

FROM GLOBAL GOALS TO LOCAL IMPACT:

How Philanthropy Can Help Achieve the
U.N. Sustainable Development Goals in the U.S.

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FOREWORD

By Vikki Spruill



The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a historic global consensus about the shared responsibility that all nations have in achieving global development. The SDGs have the potential to be revolutionary for people around the world and the planet.

We know that if successful, the global community will make incredible strides toward ending hunger, achieving gender equality, and reducing inequality by 2030. We also know that to be successful, philanthropy must be at the table.

Government and business cannot achieve these goals on their own; we need all sectors working together. As President Obama said in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly, in which he committed the United States to enacting the SDGs, “We all need to step up with the will and the resources and the coordination to achieve our goals. This must be the work of the world.”¹

As the principal strategic leadership association for U.S. foundations, the Council on Foundations believes that philanthropy is an essential aspect of civil society. Working closely with our partners, we have tried to help foundations of all types and sizes, including those who only fund domestically, see their own work and mission in the Global Goals. This report is an extension of those efforts.

In September 2015, I laid out a framework for how philanthropy might play a constructive role in achieving the SDGs, with suggestions ranging from better data sharing and impact tracking to working more closely with governments.² Since then, the Council has organized several convenings—in Little Rock, Arkansas; San Francisco; New York City; and at our annual conference in Washington, D.C.—in which a wide array of foundations gathered to learn more about the SDGs and discuss how to align their work within this global framework.

The discussions during those meetings—and the partnerships that emerged from them—form the basis of the recommendations found here. With this report, we hope to inspire the sector to lead the way toward realizing the SDGs, improving humanity, and safeguarding our planet. We share examples of how foundations are already using the goals to structure their work and colleagues offer suggestions for how other foundations might use the framework to achieve their mission.

Above all, this report is an affirmation of the Council’s commitment to serve as a resource for philanthropy as it works on the SDGs.

We are eager to build upon the conversations on these pages—through hosting additional convenings in other U.S. cities, increasing programming and resources for foundations, and other activities that develop to help philanthropy’s efforts to realize the SDGs. For us, this is just the start.

We know that global sustainable development is within reach. While it’s true that the SDGs are incredibly ambitious in scale and scope, that’s partly what makes them so exciting—the potential and promise they hold. It’s also what makes the contributions and unique value of philanthropy so important to the framework’s ultimate success.

That success depends on all of us, as a community. We hope that this report is one of many tools to increase the effectiveness of foundations’ work toward the SDGs. And we can’t wait to see what we can achieve together.

With gratitude,

Vikki Spruill
Council on Foundations President and CEO

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Philanthropy has played a critical role in developing the SDGs and is now leading and shaping discussions about how to achieve them globally.

Even before the U.N. voted to adopt the goals, they made clear that the support of philanthropy and the rest of the private sector would be essential for the goals' success.³ Some foundations and companies helped shape the goals while many actors are supporting programs that will help achieve them.

The SDG Philanthropy Platform, for example, is a multi-year philanthropic initiative led by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Foundation Center, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA). The Platform has been instrumental in raising awareness about the SDGs, forging partnerships between philanthropy and the private and public sectors, and increasing philanthropy's engagement with the post-2015 development agenda.⁴

The Council also works to encourage broader understanding of the goals and build support about the importance of the SDGs as a tool for action. Building off earlier efforts in four pilot countries—Colombia, Kenya, Indonesia, and Ghana—the Council held four meetings in cities across the U.S. from late 2015 to early 2016 to discuss how foundations could align their work within a global development framework.

Those meetings, and this report that resulted from them, would not have been possible without the help of many individuals and organizations across the country. In particular, we owe a debt of gratitude to the Clinton Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation,

and the 92nd Street Y for hosting our gatherings; as well as our three regional association partners: Philanthropy New York, Southeastern Council on Foundations, and Northern California Grantmakers.

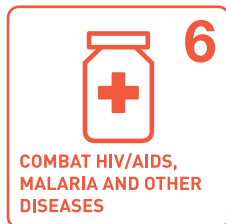
We thank all of the organizations supporting the SDG Philanthropy Platform, including the Foundation Center, United Nations Development Program, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the MasterCard Foundation.

We also want to thank our philanthropic partners who have dedicated their resources and expertise to discussing how we may achieve the SDGs, including the U.N. Foundation, the International Community Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Arkansas Community Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, and Measure of America.

Lastly, this report was authored by the Global Philanthropy Director for the Council on Foundations, Natalie Ross, and the Council's consultant, Alex Edwards of BerlinRosen. The report benefited from comments and input from colleagues at the Council on Foundations and Foundation Center staff, as well as conversations with many members of the philanthropic sector, government, civil society, and academia.



INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW



The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) illustrated above provided the foundation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On September 25, 2015, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, world leaders from all 193 U.N. member countries gathered and universally ratified the SDGs. It was a day as historic as it was ambitious; the SDGs represent a first-of-its-kind “global plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity.”⁵ The 15-year framework included 17 goals and 169 accompanying targets in total, ranging from the eradication of extreme poverty to the preservation of the environment.

“The MDGs helped to lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, to make inroads against hunger, to enable more girls to attend school than ever before. Yet for all the remarkable gains, I am keenly aware that inequalities persist and that progress has been uneven.”

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

The SDGs, of course, did not appear from thin air or by surprise. They built upon the U.N.’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), an international development agenda for the years 2000 to 2015 that was adopted by the world’s leading nations and development institutions.⁶ In many ways, the eight MDGs were extremely effective in galvanizing efforts to solve humanity’s greatest challenges. The number of people living in extreme poverty fell from nearly 2 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015; child mortality rates declined by more than half; and significant headway was made toward reversing the spread of new HIV and malaria infections.⁷ In other areas, though, such as climate change and inequality, progress was stagnant or the situation worsened.

