CHARITY INSIGHTS CANADA PROJECT (CICP)

Collaboration in Canada's Charitable Sector

Collective Quantitative CICP Survey Results (2023-2025)

<u>**Project Members**</u>

Paloma Raggo
Principal Investigator

Callie Mathieson
Chief Project & Operations Officer

Susan D. Phillips
Policy Lead

Thi Kim Quy Nguyen
Postdoctoral Fellow

Tara McWhinney
Postdoctoral Fellow

Tuan Tu Tran
Data Specialist

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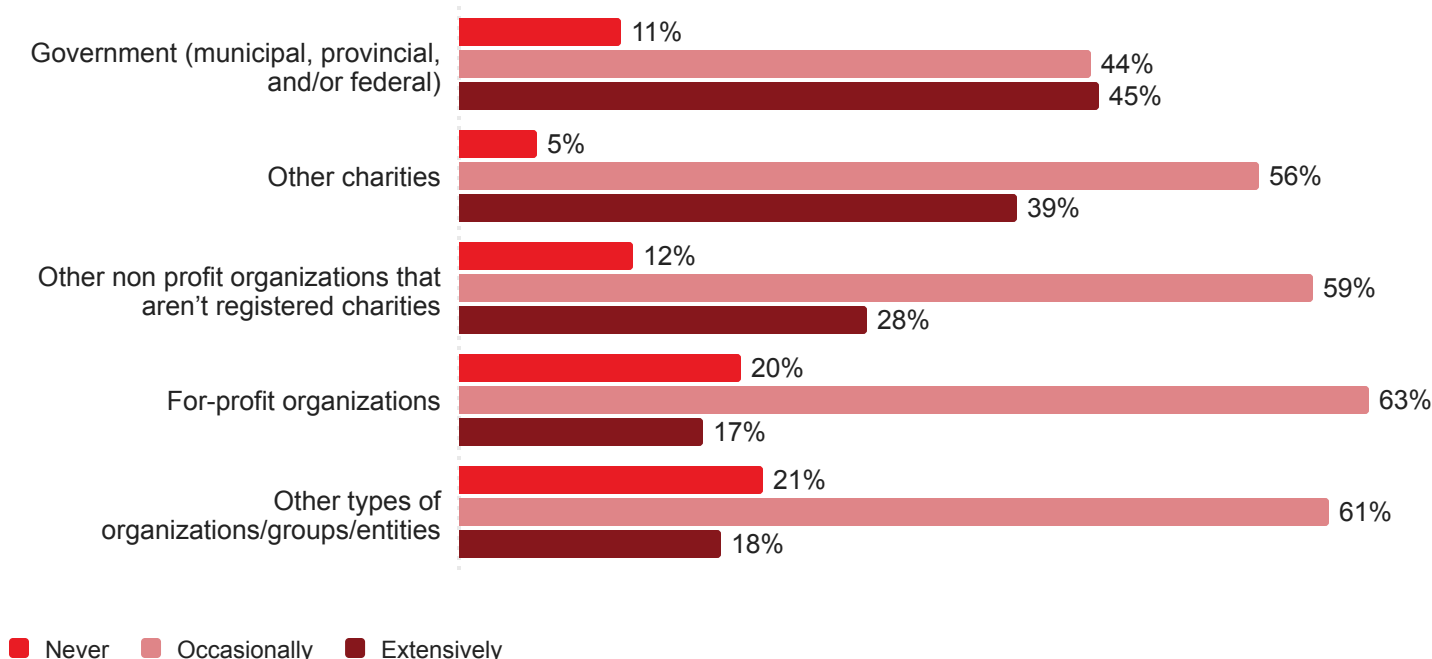
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Charity Insights Canada Project [CICP]
Collaboration: 2023-2025

Carleton University

February 2023 : Collaboration Within the Sector

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4%

1. Please select to what degree your organization collaborates with each of the below :

692 Responses

Government (municipal, provincial, and/or federal)
- 11%
- 44%
- 45%

Other charities
- 5%
- 56%
- 39%

Other non profit organizations that aren't registered charities
- 12%
- 59%
- 28%

For-profit organizations
- 20%
- 63%
- 17%

Other types of organizations/groups/entities
- 21%
- 61%
- 18%

■ Never ■ Occasionally ■ Extensively

2. Please evaluate the effectiveness of your collaboration with each of the following :

685 Responses

Government (municipal, provincial, and/or federal)
- 8%
- 17%
- 44%
- 28%

Other charities
- 13%
- 38%
- 46%

Other non profit organizations that aren't registered charities
- 17%
- 39%
- 40%

For-profit organizations
- 5%
- 21%
- 42%
- 29%

Other types of organizations/groups/entities
- 4%
- 22%
- 43%
- 30%

■ Very ineffective ■ Ineffective ■ Neither ineffective nor effective ■ Effective ■ Very effective
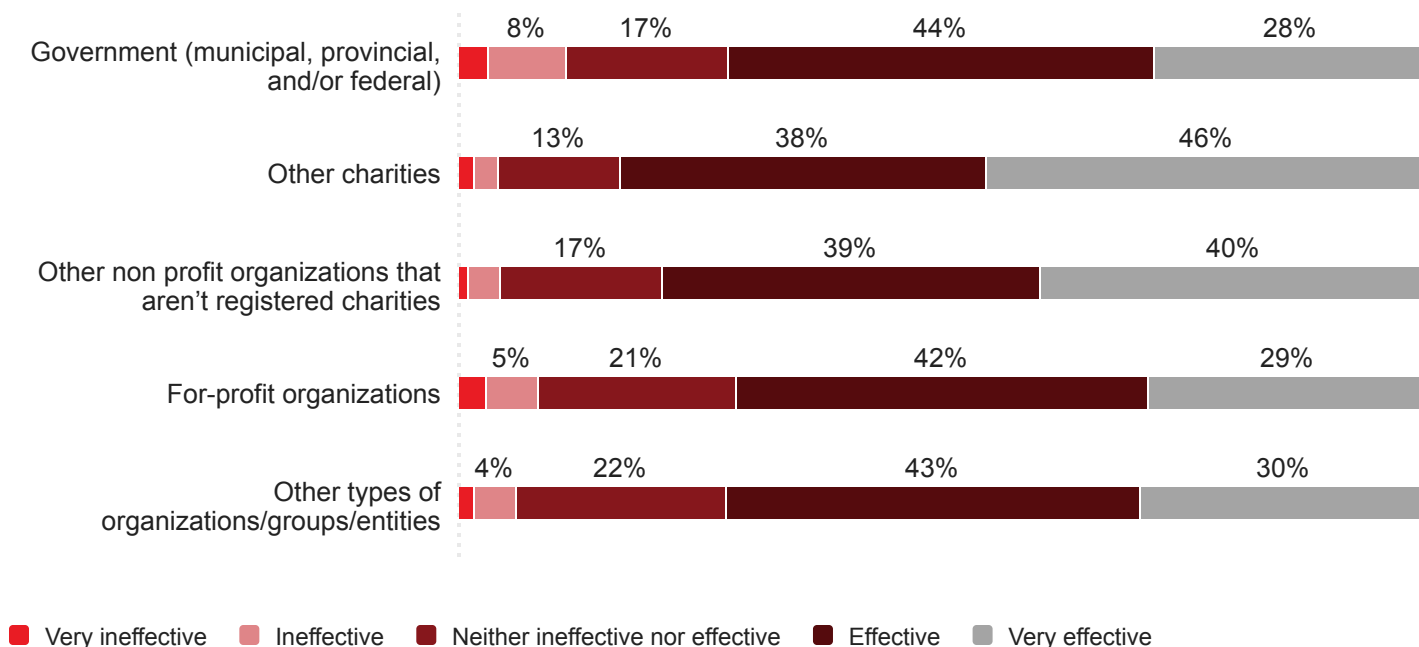
3. What motivates your collaborations?

688 Responses

Motivation	Percentage
Access to more or different kinds of resources	79%
Achieve greater impact	77%
Improved services	75%
Ability to serve a wider audience	69%
Enhancing advocacy efforts	57%
Funder required or directed	48%
Obtain better information	46%
Other (please indicate)	10%
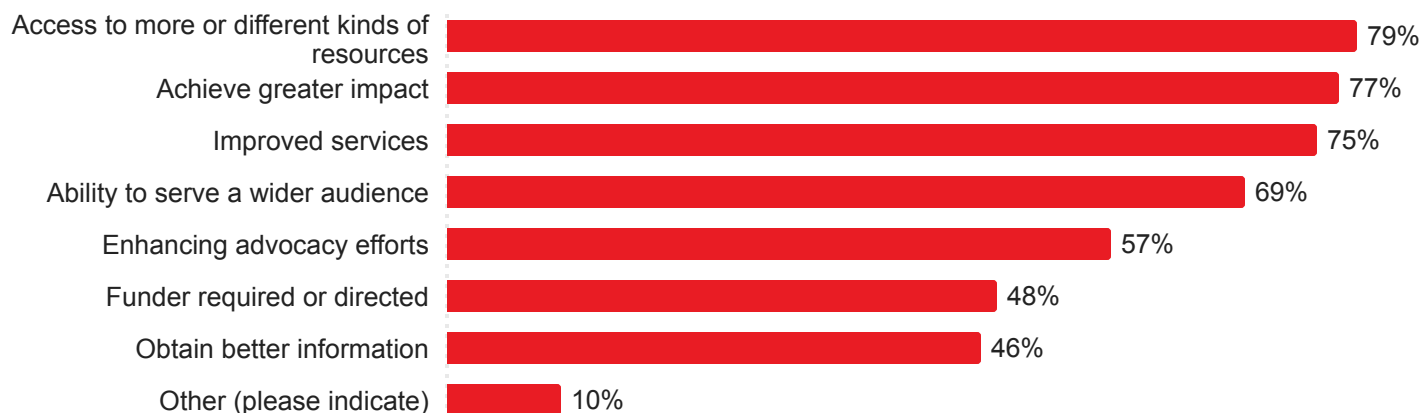
April 2023 : Service Collaboration & Integration

