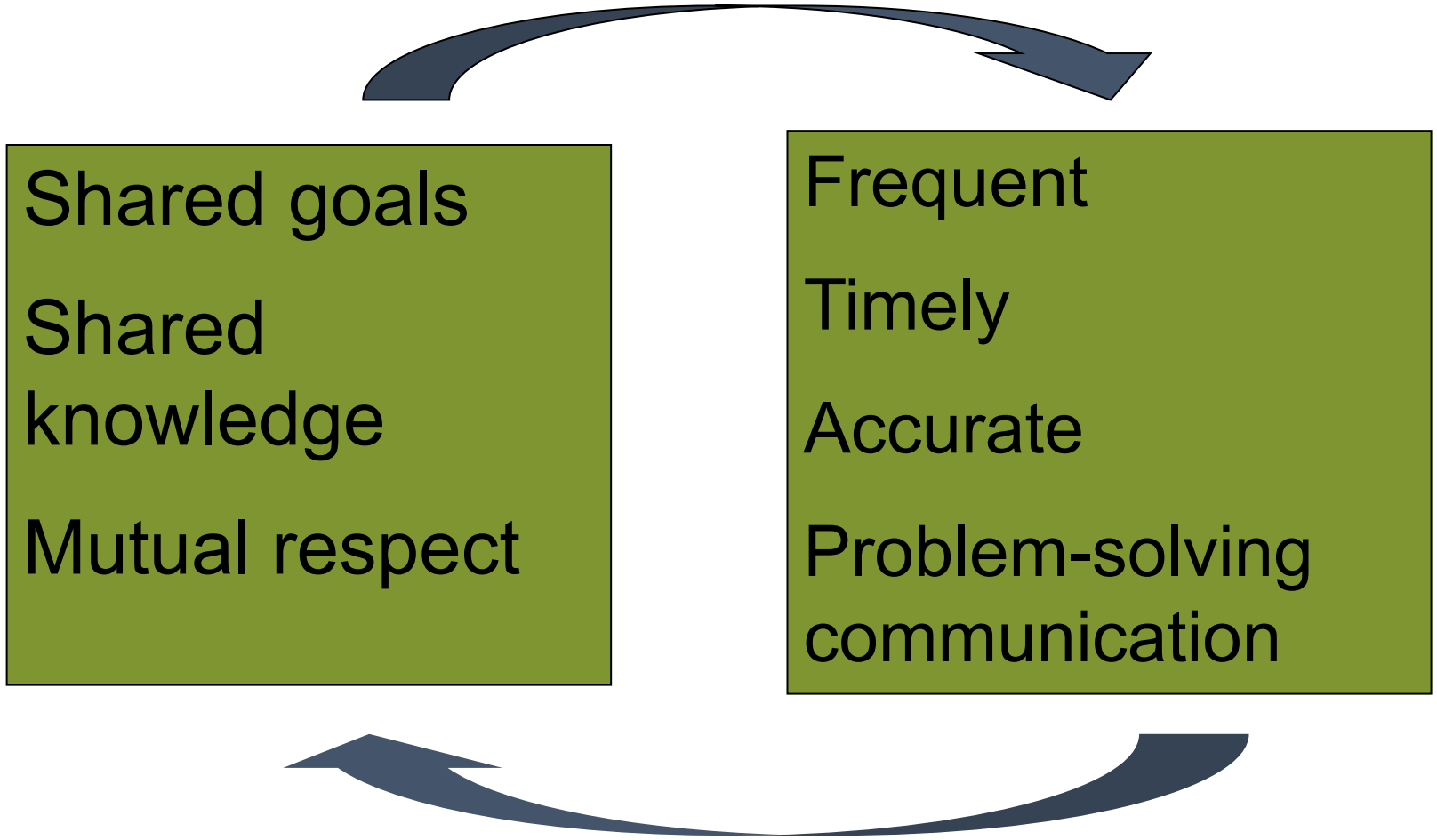
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational Coordination as a Framework for Performance Improvement and Positive Change

Relationships <u>shape</u> the communication through which coordination occurs ...

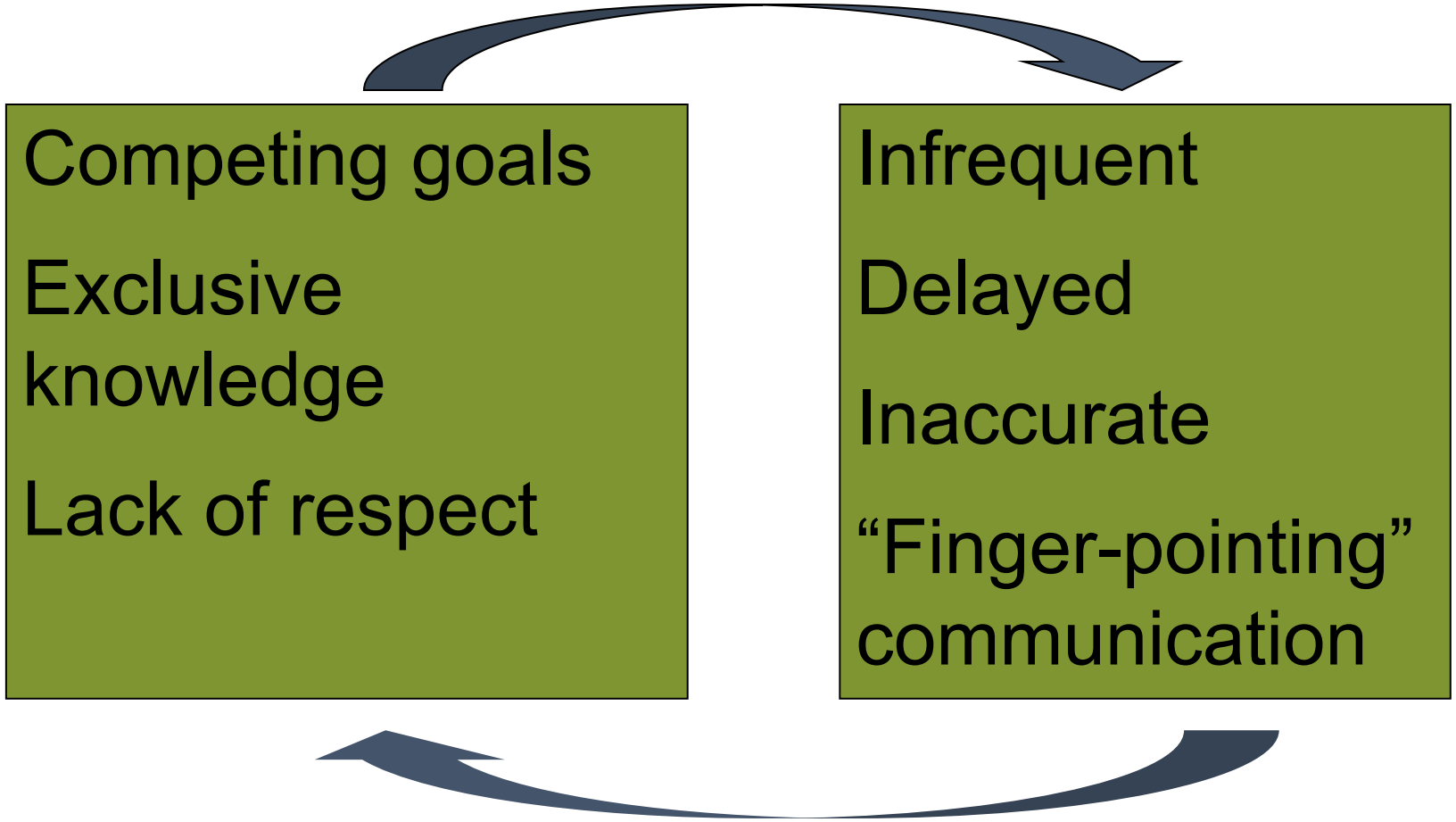
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

… for better



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

… or worse



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

This process is called

relational coordination

"Communicating and relating
for the purpose of task integration"

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

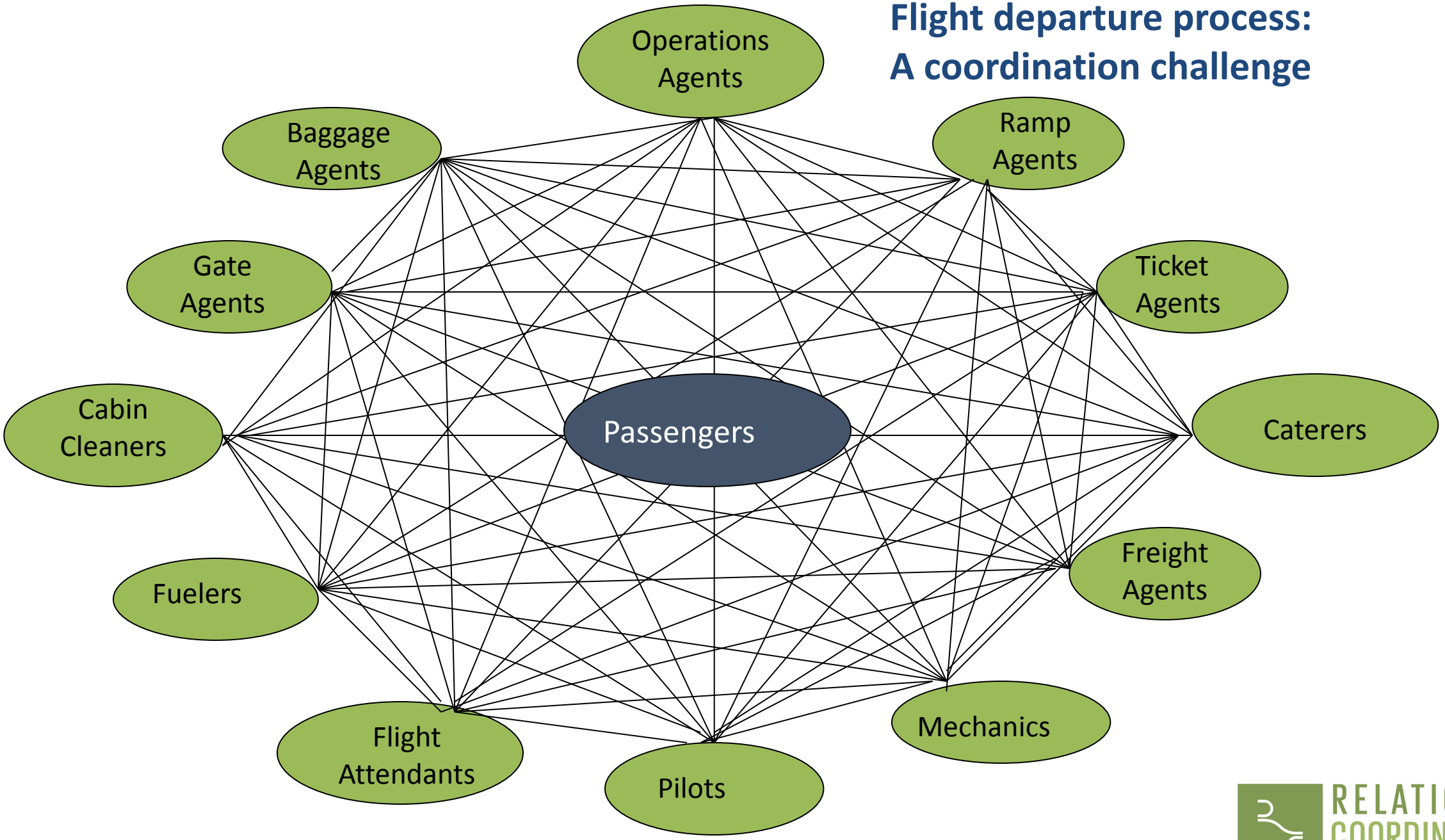
Investigated performance effects of relational coordination

