

Partnership Learning Project



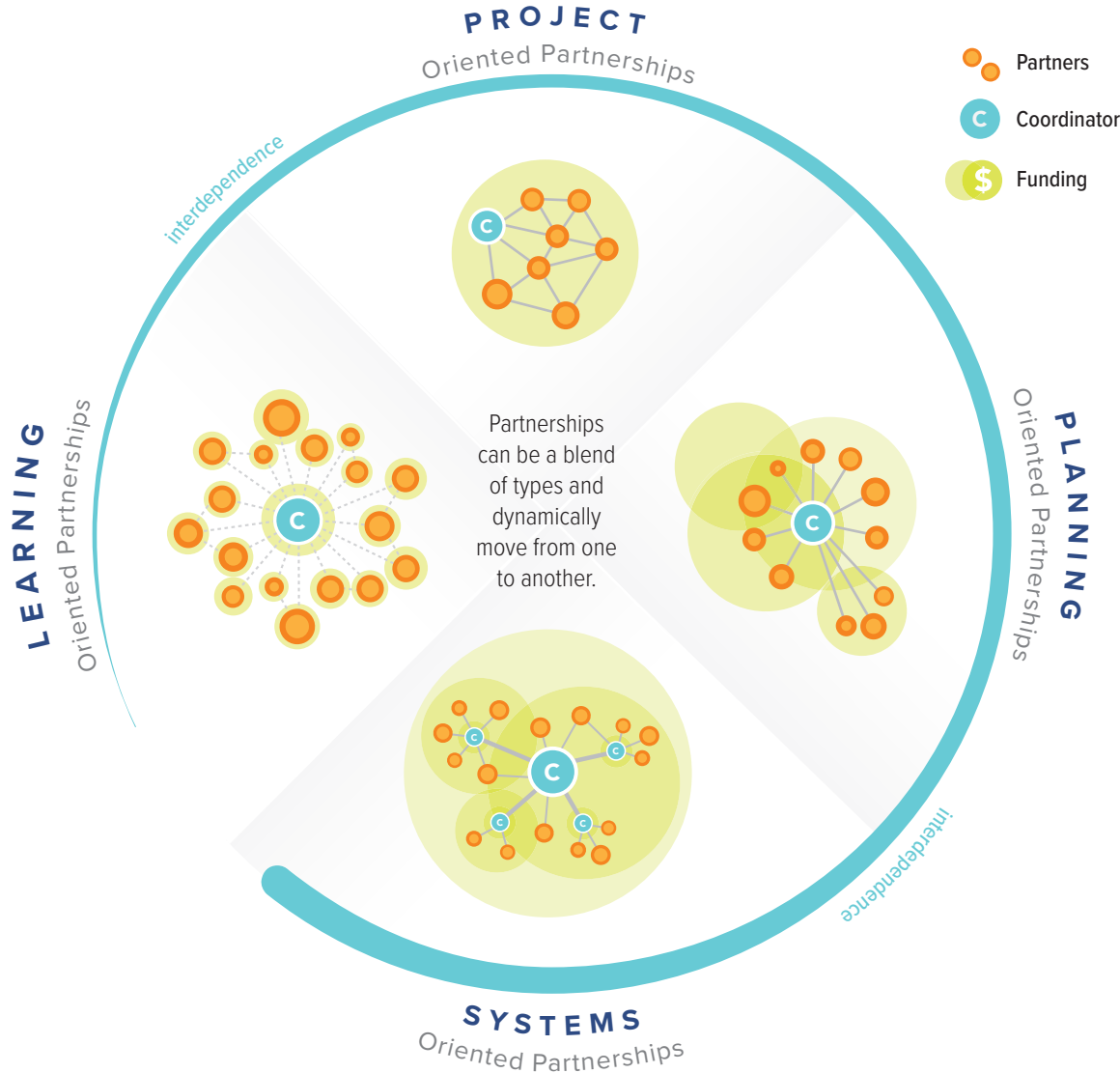
A REPORT FOR **Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board**
In collaboration with Bonneville Environmental Foundation

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The partnership types below are defined by the relative autonomy or interdependence of partners. This originates from the Public Administration literature (Mandell and Steelman 2003; Cigler 1999) and was further developed inductively through ‘grounded theory’ analysis of data from the partnerships in this study.