► UNPRECEDENTED IN SCALE, AMBITIOUS IN SCOPE

Though the SDGs are an explicit expansion of the MDGs, they differ in several key ways. The process to develop the goals was exhaustive, transparent, and people-centered. For the first time in history, the U.N. launched a global survey—MyWorld2015—to understand what issues matter most to individuals around the world, and to use that feedback to inform global priorities.⁸

The process, which lasted nearly three years and crowd-sourced ideas from 10 million individuals, was “transformational,” according to Chris Whatley, Executive Director of the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA). “It harkened back to the original charter of the U.N. and allowed ‘we the people’ to determine what the SDGs should look like.”⁹

Whereas the MDGs were mainly focused on human development and geared toward low- and middle-income countries, the SDGs incorporate all dimensions of development—economic, social, and environmental—and are equally applicable for all nations, in their international aid as well as in their domestic policymaking.

“If the MDGs were a first order of business, the SDGs are a comprehensive blueprint for development,” said Tony Pipa, the U.S. Special Coordinator for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, who was closely involved in the development of the goals. “They integrate the elements that were missing with the MDGs: the underlying drivers of development.”¹⁰

WHAT ARE THE SDGS?



GOAL 1:
End poverty in all its forms everywhere.



GOAL 7:
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.



GOAL 13:
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.



GOAL 2:
End hunger, achieve food security, and promote sustainable agriculture



GOAL 8:
Promote sustained, inclusive economic growth, full employment, and decent work for all.



GOAL 14:
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources.



GOAL 3:
Ensure healthy lives and promote the well being for all at all ages.



GOAL 9:
Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.



GOAL 15:
Protect and promote terrestrial ecosystems, forests, land, and biodiversity.



GOAL 4:
Ensure equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities.



GOAL 10:
Reduce inequality within and among countries.



GOAL 16:
Promote peaceful societies, accountable institutions, and access to justice for all.



GOAL 5:
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



GOAL 11:
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.



GOAL 17:
Strengthen global partnerships for sustainable development.



GOAL 6:
Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.



GOAL 12:
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

► FORGING AGREEMENT—AND PHILANTHROPY’S ROLE

The universal nature of the SDGs reflects the unprecedented political and moral consensus behind them—not just among member states, but within and across them. For its part, the United States played an essential, active role in developing the SDGs, as did the philanthropic community. Nearly 80,000 Americans completed the MyWorld survey, many doing so after learning about the portal participating in a local meeting organized by the U.N. Foundation in partnership with UNA-USA.¹¹

The work of the SDG Philanthropy Platform was essential in ensuring that funders played a leading role in developing the global framework. During the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in 2015, the platform held a side event and successfully advocated for the critical role of funders in global development efforts. As a result, the emerging outcomes document, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, included language about the importance of private sector financing—and philanthropy’s contributions specifically.


The SDG Philanthropy Platform also plays a critical role moving forward, as the SDGs are implemented and efforts to achieve specific targets come into sharp focus. SDGfunders, for example, is already tracking philanthropic funding toward the goals. According to a recent analysis by the Foundation Center, between 2002 and 2012 foundations made \$30.5 billion in grants toward the MDGs; between 2010 and 2013 universal grantmaking, if applied through an SDG lens,

totaled \$97.3 billion. Over the next 15 years, it is estimated (conservatively) that funders could direct as much as \$360 billion in grants toward the SDGs.¹²

As Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, put it: “Governments alone cannot address the critical challenges of sustainable development, nor can we expect philanthropy to achieve its maximum potential operating in isolation. The SDG Platform will create the linkages necessary to achieve the SDGs and, ultimately, a more just and equitable society.”¹³

Launched in 2014, the SDG Philanthropy Platform is a multi-year initiative led by the UNDP, the Foundation Center, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA). It aims to build greater awareness around the SDGs, increase international development resources, and forge new partnerships for the philanthropic community.

Going forward, SDGfunders.org, a website powered by the Foundation Center that emerged from the broader partnership, will offer foundations a centralized place to share data and visualize philanthropic investment towards each of the SDGs, globally and within specific countries.


**SDGfunders**
SDG Philanthropy Platform

Goals
Foundation Funding
and More

Reports
Qualitative
Resources

Join the Conversation
Blog Posts, Articles,
Social Media, Videos

Get Involved
Partnerships and
Ways to Engage



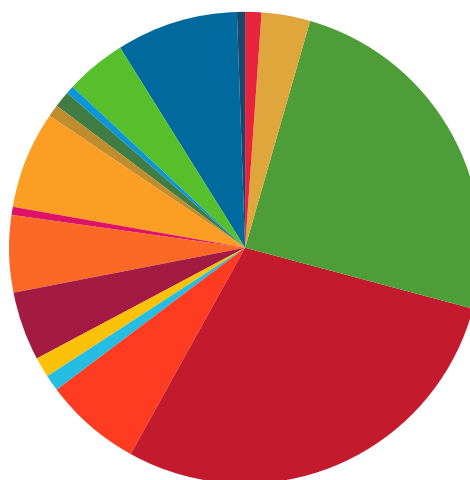
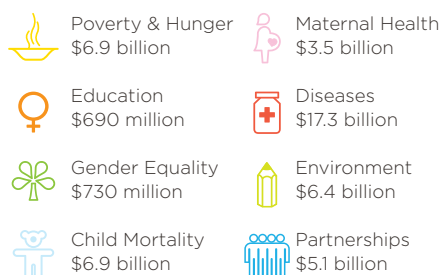
SDG Philanthropy Platform: Helping Philanthropy Engage in the Global Development Agenda

