

C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer 2021

Mind the Gap

Non-Profits Lag Corporate Counterparts on Important Topics

MIND THE GAP

Covid-19 pandemic an accelerant for action on environmental, social, and governance issues cross-sector partnerships enable delivery of effective solutions

Strong, strategic responses on antiracism - but non-profits lag their corporate counterparts

Greater investment into partnerships planned to address complex issues



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Introduction

Welcome to the 2021 edition of the C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer – the 12th in our unique annual series of practitioner-led studies.

This 2021 Barometer edition draws on the experience of 130 leading companies and NGOs who completed our confidential annual survey during July. The survey was supplemented by deep-dive roundtable discussions with corporate and NGO practitioners to provide qualitative insights.

The Barometer series offers growing insight into the ways in which the corporate-NGO partnering landscape is evolving. Each year's findings build on previous years' data



to deepen understanding of drivers, changing practices and likely future developments in cross-sector partnering and its growing impact on society.

This year's Barometer is, of course, set against the backdrop of the ongoing and evolving Covid-19 crisis. In addition to our basesline questions on current practice and future trends, we take another look at the effects of the pandemic, and the effects of the antiracism movement a year on from intense media scrutiny on this latter topic.

It is heartening to be able to report that partners across the NGO-corporate landscape have been galvanised into real action to deliver on their aims in spite of all the tremendous difficulties posed by the pandemic. This is testament to the determination of partners to act for the benefit of society and our collective environment no matter what obstacles lie in the way.

These and other findings also demonstrate and reinforce the corporate and non-profit sectors' belief in the proven commercial, social, and environmental value that investments in cross-sector partnerships can yield.

And finally, we are hugely grateful to all our respondents and commentators for sharing their unique and valuable perspectives and experiences. We hope this 2021 edition of the C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer helps to inform and enhance their and your understanding, investment decisions and practice of corporate-NGO partnering.

As usual, we welcome your comments and suggestions via <u>www.candeadvisory.com/barometer</u> or <u>admin@candeadvisory.com</u>

Manny Amadi, MVO

CEO, C&E Advisory





Headline findings

Why partner?

For corporates, reputation/credibility remains the most important factor – with 100% of respondents of business respondents citing this main reason. Conversely, 95% of all NGOs say access to funding is the main motivation for partnering with corporates

Corporates remain primarily motivated by enhancing their reputation and credibility; innovation (though less emphasised this year) and driving long-term stability and impact are considered the next most important motivations for companies seeking to partner with non-profits. Innovation and long-term stability & impact are also reflected in the top three motivations for NGOs partnering with corporates – with human resource development (enhancing workforce skills and competencies) seeing a strong rise – up 10% year on year – as a factor for non-profits.

Partnering practice and effectiveness

Corporates continue to lead NGOs in depth and reach of partnerships

Through the 11-year span of past Barometer reports, corporates have consistently led their non-profit counterparts in describing their engagements as deeper, problem-solving partnerships that address core, mission-relevant or purpose-led issues in ways that create value for society. This year's findings again show 71% of corporates stating that their organisations are engaged in this way - with only 33% of NGOs believing the same to be true of their partnerships. However, half of all NGOs believe this approach to partnering to be an aspirational one – and that their organisation is moving towards achieving it.

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

Encouragingly, practitioners remain more or less unanimous (94% of corporates and 98% of NGOs) in their belief that their partnerships have helped corporate partners to develop their understanding of the societal / environmental issues their partnerships have been designed to address.

Strong majority of corporates and NGOs report that partnerships are helping to change business practices for the better

Similarly, 77% of corporate respondents and 61% of NGOs believe that business practices have improved because of their engagement in partnerships. This is highly encouraging and provides continued 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

Innovation, scale, impact and relevance secure acclaim from partnership practitioners

This year, for the first time, the Barometer reveals joint winners of the Most Admired Corporate-NGO Partnership as voted by partnering professionals from both sectors. The Boots UK – Macmillan Cancer Support partnership and the Tesco – Health Charity partnership consortium (which includes Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation, and Diabetes UK), have tied for first place, followed closely



by the Tesco – WWF alliance, which was also the runner-up in 2020. Many congratulations to these partnerships for the significant social and environmental impacts they continue to achieve – and for the inspiration they provide to others.

Non-profits: holistic environmental, social and governance (ESG) frameworks and plans

The NGO approach to addressing holistic ESG issues is improving – but still has a long way to go

Whilst many non-profits have clear, core social and environmental missions to which they dedicate resources and on which they often demonstrate outstanding results, it is rarely evident how effectively such organisations perform on other ESG issues. For example, activities designed to achieve desirable social outcomes may have harmful environmental effects – and vice versa, yet the benefits of taking a holistic approach to the planning and delivery of ESG practices have been well demonstrated.

Having first examined this topic in the last edition, we sought in this 2021 Barometer to gauge whether non-profits are evolving towards a holistic approach to addressing ESG issues – and the extent to which their corporate partners perceive this to be the case.

The findings are instructive; 42% of corporates and 52% of NGOs believe that the latter have holistic ESG plans and frameworks in place to guide organisational practice. The non-profit sector's view of itself has improved markedly, in this regard, over the past year (up by 15% year on year).

However, 46% of corporates and 34% of NGO respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement that their partner NGO / their non-profit organisation has a holistic ESG framework and plan. That large numbers of NGO respondents are unclear about whether or not their organisation has a holistic ESG plan or framework would indicate that, even if they exist, such plans / frameworks are either not prominent nor prioritised within their organisations, or that they are insufficiently communicated - both internally, and to their corporate partners and other stakeholders.

Special Topics

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The accelerating effects of the global pandemic on ESG practices continues – and cross-sector partnerships make strong contributions in efforts to grapple with the effects of the pandemic

Building on data from last year when, in the very eye of the storm, the pandemic was reported to have accelerated the extent to which companies and non-profits embraced the ESG agenda, this year's Barometer looked at progress made against last year's plans, as well as current attitudes and future plans. It is hugely encouraging that the 2021 Barometer finds absolutely no let-up in the collective determination to deal with the worst effects of the pandemic. This year, 78% of corporates and 50% of NGOs remain more, or much more, actively engaged in addressing ESG issues because of Covid-19. The difference in the strength of declarations between the sectors is perhaps understandable, as NGOs' entire organisational mission is typically focused on addressing a core ESG issue/s, whereas this is not the case for corporates.

