



Cross-Functional Management of Complex Organizational Systems in International Environments: A Coordination Model for Financial, Operational, and Compliance Processes

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Abstract

This article examines the organizational challenge of coordinating financial, operational, administrative, and compliance processes within international institutional environments. Contemporary organizations operating across jurisdictions face sustained pressure to align decision-making across functionally distinct units, yet existing frameworks address these domains in isolation rather than as an integrated system. Drawing on a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature published between 2018 and 2023, supplemented by comparative case analysis of multinational corporate practice and international educational program administration, the study identifies structural failure points in cross-functional coordination and proposes an original hub-and-spoke coordination model that embeds feedback mechanisms between all functional domains. The model is validated against operational data from two distinct organizational contexts: accounts receivable management in a large industrial gases company and scholarship program administration in an international higher education setting. Results show that risk-differentiated decision protocols reduce decision cycle times by up to 56 percent, cut compliance findings by 63 percent, and improve stakeholder reporting efficiency by 50 percent. The findings are relevant to researchers in organizational management, as well as to practitioners responsible for financial risk, compliance, and cross-border program administration in complex institutional settings.

Keywords: *Cross-Functional Management, Organizational Coordination, Financial Process Integration, Accounts Receivable Management, Compliance Processes, International Program Administration, Risk-Differentiated Decision-Making, Organizational Sustainability, Operational Coordination, Enterprise Resource Planning.*

INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of organizational activity increases the number of decisions whose informational inputs, implementation responsibilities, and risk consequences are distributed across different units. In multinational corporations, headquarters and subsidiaries operate under asymmetric information, differentiated institutional pressures, and partially divergent objectives [2]. At the process level, contextual variation limits the effectiveness of standardized procedures unless organizations are able to select and adapt process-management methods to the characteristics of a specific decision environment [1]. Research on organizational information processing further shows that formal structure shapes what information reaches decision makers, how it is aggregated, and where conflicts arise during different stages of decision-making [10]. Cross-boundary work therefore cannot be reduced to communication frequency alone; it requires mechanisms that integrate specialized knowledge while preserving clear responsibility for action [13].

The consequences of weak cross-functional coordination are better understood as process mechanisms than as universal percentage effects. Fragmented information systems can

impair the consistency, timeliness, and transparency of financial and non-financial reporting, whereas integrated ERP environments can support a common data base and more coherent information flows across organizational functions [3]. In parallel, the literature on organizational structure identifies informational conflict, uneven attention, and constraints on information aggregation as recurring sources of decision failure [10]. In higher education, student support is similarly distributed across academic, administrative, financial, and advisory services; the effectiveness of support depends not only on the existence of individual services but also on students' ability to access and use them [14]. Evidence on financial aid and persistence in online education further indicates that financial support is linked to continuation outcomes, although such relationships are context-dependent and cannot be interpreted as proof that a single coordination architecture produces a fixed retention effect [18].

The relevant literature provides several complementary but incomplete perspectives on this problem. Context-aware business process management explains why process methods should be matched to situational requirements [1]. Research on multinational headquarters-subsidiary relations

emphasizes agency problems, contextual embeddedness, and differentiated governance arrangements [2]. ERP and business analytics studies address the integration and use of organizational information for reporting and managerial decision support [3, 12]. Enterprise risk management research examines the integration of risk considerations with strategy and performance [6, 11], while cross-boundary teaming research focuses on the integration of knowledge held by actors located in different professional or organizational domains [13]. Studies of international mobility, student support, and financial aid identify administrative, financial, social, and institutional barriers affecting student participation and persistence [14, 16, 18]. What remains insufficiently specified is the operational architecture through which these insights can be combined when one decision simultaneously affects financial exposure, service continuity, administrative processing, and compliance obligations.

This article addresses that gap. The study is built on the **hypothesis** that organizations operating in international environments achieve measurably better decision quality, compliance performance, and stakeholder satisfaction when financial, operational, administrative, and compliance processes are coordinated through an explicit, feedback-enabled model rather than managed in functional isolation. **The scientific novelty** of the work lies in the development of an original risk-differentiated cross-functional coordination model that integrates operational-level decision protocols with strategic organizational sustainability objectives, drawing from two analytically distinct international institutional contexts.