- Nine site study of flight departures over 12 months of operation at Southwest, American, Continental and United
- Measured quality and efficiency performance, adjusting for product differences
- Measured relational coordination among pilots, flight attendants, gate agents, ticket agents, baggage agents, ramp agents, freight agents, mechanics, cabin cleaners, fuelers, caterers and operations agents

Gittell, J.H. (2003). The Southwest Airlines way: Using the power of relationships to achieve high performance. McGraw-Hill: New York.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Flight departure process: A coordination challenge



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

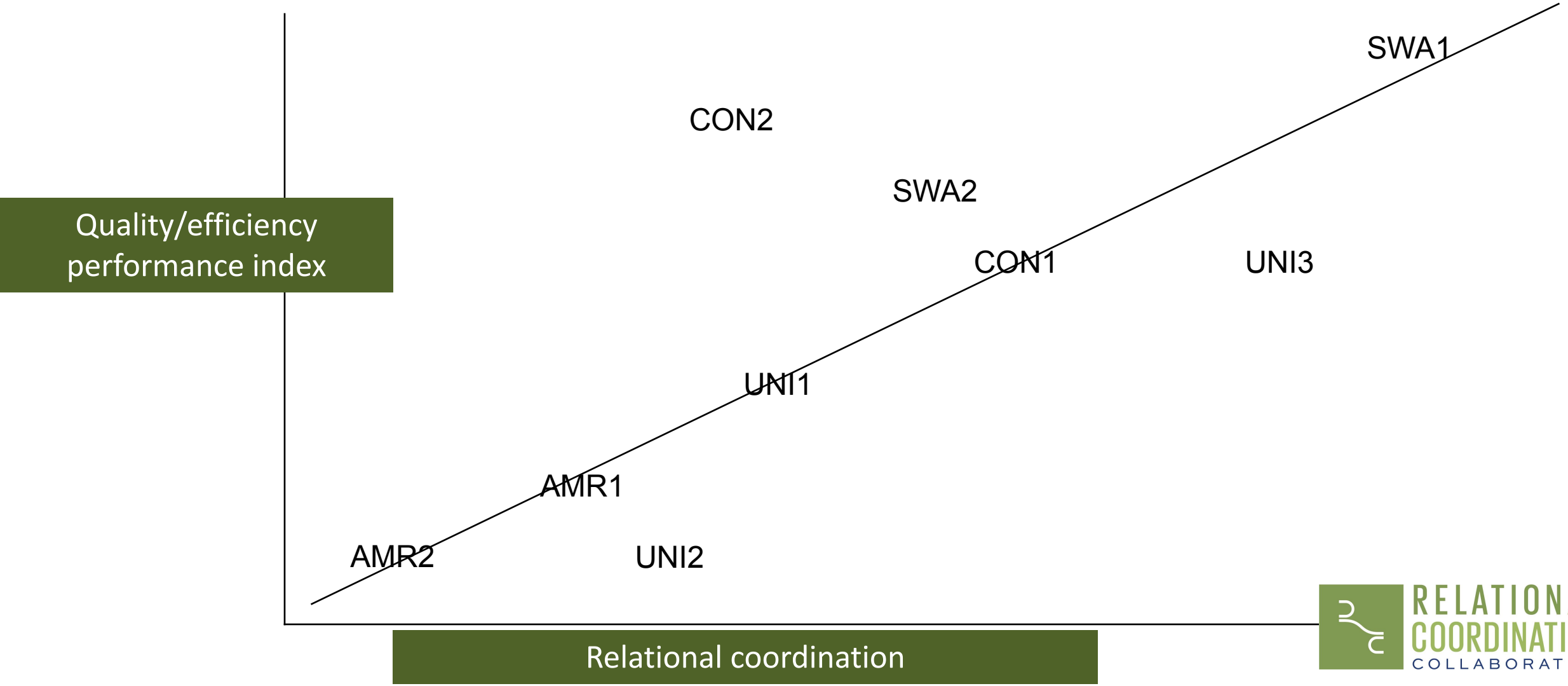
Relational coordination drives flight departure performance

	Efficiency		Quality		
	Gate time/ flight	Staff time/ passenger	Customer complaints	Lost bags	Late arrivals
Relational coordination	-.21***	-.42***	-.64***	-.31*	-.50**
Flights/day	-.19***	-.37***	-.30***	.13	-.22+
Flight length, passengers, cargo	.79***	.45***	.13	.12	-.54**
Passenger connections	.12**	.19**	.09	.13	.00
R squared	.94	.81	.69	.19	.20

Observations are months (n=12) in airport locations (n=9). Standardized coefficients are shown.

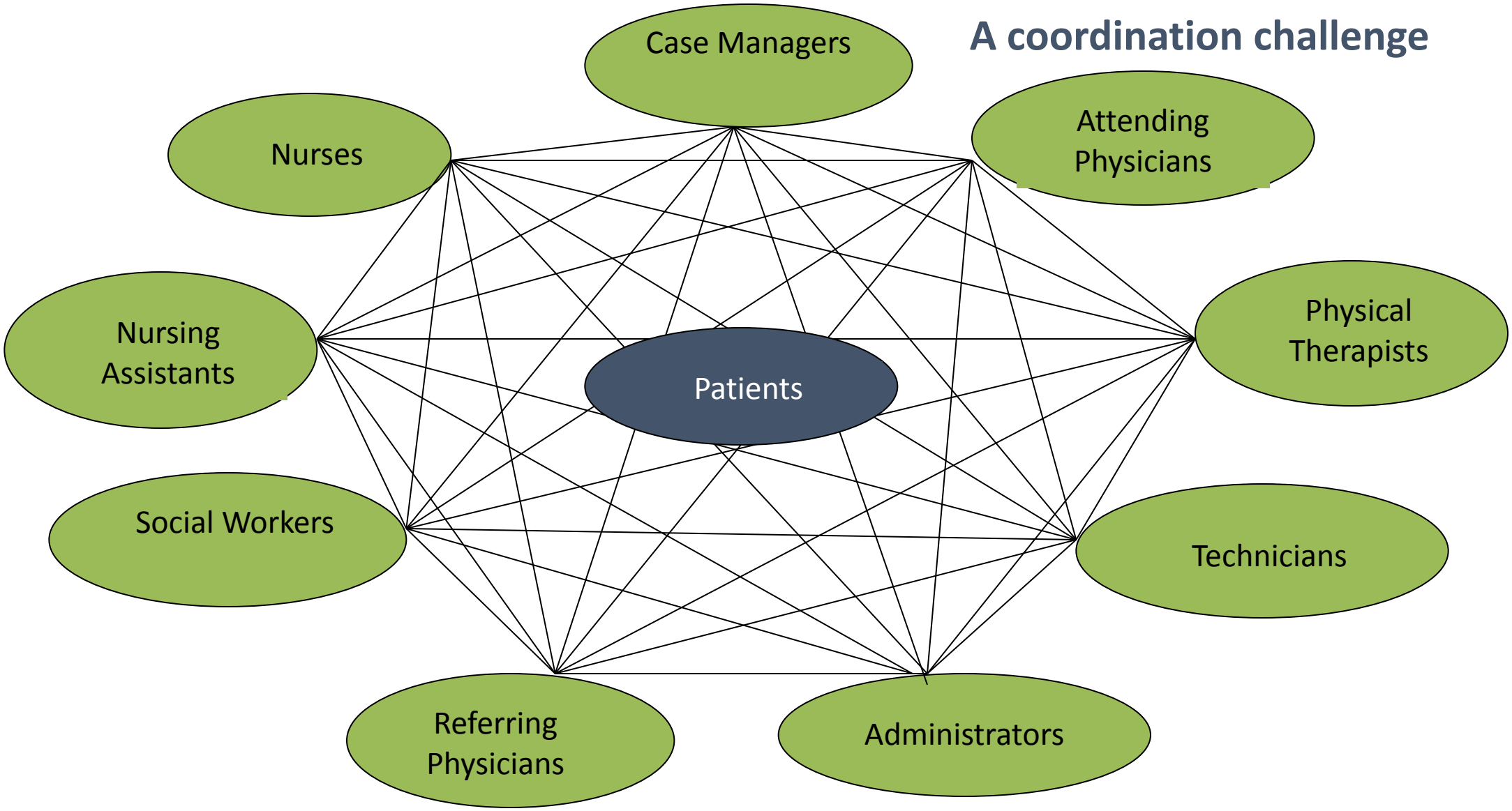
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational coordination drives flight departure performance



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Patient care:
A coordination challenge



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Institute of Medicine report

"The current system shows too little cooperation and teamwork. Instead, each discipline and type of organization tends to defend its authority at the expense of the total system's function." (2003)

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Physicians recognize the problem

"The communication line just wasn't there. We thought it was, but it wasn't. We talk to nurses every day but we aren't really communicating."

