Nonprofit Organizations and the Sustainable Development Goals: Social Sector Partnerships for Transforming the World

by
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Abstract

This paper focuses on why many American nonprofit organizations do not know about the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, and therefore, how these very organizations can become better educated with them, integrating the Goals into their organization’s governance and administration, potentially attracting private and public sector funding. Based upon three expert interviews, a detailed survey, and a significant literature review, I find the implementation of a “Three-Tiered Model” is best for relating the work of many nonprofits to the Sustainable Development Goals, requiring little, or not financial resources to do so. As well, I recommend the establishment of a multi-organization campaign, with the sole purpose of developing and share resources and best practices for increased Goal implementation.
Acknowledgments

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the amazing Simone P. Joyaux, ACFRE, AdvDip, FAFP (and future honors she will receive); Brian Kastner, MA, of the Council on Foundations; Jeff Unsicker, Ph.D., with the University of San Diego and the School of International Training’s Graduate Institute; all of the respondents of the Capstone’s survey; my partner Robert; as well as, Greg Finkelstein, MNA, and Mickey Bejarano, MA–two of the rare people truly deserving the title “friend.”

Lastly, my time at USF has been a challenge, dealing with those uneasy with mentally disabled students. This is a heartfelt acknowledgement to the professors, administrators, and students everywhere, supporting other students having mental disabilities, and related health issues; our community still has a long way to go–even at a University, and even in San Francisco.
# Table of Contents

List of Tables ........................................................................................................................ ii

List of Figures ...................................................................................................................... iii

List of Abbreviations ........................................................................................................... iii

Section 1. Introduction ....................................................................................................... 1
  Sustainable Development Goals ................................................................................... 1
  Millenium Development Goals ..................................................................................... 2
  Nonprofit Sector Importance ........................................................................................ 3
  Other Participatory Means ........................................................................................... 3
  Report Organization ...................................................................................................... 5

Section 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................... 5

Section 3: Methods and Approaches ................................................................................ 11
  Expert Interviews ........................................................................................................ 11
  Multi-Sector Survey .................................................................................................... 11

Section 4. Data Analysis .................................................................................................... 12
  Literature Review ........................................................................................................ 12
  Multi-Sector Survey .................................................................................................... 12

Section 5: Implications and Recommendations ............................................................... 17

Section 6: Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 19

List of References .............................................................................................................. 20

Appendix A: List of Interview Questions ........................................................................... 23

Appendix B: List of Survey Questions ............................................................................... 24

Appendix C: California Green Academy's Three-Tiered Model Handout ......................... 26

Appendix D: California Green Academy's Completed Three-Tiered Model ..................... 27

Author’s Bio ...................................................................................................................... 28
List of Tables

Table 1. Nonprofit Sector Sustainable Development Goals Survey .................................... 12
List of Figures

Figure 1. United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.............................................. 01
Figure 2. United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals.............................................. 02
Figure 3. Proposed “NPOs-for-SDGs” Campaign Logo..................................................... 18
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COF</td>
<td>Council of Foundations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DESA</td>
<td>United Nations’ Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSD</td>
<td>UN DESA’s Division of Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Nongovernmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>U.N. Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental Organization (synonymous with NPO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPO</td>
<td>Nonprofit Organization</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNGA</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly</td>
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<td>UNGC</td>
<td>U.N. Global Compact</td>
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Section 1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals

Adopted 25 September 2015, and by all 193 United Nations’ ("UN") member states—
including the United States, the UN’s “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”
(“2030 Agenda”) is a package of three major non-binding accords, with an emphasis on
sustainable development, from 2015 to 2030. The 2030 Agenda includes the “Addis
Ababa Action Agenda for Financing Sustainable Development,” the “Sustainable
Development Goals” ("Goals"), as well as, the “Paris Climate Accord.” Action with all
three pieces are considered fundamental for achieving a sustainable future, by 2030.

