



# C&E Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer 2020

## Headline Findings

### Resilience amidst the turbulence



*Partnerships responses to Covid-19 pandemic boost – rather than diminish – cross-sector partnering*

*Strong and strategic corporate and non-profit responses to the antiracism movement – supported by cross-sector partnering*

*Lack of a holistic approach to addressing ESG issues leaves many non-profits at serious risk*

**Special Topics Edition**

## Headline findings

### Why partner?

*For corporates, reputation and credibility remain paramount (93%), whilst for NGOs, access to funding (96%) remains the key driver. But this year, some of the complementary aims and longer-term focus are down for NGOs - whilst corporates are less concerned about securing efficiency and effectiveness through partnerships.*

Both corporates and NGOs report notably lower interest regarding 'access to new markets' as a reason for cross-sector partnering. However, they diverge on 'effectiveness' (creating more appropriate products and services) which sees a striking reversal (down 23% on last year) for companies, and an upswing (up 10%) as a reason for partnering on the NGO side.

### Partnering practice and effectiveness

*Corporates again lead NGOs in depth and reach of partnerships*

The gradual shift in emphasis towards the creation of deeper, problem-solving partnerships continues, with 63% of corporates stating that their organisations are increasingly engaged in strategic partnerships designed to address core, mission-relevant or purpose-led issues in ways that create value for society, for themselves and for their NGO partners. This contrasts with NGOs where only a quarter (26%) report the same to be true. These findings are logically complemented by the fact that a larger percentage of NGOs than corporates (46% vs. 30%) believe that such a position is 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 (98% of corporates and 85% of NGOs) in their belief that their partnerships have helped corporate partners to enhance their understanding of the social / environmental issues that the 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, around two-thirds of corporate and NGO respondents (67% and 63% respectively) indicate that business practices have improved because of their engagement in partnerships. Again, this is highly encouraging, providing continued validation that businesses are taking greater action to improve their performance on social and environmental issues.

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

*The NGO approach to addressing ESG issues appear reactive and fragmented, rather than holistic*

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, yet the benefits of taking a holistic approach to the planning and delivery of ESG practices have been well demonstrated.

We sought in this 2020 Barometer to establish whether 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 Barometer found that over a third (37%) of NGOs and around a quarter (26%) of corporates state that their non-profit organisations or partners do *not* have a holistic ESG plan or framework in place. Just over a third of corporates and NGOs (35% and 37% respectively) believe their charities (or non-profit partners) have holistic ESG plans in place, whilst 39% of corporates and 27% of NGO respondents are uncertain of their non-profit partners', or charities' status on this issue.

After several leading development organisations and charities have faced recent criticism for poor safeguarding, environmental, supply chain, and other practices, it is notable that such high proportions (around two-thirds) of non-profits appear not to take a holistic approach to tackling ESG issues – or poorly communicate their practices in this regard. We argue that this concerning finding represents a risk to non-profits. As they continue to plan for a post Covid-19 future, re-imagine their theories of change, and build new business models, we believe that that it is imperative for non-profits to think holistically about the importance of the ESG agenda for their future evolution.

### **The stars – the most admired corporate-NGO partnerships and partners**

*Ambition, scale, impact, and relevance secure acclaim from partnership practitioners*

This year, for the second year running in an unprompted voting process, the Boots UK–Macmillan Cancer Support partnership has been voted the Most Admired Corporate-NGO Partnership by partnering professionals. But it is being strongly challenged for leadership by the Tesco-WWF collaboration which has moved up significantly year on year.

And in third place, is the Tesco Health Charity Partnership, with Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation, Diabetes UK (just pipping 2018 winner and last year's runner-up GSK-Save the Children).

## **Special Topics**

### **The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

*Cross-sector partnering practitioners double down on tackling ESG issues following the global pandemic*

The 2020 Barometer sought to establish the impact of Covid-19 on corporate and non-profit approaches to ESG issues. Any fears that the pandemic and the resource-constrained times it has ushered in might lead to a down-grading of corporate or non-profit attention on ESG issues has not been borne out by the findings. Instead, the data reveals the opposite effect: the impact of the pandemic has been to make most companies and non-profits more actively engaged in addressing ESG issues. The effect is most pronounced on the corporate side, where an overwhelming 80% of businesses are more, or much more actively engaged in addressing ESG issues because of Covid-19. No corporate respondents reported lower levels of engagement on ESG issues.

