

Private-Sector Collaboration for Sustainable Development



About this Report

This report was written by Sara Enright, Cecile Oger, Peder Michael Pruzan-Jorgensen, and Angie Farrag-Thibault, with additional guidance and insights provided by Ryan Whalen and Jereme Bivins at The Rockefeller Foundation. Any errors that remain are those of the authors.

BSR developed this report with the support of The Rockefeller Foundation to identify what makes collaborations successful and how companies can best prepare to make the most of their investments in private-sector collaboration. The report is written for collaboration practitioners.

BSR works with business and stakeholders to design, implement, and scale collaborative initiatives that create shared solutions to global challenges. Our collaborations bring together more than 400 companies, spanning multiple sectors and geographies, to strengthen company performance, improve markets and industries, and contribute to systemic change for a more just and sustainable world.

This report draws upon insights from multiple sources, including lessons learned from our work managing and scaling collaborations:

- **BSR experience:** Lessons learned from facilitating collaboration between hundreds of BSR member companies and their stakeholders, including both multi-company and multistakeholder collaborations.
- **Expert interviews:** Ten interviews with directors of BSR collaborations and 31 interviews with external collaboration executives and sustainability leaders inside companies, conducted during the summer of 2017.
- **Group discussions:** Three small-group discussions with companies and collaboration leaders in New York City, London, and Hong Kong, to review and provide feedback on initial report findings.
- **Literature review:** A desk-based review of key literature relating to corporate collaboration and partnerships, multistakeholder collaboration, and collaboration governance.

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Disclaimer

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Foreword

How does business lead?

When we think of leadership, we often think of a single, iconic leader. We celebrate leading companies for their bold action on sustainability risks and opportunities. Yet one of the most important ways business leads is through collaboration. We underappreciate the value of leadership when leading is the job of many.

In the past year, it has become increasingly clear that the world is changing fast—and profoundly. We are faced with challenges such as catastrophic climate change, increasing inequalities, and the rapid emergence of new technologies that disrupt societies and raise new, fundamental ethical questions. These are not new challenges, but the pace with which they are influencing all aspects of society is picking up. They also come at a time when established governance models are being questioned—or outright failing—calling for new leadership constellations.

This report is based on the premise that business must take a leadership role through collaboration, both to ensure the future of sustainable business and for the benefit of society as a whole. As we look to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and implement the Paris Agreement on climate change, it is clear that we must transcend the status quo of individual actions to foster collaboration for impact, at scale. We must mobilize, leverage, and direct the transformative power of business's collective resources and capabilities toward these ends.

We need more business collaboration, but above all we need well-designed, well-governed, accountable, and impactful collaborations. This report is a contribution in that direction. It sets out to identify what has made collaborations successful in the past and the present, with a view to proposing guidance for the future. It has been informed by the rich experiences and thoughtful perspectives of practitioners from many parts of the

private sector but also from civil society organizations that have worked closely with in partnership with companies. We are extremely grateful for their time and for the thoughts that they have shared with us and generously made available to others to learn from.

Collaborative leadership has been a fundamental tenet of BSR's 25 years of work to create a just and sustainable world. Our strategy emphasizes the need to ideate, design, and explore—and subsequently accelerate and scale—powerful collaborations that yield transformational change. We believe that the time is right to pursue such opportunities vigorously, aggressively, and with focus. We have written this report to provide guidance that we hope will encourage more businesses to engage in collaborations—and help them do so more successfully.

For The Rockefeller Foundation, building strategic partnerships is a core component of our strategic approach. We believe that creating coalitions that engage the full range of actors across a given system—from the private sector to government to civil society—can accelerate breakthroughs that deliver impact at scale. We hope that this guide to engaging the private sector in designing and implementing high-impact collaborations for sustainable development will serve as a catalyst for the next generation of transformative results.

We will only succeed if we really work together, combining our capabilities, resources, and assets. We invite you to join us to create shared solutions to global challenges—to lead through collaboration.

Peder Michael Pruzan-Jorgensen

Senior Vice President, BSR

Ryan Whalen

Director, President's Office, The Rockefeller Foundation



Shared Solutions to Global Challenges

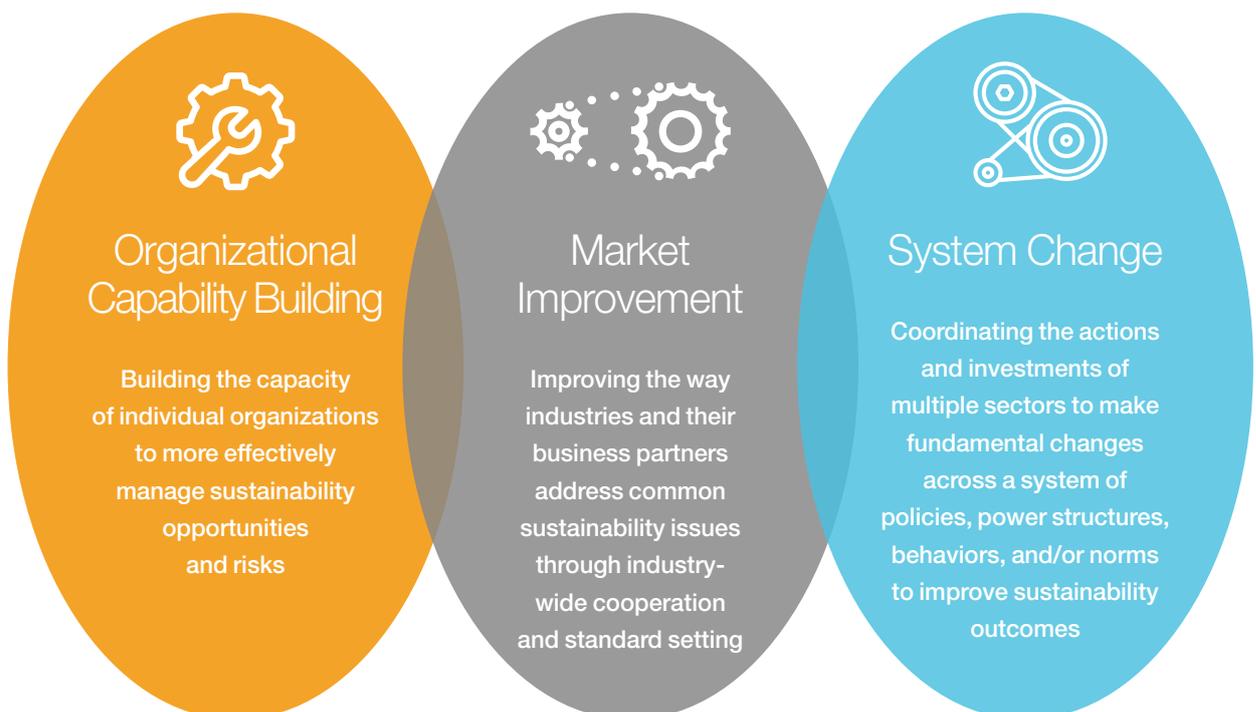
The world has a global roadmap for building resilient and inclusive economies. The adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate change leaves little room for ambiguity about what we need to do. The private sector has a tremendous role to play in fulfilling the objectives laid down in the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, but business as usual won't get the job done. The imperatives to eliminate poverty, avoid catastrophic climate change, and build inclusive societies call for new approaches. In particular, we need to find new ways of leveraging business's collective assets and resources through collaboration, as no one organization can tackle systemic issues alone.

Private-sector collaboration for sustainable development is not a new business activity. It emerged in the early 1990s, offering companies the opportunity to more legitimately engage, influence, and support social and economic development. Since then, we have witnessed a plethora of collaboration models and methods that, in different ways, have sought to contribute to more resilient and inclusive economies while also building business value. While some of these

collaborations have had significant impact, others have failed to achieve their objectives. But all have provided valuable lessons to future practitioners on how best to leverage the collective resources of the private sector through collaboration. We need to learn from past successes and failures to build stronger collaborations for the future.

A review of the past tells us there is not one model of success. Rather, we—companies, foundations, civil society, advisors, governments, and other stakeholders—need to be able to embrace and step into a diversity of collaborations, each designed for a particular purpose. To help companies and stakeholders better position their collaborations, this report proposes a simple taxonomy that distinguishes collaborations by the scope of change that they seek—at the organizational, market, and system levels. Our point is there is no silver bullet. Sometimes we must first focus on building capacity and capabilities before we aim to change the market or the system.

The BSR Collaboration Taxonomy



Key Success Factors

Does the need for a diversity of approaches dispel commonalities for successful collaborations? We don't think so. Success can be designed. Our experience and research point to five common success factors that apply across all types of collaborations.

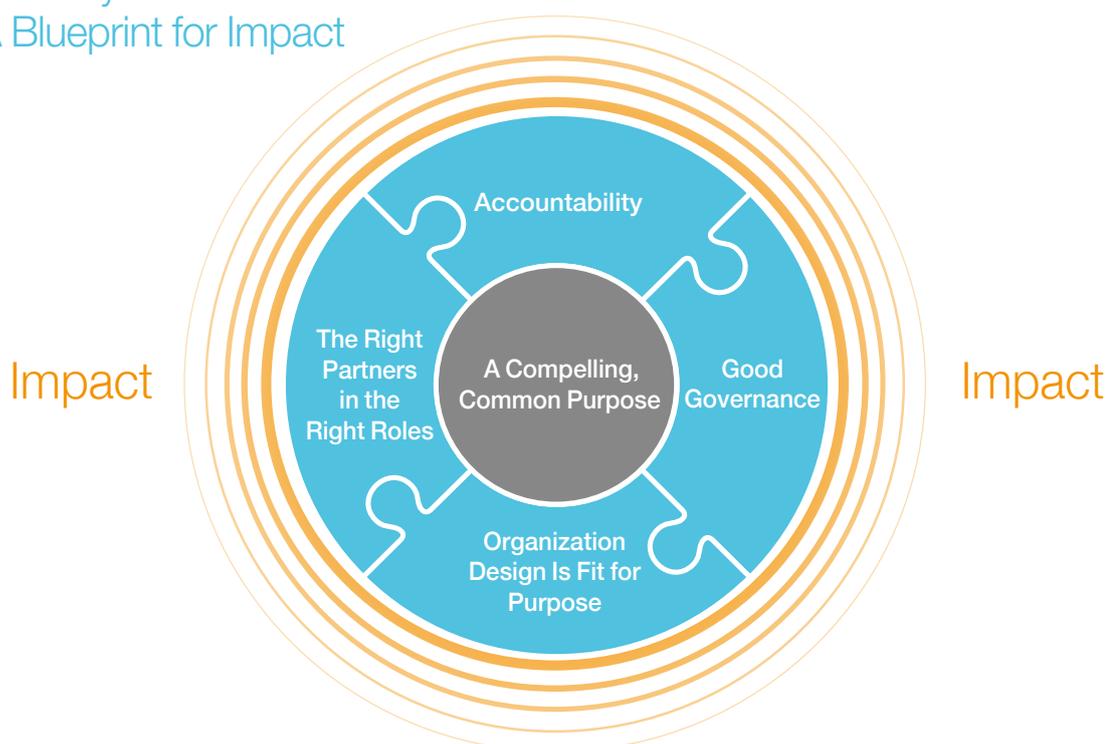
Above all, collaborations must have a compelling purpose with clear objectives to set the direction. Success also requires an organization that is fit for purpose, with sufficient resources and staffing to operate, as well as the right, committed participants, without whom efforts may quickly come to a halt. Good governance and accountability are two additional success factors that greatly influence the ability of collaborations to move forward with the legitimacy, credibility, and support they need to succeed.

The five success factors are not a recipe for success, but rather offer a blueprint that new collaborations can apply in their design, and that companies can use to guide the decisions they make when working in collaboration.

A Winning Design Includes:

- **A compelling, common purpose** that brings participants together and enables each to accrue value from the collaboration
- **The right partners in the right roles** that bring the required authority and resources to drive the collaboration forward
- **Good governance** that enables efficient, transparent, and fair decision-making
- **An organizational design that is fit for purpose** – with sufficient resources and staffing to operate
- **Accountability** to the objectives the collaboration participants have committed to

Five Key Success Factors: A Blueprint for Impact



Preparing for Success

In addition to the design of the initiative, our research underlines that collaboration success is highly contingent on the preparedness and commitment of participants. This is an often-overlooked requirement of collaborative work. Corporate participants that meet their goals through collaboration evaluate which initiatives to join; invest sufficient time, resources, and talent in priority collaborations; and commit to being accountable to ensure that the initiative is successful.