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Nurses observe the same problem

"Miscommunication between the physician and the nurse is common because so many things are happening so quickly. But because patients are in and out so quickly, it's even more important to communicate well."

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Same study conducted in hospital setting

- Nine hospital study of 893 surgical patients
- Measured quality and efficiency performance -- and job satisfaction, adjusting for patient differences
- Measured relational coordination among doctors, nurses, physical therapists, social workers and case managers

Gittell, J. H. (2003). High performance healthcare: Using the power of relationships to achieve quality, efficiency and resilience. McGraw-Hill: New York.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

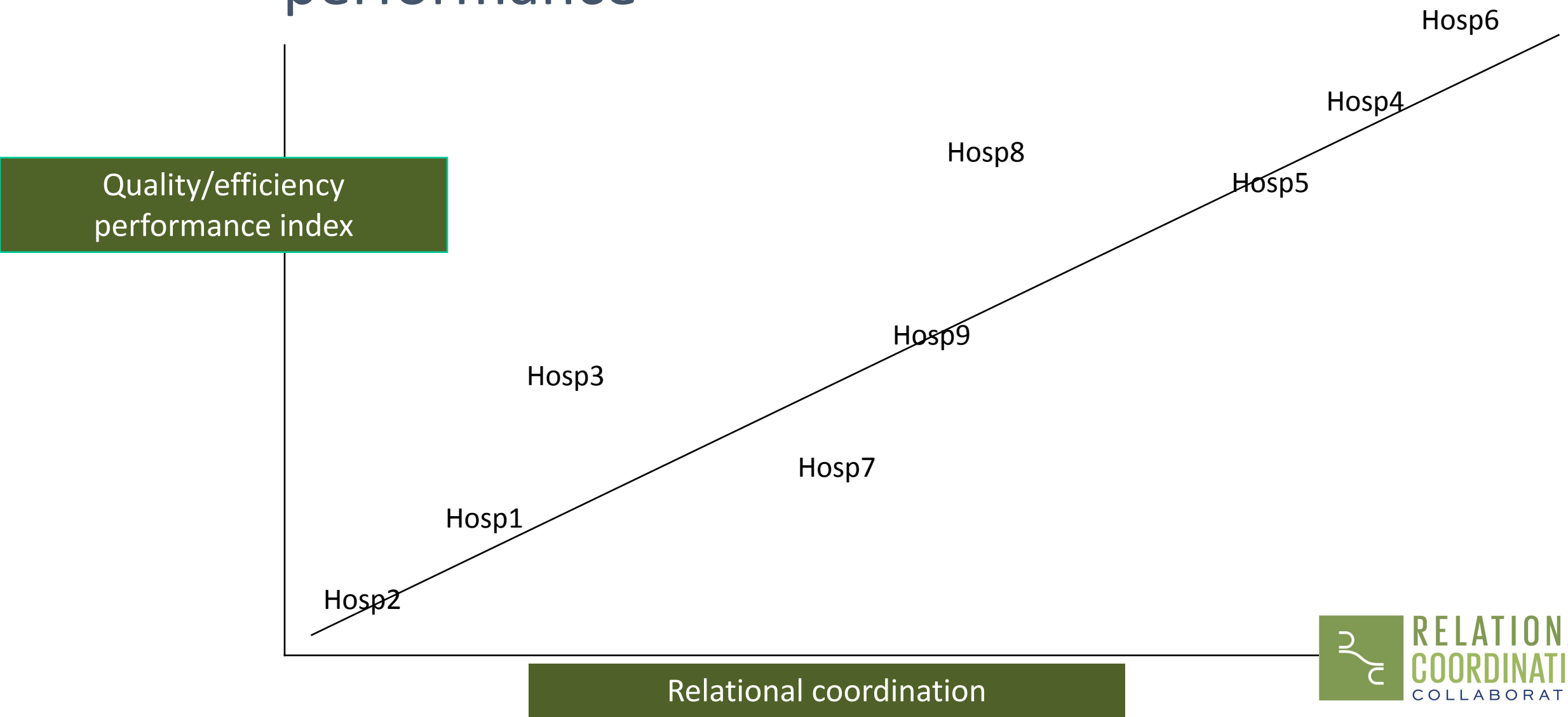
Relational coordination drives surgical performance

	Length of stay	Patient satisfaction	Freedom from pain	Mobility
Relational coordination	-.33***	.26***	.08*	.06+
Patient age	.02	.00	.01	.04
Comorbidities	.09*	.07	.01	.04
Pre-op status	.03	.01	.20***	.28***
Surgical volume	.11**	.10*	.06+	.03
R Squared	.82	.63	.50	.22

Observations are patients (n=878) in hospitals (n=9). Model also included gender, marital status, psychological well-being and race. Standardized coefficients are shown.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational coordination drives surgical performance



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Research has continued…

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

across multiple sectors….

Commercial Sector
- Accounting
- Airlines
- Asset management
- Auditing
- Banking
- Consulting
- Construction
- Electronics
- Engineering
- Finance
- Fishing
- Information technology
- Machine suppliers
- Manufacturing
- Multinationals
- Pharmacy
- Pharmaceuticals
- Private equity
- Renewable energy
- Road infrastructure
- Software
- Telecommunications
- Venture investing

Human Services Sector
- Autism care
- Child services
- Community collaboration
- Criminal justice
- Disability care
- Early child intervention
- Intellectual disability care
- Social movements
- Sports
- Substance use treatment
- Youth services

Education Sector
- Early child education
- E-learning
- Elementary education
- Higher education
- Medical school
- Nursing school
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Translational research

Healthcare Sector
- Cardiology
- Care continuum
- Chronic care
- Community based care
- Diagnostics
- Elder care
- Emergency care
- Gynecological care
- Hepatology
- Health systems
- Home care
- Intensive care
- Long term care
- Medical care
- Mental health care
- Neonatal intensive care
- Obstetric care

Healthcare Sector
- Oncology
- Palliative care
- Perioperative care
- Primary care
- Psychiatric care
- Public health
- Rehabilitation care
- Specialty care
- Surgical care
- Telehealth
- Transplant care
- Trauma care
- Veterinary care

Bolton, R., Logan, C., & Gittell, J. H. (2021). Revisiting relational coordination: A systematic review. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *57*(3), 290-322.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

… and multiple countries

North America
- Canada
- United States

South America
- Argentina
- Ecuador

Europe
- Austria
- Belgium
- Denmark
- England
- France
- Germany
- Iceland

Europe (continued)
- Ireland
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Portugal
- Scotland
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland

Africa
- Egypt
- Nigeria
- South Africa

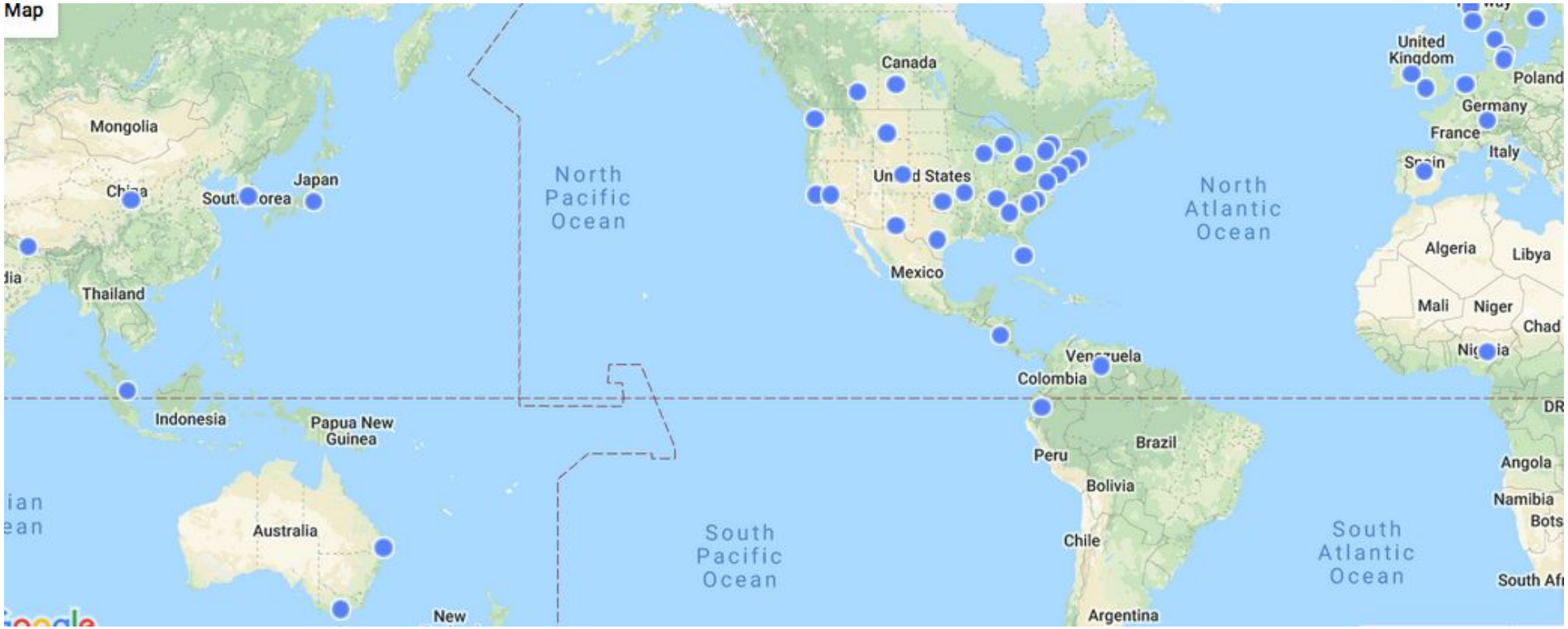
Middle East
- Israel
- Lebanon
- Saudi Arabia

Asia
- China
- India
- Japan
- Malaysia
- Pakistan
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Australia
- New Zealand

Bolton, R., Logan, C., & Gittell, J. H. (2021). Revisiting relational coordination: A systematic review. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *57*(3), 290-322.