Figure 1. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals

Pictured above, the Goals are 17 specific objectives, accompanied by 169 detailed
targets, and 242 indicators—organized in the same fashion as the Millennium
Development Goals ("MDGs"). Despite the global importance of achieving all 17 by
2030, the Goals’ overall progress is far behind, and as of 2019, the UN project
completion of the Goals to just over half accomplished, by 2030. Through a detailed
survey, literature review, and three expert interviews, this report focuses on what may
be inhibiting many American nonprofit organizations/nongovernmental organizations
(“NGO”) from adopting and implementing the Goals; and, therefore, how these same
organizations can become better-educated with, and integrate the Goals, into nonprofit
governance and administration, even positioning themselves for private/public sector
funding.

By “adopting” the Goals, I refer to approving and embracing the Goals into an
organization’s mission, vision, Theory of Change, organization culture, or other
governance protocols. By “implementing” the Goals, I refer to integrating the Goals’

objectives, targets, and indicators into an organization’s existing or planned service delivery, as well as, other administrative and programmatic procedures.

As well, as private, public, and philanthropic funding will be essential to achieving all of the goals, I provide recommendations on how the aforementioned sectors can assist in encouraging adoption and action, by nonprofit organizations.

**Millennium Development Goals**

Preceding the Global Goals, the MDGs were 8 objectives—inclusive of 21 targets and 60 indicators, adopted by the UN at the Millennial Summit in 2000. With a timeframe of 2000-2015, the focus of the MDGs was largely, “to spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty [living on less than $1.25 USD a day]” (United Nations, 2015).

As of this writing, the MDGs were the world’s most successful antipoverty measure ever launched, and raised nearly one billion people—14% of the world’s population [2015]—out of extreme poverty. Other objectives, such as primary education, gender equality, maternal health, and increasing HIV/AIDS medical treatments, were also dramatically improved—especially in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

However, the MDGs did have their drawbacks, in that they did not focus on everybody, with large portions of women [non-child bearing], children, and especially the disabled, not included in MDG plans, and overall efforts. However, these prior deficiencies would be integrated significantly intro the SDGs, creating the motto, “Leave No One Behind.”
Nonprofit Sectors Importance

Nonprofits have played a valuable role in the development of the Goals, but much more are unaware of the Goals, overall. Currently, the global community is not on track to achieve much of the Goals’ targets by the agreed-upon 2030 deadline, so understanding the lack of awareness in the nonprofit sector is vital in reaching the Goals’ targets. This project also seeks to advance a “Three-Tiered Model” for nonprofits to, not only better understand the Goals and their importance, but also allow for the nonprofit to more achievabley envelope relevant Goals into the organization’s governance, administration and service delivery, in a systemic and long-term manner.

Whether it was the MDGs, or is the SDGs, it was the nonprofit / NGO sector who brought these Goals into being, achieving the greatest results with the MDGs. The SDGs are a global opportunity for NGOs to come together, showing the sector’s strength, for the good of all humanity, the planet, and our future.

Other Participatory Means

While there are other means to participate with the Goals, such as with the UN Global Compact and other national governments, none of these initiatives are as direct in the adoption and implemention of the Goals, into a nonprofit institution’s governance, administration, and services delivered. The varying initiatives are outlined below.

**UN Global Compact and Sister Initiatives.** Established in June 2000, the UN’s Global Compact (UNGC) is a, “a call to companies to align strategies and operations with ten universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and take actions that advance societal goals” (UNGC, 5). “The world’s largest corporate sustainability initiative,” with currently over 9,500 private sector participants. While UNGC is designing primarily for for-profit businesses, almost 3,000 non-business organizations have joined UNGC, with the near majority (47%) being NGOs.

Besides UNGC, there is also the Principles for Responsible Investment and the Principles for Responsible Management Education, both of which are more focused on the private / for-profit sector, and include the element of higher education, whose training may not be possible for small and medium-sized nonprofit organizations.

**The Partnering Initiative.** Along with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ Division of Sustainable Development, and the UN’s Office of Partnerships, the Partnering Initiative is a global organization, established to maximize high-level partnerships, especially with private sector and civil society organizations. There is no doubt this is an important avenue for SDGs implementation; however, such participation does require UN registration, and
annual reports quantifying an organization’s involvement. These actions may be onerous for small organizations who lack the staff for this level of commitment, and whose contracting for consulting services may be financially unfeasible.

