

Collaborating for a sustainable future

A GlobeScan/SustainAbility Survey



About the GlobeScan / SustainAbility Surveys

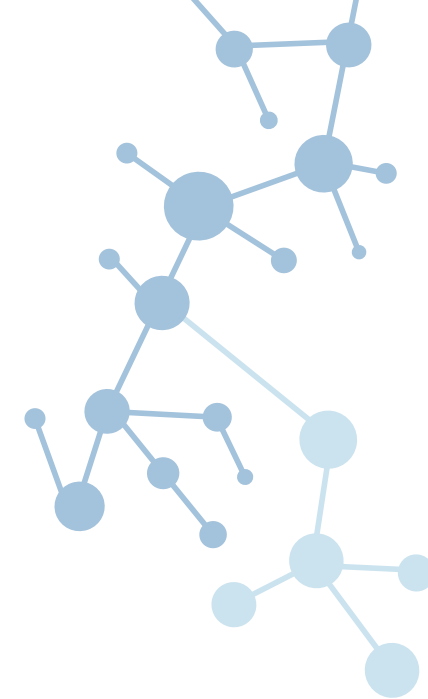
The GlobeScan / SustainAbility Surveys offer a unique, collaborative platform that uses research-driven insights, including targeted surveys of the most influential thought leaders in the sustainability arena from over sixty countries, to explore the biggest sustainability challenges.

The thousands of stakeholders surveyed include leading sustainable development experts and practitioners from five sectors:

- Corporate
- Government (including multi-lateral institutions)
- NGOs
- Institutional (e.g., academics)
- Service (e.g., consultants, media)

The GlobeScan / SustainAbility Surveys are in field around six times each year, and provide a regularly updated expert perspective on a range of timely topics.

You can download all the latest surveys from the [GlobeScan](#) or [SustainAbility](#) websites.



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Introduction

“The most often used phrases in the many meetings I attended [were] the need to create ‘coalitions of the willing’ and a recognition that ‘all issues are inter-connected’ and cannot be viewed in silos.” - Jo Confino, Chair of Guardian Sustainable Business writing at the close of the Rio +20 Conference in June 2012

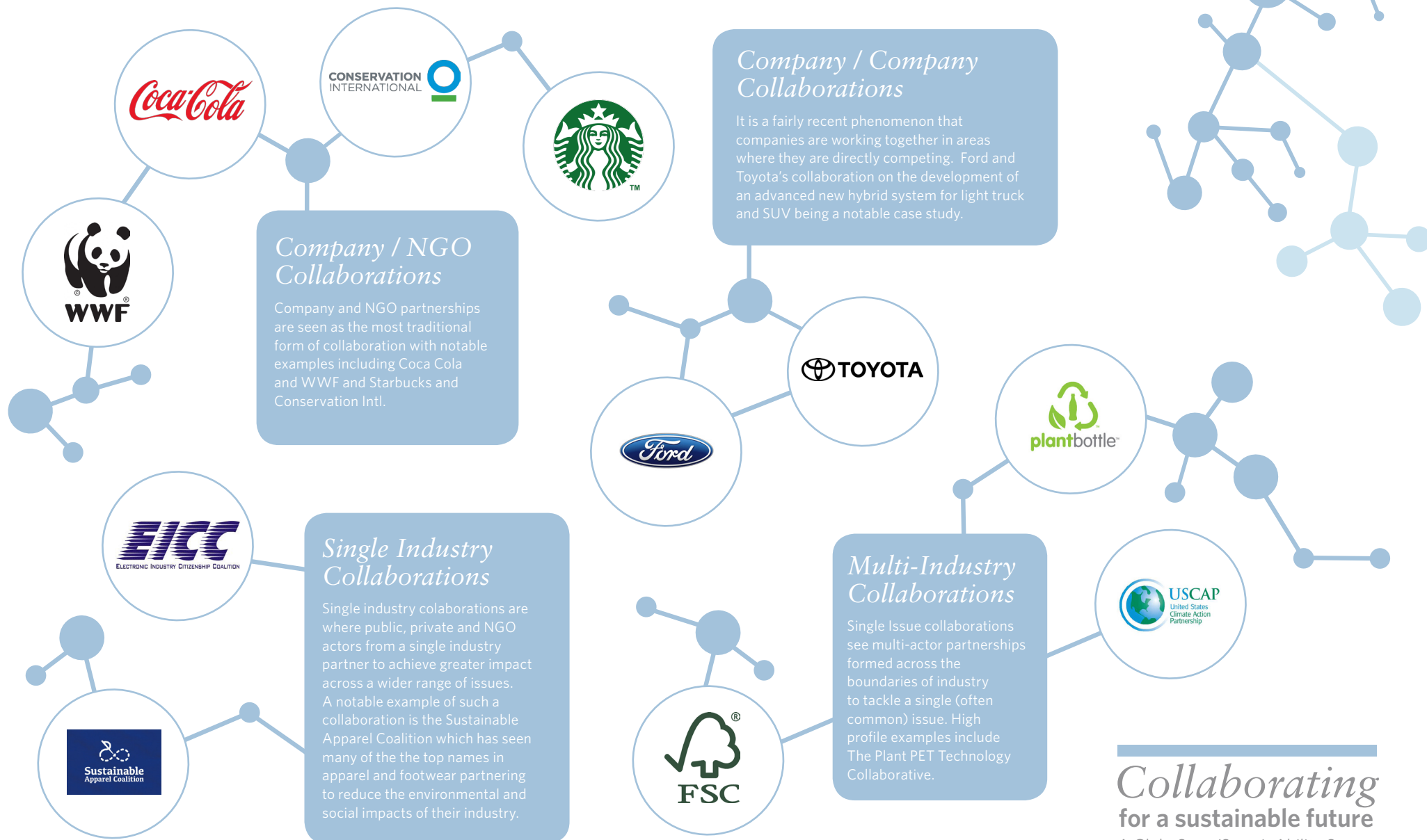
Proponents of more and better collaboration (e.g. between businesses, businesses and governments, businesses and NGOs, and multi-actor partnerships between all three) were not only big winners Post-Rio, but collaboration continues to be viewed as one of the few models that could catalyze solutions to the sustainable development challenges that we face at the speed and scale that we need.