Responses on the non-profit side were also positive, if less decisive; 60% of NGOs report that their organisations are more, or much more actively engaged in addressing ESG issues because of Covid-19, with 38% indicating a neutral effect, and 2% less actively engaged.

*Social programming issues dominate corporate and NGO responses to Covid-19*

Unprompted responses indicate that for both companies and non-profits, issues related to social programming at the community level (from food and mental health provision, to re-skilling and tackling digital exclusion) have come very much to the fore in their enhanced response to ESG issues. There is, however, a risk that negative effects arise as non-profits, in particular, dial down on environmental issues in favour of seemingly more pressing social issues.

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

Cross-sector partnering is playing a vitally important role in organisations' responses to the pandemic. Nearly three-quarters of corporates and non-profits (70% and 72% respectively) report that they have increased or will increase their emphasis on partnering due to Covid-19.

*And the pandemic is changing how corporates and non-profits partner*

And in looking at the nature of partnerships and whether Covid-19 has changed *how* organisations engage in those partnerships, 81% of all NGOs assert that the pandemic has either changed or changed significantly, how their organisation partners with corporates (with the rest reporting no change).

The equivalent figure on the corporates' side is significantly lower, with nearly half (48%) reporting that the pandemic has changed, or significantly changed how they partner with non-profits. Just over half (52%) reported no changes in this regard.

Re-purposing existing partnerships; mobilising product, process and people assets; collective impact; and digital, tech, and pace emerge as important ways in which cross-sector partnerships are evolving in response to Covid-19.

**The impact of the antiracism movement**

Given the enormity of the world's response to the death of George Floyd during his forceful arrest by Minneapolis Police in May of this year, and public and media interest in the antiracism and the #BlackLivesMatter movement that followed, the 2020 Barometer included a section dedicated to examining corporate and non-profit responses to the issues raised, and the implications for cross-sector partnering.

*Many companies and non-profits report that their organisations are making a strong and strategic response*

Responses from both companies and non-profits indicate that the vast majority of organisations are taking, or are set to take, clear steps in their response to the antiracism movement. Around three quarters of corporate respondents (74%) and over four-fifths of non-profits (85%) expect their organisation to make a fairly strong, or strong strategic response to the issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Most of the rest of the responding corporates and NGOs expect that

their organisation will make some response, with only 4% of organisations in each sector expecting no response from their organisations.

*Why?*

There are often multiple reasons for organisations committing to change in addressing the issues raised by the antiracism movement, but these reasons cluster around the moral case for social justice, pressure from employees, as well as the opportunity to better engage existing or access new service users and customers.

*A significant majority of companies and NGOs expect the issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement to feature in their partnerships*

Overall, a significant majority of companies (66%) and NGOs (60%) expect the issues raised by the #BlackLivesMatter movement to feature in their partnerships – including on policy, advocacy, and programmatic areas.

### **Medium-term prospects for corporate-NGO partnering**

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

The overwhelming majority of practitioners from both sides of the partnering arena expect that partnerships between companies and NGOs will become even more important over the coming three years.

More NGOs (98%) anticipate this growing rise in the importance of cross-sector partnering than their corporate counterparts, but nearly nine out of ten (87%) corporates expect that partnerships between the sectors will play a more or much more important role in the coming three years.

Approximately nine out of ten corporates and NGOs cite the need to leverage each others' assets to maximise the mutual benefit, and pressure on companies to demonstrate societal consideration within business practices as the likely key drivers for the continuing importance of cross-sector partnerships.

*Increases in investment on the way*

Two-thirds (65%) of corporates and around three-quarters (76%) of NGOs expect their organisation to increase or significantly increase their investment (commitment, time, resources, etc.) in cross-sector partnering over the next three years. A striking sentiment, given the headwinds presented by Covid-19 and other economic and political uncertainties.