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4%

1. How do you identify potential partners to collaborate with within the sector?

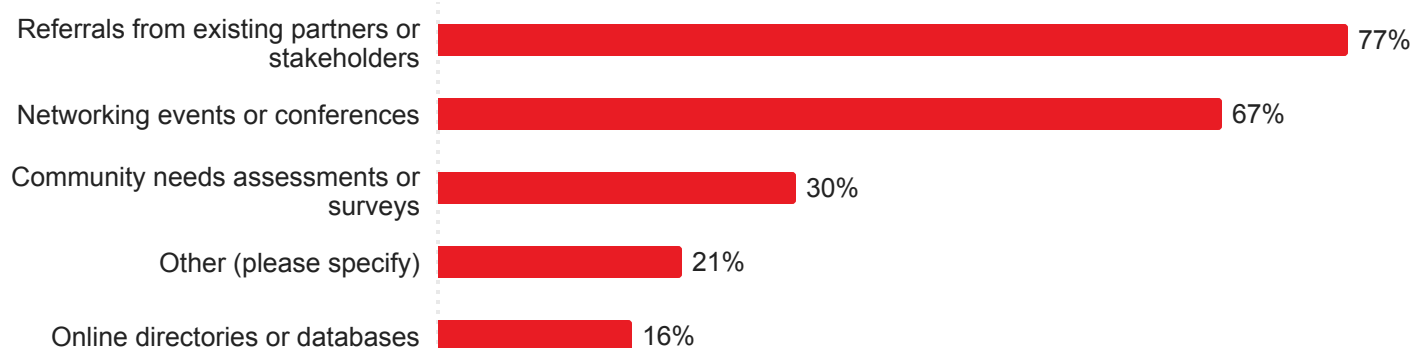616 Responses

Method	Percentage
Referrals from existing partners or stakeholders	77%
Networking events or conferences	67%
Community needs assessments or surveys	30%
Other (please specify)	21%
Online directories or databases	16%

2. What factors do you consider when selecting partners to collaborate with within the sector?

641 Responses

Factor	Percentage
Alignment with organizational mission or values	84%
Complementary strengths or areas of expertise	78%
Past experience with successful collaborations	64%
Capacity to contribute resources or funding	59%
Other (please specify)	7%
N/A	4%
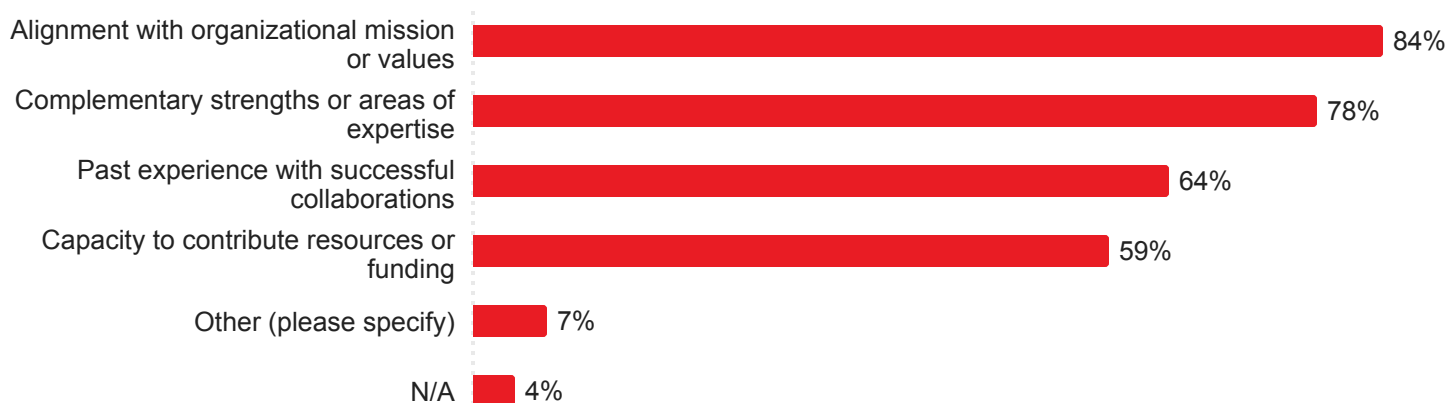
3. In your experience, what are some common challenges that arise when collaborating with other organizations? (Please rank from most (1) to least (7) challenging)
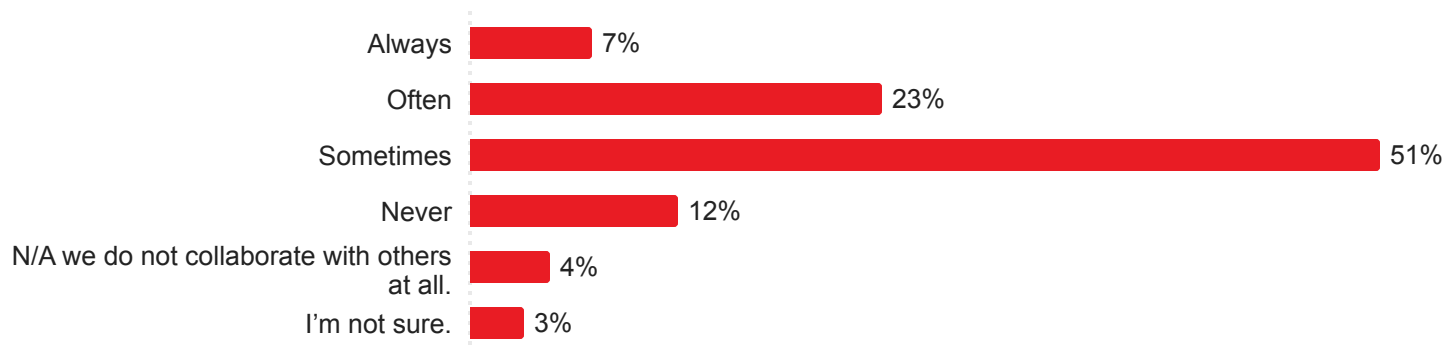
630 Responses

Field	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Communication breakdowns	39%	10%	10%	14%	13%	13%	0%
Differences in organizational culture or priorities	13%	38%	13%	15%	10%	10%	0%
Challenges in aligning program or service models	3%	9%	41%	15%	18%	12%	1%
Difficulty in securing funding or resources	18%	12%	10%	38%	8%	13%	1%
Lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities	6%	10%	13%	11%	44%	14%	2%
Lack of time and resources required to work effectively with a partner	19%	20%	12%	7%	6%	37%	0%
Other (please specify)	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	94%

August 2023 : Cross-sector Collaboration

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4-5%

1. Does your organization collaborate with organizations from outside of your primary sector of activity to address complex issues or problems (ex. you are a health-based organization, and you collaborate with environmental or education-based organizations to address shared challenges)?

559 Responses

Response	Percentage
Always	7%
Often	23%
Sometimes	51%
Never	12%
N/A we do not collaborate with others at all.	4%
I'm not sure.	3%

2. (If Always, Often, or Sometimes) **- How does your organization measure the impact(s) of its cross-disciplinary collaborations? :**

449 Responses

Do not currently have a formal impact measurement process	53%
Collect anecdotal evidence and qualitative feedback	29%
Use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods	17%
Regularly track and analyze specific key performance indicators (KPIs)	9%
Utilize third-party assessments or evaluations	6%
I'm unsure.	3%
Other (please specify)	2%

3. How do you perceive the impact of cross-disciplinary collaborations on the overall effectiveness of the sector in addressing complex challenges?

553 Responses

Significantly positive impact	16%
Positive impact	49%
Marginally positive impact	17%
No impact	3%
Marginally negative impact	1%
Negative impact	0%
Significantly negative impact	0%
I'm unsure.	14%
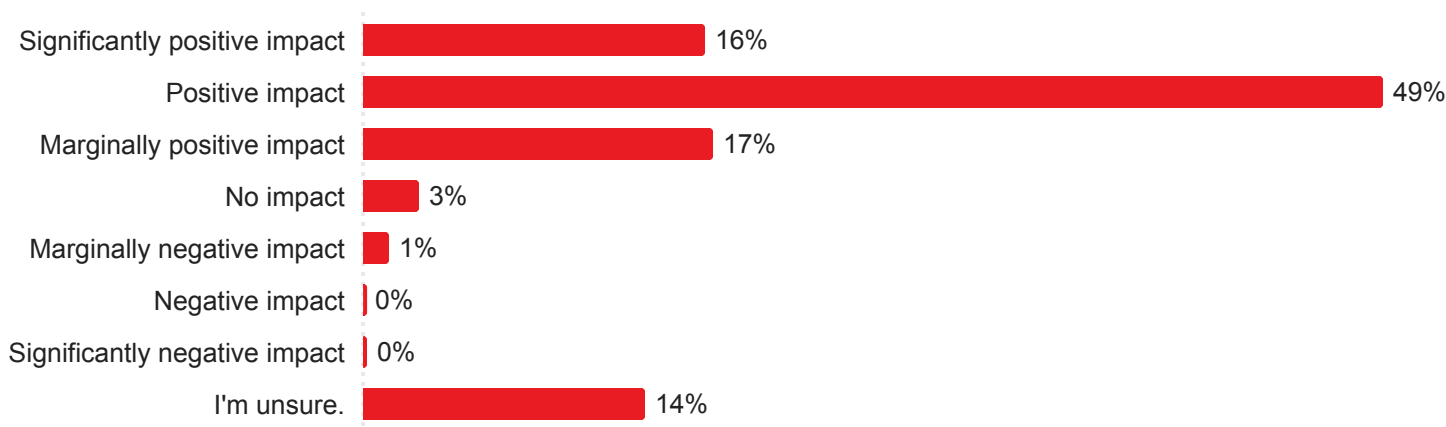
July 2024 : Mergers

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4-9%

1. In the past five years, has your organization been involved in any discussions or actions related to merging with another organization?