OWEB’s Partnership Technical Assistance grants would be suitable for any partnership type. OWEB’s Focused Investment Partnership grants, with their focus on implementation, would be suitable for project-oriented, planning-oriented or systems-oriented partnerships.

A TYPOLOGY OF Partnership Types

\$ Funding for Coordination 🔗 Interdependence among partners

Learning-Oriented

Partners are **fully autonomous** with **little interdependence**.

Partners come together to tackle shared questions to improve strategies, practices or policies. Partners independently apply their learning. A coordinator serves as convener.



Project-Oriented

Partners are **mostly autonomous** with **some interdependence**.

Partners go through an initial period of collaborative planning and commit to a set of shared actions. Their main focus is coordinating implementation, often with each partner leading their own projects. After projects are complete, the partnership may dissolve or reorganize around a new focus. A coordinator serves as a project manager, a role which may be rotated among partners.



Planning-Oriented

Partners are **moderately interdependent**.

Partners engage in iterative cycles of collaborative long-term planning and work together to implement shared priorities. Individual partner organizations may have to shift how they operate to align with the partnership overall. A coordinator serves as a facilitator, planning coach and project manager, a role which is usually held by a partner organization who may also contract with an independent facilitator.



Systems-Oriented

Partners are **greatly interdependent**.

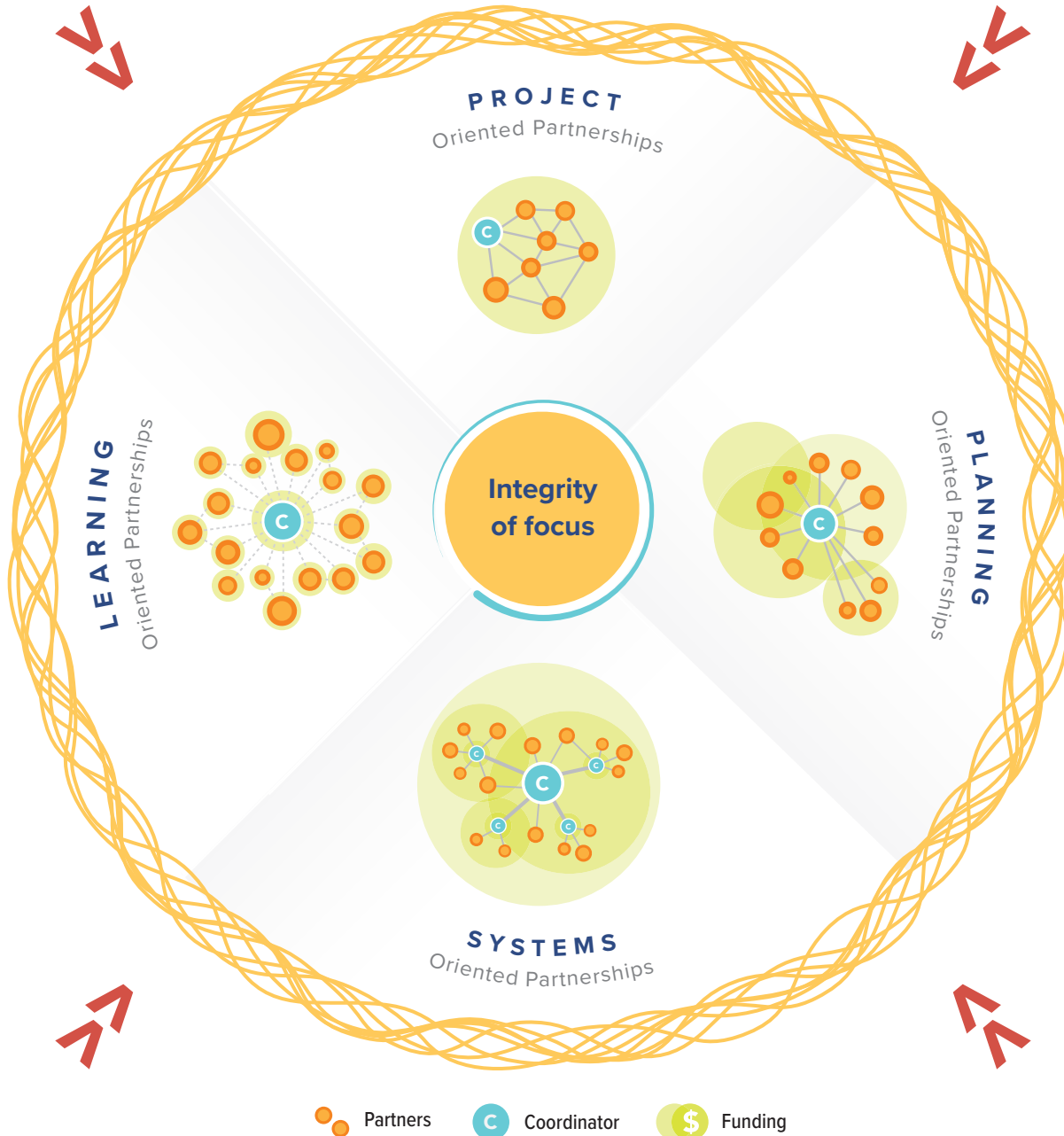
Partners engage in iterative cycles of collaborative long-term planning and establish shared standards, practices and systems to hold each other accountable to systems change. They work through differences, achieve alignment and coordinate for implementation. A coordinator serves as collaborative leader, facilitator and project manager, a role which may be held by a partner or host organization who may also contract with independent facilitators.