Social programming issues continue to receive greater attention in the aftermath of the pandemic – but attention on climate change and environmental issues is making a return

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Last year, it was clear from the unprompted responses that non-profits appeared to have dialled down their focus on environmental issues in order to focus on more immediate priorities. However, it is equally clear from this year's responses that climate change and environmental issues are back on the agenda once more, as the world has learned to cope with the new reality – but that out and out focus on these areas, understandably, still isn't a primary focus for many non-profits.

As we would expect, there is a clear increased focus on virtual and digital services, less on face-to-face, greater concerns over safety and supply chain management – and increasing concerns over mental health and backlogs in healthcare in other areas such as cancer care.

Enhanced role for cross-sector partnering in corporate-NGO responses to Covid-19

When practitioners were asked what role their partnerships have already played in their organisations' responses to Covid-19 (figure 10), 79% of corporates (70% last year) and 70% of non-profits (72% last year) report that they have increased, or increased significantly, their emphasis on partnering as a result of Covid-19. This illustrates the value of cross-sector partnerships and their role in organisational responses to the pandemic.

The impact of the antiracism movement

Strong, strategic response; the antiracism movement has sparked real action in companies and non-profits

Conducted in the immediate aftermath of the murder of George Floyd during his forceful arrest by Minneapolis police, and the antiracism movement it galvanised, the 2020 Barometer examined the likely responses by companies and non-profits to the issues raised by these events. There was the risk (and fears in some quarters) that commitment to action on antiracism would diminish over time as the glare of the media and the public inevitably moved on from the intense focus wrought by the events of 2020. Examining the responses that corporates and NGOs *have made* over the last year, we find that the responses are encouraging for the antiracism and broader equity, diversity & inclusion (EDI) agendas.

Just over three-quarters (76%) of corporates and approaching two-thirds (61%) of NGOs report that their organisations have made a fairly strong, or strong, strategic response to antiracism during the last 12 months (figure 12).

Corporates outperform non-profits on strategic responses to the antiracism agenda

It is notable that organisations in the corporate sector appear to be outperforming those in the non-profit sector (by a factor of 15%) in making fairly strong, or strong, strategic responses on antiracism and related EDI issues. We speculate in the report why this lag exists on the part of non-profits.

For a significant majority of companies and nearly half of NGOs the issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement have featured in their partnerships – including on policy, advocacy, and programmatic areas

When asked (figure 13) about the extent to which the issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement have featured in organisations' partnerships over the last year, 71% of corporate respondents and 47% of NGO respondents reported that issues raised by the antiracism movement had either featured strongly or moderately. At 71%, corporate responses this year were close to, or indeed exceeded the predictions



made last year (65%). The reverse was the case for non-profits (60% predicted in 2020 for the year ahead versus 47% reported in 2021).

Medium-term prospects for corporate-NGO partnering

Cross-sector partnerships likely to become even more important over the next three years

Despite the difficult socio-economic backdrop created by Covid-19, and all its associated issues, a third of all respondents (equally matched by corporates and NGOs) believe that partnerships will play a much more important role for companies and NGOs over the next three years. A further 51% of all corporates and 64% of NGOs believe partnerships will become more important. No respondents at all anticipate any decline in this regard.

Asked why this is, 85% of corporates and 81% of NGOs cited the need to leverage each other's assets to maximise the mutual benefits of partnerships. Societal and stakeholder pressure on companies to demonstrate societal considerations in their business practices is similarly identified as a key likely driver of the importance of partnering across sectors. Also, enhancing corporate or brand reputation was high on the list as a factor for both corporates and NGOs at 67% and 74%, respectively.

Greater investment in partnerships likely in the next three years

Finally, 88% of NGOs and 80% of corporates expect that their organisation will either increase, or significantly increase, investment in cross-sector partnering in the medium term. These findings reinforce practitioners' belief in the value that investments in partnerships can yield.



Part 1: Current state

1. Why companies and NGOs partner

For corporates, reputation and credibility are vital, whilst for NGOs, access to funding remains top priority

The strongest twin motivations for cross-sector partnering over the 11 years of the Barometer have been the consistent desire for corporates to enhance their reputation through partnerships – and for NGOs to raise much-needed funds. Notwithstanding significant evolutions in the nature of partnering over that time frame (including, for example, the emergence of longer-term, multi-faceted and multi-organisational partnerships), these two factors clearly remain paramount – as illustrated in figure 1 below.

At 69%, innovation (developing unexpected / new ways of addressing issues and complex problems) remains the second most important factor for corporates – though down a little year on year. It clearly remains a key component for all partners; recent years have witnessed ever more innovative and creative partnerships in what is also an increasingly competitive environment – so the need to stand out from the crowd whilst simultaneously delivering on partners' objectives is vital. These findings are also borne out when the Barometer looks at the most admired partnerships, below.

We find in this edition that NGOs are more motivated by long-term stability and impact (achieving greater "reach" and being more efficient and effective in the search for enhanced sustainable development impact) than was the case last year (up 9%). Long-term stability remains an important feature for corporates, too. The Covid-19 pandemic has put many NGOs' finances and programmes under increased pressure, so it's perhaps no surprise to see a concern about the ability to deliver more effectively in the longer term being more highly prioritised this year.

Similarly, NGOs are significantly more interested in access to new markets (understanding and reaching those at the bottom of the economic pyramid) and in staff development (enhancing skills and competencies in the workforce) through partnerships this year – whilst access to people and contacts via partnerships is down year on year. These findings seem likely to be related to the pandemic for similar reasons to the desire for greater long-term stability, and are borne out via in-depth discussions and comments elsewhere in this year's Barometer.