To better understand the renewed hope, future prospects and potential pitfalls of “Collaborating for a Sustainable Future,” SustainAbility and GlobeScan surveyed 800 global experts in 74 countries representing business, government, NGO and academic perspectives. We asked respondents for clues to a blueprint for the most effective forms of collaboration, how business should (and in reality, would) approach governments to address sustainability issues, and the most valued attributes of a collaboration partner. “Collaborating for a Sustainable Future” represents the beginning of our exploration into these questions and more, becoming an important focus area for us in the new year. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and insight.

Collaboration

Under the collaboration banner there are diverse arrangements in terms of the nature and number of organizations that can be involved. We limit our focus to business working across organizational boundaries to drive environmental, social and economic change. This focus nonetheless leaves many types of initiatives that range from a company working on a single issue with one NGO to large scale multi-issue partnerships with companies working with industry peers, governments and other groups.

Some examples of collaboration (and those involved...)



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Key findings

- Despite pessimism of national governments' willingness and ability to make substantive progress on the sustainability agenda, experts overwhelmingly believe that progress requires companies collaborating with multiple actors, including governments. However, significant doubt remains about the approach companies will take in their engagement with the public sector.
- All forms of collaboration are expected to increase over the next five years, although experts believe the most effective forms will involve actors focused on addressing a single issue, rather than a broad set of topics.
- Public policy advocacy and consumer engagement on sustainability topics are seen as having the most upside when addressed through multi-actor collaboration. Perhaps more surprisingly, experts see a significant opportunity for collaboration to accelerate more sustainable business models.
- Nearly half of experts cite access to diverse perspectives and expertise and pooling risk as keys to the business case for collaboration; Cost reduction is not seen as a primary reason to collaborate.
- Whether partnering with an NGO or company, shared purpose and the transparent exchange of information are important pre-requisites for collaboration.

Survey Methodology

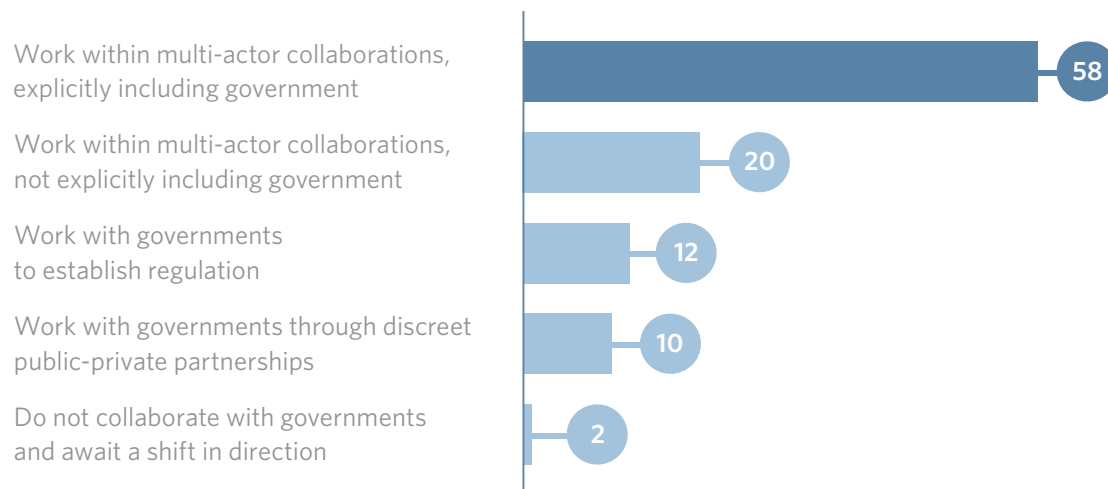
- Survey polled in September 2012
- 791 sustainability professionals responded
- From corporate, government, non-governmental, academic/research, service/media, and other organizations
- Representing 74 countries
- With 63 percent having more than ten years of experience working on sustainability issues



“Post-Rio +20, experts overwhelmingly believe companies should collaborate with multiple actors, including governments, to advance sustainability most effectively”

Despite pessimism of national governments’ willingness and ability to make substantive progress on the sustainability agenda, experts overwhelmingly believe that progress requires companies collaborating with multiple actors, including governments.

What is the “most effective approach companies can take”?



Question

Given the outcome of Rio+20 and the general pessimism around national governments’ willingness and/or ability to make substantive progress on the sustainable development (SD) agenda, which one of the following statements best summarizes the most effective approach companies can take in respect to pro-SD public policy?

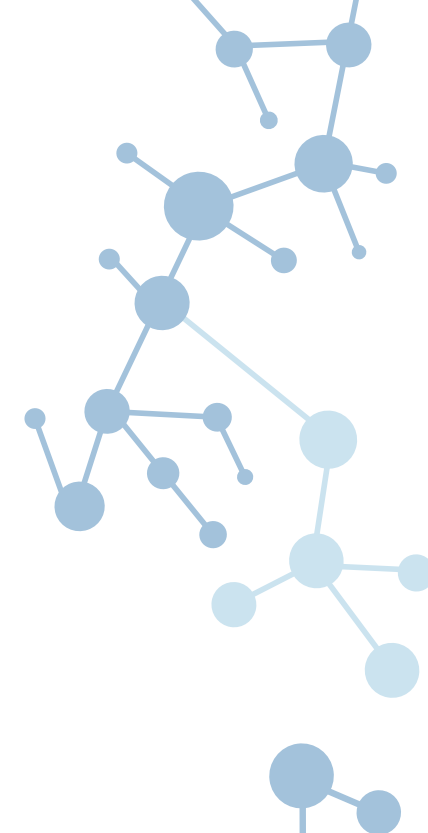
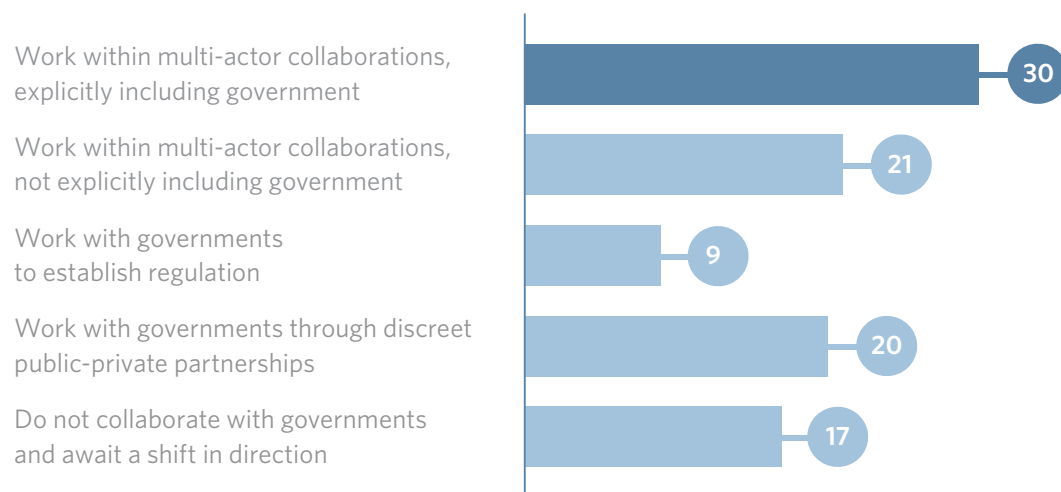
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“While experts believe companies will involve governments in collaborative partnerships, the range of responses indicates there is no clear-cut approach to how businesses and governments will work together to advance sustainability”

