



Investing with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

The existential question at the core of any foundation is, *Where can we have the most impact?* Impact includes the best way to leverage funds, human resources, and tactics at the foundation's disposal to achieve its mission. Beyond grantmaking, every foundation, including community foundations, has sizable assets to invest. This playbook helps community foundations use the United Nations' [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) for greater impact in putting those investments to work to build a more sustainable world.

Introduced globally in 2015, the 17 SDGs aim to eliminate poverty, hunger and inequality, protect and preserve the planet, and build conditions for peace and prosperity through partnerships and collaboration. The "Five Ps"— people, planet, peace, prosperity, and partnerships— are often used as shorthand to describe the overarching and interconnected concerns of the SDGs. This expansive perspective on "sustainability" opens a much broader range of opportunities for thinking about community foundation financial investments.

The playbook outlines a four-step process to engage productively with the SDGs.

1. Ensure organizational readiness

Using SDGs to guide the foundation's work must be coordinated at the highest level and integrated across the organization. Identifying internal barriers to that cooperation is the first step.

2. Align priorities with SDG values

Create a subset of two to three dozen SDG targets that map to the foundation's primary areas of interest and identify metrics to measure progress on those targets.

3. Apply the SDG Impact Standards to decision-making

Map the SDGs to the foundation's work, invest accordingly, track and measure impact, reach out to the community for investment ideas, be transparent in reporting goals and outcomes, and include all branches of the foundations (from the board to donors).

4. Determine the level of engagement, from basic to deep integration

A basic strategy could include tracking the number of holdings and assets under management by SDG and publishing the investment firm's annual contribution to the SDGs. Deep integration could include devoting all of the foundation's assets to impact holdings and measuring and reporting detailed impacts by SDG while engaging the community.

Community foundations worldwide are exploring how the SDGs can contribute to their work. In the U.S., this effort is in its early stages, but indications are that aligning foundation work with the SDGs is beginning to pay off. This playbook can be a first step toward greater and sustained impact.

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No Poverty



Zero Hunger



Good Health & Well Being



Quality Education



Gender Equality



Clean Water & Sanitation



Clean Energy



Economic Growth



Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure



Reduced Inequalities



Sustainable Cities



Responsible Consumption



Climate Action



Life Below Water



Life on Land



Peace, Justice, & Strong Institution



Partnership for the Goal

WHERE CAN WE HAVE THE MOST IMPACT?



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