Corporates, meanwhile, are significantly less interested than previously in access to new markets through partnerships. Judging from comments received from corporate participants, this would seem to reflect a greater prioritisation of core markets as we emerge from the crisis.



Figure 1: Why companies and NGOs engage in partnerships with each other (broken down by sector):



Why does your organisation engage in corporate-NGO partnerships?

2. Partnering practice and effectiveness

Depth and reach of partnerships

Corporates continue to lead NGOs in depth and reach of partnerships

A consistent feature over the lifespan of the Barometer has been the gradual shift in emphasis towards the creation of more strategic, substantive, and impactful partnerships, both in terms of the aims of partnerships and in their delivery.

Corporates have consistently been ahead of their NGO counterparts in framing more of their engagements as deeper, problem-solving partnerships that address core, mission-relevant or purpose-led issues in ways that create value for society. This year's findings again bear out both these longer-term trends, (figure 2), with nearly three-quarters (71%) of corporates stating that their organisations are engaged in this way - while only a third of NGOs believe the same to be true of their partnerships.

These findings are logically complemented by the fact that a larger percentage of NGOs than corporates (50% vs. 24%) believe that such a position is an aspirational one – and that their organisation is moving towards achieving it.

Similarly, 17% of NGOs and just 4% of corporates believe their organisations agree with this aim but don't have the organisational capacity to deliver on it.



Figure 2: The extent of deeper, problem-solving partnerships addressing core, mission-relevant or purpose-led issues in ways that create value for society:



"We are increasingly engaged in deeper, problem-solving partnerships designed to address core, mission-relevant or purpose-led issues in ways that create value for society, for ourselves and for our (corporate or NGO) partners." In light of the preceding statement, which of the following choices most accurately reflects your organisation's current position?



Enhancing business understanding of social and environmental issues – and changing business practices for the better

Corporates and NGOs are extremely confident that partnerships help to improve business understanding

This year's Barometer again assessed the extent to which partnerships help to enhance business understanding of social and environmental issues – as well as the extent to which business practices may have changed for the better as a result.

Encouragingly (figure 3), practitioners remain more or less unanimous (94% of corporates and 98% of NGOs) in their belief that their partnerships have helped corporate partners to develop their understanding of the societal / environmental issues their partnerships have been designed to address.

Figure 3: The extent to which partners have helped each other understand the issues they're facing:



Similarly (figure 4), 77% of corporate respondents and 61% of NGOs believe that business practices have improved because of their engagement in partnerships. This is highly encouraging and provides continued validation of the view that businesses are taking greater positive action to improve their performance on social and environmental issues.



Figure 4: Extent to which partnerships help change business practices for the better:



3. The stars - the most admired corporate-NGO partnerships and partners

The Boots UK – Macmillan Cancer Support partnership "doesn't rest on its laurels" whilst the Tesco – Health Charity partnership consortium is "multi-faceted, complex and impactful" – the two are jointly most admired by professionals

Again this year, in an entirely unprompted, confidential exercise, Barometer survey respondents drawn from UK and internationally leading companies and NGOs were asked which other corporate-NGO partnerships they particularly admire and why that is. We also derive the most admired partnering companies and NGOs from the same data (figures 5,6, and 7).

This year, for the first time, there are joint winners of the accolade in the shape of the Boots UK – Macmillan Cancer Support partnership (which has finished in first place for the last two years) and the Tesco – Health Charity partnership consortium (which includes Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation, and Diabetes UK), followed closely by the Tesco – WWF partnership, which was also the 2020 runner-up.

Further explanation of the nature and scale of these popular partnerships is included below, along with comments from respondents which typify exactly why these three partnerships and organisations are most admired within the cross-sector partnering ecosystem. All of these partnerships – and highly-rated partnering organisations – are to be congratulated, not only for the value they are securing for stakeholders in different parts of the world, but also for the inspiration they provide to practitioners in the cross-sector partnerships arena.







Which other corporate-NGO partnerships do you admire and why? (Respondents could list up to three starting with their most admired partnership).







Figure 7: Most Admired Partners, NGOs



The Boots UK - Macmillan Cancer Support partnership

Being told 'you have cancer' can affect so much more than just your health – it can affect the way you think and feel about yourself. Boots and Macmillan have joined forces to provide cancer support in your community to help you feel like you again.

Boots UK aims to give everyone, everywhere, the best cancer information and support they need in a place that's everyday, reliable, familiar and trusted. Macmillan's experience in supporting people living with cancer, combined with Boots UK's expertise in delivering healthcare and beauty information and advice, means together we can provide easily accessible specialist cancer information and support to thousands of people on the high street and through our online support services.

Since 2009, Boots colleagues and customers have raised £19.4 million* for people living with and affected by cancer.

*(as of January 31st 2021)

Almost 4,000 Boots Macmillan Information Pharmacists (BMIPs) can be found in Boots pharmacies across the country. BMIPs are professional pharmacists employed by Boots who volunteer some of their time in work to support customers affected by cancer. They are trained to understand more about cancer diagnosis, treatment and how cancer affects people. They can also answer questions about medication and guide people to other sources of information and support

Over 800 <u>Boots Macmillan Beauty Advisors (BMBAs)</u> can be found at No7 counters in Boots stores. BMBAs are No7 Advisors trained by Macmillan and Boots to give face-to-face advice to help people cope with the visible side effects of cancer. From defining sparse brows and lashes to caring for nails



that are suddenly more brittle, BMBAs offer lots of tips to help people feel, and look, more like themselves again.

Both Boots Macmillan Information Pharmacists and No7 Boots Macmillan Beauty Advisors are also available virtually, to support people living with cancer from the comfort of their own home.