However, significant doubt remains about the approach companies will take in their engagement with the public sector. We found a 28-point gap between what experts believed was the most effective approach, namely multi-actor collaboration that includes government, and what companies would actually pursue.

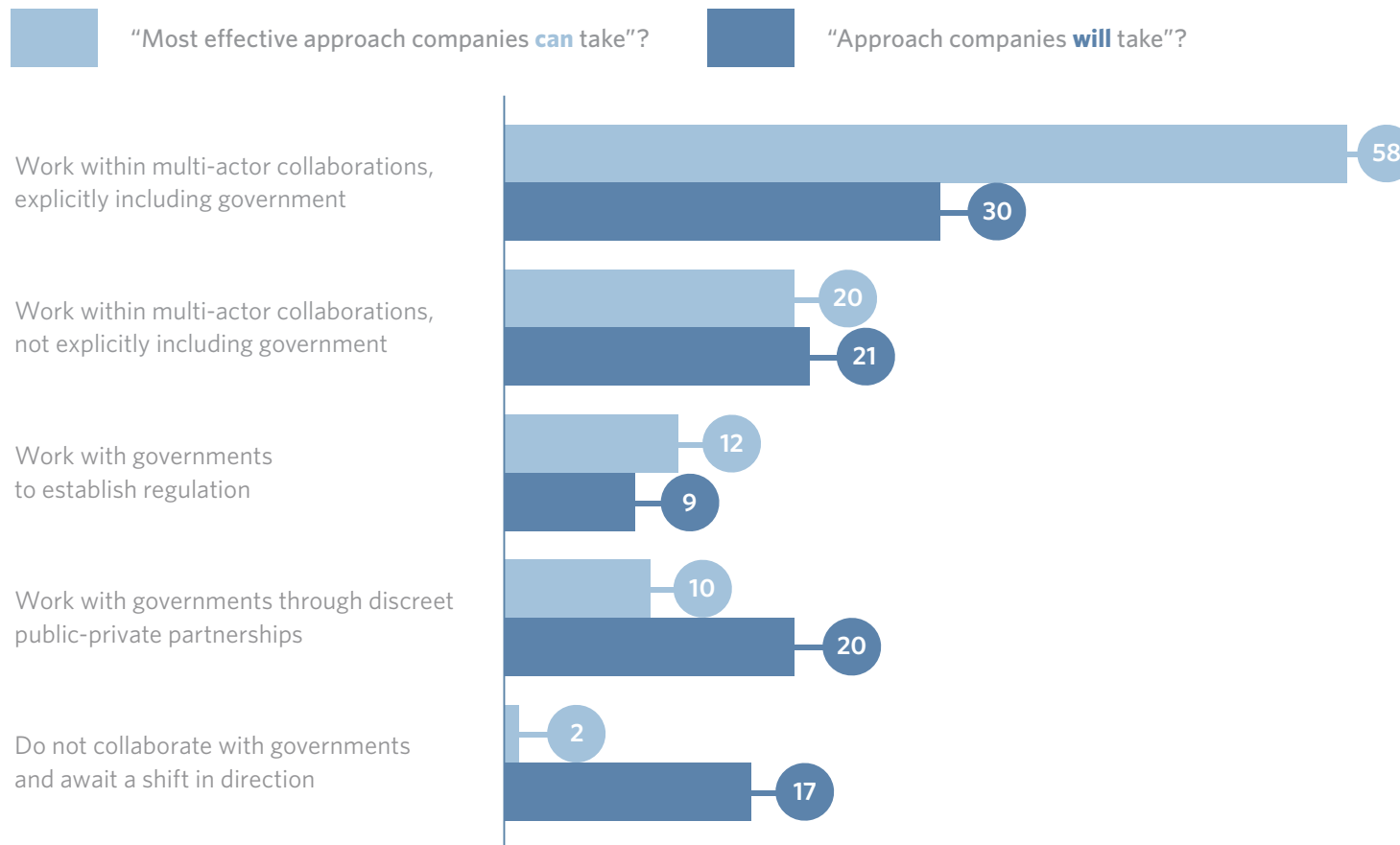
Which is the most likely “approach companies will take”?