789 Responses

No, we have not been involved in any discussions or actions related to merging	82%
Yes, we discussed it as an option but have not acted on it yet	7%
Yes, we considered it but decided against merging	7%
Yes, we merged with another organization	2%
Not sure	1%
Yes, we are currently in the process of merging	1%

2. If your organization has been involved in any discussions or actions related to merging, what were the primary reasons for considering or pursuing a merger?

129 Responses

Desire to increase efficiency	46%
Desire to improve service delivery	46%
Need to save on costs	42%
Opportunity to offer better and broader services	40%
Desire to avoid duplication/overlap of services/programs	34%
Desire to benefit from the technical, financial or other resources of another organization	27%
Other (please specify)	20%
Difficulty recruiting/retaining volunteers	17%
Difficulty recruiting/retaining staff	16%
Need to make a dramatic change to organizational culture/strategic vision	16%

Increased competition with other organizations	12%
Impact of changes in government policies or funding	10%
Public opinion in favour of a merger to lessen duplication/overlap	7%
Request from funder	5%
Difficulty meeting reporting, accountability, transparency or other demands	4%
Crisis or emergency response needs	4%
Not sure	1%

3. If your organization has not been involved in any discussions or actions related to merging, what are the primary reasons for not considering or pursuing a merger?
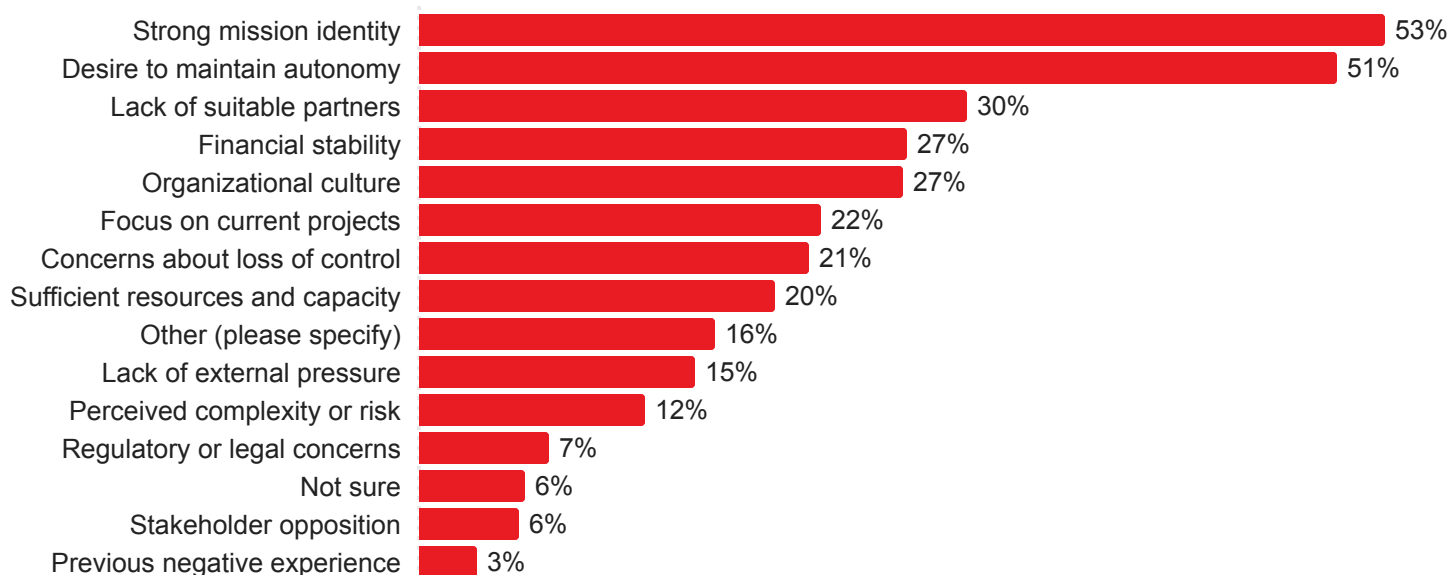
633 Responses

Strong mission identity	53%
Desire to maintain autonomy	51%
Lack of suitable partners	30%
Financial stability	27%
Organizational culture	27%
Focus on current projects	22%
Concerns about loss of control	21%
Sufficient resources and capacity	20%
Other (please specify)	16%
Lack of external pressure	15%
Perceived complexity or risk	12%
Regulatory or legal concerns	7%
Not sure	6%
Stakeholder opposition	6%
Previous negative experience	3%

4. Overall, how do you believe mergers are impacting the charitable sector in Canada?

783 Responses

Positive Impact: Mergers are leading to stronger, more sustainable organizations and better services.	11%
Neutral Impact: The impact of mergers is neither significantly positive nor negative.	9%
Negative Impact: Mergers are leading to challenges such as reduced services, loss of organizational ...	5%
Mixed Impact: There are both positive and negative effects, depending on the specific circumstances of each case.	29%
Not Sure: I do not have enough information to assess the overall impact.	46%

October 2024 : Charity 'Co-opetition' (Cooperative Competition)

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4%

1. Does your organization engage in both competition and collaboration with other charities (e.g., competing for funding while working together on projects)?

753 Responses

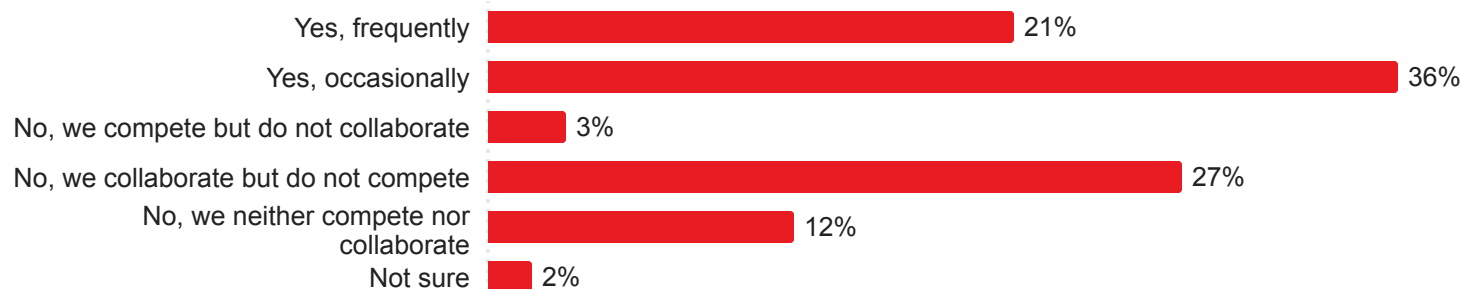|	
Yes, frequently	21%
Yes, occasionally	36%
No, we compete but do not collaborate	3%
No, we collaborate but do not compete	27%
No, we neither compete nor collaborate	12%
Not sure	2%

2. In which areas does your organization collaborate with other charities despite competing for funding or other resources?

752 Responses

Sharing best practices or knowledge	61%
Program delivery or service provision	54%
Advocacy initiatives	38%
Event planning or fundraising campaigns	31%
Joint research	18%
Shared services (e.g., IT, administrative support)	16%
Other (please specify)	8%
N/A	7%
We do not collaborate with other charities	7%

3. What is the biggest challenge your organization faces when balancing competition and collaboration with other charities?

751 Responses

We do not experience challenges balancing both	28%
Tension over limited funding/resources	21%
Differing organizational priorities or goals	16%
N/A	14%
Lack of trust or transparency	8%
Not sure	4%
Other (please specify)	4%
Perception that collaboration weakens competitive advantage	4%
Legal or contractual restrictions	1%
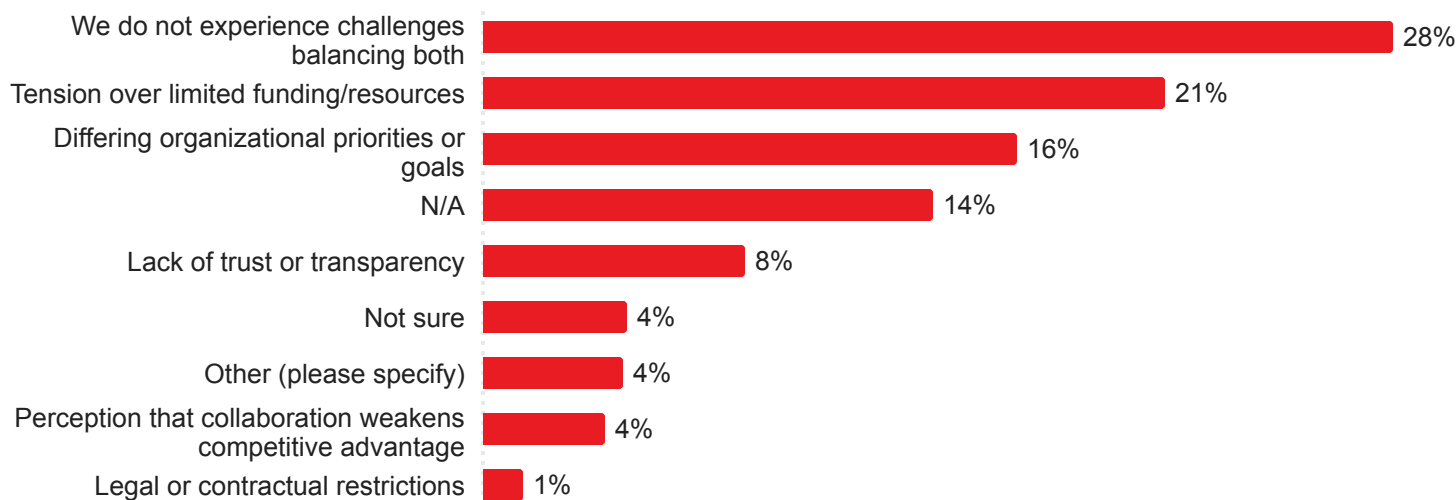
4. How do you view the future of collaboration among charities that compete for funding or resources?