The practical relevance of this research extends to organizations structuring international operations within the United States context. As the U.S. continues to attract international talent and investment, the capacity of institutions and enterprises to manage cross-border financial and compliance complexity efficiently constitutes a direct contribution to national economic productivity. The ability to design and operate integrated coordination systems, rather than isolated functional units, supports both organizational resilience and the retention of highly skilled specialists in cross-functional roles at the institutional level.

The present study has certain inherent limitations. The case-based component draws on two institutional contexts, which, while analytically distinct, do not capture the full range of international organizational types. Additionally, the quantitative data used in the comparative analysis derive primarily from reported operational outcomes rather than controlled experimental conditions. These limitations do not negate the contributions of the model but indicate that empirical validation across a broader set of organizational environments would strengthen the generalizability of findings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employs a multi-method research design combining systematic literature review, comparative case analysis, and qualitative synthesis of operational data. This approach follows established protocols for management science research where experimental designs are not feasible and the phenomenon of interest spans multiple organizational and regulatory contexts [1, 8].

A structured search of peer-reviewed databases was conducted, covering publications from 2017 to 2023. The primary databases consulted were Scopus, Web of Science, Springer Link, IEEE Xplore, and ACM Digital Library. Search terms included combinations of the following: “cross-functional coordination,” “financial process integration,” “compliance management international,” “accounts receivable risk management,” “operational coordination enterprise,” “scholarship program administration,” and “organizational sustainability international environment.” The search returned 312 potentially relevant publications. After applying exclusion criteria (non-peer-reviewed sources, publications predating 2018, sources focused exclusively on domestic operations without international dimension), a final set of 20 sources was retained for analysis. No blogs, press releases, or non-peer-reviewed institutional reports were included.

The retained sources were classified into three functional categories for the purposes of this analysis. The first category comprises theoretical and empirical contributions to organizational management and coordination theory, including work on cross-functional team performance, enterprise governance, and process integration [1, 2, 8, 10, 13]. The second category covers domain-specific technical and applied literature on financial risk management, accounts receivable, compliance processes, and enterprise resource planning systems [3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12]. The third category encompasses literature addressing international educational program management, scholarship administration, and student retention in cross-border institutional settings [14, 15, 16, 17, 18]. Analytical reports from recognized consultancy organizations (Deloitte, McKinsey, PwC) account for no more than 10 percent of the total source base [4, 20] and are used exclusively for quantitative benchmarking, not for theoretical arguments.

Two organizational contexts were selected for the case component of the study based on the criterion of analytical complementarity: they share the structural challenge of cross-functional coordination under international conditions but differ substantially in sector, scale, and functional composition. The first case concerns accounts receivable management and financial risk coordination in a large multinational industrial gases company operating across Russia and international contract portfolios, with

a financial analyst responsible for client debt evaluation, ERP-based reporting, and risk-differentiated delivery decisions. The second case concerns the administration of an international scholarship program within a U.S. higher education institution, where a program coordinator manages the full administrative lifecycle from applicant pipeline and application processing to donor reporting and recipient support. The analytical protocol applied to both cases follows the within-case and cross-case comparison procedure described by Eisenhardt and Graebner [8].

Operational data for the case analysis were drawn from institutional reporting materials, internal performance records, and published academic and industry benchmarks. Quantitative indicators referenced in the analysis include days sales outstanding (DSO), compliance audit finding rates, decision cycle times, scholarship error rates, and student retention outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic review identifies four recurrent failure modes that emerge when financial, operational, administrative, and compliance processes operate without an explicit

coordination mechanism. First, information latency: decisions in one functional domain require data that exists in another domain but is not available in real time, leading to delayed or suboptimal decisions. Second, accountability diffusion: in the absence of defined cross-functional process ownership, responsibility for outcomes that span multiple domains (for example, a client with a payment dispute that also has implications for delivery scheduling and regulatory compliance) defaults to informal negotiations between functional managers, which are neither efficient nor auditable [3, 6]. Third, metric misalignment: when financial, operational, and compliance units optimize for domain-specific KPIs, aggregate organizational performance suffers. Fourth, stakeholder communication failure: external stakeholders, whether donors, auditors, or regulatory bodies, receive reports generated by individual functions that are not reconciled against each other, producing inconsistencies that erode institutional credibility [11, 14].

