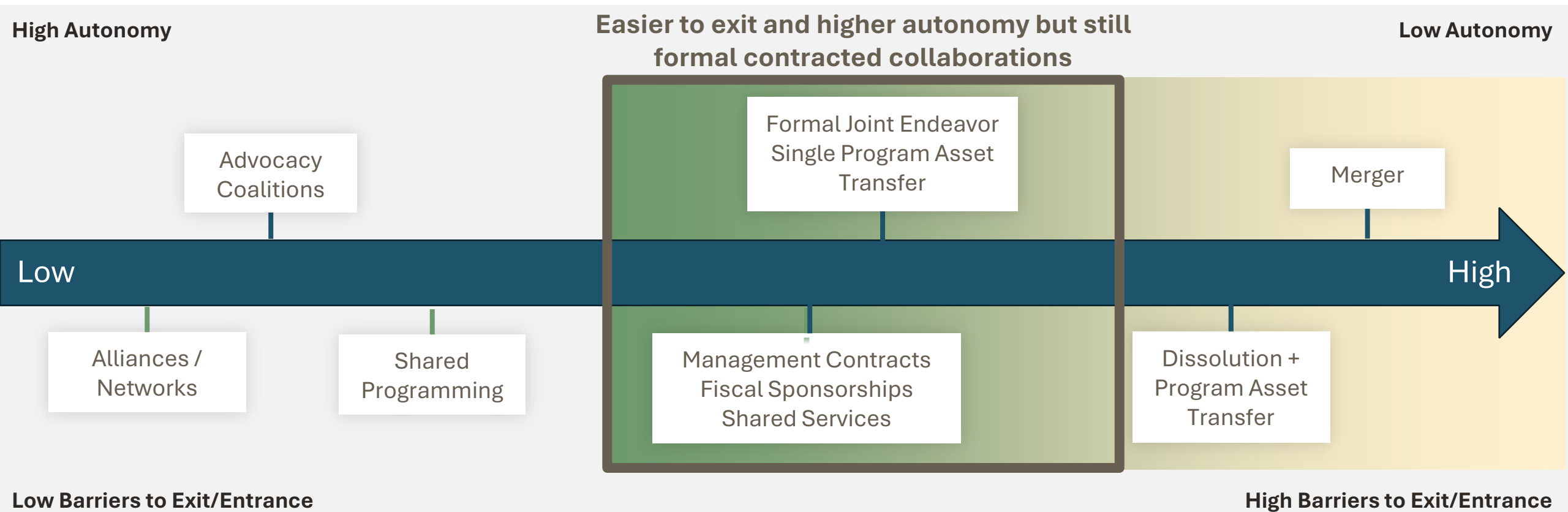
# Examples of Nonprofit Interorganizational Restructuring



# Examples of Nonprofit Interorganizational Restructuring



# Examples of Nonprofit Interorganizational Restructuring



# Sacred and Not Sacred

**What are we willing to  
give up?**

**What are not willing  
to give up?**

# Strategy, design, capital, organizational will

1. Set strategic goals
2. Learn about the possible forms of integration and choose carefully
3. Ensure sufficient operating reserves
4. Involve board and staff from the beginning



*Unlocking the Power of Sustained Collaboration Insights from Partnerships for Nonprofits and Consultants, Michelle Shumate Ph.D.*

# First, Do No Harm - Eyes On the Prize

- Is our mission what it should be in order to best serve our constituents? How do we know this?
- Are we in sufficient partnership with constituents to ensure that we can serve their interests in making this alliance?
- To what extent and how will this alliance fulfill or enhance our mission?
- Are clear enough about our own mission to maintain its integrity while in in partnership with another?
- What might we gain and/or lose through this alliance? What might our partners gain and/or lose?
- What are we willing to give up? What are not willing to give up?



*The Rush to Merge: Considerations About Nonprofit Strategic Alliances, Ruth McCambridge and Mary Francis Weis, Management Consulting Services, 1997*