742 Responses

39%	

There will be more opportunities for collaboration despite competition — 39%

Collaboration will remain the same as it is now — 25%

Collaboration will decrease as competition becomes more intense — 15%

Not sure — 20%
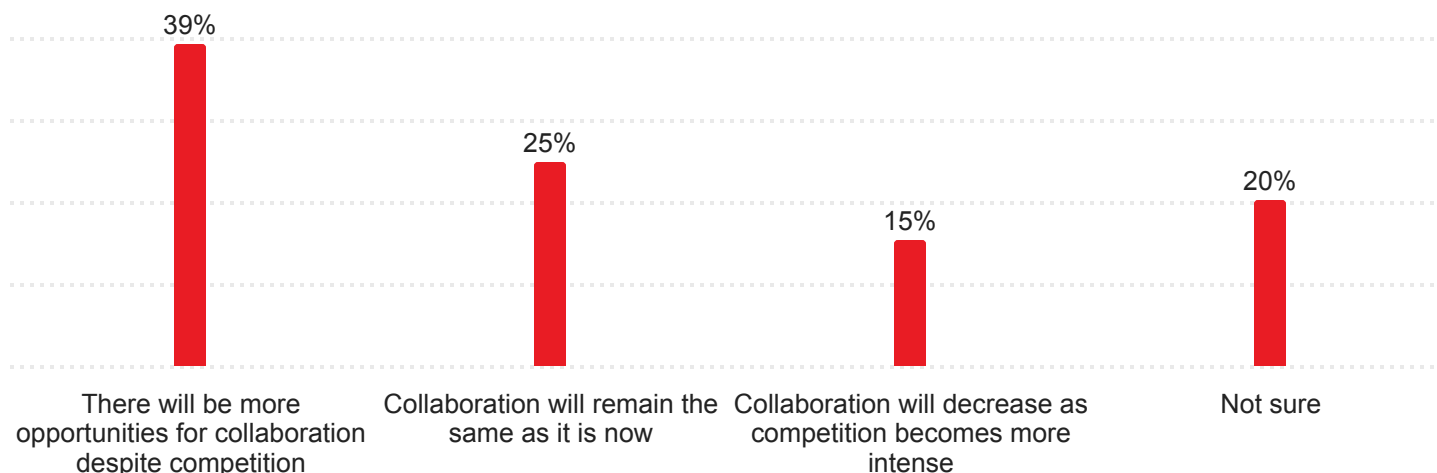
November 2024 : Sector Collaboration & Unification

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4%

1. Do you believe greater collaboration among charities in your region would improve outcomes for the communities you serve? (Examples might include shared projects, pooled resources, or joint advocacy efforts.)
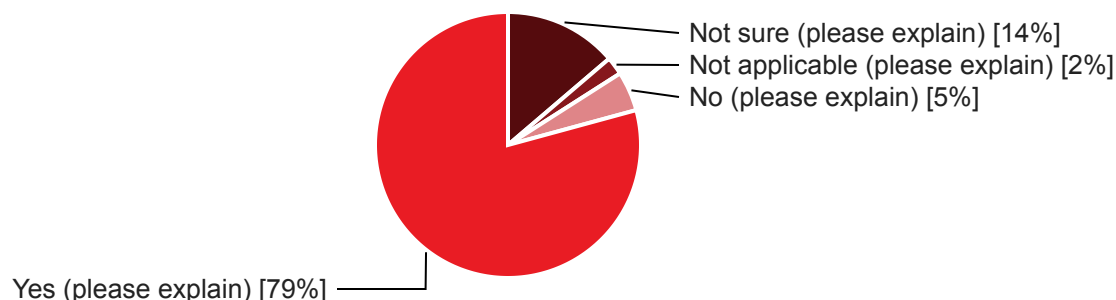
727 Responses

Not sure (please explain) [14%]
Not applicable (please explain) [2%]
No (please explain) [5%]
Yes (please explain) [79%]

2. What do you think are the biggest challenges preventing greater collaboration or unification across the charitable sector?

731 Responses

Category	Percentage
Limited time or staff capacity	71%
Competition for funding	63%
Differing organizational priorities or missions	54%
Limited infrastructure or platforms to facilitate collaboration	36%
Lack of trust between organizations	33%
Other (please specify)	11%
Not sure	2%
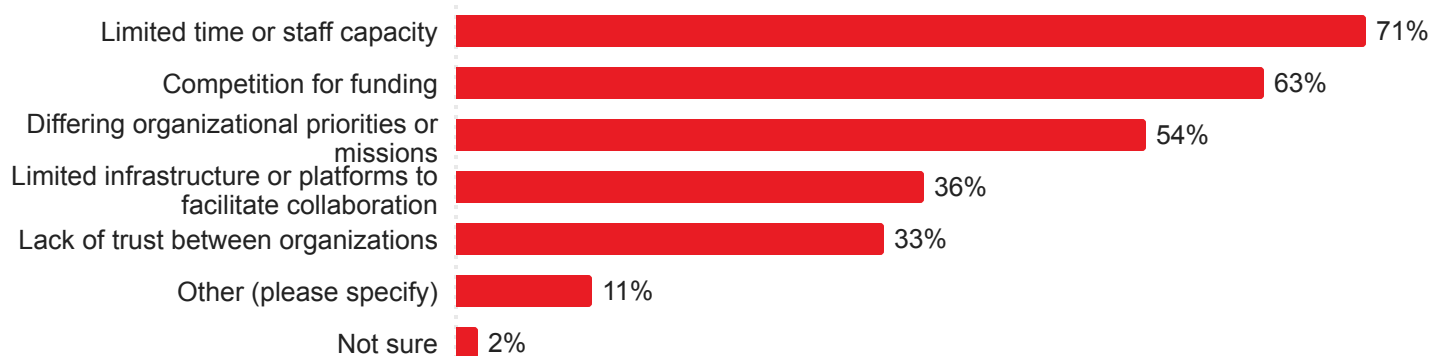
3. Do you see value in sector-wide standards or certifications (e.g., shared EDI benchmarks, decent work standards for staff and/or volunteers, ethical funding practices)?

731 Responses

Strongly agree [22%]

Strongly disagree [3%]

Disagree [6%]

Neutral/Unsure [36%]

Agree [33%]
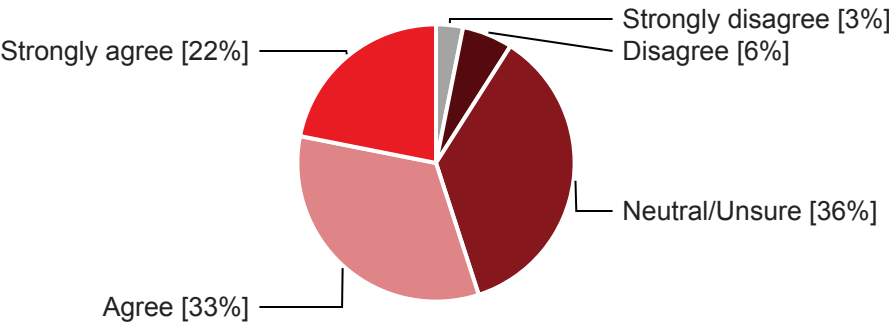
4. If a national-level initiative aimed to strengthen collaboration and unification across the charitable sector were introduced (e.g., creating shared networks, resources, or advocacy platforms), how would your organization respond?