Question

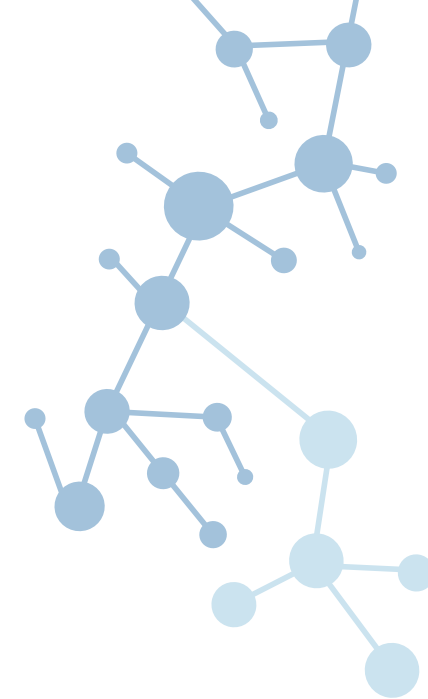
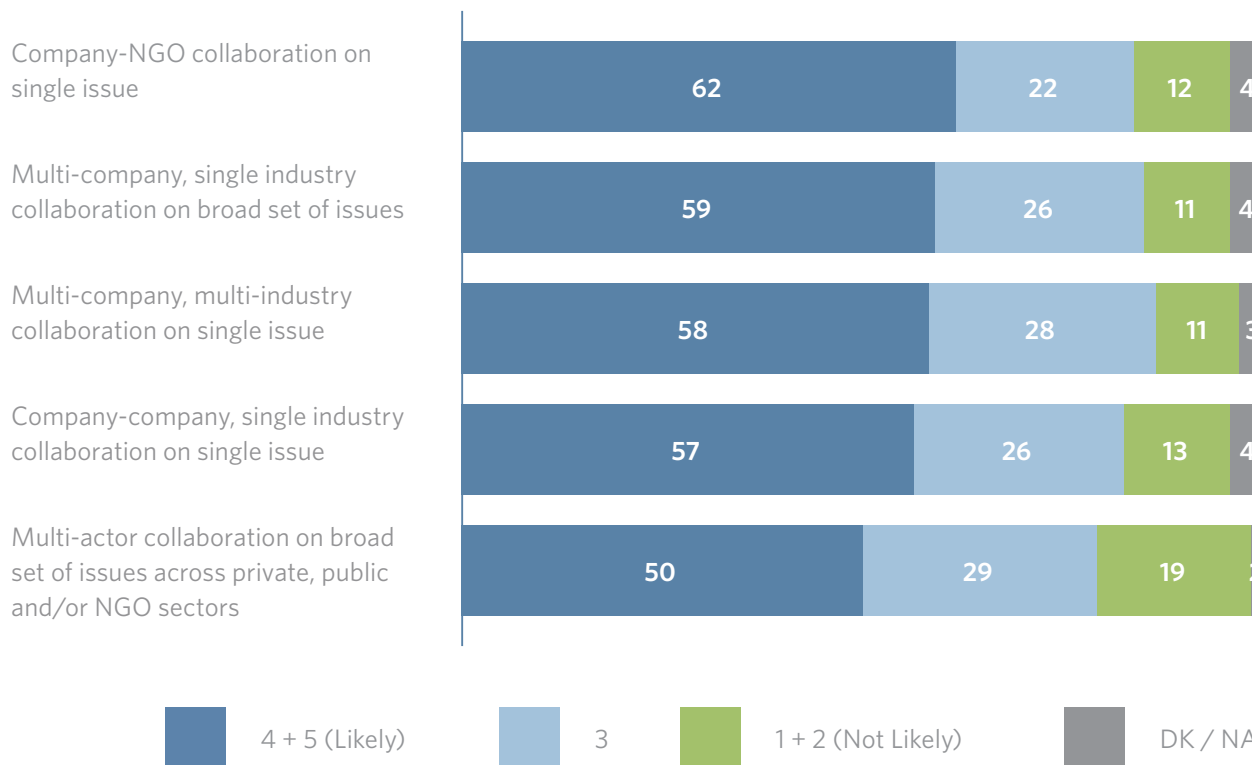
And which one of these same statements best summarizes the approach companies will be most likely to take in respect to pro-SD public policy?

“Multi-actor collaboration that involves government is the most effective approach companies can take to work with the public sector, but experts have significant doubts that business will be as willing to pursue it”



“All forms of collaboration are expected to increase over the next five years, though experts see collaboration over a broad set of issues and actors as least likely to increase”

From more traditional forms of collaboration (company-NGO partnerships such as Starbucks and Conservation International) to more expansive multi-actor partnerships across the public, private and NGO sectors, experts are bullish that we will see more of all of these varieties in the next five years.

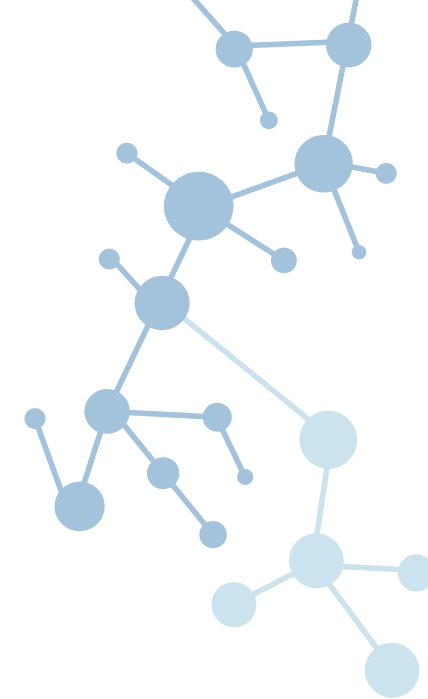
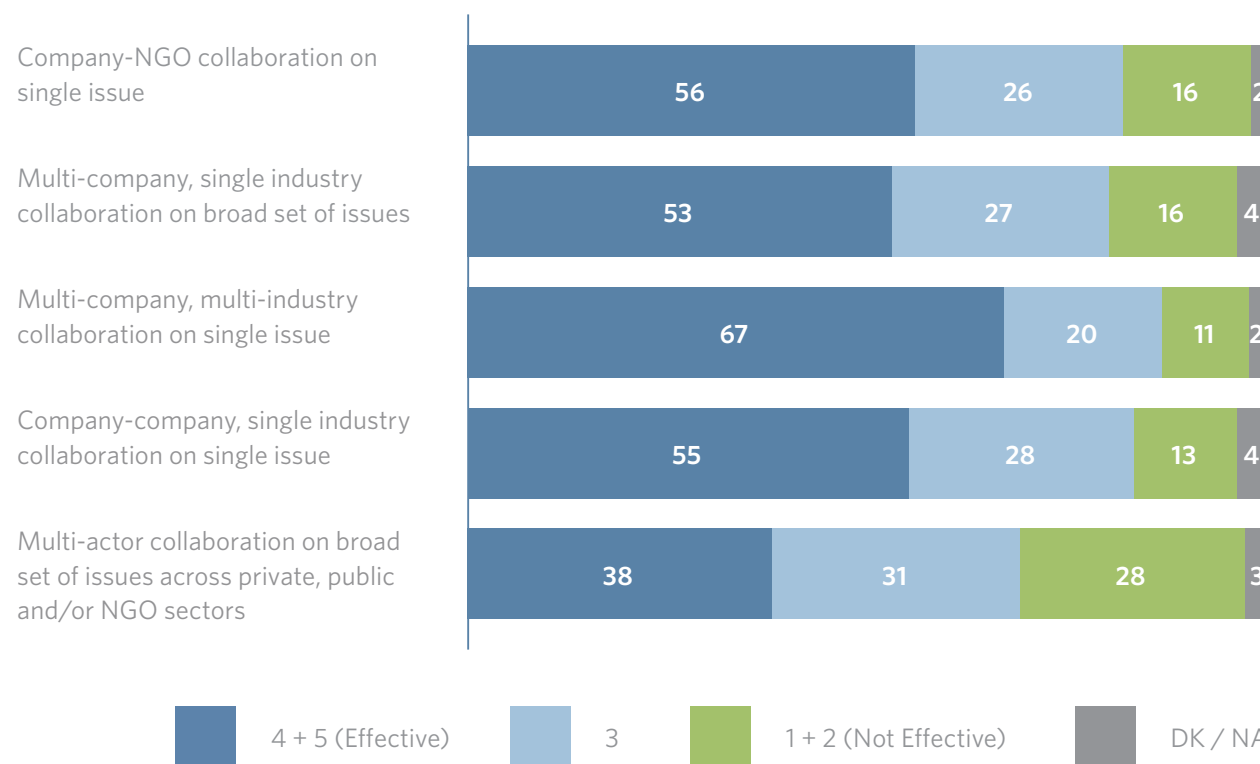