Evaluate

- Prioritize and strategize
- Understand the business case
- Acknowledge the company's red lines



Invest

- Secure leadership and organizational support
- Resource the collaboration
- Put your best people on it



Commit

- Integrate the learnings
- Create accountability
- Champion the initiative

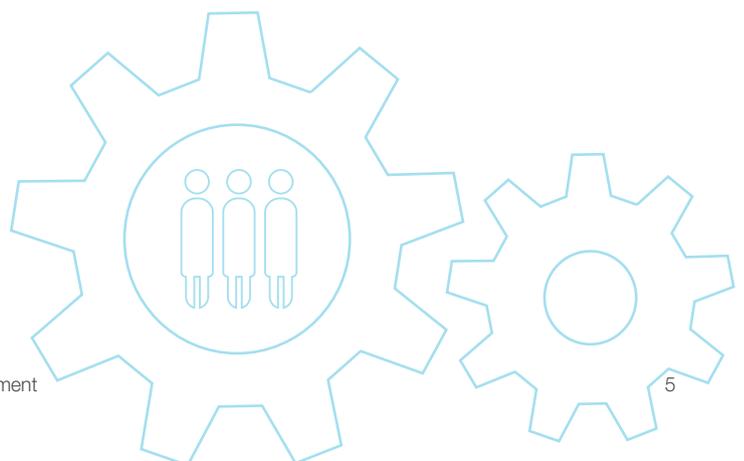
Taking these three steps—evaluating, investing, and committing—will enable companies to more confidently determine when collaboration is necessary, select the set of collaborations that clearly align with and deliver on business objectives, and focus their resources on maximizing impact and business results. These preparatory steps also reinforce the key success factors for high-impact collaborations, ensuring that the company's contributions strengthen the initiatives they participate in.

The Next Generation of Corporate Collaboration

Private-sector collaboration for sustainable development is essential to making progress with the global roadmap provided by the SDGs. While collaborations in the future will be different from those we know today, we expect that the success factors will remain relevant. Emerging trends that practitioners should keep their eyes on as they design and participate in the next generation of collaborations for sustainable development include:

- The introduction of new technologies that allow collaborations to link more partners and reach more stakeholders than ever before, and to thereby accelerate change
- The development of more accountable, inclusive, and efficient collaboration governance models
- The adoption of more systemic approaches to collaboration, leading to the formation of alliances between unexpected partners that share common concerns
- Meta-collaboration between like-minded initiatives to reduce fragmentation, pool resources and capabilities, reach new audiences, and amplify impacts

As an essential means to addressing sustainability issues, collaboration should now find its place as a core business activity, where it needs to be developed, invested in, and honed as a core capability for achieving shared success.



Introduction

Achieving the SDGs is a global moonshot. We will rely on collaborative efforts of all kinds to see us through the complex, systemic transformations required at global and local levels to meet this ambition.

It is essential that business participate as an active partner alongside governments, foundations, civil society, international organizations, and other key stakeholders, going beyond good intentions to build high-impact collaborations that can deliver systemic change to meet these ambitious targets.

Collaborations examined for this report:

- **21 collaborations** headquartered across **seven countries**
- Collaboration sizes ranged from **10–3,000+ member/partner organizations**
- **81 percent of collaborations** had multistakeholder governance models
- **11 industries** represented
- **13 SDGs** addressed

The imperative of business collaboration for the future of the planet means that we need to ensure that private-sector collaborations are as successful as possible—and that future collaborations learn from past successes and mistakes. We believe that collaborations involving the private sector can be designed for impact, and that companies can build and improve their capabilities to contribute.

This report has been guided by the ambition to identify the characteristics of successful collaborations, as well as to better understand how individual companies can prepare for and contribute to their success. In doing so, we have looked to the past and the present to learn from existing collaborations and their participants, the practitioners. We have sought to learn from more than 20 diverse collaborative initiatives as well as from interviews with more than 40 practitioners.*

We found a perhaps surprising degree of commonality of opinions, despite the great diversity of collaborative initiatives and practitioners across industries, regions, and issues areas. This not only reinforces our overall conclusion that success can be designed (although never guaranteed), but also strengthens our confidence that the presented conclusions, while built on past experiences, will hold value for future endeavors.

Collaboration is not an easy path. It requires real leadership, time, resource investment, and commitment to the “long game” for the effort to pay off. It is, in brief, a different way of doing business, and a skillset that companies must learn to meet their goals.

In Chapter 1, we study the motivations that bring companies together to collaborate and present a taxonomy that categorizes private-sector collaborations based on the level they target within a system to achieve their impacts: building company capabilities to enhance sustainability performance, improving the sustainability of markets and industry value chains, or contributing to positive system change across multiple sectors.

Moving from theory to practice, in Chapter 2 we explore the key factors for successful collaborations, as well as

**Throughout this report, the term “practitioners” refers to our interviewees.*

common causes of failure, drawing from examples and practitioner experiences. We identify five key success factors that practitioners should consider in the process of ideating and designing their collaborations to achieve their objectives.

“Today’s systemic challenges require collaboration. One company can only go so far alone until it hits a barrier, and then collaboration needs to happen for practical reasons.”

Hendrik Alpen

Sustainability Business Expert, H&M

Recognizing that collaborations are only as strong as the members that support them, in Chapter 3 we examine the role of individual companies in contributing to the success of collaborations while achieving their own individual goals. In addition, we set out recommendations for how a company can evaluate, invest in, and commit to take the lead on the causes they support.

In an era of climate change, technological advancements, mass biodiversity loss, and socioeconomic turbulence, we also recognize that the past can only teach us so much about how to collectively respond to issues that are rapidly evolving. Our final chapter provides a review of evolving trends that practitioners should keep their eyes on as they design and participate in the next generation of collaborations.

What is Corporate Collaboration for Sustainable Development?

For the purpose of this report, we focus on voluntary efforts that engage multiple participants from the private sector in noncommercial, precompetitive collaboration.¹

Such initiatives require participants to:

- Work together to achieve a common purpose and/or specific outputs.
- Share risks, responsibilities, resources, and benefits.
- Adhere to a process for decision-making and action, including shared rules, norms, and structures.



This report focuses on:

- Business-led collaborations
- Collective action efforts
- Sustainability-focused membership networks
- Multistakeholder initiatives
- Ongoing working groups or task forces



This report does not focus on:

- One-on-one partnerships
- Informal or one-off initiatives
- Public-private partnerships
- Joint ventures
- Industry associations

Corporate Collaboration Done Well

When done well, collaboration can achieve truly impressive results.

Thanks to increased participation from companies in collaborative efforts, there is growing awareness within the private sector of social, environmental, and governance risks and business opportunities and increasing adoption of common sustainability standards and reporting requirements across corporate operations and supply chains.

Like never before, companies are taking a leadership role on issues of broad public concern.

Specific Examples of Collaborative Success Include:

- More than 12 percent of global cotton production is produced by farmers who have been certified by the **Better Cotton Initiative** (BCI) for their adoption of more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable production practices. BCI engages companies across the apparel value chain—from farms to fashion and textile brands—to make “better cotton” a commodity.²
- Half a billion children have been vaccinated and more than 9 million lives saved in the world’s poorest countries since the founding of **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance**, in 2000. Vaccine companies contribute to this public-private partnership with their research and technical expertise to supply vaccines that address the needs of developing countries.³
- The **Maritime Anti-Corruption Network** (MACN) is successfully driving progress to eliminate corruption across the maritime industry’s value chain. For example, MACN influenced a new regulatory framework adopted in Argentina in 2017 that was codeveloped between government and industry to increase the efficiency, integrity, and transparency of dry-bulk vessel inspections.⁴

1 Why Companies Collaborate

Precompetitive collaboration allows companies to invest their resources in the sustainable development of their organization, market, and greater ecosystem, for the benefit of all.

While companies have a long history of participating in strategic commercial partnerships, industry associations, and business-to-civil-society partnerships, they are relative newcomers to collaboration for sustainable development. More than ever before, companies are working in coordination with others across their value chain, and even across entire regional or global governance systems, to learn about the systemic issues that curb long-term business growth—such as keystone species extinction, talent shortages, and climate-threatened supply chains—and to agree on joint actions to address them.

Our research finds that the most successful business collaborations are those that recognize that companies are motivated primarily out of self-interest, and tap into the competitive factors that will motivate companies to join and contribute to the effort.⁵ For instance, the Monitor Group finds that companies are more adept at accelerating collective social impact goals when these can potentially directly benefit their core business, including initiatives that are designed to steward natural resources, enable market-based solutions to sustainability challenges, and raise industry standards.⁶ One interviewee framed collaboration for sustainable development as a business strategy that enables future competition between companies within a more sustainable market system.

In practice, the motivating factors behind any one company's participation in a collaboration vary depending on its unique needs. In Table 1, we offer a typology of commonly cited motivations that may propel companies to engage in collaborations.

Table 1 Commonly Cited Motivations for Corporate Participation in Collaboration⁷

Strategic opportunity creation/ problem resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Co-investing in new market opportunities ■ Building resilient, sustainable supply chains ■ Overcoming regulatory barriers ■ Sharing the risk of new approaches with peer organizations
Leveraging financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accessing donor funding ■ Mobilizing and optimizing pooled resources toward a common purpose
Influencing others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shaping industry standards ■ Influencing policy and garnering political support ■ Encouraging behavior change
Gaining access to partner assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accessing new networks ■ Accessing technical support and complementary skills ■ Accessing new technologies ■ Accessing information and knowledge
Improving legitimacy, credibility, or visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enhancing brand value and reputation ■ Inspiring, attracting, and retaining top talent ■ Building legitimacy and support for a preferred approach

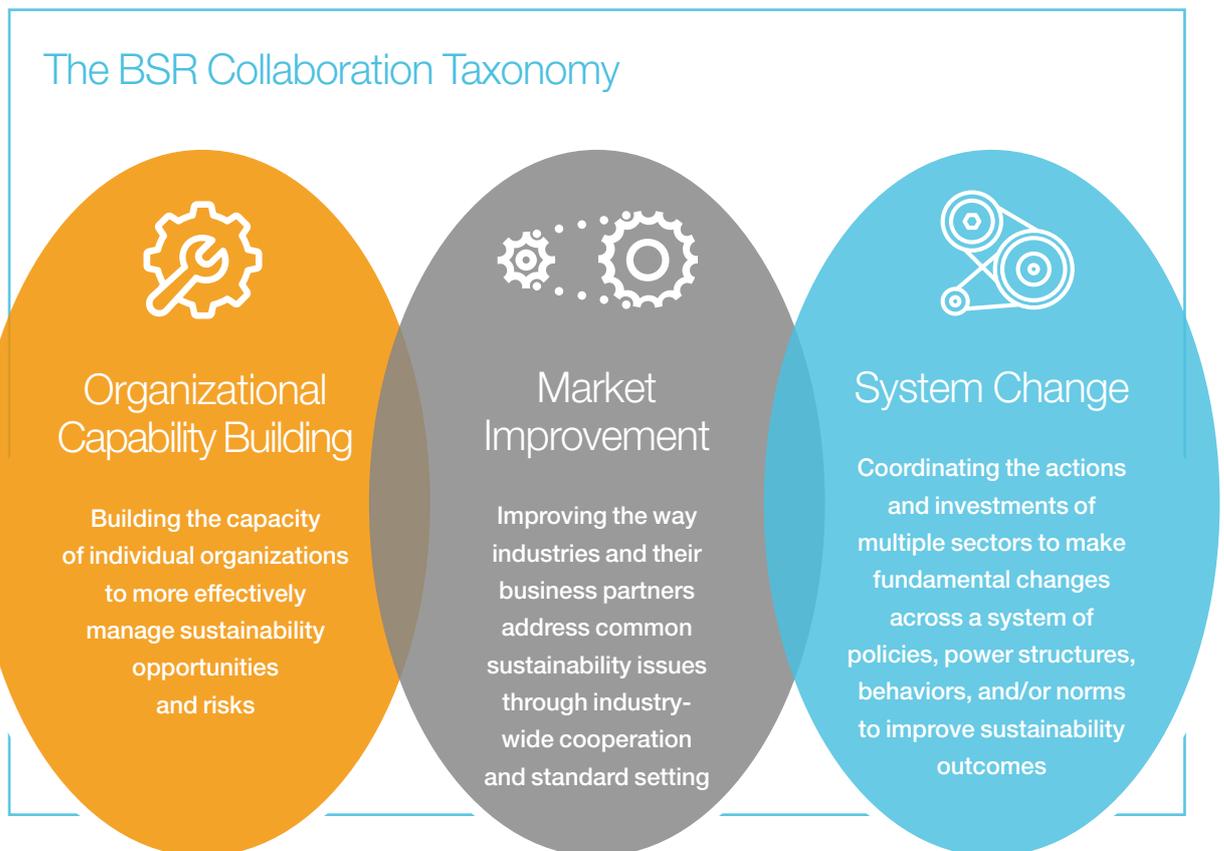
We believe it is critical to success that participating companies are explicit about the value they are seeking from a collaboration and how the collaboration's outcomes and impact enable that value creation. Our research also shows that different companies may seek different value propositions from the same collaboration, as elaborated further in Chapter 2.

Collaboration Taxonomy

The collaborations reviewed for this report exhibit a very wide range of characteristics, all unified around the common purpose of advancing business interests and sustainable development. In some cases, companies partner with stakeholders; in others they admit only

corporate members. In some cases, they focus on sharing good practices, whereas in others, participants leverage their collective resources to influence the operating environment. In yet other cases, the defining characteristic may be a focus on a particular industry, or on changing the way supply chains manage social and environmental impacts.

BSR finds it useful to organize the universe of collaborations based on the scope of change that a collaboration seeks: organizational, market, or system change. While all collaborations across the taxonomy are focused on action and impact, the targeted scope of change influences the design of the initiative, including decisions about objectives, activities, composition, organization, and governance.