700 Responses

Response	Percentage
Enthusiastically participate	30%
Participate cautiously, with reservations	53%
Likely not participate	7%
Actively oppose	2%
Not sure or N/A	9%
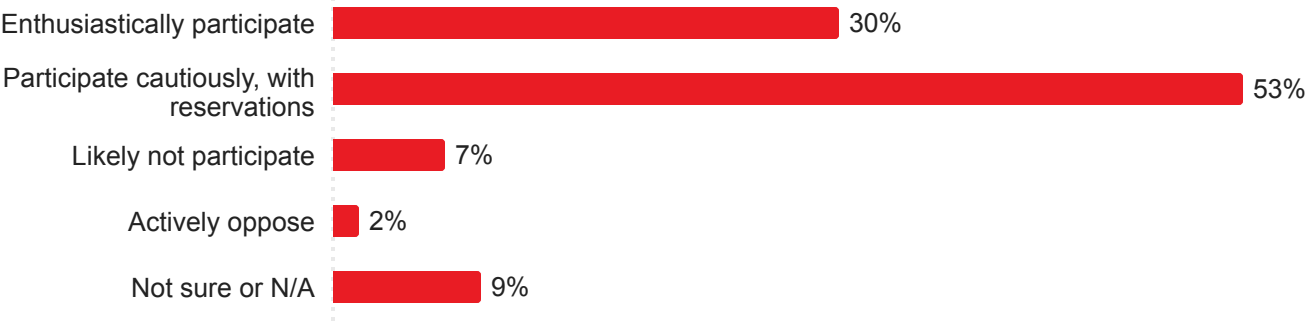
March 2025 : Coalitions

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4-6%

1. Is your charity currently a member of any coalitions?

813 Responses

Response	Percentage
Yes, we are a member of 1 coalition	14%
Yes, we are a member of 2–3 coalitions	20%
Yes, we are a member of 4 or more coalitions	8%
No, but we have been in the past	4%
No, we have never been part of a coalition	37%
Not sure	16%
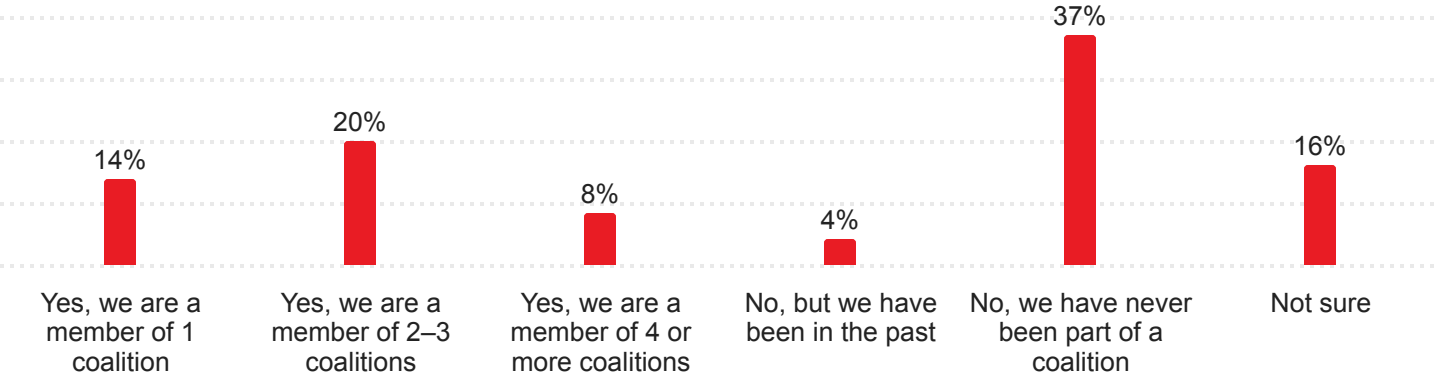
2. What types of organizations are included in the coalition(s) your charity is (or were) a part of?

374 Responses

Other charities within our subsector (e.g., organizations with a similar mission)	84%
A diverse mix of charities across different subsectors	31%
Nonprofit organizations that are not registered charities	32%
Private sector businesses or corporate partners	11%
Government agencies or departments	14%
Grassroots or community-led organizations	37%
Other (please specify)	7%
Not sure	0%
Academic or research institutions	18%
Unions or professional associations	9%
International organizations	9%

3. What benefits have you experienced from being a member of a coalition?

372 Responses

Stronger networking and collaboration opportunities	80%
Stronger advocacy and policy influence	71%
Improved access to shared resources and services	67%
Sense of community	62%
Enhanced learning and professional development	55%
Greater visibility and public awareness	52%
Access to information about our subsector	52%
Increased efficiency in achieving our mission	35%
New funding opportunities	32%
Other (please specify):	3%

4. (If No, we have never been part of a coalition): **Why is your organization not a member of a coalition?**

296 Responses

Response	%
We are unaware of relevant coalitions in our sector	48%
We lack the time or capacity to participate	22%
Not sure	17%
We have not seen a clear benefit to joining	16%
Our mission or priorities do not align with existing coalitions	15%
Other (please specify):	10%
We prefer to work independently	10%
Coalition membership fees are too high	8%
General lack of interest on the part of our board	6%
General lack of interest on the part of our senior leadership	4%
General lack of interest on the part of our staff/volunteers	2%

June 2025 : Shared Services & Resource Sharing

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4%

1. Does your organization currently participate in any shared services or collective purchasing agreements?

715 Responses

Response	%
No, we don't participate in shared services or collective agreements	53%
Shared program delivery or service coordination	20%
Shared office or co-working space	17%
Shared administrative services (e.g., HR, IT, finance, payroll)	12%
Joint procurement (e.g., bulk purchasing of software, supplies, ...	10%
Other (please specify)	8%
Shared volunteer pools or staffing arrangements	5%
Shared fundraising or donor management platforms	4%
Shared transportation or logistics	3%
Not sure	1%

2. What are the main reasons your organization does (or would consider) participating in shared services or resource-sharing?

708 Responses

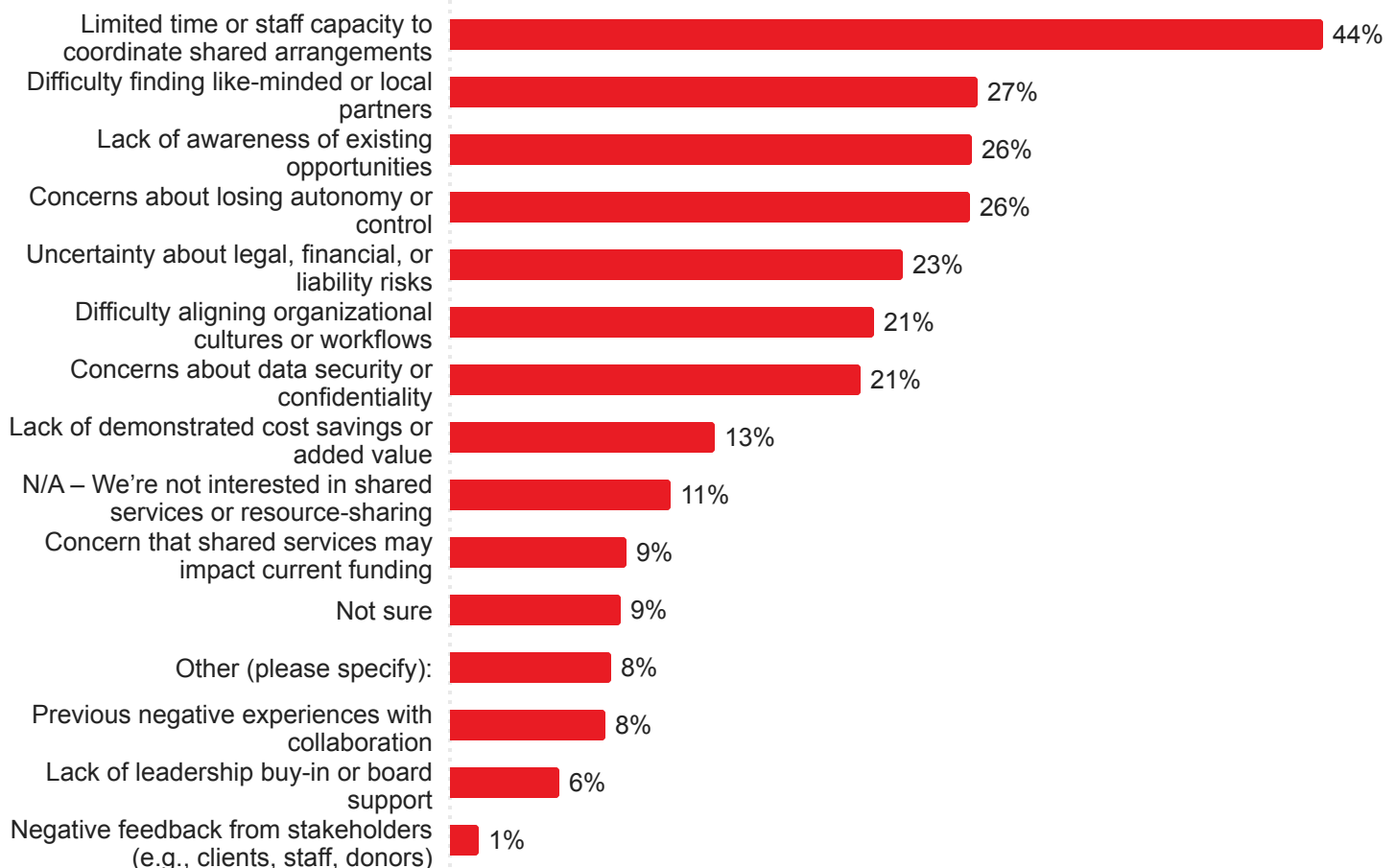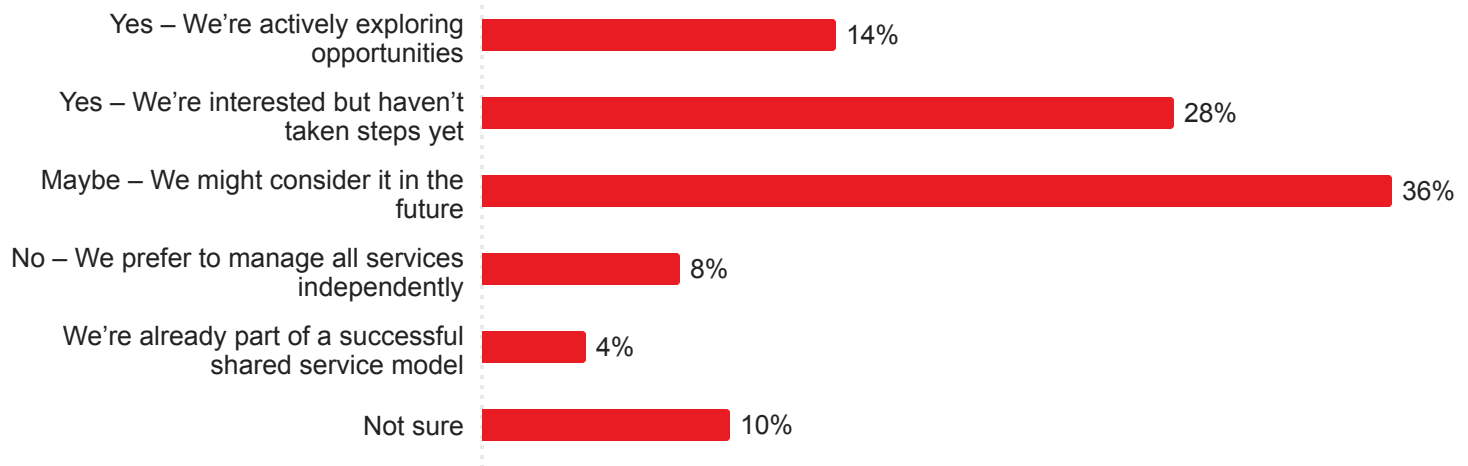| Reason	Percentage
Reducing costs	63%
Building stronger relationships or collaborations	50%
Accessing specialized expertise	45%
Increasing efficiency and reducing administrative burden	44%
Enhancing service delivery for beneficiaries	35%
Freeing up time to focus on core mission or programming	29%
Responding to funder encouragement or incentives	13%
Not sure	8%
Other (please specify):	4%
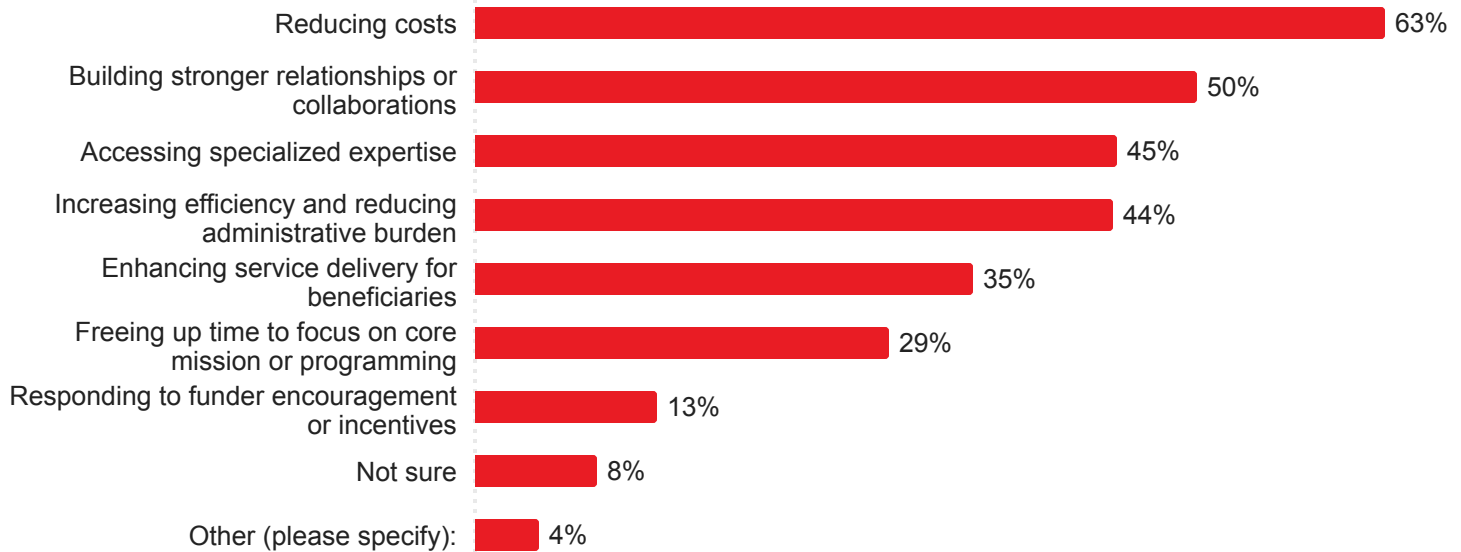
3. What are the biggest challenges your organization faces in participating in shared services or resource-sharing?