## 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 2020 was compiled using responses to a confidential online survey of 110 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.

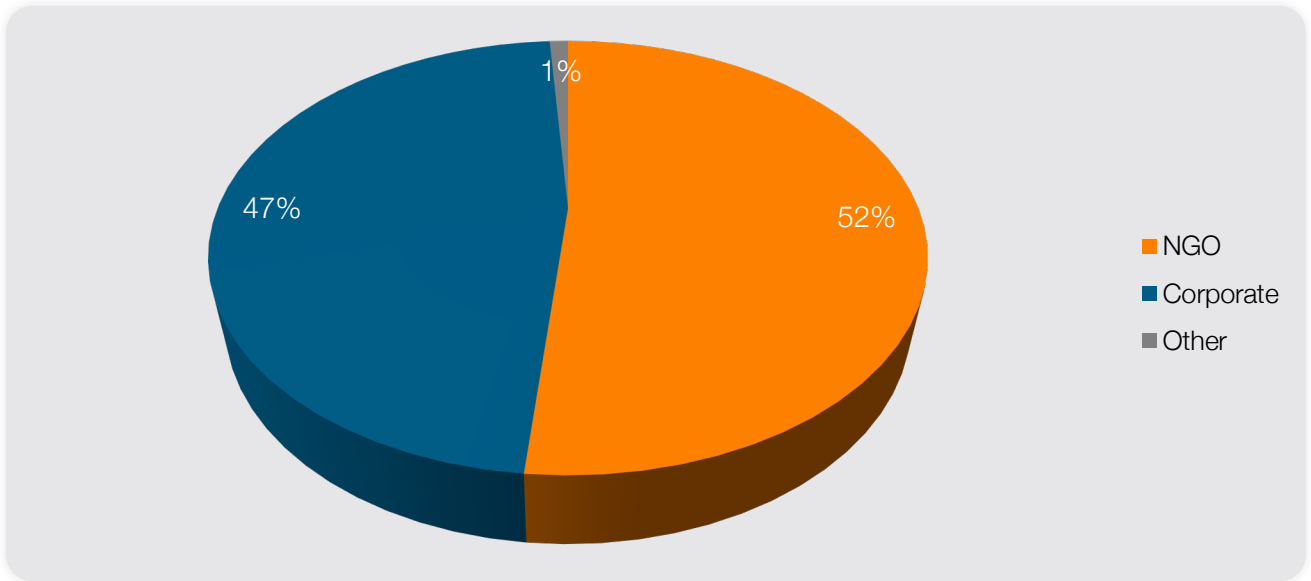
The online survey and roundtables took place during July 2020.

### The Sample

The online survey was undertaken by 110 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 48% corporate (including 1% other which refers to Corporate Foundations) and 52% NGOs is well balanced.