Organizational Capability Building

initiatives focus on building and refining the capabilities of companies to more effectively and efficiently manage social and environmental risks and opportunities, often by sharing or developing knowledge and good practice for an emerging issue. Through such initiatives, companies often engage stakeholders through consultation processes to inform business strategy.



Market Improvement

initiatives aim to engage entire industries and their supply chains on sustainability issue management to create more sustainable and efficient market industry competition, often by developing common principles and standards, product labels, and/or by securing corporate and stakeholder commitments. These initiatives often achieve wide participation from the industries and supply chains concerned, and seek to engage stakeholders that influence or are influenced by the industries and supply chains.



System Change

initiatives seek to influence pervasive, complex, and systemwide issues that have many root causes and no clear solutions, such as mitigating climate change, creating a more circular economy, and improving population health. Leading companies that champion system change initiatives are often materially invested in pivoting toward a new, more sustainable business model, which also may require fundamental changes to the political, regulatory, and business environment. These initiatives often also require great financial and management resources to ultimately succeed in bringing about more sustainable norms and behaviors across multiple actors within the system.

This taxonomy is fluid and not mutually exclusive. Initiatives may start out with capability building efforts and over time—as participants build their knowledge of the issues and potential solutions—move into more of an action orientation to advance market or systems-level change. All serve important roles in preparing individual organizations, aligning value chains across industries, and coordinating collective action across systems.

In this report, we look across the spectrum of collaborations, from organizational capability building to system change, to examine universal success factors for initiatives that make tangible progress toward their mission and objectives.

Table 2 on the following page provides more detail on the typical characteristics of the different types of collaboration.

Table 2 Business Sustainability Collaboration Taxonomy

Typical Characteristics	Organizational Capability Building	Market Improvement	System Change
Objectives	Building the capacity of individual organizations to more effectively manage sustainability opportunities and risks	Improving the way industries and their business partners address common sustainability issues through industrywide cooperation and standard-setting	Coordinating the actions and investments of multiple sectors to make fundamental changes across a system of policies, power structures, behaviors, and/or norms to improve sustainability outcomes
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Convening ■ Research ■ Training ■ Knowledge-sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of industry sustainability standards ■ Advocacy for positive policy changes for the industry ■ Promotion of industry best practices ■ Partnership brokering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of industry and multi-industry sustainability standards ■ Policy advocacy ■ Resource mobilization ■ Collective action between participants and external stakeholders
Composition	Wide array of organizations across sectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Companies ■ Government organizations ■ NGOs 	Industry value chains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Retailers and brands ■ Suppliers, manufacturers, distributors ■ Farms and factories ■ Representative stakeholder groups 	Select, influential actors within a system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Companies ■ Government organizations ■ NGOs ■ Representative stakeholder groups
Governance & Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Membership organizations ■ Training initiatives ■ Working groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Industry-specific membership organizations ■ Industry associations ■ Standards & certifications bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Multistakeholder initiatives ■ Standards and certifications bodies
Examples	The Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) is a membership network of investors dedicated to increasing the scale and effectiveness of impact investing around the world. It does this primarily through sharing information, tools, and resources to enhance members' capacity to make and manage impact investments.	The Clean Cargo Working Group™ (CCWG) is a business-to-business leadership initiative involving more than 50 major brands, cargo carriers, and freight forwarders dedicated to reducing the environmental impacts of transport and promoting responsible shipping. Representing more than 85 percent of global container cargo capacity, CCWG provides the industry standard for reporting and evaluating ocean carriers' environmental performance, informs supplier procurement decisions, and enables collaborative performance improvement.	The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a global standard that requires countries and companies to disclose information on the governance of oil, gas, and mining revenue to promote the open and accountable management of extractive resources. The multistakeholder governance bodies include implementing and supporting countries, civil society, industry, and institutional investors.



2 The Key Success Factors of High-Impact Collaboration

Impact and results can be designed. BSR's experience and research finds that there are five common success factors for high-performing private-sector collaborations. In this chapter, we examine each of these factors and their components, which enable successful collaborations—from organizational capacity building to systems-change initiatives—to take steps toward their missions and achieve impact.

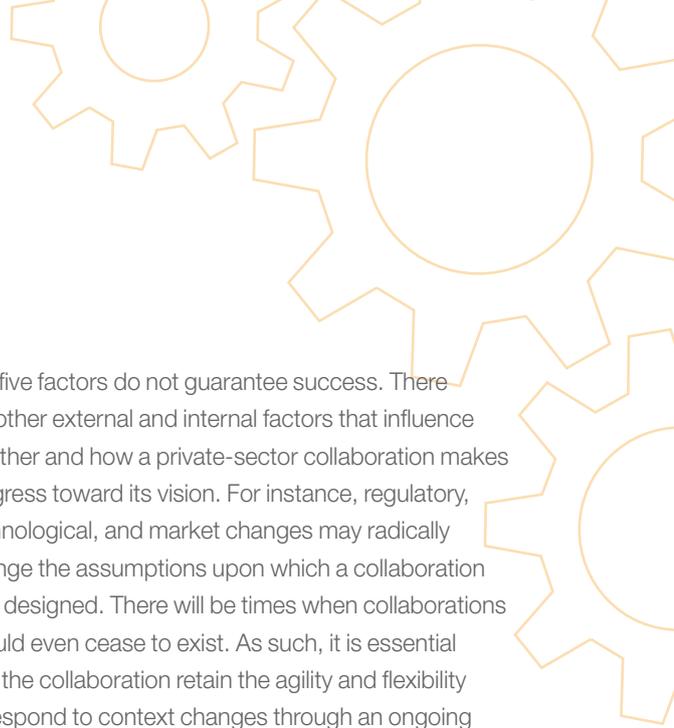
Collaboration in Action

What makes collaborations successful? Can we meaningfully identify shared characteristics across the diversity of past and present private-sector collaborations that can inform the design of future collaborations? And can success be designed?

Our research suggests that successful private-sector collaborations display certain characteristics that must be in place to enable them to advance progressively toward their visions and missions. It also suggests that considering these factors in the design of new collaborations is necessary for success. In interviewing more than 30 collaboration leaders who subjectively described the characteristics they find to be common among initiatives they consider to be successful, we found a remarkable resonance around five factors that, combined, offer a blueprint for high-impact collaborations.

Five Key Success Factors: A Blueprint for Impact





A Winning Design Includes:

- **A compelling, common purpose** that brings participants together and enables each to accrue value from the collaboration
- **The right partners in the right roles** that bring the required authority and resources to drive the collaboration forward
- **Good governance** that enables efficient, transparent, and fair decision-making
- **An organizational design that is fit for purpose** – with sufficient resources and staffing to operate
- **Accountability** to the objectives the collaboration participants have committed to

The five factors, examined in detail in the following pages of this report, are interdependent. For example, good governance results in an organization that attracts the right participants to commit the resources necessary to advance the mission. When one or several factors are missing from the design and strategy, collaborations may face several of the challenges that are highlighted on page 26.

The five factors do not guarantee success. There are other external and internal factors that influence whether and how a private-sector collaboration makes progress toward its vision. For instance, regulatory, technological, and market changes may radically change the assumptions upon which a collaboration was designed. There will be times when collaborations should even cease to exist. As such, it is essential that the collaboration retain the agility and flexibility to respond to context changes through an ongoing assessment of the collaboration's strategy and design relative to the external environment.

Ineffective collaborations risk being counterproductive to their cause: If they are failing to achieve their objectives, they may be diverting limited attention and resources from other initiatives that might better address the issues. By spotting the warning signs early, collaboration participants can better steer their strategic collaborations toward success.

The following sections explore these five factors in greater detail.



“The principles of partnership tend to be universal, and don't really change much between different types of organizations. Collaboration involves trust building over a period of time and the structures and processes that enable that trust to build.”

Barbara Durr

Director of Strategic Partnerships, Oxfam America



2.1 A Compelling, Common Purpose

First and foremost, organizations must have a strong motivation to join a collaborative effort. This common purpose—the North Star—is interwoven throughout its mission and strategy, and unites participants to focus on common objectives.

The purpose needs to be ambitious and broad enough for all participants to see value in the collaboration, but the value they seek may not be the same. As highlighted by Meghann Glavin, former managing director of the 100,000 Opportunities Initiative and senior manager of global responsibility at Starbucks, “A shared North Star doesn’t mean we start in the same place, and it doesn’t mean we’ll take the same route north. We do not have to be identical in our approach to achieve impact.”

Collaborations should give meaningful time to defining the purpose and the associated outcomes that participants are seeking. In particular, when dealing with complex, high-risk topics—such as the

prevention of child labor in supply chains, improved management of depleting water resources, or the development of new industry standards—it will take time for companies and their stakeholders to understand each other’s diverse and often opposing perspectives, build trust, and together narrow big ideas into an effort that is both actionable and meaningful for everyone at the table.

One interviewee likened this negotiation to that of a peace process: the careful, sometimes dramatic brokering of terms, strategies, roles, and responsibilities that ultimately allows everyone to agree on common ground and a plan of action.

In parallel, collaborations should develop a strategy for impact and objectives that define what “impact” and “success” look like for the initiative. This will influence further strategic decisions about who to involve, what topics to invest time and resources on, and how to evaluate the effort’s progress. While initiatives that seek to build participants’ organizational capabilities might prioritize scale of membership as an impact objective, systems change initiatives might prioritize the adoption of new policies.

Learning from the 100,000 Opportunities Initiative

The **100,000 Opportunities Initiative** aims to bridge the opportunity divide for young Americans who are out of school and not working. Since its launch in 2015, more than 50 U.S. companies have joined the effort, rallying around the collective goal of engaging at least 100,000 youth by 2018 through apprenticeships, internships, training programs, and jobs. With this unexpected surge in momentum, the Initiative quickly surpassed its first goal, inspiring participating companies to re-up their commitment to hire one million youth by 2021.

Of this effort, Meghann Glavin said, “When you bring social and business impact together, you can create something that is truly sustainable. Attacking the issue of youth unemployment also allows us to address our business talent acquisition and recruiting needs.”



A Compelling, Common Purpose Includes:

A shared vision and mission

Collaborative initiatives need to articulate the common purpose that brings participants together. The vision describes the common change that the participants want to see in the world, while the mission describes how the collaboration proposes to get there. In designing the vision and mission, collaborations should also consider how these might mobilize and incentivize stakeholders to support the initiative. For instance, the **Future of Internet Power** initiative is inspired by its vision of an internet powered by 100 percent renewable energy and is activated through its mission to increase the use of renewable energy to power data centers through collaboration with companies, power providers, developers, utilities, and policymakers.

Galvanizing value propositions for both business and society

Collaborations should articulate clear value propositions for each group of priority participants to ensure that they recognize how their involvement in a collaborative effort will lead to a net-positive result for their organization (or, in some cases, a reputational risk in not participating), in addition to a benefit for society. For instance, **Gavi** creates new market opportunities for vaccines companies by enabling long-term, predictable demand for their products, creating a strong economic incentive for their participation while increasing access to immunization in poor countries.

A strategy for impact

Collaborations should develop a strategy for impact that is grounded in the vision and mission, defines what success looks like, and determines what actions will need to occur, by whom, and when. More established initiatives may develop a theory of change, or logic model, to better establish the link between actions and anticipated outcomes and, ultimately, impacts. For example, the **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil** developed a theory of change to achieve its vision to make sustainable palm oil the norm.

Ambitious objectives

The strategy should be guided by clear, challenging objectives that motivate participants to act. SMART objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused, and time-bound) strengthen the collaboration as they allow for continuous assessment of and communication on progress. Additionally, objectives should reflect the value participants are seeking from the collaboration. The **100,000 Opportunities Initiative** offers a good example of how ambitious objectives can motivate participants to commit to action.

2.2 The Right Partners, in the Right Roles

The success of a collaboration is highly dependent on accessing and leveraging, at the right time, participants' resources, including financial commitments, market leverage, reputation, and networks. The ideal composition of the collaboration will evolve over time relative to the strategic objectives and progress made, often with a focus on critical mass.

However, collaboration partners should resist defaulting to inviting everyone who is interested to join from the outset. Instead, partners should focus on securing a group of champion organizations that bring the critical assets and motivation. Especially in the initial phases of a collaboration, too many diverse and adversarial perspectives will reduce the likelihood of reaching a consensus, with greater risk of politics and inertia.

Interviewees recommended mapping and prioritizing stakeholders—including companies, policymakers, civil society organizations, donors, and development actors—who are critical to the initiative's success, and inviting them to participate in early discussions about the design of the effort before launching.

This will facilitate defining the collaboration's design from the perspective of those that are most invested in the outcome and have the greatest ability to make progress. It will also allow early champions to build understanding and trust, and help design the roles that best motivate participation and leverage their and their peers' assets. As stated by Eddie Rich, Deputy Head of the EITI, "Getting the right people around the table talking about the wrong thing is better than getting the wrong people talking about the right thing. They will find their roles."

Finally, our research confirmed that, in addition to getting the right organizations to the table, enlisting, empowering, and incentivizing the right individuals and creating a set of clear roles and responsibilities are equally important in designing a collaboration and moving it forward.



