



C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer
2019
Headline Findings

What Next?

Partnerships evolve to better address environmental and social challenges

Sign-posting the next 10 years: Multi-stakeholder collaborations, deeper impact measurement, greater leveraging of tech. And will companies go it alone?

10 YEAR Edition

Headline Findings

Why partner?

For corporates, reputation and credibility (cited by 91% of companies) remain top priorities, but innovation is a key motivation and access to new markets is seen as increasingly important. Access to financial support (cited by 100% of NGOs) remains the primary driver, but access to people and contacts, and securing long-term stability and impact are also seen as key benefits for NGOs.

Both corporates (76%) and NGOs (79%) rate innovation highly as a reason for partnering. However, the biggest year on year increases in stated reasons for partnering related to long-term stability and impact for NGOs (up 19% on 2018 findings) and, for corporates, access to new markets (up 18%).

Partnering practice and effectiveness

The trend towards deeper, strategic partnerships continues

Boundaries between the NGO and corporate sectors continue to blur as challenging circumstances sharpen the focus of NGOs on financial sustainability alongside delivering their social and environmental mission, and, fuelled by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), companies increasingly strive for social purpose. Against this background, the 2019 Barometer again finds that the trend towards deeper, strategic, problem-solving partnerships has continued. 90% of companies aspire to or are already engaged in such partnerships, with 76% of NGOs reporting similar status in the quest to address core, mission-relevant or purpose-led issues in ways that create value for society.

Strong upswing in NGOs acknowledging the value of Corporate partners' non-cash assets

Over the years, corporate respondents have been overwhelmingly consistent (91% this year) in their belief that harnessing and deploying corporate competencies and assets in their work with NGO partners results in greater impact than purely financial support. NGOs on the other hand, have been less emphatic, a majority of NGOs typically agreeing with the view, but usually a significant minority neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

However, the 2019 Barometer finds a strong upswing (25% increase versus 2018) in the percentage of NGO respondents agreeing that their corporate partners can add greater value by deploying the latter's competencies and assets in partnership, than can be made by financial support alone. The increase in NGOs expressing this view is highly noteworthy and takes NGO sentiment (now at 81%) much nearer corporate levels on this point.

Corporates and NGOs remain highly confident that partnerships help to improve business understanding

One of the core contributions that business engagement with the non-profit sector can bring is greater proximity to, and improved business understanding of, social and environmental contexts, issues, trends and stakeholders, in local or international arenas. It is pleasing to note, therefore, that both corporates and NGOs (96% and 90% respectively) are very confident that their partnerships have enabled corporates to improve their understanding of the social and / or environmental issues partnerships aim to tackle.

NGOs increasingly confident of their contribution to changing business practices for the better

In recent years, the Barometer has found an increasing acknowledgement from both NGOs and corporates that partnerships have helped to change the practices of the latter for the better.

This view is reinforced further this year with approximately two-thirds of both NGOs and corporates (64% and 67% respectively) believing this to be the case. NGOs have an important stakeholder role to play in holding business to account, so it is highly encouraging to note that the 64% of this constituency agreeing that their organisations have helped their corporate partners to change the latter's business practices for the better is an 8% increase on 2018 figures – and a 13% increase on 2016 (when the equivalent response was 51%). This provides strong validation of the view that businesses are taking greater positive action to improve their performance on social and environmental issues.

The stars – The Most Admired corporate-NGO partnerships and partners

Scale, impact, longevity and creativity win practitioners' admiration

Many of the above enabling factors were well reflected in the composition of this year's three most admired partnerships.

This year's winner, the Boots UK – Macmillan Cancer Support partnership, has been praised by partnering practitioners across the industry for its strategic fit, big impact, longevity, strong clear communications and mutual benefit. The GSK - Save the Children partnership (winner in the last three years) was in second place this year, with Network Rail - Samaritans in the top three for the first time.

Medium-term prospects for Corporate-NGO partnering

Partnerships will continue to become more important in the medium term

Overall, 94% of corporate respondents and 93% of respondents from NGOs see the role of partnerships as becoming more or much more important over the next three years.

Pressure on companies to demonstrate societal considerations, leveraging each other's assets, brand enhancement & credibility are the likely key drivers.

Increases in investment on the way

Over two-thirds of companies (67%) and over four-fifths of NGOs (83%) expect their organisation to increase or significantly increase their investment (commitment, time, resources, etc.) in cross-sector partnering over the next three years.