► FOUNDATION FUNDING TOWARDS SDGS AND MDGS

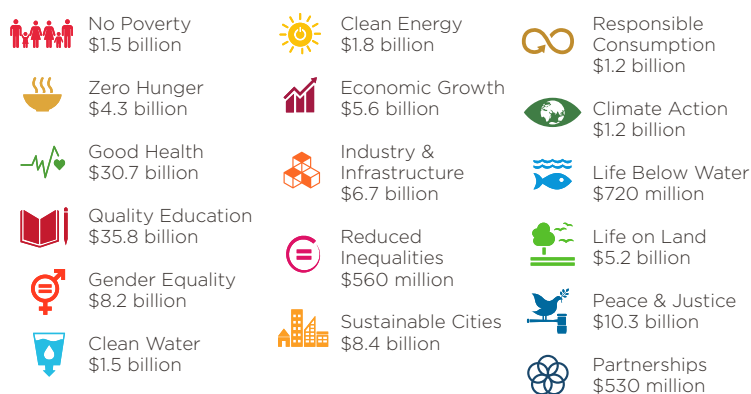
Recent analysis by the Foundation Center found that between 2002 and 2012 foundations made \$30.5 billion in grants toward the MDGs. In comparison, between 2010 and 2013 universal grantmaking, if applied through the lens of the SDGs, totaled \$97.3 billion.



**FOUNDATION FUNDING
FOR MDGS, BY GOAL**



**FOUNDATION FUNDING
FOR SDGS, BY GOAL**



Note: Foundation funding by specific goal reflects total funding directed toward that target; as some funding contributes to more than one goal, it is included in the funding-by-goal number for each goal individually, but not in the overall foundation funding total.

Source: Foundation Center/SDGfunders.org

► BUT WHAT ARE THE GOALS, REALLY? A CLOSER LOOK

While philanthropy’s collective potential to bring the SDGs to fruition is clear, many funders struggle to see how the new goals impact their own individual grantmaking.

U.S. foundations that only work on domestic issues, for instance, may not view their work as part of a global development agenda. Corporate philanthropies that have worked for decades to eradicate poverty and disease might dismiss the SDGs as irrelevant, imposing, or unnecessary.

But universal goals do not mean that each and every foundation, government, and company must identify with or work on all the targets to make progress. Indeed, with 169 discrete objectives, doing so would be impossible.

Universality means that the SDGs are applicable to everyone, everywhere—without diminishing the importance of different national realities, levels of development, and local community priorities.

For philanthropy, the fact that the SDGs are universal means that the work of any foundation, so long as it seeks to better humanity, is part of a larger global development effort. In this way, a community foundation focused on issues like affordable housing in the U.S. is as much “a part” of the SDGs as is a longstanding global aid organization that supported the MDGs.

To see how the SDGs overlap with most areas of philanthropic grantmaking, consider the following initiatives of three leading U.S. funders—in particular, the points of intersection between a domestic philanthropic program and a global goal or target:

Winthrop-Rockefeller Foundation’s Expect More Initiative:¹⁴

Shapes a future for Arkansas by investing in advanced-skills training and education, so that in 10 years the current ratio of 70 percent low-skill, low-wage jobs to 30 percent that require a postsecondary credential, can be flipped on its head.



Marin Community Foundation’s Health and Energy Efficiency of the Built Environment Initiative:¹⁵

Supports improvements in home and health conditions for low-income households and communities in Marin County, California by integrating energy sustainability.



Clinton Foundation’s No Ceilings, The Full Participation Project:¹⁶

Inspires and advances the full participation of girls and women, who remain the majority of the world’s unhealthy, unfed, and unpaid.



MORE THAN A NAME: WHY PHILANTHROPY SHOULD CARE ABOUT THE SDGs

Universal adoption of a common development framework carries tremendous opportunities and benefits, especially for the philanthropic community. While skeptics of the SDGs contest that the goals are non-binding and difficult to measure, even potentially ineffective, as international agreements do not trump domestic priorities, recent history

suggests that goal setting can be tremendously powerful. For this reason, philanthropy should not stop at simply seeing itself in the SDGs; funders must champion the goals, integrate the framework into their strategies, and look for windows to increase impact with other foundations and partners.

► THE POWER OF GOAL SETTING

There is significant evidence that shared goals greatly contribute to social, economic, and human progress.¹⁷ While Americans are at times suspicious about directives imposed from “above” or that originate “elsewhere”—U.N. mandates being a prime example—it is precisely the universal, applicable-to-all nature of these agreements that underlies progress.

From 2000 to 2015, for instance, the global community rallied around the MDGs; defined clear, actionable, and achievable targets; took bold action; and tracked impact. Outside of international development, shared goals are proving to be increasingly effective tools for philanthropy to forge consensus, build unlikely alliances, and share both successes and failures.¹⁸

Building off work by Measure of America, a data-driven program of the Social Science Research Council, there are at least eight clear benefits of goal setting in the context of global development.

UNIVERSAL TARGETS HELP TO:¹⁹

1. Create a shared definition and common framework for progress
2. Set a baseline for measuring progress and ensures uniform metrics
3. Emphasize outcomes and results, rather than just inputs
4. Align the work and actions of disparate groups of actors
5. Share learning and expertise and promote best practices
6. Galvanize attention for neglected issues and challenges
7. Mobilize increased public support and financial resources for change
8. Promote transparency and accountability in social impact work

► RIPPLES IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Aligning a foundation's work with a larger vision such as the SDGs is more than an exercise in word association—it is an impactful, potentially transformative, act. In today's increasingly interconnected and complex world, shared goals are becoming more important than ever.