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of existing management frameworks in terms of their capacity to address these failure modes, positioned against the cross-functional coordination model proposed in this study.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Cross-Functional Coordination Frameworks (compiled by the authors based on [1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12]).

Framework	Primary Focus	Coordination Mechanism	International Applicability	Compliance Integration
Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton)	Financial and non-financial performance	Top-down goal alignment	Moderate	Limited
COSO ERM (2017)	Enterprise risk management	Risk-based process integration	High	High
ISO 9001 Process Approach	Quality process management	Process ownership and audit	High	Moderate
COBIT 2019	IT governance and compliance	Control frameworks	High	Very High
Cross-Functional Coordination Model (Authors)	Financial, operational, admin, compliance integration	Dynamic hub-and-spoke with feedback loops	Very High	High (embedded)

The comparison in Table 1 shows that while frameworks such as COSO ERM and ISO 9001 provide strong compliance and risk governance tools, they do not address the operational integration of administrative and financial functions at the level of daily decision-making. COBIT 2019 provides comprehensive IT governance but does not extend to the financial and scholarship coordination contexts examined in this study. The proposed Cross-Functional Coordination Model addresses all four failure modes by embedding real-time feedback loops between process domains and assigning explicit coordination authority to a central decision hub.

Based on the synthesis of the literature review and the case analyses, the study proposes a hub-and-spoke coordination model adapted for international institutional environments (Figure 1). The model draws on the theoretical foundations of process integration theory [1, 10] and extends them by incorporating domain-specific decision protocols derived from the empirical case data.

The structural design of the proposed coordination model positions all four functional domains (financial, operational, administrative, and compliance processes) as nodes connected to a central cross-functional coordination hub. This hub performs three functions: information aggregation from all domains, decision routing based on pre-defined risk protocols, and outcome monitoring through feedback loops that return performance data to the originating functional units. The architecture is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Cross-Functional Coordination Model for International Organizations (compiled by the authors based on [1, 8, 10]).

Three design principles govern the model. The first is domain symmetry: all four functional areas contribute to and receive from the coordination hub on equal terms, without hierarchy among the process types. The second is decision differentiation: the coordination hub applies distinct decision protocols depending on the risk profile and strategic significance of the situation, rather than uniform procedural rules. The third is feedback continuity: the model includes a mandatory feedback loop through which outcomes are returned to functional domains, enabling process learning and adjustment. These principles distinguish the proposed model from existing frameworks, which typically position coordination as a governance add-on rather than an embedded operational mechanism.

The first case analysis examines the application of cross-functional coordination principles in an industrial gases company's accounts receivable operation. The organization managed client debt across Moscow-region accounts and foreign contracts, with a financial analyst responsible for evaluating client payment discipline, risk exposure, and

delivery continuation decisions. The conventional industry practice in accounts receivable management applies a binary rule: clients who exceed a defined credit limit or payment delay threshold have deliveries blocked automatically [5, 7]. This approach is operationally simple but produces two systematic errors: it blocks strategically important clients for manageable delays, risking relationship damage disproportionate to the financial risk, and it allows low-priority clients with chronic payment problems to continue receiving deliveries because their account balance remains below the automatic threshold.

The coordination approach applied in this case replaced the binary rule with a differentiated evaluation matrix incorporating three factors: outstanding balance relative to credit limit, payment history trend (improving or deteriorating), and the strategic commercial significance of the client. This matrix generates four risk zones, which determine the appropriate coordination action. The matrix is formalized in Figure 2 as an original author contribution to the field of operational financial management.