As partnerships experience stressors, they may change from one partnership type to another while maintaining their clarity of purpose and core members - or they may dissolve, merge with another partnership or shift in purpose, scope and structure to form a new partnership.

Examples of stressors:

- >> Loss of a coordinator and/or key leaders
- >> Catastrophic events like fire or drought
- >> Loss or gain of substantial funding
- >> Inaccurate assumptions in the theory of change
- >> Strong critiques and/or opposition



THREADS OF Partnership Resilience

Resilience refers to the ability to withstand changes and stressors and still maintain the integrity of a partnership.

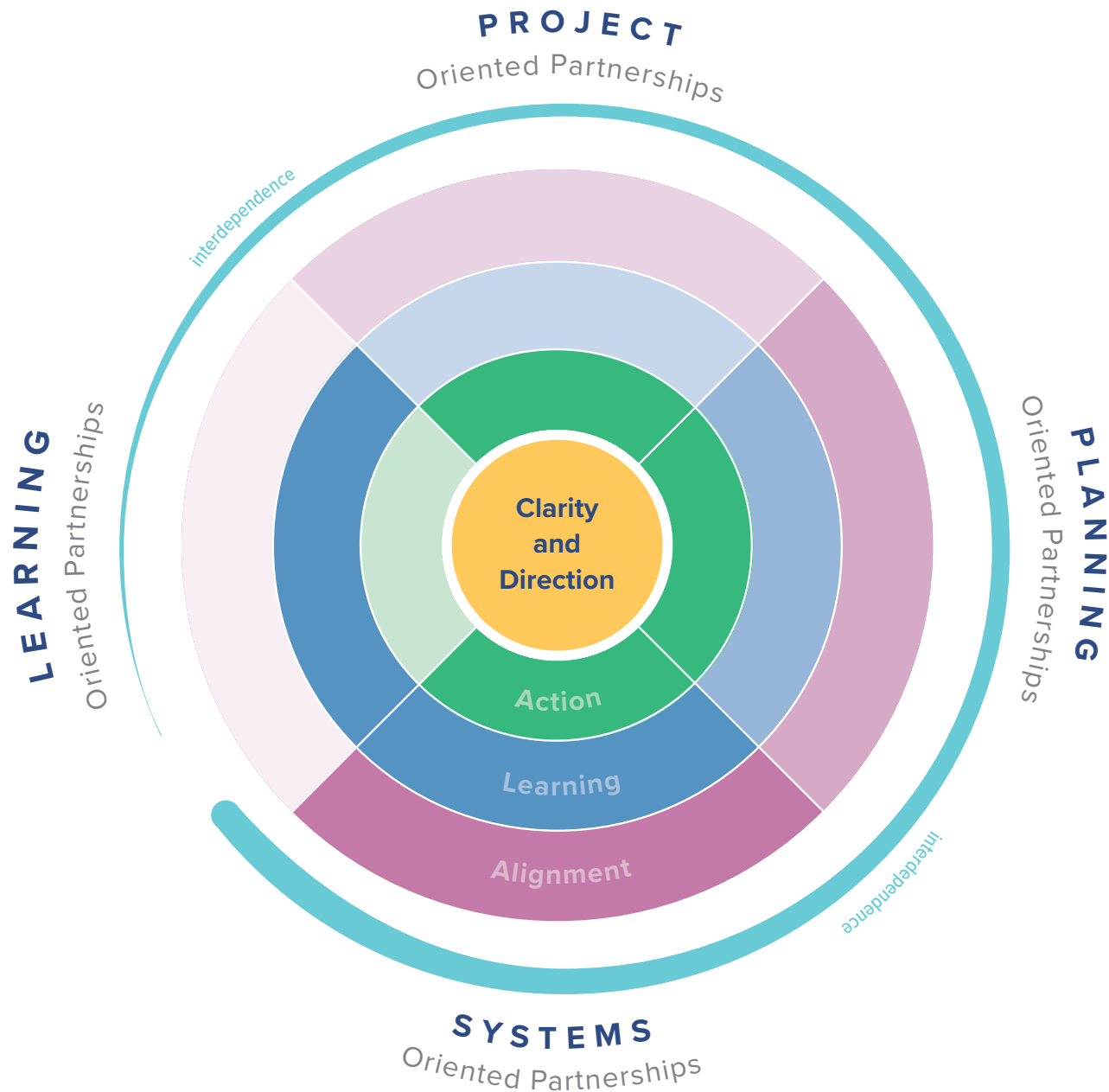
The following threads, or elements, contribute to a partnership’s resilience with multiple threads reinforcing each other.

- Camaraderie**
Partners like each other and pitch in to help
- Success**
Success creates more opportunities for success
- Formalized commitments**
Partners document agreements and plans
- Consistent funding**
Partnership coordination is consistently funded
- Organizational anchors**
Fiscally strong partner organizations add stability and capacity
- Shared leadership**
Leadership is shared among partners, both structurally and in the culture of how partners work together.
- Openness**
Leaders and partners are open to learning and change
- External relationships**
Partners connect with individuals and organizations who can be a source for new ideas and resources

Performance refers to the ability of a partnership to achieve their goals and make an impact.



High performance looks different for different partnership types. Greater color intensity below denotes categories of performance that are highly important for overall performance for each partnership type.



UNDERSTANDING High-Performing Partnerships

The following categories of performance were inductively developed from the data.

- **Clarity and Direction**
 - Leadership, dedicated partners, and funding
 - Clear purpose and scope
 - Clear roles and decision-making
 - Effective communication and coordination
- **Action**
 - Strategic plan with prioritized actions
 - Well-executed actions
 - Ability to track progress and make improvements
- **Learning**
 - Trust to work through hard questions
 - Incorporation of new learning and latest science
 - Dissemination of learning
- **Alignment**
 - Standardized practices and norms
 - Systems for feedback and accountability
 - Ability to tell the story of learning and impact

Clarity and Direction are important for all partnership types to perform well, while other categories may be more or less important for overall performance depending on the partnership type ([See Partnership Types](#)). Partnerships can be a blend of different types and dynamically move from one to another.