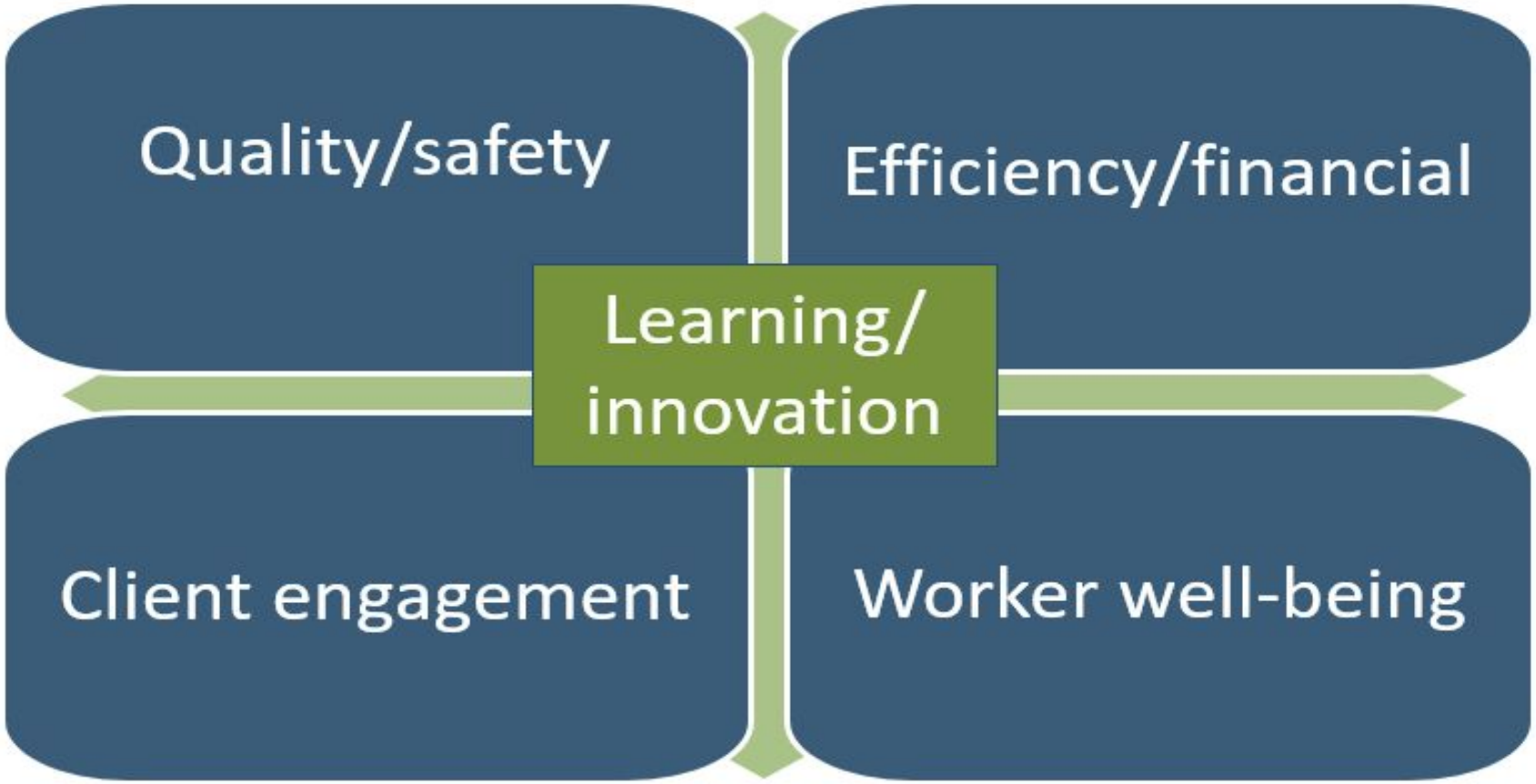
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

…around the world



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Performance outcomes of RC



Bolton, R., Logan, C., & Gittell, J. H. (2021). Revisiting relational coordination: A systematic review. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *57*(3), 290-322.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

When does relational coordination matter most?

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

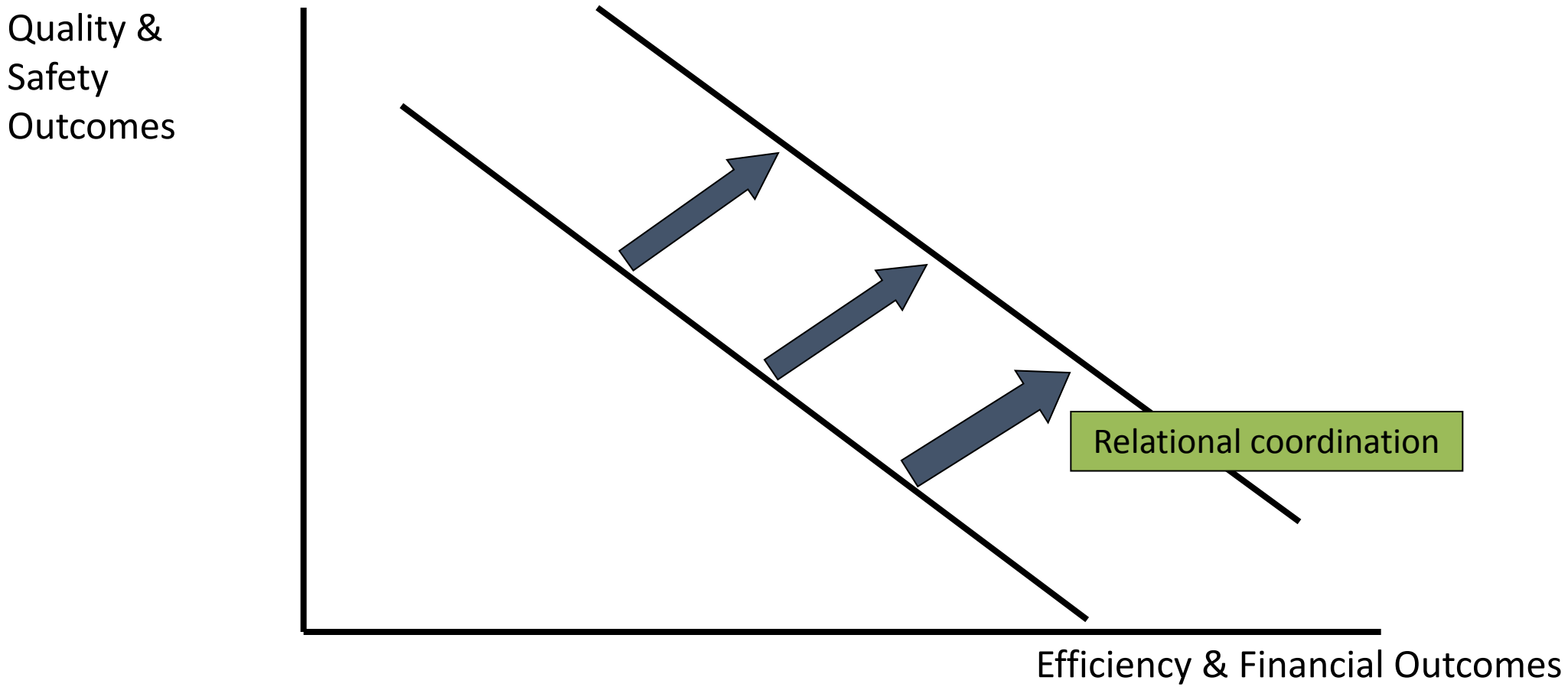
Relational coordination matters most under conditions of complexity

- Task interdependence
- Uncertainty
- Time sensitivity

Gittell, J. (2002). Coordinating mechanisms in care provider groups: Relational coordination as a mediator and input uncertainty as a moderator of performance effects. *Management science*, *48*(11), 1408-1426.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

RC shifts the quality/efficiency frontier to *create value*



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

There are *other* useful responses to performance challenges…

- Reengineering
- Total quality management
- PDSA
- Quality improvement
- Lean/ six sigma
- High reliability

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Addressing technical issues is necessary - but not sufficient

"We've been doing process improvement for several years, and we think we're on the right track. But we've tried a number of tools for process improvement, and they just don't address the relationship issues that are holding us back."

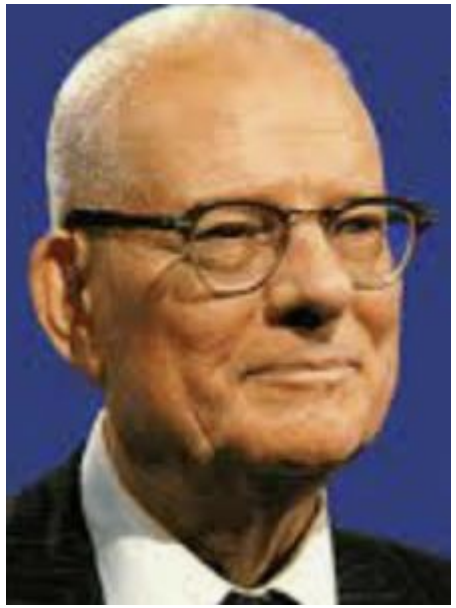
- Bob Hendler, Tenet Healthcare Systems

Baker, N. J., Suchman, A., & Rawlins, D. (2016). Hidden in plain view: Barriers to quality improvement. *Physician Leadership Journal*, *3*, 54-7.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

How does RC improve learning and innovation?