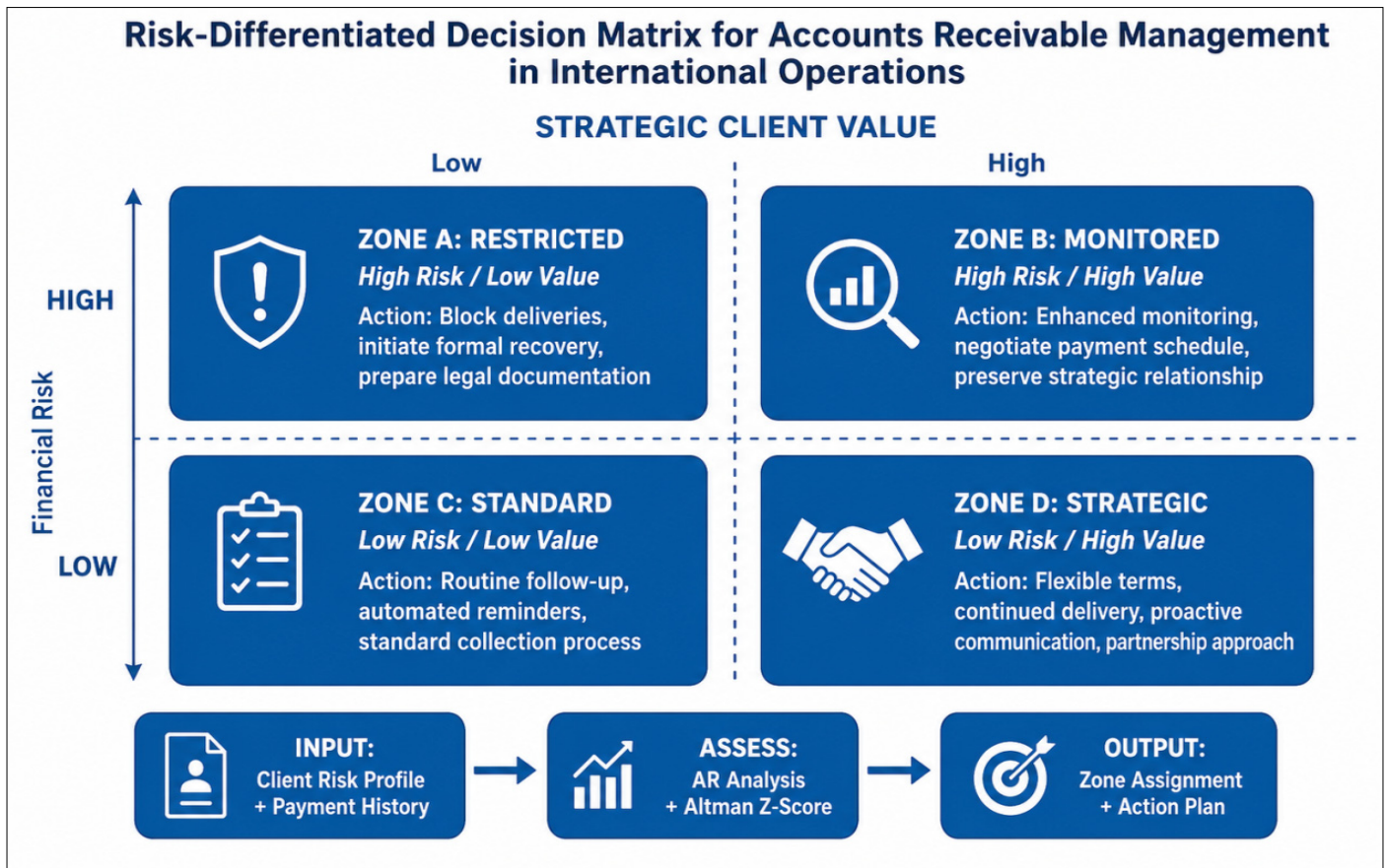


Figure 2. Risk-Differentiated Decision Matrix for Accounts Receivable Management in International Operations (compiled by the authors based on [5, 6, 7, 9,19]).