In this way, a community foundation in Little Rock, Arkansas which leads a campaign against human trafficking isn't just working on SDG target 5.2, they are impacting goals related to education, poverty, and gender equality.

Because human trafficking is essentially a global supply chain—meaning that individuals are brought to the U.S. from overseas—a foundation that intervenes at one point in the chain reverberates at all other points of the chain. Put differently, less demand for trafficked individuals means less supply. In this way, women and girls in the developing world are more likely to escape poverty, pursue education, lead healthy lives, and contribute positively to society (goals 1, 4, 3, and 8, respectively).



The actions of any one individual, no matter where they originate, send ripples around the world.

► THE INTANGIBLES: INFORMATION, LEARNING AND SHARED EXPERTISE

Just as the United States benefits from experimentation at the state level—its “laboratories of democracy”—nations everywhere can benefit from adopting and adapting the best practices of others.

For international development specifically, the U.S. government has at times attempted to learn from experiences abroad and apply them to problems at home. This includes programs like USAID's Lessons

Without Borders, which was launched in the mid-1990s with the goal of using global strategies to reduce health care costs at home.²⁰

Universal goals also improve decision-making through increased flows of information and the open exchange of ideas.



► MAKING SPACE FOR EXPERIMENTATION AND DIVERSITY

Part of what makes the SDGs so impactful is that they represent the ends, not the means, of global development.

It's important to remember that aligning behind a common vision does not mean submitting to a common approach.

Making progress toward the SDGs is similar in many ways to the operations of an assembly line: organizations and sectors should specialize in what they're best at, their "comparative advantage," to achieve the greatest impact. Not all goals will resonate equally of course—one country may score well in terms of education, but fare much worse with respect to carbon emissions; another might have relatively low levels of poverty, but a highly unequal society.

Moreover, some actors will be better positioned to integrate the SDGs into their work immediately. For others, incorporating the goals will come less naturally, and they may end up working on only a handful of targets directly. Different approaches should be both expected and encouraged. A multinational corporation is not the same as a family foundation; their strategy to improve education should play to their corporate strengths and look different from a local funder's work toward the same objectives.

Shared goals are ultimately about shared ambition; they are not policy prescriptions or a one-size-fits-all solution.

Consider the results of the MyWorld survey in two countries: the United States and Yemen. When nearly 3,000 U.S. girls under the age of 15 were asked to name their top two global development priorities, they chose quality education and gender equality. When half as many Yemeni girls were asked the same question, the same two priorities were identified.²¹

Despite the two populations of girls sharing ambitions, few would find it appropriate for Yemen and the U.S. to approach the issues of education and female empowerment in the same way. The nations are at vastly different levels of development, each with distinct social, political, and economic realities. This is why the SDGs intentionally leave room for diversity in pursuit of shared goals. The framework takes into account different national capacities and priorities, and it encourages innovation and experimentation within countries.

In one instance, the mayor of Baltimore sent a team to Kenya to gain insight into lowering his city's high infant mortality rate. Baltimore officials then utilized Kenya's immunization program and implemented it locally, increasing coverage in the city from 60 percent to 90 percent in just four years and saving hundreds of lives.²²

The same principle applies within and between sectors. A company in the U.S. shouldn't be afraid to structure an employee volunteer program based off one at a Chinese firm; a family foundation in Texas can integrate a new federal government technique into their efforts to improve energy efficiency in homes. The possibilities for this type of intellectual borrowing are endless, but it first requires a willingness to connect work and learn from others, across sectors and across borders.

A TWO-WAY STREET: WHY THE SDGS SHOULD CARE ABOUT PHILANTHROPY

The launch of the SDG Philanthropy Platform stems in part from consensus that philanthropy, by and large, was less involved with the MDGs than it could (or should) have been. Given the sheer scale of the SDGs, the philanthropic community could not afford to sit on the sidelines this go-around. Meaningful progress would require all sectors within the development ecosystem to work together—especially in countries with corrupt or gridlocked political systems, weak private sectors, or a limited role for civil society. As Stephanie Street, Executive Director of the Clinton Foundation, summarized: “In the simplest sense,

philanthropy is important because it is necessary.” Philanthropy is also critical to the success of the SDGs not just because they are another sector, but because they are a unique sector. Much of what distinguishes the field—collaboration, experience engaging individuals at the grassroots, a willingness to take risks and leverage resources—are critical components of global development. Accordingly, governments and the private sector should view philanthropy as an active partner, not just a source of additional funding, and take advantage of the sector’s unique characteristics and expertise, including:

MISSION-ORIENTED: The vast majority of philanthropy is guided by a set of values that closely overlap, and often directly mirror, the global development framework. In this way, philanthropy is already “doing” the work of SDGs; it does not need to be convinced.

CLOSE TO THE GROUND: Philanthropy puts people front and center, particularly those who are already marginalized. Just as the SDGs prioritized a participatory, bottom-up approach, funders are committed to fostering deep ties with those who know how to effect change in communities.

BOLD, INNOVATIVE, AND RISK-TAKING: Funders of all sizes are often associated with “big bets”—a willingness to venture into unknown fields, support individuals and ideas outside the mainstream, and make sustained commitments needed to solve intractable problems.

CONVENING AND CATALYZING: Philanthropy sits at a unique intersection of government and business, activists and nonprofit organizations, science and technology, and academia and research. It has used this position to coalesce alliances, lend credibility to ideas, and generate additional funding.

