# The C&E Advisory Corporate–Non-profit Partnerships Barometer 2026

# TOP 10

## 1. In 2026, political and economic pressure is strengthening cross-sector engagement

**Growing scrutiny of ESG is changing how organisations engage**. 31% of corporates expect to increase their cross-sector engagement in response to ESG pressure, up from 22% last year, while 54% of non-profits expect an increase, up from 37%. None of the non-profits surveyed anticipate reducing their engagement. In a more contested environment, organisations are continuing to turn to partnership for expertise, delivery capacity and support.

## 2. The case for cross-sector partnership is becoming more practical

**Reputation & credibility remain the leading corporate motivation for partnering**, at 82%. Access to funding continues to lead for non-profits, at 89%. Among corporate partners, however, long-term stability & impact has risen to 71%, access to people and contacts to 61%, effectiveness to 58% and efficiency to 39%. The case for partnership increasingly includes what collaboration can contribute to organisational performance and delivery.

## 3. Cross-sector partnerships are influencing business practice

**Partnerships continue to deepen understanding of social and environmental issues**, with 95% of corporates and 98% of non-profits agreeing. There is growing evidence of influence on business behaviour: 70% of corporates and 78% of non-profits say partnerships have helped change business practices for the better. The next challenge is to identify & evidence these changes more consistently.

## 4. ESG commitments are holding firm, while businesses change how ESG is managed

Despite political and economic pressure, 55% of corporates and 62% of non-profits report no notable change to their ESG commitments, while a further 31% and 39% respectively have strengthened them. Corporate responses are more varied, with 15% reporting some reduction. Yet, 67% of corporates are integrating ESG more closely into core business strategy and 53% are placing greater emphasis on demonstrating its business case.

## 5. ODA cuts are having their greatest impact on international non-profits

The effects of ODA reductions are highly uneven. Almost a quarter of the non-profit sample report an adverse impact. Among the international non-profits responding, however, 83% report a negative effect, including 50% reporting a significantly negative effect. Respondents describe reduced funding, programme delivery, capacity and long-term planning, as well as increased competition for alternative sources of support.

## 6. Future partnerships are expected to be longer-term and more collective

89% of respondents expect long-term strategic partnerships to become more important over the next three years, while 64% point to multi-partner and collective-impact collaborations. Only 12% expect traditional bilateral partnerships to become more important. Respondents also anticipate greater use of skills, expertise, corporate influence, networks and investment capital, indicating broader partnerships with more organisations and a wider mix of resources.

## 7. 2026's Most Admired partnerships reward longevity, integration & visible impact

IKEA + WWF, and Greene King + Macmillan Cancer Support, jointly top the Most Admired ranking with 11% of nominations each. Tesco + Diabetes UK, the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK follows at 9%, with Boots + Macmillan Cancer Support at 8%. Respondents particularly value long-term commitment, strategic alignment, the effective use of each partner's distinctive assets and demonstrable impact.

## 8. AI's clearest near-term opportunities are measurement and efficiency

80% of respondents identify impact measurement and reporting as an area where AI could add significant value, while 74% point to reducing operational costs and increasing efficiency. Organisational readiness is less advanced: only 44% consider their organisation very or fairly prepared to realise these opportunities while managing the associated risks. **Skills, data, governance and responsible use are emerging as the immediate implementation priorities.**

## 9. Confidence in partnerships remains strong, but investment expectations have softened

64% of corporates and 84% of non-profits expect partnerships to become more important over the next three years. Expectations for investment also remain positive, with 52% of corporates and 71% of non-profits anticipating an increase. Investment growth expectations are lower than last year, while more respondents expect investment to remain stable. The direction remains positive, with greater caution about the pace of growth.

## 10. Financial pressure is making efficiency a stronger reason to partner

Economic pressure is becoming a much more prominent part of the corporate partnership case. **44% of corporates say pressure on resources and the need to partner to reduce costs will make cross-sector partnerships more important, up 28% from last year**. 67% identify the value of combining the different assets of companies and non-profits. Partnerships are increasingly thought of as a way to share capabilities and resources, whilst delivering social and environmental outcomes.

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*Data based on a survey of 117 internationally leading companies and well-known non-profit organisations.*