To find out more about how to access free cancer support on the high street visit: <u>www.boots.com/macmillan</u>

Typical of the comments made by practitioners about the Boots Macmillan partnership were:

- "...the absolute definition of a strategic, mutually-beneficial partnership"
- "Delivering huge impact for people affected by cancer, on the high street, massively extending reach of the charity"
- "The partners have furthered their commitment this year, at a time when people living with cancer need support at the heart of their communities the most"
- "The partnership is embedded throughout both organisations"

The Tesco – Health Charity Partnership (Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation, Diabetes UK)

The Tesco Health Charity Partnership was launched in 2018 to inspire, empower and support Tesco colleagues, customers and their families to make sustainable lifestyle changes and adopt healthy habits. Through this work, the partnership aims to bring about measurable changes to the behaviours that can help lower the risk of cancer, heart and circulatory diseases and type 2 diabetes.

Together, these diseases account for around half of all deaths in the UK, yet four in 10 cases of cancer, up to 5 in 10 cases of type 2 diabetes, and many heart and circulatory diseases can be prevented. The pandemic put into sharp focus the threats and challenges of living with these conditions, and how important reducing risk is.

During the pandemic the four partners came together to maximise the positive impact they could make on people affected by the conditions. This included making sure that people who were extremely clinically vulnerable and recommended to shield were given priority slots for Tesco online shopping as well as signposting to the charity Helplines from Tesco.com, for example. The four partners also used their collective voice to promote the flu jab at Tesco pharmacies, emphasising the in-store safety measures, and the simplicity of the online booking system allowing for evening and weekend appointments that could be combined with a weekly shop.

One of the core pillars of the partnership is fundraising, but traditional cash collections in Tesco stores had to pause as a result of the health risk and the demands placed on Tesco colleagues. As a partnership they pivoted fundraising towards cashless, with Tesco providing the longest ever period of round up at till. With Tesco matching customer donations, the September 2020 campaign raised £3 million for the three charities. The learnings taken away from the successful 2020 fundraiser have been built into future events, with the partners' latest two week round up at till event going live on 13 September 2021.



Some of the comments made by practitioners about the Tesco – Health Charity Partnership were:

- "...a flagship partnership, generating significant income for three great causes but crucially tackling barriers to Tesco colleagues and customers making healthy choices"
- "The largest health charities trying to positively influence the health of the nation"
- "Multi-faceted, complex and impactful, it brings together four leading organisations in pursuit of shared goals"

To find out more visit: https://www.tescoplc.com/sustainability/partnerships/health-charity-partnership/

The Tesco – WWF Partnership

Tesco and WWF launched their ground-breaking partnership in 2018 with the aim of halving the environmental impact of the average UK shopping basket. To achieve this goal, the partnership needed a better understanding of the impact some of the UK's most purchased foods are having on the planet. To help, the partnership launched the "Sustainable Basket" metric to track key sustainability criteria across the entire food value chain, from production to consumption.

The Metric measures environmental impacts of food across seven different categories: climate change; deforestation; sustainable diets; sustainable agriculture; marine sustainability; food waste; and packaging waste. So far, Tesco has achieved 11% of its target to halve the environmental impact of the average shopping basket.

Tesco and WWF are working together on a number of different initiatives to make the food Tesco offers more sustainable, including working to ensure all wild fish is sourced from sustainable sources, and reducing emissions in existing supply chains.

Some of the comments made by practitioners about the Tesco – WWF partnership were:

- "So inspiring. A truly strategic partnership, getting under the skin of the corporate to influence business practice at all levels"
- "It is purpose-linked and creates large societal impact"
- "System change helping business and consumers achieve a net-positive impact on the planet"
- "This is a truly strategic programme looking to reach its mission through systemic change. Income is only a small element of this truly mission-led partnership. It's utterly inspiring"

To find out more visit: https://www.tescoplc.com/sustainability/partnerships/wwf/

4. Non-profits - holistic environmental, social and governance (ESG) frameworks and plans

The NGO approach to addressing ESG issues is gradually becoming more holistic – but there is still a long way to go

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It has been observed (by subscribers to the Barometer, and in roundtable discussions related to the Barometer and cross-sector partnering) that whilst many non-profits have clear, core social and environmental missions to which they dedicate resources and on which they often demonstrate outstanding results, it is often not evident how effectively such organisations perform on other ESG issues. For example, activities designed to achieve desirable social outcomes may have harmful environmental effects – and vice versa. Many non-profits tend to operate in narrow social or environmental 'swim lanes' when these issues in fact, increasingly flow in a common pool.

From identifying and mitigating risks, and leveraging opportunities, to helping organisations to fully live their stated values, the benefits of taking a holistic approach to the planning and delivery of ESG practices have been well demonstrated.

In view of this, and efforts by non-profits to build back better, we again sought to establish whether or not non-profits have a holistic approach to their ESG practices – and the extent to which their corporate partners perceive this to be the case.

The findings (figure 8) are instructive; 42% of Corporates and 52% of NGOs believe that the latter have holistic ESG plans and frameworks in place to guide organisational practice. The non-profit sector's view of itself has improved markedly, in this regard, over the past year (up 15% year on year).

Forty-six per cent of corporates and 34% of NGO respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement that their partner NGO / their non-profit organisation has a holistic ESG framework and plan. That large numbers of NGO respondents are unclear about whether or not their organisation has a holistic ESG plan or framework would indicate that, even if they exist, such plans / frameworks are either not prominent nor prioritised within their organisations, or that they are insufficiently communicated - both internally, and to their corporate partners and other stakeholders.

Encouragingly, however, only 13% of corporates and 14% of NGOs state that their non-profit organisations (or partner organisations) do not have a holistic ESG plan or framework – and again, the non-profit sector's view of itself has improved markedly over the past 12 months in this regard (a 23% change, year on year).