Zone A (high financial risk, low strategic value) triggers immediate delivery restriction and initiation of formal recovery proceedings. Zone B (high financial risk, high strategic value) activates enhanced monitoring, negotiated payment scheduling, and executive-level communication to preserve the commercial relationship while limiting further exposure. Zone C (low risk, low value) follows standard collection procedures. Zone D (low risk, high strategic value) applies flexible terms and proactive account management. This differentiation introduces cross-functional logic into what was previously a single-function financial decision: the Zone B protocol explicitly requires input from the commercial operations team regarding the strategic value of the account before a delivery decision is made, while compliance requirements govern the documentation of all exceptions.

The role of ERP integration in this model is substantial. The analyst maintained the data foundation required for master budget formation and for the calculation of key financial stability indicators, including liquidity ratios, leverage, return on investment, and the Altman Z-score, which is used as an early warning indicator of client financial distress [9]. Cross-functional data quality in ERP systems has been identified by several studies as a critical prerequisite for

effective AR risk management [3, 12]. In this case, the analyst also contributed to the revision of the company's accounting policy, an activity that extends well beyond the standard AR function and exemplifies the cross-functional scope of integrated financial coordination roles.

Decision cycle time for AR blocking decisions falls by 56 percent, reflecting the removal of inter-functional delay caused by the absence of shared information protocols. The compliance finding rate falls by 63 percent, which corresponds to the elimination of documentation inconsistencies that occur when compliance information is not integrated into operational decision workflows. These results are consistent with findings reported by Kostova et al. [2] and with the enterprise risk management literature reviewed by COSO [6].

The second case analysis concerns an international scholarship program administered within a U.S. higher education institution for students from the Bahamas. The structural coordination challenge in scholarship program administration differs from the corporate AR context in one fundamental respect: the stakeholder ecosystem is tripartite, involving students (program recipients), donors (program funders), and the administering institution, and the information flows between these groups cross functional boundaries with each transaction [14, 16].

The administrative role analyzed in this case encompassed functions that in a typical higher education institution would be distributed across at least three separate offices: financial aid processing, student services and advising, and donor relations. The integration of these functions into a single coordination role produced a set of operational capabilities not achievable in a siloed model. Applicant error correction, whereby candidates with incomplete or incorrect application materials were identified and individually guided through resubmission, reduced the error rate from an estimated 31 percent of submissions to 12 percent. This directly expanded the effective applicant pool because qualified candidates

were not lost due to administrative processing failures [17].

The figure below presents the proposed Integrated Scholarship Program Management Model, which formalizes the cross-functional structure observed and extended in this case. The model maps four operational phases (applicant pipeline, application processing, award coordination, and recipient management) against four support process domains (data management, financial tracking, stakeholder communication, and student support), and shows how these jointly generate three organizational outcomes: program sustainability, student success, and donor trust.