**Ruth McCambridge**

Co-Founder and Director of Content  
Nonprofit Financial Commons



**Tammy Schutz**

Title  
Pioneer Living Museum





**Jon Pratt**  
Senior Research Fellow  
Nonprofit GPS



**Pam Johnston**  
President & CEO  
Ocean State Media



Q & A



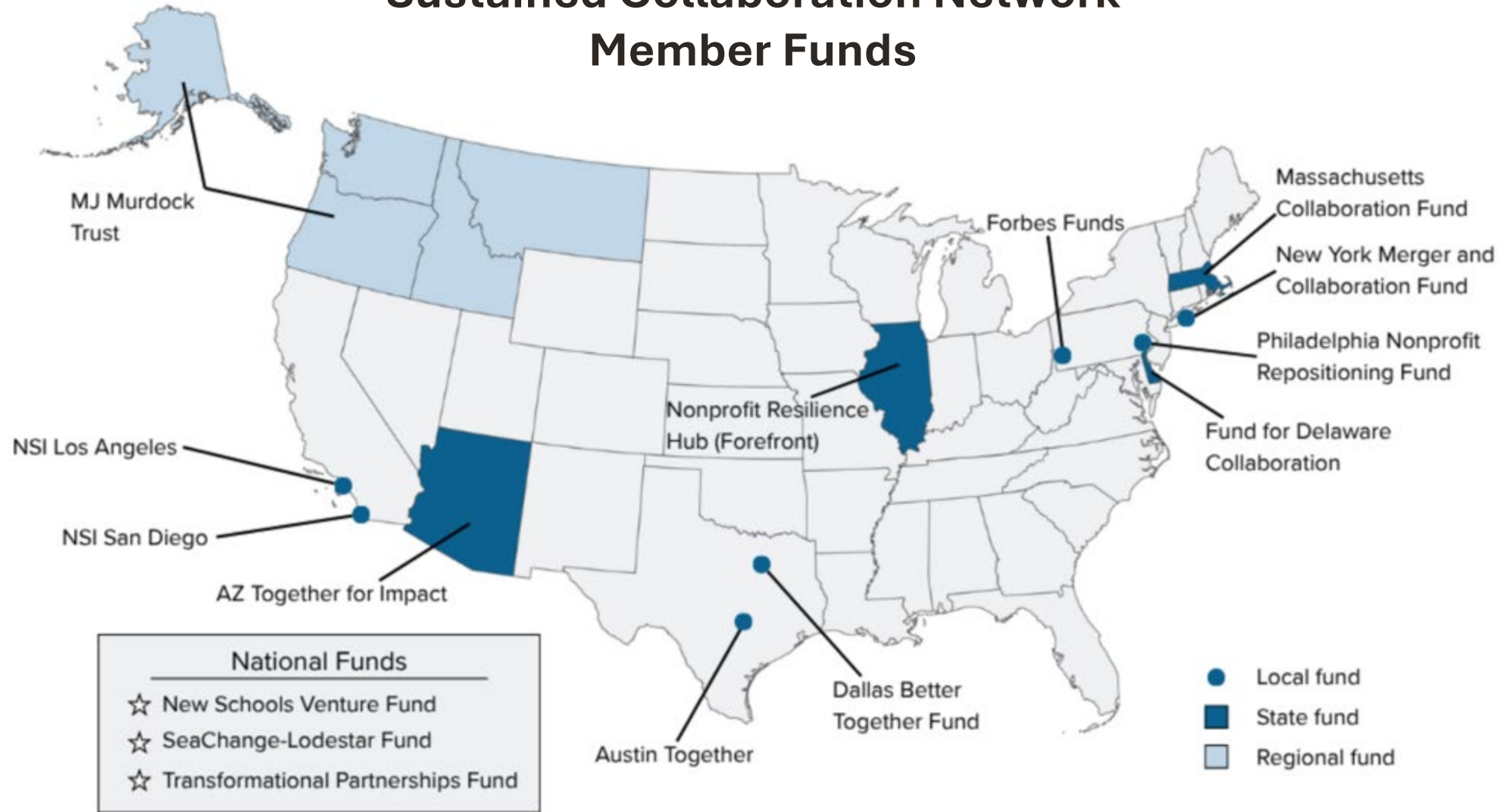
# Key Conclusions

- **Mergers are not a universal solution.** They are one tool among many and often overused as a default response.
- **Strategic clarity must come before structural decisions.** Organizations should define goals before choosing alliance types.
- **Readiness and alignment determine success.** Internal stability, trust, and shared purpose are prerequisites.
- **Process discipline is essential.** Careful planning, communication, and leadership structures matter more than the legal form.
- **Alliances involve trade-offs.** Organizations must explicitly assess what they will gain—and what they may lose.
- **Sector-wide pressures should not override mission focus.** Decisions should prioritize long-term community impact, not just external expectations.



*The Rush to Merge: Considerations About Nonprofit Strategic Alliances, Ruth McCambridge and Mary Francis Weis, Management Consulting Services, 1997*

# Sustained Collaboration Network Member Funds



# Confidential Helpline Support

Today's presentation may leave you with practical questions of implementation and strategy. We are offering free confidential virtual consultations with finance consultants to help in your navigation of first steps. We can help address questions like:

- How do I estimate the length of time I have to **implement a collaborative restructure** given current resources?
- How do we approach **due diligence** on a potential partner organization?
- What are the **key risks** to plan for in a collaborative arrangement, and how can we mitigate them?