Question

Please rate the likelihood that the following forms of collaboration (which include business as a primary actor) will increase over the next five years.

“Collaboration is most effective when parties are focused on addressing a single issue, rather than a broad set of topics”

However, not all forms are created equally—experts perceive partnerships that focus on addressing a single issue, rather than a broad set of topics, as being most effective. This is probably due to familiarity with high-profile single-issue initiatives such as the Forest Stewardship Council, the Marine Stewardship Council and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, as well as perhaps a skepticism with more diffuse membership collaborations such as the UN Global Compact. It is also worth noting that despite a growing awareness of the need to take a more systemic approach to sustainability – the interrelations and interdependencies of issues such as climate, water, biodiversity and food security is probably too ambitious for consideration by collaborations at this stage.

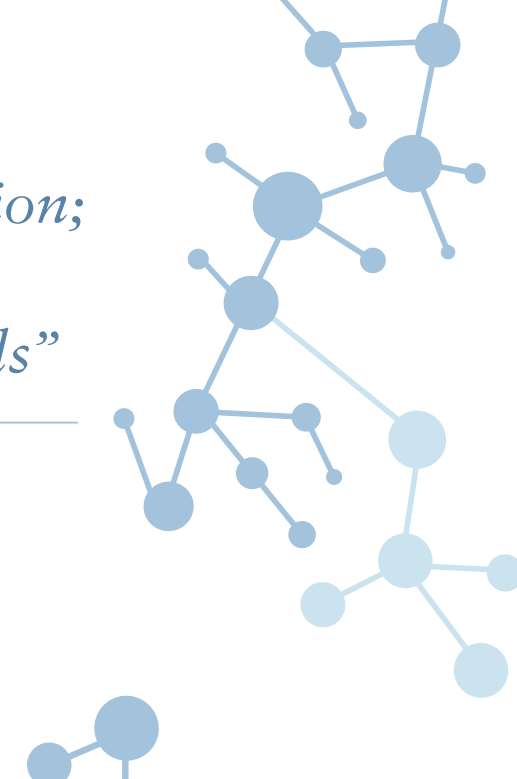
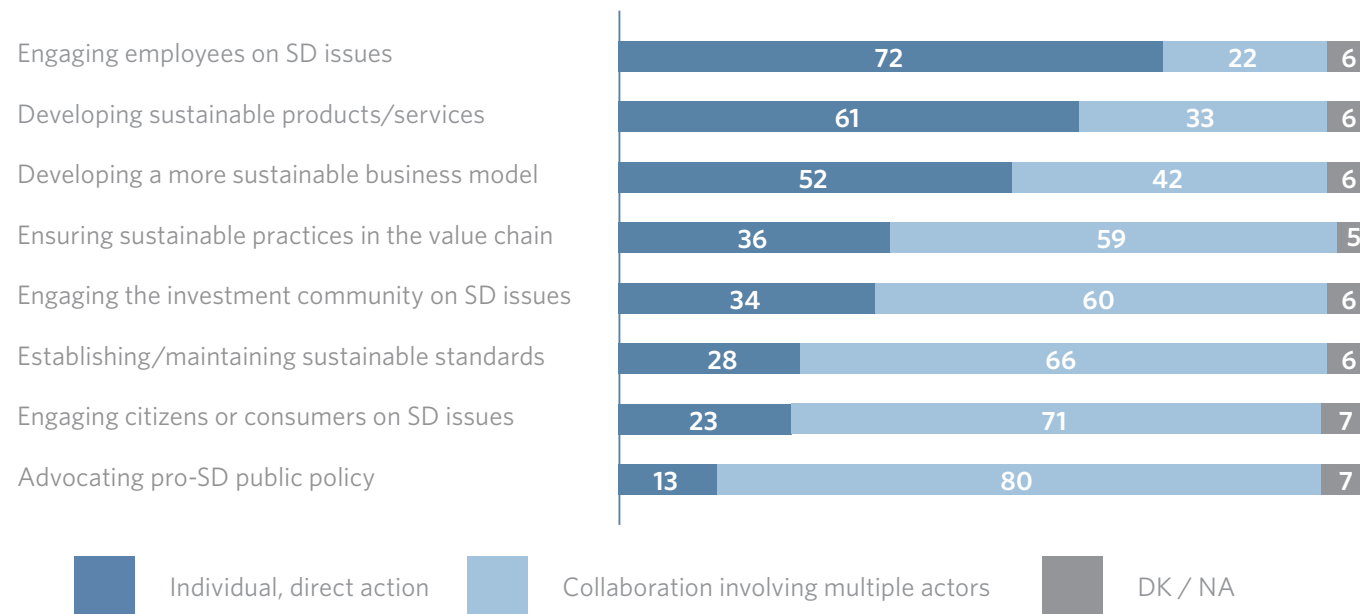


Question
Please rate the effectiveness of the following forms of collaboration (which include business as a primary actor) in progressing the SD agenda.