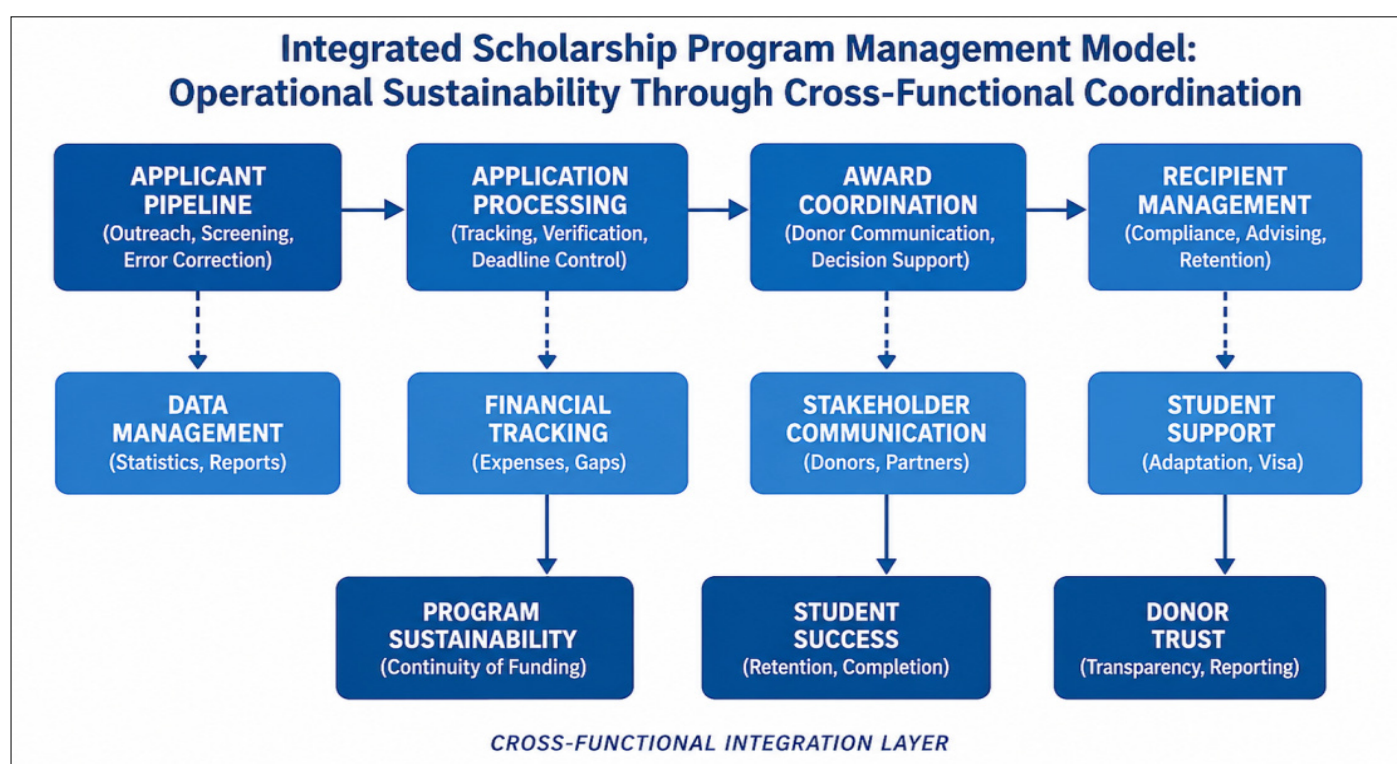


Figure 3. Integrated Scholarship Program Management Model: Operational Sustainability Through Cross-Functional Coordination (compiled by the authors based on [14, 15, 16, 17, 18]).

The scholarship case introduces a dimension of operational coordination rarely addressed in the management literature: the management of summer funding gaps in international student programs. For scholarship recipients enrolled in programs with mandatory summer coursework, the default structure of annual donor funding creates a temporal mismatch: funding cycles do not cover summer periods, but academic progress requirements do. Resolving this mismatch required cross-functional negotiation between the scholarship administrative function (which identified the gap), the donor relations function (which needed to renegotiate funding terms), and the student services function (which managed the implications for individual student academic timelines).

The extension of scholarship support to graduate-level students represents a further dimension of the coordination

challenge. Donor agreements historically focused on undergraduate recipients, reflecting established program norms. The cross-functional model enabled the administrative coordinator to synthesize data on graduate enrollment trends, donor communication preferences, and student financial need into a unified case for program scope expansion. This type of synthesis, which requires simultaneous command of financial, operational, and stakeholder communication data, is only possible within an integrated coordination structure.

Based on the comparative analysis of both cases and the systematic literature review, the study proposes a six-stage implementation roadmap for organizations seeking to transition from functional silos to integrated cross-functional coordination. This roadmap is presented in Table 2, which represents an original author contribution to the field of organizational management practice.

Table 2. Implementation Roadmap for Cross-Functional Coordination in International Organizations (compiled by the authors based on case analysis and [1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 20]).