Figure 8: The extent to which non-profits have holistic ESG frameworks in place



These overall findings were borne out by the illustrative comments received from <u>NGO practitioners</u> when they were asked to sum up, in a single sentence, their organisations' approach to ESG planning and implementation. These included:

- "We work to integrate ESG issues into decision-making and risk management both internally and externally, incentivising best practice through transparency of policies, operations and commitments to ESG best practice"
- "Corporate/NGO engagement (also beyond partnership) are needed to create a net-zero, naturepositive future"
- "We are in the process of developing this [holistic ESG framework] to measure all activities against an impact framework"
- "We cover the basics, but not yet 'held' together by a single person or team and it is not holistic or strategic"
- "In development"

Similarly, some of the most illustrative comments from corporate practitioners included:

- "Our major NGO partners tend to have a niche specialism, e.g. in development or conservation, rather than a holistic view"
- "We don't know whether they have these in place"
- "Good question; I am not aware of full ESG positions for our non-profit partners"
- "We assess the frameworks in place for non-profit partners"



In a world in which *"trust us because ours is a good cause"* is unlikely to meet stakeholder expectation, being perceived as a deserved paragon of virtue in one regard may not be enough to defend against criticism in an unrelated area. There is therefore an imperative for non-profits to think holistically about the importance of the ESG agenda for their future evolution as they continue to plan for a post Covid-19 future, re-imagine their theories of change and build new business models. It is encouraging, therefore, to see NGO practitioners perceive progress in this arena, though there is clearly a long way still to go.



SPECIAL TOPICS

Part 2: Special Topics

5. Impact of, and responses to the Covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic has accelerated corporate and non-profit engagement on ESG issues

The 2020 Barometer took a detailed look at the effects of Covid-19 on the cross-sector partnering agenda. Conducted in the summer of 2020, the Barometer sought the views of practitioners very much in the eye of the storm. Since then, the world has become more accustomed to the ongoing nature of the pandemic, coupled with hope for our collective future freedom to be delivered, hopefully, by mass vaccination programmes across the globe.

In a highly notable finding, and contrary to the expectations of some, responses in 2020 indicated that the pandemic was having the effect of accelerating corporate and non-profit engagement on ESG issues. For example, 80% of corporates were found to be more, or much more, actively engaged in addressing ESG issues because of Covid-19 – and not a single corporate respondent reported lower levels of engagement on ESG issues due to the pandemic. Responses on the non-profit side were also positive, with 60% of NGOs reporting that their organisations were more, or much more, actively engaged in addressing ESG issues because of Covid-19.

It's encouraging for society, therefore, that the 2021 Barometer finds absolutely no let-up in the collective determination to deal with the worst effects of the pandemic by addressing ESG issues. This year, 78% of corporates and 50% of NGOs report that the pandemic has made their organisation more, or much more, actively engaged in addressing ESG issues because of Covid-19 (figure 9). The difference in the strength of declarations between the sectors is perhaps understandable, as the core organisational mission of non-profits is typically focused on addressing a core ESG issue/s, whereas this is not the case for corporates.



Figure 9: The impact of Covid-19 and level of engagement in addressing ESG issues



In which of these ways has Covid-19 impacted your organisation's response to addressing environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues? My organisation has / will become...

Continued determination from corporates and NGOs in coping with the new realities

We also looked at the *types of ESG issues* that companies and non-profits have become more, or less, engaged in due to Covid-19. We posed the question: *"Please briefly indicate issues that your organisation has become MORE actively engaged in as a result of Covid-19"*. The following table (table 1) - weighted by clusters of issues - illustrates some of the typical types of responses received from both NGOs and corporates:



Table 1: Example ESG issues that companies and non-profits have become MORE engaged in as a result of the pandemic

Exemplar NGO responses	Exemplar Corporate responses
Social Programming	Social Programming
 Health inequalities, socioeconomic inequalities 	 Pandemic response and recovery; food an consumer goods (re)distribution
 Addressing poverty, our cause is a social one, so many things. On environment and governance, less change 	 Social mobility, providing access to IT equipment, virtual work experience, virtua mentoring
Supporting young people into jobs and	 Digital exclusion; loneliness and isolation Community support, especially supporting disadvantaged; employee welfare and wellbeing, team recruitment and tackling skills shortages Focus on community support and health issues
implementing Kickstart, the Government's youth employment scheme	
Domestic abuse and impact of lockdowns	
Mental health issues, work culture	
Diversity and inclusion	
Primarily health, but increasingly the social determinants and environmental factors that give rise to poor health outcomes/choices, and actively tackling these through partnerships, policy and campaigning	• Pivoted some of our business operations produce more medical equipment such a patient monitoring systems, ventilators an ultrasound systems for clinical use in intensive care units to meet urgent
Bovernance and ways of working	increasing demandWell-being focus has accelerated
Have acted with much greater flexibility and speed to respond to need and have talked more to communities to ensure that we are providing the right support, and as best we	 Wental well-being and colleague health
Can Management of funde de restrictions etc	 Supply Chain Greater interest in responsible supply chain management Environment Greater focus on sustainable travel so we don't revert to previous behaviours
Management of funds - de-restrictions etc.	
More virtual Corporate Volunteering has taken place as it was a tangible way for employees to use their skills whilst on furlough	
Digital/virtual ways to engage beneficiaries	

These unprompted responses demonstrate that for both companies and non-profits, issues related to social issues and governance have remained at the fore of their responses; serious and extensive efforts are being made to tackle complex ESG issues, but enormous challenges and inequalities remain to be tackled.



Conversely, when asked what issues organisations had become LESS actively engaged in as a result of Covid-19, typical responses received included:

Table 2: Example ESG issues that companies and non-profits have become LESS engaged in as a result of the pandemic

Exemplar NGO responses	Exemplar Corporate responses
 We now look more at systemic change, rather than affecting change at an individual level. Our belief is that this will achieve greater, sustained impact at scale The issue is we're not doing less so we're trying to do more with similar resources We are a grant funder and have been more strategic in our approach to funding over the past few months rather than continuing with 'work as usual' to ensure that we could meet the needs of communities as best we could both in the immediate and longer term 	 None - our organisation has a very high level of commitment across ESG. [This view was echoed by several respondents] None - Covid has been on top, and we have added resource to deal with it Non-strategically aligned projects - more focus on supporting adults with financial health recovery through provision of education and resources Face-to-face experiential offers Investments in non-essential environmental activities
• Conservation field work has been somewhat curtailed as a result of COVID-19, both from a funding and an operational perspective	
• Sport and mental health	
Recycling	
Anything that is not business-critical	

"

Last year, it was clear from the unprompted responses that non-profits appeared to have dialled down their focus on environmental issues in order to focus on more immediate priorities. However, it is equally clear from this year's responses that climate change and environmental issues are back on the agenda once more, as the world has learned to cope with the new reality – but that out and out focus on these areas, understandably, still isn't a primary focus for many NGOs.