**SDG Charter.** Began by the Government of the Netherlands, the “SDG Charter,” and its corresponding network, the “Charter Gateway,” is a one-page document, identifying ways in which business and civil society can implement the Goals. While the Charter also provides initiatives for individual signatories and cross-sector partnerships, the Charter does not provide concrete targets and indicators, as the Goals do, and overall, the Charter implies the need to focus on accomplishing all seventeen Goals together. Not all organizations are involved with the work of all seventeen Goals, and may see this as a turn-off to such participation. Further, the Charter was established seven months prior to the official UN adoption of the Goals; this may turn interested parties away, as it makes no reference to the targets and indicators, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

**Impact 2030.** Founded in 2015 in response to UNGA A/RES/66/67, Impact 2030 is a global partnership, marrying for-profit organizations with volunteer and training opportunities that advance the Goals. Impact is equivalent to the UNGC, but focused solely on educating the private sector about the Goals, and then connecting the sector to volunteering opportunities to advance the Goals. Although nonprofit organizations are the overwhelming entities where volunteer service is directed to, Impact 2039 is still a private sector-focused campaign, and it does not orchestrate SDG action among nonprofits, focusing how the social sector can advance the Goals, minus private sector participation.

**Private Foundations.** Private foundations have been far ahead of the sector with their knowledge and research about the Goals, especially the Bill and Melinda Gates, Ford, and the Silicon Valley Community Foundations. However, the foundation’s work has mostly been the promotion of economic opportunities with funding the Goals, and not so much how the nonprofit sector can integrate the Goals into organization’s work. As well, they have not tied funding to SDG implementation, so almost no integration by the nonprofit sector has occurred, or is even being encouraged.

**Nonprofit Associations.** Most, if not all, nonprofit associations have not been involved at all with the Goals. While the National Council of Nonprofits mentions the Goals, they are not involved in promoting the Goals’ integration into the work of nonprofits. This is not even occurring with the California Association of Nonprofits, the organization overseeing nonprofits in the state with the most active climate change policies. Overall, only the Council on Foundations has
been far ahead of the effort, explaining the Goals, and encouraging integration—domestically and internationally.

Report Organization

The remainder of the report contains a significant literature review, research methods and approaches, data analysis, implications and recommendations, and the conclusion of the report, providing further insight for nonprofit implementation.

Section 2: Literature Review

My review includes a plethora of publications, and is grouped by individual authors, then by works from various organizations.

Bhattacharya describes various steps organizations—mainly for-profit enterprises—can take to engage their employees, becoming more concerned with sustainability, using the author’s three-step model of incubating your company’s sustainability purpose, concretizing your goals and partnering such goals with stakeholders priorities and expectation, as well as, launching your sustainability plan, emphasizing the employee’s psychological investment. The article makes significant sense, in that it ties its potential application to an employee’s overall motivation—what it in this for me?; thereby, creating a greater depth of personal investment. However, the author seems to lump his three-step model into a “one-size-fits-all” approach, and does not take into account the various nuances and other “cultural” systems each employee embraces for work—ethnic, social, religious, ethical, etc., as well as, the level of existing “investment” for every employee.

First published in 2017, the Gates Foundation’s “Goalkeepers” report has been an excellent and thorough source of tracking philanthropic support from the American foundation, to causes abroad. One element that surpasses other reports (though there are few like this) is its business-as-usual scenarios, and how the report focuses on the need to act in Africa and Southeast Asia, the most, making the greatest difference in poverty reduction. While the report is a critical and worthy publication, it should examine how other organizations—public charities, private foundations, and other civil society entities—can scale these very efforts, further assisting the geographies discussed, but not having to worry about lacking Gates’ financial resources.

Developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat for Educational Ministers, the guide provides frameworks for integrating all 17 SDG’s into educational institutions, and discusses the importance of educating minds for sustainable development, ensuring a healthy, equal, and prosperous future for the Commonwealth. The framework is important to my research, in that it provides a multi-national agreement of education standards, which can be scaled into nonprofit organizational directives, providing a plethora of cultural implementation, throughout the world. While the frameworks are
needed and transformational, partnership with non-educational entities is barely discussed, and the frameworks—if fully implemented—would reach just under 1/3 of the world’s population, not fully supporting the critical mass needed for SDG achievement.

Brookings Institution

The Brookings Institution (2018) discusses the need for the U.S. to return to its historic role of global leadership exercised through foreign aid, and now including sustainable development—unlike China’s strategic positioning with foreign aid recipients, and how most Americans (75%) believe this should be the nation’s directive. The article infers how foreign aid can be tied to a new, global “Marshall Plan” for the SDGs, so long as the U.S. remains committed to sustainable development, internally, as well. What the article lacks is where this valuable and honorable effort would be tied to/overseen by—what branch and levels of government would administer this effort, and how would it be financed, in the same manner the original Marshall Plan was financed.

Providing a much-needed global perspective, the Institution’s 2018 research provides a very dismal view of SDG success toward 2030—only half of indicators achieved from five goals, and finds that even developed countries (OECD members) will not achieve much of the Goals’ targets. The research is important in that it provides a roadmap for nonprofits and civil society organizations to excel in the efforts, either by assisting in what work is of the greatest need, or by showing what can be an organization’s “niche” objective/services. Despite the research being detailed and providing country-level findings, there are no differentiations of what sector can take leadership or responsibility for the work being done, and how countries can leverage other countries resources for such efforts.

In a far more technical summation, Georgeson and Maslin hopes to find a point to hold governments, international organizations, and NGOs accountable, through the frameworks of implementation, monitoring, and finance. This research is important, in that, it provides a system for organizations to understand the SDGs, and how the MDGs succeeded, as well as, methodically going about achieving the Goals. The research reflects a lot about the failure of prior finance mechanisms for the MDGs, and how such tools would not work with the SDGs, without providing understanding into mechanisms and obligations that are more promising.

Providing a private sector perspective, Hoek’s Trillion Dollar Shift finds that nearly $1 trillion USD is potentially available to for-profit entities, implementing the Goals worldwide, through 2030, highlighting the biggest potential for economic development and impact being green infrastructure; Hoek finds more infrastructure will be built in the next fifteen years, then throughout human history. Although presenting a private sector opportunity, the publication offers (through inference) potential for
nonprofits to collaborate with private entities in implementing the Goals, and how there is significant funding available and possible for development, in the name of the SDGs. Despite the mention of the fifty largest economies including for-profit corporations, the publication exudes the belief that private business will be the major key to implementing the SDGs, with some public-private partnerships recognized, and no significant mentioning involvement by NGOs.

As noted with achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Johns Hopkins University article finds that NGOs will be the primary source for achieving the Goals, accompanied by private foundations and philanthropists. This research is important for my Capstone, in that it verifies how powerful the nonprofit sector was with the MDGs, and how civil society has a significant role in SDG action. While the report discusses the overwhelming work of nonprofits with the Global Goals, it is not as vibrant in its encouraging multi-sector partnerships, even if significant amount of funding will come from private foundations and philanthropists; further, the overall inference that few entities will achieve the SDGs is now antiquated.

Countering a report authored by the International Council for Science, the publication by the Korea Center for Women in Science finds all seventeen SDGs need to be further divided by sex and gender—including Goal 5: Gender Equality, as not all the targets can be applied equally upon sex and gender, and among different populations—such as, children and pregnant women. The report does not so much provide additional targets and indicators based upon sex and gender, but rather advances the need to have these considerations in mind, if and when updating progress or action for the Goals. Although the publications acknowledge the lack of authority and power women and girls still have today, the report is without elements and actions key for having men and boys help advances sex- and gender-inclusive targets; UN Women calls this a “He for She” approach.