INDEPENDENT AND AUTONOMOUS: Foundations are free of many of the constraints that limit the ability of governments and corporations to impact the SDGs, such as the need for legislative approval or generating returns for shareholders.

ABLE TO TAKE THE LONG VIEW: Philanthropy is uniquely capable of investing in initiatives without immediate returns—projects that often take years, or even decades, to yield results. In this way, the sector can be more nimble in decision making, responding to new developments while also looking at the longer-term horizon.

CAPACITY BUILDERS: Funders are known for their ability to build the capacity of individuals, organizations, and communities—including identifying and breaking down the obstacles that inhibit the realization of the SDGs.

Ultimately, the nonprofit sector does things that others cannot—just as the private and public sectors have capabilities distinct from philanthropy. Communicating what funders bring to the table with respect to the SDGs isn’t a means to boast or seek credit. Rather, it’s a way to recognize philanthropy’s comparative advantages and strive to both eliminate redundancies and create synergies across work.

ON THE GROUND: PHILANTHROPY AND THE SDGs IN PRACTICE

Once foundations begin to see themselves in the SDGs—after they’ve bought into the potential of the goals and the importance of working on them—what’s next?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY TO CONSIDER:

1.

What, if anything, changes?

2.

How do foundations translate support into action and exercise their unique value within a global framework?

3.

Most importantly, what can philanthropy do to make a meaningful impact on the SDGs?

“Philanthropic institutions have a critical role to play in contributing to the SDGs. We have the freedom to take greater risks, incubate new projects, and foster linkages with civil society and local communities through our grantmaking and convening power.”

Ed Cain,
Vice President of Programs,
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation



Case Study:

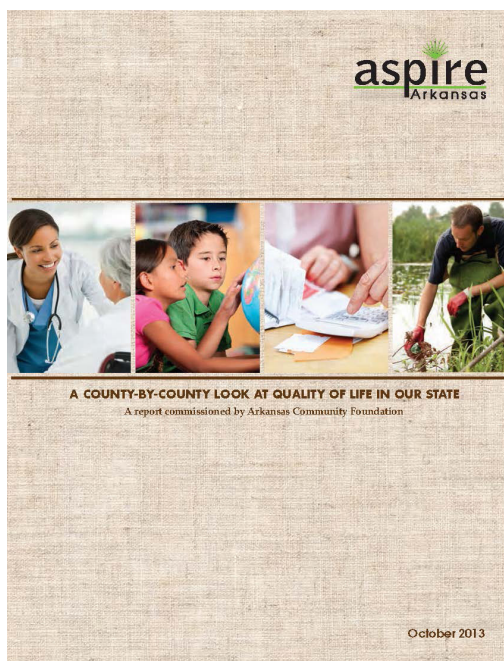
“IN THE BUSINESS” OF MAKING PHILANTHROPY MORE EFFECTIVE

Since 2011, the Arkansas Community Foundation has published two editions of Aspire Arkansas, a county-by-county, data-driven report looking at community well being in the state, from economics and education to health and community engagement. The goal of the study, as described in the introduction, is “not to point out deficiencies...but to aid all community leaders in identifying local challenges and making more informed decisions about key issues.”

It has done just that. After reading Aspire Arkansas, several foundation partners incorporated key findings from the report into their work. One affiliate in Conway County decided to collaborate with local health care professionals to launch a nutrition and fitness program aimed at improving the county’s poor health statistics. Community members outside Hot Springs alarmed by low high school graduation rates rallied together to successfully fund a summer program for at-risk youth. As a foundation staff member described the report’s impact:

The approach will always be grassroots—data tells us where to focus donors, but local leaders decide how and in what to invest.”

To be sure, Aspire Arkansas wasn’t inspired by or in response to the U.N.’s goals. Yet one can easily see how the data encompassed in the report could help funders determine where, what, and how to invest in the SDGs in Arkansas. Of course, data is no panacea for development challenges. As Arkansas Community Foundation President Heather Larkin writes: “In every case, using this data will likely involve a little research, a little creativity, a little innovation, and a lot of partnership.”



► DATA, DATA, DATA

First and foremost, funders can follow the numbers.

When combined with universal goals, data can be a transformative tool for the SDGs—a development guidebook, flashlight, and compass all in one.

Data can help turn an abstract concept into something trackable and measurable.

Long before the Global Goals were adopted, philanthropy has been a leader in using evidence-based research to determine areas of need, identify levers of change, and assess impact over time. In areas like health, education, and economic well-being, philanthropy frequently turns to mapping to understand how different communities fare across a host of issues, as well as over time and relative to others. This straightforward but illustrative technique offers a baseline measure that can both inform and guide grantmaking strategies.

For the SDGs, mapping is an indispensable process. Many of the 169 targets—though not all—are discrete and the 231 indicators currently identified are measurable. Data is readily available throughout much of the world and, consequently, funders today can ascertain key information about the targets, populations, and geographies most in need of support. With this data in hand, philanthropy can work alongside grassroots leaders to create change in local communities, whether in New York or Nairobi.

Across the nation, cities and states are putting data to work in new and innovative ways.