708 Responses

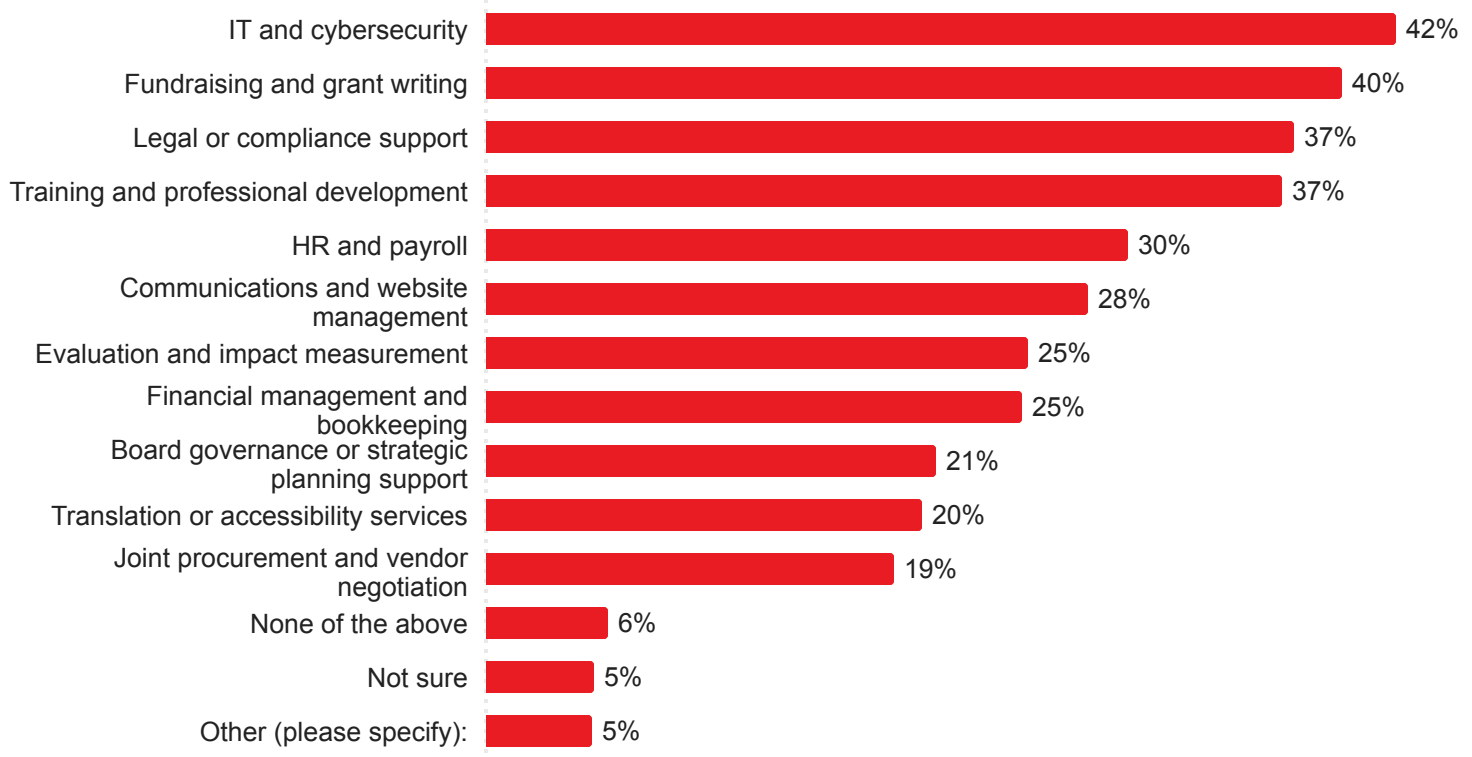| Challenge	Percentage
Limited time or staff capacity to coordinate shared arrangements	44%
Difficulty finding like-minded or local partners	27%
Lack of awareness of existing opportunities	26%
Concerns about losing autonomy or control	26%
Uncertainty about legal, financial, or liability risks	23%
Difficulty aligning organizational cultures or workflows	21%
Concerns about data security or confidentiality	21%
Lack of demonstrated cost savings or added value	13%
N/A – We're not interested in shared services or resource-sharing	11%
Concern that shared services may impact current funding	9%
Not sure	9%
Other (please specify):	8%
Previous negative experiences with collaboration	8%
Lack of leadership buy-in or board support	6%
Negative feedback from stakeholders (e.g., clients, staff, donors)	1%

4. Would your organization be interested in participating in sector-wide initiatives to streamline operations and reduce costs through shared services?