Learning from the Global Network Initiative

The **Global Network Initiative** (GNI) is a multistakeholder group of companies, civil society organizations, investors, and academics dedicated to protecting and advancing freedom of expression and privacy in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector. Setting up the initiative took more than two years, during which time the founding organizations negotiated the GNI's Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy, implementation guidelines, and governance structure, before launching the initiative.⁸ This extensive effort of early champion organizations allowed participants to clarify their roles and responsibilities, understand the issues, develop a strategy, and build trust before opening the group up to a wider set of participants.



The Right Partners, in the Right Roles Includes:

Champion organizations that drive the collaboration forward

Early collaboration members should dedicate time to identifying, recruiting, and cultivating champion organizations that will help to drive the initiative from concept to implementation. Champion organizations have a strategic incentive to see the collaboration succeed and play a critical role in keeping the level of ambition high. They act as a role model for their industries, and dedicate the time, advocacy, and behind-the-scenes diplomacies to encourage peers to join the effort.

Participants with decision-making authority in their organizations

Collaborations should establish guidelines on what authority and expertise participants will be expected to have, in order to make decisions and negotiate on behalf of their firms. Many collaborations require executive-level participation to ensure that decisions are made efficiently. If the initiative requires member companies to engage specific business units to take action, it is important to include employees from those functions in the group decision-making.

At a minimum, collaboration participants should be capable of building relationships with other members, as well as with the key decision-makers and management teams within their own organizations, to ensure that commitments are met. See Appendix A for specific recommendations for companies to reference when selecting the employees that will best represent their interests.

Clear participant roles and responsibilities

The collaboration's operating charter or governance handbooks should include a description of participant roles, responsibilities, division of tasks, accountabilities, expectations, and rights. Making these explicit helps align the participants' interests to those of the partnership. It also helps create the basis for trust, ensuring that all members know what is expected of them and of each other.

For example, the **Ethical Trading Initiative** lays out member obligations for corporate members to join, including adhering to the ETI Base Code and Principles of Implementation, as well as a commitment to submit annual reports to the ETI secretariat to share the steps they are taking to improve working conditions in their supply chains. See Appendix A for common participant roles and responsibilities in collaborations for sustainable development.

Trust between participants

For a collaboration to succeed, participants need to trust that the others are participating with integrity and fulfilling their commitments. The collaboration can begin by institutionalizing policies, procedures, and agreements to create a safe space to collaborate, but, more powerfully, participants build trust over time by being accountable for the actions they commit to and by taking risks together. Include as many opportunities for face-to-face interaction as possible in the collaboration agenda to facilitate trust building.

2.3 Good Governance

Governance must be designed to support the purpose of the collaboration, with an emphasis on ensuring effective, efficient, balanced, and transparent decision-making that ensures the initiative's actions are considered legitimate and authoritative by internal and external stakeholders. Governance systems also enforce codes of conduct that create a safe space for participants to collaborate.

Well-functioning governance frameworks take a middle ground between legitimacy and efficiency: ensuring representation of critical stakeholder groups—which determine their level of buy-in and ownership and, as a result, the overall legitimacy of the initiative—and creating an efficient, clear, and fair decision-making process.⁹ To strike this balance, collaboration partners may choose to make most decisions through consensus (lack of objection), and bring to a vote only the issues where there are differing views. Once initiatives advance in size, external engagement, or

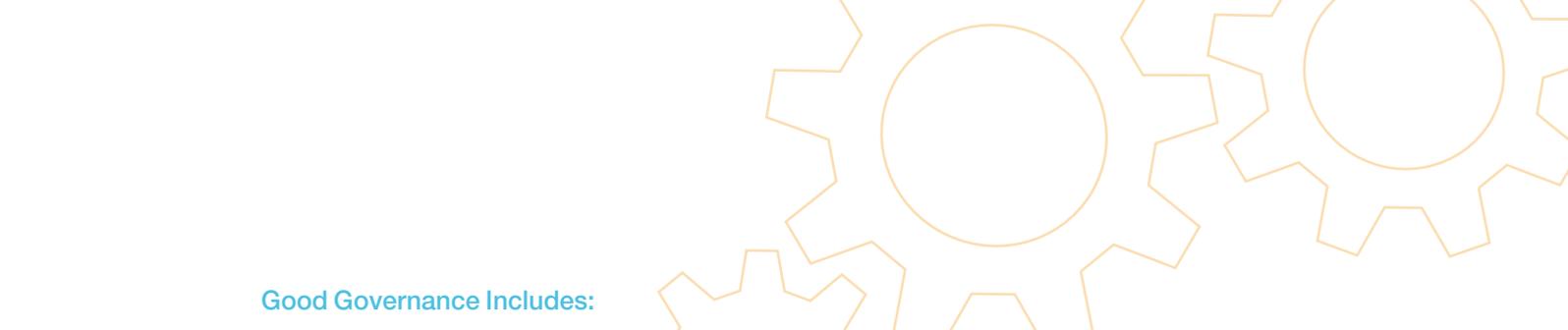
complexity, they may establish a governing body such as a steering committee or board of directors to make strategic decisions on behalf of the wider membership, as well as introduce advisory boards or technical committees. Initiatives that involve multiple stakeholders or competitors should consider engaging a neutral moderator to maintain legitimacy, facilitate decision making, and prevent conflicts of interest.

Further, good governance systems integrate stakeholder and rights holder voices into decision making. Stakeholder influence over the collaboration should be weighted by the value they bring to and take from the initiative. For instance, civil society organizations may object to purely advisory roles if their endorsement of outcomes are essential to the collaboration's success.

A number of interviewees pointed out that it is important to enter collaborations with the assumption that all parties are working toward the same purpose and objectives, rather than assuming adverse, unresolvable interests. This perspective will help early collaborators avoid the impulse to develop elaborate governance structures to protect various constituent interests. Such structures often take significant time to develop, are potential causes for conflict, and inhibit efficiency.

Learning from the Better Cotton Initiative

The **Better Cotton Initiative** (BCI) is a multistakeholder initiative of more than 1,000 member organizations that promotes better standards and practices in cotton farming across 24 countries. To ensure equal representation of interests between members that have varying roles across the cotton supply chain, BCI has a governance model that reflects the reality of the industry and its membership. The BCI's Council is the representative decision-making organ on behalf of the General Assembly of BCI members and consists of 12 seats: three seats each for civil society organizations, producers/farmers, supply chain actors, and retailers and brands.



Good Governance Includes:

A representative governance model

When making group decisions, the collaboration should take care to ensure that the opinions of participating constituencies are adequately represented and that no one group dominates or can be dominated in the decision-making process.¹⁰ Participants need to feel confident that their interests are represented, ultimately making it more likely that the group will arrive at consensus and commit to joint actions.

While some collaborations may achieve representation by requiring a quorum of members to participate in a vote, more diverse initiatives may opt to establish a governing body with elected representatives from each constituency to facilitate the process, such as in the **Better Cotton Initiative** example.

Clear and fair decision-making guidelines

Decision-making procedures should include guidelines for which organizations have a say on different levels of decision, addressing questions such as which powers are granted to the steering committee as opposed to regular members, and if any organizations or membership groups will be excluded from decision-making.

It is common, for example, to restrict voting to dues-paying members. Procedures should also ensure fair treatment between members with different levels of power, such as brands and their suppliers.

Mutually-enforced code of conduct

Collaborations should introduce strong, enforceable policies that create a safe space for precompetitive collaboration. These include antitrust guidelines and knowledge of competition law, as well as non-solicitation agreements and processes for conflict resolution.

We recommend that the initiative seek outside legal counsel to protect against antitrust concerns, especially when the collaboration has direct ties to business value.¹¹ Participants should hold each other responsible for their conduct and be willing to evict members from the initiative when they fail to uphold their obligations.

Promotion of rights holder and stakeholder engagement

Collaborations should strive for engagement of rights holders—who might include workers, smallholder farmers, indigenous populations, and youth—as well as external stakeholders, who can inform the effort with their lived reality and shape the direction toward outcomes they find favorable.

When seeking direct rights-holder participation, initiatives should be careful to respect the value of the time given by rights holders to participate by, for example, holding in-person meetings within easy travel distance.¹² Our interviews revealed one example of an organization that reserves an empty chair at meetings to represent rights holders, when they are unable to be present, to remind decision-makers of their interests.

2.4 An Organization Design that Is Fit for Purpose

The way that the organization itself is structured and resourced impacts performance. It can be tempting to keep collaborative efforts as “start-ups” or pilots, managed by part-time member volunteers or a few seconded staff. Experience shows, however, that once a collaboration grows, a staffing model made up of volunteers will prove insufficient to maintain momentum and focus on the shared purpose.

It is important to consider how the initiative will be staffed, housed, and financed, as well as how the activities and the organization itself are designed to evolve.

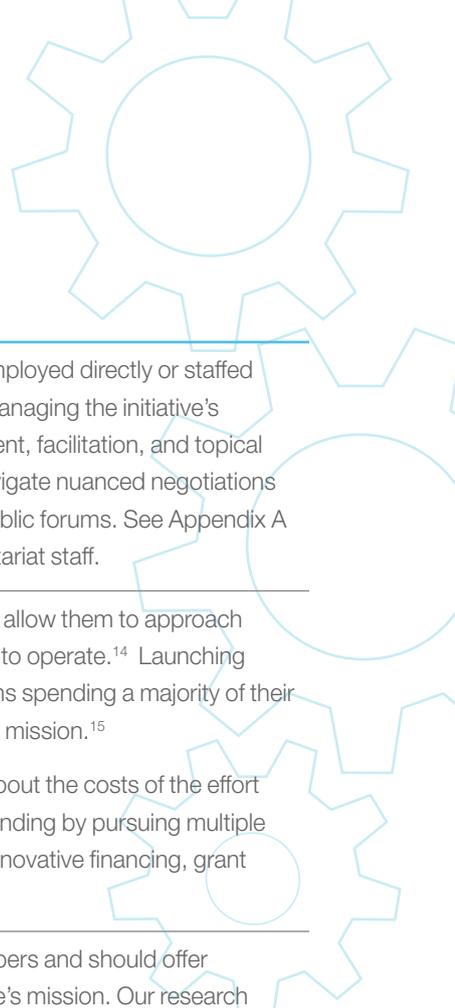
Most collaborations have a secretariat, which manages a wide range of functions that keep the initiative and its participants organized and moving toward their objectives. Secretariat services usually include oversight of governance, strategic planning, facilitating

member discussions and decision-making, managing internal and external communications, outreach and onboarding of new members, securing additional funding, managing the collaboration’s activities and research, and supporting administrative functions such as finance and accounting, and IT services. Secretariats also hold the initiative accountable to its goals and report against key performance metrics to members and external stakeholders, among other tasks.

Collaboration participants have the option of launching their own organization or finding a host institution. New or smaller initiatives may benefit from seeking out a host organization that can offer quick set-up, a neutral space to convene, an administrative backbone, an initial staff with topical and/or management expertise, and facilitated access to a network and funders. Nonprofit hosts also can be beneficial to corporate collaborators by providing a corporate liability shield and tax exemption.¹³ More mature or larger efforts may choose to set up an independent entity with their own staff and resources. Many collaborations opt to start with a host institution, and then spin off into independent entities once they have reached a certain scale and have sufficient resources to maintain momentum.

Learning from The Accord

The **Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh** (The Accord) requires all factories producing for signatory companies to receive independent inspections on fire, electrical, and structural safety. Different from other voluntary supply chain standards, which typically employ auditors, the Accord decided to employ technical experts to more effectively identify and address construction and building-safety related issues. The Accord’s staff consists primarily of professional structural, fire safety, and electrical engineers, remediation and safety monitors, and health and safety trainers, whose applied expertise leads to credible assessments and determinations on required safety remediation.



An Organization Design that Is Fit for Purpose Includes:

An appropriate number of staff with topic expertise and facilitation experience

Collaborations should hire a professional team—either employed directly or staffed by a host organization—to bring dedicated attention to managing the initiative’s secretariat. The team should collectively have management, facilitation, and topical expertise, allowing them to develop viable strategies, navigate nuanced negotiations between members, and represent the collaboration in public forums. See Appendix A on page 40 for examples of responsibility areas for secretariat staff.

Adequate financial resources

Collaborations should have a business model, as this will allow them to approach various funders to secure the financial resources needed to operate.¹⁴ Launching without a financial plan can lead to under-resourced teams spending a majority of their time seeking additional funding rather than pursuing their mission.¹⁵

Practitioners advise being clear up front with members about the costs of the effort and considering ways to secure diverse and long-term funding by pursuing multiple funding streams (e.g., member dues, certification fees, innovative financing, grant funding, among others).

Activities that advance the objectives and mission

Activities should be prioritized and agreed upon by members and should offer participants concrete steps that clearly link to the initiative’s mission. Our research finds that it is more common that one might expect for collaborations to succumb to mission drift.

For example, a study of multistakeholder partnerships registered in the UN’s Global Sustainability Partnership Database found that 43 percent were pursuing activities that are not directly related to their publicly stated goals and ambitions.¹⁶ To keep on track, collaborations should regularly review whether their strategies and underlying activities effectively target the stated objectives.

A flexible organizational structure

Particularly when the collaboration is getting started, its organizational structure should remain agile, like a start-up, to take advantage of external events, partnerships, and resources that can further the cause.

