



Cross-sector collaboration in the UK: The leaders' view

Leaders across the sectors agree that cross-sector collaboration is essential to improve long-term prosperity for the UK. But it remains elusive. We surveyed over 270 leaders from the public, private and non-profit sectors to establish what the real barriers are and what needs to change.



The need is clear

92 %

believe that **cross-sector collaboration** can support **economic growth** and positive public policy outcomes for the UK



But there's a problem

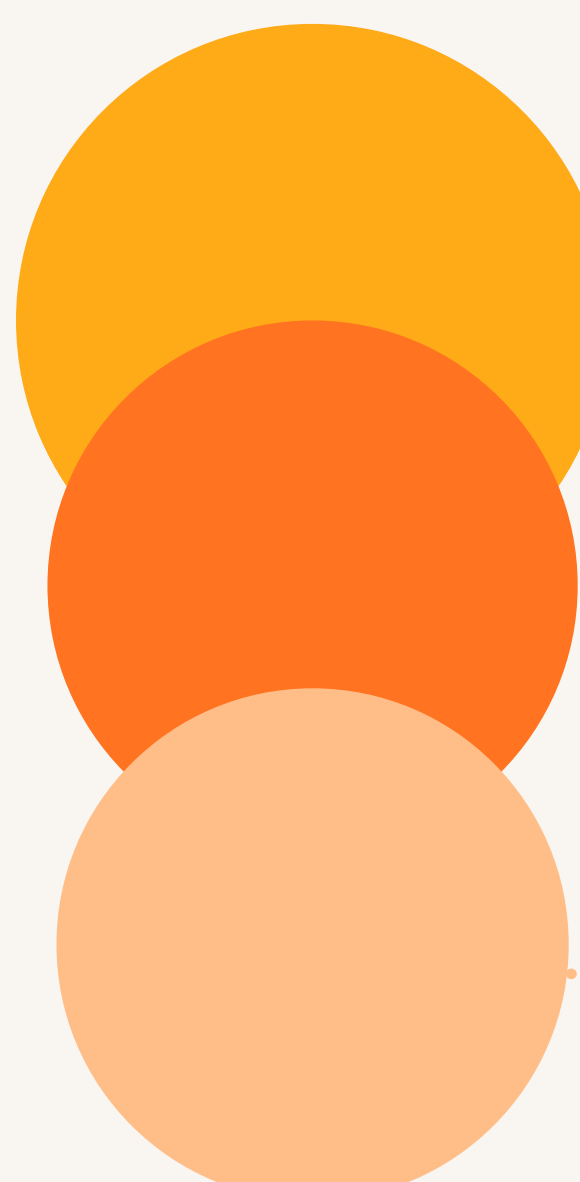
Just 11%

of respondents rated current cross-sector collaboration as 'Good' or 'Excellent'



So what's getting in the way?

After 'Bureaucratic hurdles', over half of leaders cited issues relating to alignment, culture and communication.



66%

of leaders cited misaligned objectives

59%

believed there was a lack of communication

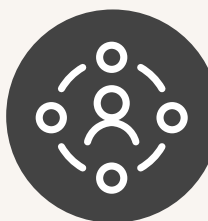
57%

felt there were issues around trust and mutual respect



We know the solutions

Across the public, private and non-profit sectors, the following enablers were identified as critical for cross-sector collaboration.



Shared goals and alignment



Trust and mutual respect



Clear communication



Strong leadership

But are leaders equipped to deliver them?



While

62 %

of respondents cited that they, or their organisation, had **strong cross-sector networks**



Only

14%

felt **very confident** in their ability to collaborate across sectors



Just

1/3

of leaders had **received specific training** and development

The outlook

As it stands, 52% of leaders feel optimistic about the future of cross-sector collaboration over the next five years.

Those feeling positive about it reflect the simple fact that "Without it, the nation fails" and that there seems to be a "changing narrative" from government.

Those feeling less optimistic state that "culture is difficult to change" and there's "lots of talk but little action".



So what needs to change – recommendations from leaders

Beyond the clearly articulated need for 'transparent and genuinely aligned goals', there were three key themes emerging from the survey.

01

Long-term thinking & strategy: there's an urgent need for clarity, continuity and better foresight to improve investment and collaboration potential.

"Take swift investment decisions and back them. Delaying or changing programmes causes massive disruption, increasing costs and reducing trust."

"You cannot 'collaborate' in the abstract. You need to collaborate on specific things with tangible goals, and that entire structure is missing."

"Establish a small number of clearly defined missions that are enabled by both public and private actors, and commit to them for a long enough to enable investment to bear fruit."

02

True understanding and meaningful dialogue between the sectors: the need for genuine and open relationships where parties understand each other's intent and incentive.

"Improve leadership and understanding of how to collaborate; reduce silo focus – the Civil Service is constrained by department structures and siloed policy development. There need to be common outcomes and system leadership."

03

Risk appetite: cross-sector collaboration will force changes to ways of working, pushing organisations and individuals out of their comfort zones. Teams need the permission, structures, skills and confidence to embrace this.

"Culturally the Civil Service is taught to deconstruct and avoid risk, not construct vision with controlled risk."

"Set the tone at the top of the organisation and deliver."

"Walk a mile in each other's shoes. Business doesn't understand how the public sector works and becomes frustrated at the bureaucracy. Public sector has no concept of the motivations and concerns that drive or impact businesses."

"Too few people who have worked in both [sectors], leads to mistrust and an 'us and them' culture."

"Zig-zag careers (secondments) is a quick win. Connect areas of strong practice across the enterprise. Work on answering this question - how do we move beyond the perception that industry is just interested in making a profit?"

"Increase secondments and joint planning."



Building better cross-sector collaboration: How WIG supports leaders

No single organisation holds all the answers to our biggest challenges. As we celebrate our 40th year, WIG has renewed its focus on bringing the sectors together and improving collaborative capabilities, for better business, better government and better society.

01

Strategic dialogue

Focused cross-sector discussion on the UK's priority long-term policy issues.

Delivered through:

- Briefings and senior roundtables
- Content and reports
- NED & Board placements

02

Leadership capabilities

Equipping leaders with cross-sector understanding and a collaborative skillset.

Delivered through:

- Cross-sector secondments
- Cross-sector mentoring
- Leadership development

03

Evidencing best practice

Sharing what works, and what doesn't, to improve collaborative outcomes.

Delivered through:

- Case studies
- Leadership series
- Organisational 'Raids'

Get in touch

If you'd like to hear more about the results from the survey, or how WIG can support organisations and leaders to build their collaborative capacity, please get in touch: membership@wig.co.uk