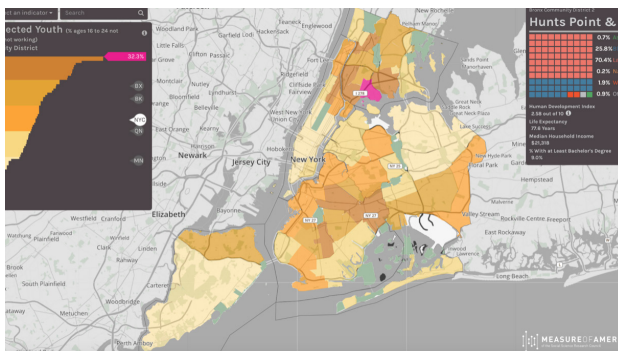
Foundations in California are looking to indices that already exist, such as the Human Development Index, to determine how the state is doing on SDGs like inequality and gender equality. DATA2GO, New York City's groundbreaking online mapping and data tool, features a remarkable 350 indicators, all publicly searchable by demographic group, geography, issue area, and more.²³ Some metrics correspond directly to SDG benchmarks; others can be used as close proxies.

Lastly, data has meaningful benefits for the sector as a whole, beyond what it offers individual foundations.

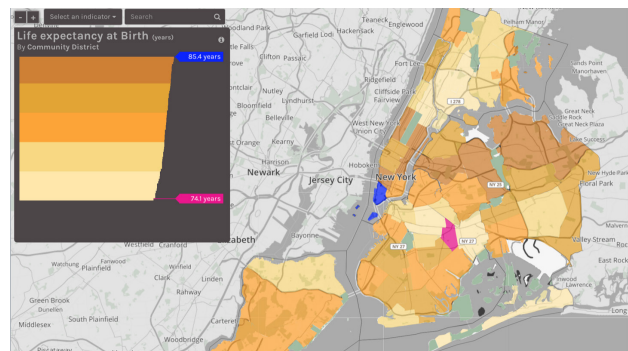
By making information on philanthropic investments and impact more accessible, the broader international development community is more likely to view funders as active partners at the table.

Data opens new windows for collaboration between foundations, provides a birds-eye view of where resources are flowing, and better communicates the sector's collective impact.

For these and other reasons, SDG funders have already begun publicly tracking investments by foundation, goal, region, and population group. Where capacity for data collection doesn't exist in the sector, the Foundation Center is working with partners to build it. Funders can also support efforts to build greater capacity around data and the SDGs.



DATA2GO, New York City's groundbreaking online mapping and data tool for tracking human development indicators.



Case Study: **COMMUNITY-DRIVEN, FROM START TO FINISH**

In 2014, residents of Sonoma County, California were struck by data showing significant health, education, and income disparities within their region. Local leaders, expressly wanting to be the “healthiest county in the state of California,” partnered with local government to commission a new report that would “focus resources and attention to areas of need, leverage resources, and empower communities.”

The process to develop the Portrait of Sonoma, as described by the report’s author, Measure of America’s Kristen Lewis, involved “a huge cross section of people—nearly everyone in Sonoma—coming together as advisors and engaging with the report.” But the biggest innovation: a broad pledge of support by community members, including more than 55 local organizations, to use the report as basis for an “agenda for action” to improve health outcomes. Sonoma County’s new Health Action plan, the community decided, should move beyond traditional, narrowly-defined metrics of well-being to include underlying determinants of health such as stigma and living and working conditions.

Localization went deeper still. Residents aligned behind specific, cross sector approaches: two population-based interventions, universal pre-k and anti-smoking campaigns, and six place-based initiatives, including support for undocumented immigrants and disconnected youth. The Department of Health Services gave more than 90

community presentations on the report, leading one resident to observe that it was “impossible to go to a meeting in the community without Portrait of Sonoma being discussed.”

Visit the county government’s website today and you’ll find dozens of testimonials and photos of individuals holding copies of the report and reflecting on its impact—visual proof of local ownership and action. Like Aspire Arkansas, the Portrait and resulting Health Action plan were not inspired by the SDGs per se. But they represent an excellent model for how communities worldwide could use the SDGs today.



Staff at Community Foundation Sonoma County discuss how the Portrait spurred an early-childhood education campaign, iREAD.

(Pictured from left to right: Elly Grogan, Beth Brown, Karin Demarest; Source: Community Foundation Sonoma County.)



► **BE PICKY: PRIORITIZING, LOCALIZING, AND TAILORING**

Philanthropy should be intentional and deliberate in deciding which goals to devote resources to—and how best to go about doing so.


Funders ought to seek depth, not breadth, in global development, and work closely with individuals on the ground to develop appropriate local approaches to the challenges deemed most pressing by community members.

Philanthropy has a key role to play in “bringing home” the SDGs. It is often said that to make a difference, one should think global and act local. U.S. funders can do just that. They have existing knowledge of where strengths and gaps lie, resulting from deep and longstanding ties within communities. Philanthropy should continue listening to these voices in the context of the SDGs. Residents in the Arkansas Delta who’ve rallied around two issues for the past year—jobs and clean water—are already sending a message about which goals are priorities.

Foundations should also take responsibility for communicating to grantees and partners the value of the SDGs, in addition to helping educate the general public.

Many nonprofits are already working on specific targets but have yet to align their efforts globally or make the SDGs the context around which they view their work. Funders can help translate what they hear from local leaders into the universal language of the goals, and conversely, make the global framework relevant to the daily lives of individuals in the community.

In the end, prioritizing, localizing, and tailoring the Global Goals is about ownership. It underscores the power of funders coming together to share ideas and create new partnerships. During a convening last year in Little Rock, foundations ended the day by committing to work together to make a set of concrete, state-specific “Arkansas SDGs” a reality. Throughout the country, philanthropy can take similar steps to internalize the Global Goals—organization by organization, community by community.



Prioritizing, localizing, and tailoring the Global Goals is about ownership.