As we would expect, there is increased focus on virtual and digital services, less on face-to-face, greater concerns over safety and supply chain management – and increasing concerns over mental health and backlogs in healthcare in other areas.

Enhanced role for cross-sector partnering in corporate and non-profit responses to Covid-19

When practitioners were asked what role their partnerships have already played in their organisations' responses to Covid-19 (figure 10), 79% of corporates (70% last year) and 70% of non-profits (72% last year) report that they have increased, or increased significantly, their emphasis on partnering as a result of Covid-19.

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The near identical question last year was posed in a future-looking mindset, asking what organisations "will do" with regard to cross-sector partnerships as a result of the pandemic. That answers to this edition's retrospective question ("my organisation *has…*") so closely match the intent expressed last year is a tribute not only to the skill of corporate and non-profit practitioners, but also illustrates the value of cross-sector partnerships and their role in organisational responses to the pandemic.



Figure 10: The role of cross-sector partnerships in organisations' responses to Covid-19

What ROLE has partnerships with corporates/ NGOs played in your organisation's response to Covid-19. My organisation has...

The pandemic is continuing to change how corporates and non-profits partner – though less so than previously

Similarly, in looking at the nature of partnerships and whether Covid-19 has changed *how* organisations engage in those partnerships (figure 11), more NGOs are reporting *significant* change compared with 2020, whilst the corresponding figure for more moderate change is down. We may have expected to see such a result as the pandemic has been affecting all our lives for around 18 months now, so organisations may have become inured, to some extent, to new ways of working. Nevertheless, it is also clear from the data that the pandemic is continuing to change how corporates and non-profits partner – though this change appears to be greater for NGOs than corporates, overall.



Figure 11: Has Covid-19 changed how organisations engage in partnerships?



Has Covid-19 changed HOW your organisation engages in partnership with corporate / NGO organisations?

When respondents were then asked *why* they had answered as they did regarding how Covid-19 has changed how their organisations engage in partnerships, some of the illustrative unprompted responses from corporates included:

- "Hasn't really changed HOW we partner, but certainly has increased the amount of partnership working"
- "We are seeing more multi-sector collaborations"
- "We now have more clearly defined and much more ambitious global goals which help select strategic partners"
- "It hasn't necessarily changed HOW we partner, we continue to find ways to strategically resolve a common issue or achieve common goals, sharing our assets, but it has focused our minds on being specific on the areas we can address together, some of which are issues created as a result of the pandemic"
- "...deeper more meaningful relationships"

NGO responses to the same question included comments such as:

- "We now deliver a lot of our services to companies virtually"
- "A greater understanding and recognition of value share and inter-connectedness"
- "New opportunities to engage and support the cause. Corporates actively keen to support"
- "More interest from corporates in providing unrestricted funding and in-kind support"
- "It has shown us we can respond to opportunities in a more agile way"
- "Greater desire to engage in partnerships, not only from a funding perspective, but also through understanding that we need to work collaboratively with corporate organisations if we are to achieve our aims"



- "Trying to persuade corporates to remove set criteria and become more mission focused/genuinely philanthropic"
- "We have required additional funding to meet growing needs and we recognise more than ever that only by working in partnership can we reach, engage and influence the people we are here to serve"
- "More communication is now taking place rather than the usual standard communication and updates. There seems to be more of a closer relationship and willingness to go over and above the usual support, maybe in recognition of the real need that there is out there which has been exacerbated and highlighted by the pandemic"

6. The impact of the antiracism movement

The 2020 Barometer was conducted two months after the murder of George Floyd during his forceful arrest by Minneapolis Police – and dedicated a section to examining corporate and non-profit responses to the antiracism campaign and movement it catalysed. In the glare of the enormous public and media interest in the antiracism agenda at the time, we asked a future-facing question, asking corporate and NGO practitioners what types of response, if any, they were *expecting* their organisations to make over the following year as a result of the issues raised by the antiracism movement. 84% of corporates, and 85% of NGO respondents expected that their organisation would make a fairly strong, or strong strategic response.

There was the risk (and fears in some quarters) that commitment to action on antiracism would diminish over time as the glare of the media and the public inevitably moved on from the intense focus wrought by the events of 2020. Examining the types of responses that corporates and NGOs *have made* over the last year as a result of issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement, we find that the responses are encouraging for the antiracism and broader equity, diversity & inclusion (EDI) agendas.

Just over three-quarters (76%) of corporates and approaching two-thirds (61%) of NGOs report that their organisations have made a strong or a fairly strong strategic response to antiracism during the last 12 months (figure 12). Overall, it is encouraging that a significant majority of organisations in the corporate and non-profit sectors report taking clear action to drive forward solutions to the problems of antiracism. However, it is notable that organisations in the corporate sector appear to be outperforming those in the non-profit sector (by a factor of 15%) in taking fairly strong, or strong, strategic action on antiracism.

It is unclear as to why this performance gap exists. It may be that the non-profit sector was starting from a higher base in terms of its practices on race, diversity & inclusion, so required less additional action; that non-profits were less under the spotlight on issues of race, inclusion and diversity than have been companies – or that they lack appropriate resources to invest in addressing these issues; or that other factors (e.g. attention to mitigating risk, or leveraging opportunities inherent in the EDI dividend) are felt more keenly by the corporate sector. Whatever the reason, it does seem ironic that the non-profit sector which is much admired for its mission and values orientation is faced with such a clear comparative deficit in terms of sectoral responses to the antiracism challenge.







What type of response, if any, has your organisation made as a result of issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement, over the last year?