Relationships of shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect promote a culture that supports process improvement



Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the Crisis*. MIT Press.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

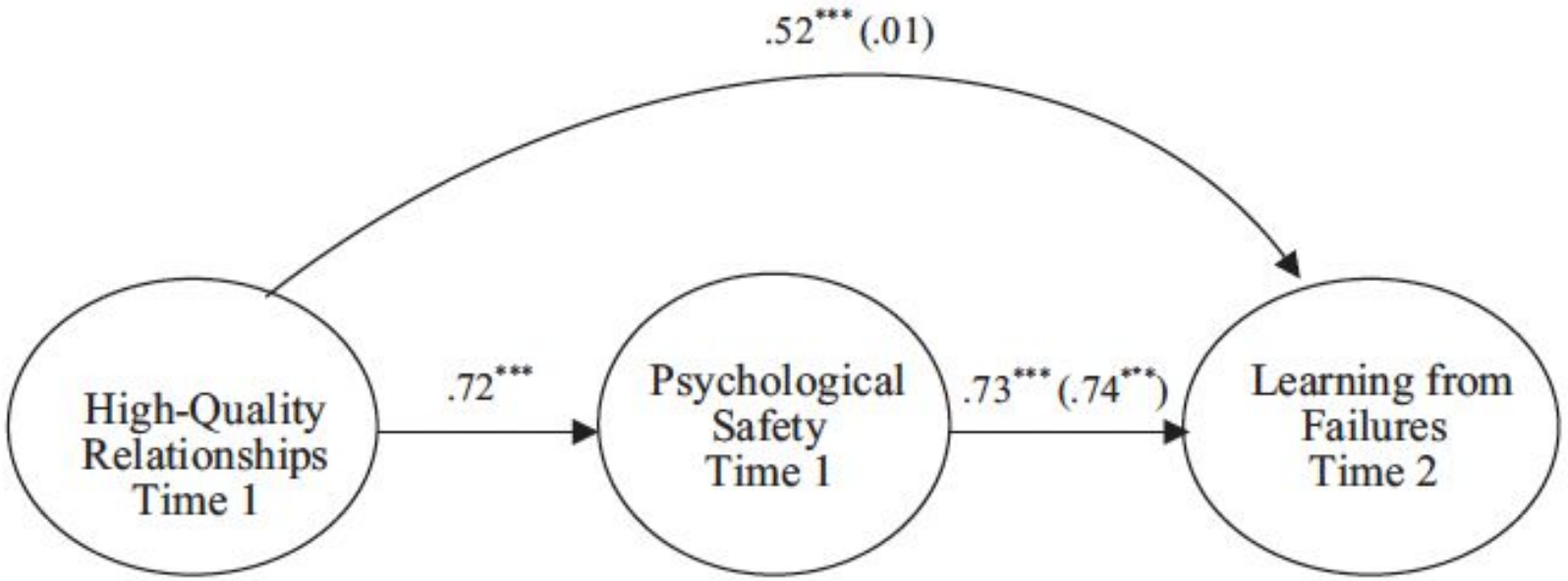
How does RC improve learning and innovation?

Positive relationships evoke positive emotions – activating more advanced part of our brain - thus supporting learning and innovation

Fredericksen, B. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of Biological Sciences*.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

How does RC improve learning and innovation?



Carmeli, A., & Gittell, J. H. (2009). High-quality relationships, psychological safety, and learning from failures in work organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior.*

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

How does RC improve worker outcomes?

Relational coordination enables workers to achieve better quality outcomes for their clients and customer with

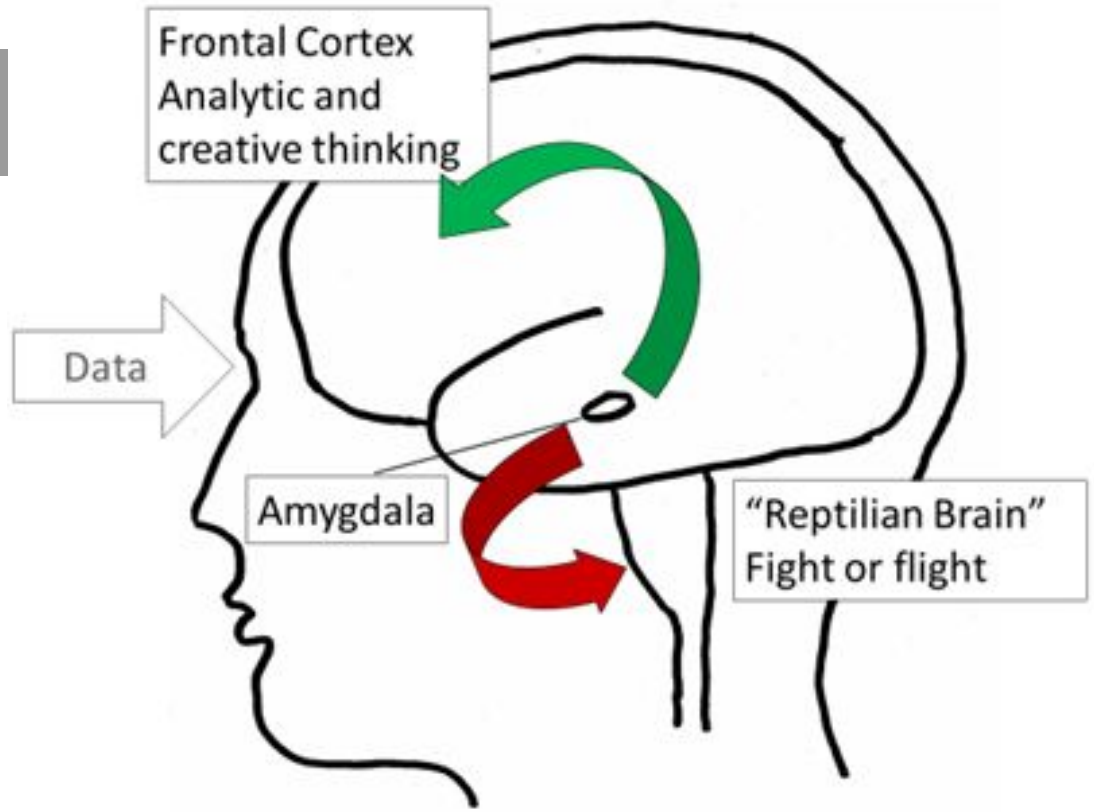
- less wasted effort
- less stress
- therefore less burnout

Gittell, J. H., Weinberg, D., Pfefferle, S., & Bishop, C. (2008). Impact of relational coordination on job satisfaction and quality outcomes: a study of nursing homes. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *18*(2), 154-170.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