“Public policy advocacy and consumer engagement on sustainability will benefit most from multi-actor collaboration; More surprisingly, experts see a significant opportunity for collaboration to accelerate more sustainable business models”

Collaboration’s renewed moment in the sun translates to some aspects of the sustainability agenda better than others and the results provide a steer on where companies should remain strongly competitive.

Systemic barriers – such as disengaged investors & citizens, lack of enabling policy and resource scarcity in the supply chain – issues that no-one company can address on its own, are seen as having the most upside when addressed through multi-actor collaboration. However competition still plays its part and the majority of experts believe that individual, direct action should drive the development of sustainable products and services.



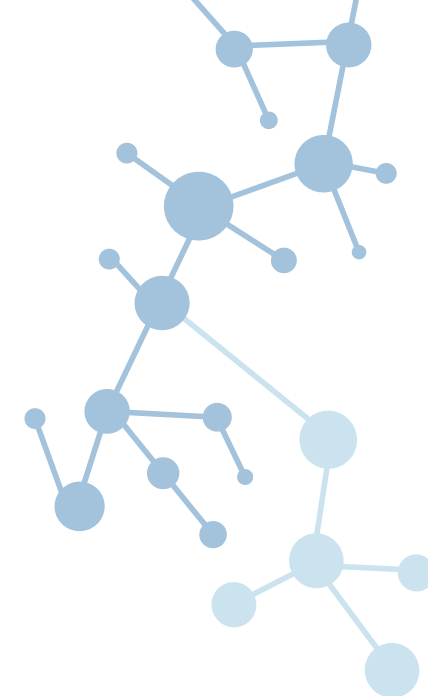
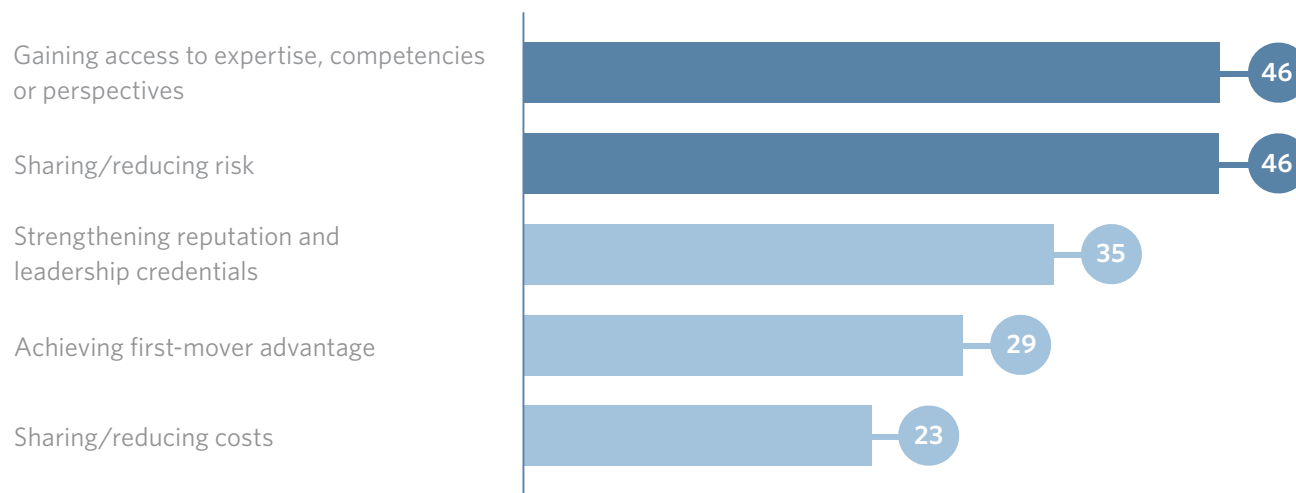
Question

For each of the following activities, on balance, which approach is most effective for large multinational companies to take in order to achieve positive environmental, social and economic outcomes? Is it individual direct action, or collaboration involving multiple actors?

“Nearly half of experts cite access to diverse perspectives and expertise and pooling risk as keys to the business case for collaboration; Cost reduction is not seen as a primary reason to collaborate”

Under the collaboration banner there are diverse arrangements in terms of the nature and number of organizations that can be involved. We limit our focus to business working across organizational boundaries to drive environmental, social and economic change. This focus nonetheless leaves a many types of initiatives that range from a company working on a single issue with one NGO to large scale multi-issue partnerships with companies working with industry peers, governments and other groups.

Which supports the “business case for collaboration”?