Case Study:

FROM PRIVATE COLLABORATION TO PUBLIC GOOD

Much is made about the power of collaboration. But what about for corporations, whose profit-first missions and responsibility to shareholders often precludes a deep commitment to social good?

Well, the SDGs are helping many private actors collaborate with the global development community via employee engagement programs. Today, businesses like IBM are changing their volunteer systems to align with the SDGs, giving staff credit for working toward one of the 17 goals and tracking the distribution of time spent across targets.

More than simply recoding how hours are logged, these changes are helping to educate millions of people about the SDGs, inspire volunteerism, measure impact, and create new bonds with governments and nonprofits.

Recognizing this potential, leading companies around the world recently launched Impact2030, the “only business-led effort designed to marshal the power of employee volunteer investments to advance the Global Goals.” Through promoting greater awareness of the SDGs to employers, the coalition is hoping to influence other corporations to unite their volunteering efforts within the framework. Nearly 60 companies have already signed on, with a goal of 250 businesses joining in the coming years.

Describing the impact of the initiative, Medtronic’s Jennifer Chavez Rubio said: “Ultimately, it’s about moving away from one-off volunteering—tracking the data and rolling it up over time to demonstrate the private sector’s role in global development.”

 **IMPACT** | 2030



► THINK BIG—AND BROAD: THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

Funders can—and should—seize opportunities offered by the SDGs to increase cooperation, share expertise and best practices, and align work for impact.

The community is already a leader in bringing different organizations and sectors to the table, creating space for much-needed coalition building.

Now, funders should use their power to convene in the service of the SDGs. This means integrating the goals into conversations already underway—from conferences to meetings with elected officials—and looking for new partnerships rooted in the framework. The Hilton Foundation, for example, has invested nearly \$10 million in grants over the past three years to promote collaboration around the SDGs, including a \$5.4 million grant to UCLA's World Policy Analysis Center to invest in the next generation of leaders working on the SDGs.²⁴

As philanthropy embraces the SDGs locally, it must involve other sectors—government, the private sector, and NGOs.

There are parallel conversations around the goals happening in the U.S., such as the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, which hosts events and city tours to provide a forum for collaboration. Additionally, dozens of mayors around the world are working to highlight the link between cities and sustainable development and countless nonprofits like Bread for the World and Save the Children are also contributing to the SDGs.²⁵

Moreover, many private companies and corporate foundations are making progress toward the SDGs, as seen in Salesforce.org's partnership with the San Francisco school district to improve educational opportunities or the work of Hewlett Packard Enterprises to extend the unique assets of their business to all residents in California. Philanthropy

should link its own conversations with those happening elsewhere and look for key actors with whom to partner, such as sustainability officers and other city officials.

Often, philanthropy may have to venture into uncharted waters, ushering in others along the way.

Foundations in Arkansas last year, realizing that the state didn't have a formal plan for public education, joined forces and took responsibility to develop one. Led by the Walton Family Foundation and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, funders formed a steering committee to listen and learn from thousands of Arkansans about what they wanted in the public education system.²⁶ Philanthropy generated buy-in, mobilized support, and bridged compromise around seven guiding principles. The resulting plan, ForwARd: A New Vision for Arkansas Education,²⁷ was then adopted by the Board of Education, providing residents with a new action-oriented framework for education.

The SDGs lend themselves easily to partnerships. The goals provide a mutual language and create new windows for collaboration, especially unlikely alliances. As one funder in Little Rock said, "caring is secondary," meaning that an individual's motivation for caring matters less than the simple fact that they care.

Funders should increasingly look to the incentives of potential partners, and use them to sway individuals to care about the SDGs. Philanthropy's work to combat human trafficking in the U.S. South, for instance, has been successful in part because it is an issue that Republican and Democratic elected officials can agree on, even if for different reasons.

Lastly, partnership is only the first step toward meaningful collaboration. Collaboration entails exchange—of ideas and information, of lessons learned and best practices. It has the power to generate additional resources and overcome inertia. As the Baltimore immunization example showed, it is neither limited by national borders nor by silos.

Case Study: A CITY AT THE VANGUARD

Though the earlier examples in Arkansas and California were not the result of the Global Goals, there is one U.S. city that developed a plan of its own, inspired and informed by the SDGs. New York City's OneNYC, launched in April 2015, represents a comprehensive plan to "establish bold goals and specific targets for a strong, sustainable, resilient, and equitable city."

Like the SDGs, OneNYC set measurable targets to track impact over time, followed by extensive outreach to thousands of New

Yorkers and civic organizations—including a multilingual online survey—and incorporates environmental sustainability as an integral and indivisible principle for progress.

Dan Zarrilli, Senior Director in the NYC Office of the Mayor, described the alignment between OneNYC's goals and the SDGs as one of the plan's greatest strengths. "There is a relevance here in New York for the Global Goals, and the OneNYC plan bears that to be true. It's how the goals are becoming real in the city."

The OneNYC plan and corresponding SDGs.



DISCUSSION AND KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR U.S. PHILANTHROPY

U.S. philanthropy must take the SDGs seriously and capitalize on the tremendous opportunities they present. Foundations who view the goals as essential and urgent calls to action, for every sector, will have a clear way of connecting their own individual efforts to broader humanitarian goals.

How then should the field take appropriate action? To be sure, taking action includes all the strategies previously discussed:

- Using data and listening to the grassroots
- Identifying priorities and personalizing approaches
- Forging collaboration and exchanging ideas
- Measuring impact and sharing best practices

But the ambitious global development agenda also calls us to do more. Action is about education. It means talking about the SDGs with grantees and partners, as well as other sectors and the general public. It requires openness, honesty, and transparency. Funders should look in the mirror and ask how the SDGs are actually being integrated into their program areas, partnerships, and internal cultures.