715 Responses

Yes – We're actively exploring opportunities	14%
Yes – We're interested but haven't taken steps yet	28%
Maybe – We might consider it in the future	36%
No – We prefer to manage all services independently	8%
We're already part of a successful shared service model	4%
Not sure	10%

5. If sector-wide shared service models were available, which areas would be most useful for your organization? (Select up to two)

714 Responses

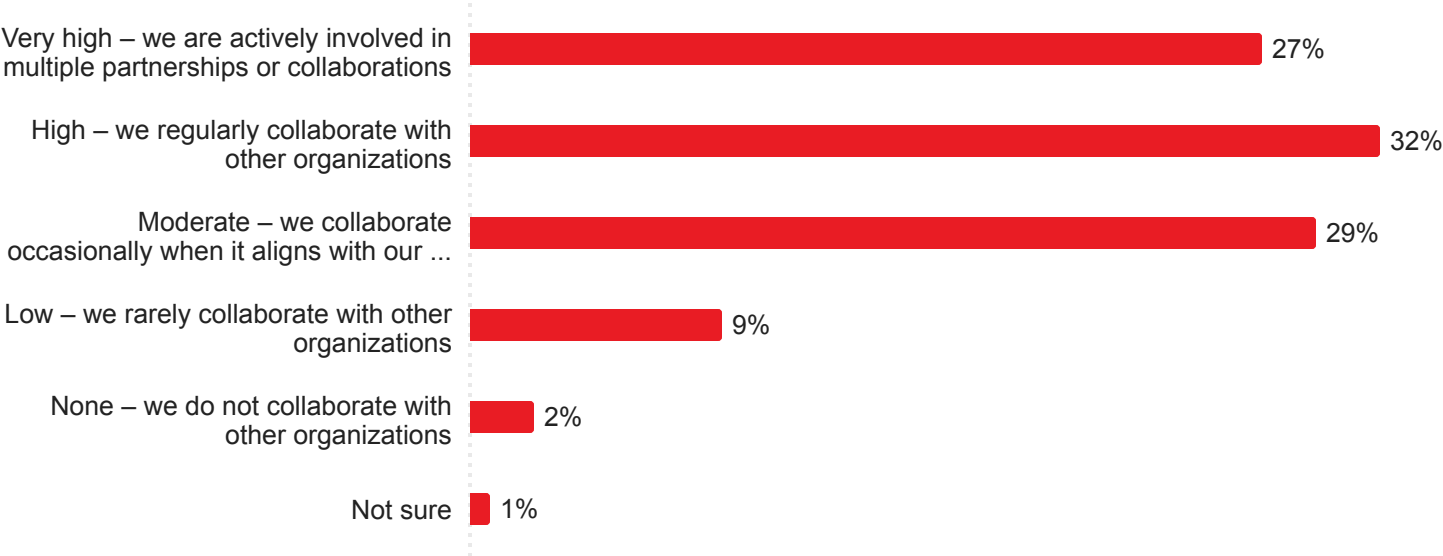|	
IT and cybersecurity	42%
Fundraising and grant writing	40%
Legal or compliance support	37%
Training and professional development	37%
HR and payroll	30%
Communications and website management	28%
Evaluation and impact measurement	25%
Financial management and bookkeeping	25%
Board governance or strategic planning support	21%
Translation or accessibility services	20%
Joint procurement and vendor negotiation	19%
None of the above	6%
Not sure	5%
Other (please specify):	5%

July 2025 : Partnership Fatigue?

Confidence level: 95%, Margin of error: 4%

1. In the past 12 months, how would you describe your organization's level of involvement in collaborative or partnership-based work?
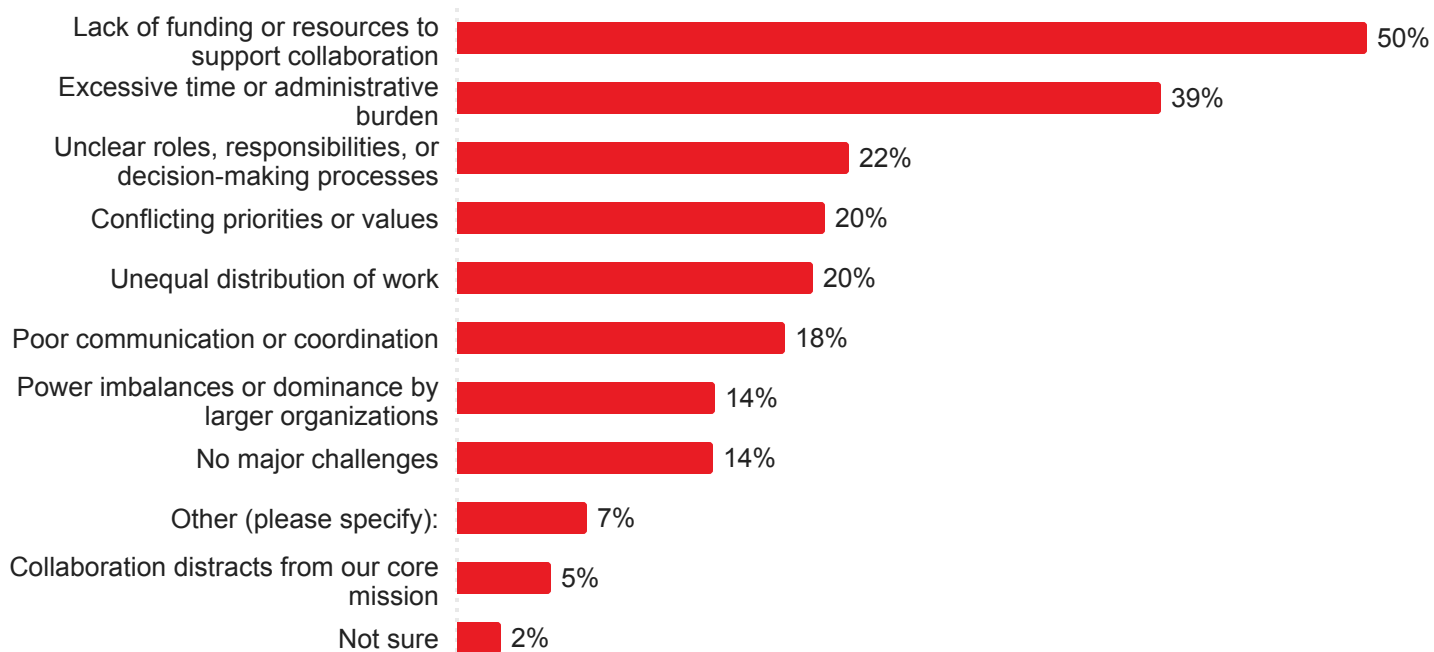
586 Responses

Response	Percentage
Very high – we are actively involved in multiple partnerships or collaborations	27%
High – we regularly collaborate with other organizations	32%
Moderate – we collaborate occasionally when it aligns with our ...	29%
Low – we rarely collaborate with other organizations	9%
None – we do not collaborate with other organizations	2%
Not sure	1%

2. Has your organization ever felt pressured to collaborate (e.g., by funders, governments, or other partners)?

586 Responses

- Yes – frequently [12%]
- Not sure [2%]
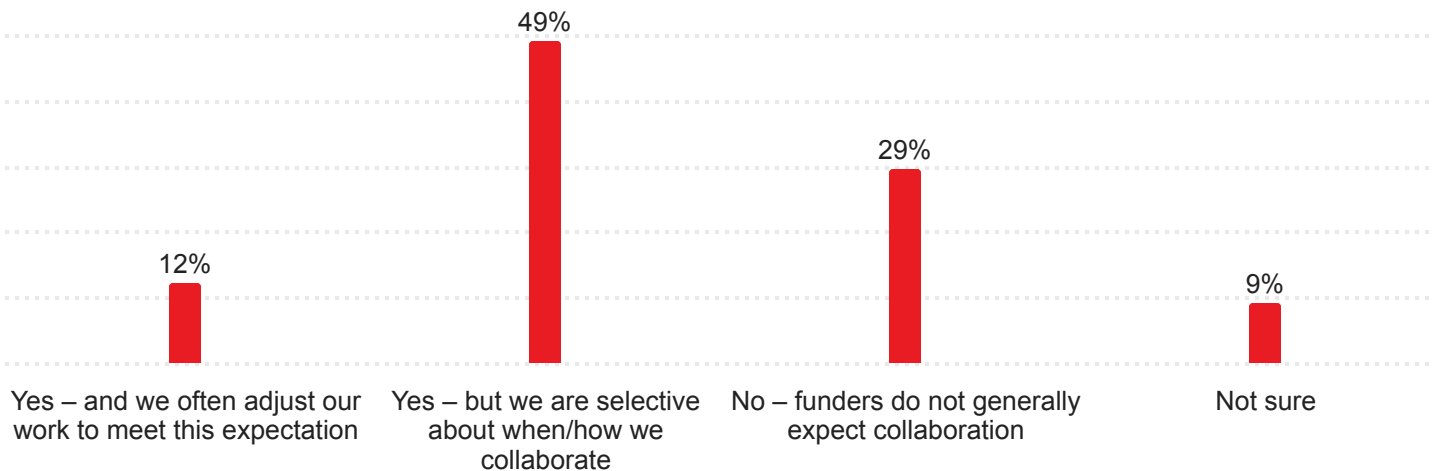- No – we have not felt pressured [45%]
- Yes – occasionally [41%]
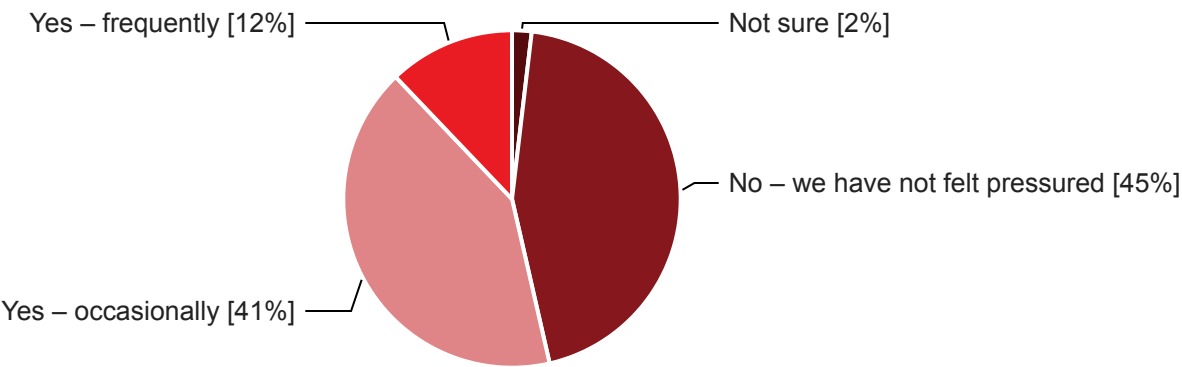
3. What are the biggest challenges your organization faces when collaborating with other organizations? Select up to 3.
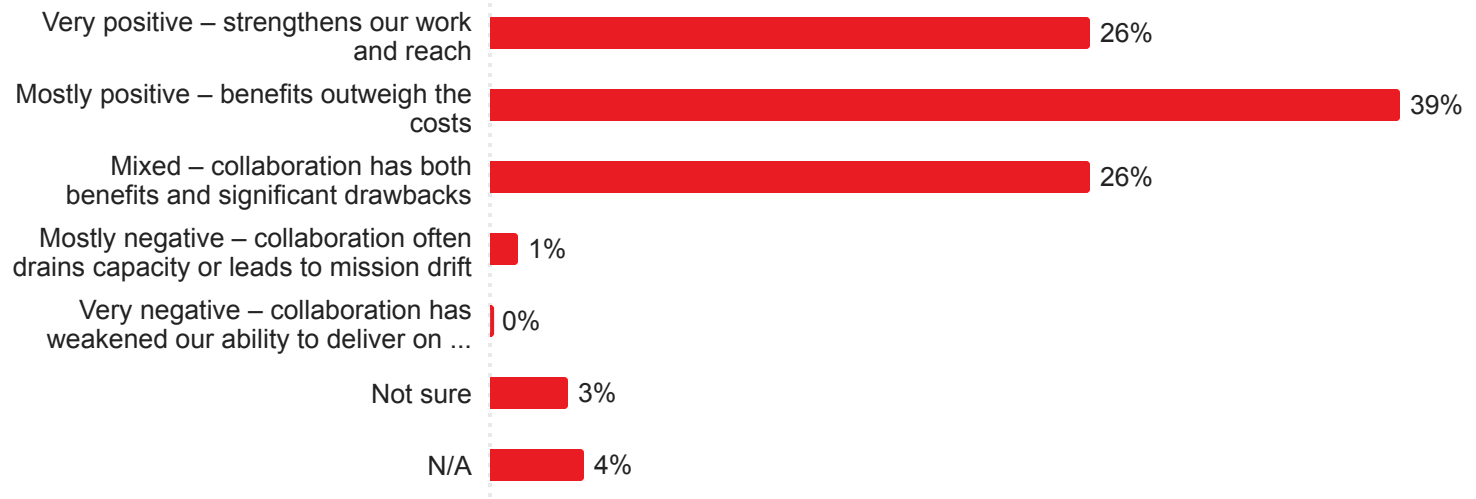
584 Responses