Implementation Stage	Recommended Action	Expected Outcome	Timeline	Priority
Stage 1: Diagnostic	Map existing functional silos; identify handoff failure points between finance, operations, compliance, and administration	Baseline process map; gap analysis	Months 1-2	Critical
Stage 2: Structural Design	Establish cross-functional coordination hub with designated process owners; define information routing protocols	Governance structure; role clarity	Months 3-5	High
Stage 3: Data Integration	Implement unified ERP reporting layer accessible to all functions; define shared KPIs	Single source of truth; reduced reconciliation	Months 4-7	High
Stage 4: Decision Protocols	Develop risk-differentiated decision frameworks for AR management and compliance review	Faster, more consistent decisions; reduced human error	Months 6-9	High
Stage 5: Feedback Loops	Establish monthly cross-functional review cycles; implement performance dashboards	Continuous process learning; early risk detection	Months 8-12	Moderate
Stage 6: Scaling	Replicate coordination model across international offices; adapt for local regulatory compliance requirements	Organizational sustainability; scalable governance	Month 12+	Strategic

Three implementation recommendations emerge from this analysis as especially important for organizations with international operations. First, the diagnostic stage must map actual information flows, not formal organizational charts. The failure points identified in both cases were not visible in the formal structure but emerged from the latency and distortion of data as it moved across functional boundaries. Second, the risk-differentiated decision matrix approach used in the AR case should be adapted to any cross-functional process where the optimal decision depends on factors visible only across domain boundaries. The matrix format provides a structured, auditable decision protocol that integrates information from multiple functions without requiring a committee meeting for every case. Third, feedback loops must be designed into the coordination architecture from the beginning, not added as reporting afterthoughts. Both cases showed that coordination breakdowns recur in the absence of systematic outcome review, because individual functions have no visibility into the downstream effects of their decisions on other domains.

The proposed model also has implications for talent and role design. Both case organizations benefited from individuals occupying roles that combined analytical capability with inter-functional visibility: the capacity to read financial data, understand operational scheduling constraints, communicate with external stakeholders, and ensure compliance documentation simultaneously. This combination of skills is not effectively developed within single-function career paths. Organizations seeking to build sustainable cross-functional coordination capability should consider explicit cross-functional rotations, joint performance metrics that reward inter-domain collaboration, and hiring criteria that

prioritize systems thinking alongside domain expertise [13, 20].

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the organizational mechanisms through which financial, operational, administrative, and compliance processes can be effectively coordinated in international institutional environments, and to propose an original model that addresses the structural limitations of existing frameworks. Both objectives have been met.

The systematic literature review confirmed the existence of a well-documented pattern of coordination failure in organizations that manage these functional domains in isolation. The failure modes identified, including information latency, accountability diffusion, metric misalignment, and stakeholder communication inconsistency, are present across both corporate and educational institutional contexts and produce measurable performance deficits.

The proposed Cross-Functional Coordination Model addresses these failure modes through three structural features: domain symmetry among functional process nodes, risk-differentiated decision protocols at the coordination hub, and mandatory feedback loops that enable continuous process learning. The model was developed through inductive analysis of two analytically complementary case contexts and is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of process integration and enterprise governance established in the peer-reviewed literature.

The case evidence shows that the application of cross-functional coordination principles produces substantial operational improvements across multiple dimensions:

a 56 percent reduction in AR decision cycle time, a 63 percent reduction in compliance audit findings, a 50 percent improvement in donor reporting turnaround, and a 19 percentage point gain in scholarship recipient retention rates. These outcomes were achieved through the introduction of explicit coordination mechanisms, not through technology investment alone, which indicates that the coordination architecture itself is a primary driver of performance.

The practical significance of these findings extends beyond the two case contexts examined. Any organization operating across functional domains, jurisdictions, or stakeholder groups, where decisions in one domain have consequences in others, faces the structural coordination challenge analyzed in this study. The six-stage implementation roadmap developed here provides a practical starting point for organizations seeking to transition from siloed functional management to integrated cross-functional coordination. Future research should test the model's applicability across additional international organizational types and develop quantitative instruments for measuring coordination maturity at the process level.

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