How we communicate and relate affects our brains

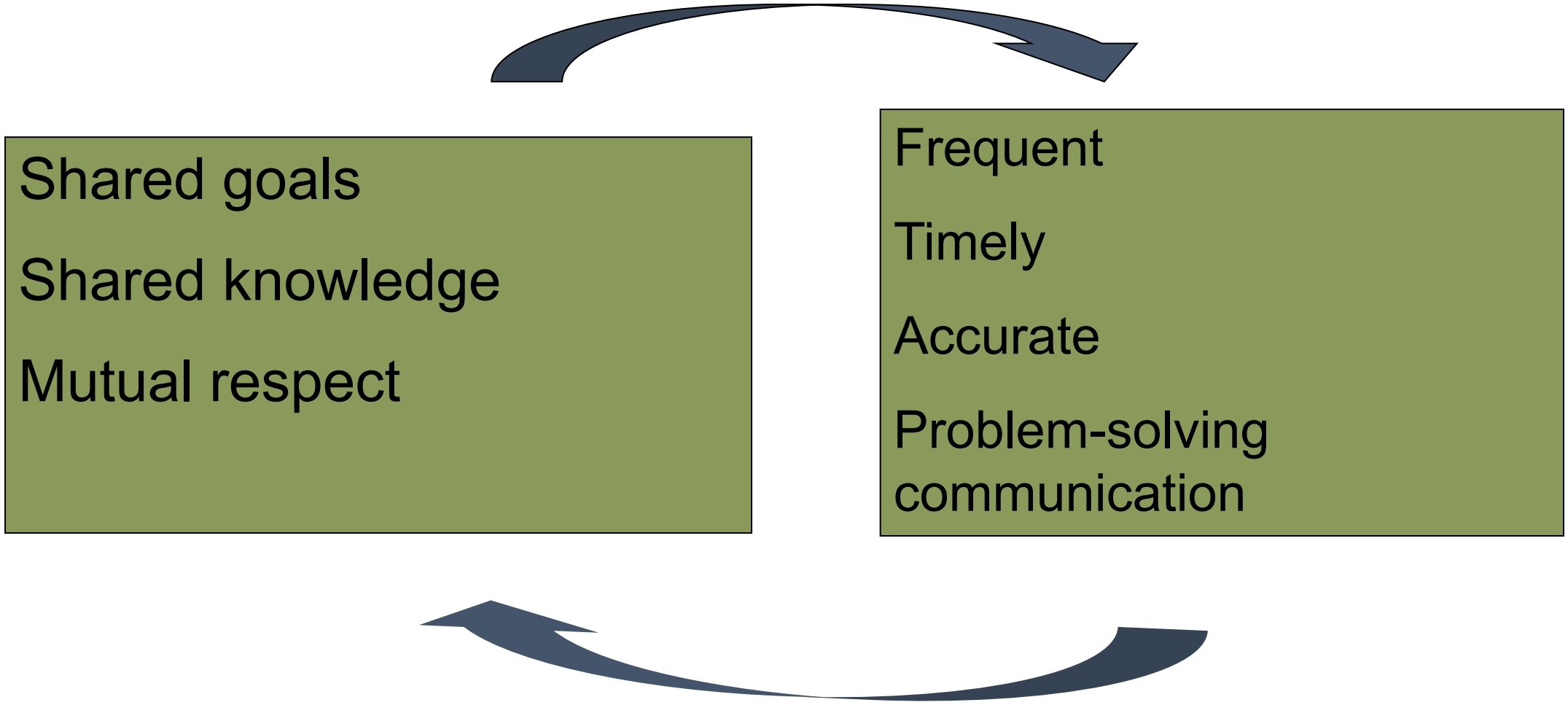
for better…



…or worse

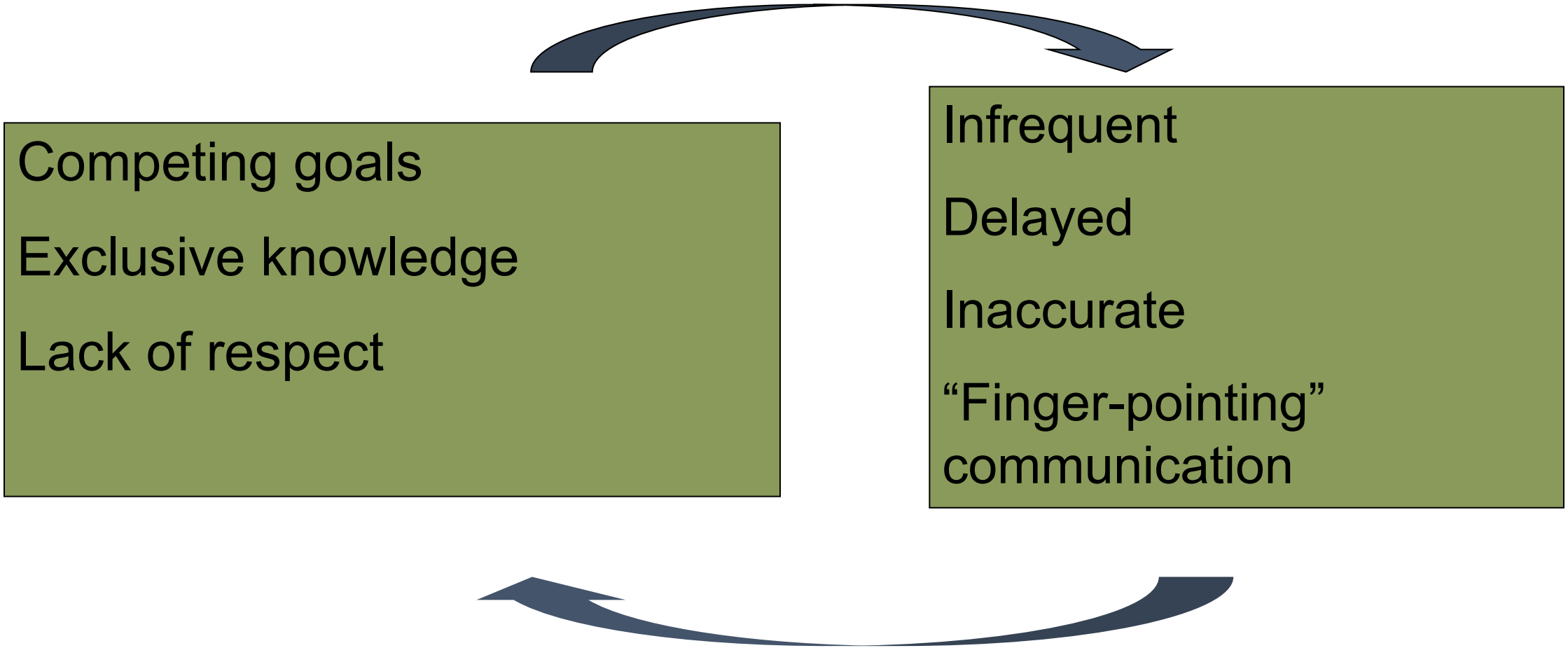
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

We can create positive spirals …



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

… or negative spirals



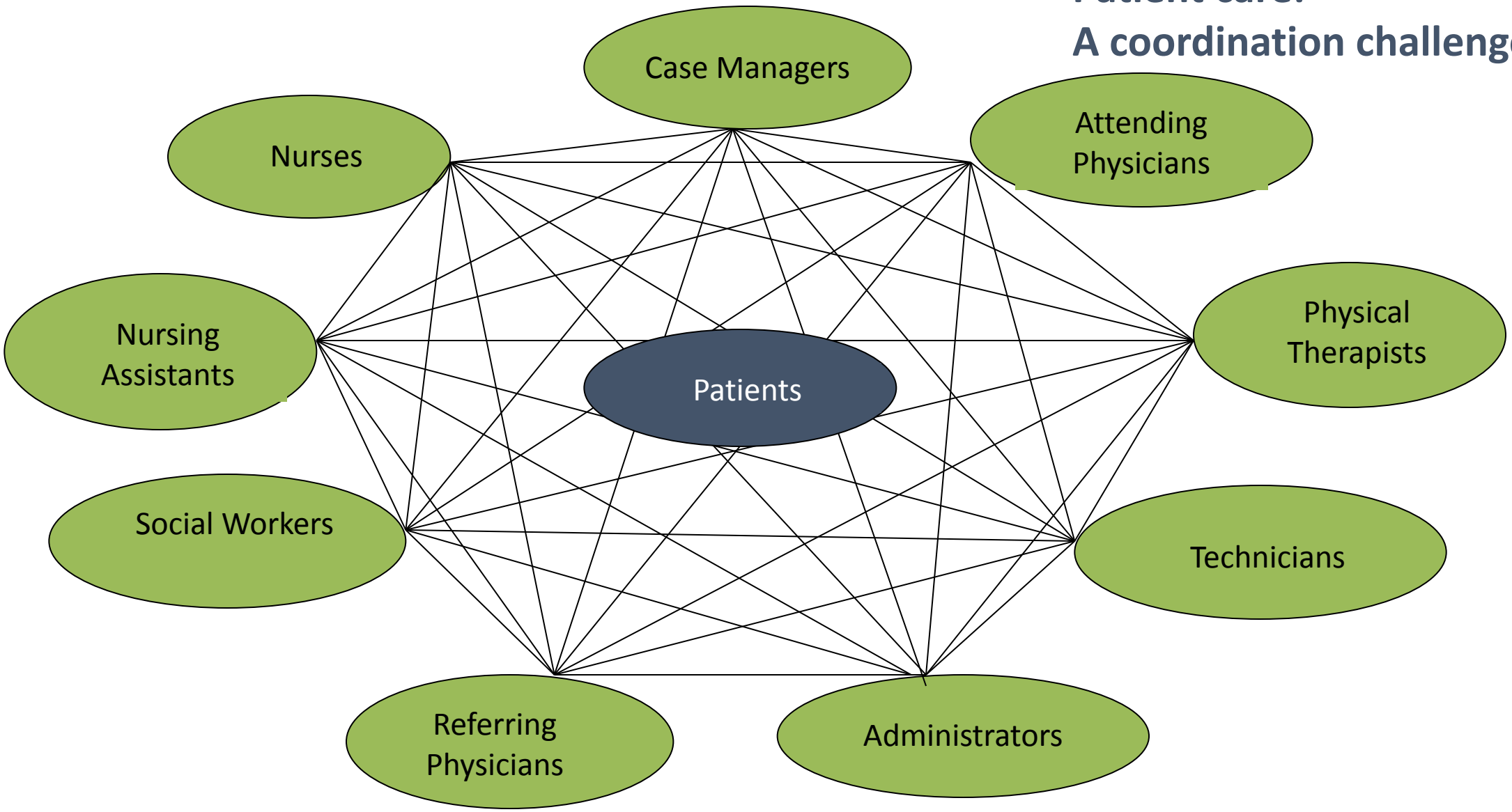
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

In sum….

Relationships of shared goals,
shared knowledge and mutual respect help people to
connect in productive ways around
the work they do together

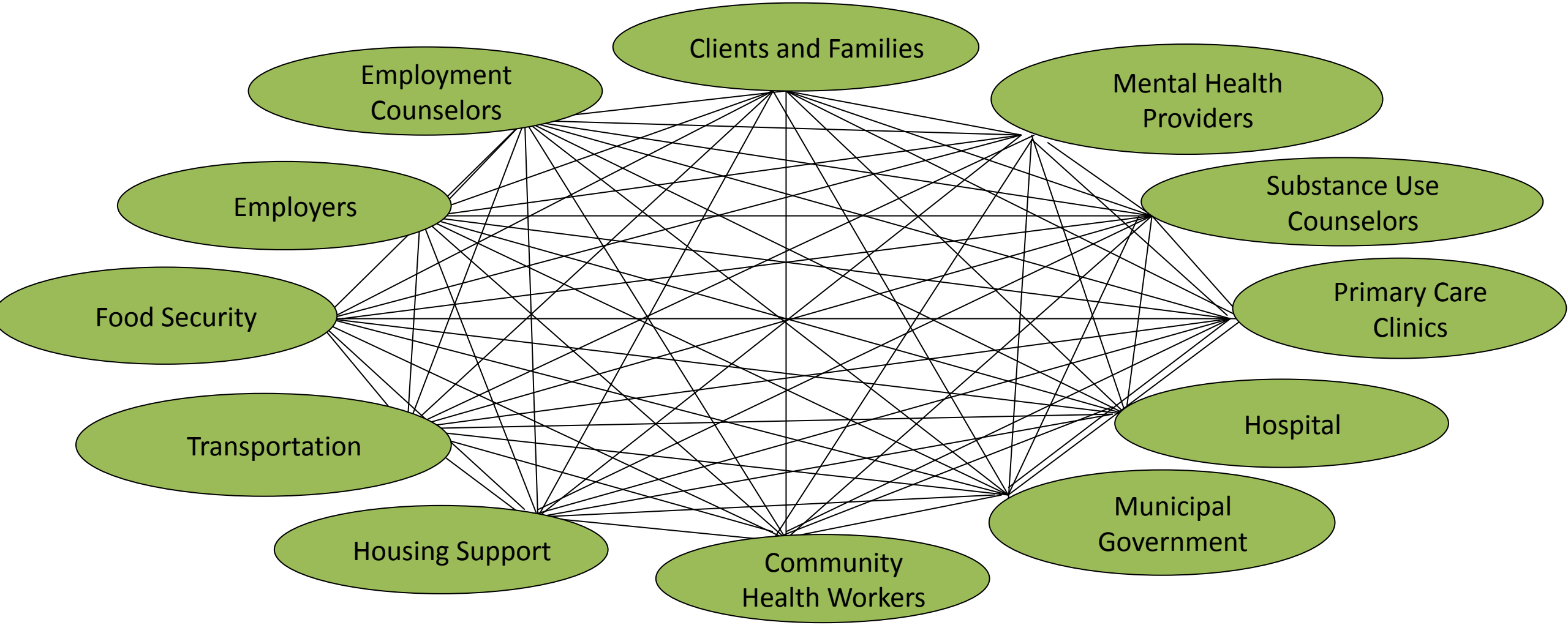
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Patient care:
A coordination challenge



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Building healthy communities: A coordination challenge