Sign-posting the next 10 years in cross-sector partnering

Alongside positive efforts to tackle the growing threat of climate change via the 2016 Paris Agreement, adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the drive towards inclusive and sustainable growth, the years since 2010 have seen a variety of adverse conditions, from the after effects of the global financial crisis to escalating environmental challenges, Brexit, international trade disputes, and the 2018 sexual exploitation and poor disclosure scandals that consumed some leading international aid agencies.

In marking the 10th anniversary of the Barometer, we invited partnerships practitioners to identify the opportunities and threats most likely to impact the evolution of cross-sector partnering – as well as what practices will need to change in order to successfully navigate future evolutions.

Key opportunities

Partnership practitioners across the corporate and NGO sectors are excited about likely future opportunities for cross-sector partnering over the next decade and keen to derive social, economic and environmental value for their organisation and others – through building more effective partnerships.

Responses to the (open text) question on opportunities were many and diverse, but *deeper, strategic partnering; multi-stakeholder collaborations; the SDGs; impact measurement; and use of technology* emerged as key opportunity-related themes from the unprompted responses. There was strong alignment on these themes across both sectors.

Key threats

Significant long-term threats to cross-sector partnering identified by corporate and NGO respondents coalesced around *economic and political uncertainty and the rise of populism*. In connection to fears around political uncertainty and the rise of populism, strong references were made to *increasing assaults on civil society* in some countries, as well as *diminishing levels of trust* in the various actors involved in cross-sector partnering. And finally, a notable number of NGO respondents perceived a possible threat of *corporate sector DIY* – i.e. that as the corporate approach to purpose-led growth extends and matures, some companies and brands may choose to go it alone by increasingly addressing societal / environmental and other issues directly, without recourse to NGO partners.

What practices will need to change in order to successfully navigate the future?

Corporate and NGO respondents were generous and insightful in proffering advice to companies and NGOs seeking to thrive through cross-sector partnering in the coming decade. Advice was framed around what organisations in each sector would need to stop, continue or start doing in order to be effective in the coming decade of partnering. In most instances, the advice was relevant across sectors, although the emphasis varied for corporate and NGO actors.

The key themes that emerged related to *strategy and approach* (even greater focus on longer-term, strategic relationships); *focus on impact; authenticity*; and greater efforts to balance *the power dynamic* in relationships between companies and NGOs. *Innovation and co-development* (between the parties in a partnership), as well as *in-sector collaboration* (strongly encouraging NGOs to collaborate more with each other) also emerged as strong themes for navigating future challenges and opportunities.

About C&E Advisory

C&E is a leading specialist ‘business and society’ consultancy. We work with some of the world’s foremost businesses, NGOs and High Net-Worth Individuals, helping them secure sustainable value – shareholder, social and environmental. Our practice areas cover strategy, programme design, oversight and reviews, performance measurement and reporting, high performance team development and leadership coaching.

And because today’s challenges and opportunities require new ways of thinking, C&E is particularly adept at inspiring and enabling sometimes surprising cross-sector collaborations. We have advised – and continue to advise – on some of the world’s leading and best known corporate-NGO partnerships. C&E also advises on all aspects of the shared value agenda.

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About the Barometer

Methodology

The C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer 2019 was compiled using responses to a confidential online survey of 101 leading UK-based companies and NGOs engaged in corporate-NGO partnerships.

The number of respondents reflects an ever-growing interest in the corporate-NGO partnering agenda. Practitioners on both sides of corporate-NGO partnerships clearly have a keen interest in the Barometer because it allows them to have a sector-wide perspective on the evolution of the cross-sector partnering landscape.

This year’s survey included a mixture of new and previously asked questions. Thanks to this combination of questions we have been able to identify new challenges and opportunities in partnering, whilst simultaneously enabling accurate and effective comparison of data against Barometer readings from previous years.