Asked *why* their organisations made the above responses, the following are illustrative of the types of **unprompted** comments shared by respondents:



this by being better at reaching and serving diverse communities in the UK, some of which are disproportionately affected [by health condition]

Social justice

• We have recruited a new position of Head of Diversity. Systemic racism is something we have to address as a humanitarian organisation

Miscellaneous

- We haven't moved as quickly or as far as many of us would have hoped. We are at the beginning of our diversity and inclusion agenda
- There is a strong desire to change, however a lack of resource and knowing where to start is hampering our progress

Diversity & Inclusion officer. In 2021, our Foundation has also decided to create a global initiative to increase diversity in engineering and will be investing \$100m over 10 years

- We have a strong commitment to EDI, led from the CEO and Executive Committee.
 #BLM has identified a need, and provided a platform and opportunity to push further, faster
- A light has been shone on a major issue facing society



It is clear from both the responses in figure 12 and the above *unprompted* commentary that the antiracism movement appears to have sparked action in corporate and non-profit organisations.

For a significant majority of companies and nearly half of NGOs, the issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement have featured in their partnerships – including on policy, advocacy, and programmatic areas

When asked (figure 13) about the extent to which the issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement have featured in organisations' partnerships over the last year, 71% of corporate respondents and 47% of NGO respondents reported that issues raised by the antiracism movement had either featured strongly or moderately. At 71%, corporate responses this year were close to, or indeed exceeded the predictions made last year (65%). The reverse was the case for non-profits (60% predicted in 2020 for the year ahead versus 47% reported in 2021).



Figure 13: The extent to which the issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement featured in your organisation's partnerships over the last year



To what extent have issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement featured in your organisation's partnerships (on e.g. policy, advocacy, or programmatic areas) with non-profits or corporates over the last year? Cross-sector partnerships with our corporate / non-profit partners have...

Asked *why* they responded as in figure 13, a range of *unprompted* responses emerged which are typified by the following:

Exemplar NGO responses	Exemplar Corporate responses
 Targeting Shared ambition with corporates to drive inclusive and diverse campaigns that drive real change and reaching all communities with focused and relevant messaging We work with the most disadvantaged young people in society, including those who are groomed into criminal activity. Systemic barriers linked to poverty and race mean we support a high proportion of young people from the black community. We also work to disrupt the systems that prevent them from thriving. This means we have pivoted programmes and policy work 	 Targeting Where new actions, risks or opportunities have been identified as a result of #BLM, we have deployed the same approach that we would normally take - which includes considering the best and/or most appropriate non-profit partners We have a broad portfolio of NGO partnerships. We have increased commitments in relation to #BlackLivesMatter Responsibility for equality and inclusion strategies sits within the HR function - which has perhaps less experience of partnering with NGOs to drive the kind of



to meet the emerging needs of the young people we are here to support

• There has been some indication that funders are prioritising programmes that address the issues and we have responded accordingly. We also acknowledge our programmatic work needs to target underserved communities more than it has been

Impact

- We are trying to deliver our services to more diverse communities, and want to explore how working with corporate partners can help to achieve this
- This is a huge focus and we have lots more plans in this area going forward

Miscellaneous

- DE&I considerations to be built into all partnerships going forward
- Contributed to deeper discussion and awareness of what each partner is trying to do and is capable of
- Not at the stage where we can partner with other organisations as we are still determining what our approach will be to become an antiracist organisation
- Because as an NGO we are moving towards de-colonising our model of aid and recognising that culture needs to change to be much more intentionally antiracist

systemic changes required. While employee networks have become more influential, again, these are under-resourced compared to the scale of the challenge.

Impact

- While recognizing the importance of the BLM movements, our NGO partnership focuses already on supply chain issues in developing countries so BLM is either already included or not relevant
- We identified a partner to help us access future employee markets where our current pipeline is not as strong as we would like. We also continued to partner through an NGO network to engage businesses on their response to the issues raised

Miscellaneous

- We have mostly led this internally and with professional advisors
- Our focus has been on internal conversations and awareness to help define D&I strategy
- We already had programmes in place but we have signed the Race at Work Charter. I think this would have happened without the BLM movement though

"

It seems clear that the projection of systemic racism onto public consciousness triggered by the death of George Floyd – and the antiracism movement galvanised by those events – has caused most companies and non-profits engaged in this study to actively review their policies and practices around issues of race, inclusion and diversity. Whether driven by a values-led belief in social justice, pressure from employees, or a desire to better serve new and existing customers and service users, most respondents report that their companies and non-profits are taking a reasonably strong strategic approach in their responses to addressing these issues. A clear majority also indicate that cross-sector partnerships will likely play a role in their responses to the issues raised by the antiracism movement – primarily to enhance the impact of their efforts through collaborative working.



Part 3: Mid-term trends, prospects, and anticipated developments in partnerships

7. Likely importance of partnerships in the mid-term

Cross-sector partnerships likely to become more important to both companies and non-profits over the next three years

A strong and consistent feature of the Barometer over the past 11 years has been an acknowledgement of the growing importance of cross-sector partnering – coupled with an expectation that this trend is set to continue. With an overwhelming majority of corporates (84%) and virtually all NGOs (98%) expecting that partnering between the two sectors will become more, or much more, important over the next three years, the 2021 Barometer findings on this issue are no different. This is hugely encouraging given the tremendously difficult socio-economic backdrop created by Covid-19, and all its associated issues. In fact, a third of all respondents (equally matched by corporates and NGOs) believe that the role that partnerships will play in the corporate-NGO agenda over the next three years will be much more important, whilst no respondents at all anticipate any decline in this regard (figure 14).



Figure 14: The future importance of corporate-NGO partnerships:

What is your expectation of the role that partnerships will play in the corporate or NGO agenda over the next three years? Would you say they are likely to become.....?

8. Drivers of change

Invited to identify factors that will drive the likely growing importance of cross-sector partnerships in the medium term, 85% of corporates and 81% of NGOs cited the need to leverage each other's assets to maximise the mutual benefits of partnerships (figure 15).