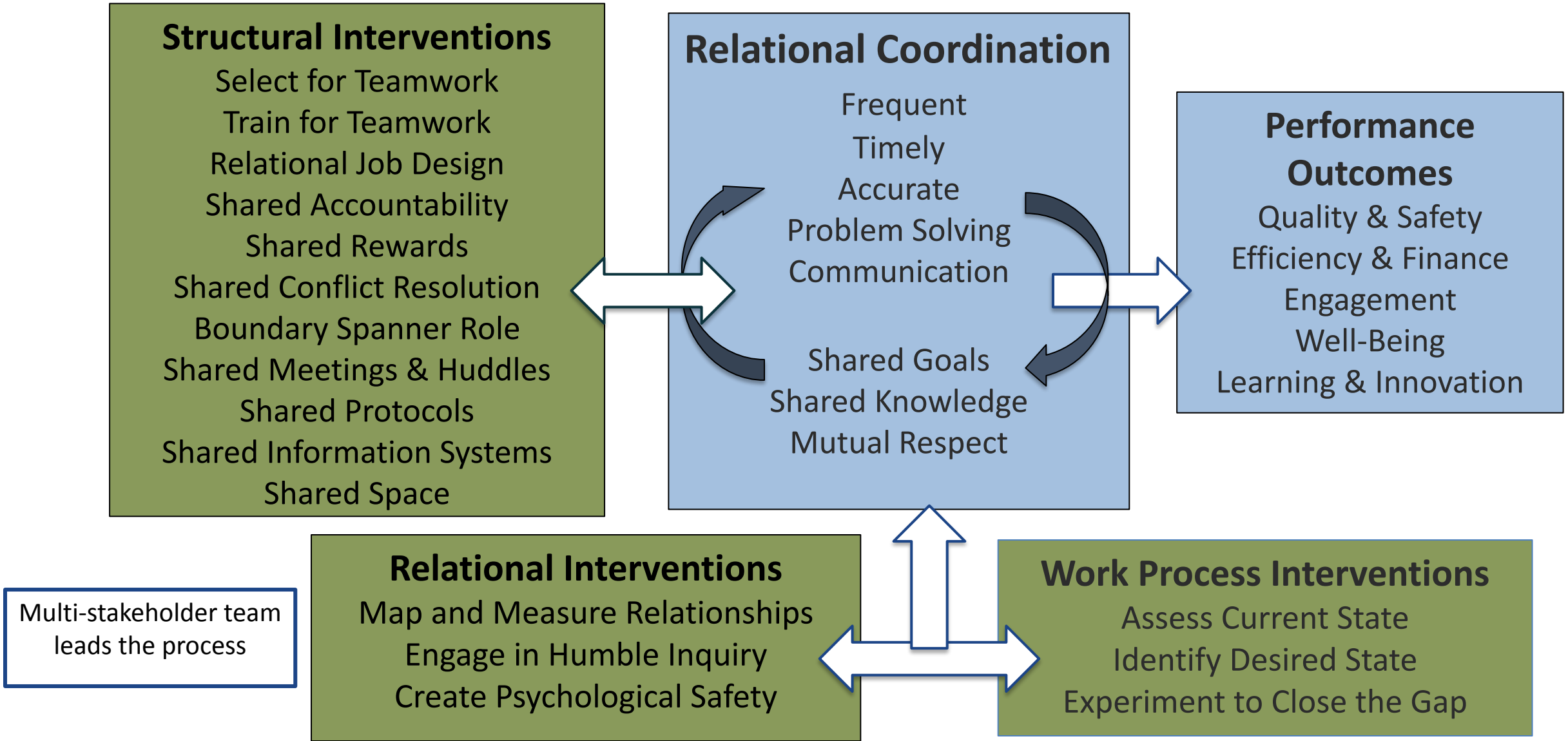
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

But how do we get from here to there?

Gittell, J. H. (2016). Transforming relationships for high performance: The power of relational coordination. Stanford University Press.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational model of change



Six stages of change

- Stage 1: Explore context and create change team
- Stage 2: Assess relational coordination
- Stage 3: Assess structures
- Stage 4: Design interventions
- Stage 5: Implement interventions
- Stage 6: Assess progress and spread the learning

A cycle of continuous improvement

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Three types of interventions

- **Relational interventions** help to strengthen relational coordination
- **Structural interventions** help to support and sustain relational coordination
- **Work process interventions** are participatory problem solving methods for continuous improvement (lean, six sigma, PDSA, improvement science, etc.)

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

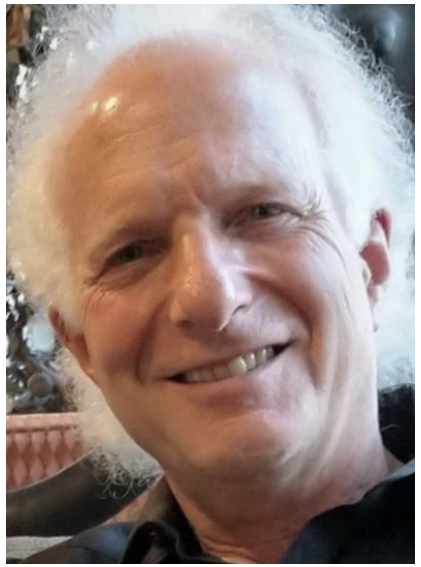
Relational interventions

- *Relational mapping* to see the whole
- *Humble inquiry* to create psychological safety
- *Top priorities* to identify shared goals
- *Conversations of interdependence* to build shared knowledge
- *Conversations of difference* to build shared knowledge
- *Improvisation* to see the perspective of others
- *Walk a mile* to see the perspective of others
- *Stepping stones* to shared personal narratives
- *Behavioral standards* to build mutual respect

Gittell, J. H. (2016). Relational interventions in *Transforming relationships for high performance: The power of relational coordination*. Stanford University Press.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational interventions



"Relational interventions are interventions that improve participants' capacity to self-manage their interdependence; to understand their common goal, to understand how their work fits into the larger work process, and to carry out their work with a mindfulness of how their actions affect the work of others."

– Tony Suchman

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build psych safety

- Set up the room to signal inclusion
- Be attentive to who is invited, why they are invited and your expectations for their participation
- Role model positive relational behaviors
- Establish behavioral standards
- Engage in humble inquiry

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build psych safety

PEARLS

Partnership	We'll get through this together
Empathy	It sounds like that was difficult for you
Acknowledgement	That was really well done
Respect	I respect that about you
Legitimation	Anyone would feel [happy/disappointed] after going through that
Support	Just know I'm here to help

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build psych safety

- Humble inquiry
- Express vulnerability by asking questions to which you don't know the answer
- Admit publicly you rely on the expertise of others, thus lowering status barriers based on expertise
- "Each of us knows a lot but we can't possibly know everything - we need diverse perspectives to see the whole picture"

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build psych safety

- Relational repair
- Are you OK? Did I say the wrong thing? (empathy, humble inquiry)
- Reflect back what you hear (reflective listening)
- I have a lot to learn (acknowledge)
- Propose a follow up action

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build shared goals

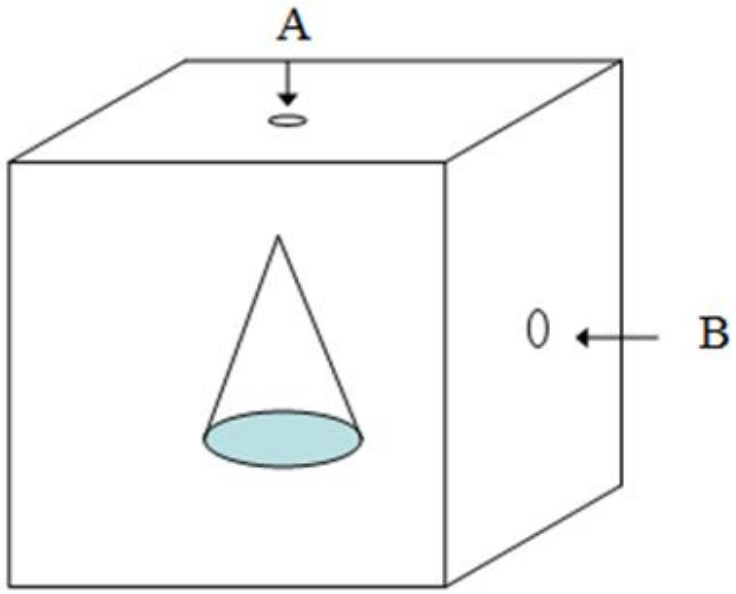
- Sit around a table or on zoom with all roles in focal work process
- Each person writes down top three goals their role has for the work, on sticky notes (real or virtual)
- Place in the center, organize by theme
- Note common themes, note differences
- Any goals that you can all agree on?
- Any different goals that you can support?
- Any competing goals you will need to resolve, and how?

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build shared knowledge

When we include diverse perspectives, we can see more together

Cone in the Box



Adapted from Brown J. "A Leader's Guide to Reflective Practice." Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2007.

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RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build shared knowledge

- Conversations of interdependence
- Find one partner from another role and ask:
  - What do you find most meaningful about your work?
  - What it is about how I do my work that helps you do yours?
  - What could I do differently that would help you more?
- Then switch places

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build shared knowledge

- Conversations of similarities and differences
- Find one partner from a different role and ask:
  - What are some of the things we have in common? Professionally? Personally?
  - What are some of our differences? Professionally? Personally?
  - How might those differences impact how we work together? Positively? Negatively?
  - How could we use our differences to create more value?
- Then switch places

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational intervention to build mutual respect

- Sit around a table or on zoom with all roles in focal work process
- Each person writes down three things that help them to feel respected, on sticky notes (real or virtual)
- Put them in the center, organize by themes
- Note common themes
- Note differences
- Create behavioral standards for the group, based on the themes

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Structural interventions

- Select & train for teamwork
- Relational job design
- Shared accountability
- Shared rewards
- Shared conflict resolution
- Boundary spanner roles
- Shared meetings & huddles
- Shared protocols
- Shared information systems
- Shared space

Gittell, J. H. (2016). Structural interventions in *Transforming relationships for high performance: The power of relational coordination*. Stanford University Press.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Organizational structures assessment tool

Structures	Nurses	Case managers	Physicians	Residents	Physical therapy	Respiratory therapy
Selection for Teamwork						
Training for Teamwork						
Relational Job Design						
Shared Accountability						
Shared Rewards						
Conflict Resolution						
Boundary Spanner Role						
Shared Meetings & Huddles						
Shared Protocols						
Shared Info Systems						
Shared Space						

WEAK SUPPORT **MODERATE SUPPORT** **STRONG SUPPORT**

Structural interventions

- Which structures are currently *most supportive* of relational coordination?
- Which structures are currently *least supportive* of relational coordination?
- Where are the biggest opportunities for improving your structures?
- Where will you start? What obstacles will you face?
- Who will you need to engage from within (and possibly outside) the organization?