Question

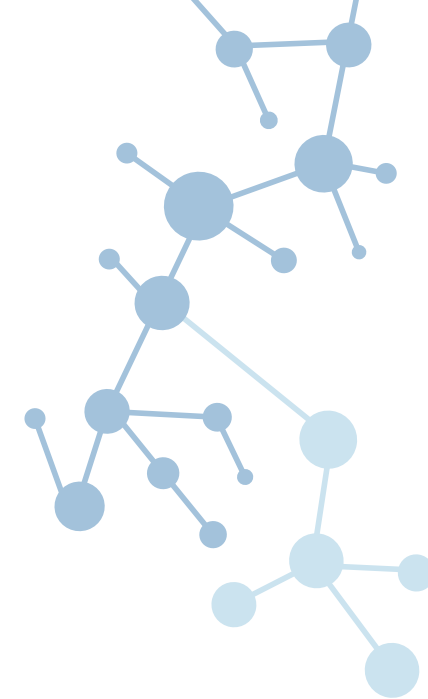
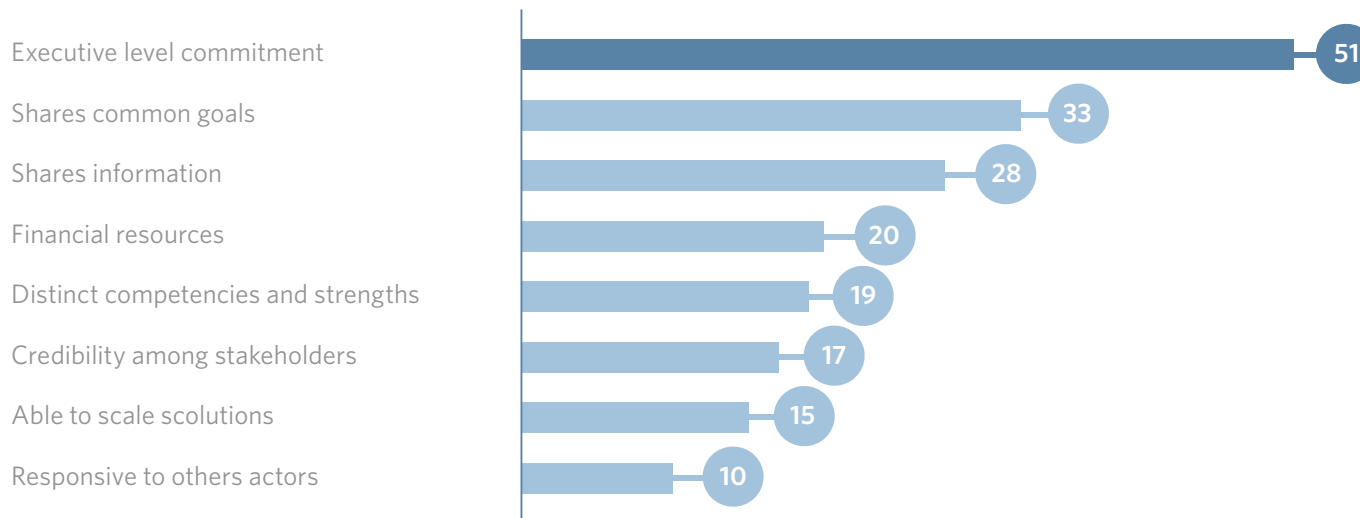
Which two of the following potential benefits of collaboration most support the business case for companies to engage in multi-actor collaborations?

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“Executive-level commitment is seen as the most critical attribute of a corporate collaboration partner; Shared purpose and sharing information also deemed important”

Related to the business case discussion is the choice and justification of partners. We asked experts to name the most important attributes of corporate and NGO partners, respectively. Executive-level commitment is seen as most important for a corporate partner, offering a clear message to companies of the importance of vision and corresponding commitment at the top.

What is the “most important attribute when collaborating with companies”?



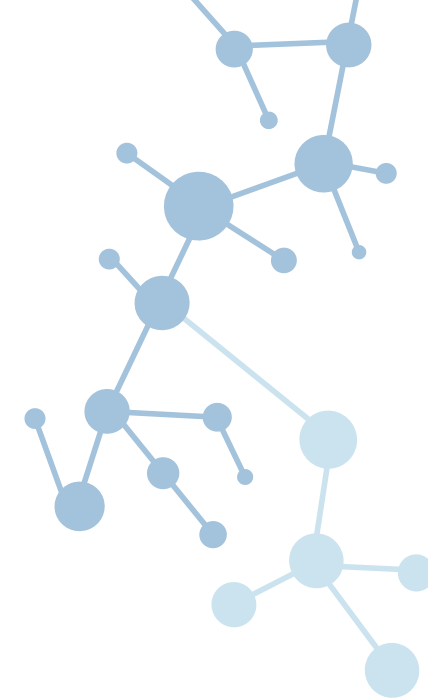
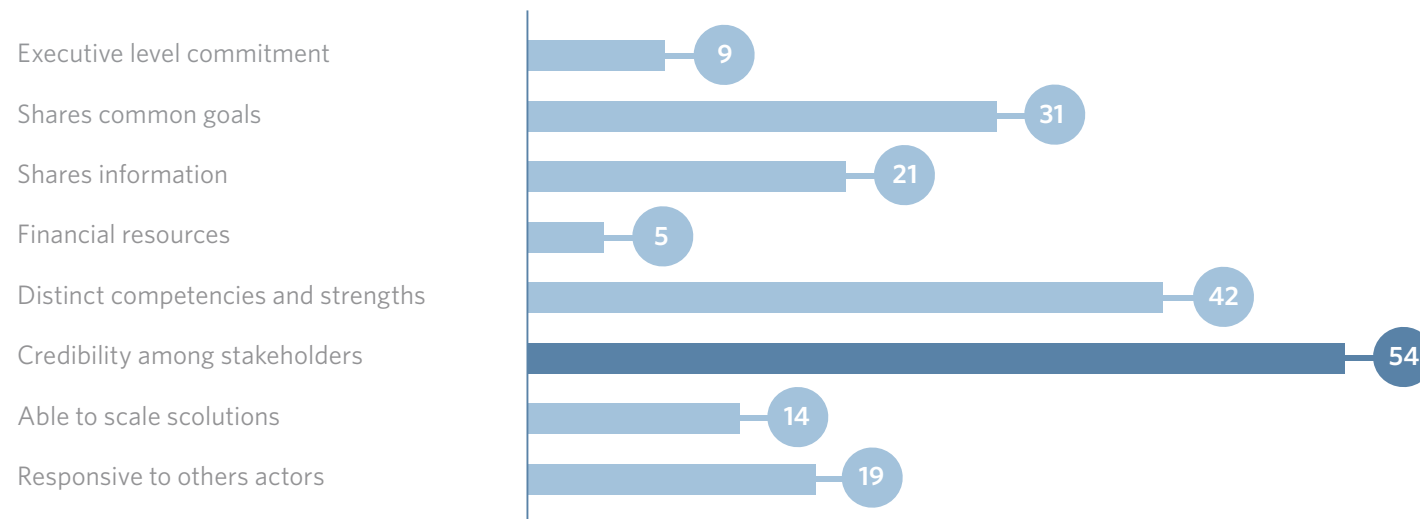
Question

From the list below, please select the two most important attributes of a collaboration partner if the partner is a company.

“An NGO’s reputation, followed by its ability to bring distinct competencies to bear in the relationship, are the most important attributes when partnering with an NGO”

Meanwhile, reputation and distinct competencies (like deep knowledge on a particular issue or subset of issues) are what stakeholders look for in NGO partners.