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of funding or resources to support collaboration	50%
Excessive time or administrative burden	39%
Unclear roles, responsibilities, or decision-making processes	22%
Conflicting priorities or values	20%
Unequal distribution of work	20%
Poor communication or coordination	18%
Power imbalances or dominance by larger organizations	14%
No major challenges	14%
Other (please specify):	7%
Collaboration distracts from our core mission	5%
Not sure	2%

4. Do you feel that collaboration is often expected by funders as a condition of funding or credibility?

584 Responses

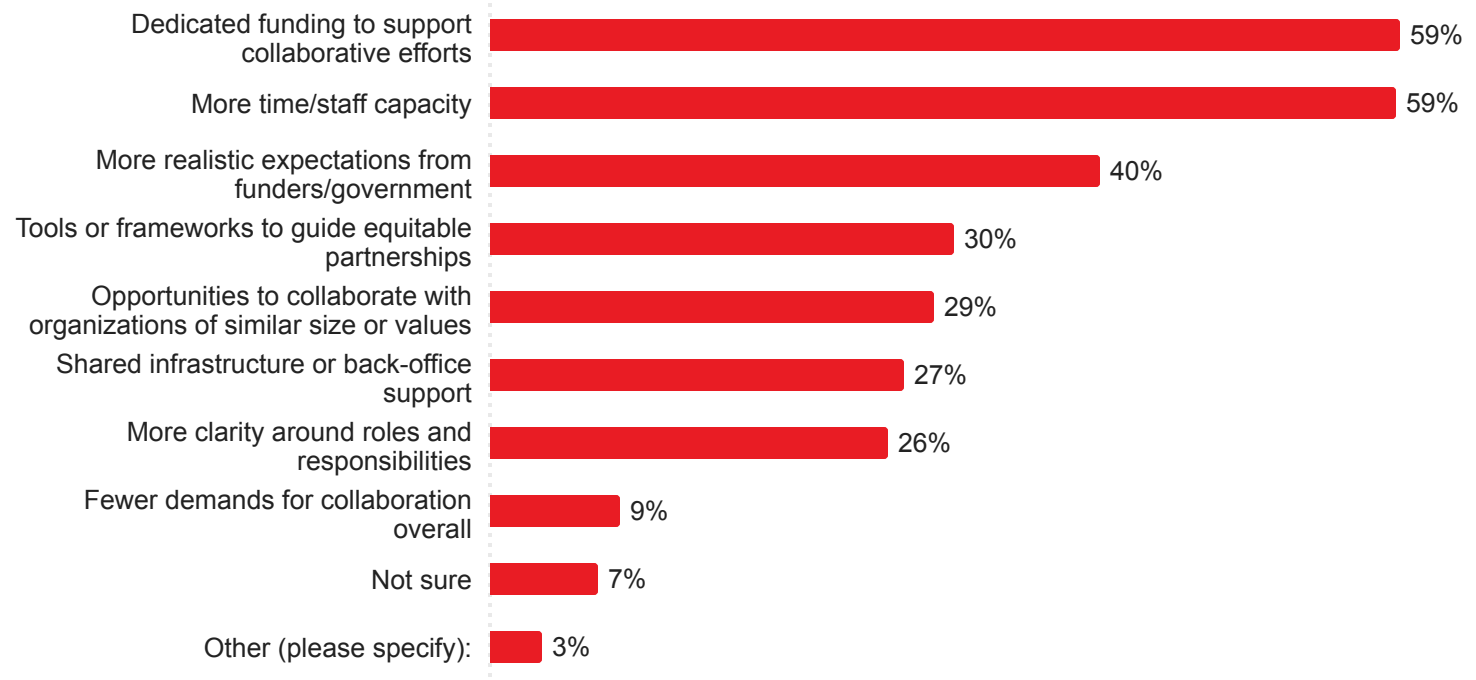| Response	Percentage
Yes – and we often adjust our work to meet this expectation	12%
Yes – but we are selective about when/how we collaborate	49%
No – funders do not generally expect collaboration	29%
Not sure	9%

5. Overall, how would you describe the current impact of collaboration on your organization?

586 Responses

Response	Percentage
Very positive – strengthens our work and reach	26%
Mostly positive – benefits outweigh the costs	39%
Mixed – collaboration has both benefits and significant drawbacks	26%
Mostly negative – collaboration often drains capacity or leads to mission drift	1%
Very negative – collaboration has weakened our ability to deliver on ...	0%
Not sure	3%
N/A	4%

6. What would help your organization engage in healthier or more sustainable collaboration? Select all that apply.

587 Responses

Response	Percentage
Dedicated funding to support collaborative efforts	59%
More time/staff capacity	59%
More realistic expectations from funders/government	40%
Tools or frameworks to guide equitable partnerships	30%
Opportunities to collaborate with organizations of similar size or values	29%
Shared infrastructure or back-office support	27%
More clarity around roles and responsibilities	26%
Fewer demands for collaboration overall	9%
Not sure	7%
Other (please specify):	3%

Survey Methdology

Data Source
The Charity Insights Canada Project (CICP) panel is derived from publicly available T3010 Registered Charity Information Returns administered by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). This dataset is publicly accessible and unaltered. Our lists are copies of an official work published by the Government of Canada and are not endorsed by, or affiliated with, the Government of Canada.

Sample Development
Randomized samples were generated from a population of approximately 84,000 registered charities in Canada. After initial exclusions, the sampling frame included approximately 33,000 organizations.

Excluded from the study were:

- Religious organizations tied to specific places of worship (with limited exceptions)
- Hospitals and schools

Charities were included if they:

- Were designated as Type C (charities)
- Reported at least one full-time employee (FTE)
- Reported annual expenditures greater than $1
- Targeted sub-samples were also created for:
- Public and private foundations (Types A & B)
- Volunteer-run charities (FTE = 0)

Panel Composition
From this refined frame, a primary random sample was drawn and supplemented by seven sub-samples (SS1–SS7) to ensure inclusion of hard-to-reach and diverse groups such as:

- Foundations and volunteer-run organizations
- Charities across different regions (e.g., British Columbia, Québec)
- Organizations engaged in international or religion-focused activities

This approach results in a panel of approximately 1,100 charities annually, representing a broad cross-section of the sector. As of September 2025, about 950 participants remain active.

Recruitment & Participation
Recruitment was conducted via email and phone outreach. All participants completed an information form to verify organizational details and provide additional HR data.

Survey Process
The CICP distributes short surveys every Wednesday at 6:00 a.m. ET, with a 24-hour initial response window and a reminder the following morning. Weekly reports are released each Friday to provide timely insights.

Oversight
Survey topics are developed by the CICP core research team, with guidance from an Advisory Board of sector leaders and practitioners. The Board ensures that the study remains responsive to emerging issues and reflective of the sector's evolving realities.