There's no right way to educate, and every contribution counts—no matter how small.

For some foundations, it's as simple as adding a page about the Global Goals to their website or posting a video about them on social media. For others, it might mean organizing a meeting for local stakeholders or hosting an internal workshop to train staff on how to use the SDGs in grantmaking. If you are the City of New York, it means running mini-video tutorials about the SDGs in taxicab TVs throughout the city.²⁸

Action is also courage. Philanthropy is unique because it is more free and willing to take risks, to seek out opportunities for large-scale change, to seed the next moonshot.

The Ford Foundation and others helped spark the Green Revolution not by sitting on the sidelines or making safe bets. They believed in the transformative potential of an idea, and in turn, leaders there committed significant resources into research and development that would ultimately save millions of lives.²⁹ Public education, the polio vaccine, program-related investments—all are byproducts of courageous, inventive philanthropy. The SDGs should inspire similar boldness and risk taking for funders today.

While aid assistance was key for the MDGs, the estimated price tag for enacting the SDGs is more than \$3 trillion a year, underscoring the need for new and different sources of funding.³⁰ Organizations in every sector must seriously consider emerging financing tools in their fields, many of which hold vast potential.

Philanthropy can explore promising developments in crowdsourcing, nontraditional funding cycles, and investing their own endowment, following the lead of pioneers like the Kresge and Case Foundations.³¹ It should, as the Aspen Institute's Jane Wales recently argued, play a "catalytic role by seeding, testing and providing new models for development financing."³²

For their part, local and state governments can increasingly look to new financial instruments and pay-for-success programs, or social impact bonds, as a means to mitigate risk while achieving social impact.³³ And the private sector, most notably, can (and is) forging closer alignment in how environmental, social, and governance investments are categorized, due in part to the greater clarity in classification brought by the SDGs.³⁴

While much work remains in order to move the enormous amount of capital on the sidelines to the issues and causes that need it most, multinationals, institutional investors, and financial markets are moving in the direction of more mission-oriented impact investing.³⁵

PHILANTHROPY'S "CHECKLIST": ACTIONS TO IMPACT THE SDGS

To make a difference and help realize the SDGs, philanthropy—institutions of all stripes, as well as the sector writ large—can take the following steps:



COLLABORATE AND PARTNER

Funders should make cooperation a priority and look for opportunities to work alongside other foundations, as well as the private sector, governments, and NGOs.



USE DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

Funders should “follow the data,” including mapping the SDGs and their accompanying targets and indicators to local reports, indices, and studies.



EDUCATE AND RAISE AWARENESS

Philanthropy should take a leading role in educating grantees, staff, peers in different sectors, and the general public about the SDGs and their transformational potential.



TRACK PROGRESS

The sector as a whole should work to identify ways to measure success and promote evidence-based solutions, especially through data.



LOOK TO AND TRUST THE GRASSROOTS

Philanthropy must engage local leaders and community members to develop effective approaches to make deep, lasting impact.



GALVANIZE, MOBILIZE, AND CATALYZE

Funders should think about the long term, seed pilot projects, and complement government funding. By applying Global Goals locally, the SDGs become relevant and powerful forces for action.

CONCLUSION: TAKE ACTION, AS IF THE WORLD DEPENDS ON IT

Ultimately, **taking action is about going deep.** The SDGs incorporate the critical missing piece of the MDGs: the enablers, or building blocks, of global development. These underlying drivers should be philanthropy's focus, too.

Given the scale of the SDGs, funders can't simply acknowledge the importance of the global framework and pledge their support while neglecting to consider how to change their work as a result. This is philanthropy's biggest hurdle: an inclination to see the SDGs as embedded in funders' mission and to stop there. For if the goals don't spark change, what is their impact really?

Instead, **funders should look to change root systems and structures.** Choose interventions whose impact is felt across goals. Organize and advocate. Apply pressure and alter power dynamics. Use the goals as an opportunity to renew your commitment to social change—to question not simply what is happening, but how and why.

Lastly, **taking action means not giving up.** Don't rest when a school district hits 100 percent enrollment; ask what can be done to improve the quality of education.

Realize that sustainable global development isn't truly achieved if even one person is left out or left behind. Recognize that failure is inevitable, even valuable. But also share stories of success when they occur.

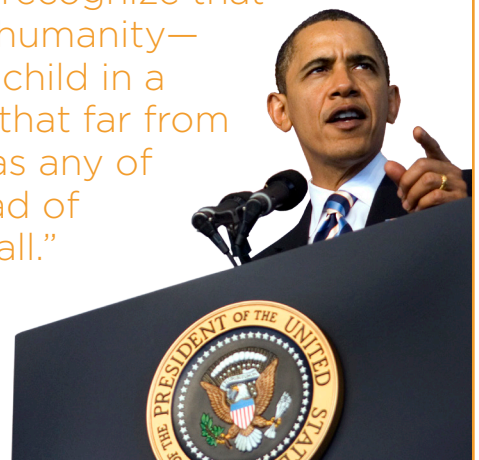
Inspire others. Mobilize individuals.
Motivate yourself.

And above all, act.

Take action as if your future and the
future of the world depends on it.

“Today, we commit ourselves to the Sustainable Development Goals. In doing so, we recognize that our most basic bond—our common humanity—compels us to act. An impoverished child in a distant slum or a neighborhood not that far from here is just as equal, just as worthy, as any of our children, as any of us, as any head of government or leader in this great hall.”

President Barack Obama,
Sept. 27, 2015, United Nations, New York, NY



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