Collaborative efforts are often fluid, with their membership, governance, and organizational models evolving to accommodate the needs of each phase of their growth and development. However, structure and consistency are also needed—advancing activities through time-bound, voluntary working groups or task forces are recommended ways to manage a fluid initiative.

2.5 Accountability

Collaboration practitioners interviewed for this report unanimously identified accountability as both a success factor and an area in which collaborations most often underperform. Research shows that few large partnerships have developed monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and fewer still share the results of impact assessments publicly.¹⁷

Inevitably, this will put into question how much progress these initiatives have made toward their goals and makes it difficult to assess how much attention these approaches deserve.

Many interviewees recommended that collaborations share with external audiences a view of where resources are being expended, what actions participants are taking, and their results. In addition to the transparency this creates, companies also benefit from evidence that the approach they are taking is moving the needle on the issues (or not), to make the business case for further engagement.

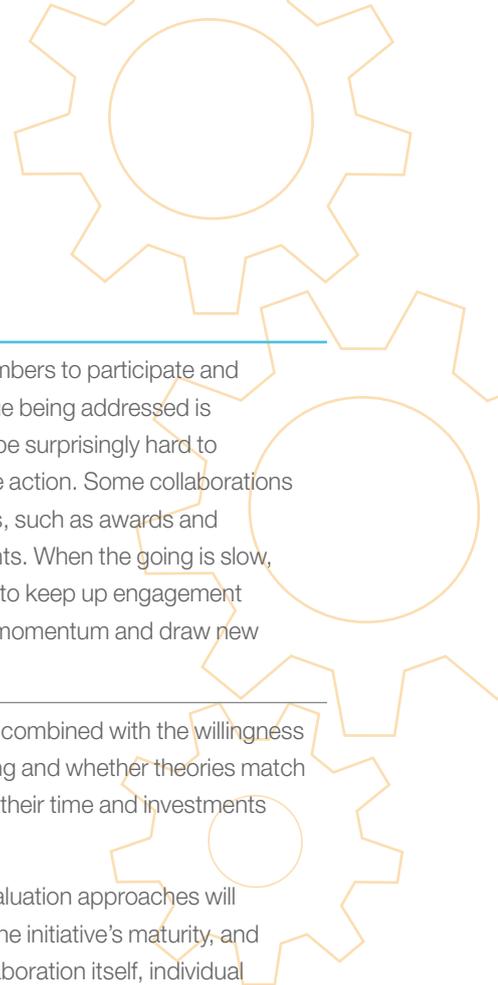
We recommend that collaborations design accountability into the obligations for membership,

requiring that all members make a commitment to action, adopt the initiative's measurement and evaluation policies, and agree up front on what information the initiative will publish to the public.¹⁸ This might involve a process to determine what information will be important for specific audiences, both internal and external, at different stages in the maturity of the initiative. Private-sector led collaborations might learn from the reporting requirements of government or philanthropically funded initiatives, which often expect detailed impact reporting. For example, the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria** employs a rigorous methodology to estimate the number of lives saved and number of disease incidents prevented as a result of its investment activities, which it reports publicly on a regular basis.

Collaborations might establish a precedent early on by enforcing consequences for participants who are consistently not accountable for their partnership responsibilities. For instance, **MACN** requires all companies to work toward implementation of the its Anti-Corruption Principles as a condition of membership, asking those that do not comply within three years of joining to leave the network. However, the ultimate goal should be to encourage participants to reach for continuous improvement and to collaborate more effectively, rather than fulfilling minimum obligations.

Learning from the Responsible Business Alliance (RBA)

As the leading industry coalition driving electronics supply chain sustainability, the **Responsible Business Alliance** (RBA, formerly the Electronic Industry Citizenship Coalition) sets standards, holds members accountable to them, and provides members with a range of “carrot and stick” measures to drive continuous improvement in members’ supply chain sustainability. RBA applicant members have two years from the date they join the RBA to conform to the membership requirements, which they are then held accountable to. Among these, members are required to commit to the RBA Code of Conduct. Compliance to the code is evaluated regularly through self-assessment questionnaires and audits, and corrective actions are taken where necessary. These accountability requirements help stimulate individual company action and create healthy competition among members, thus driving performance.



Accountability Includes:

Commitment to action

Collaborations must identify what motivates their members to participate and design actions that draw on this motivation. If the issue being addressed is not an immediate and urgent business priority, it can be surprisingly hard to encourage even engaged corporate members to take action. Some collaborations motivate through introducing incentives or obligations, such as awards and recognition, industry standards, or public commitments. When the going is slow, it can be helpful to introduce a few “quick win” efforts to keep up engagement levels. Success is contagious, and will help maintain momentum and draw new champions to the effort.

Dedication to continuous improvement through measurement and evaluation

A shared measurement and evaluation methodology, combined with the willingness and ability to use evidence to reflect on what is working and whether theories match reality, allows participants and donors to validate that their time and investments are well spent.

A strong M&E framework recognizes that different evaluation approaches will be needed to assess progress across each stage of the initiative’s maturity, and includes assessments of the effectiveness of the collaboration itself, individual activities, as well as the overall contribution of the initiative to business and development goals.¹⁹ Collaborations can set a precedent with participants by requiring them to report when joining, which also helps establish an early baseline against which the effort can be evaluated over time.

Participant accountability

Collaborations can require participant accountability initially through formal mechanisms like contracts, MOUs, statements of commitment, or partnership agreements. However, over time, it is the informal mechanisms—like the desire to protect organizational reputation or maintain key strategic relationships—that hold the most power over whether organizations deliver on their obligations. Members can hold each other accountable, setting a high bar to do and share more.

Transparency

Transparency is a requirement for legitimacy. Further, transparency facilitates more effective collaboration, directs more efficient use of resources, and improves learning between companies.²⁰ At a minimum, collaborations should offer consistently updated information about governance structures, funding sources, and progress toward the initiative’s objectives.

Strong collaborations share third-party evaluations, report successes and failures publicly, and publish updates on individual member efforts. For instance, **Better Work**’s Transparency Portal publishes the names of the apparel factories registered with Better Work country programs and their compliance with national and international labor standards, creating an incentive for all actors to commit to the goals of the initiative.

Spotlight: Common Risk Factors

There are also common signs that a collaboration may be headed for trouble.

Risk factors for collaborations cited by interviewees for this report fell across every stage of an initiative's life cycle, from start-up to scale.

Common risk factors by phase Mitigation measures

Start-Up

- Prioritizing collaboration over other, more direct interventions
- Duplicating efforts of other collaborations
- Lack of a “burning platform” to gain initial traction
- Launching prematurely, before participants have bought in
- Lack of business value for private-sector participants

Spend the time to prepare and engage critical participants.

Multistakeholder initiatives take an average of 18 months to move from early discussions to launch. This is a longer time frame than most participants expect, but the time is well spent on attaining buy-in and refining the initiative's value proposition. Organizations that launch more rapidly are more likely to face challenges early in their growth because they don't have sufficient participant support or an initial strategy for impact.²¹

Diversify funding. Seeking seed funding from foundations or governments can help initiatives build their value proposition for companies to back the effort themselves. This helps to avoid the “free rider” problem, where competing companies avoid being the sole contributors to an effort that they see as beneficial to their peers.

Early Implementation

- Negotiation breakdowns between critical participants
- Insufficient resources to meet the ambitions of the collaboration
- Breaches of trust between participants
- Participant turnover

Prioritize personal relationships and trust-building.

Trust is the glue that holds organizations together when the going gets rough. Scheduling meetings in person – while time-intensive and expensive – can be an important investment in building relationships between participants, increasing their commitment to each other and the effort.

Build a database of participant contacts. Relying too heavily on one point of contact for a participating organization can lead to burn-out or loss of the relationship with their firm if they unexpectedly leave. Collaborations do well to identify several participant contacts and ensure they are informed on the collaboration's progress, in case they need to step in.

Scaling

- Lack of leadership succession planning
- Mission creep
- Loss of enthusiasm/energy diverted to new projects
- Inability to pivot to accommodate new external forces
- Lack of a strategy for sunseting

Rotate leaders. Some initiatives expose more people to the leadership role by instituting terms for key positions such as the steering committee. This allows more organizations to participate in governance roles and creates natural periods for the initiative to refresh its strategic vision along with new leadership. To maintain some consistency, it can be helpful to stagger terms. For example, the vice-chair would remain in office when a new chair is elected.

Agree up front on signposts for scale or sunseting.

When designing the initiative, members can agree on indicators or milestones to review during each strategy cycle to determine when it may be time to consider different growth paths, including scaling to new geographies or sectors, spinning off, merging, pivoting, or sunseting the initiative. Some initiatives may determine from the beginning that they will be time-bound, lasting only a few years to accomplish their objective.

3 How Companies Can Prepare

Companies that achieve the most through collaboration carefully evaluate which initiatives to join; invest by equipping their teams with the skills, incentives, and resources needed to move the effort forward; and commit to being accountable to the initiative and taking the lead on the causes they support.

“Collaborations are only useful when they raise the bar. That means we and our companies need to be committed to raising the bar and to making it happen. Let’s be more direct, less comfortable, and challenge each other.”

Michael Kobori

Vice President, Sustainability, Levi Strauss & Co.²²

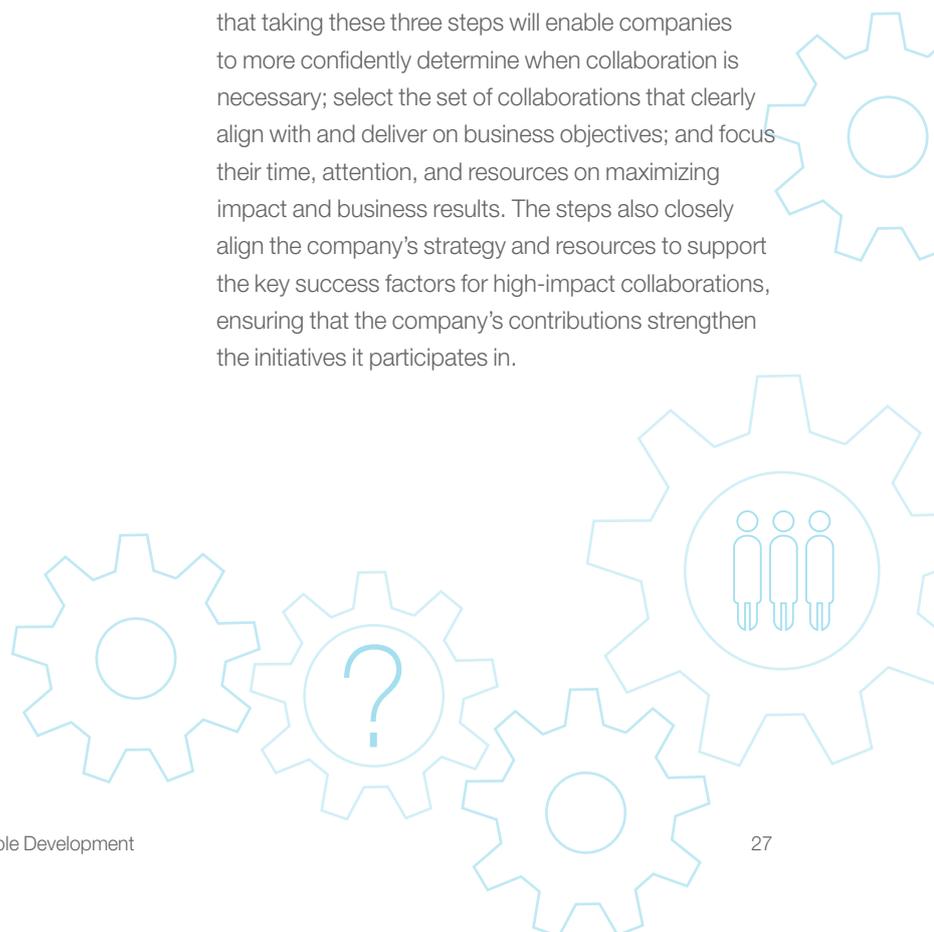
Getting the House in Order

Even the most thoughtfully designed collaboration will founder when participating organizations are not prepared to collaborate. Participants are often surprised by the level of preparation, resource allocation, time, and commitment to the long game required to be successful in their collaborative efforts.

Many interviewees recommended that if the problem could be solved in any other way, companies should pursue other paths over initiating or joining a collaboration, due to the challenging and slow nature of this work. The good news is, collaboration is a skillset that companies can cultivate. Research shows that the more collaboration for sustainable development a company engages in, the more successful the collaborations are assessed to be by the employees participating in them.²³

This chapter offers guidance on specific actions that companies should consider in advance of engaging in a collaboration that will contribute to more successful outcomes. Our guidance is organized around three basic principles: companies should better evaluate, invest in, and commit to collaborative initiatives.

We—and interviewees for this report—strongly believe that taking these three steps will enable companies to more confidently determine when collaboration is necessary; select the set of collaborations that clearly align with and deliver on business objectives; and focus their time, attention, and resources on maximizing impact and business results. The steps also closely align the company’s strategy and resources to support the key success factors for high-impact collaborations, ensuring that the company’s contributions strengthen the initiatives it participates in.