Helpline

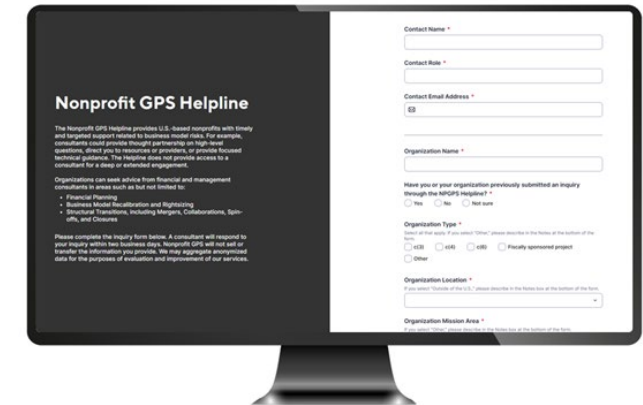
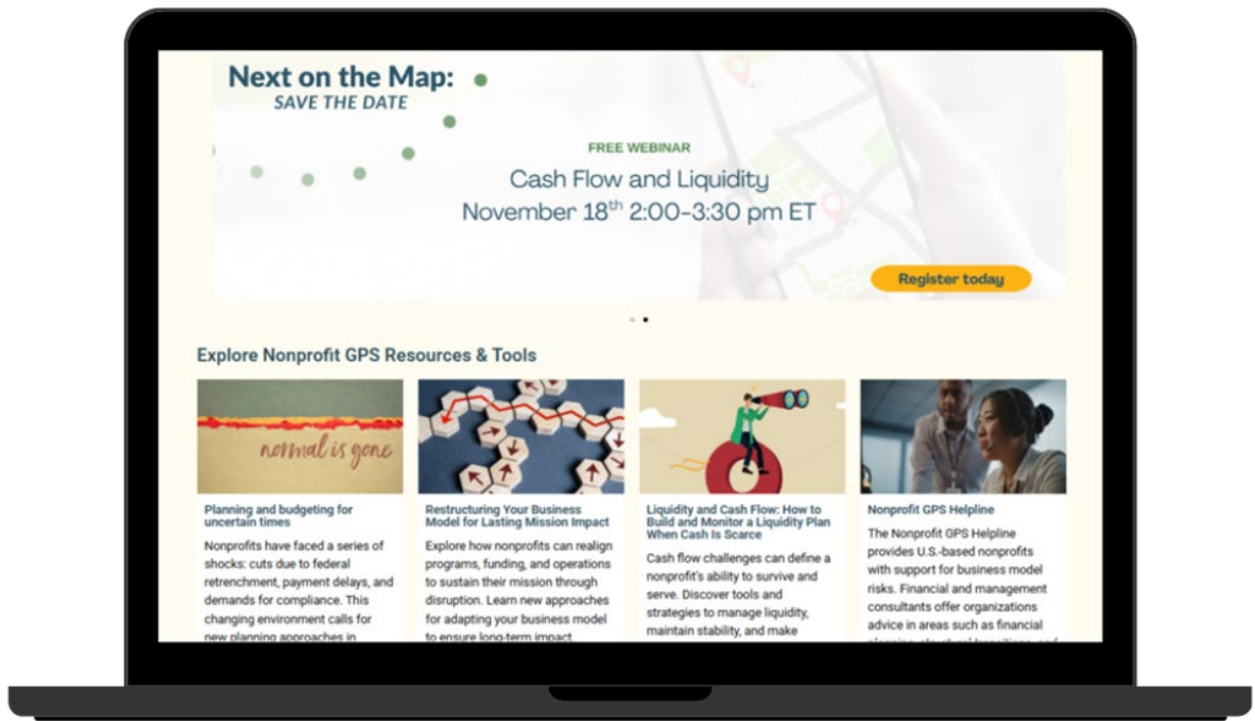




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[NPGPS.org](https://NPGPS.org)

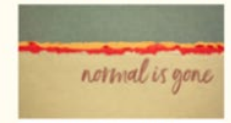


Next on the Map:   
SAVE THE DATE

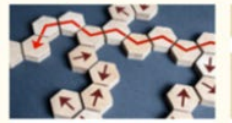
FREE WEBINAR  
Cash Flow and Liquidity  
November 18th 2:00-3:30 pm ET

Register today

Explore Nonprofit GPS Resources & Tools



**Planning and budgeting for uncertain times**  
Nonprofits have faced a series of shocks: cuts due to federal retrenchment, payment delays, and demands for compliance. This changing environment calls for new planning approaches in



**Restructuring Your Business Model for Lasting Mission Impact**  
Explore how nonprofits can realign programs, funding, and operations to sustain their mission through disruption. Learn new approaches for adapting your business model to ensure long-term impact



**Liquidity and Cash Flow: How to Build and Monitor a Liquidity Plan When Cash Is Scarce**  
Cash flow challenges can define a nonprofit's ability to survive and serve. Discover tools and strategies to manage liquidity, maintain stability, and make



**Nonprofit GPS Helpline**  
The Nonprofit GPS Helpline provides U.S.-based nonprofits with support for business model risks. Financial and management consultants offer organizations advice in areas such as financial