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Work process interventions

Participatory problem solving methods provide an iterative approach to improvement based on experimentation

- Total quality management
- Quality improvement
- Lean/six sigma
- High reliability
- Improvement science

Gittell, J. H. (2016). Work process interventions. *Transforming relationships for high performance: The power of relational coordination*. Stanford University Press.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Stage 5: Implement interventions

Developed by Dr. Tony Suchman,
Relationship Centered Health Care

- Be the change (parallel process); you can't use the old culture to create the new one
- Include all relevant stakeholders (some may be less visible)
- Use RC to open up conversations, not to close them down
- Engage people in doing the work for themselves rather than doing it for them

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Implement interventions

- Motivate stakeholders who come from distinct perspectives with different perceived levels of power to contribute time and effort to a change project
- Create a psychologically "safe space" for them to disagree respectfully
- Facilitate sensitive discussions among them
- Take care to avoid using metrics including RC survey results as report cards

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Stage 6: Assess progress and spread the learning

- Change team **assesses** progress with periodic assessments of RC, org structures and performance outcomes
- Change team **spreads** the learning through leadership mandate or positive contagion

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Assess progress and spread the learning

Relational interventions for organizational learning: An experience report

Introduction: Quality improvement and implementation science practitioners identify relational issues as important obstacles to success. Relational interventions may be important for successful performance improvement and fostering Learning Health Systems.
Methods: This case report describes the experience and lessons learned from implementing a relational approach to organizational change, informed by Relational Coordination Theory, in a health system. Structured interviews were used to obtain qualitative participant feedback. Relational Coordination was measured serially using a validated seven-item survey.
Results: An initial, relational intervention on one unit promoted increased participant engagement, self-efficacy, and motivation that led to the spontaneous, emergent dissemination of relational change, and learning into other parts of the health system. Staff involved in the intervention reported increased systems thinking, enhanced focus on communication and relationships as key drivers for improvement and learning, and greater awareness of organizational change as something co-created by staff and executives.

Thygeson, N. M., Logan, C., Lindberg, C., Potts, J., Suchman, A., Merchant, R., & Thompson, R. (2021). Relational interventions for organizational learning: An experience report. *Learning Health Systems*, *5*(3).

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

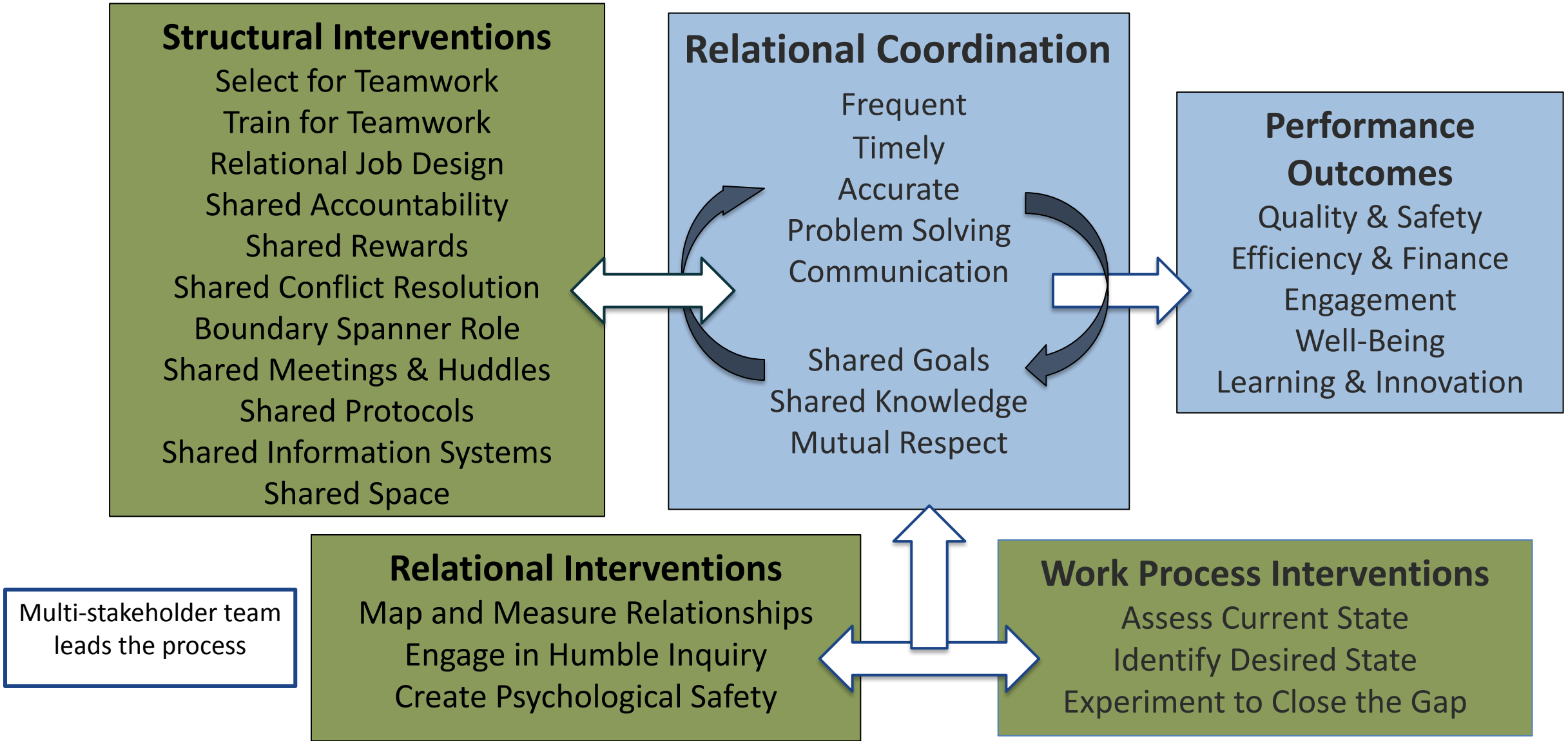
Six stages of change

- Stage 1: Explore context and create change team
- Stage 2: Assess relational coordination
- Stage 3: Assess structures
- Stage 4: Design interventions
- Stage 5: Implement interventions
- Stage 6: Assess progress and spread the learning

A cycle of continuous improvement

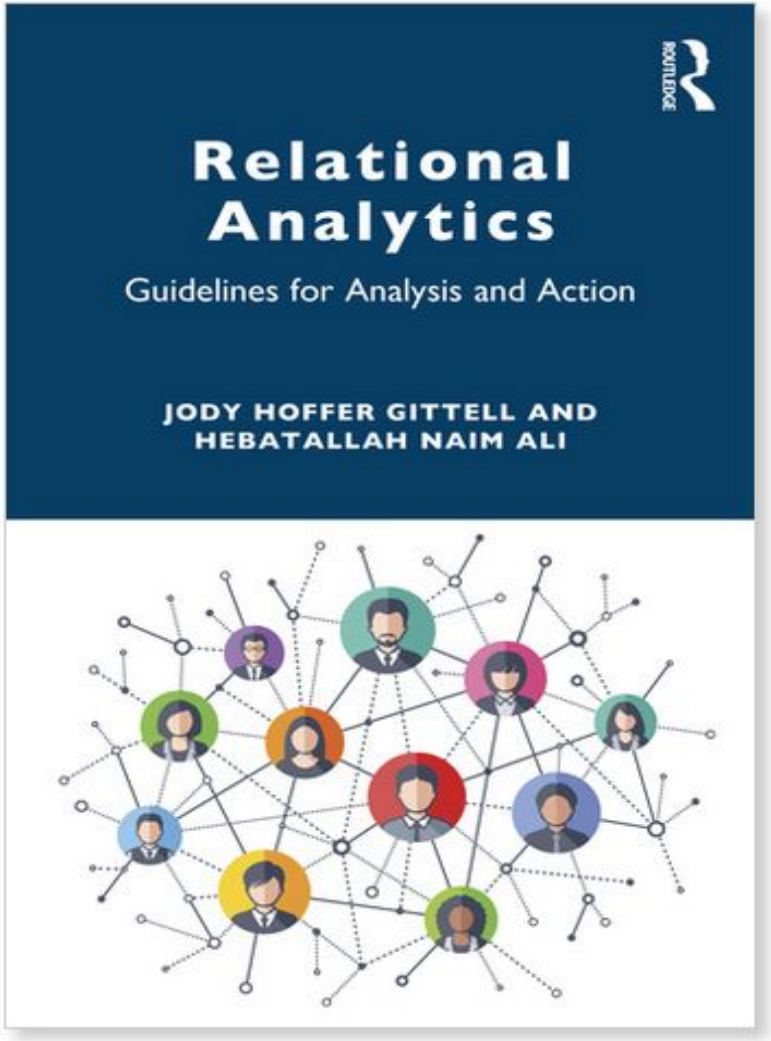
RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Relational model of change



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Visit the Relational Coordination Collaborative for more resources and a supportive community



We are witnessing a revolution in people analytics, where data are used to identify and leverage human talent to drive performance outcomes. Today's workplace is interdependent, and individuals drive performance through networks that span department, organization and sector boundaries. This book shares the relational coordination framework, with a validated scalable analytic tool that has been used successfully across dozens of countries and industries to understand, measure and influence networks of relationships in and across organizations, and which can be applied at any level in the private and public sectors worldwide.

Gittell, J.H. & Ali, H.N. (2021). *Relational Analytics: Guidebook for Analysis and Action.* Routledge Publishing.

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