Evaluate

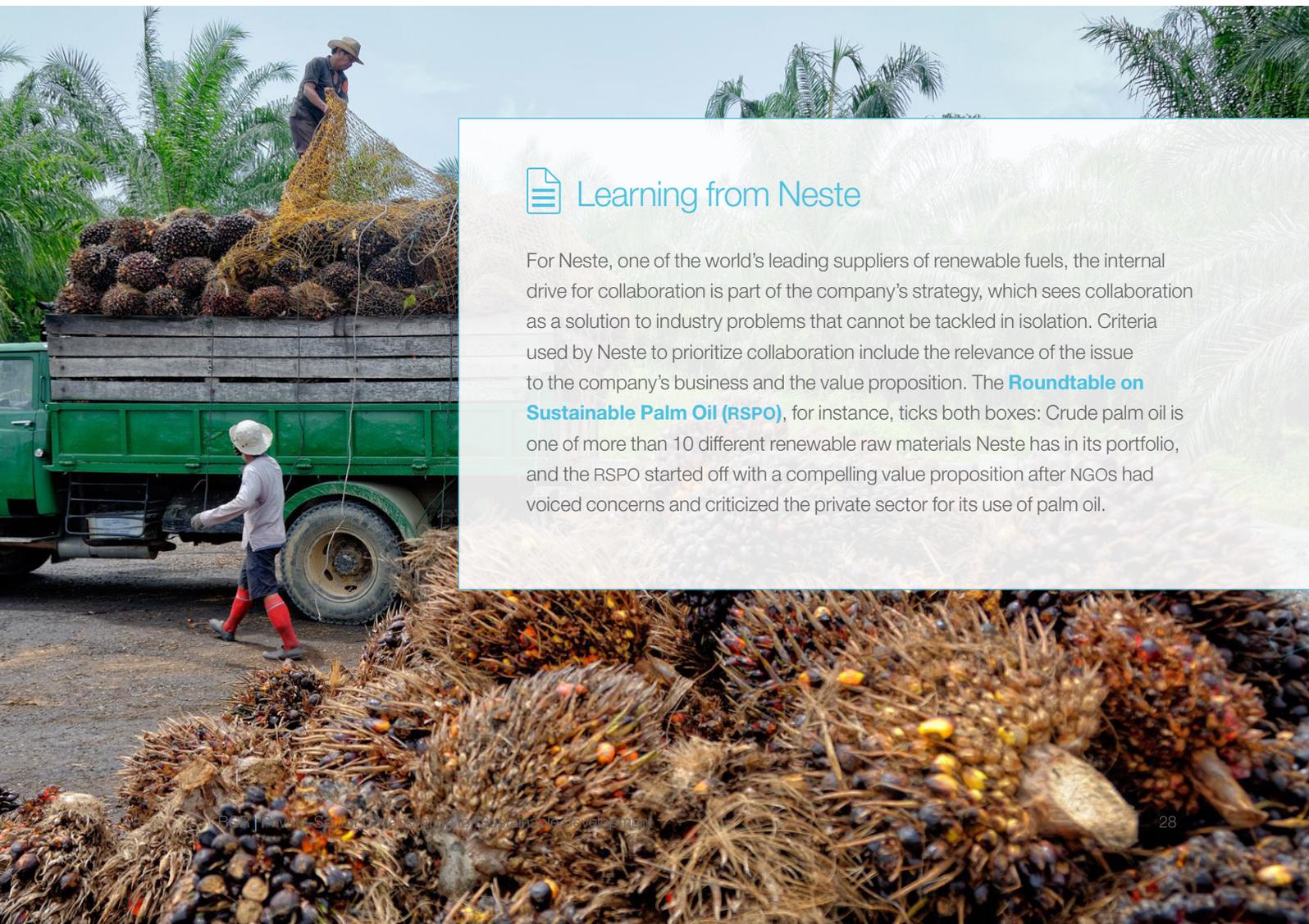
Companies need to invest time and resources in appropriately evaluating whether and how collaboration yields impact and business results. From the outset, companies should confidently and positively confirm that collaboration is the best answer to addressing a problem or delivering a solution.

Secondly, collaborations are not created equal: Some will be more effective or better suited to delivering on company objectives. Establishing the business case for engagement is essential for generating sustained commitment, as well as for securing the required internal and external buy-in. Thirdly, companies should identify any possible red lines that will determine how it may engage (or not) with a collaboration.

“Collaboration needs to be part of normal business, integrated into the way we run our projects. It is not just a task of the sustainability team, but of all teams.”

Chiel Seinen

Manager Stakeholder Relations, Shell International



Learning from Neste

For Neste, one of the world's leading suppliers of renewable fuels, the internal drive for collaboration is part of the company's strategy, which sees collaboration as a solution to industry problems that cannot be tackled in isolation. Criteria used by Neste to prioritize collaboration include the relevance of the issue to the company's business and the value proposition. The [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil \(RSPO\)](#), for instance, ticks both boxes: Crude palm oil is one of more than 10 different renewable raw materials Neste has in its portfolio, and the RSPO started off with a compelling value proposition after NGOs had voiced concerns and criticized the private sector for its use of palm oil.

Actions to Evaluate:

Prioritize and strategize

- Task the teams that manage priority sustainability issue areas with identifying when collaboration is the right choice and prioritizing the collaborations that are critical to help them achieve their objectives.
- Integrate assessments of when more collaboration will be necessary into the company's strategic evaluations, including sustainability materiality assessments, goal setting, and scenario planning.
- Identify established collaborations and promising new initiatives for each priority sustainability issue, and evaluate them based on a common set of criteria (e.g., strategic alignment, level of ambition, value proposition, ability to influence, impact potential) to select those that are a good fit for the company.
- Empower teams to say "no" to nonstrategic efforts.
- Identify any gaps where new collaboration may be necessary, and allocate resources to investigate what the company might support to advance these issues.
- Identify which collaborative efforts the company will take a lead on versus those where the company will play a more passive role.

Understand the business case

- Define the company's objectives for participating in priority collaborative initiatives, including both business and social/environmental impact goals.
- Conduct a risk assessment to determine how the company may be impacted financially or reputationally if the issue is not addressed.
- Develop the business case for participating, including:
 - Responses to common questions: Why? Who? What? How?
 - An evaluation of impact potential and timeline
 - A financial assessment of resources needed to participate over time
 - Estimated benefits for the company (see Table 1 page 9: "Commonly Cited Motivations for Corporate Participation in Collaboration")

Acknowledge the company's red lines

- Investigate what issues the company is willing to have transparency on and what public positions the company has made previously.
- Determine up front what policies, goals, or positions the company would be unlikely to support, to equip participating team members with an understanding of what their limitations for negotiation might be.

Learning from Maersk

Maersk's involvement in collaborative initiatives is guided by and aligned with its business strategy and the aligned sustainability priorities. For example, the company empowers its representatives to make meaningful decisions on behalf of the company, including choosing not to engage in efforts that do not align with the company's strategic priorities.



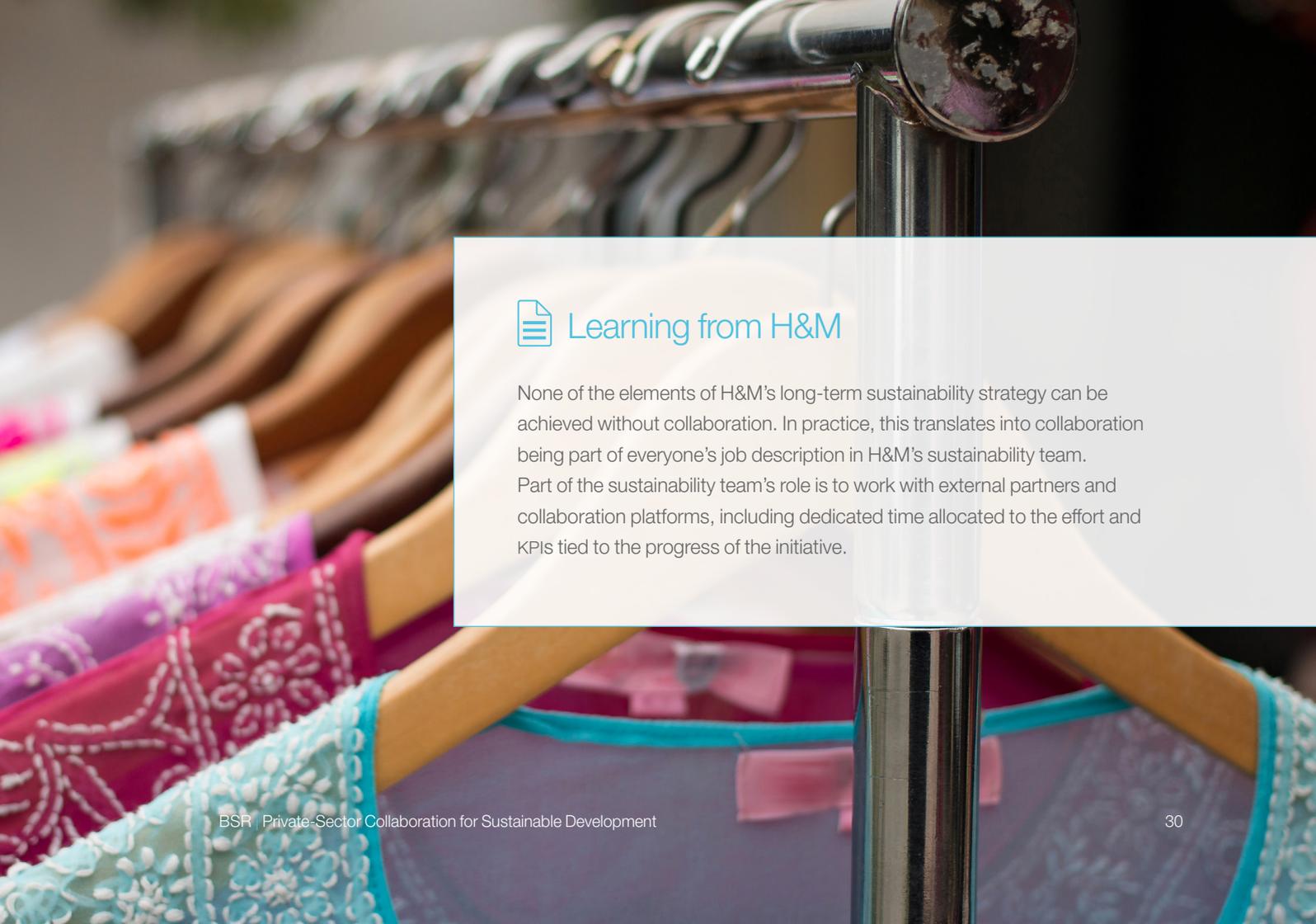
Once the company has identified the collaborations it will participate in, the next step is to determine what level of support the company should and can provide to resource the effort. This involves securing internal leadership support, allocating resources, and staffing the right people to participate and represent the company.

It may be helpful to think of collaborative efforts as another form of R&D: a business function that requires some space, time, and resources in order to deliver value back to the company in the form of new ideas, approaches, products, and services. Staff who participate in the collaboration can then deliver on the company's responsibilities and confidently make decisions on behalf of the company.

“The biggest changes are achieved when people take risks. Usually these people are empowered through senior management support.”

Kathryn Mintoft

Director of Sustainability Affairs, Credit Suisse



Learning from H&M

None of the elements of H&M's long-term sustainability strategy can be achieved without collaboration. In practice, this translates into collaboration being part of everyone's job description in H&M's sustainability team. Part of the sustainability team's role is to work with external partners and collaboration platforms, including dedicated time allocated to the effort and KPIs tied to the progress of the initiative.

Actions to Invest:

Secure leadership and organizational support

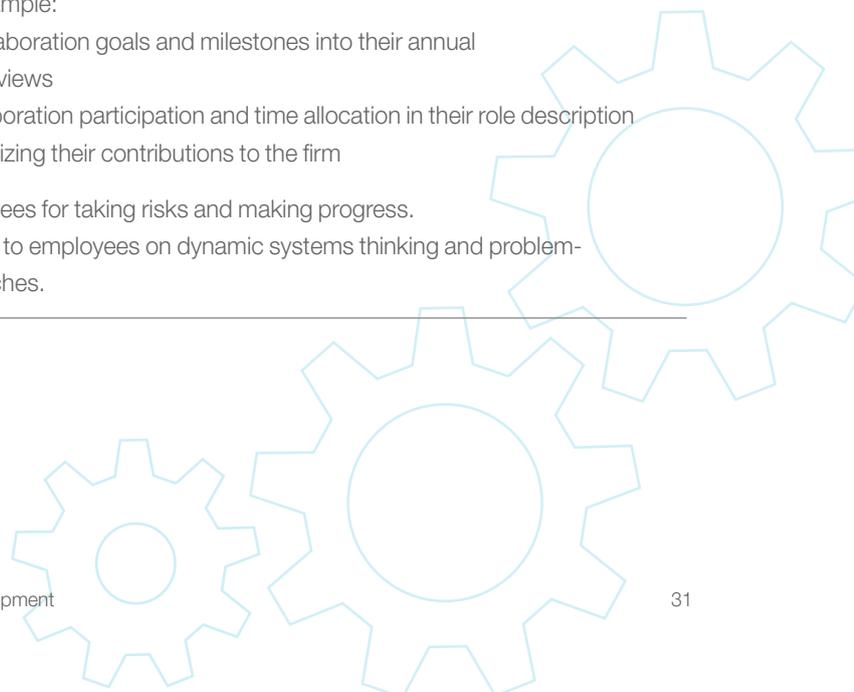
- Identify key internal stakeholders—at the executive levels as well as in related business units, functions, and geographies, and taking into consideration internal power and decision-making structures.
- Prioritize each stakeholder using a common set of criteria (e.g., level of influence, expertise in the issue, level of experience in collaboration) to segment those who should be assigned to the collaboration team, consulted, or kept informed.
- Organize meetings with relevant leadership before joining the initiative to secure buy-in. Make a special effort to engage potential skeptics who are essential to internal adoption.
- Consider establishing a cross-functional team to support the collaboration and integrate its learnings.
- Once engaged in the collaboration, plan regular updates to inform internal stakeholders of progress and decisions made on behalf of the company.