Societal and stakeholder pressure on companies to demonstrate societal considerations in their business practices is similarly identified as a key likely driver of the likely growing importance of partnering across



sectors. And more NGOs (74%) now see enhancing corporate or brand reputation as a key driver of cross-sector partnering than was the case in the 2020 edition of the Barometer (up 16% year on year).

Finally, many more corporates (65% - which is up 21% year on year) now believe that the growing body of evidence of the success of corporate-NGO partnerships is a strong driver of the likely future importance of the practice.





In your view, what factors are likely to make corporate-NGO partnerships more important in the next three years?

9. The outlook for investments in cross-sector partnerships over the mid-term

Investment in the partnering arena set to increase

The above findings on the likely future importance and drivers of cross-sector partnering are complemented by – and translate logically into - respondents' sentiments about the extent to which their organisations are likely, or not, to alter their investments (commitment, time, resources, etc.) in corporate-NGO partnerships over the next three years.



In perhaps the strongest vote of confidence yet in the importance and promise of cross-sector partnering, 88% of NGOs and 80% of corporates expect that their organisation will either increase, or increase significantly, investments in such partnerships over the medium term.

It is to be noted that positive sentiments about future investments in cross-sector partnering have strongly strengthened this year. Fifteen per cent more corporates (80% in 2021 against 65% in 2020) and 12% more NGOs (88% in 2021 against 76% in 2020) expect their organisations' investments in cross-sector partnering to increase or significantly increase in the coming years. These findings reinforce practitioners' belief in the value that investments in partnerships can yield.



Figure 16: Future investment in partnerships

Is your investment (commitment, time, resources, etc) in corporate-NGO partnerships likely to increase or decrease over the next 3 years?



Concluding remarks

It is pleasing to reflect that the findings in this 2021 Barometer report align with our discoveries in previous editions. It is also gratifying to reflect that the predictions made by partnership practitioners across the corporate and NGO communities in previous years have largely been borne out by the findings in this edition.

The overall arc of findings in previous editions of the Barometer – the consistent trends toward more strategic, problem-solving partnerships, the increasing importance of such partnerships in improving business understanding of ESG issues and business practice itself, and in helping non-profits not only to secure resources, but to better fulfil their missions – are clearly reinforced by the findings in this 2021 edition. And there are no indications that this trend will not continue, despite the enormous challenges presented by the pandemic. Indeed, the reverse seems to be the case as companies seek to reimagine their futures, increasingly anchoring their strategies around the concepts of purpose and sustainable business, whilst non-profits focus similarly on more effectively securing their missions in resource-constrained contexts.

There remains a strong imperative for non-profits to think holistically about the importance of the ESG agenda for their future evolution, as they continue to plan for a post Covid-19 future, re-imagine their theories of change and build new business models. It is encouraging, therefore, to see NGO practitioners report that their organisations are making progress in this arena. However, that a third of NGO respondents are unclear about whether or not their organisation has a holistic ESG plan or framework clearly indicates that there is a long way still to go before non-profits close the gap with companies on this important issue.

We discovered last year that the global Covid-19 pandemic acted as an accelerant for corporates and non-profits and the prioritising of ESG issues. This edition of the Barometer found absolutely no let-up in the collective determination to deal with the worst effects of the pandemic by addressing ESG issues. And cross-sector partnerships continued to play an important role in organisational responses to the pandemic.

And on our second special topic this year, it was encouraging to discover that a significant majority of organisations in the corporate and non-profit sectors report taking clear actions to drive forward solutions to the problems of antiracism in the last year. However, it is notable that organisations in the corporate sector appear to be outperforming those in the non-profit sector (by a factor of 15%) in taking fairly strong, or strong, strategic action on antiracism. We speculate in the report as to why this performance gap is evident. Whatever the reason, it does seem ironic that the non-profit sector, which is much admired for its mission and values orientation, is faced with such a clear comparative deficit in terms of sectoral responses to the antiracism challenge.

And looking to the future, an overwhelming majority of corporate and non-profit partnering practitioners anticipate that the cross-sector partnering agenda will become more, or much more, important – and expect to see their organisations increase, or significantly increase their investments accordingly. Combined with the effective role that we see such partnerships playing in helping to address some of



the key social and environmental challenges and opportunities facing society, it is clear that the future remains bright for cross-sector partnering.

Manny Amadi, MVO

CEO, C&E Advisory





About the Barometer

Methodology

The C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer 2021 was compiled using responses to a confidential online survey of 130 leading UK-based companies and NGOs engaged in corporate-NGO partnerships. The survey was supplemented by two roundtable discussions providing qualitative insights.

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 roundtables took place during July 2021.

The Sample

The online survey was undertaken by 130 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 49% corporate (including 1% other which refers to Corporate Foundations) and 51% NGOs is well balanced.



Figure 18: 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 19: Respondent's roles

What is your role?



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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Appendix

Survey respondents (excluding organisations wishing to remain anonymous)

Corporates

NGOs

ASOS Allianz Anglo American Asda BP plc ΒT Bupa **Burges Salmon LLP** Citi **DLA Piper International** Experian GE (General Electric) Greene King GSK Holland & Barrett Kingfisher plc Marks & Spencer NatWest Group Rathbone Brothers plc Reckitt Roche Tesco Twinings Virgin Media O2 Walgreens Boots Alliance The Arsenal Foundation

Age UK Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Back Up BFI **BOP HUB Breast Cancer Now** British heart foundation **British Red Cross** Comic Relief Cool Earth **Diabetes UK Diabetes UK** Family Action FareShare UK **Greggs Foundation** Invictus Games Foundation Macmillan Cancer Support Mind Oxfam Peabody RNIB ShelterBox St Christopher's Hospice St John Ambulance The Children's Society The Outward Bound Trust The Prince's Trust The Stroke Associaton The Tony Elumelu Foundation The Woodland Trust Together for Short Lives UNICEF UK World Vision International WWF Youth Sport Trust International ZSL (Zoological Society of London)