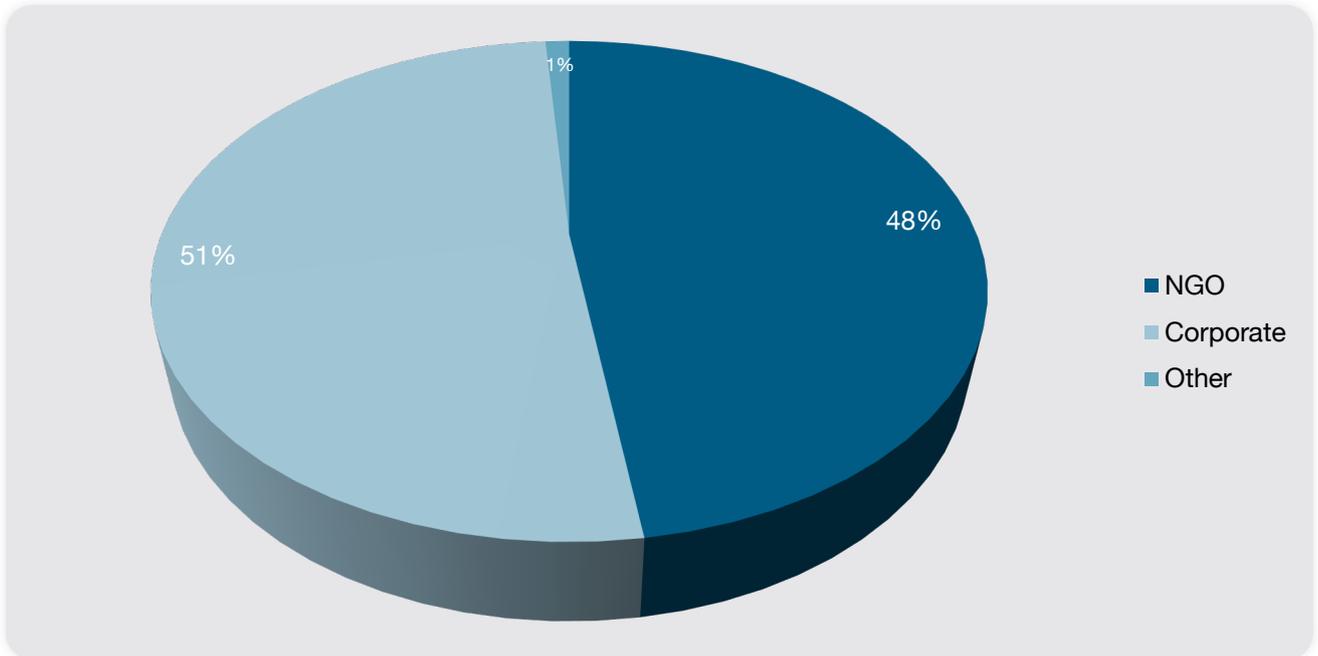
The online survey and practitioner evaluation took place during June-July 2019.

The Sample

The online survey was undertaken by 101 respondents all of whom were involved in cross sector partnerships. Of these, corporate sector respondents were drawn mainly from the FTSE100, Interbrand’s Best Global Brands Ranking, and Business in the Community’s Corporate Responsibility Index. NGO respondents were drawn mainly from the leading UK charities – by brand and revenue ranking. Our sincere thanks to all who took part.

The distribution of 51% corporate and 48% NGOs is well balanced.

Figure 16: Sector representation



Are you completing this survey on behalf of a “not for profit” organisation (NGO) or a Corporate?

Respondents to the survey held a diverse range of professional roles all directly engaged in or overseeing corporate-NGO partnerships from a senior level.

Figure 17: Respondent’s roles



What is your role?

List of participating companies and NGOs

Survey respondents (excluding organisations wishing to remain anonymous)

Corporates

Anglo American
Barclays
BP
Burgess Salmon LLP
Citi
Credit Suisse
DLA Piper
DNB ASA
DP World
Equinor
Experian
GE
GSK
GSMA
Kingfisher Group
Novo Nordisk
Pearson
Quilter
Shell
Telefónica UK (O2)
Tesco
The Ashmore Foundation
TSB Bank
UBS
Walgreens Boots Alliance
Warner Bros.
William Jackson Food Group

NGOs

Back Up
Big Issue Foundation
British Lung Foundation
British Red Cross
Cancer Research UK
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Diabetes UK
Family Acton
Family for Every Child
Forum for the Future
GOSH Charity
Hubbub
Independent Age
Institute of Imagination
Leonard Cheshire
Macmillan Cancer Support
Marie Curie
Mind
National Trust for Scotland
Ovarian Cancer Action
Oxfam
Peabody
Save the Children UK
Stroke Association
The Children's Society
World Toilet Organisation
World Vision International
WWF UK