Resource the collaboration

- Determine what level of membership and governance positions the company will take within the collaboration.
- Determine and allocate the resources needed to participate in the initiative, including financial allocation, employee time to participate, and in-kind support.
- If the initiative is underfunded, consider allocating additional resources appropriate to the level of risk and opportunity identified in the company's business case, to ensure it succeeds.

Put your best people on it

- Assign a primary point of contact who is responsible for the day-to-day participation and decision-making for the initiative. This person should:
 - Be motivated.
 - Have expertise on the issues addressed by the collaboration.
 - Have authority over the decisions they will be asked to make on behalf of the company, or have regular access to the relevant decision-makers.
- Assign at least one secondary point of contact who stays informed enough to step in for the primary if required.
- Incentivize collaboration leads to participate fully in the effort, including through, for example:
 - Integrating collaboration goals and milestones into their annual performance reviews
 - Including collaboration participation and time allocation in their role description
 - Publicly recognizing their contributions to the firm
- Reward employees for taking risks and making progress.
- Provide training to employees on dynamic systems thinking and problem-solving approaches.





Commit

The companies that get the most out of collaborative efforts make a deep commitment to ensuring their success. They integrate learnings from the partnership to align key internal functions such as public relations, government relations, procurement, and legal teams in support of the collaboration's objectives.

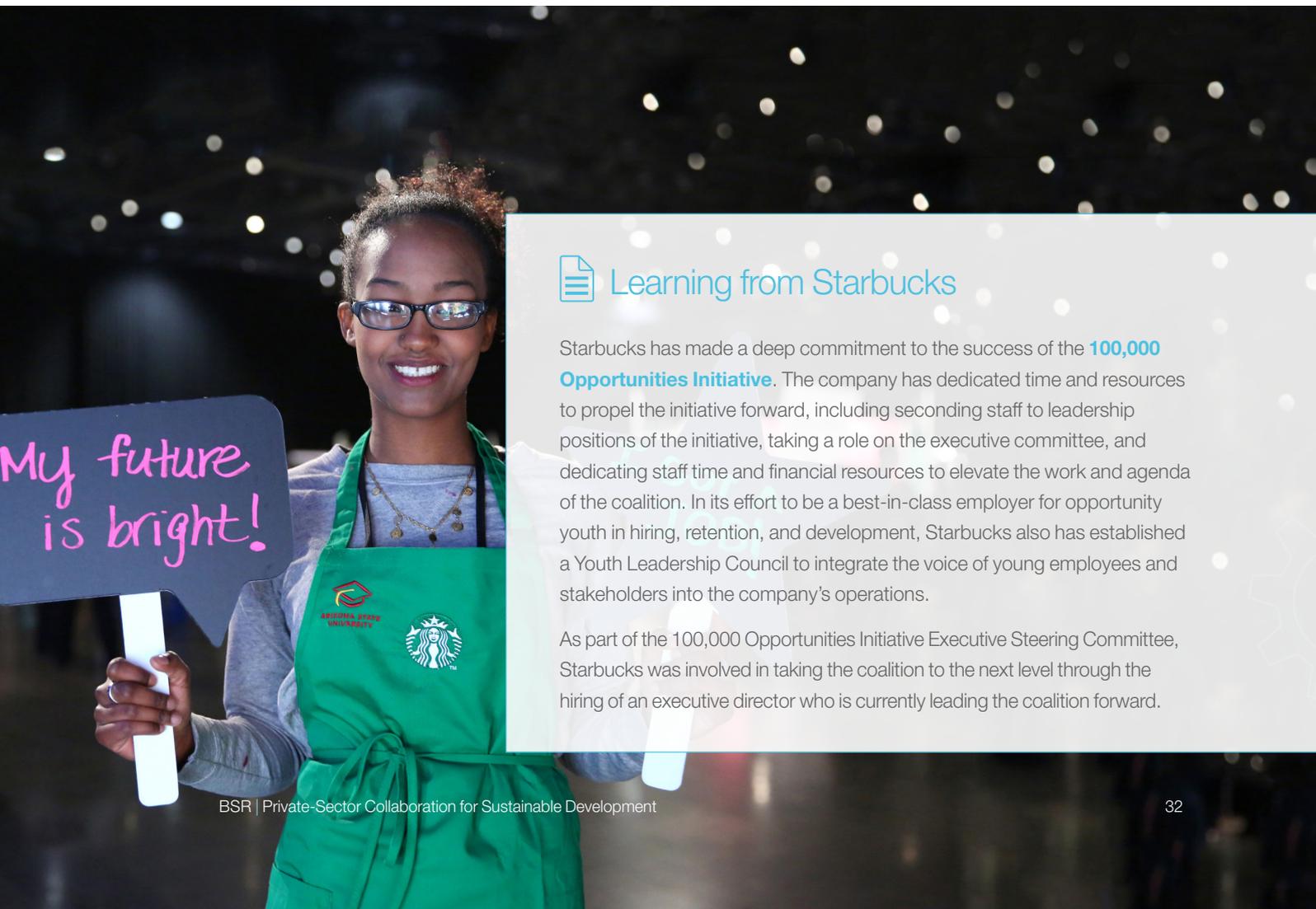
They play active roles in the collaboration, joining governance bodies, taking accountability for their responsibilities, and providing timely feedback to ensure the initiative moves ahead.

They champion the effort internally, taking the lead on implementation and piloting the collaboration's concepts. They also lead externally, leveraging their relationships to encourage other companies and critical partners to engage. Finally, they are patient and remain committed to the long haul.

"If you want to move forward fast, companies should lead by example and demonstrate how certain issues can be tackled."

Adrian Suharto

Head of Stakeholder Engagement, Nestle



Learning from Starbucks

Starbucks has made a deep commitment to the success of the **100,000 Opportunities Initiative**. The company has dedicated time and resources to propel the initiative forward, including seconding staff to leadership positions of the initiative, taking a role on the executive committee, and dedicating staff time and financial resources to elevate the work and agenda of the coalition. In its effort to be a best-in-class employer for opportunity youth in hiring, retention, and development, Starbucks also has established a Youth Leadership Council to integrate the voice of young employees and stakeholders into the company's operations.

As part of the 100,000 Opportunities Initiative Executive Steering Committee, Starbucks was involved in taking the coalition to the next level through the hiring of an executive director who is currently leading the coalition forward.

Action to Commit:

Integrate the learnings

- Integrate the collaborative initiative's recommendations into the company's business practices.
- Continuously align internal functions to support the collaboration's goals, including particularly the public relations, government relations, and legal teams.
- Seek alignment and consistency between commitments made to the collaboration and relevant company policies, practices, and lobbying positions across all functions and departments.
- Encourage points of contact to bring learnings back into the workplace, so that internal teams benefit from the knowledge gained.
- Evaluate the company's effectiveness at collaboration and seek to continuously improve for future collaborations.

Take accountability

- Make decisions and provide feedback in a timely manner.
- Pilot and help refine the collaboration's actions, toolkits, standards, etc.
- Report to the collaboration and stakeholders (when relevant) on actions taken and progress made to build collective knowledge.
- Hold other participants accountable to their commitments, encouraging them to do and share more.
- Regularly evaluate collaboration progress against this business case. If the initiative no longer meets the company's objectives or business needs, consider responsibly exiting the initiative.

Champion the initiative

- Take a leadership position in the collaboration, as a participant in working groups and/or a member of the board.
- Take a leadership role in the industry by being a first mover on integrating the collaboration's recommendations into the company's business model and operations.
- Represent the initiative and its achievements in public forums.
- Publish the company's efforts to advance the collaboration's goals, reporting both progress and challenges, to set an example for the company's peers.
- Recruit new members, partners, and funders for the initiative, in alignment with the company's growth strategy.

Learning from Credit Suisse

Credit Suisse is a current steering committee member of the **Equator Principles**, a risk management framework adopted by financial institutions for determining, assessing, and managing environmental and social risk in projects. In an effort to integrate the collaboration's work internally, Credit Suisse's sustainability team holds regular internal meetings and calls to share updates and insights from their participation with key internal stakeholders. In addition, a committed group of volunteers within the Equator Principles formed a Capacity Building and Training Working Group and has developed a set of learning resources to help members share knowledge within their own organizations.

Conclusion: The Next Generation of Corporate Collaboration

Over the past 30 years, companies, civil society, and governments have come a long way in creating new collaborative models to address shared challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. And momentum is building, as more and more rigorous cross-sector collaborations arise focused on the achievement of the SDGs.

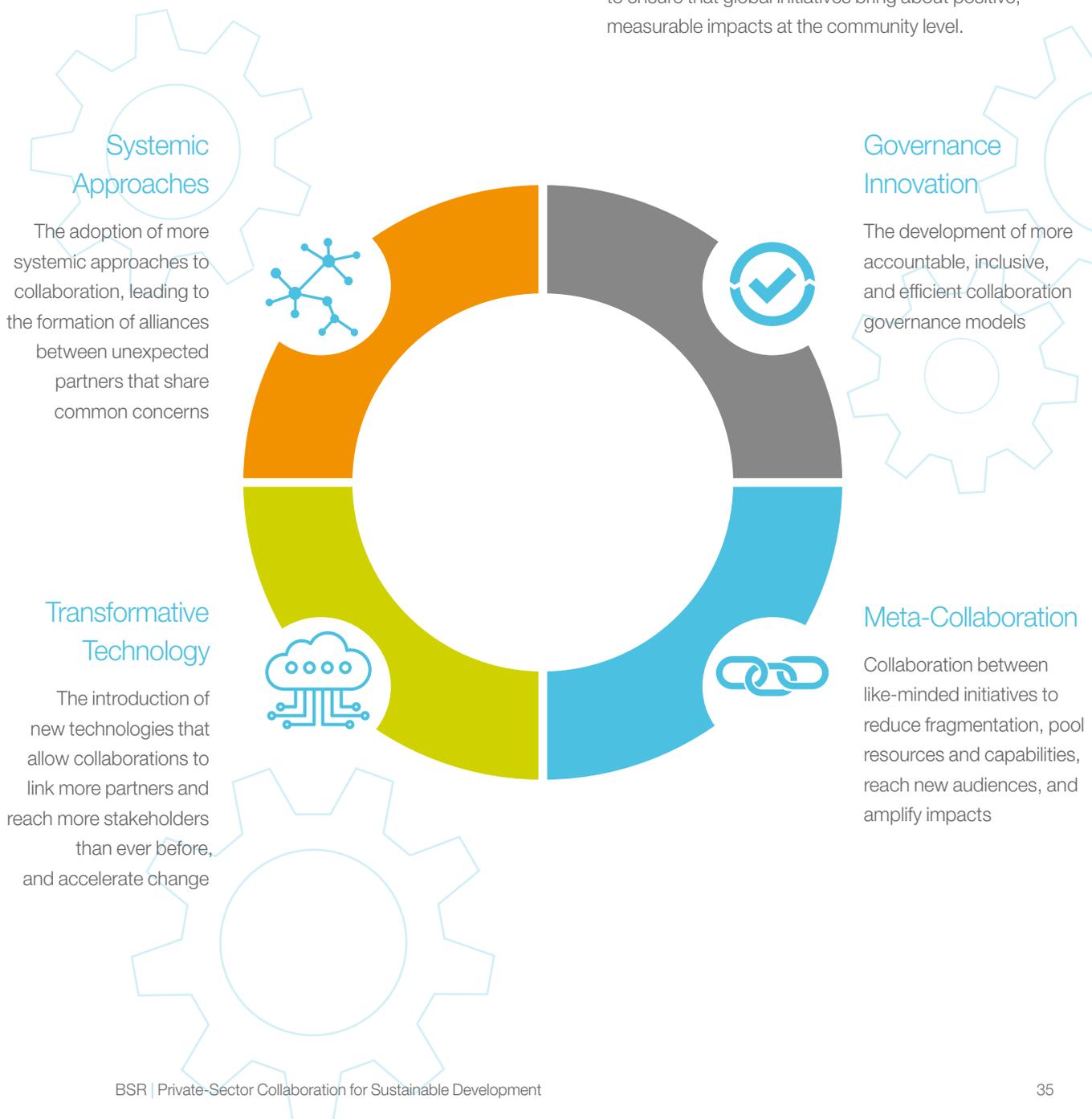
Yet as we look ahead, it is increasingly clear that today's collaborations are not moving fast enough to mitigate or even foresee the systemic changes that will impact business and society.