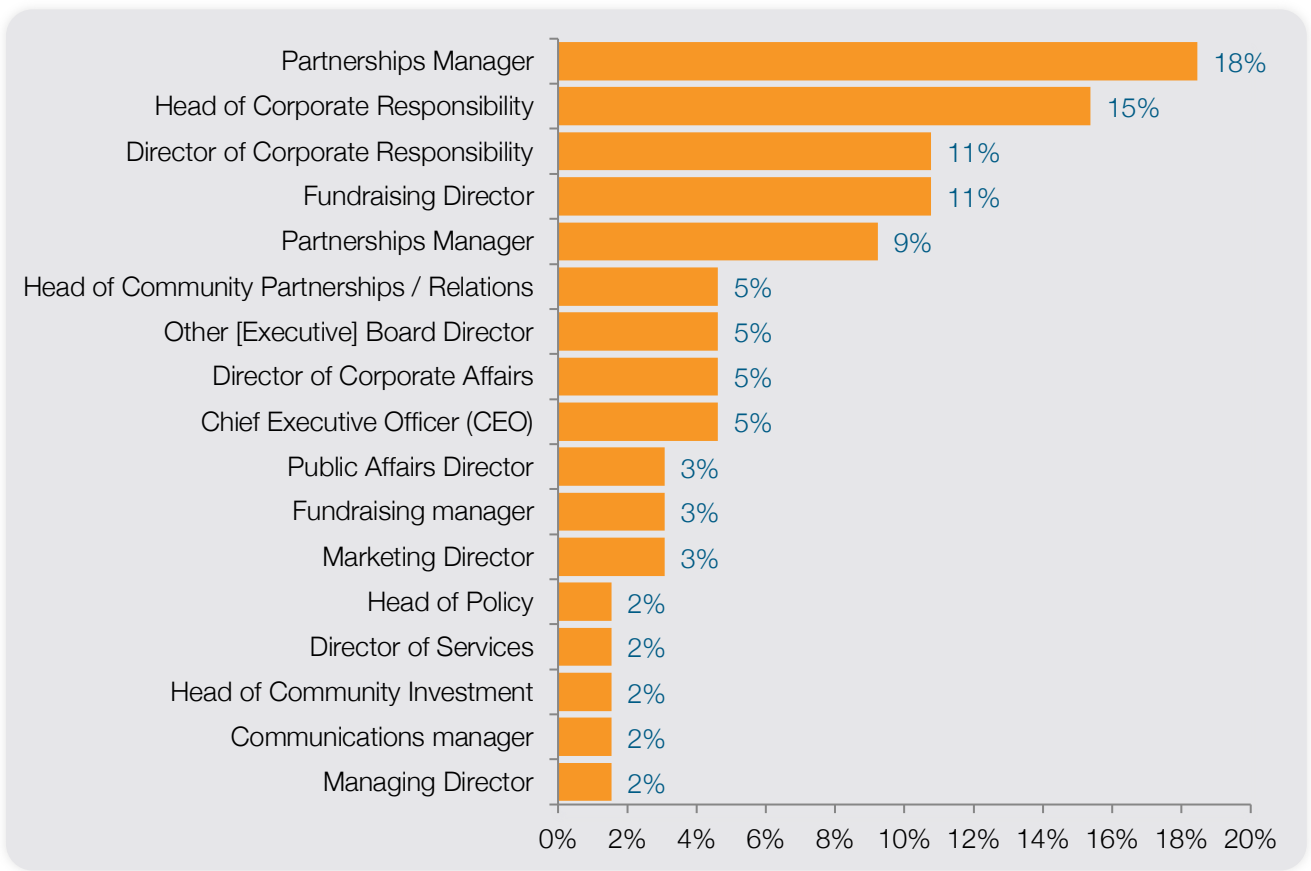
**Figure 18: Sector representation**



*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?*

**List of participating companies and NGOs**

Survey respondents (excluding organisations wishing to remain anonymous)

**Corporates**

Allianz  
 Anglo American  
 Aviva  
 Boots UK  
 BP plc  
 Burges Salmon LLP  
 CEMEX  
 Citi  
 Dixons Carphone  
 DLA Piper  
 DP World  
 Experian  
 GE (General Electric)  
 Greene King  
 Heathrow  
 IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group)  
 Jaguar Land Rover  
 Morgan Sindall Group  
 NatWest Group  
 Roche Diabetes Care  
 Telefonica UK (O2)  
 Tesco  
 Unilever  
 Walgreens Boots Alliance  
 WarnerMedia

**NGOs**

Age UK  
 Back Up  
 Blue Cross  
 British Lung Foundation and Asthma UK  
 British Red Cross  
 Comic Relief  
 Diabetes UK  
 FareShare  
 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)  
 Independent Age  
 Leonard Cheshire  
 Macmillan Cancer Support  
 Malaria No More UK  
 Marie Curie  
 Mind  
 National Trust for Scotland  
 NSPCC  
 Oxfam  
 Peabody  
 Plan International  
 Rainbow Trust Children's Charity  
 Remember A Charity  
 Royal National Institute of Blind People  
 Save the Children UK  
 St Christopher's Hospice  
 St John Ambulance  
 Stroke Association  
 The Children's Society  
 WaterAid  
 Woodland Trust  
 World Vision International  
 Youth Sport Trust International