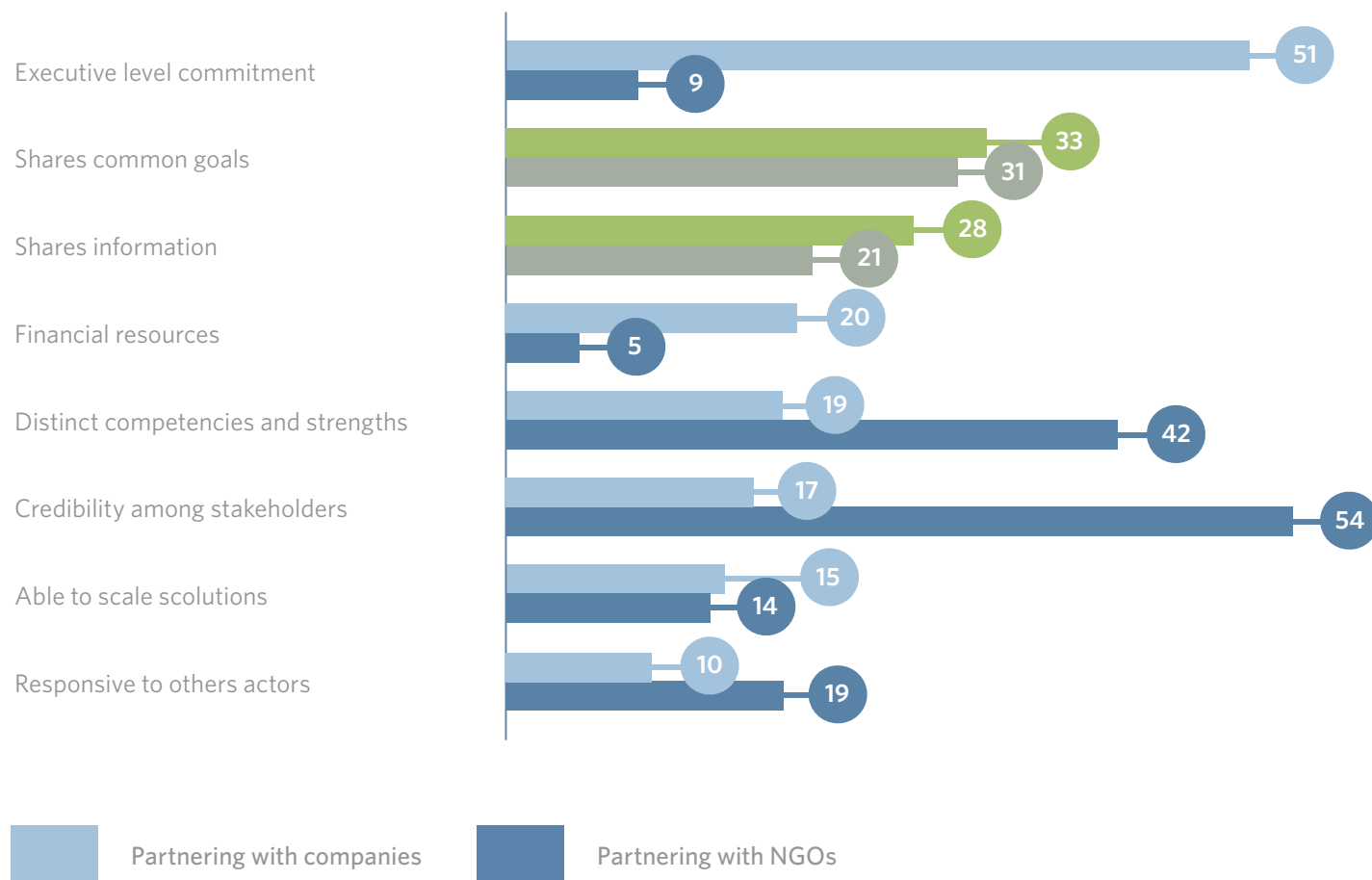
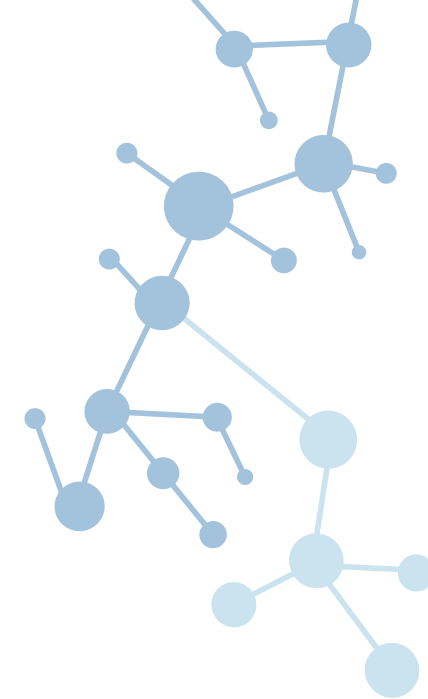
What is the “most important attribute when collaborating with NGOs”?



Question

From the list below, please select the two most important attributes of a collaboration partner if the partner is a company.

“Whether partnering with an NGO or company, shared purpose and the transparent exchange of information are important pre-requisites for collaboration”



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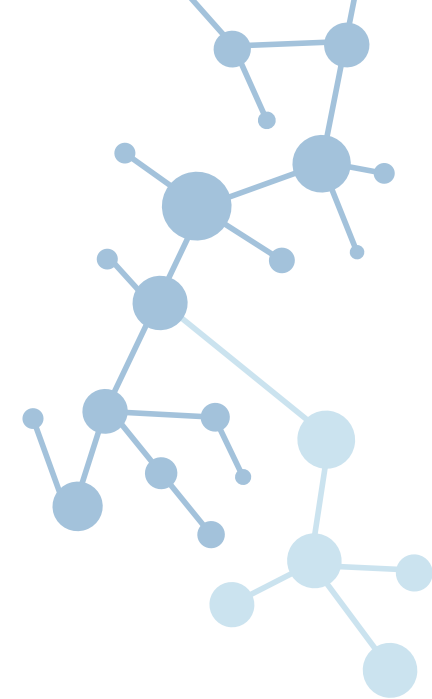
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