As noted in BSR's 25th anniversary report, ***The Future of Sustainable Business***, the advancement of climate change, the speed with which we are all becoming interconnected—and divided—through technology, and related structural economic changes brought about by growing inequality and demographic shifts worldwide, all require a different approach than business as usual.²⁴ This is also true of the way that companies collaborate.

Four Emerging Trends in Collaboration

How will collaboration evolve to meet these challenges? We turn to recent innovations in collaboration to predict possible evolutions. Emerging trends that practitioners should keep their eyes on as they design and participate in the next generation of collaborations include:

While collaborations in the future will be different to the ones we know today, we expect that the key success factors identified in this report will remain relevant. However, some factors—such as accountability and good governance—will likely develop greater emphasis and come under greater scrutiny from stakeholders as the collaboration movement progresses. With growing multisector engagement around the SDGs, we also foresee more pressure from stakeholders on collaborations and their participants to make a stronger commitment to be accountable for their actions, and to ensure that global initiatives bring about positive, measurable impacts at the community level.



Emerging Trends in Collaboration



Systemic Approaches

As individual organizations and communities increasingly recognize the interconnectedness of their goals, we anticipate that new, innovative alliances will form between unexpected partners that share common concerns.

New partnerships might arise around place-based issues, such as the partnerships established between global companies, municipal governments, and other public, academic, and nonprofit stakeholders participating in **100 Resilient Cities**—an initiative pioneered by The Rockefeller Foundation to help individual cities become more resilient to the physical, social, and economic challenges that are a growing part of the 21st century. This diverse group—which includes such institutions as the World Bank, Microsoft, the World Wildlife Federation, Swiss Re, and MIT’s Climate CoLab—is now working together on mutual challenges such as improving services for refugees, reducing traffic congestion, and creating climate-resilient infrastructure.

Through use of technology and social media, formal and informal collaborations will arise between diverse and dispersed change actors to address systemic concerns.

“Corporate leaders are talking about the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs offer a good opportunity for companies to collaborate on global issues, and we should be able to use this momentum. It is a very important moment.”

Yukako Kinoshita

Senior Manager, Corporate Responsibility and EU Policy Research, Hitachi



Governance Innovation

Collaboration governance will continue to evolve, with groups exploring more accountable, inclusive, and efficient models to achieve faster, sustained progress. As an indication of change, several initiatives are exploring options to enforce greater accountability between participants, going beyond the voluntary commitment model. For example, in an effort to ensure that the farms that participate in the **Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ (CIW) Fair Food Program** offer their farm workers humane wages and working conditions, the CIW engages the farm workers themselves in designing, monitoring, and enforcing the program. Going well beyond voluntary sustainability standards, the **Fair Food Program** features legally binding agreements between the CIW, retail food companies, and farmers to enforce consequences on farms that are reported by farm workers to be non-compliant with CIW agreements.

Further, we see collaborations more deeply considering their obligations to build the capacity for national governments to better manage the issues they were set up to remediate. For example, in 2018, five years after its launch following the Rana Plaza garment factory collapse and in adherence to the timeline of its original mandate, **The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh** will be taking the necessary steps to transfer its factory safety and compliance functions to a national regulatory body. Once the Bangladeshi government can demonstrate full capacity to inspect factories, compel remedies, and protect workers, the Accord will depart Bangladesh.²⁵

“I think there will be more bespoke, issue-focused collaboration, rather than some of the big, broader multistakeholder efforts that are already well-established. I can see collaboration becoming much more bottom-up generated, much more flexible, more like a pop-up on particular issues: run for a while and then shut down when the impact is delivered.”

Eric Anderson

Senior Consultant, Group Corporate Affairs, BT



Transformative Technology

While the spread of mobile technology, social media, and big data are accelerating the pace of social change, these movements also offer powerful new tools for companies and their collaboration partners to bring more people and insights together than ever before.

Increased comfort with working and collaborating with virtual global teams allows collaborations to extend their reach globally, allowing even the most remote participants to contribute without having to travel frequently, and saving “in-person” time for only the most critical decisions (if at all). Future collaborations are likely to explore how technology can better connect them to rights holders and stakeholder voices to better inform collaborative decision-making and to extend the reach of their advocacy.

For instance, reaching stakeholders primarily through social media, **Global Citizen** has activated millions of citizens worldwide to take more than 13 million distinct actions on causes they care about, encouraging them to urge governments, nonprofits, and companies to commit to addressing extreme poverty. This mobilization has resulted in more than US\$35 billion in new resources committed by governments and other stakeholders to end extreme poverty since the initiative’s launch in 2008.²⁶ Initiatives will also increasingly turn their analytical power to investigating big data and open sourcing information to better understand, research, and respond to sustainability risks, such as infectious diseases, human trafficking, and natural disasters.

“What we need is much closer collaboration between government, business, and other stakeholders at the national level.”

Dan Rees

Director, Better Work



Meta-Collaboration

And finally, in an effort to reduce fragmentation, pool resources and capabilities, reach new audiences, and amplify impacts for more systemic change, we are likely to see more meta-collaboration between like-minded initiatives.

Recent examples include the **We Mean Business Coalition**, which, ahead of the Paris Climate Summit in 2015, brought together seven business sustainability networks to advocate on behalf of their combined 600-plus corporate members to drive policy ambition to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy; and the **Renewable Energy Buyers Alliance**, which is helping grow large buyer demand for renewable power and helping utilities and others meet it, through four REBA initiatives led by different sustainability networks. Fueling this trend, the business community is increasingly demanding that collaborative initiatives with similar objectives align their approaches for greater consistency and efficiency, as can be seen in the push for global sustainable business reporting frameworks to harmonize reporting requirements.²⁷ Donor organizations are also interested in supporting and participating in more collaborative, systemic change models. One prominent example includes the launch of **Co-Impact**, a global philanthropic collaboration for system change incubated by The Rockefeller Foundation, and consisting of results-oriented donors who are pooling resources, networks, and expertise to drive lasting change at scale.

“We identified the need for a different dynamic to influence the climate policy negotiations. There was a realization that our work was going to be elevated by working together.”

Edward Cameron

Senior Advisor, BSR, and former Policy Engagement Director, We Mean Business Coalition



“The hallmark of a company able to lead systems change is whether they are willing to subordinate their brand to the collective goal. How would you, could you, operate if you didn’t need to take credit, and could collaborate fully and honestly?”

Judith Samuelson
Executive Director,
The Aspen Institute Business & Society Program

Toward Collaborative Leadership

We conclude with a return to the question that begins this report: In a world in which business must step up in partnership with others to resolve challenges across entire industries and systems, how does business lead?

The recommendations offered in this report will bring companies to a more efficient and effective strategy for collaboration: a big step in the right direction. Yet companies that aim to truly take the lead on resolving sustainability issues—particularly those that are systemic in nature—need to consider more profound mindset, talent, and business model transformations.

It will take a change in mindset to recognize collective gains as an individual opportunity. Companies will need to develop a level of comfort with joint problem-solving and decision-making, with taking leadership positions in situations of uncertainty, and with sparking a social movement for change over “getting there first.” CEOs and boards of directors must step up to defend collaborative actions that may be unprofitable in the short term but that advance the sustainability of the ecosystem that supports their entire industry over the long term.

An increased emphasis on corporate collaboration will also require cultivation of new kinds of business leaders: people who are comfortable navigating distributed, horizontal network structures, have a collaborative mindset, have fluency in the languages of multiple sectors, and have the capability to facilitate negotiations between many different organizations to achieve collective change.

We will see the rise of leaders who propose dynamic systems-thinking and problem-solving approaches to inspire collective actions on systemic issues. As increasing use of technology generates a corresponding increase in the influence, scale, and inclusiveness of collaborative efforts, the next generation of leaders and participants will need to learn how to cultivate trust between virtual partners and diverse cultures.

We foresee that businesses will increasingly recognize collaboration as a strategic priority, and many will take steps to transform their businesses and their industries through collaborative action. We anticipate that companies will go beyond evaluating, investing, and committing to initiatives that address the issues that are most critical to their business and will take a stronger, more proactive position on the sustainability issues that threaten their growth through collaboration.

The **We Are Still In** effort that in 2017 responded forcefully against the U.S. government’s stated intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, and through which companies, together with city- and state-level governments, have committed to continue to do their part in upholding the Agreement, is just one example of how this can be done. We may begin to see companies launching centers of excellence to promote collaboration, investing in joint ventures for sustainable development, and establishing chief collaboration officer positions to catalyze new, transformative ways of doing business.

In order to meet the challenges ahead, we must together summon the courage to evolve beyond competition to celebrate business leadership that contributes to collective success.

Appendix A Common Organizational and Governance Structures for Collaborations

Organizational Body	Typical Responsibilities
Steering Committee or Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Formulating high-level policies and strategies ■ Approving the annual business plan, budget, work plan, and financial statements ■ Appointing key staff ■ Approving terms of reference of working groups and monitoring their performance ■ Representing the collaboration in external forums
General Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promoting the vision and mission of the collaboration ■ Paying membership dues ■ Endorsing and using the collaborations' standards, tools, and methodologies ■ Participating in collaboration activities and working groups ■ Reporting, for the purposes of the collaboration's measurement and evaluation and reporting ■ Being accountable to any commitments made to the partnership ■ Respecting and adhering to the governance agreements of the initiative, including anti-trust regulation ■ Participating in group-wide decisions such as election of the steering committee, approval of the initiatives' strategic direction, and other matters as defined in the governance agreements
Working Groups, Task Forces, and Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Managing specific tasks, such as research, methodology development or adjustments, standard development, strategic planning, etc., for a specific period of time ■ Making recommendations to the steering committee or membership for adoption by the collaboration ■ Reporting back to the membership on progress, decisions made, etc.
Board of Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Providing feedback on the collaboration's efforts (as a whole or on specific issues) on a semi-regular basis
Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Facilitating member meetings ■ Implementing collaboration activities ■ Conducting strategic planning ■ Representing the collaboration in public forums ■ Communicating and engaging stakeholders ■ Recruiting members and providing member services ■ Raising funds and establishing partnerships ■ Managing performance ■ Providing administration services (e.g., accounting, finance, legal consultation, IT service, human resources management) ■ Fulfilling any additional activities as required by the steering committee

Appendix B Interviewees for this Report

Interviewee	Position	Organization
Hendrik Alpen	Sustainability Engagement Manager	H&M
Eric Anderson	Senior Consultant, Group Corporate Affairs	BT
Sven Boekhorst	Senior Vice President–Head of Procurement, Global Freight Management	Li & Fung Limited
Neil Britto	Executive Director	The Intersector Project
Edward Cameron	Senior Advisor	BSR
Richard Crespin	CEO	CollaborateUp
Maya de Souza	Assistant Director–Policy Research	Business Environment Council
Mark Devadason	Director	The Mekong Club
Barbara Durr	Senior Manager, Global Responsibility	Oxfam
Meghann Glavin	World Wide Sustainability	Starbucks
Darin Kingston	Associate Director	Global Development Incubator
Yukako Kinoshita	Senior Manager, Corporate Responsibility and EU Policy Research	Hitachi
Victoria Law	Manager, Integrity and Sustainability	ICTI CARE Foundation
Giselle Leung	Managing Director	Global Impact Investing Network
Kathryn Mintoft	Director, Sustainability Affairs	Credit Suisse
Alistair Monument	Practice Leader, Forests	WWF International
Moira Oliver	Head of Policy and Chief Counsel, Human/Digital Rights	BT
Sonia M. Ospina	Professor of Public Management and Policy	NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
Dan Rees	Director	Better Work
Eddie Rich	Deputy Head	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
Judith Samuelson	Vice President and Executive Director	The Aspen Institute Business & Society Program
Chiel Seinen	Manager Stakeholder Relations	Shell International
Moz Siddiqui	Manager, Global Operational Partnerships and Health Innovation	Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance
Lena Staafgard	Chief Operating Officer	Better Cotton Initiative
Mads Stensen	Senior Sustainability Advisor	Maersk Line
Adrian Suharto	Head of Stakeholder Engagement	Neste
Jill Tucker	Head of Supply Chain Innovation and Transformation	C&A Foundation
Andrew Updegrove	Founding Partner	Gesmer Updegrove LLP
Rob Wayss	Executive Director & Acting Chief Safety Inspector	The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh
Charles Wellins	Senior Vice President, Strategic Business Development and Head of USA	Li & Fung Limited
Gao Yun	Director for SEA and East Asia	Ethical Trading Initiative

Appendix C Collaborations for Sustainable Development Researched for this Report

Acronym Collaboration

	100,000 Opportunities Initiative
Accord	Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh
BCI	Better Cotton Initiative
	Better Work
CCWG	Clean Cargo Working Group
EP	Equator Principles
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
FoIP	Future of Internet Power
GAVI	Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
	Global Fund
GIIN	Global Impact Investing Network
GISC	Global Impact Sourcing Coalition
GNI	Global Network Initiative
HRWG	Human Rights Working Group
MACN	Maritime Anti-Corruption Network
PSCI	Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Initiative
RBA	Responsible Business Alliance
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
WMB	We Mean Business Coalition

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Introduction

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