Although incredibly misleading, the O'Neil article discusses the financial commitments needed to achieve the SDGs, and how a multisector approach will be vital in making any success. This article is incredibly important, in that it identifies key players in potential finance for nonprofit involvement with Agenda 2030, and how nonprofits can pursue such funding, if and when available. The article is misleading, in that it identifies Agenda 2030 as mostly for “government, corporations [for-profit] and philanthropists,” easily dismissing the work of NGOs and other public charities, and does not take into account the synergistic actions of organized cross-sectoral collaborations, and how worldwide, globally collaborative work not tied to profit or corporate interests are becoming more sought after by younger citizens.

Despite being an NGO / civil society organization, Oxfam has authored a report on how private business can assist with the accomplishment of the Goals; mainly, through partnerships with the public sector, and with absolute transparency and
accountability. While the discussion of increased ethics, accountability, and recognizing private business has contributed to making the world less sustainable, the article does not fully address how such businesses can work beyond the profit factor, and how these recommendations require long-term investment and patience. Despite stressing partnerships, the report is skim in addressing the NGO and private sector collaborations, and mostly focuses on public and private sector agreements.

The SDG Charter is a one-page document, providing encouragement and objectives for multisector implementation, and concluding with a call to action by all sectors for partnerships and cross-sectoral collaboration. This document is important, in that many civil society organizations have used this as a stepping stool into understanding and implementing SDGs, not having to engage in financially heavy efforts, such as UNGC, PRME, or other consultant-laden activities. Although the SDG Charter is a powerful document, it’s seems to be presented as simplistic, and does not qualify its impact as just being a starting point for SDG action, leading to external efforts.

With 61% of SDGs effecting cities, Urban Institute’s report encourages civic leaders how they can scale a local, civic, regional, or even sub-national level campaign to achieve the SDGs, making sure the most important effort is the collection and sharing of data. This publication is especially important for my research, in that it emphasizes sub-national level actions, for which most nonprofits are currently involved with. Although the emphasis on open data is essential, the report does not go into how the public sector can also work with the private sector, encouraging their openness to data, and use of trade secret protections.

**Council on Foundations**

Written by what has been the best source of civil society funding and SDG support, the Council on Foundations (2018) provides a quick overview of North America’s major foundations, and where they are also helping the public and private sectors in accomplishing the Goals’ and with the communities served. While the publication contains great examples and emphasizes the need for partnerships, the reading lacks any precise financial estimates of overall funding needed, and in particular, how is this funding evaluated as successful. Despite the many resources provided and outlining the importance of acting locally to achieve the Goals, I was disappointed the publication is not solely focused on American activities, as this research is few and far between.

Another publication by the Council (2016), this report was written at the beginning of the Goals framework (2016), and introduces the SDGs to foundations, the benefits to all with accomplishing them, as well as, how working on the Goals with a global context assists the communities the foundations serve. The publication is not
heavy on analysis and quantitative examining, as it is clearly an ‘overview’ report, establishing the SDGs and the need for partnerships. My one critique would be how the report establishes the absolute importance of data, data collection, and data sharing, yet does not refine or go into detail what data to collect, not even mentioning the Goals’ targets and indicators.

Published by two powerhouses in philanthropy – the Council and the Foundation Center (2018), the publication details the trends of American international giving for the years 2011-2015, displaying each geographic recipient of funds, with Sub-Saharan Africa receiving 25% of U.S. foundation funding, and 51% of such funding being, from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The report also mentions the rise of “disaster funding” –monies given for natural disasters, but does not go into detail how these funds are divided by geography. Although the report is thorough in its presentation of quantitative data, it does not tie such funding to MDG efforts.

**Sustainable Development Solutions Network**

Using information from the 100 largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Sustainable Development Solutions Network 2018 research surveys urban environments, quantifying their ability to achieve the SDGs as a region, and collectively, as a nation. This research is especially important, in that it provides a regional overview for nonprofits to gauge where their greatest work/needs lie, and what level of dedication will be needed to achieve the SDGs, in the NGOs own backyard. Why the survey is comprehensive, it does only focus on urban-related SDGs (15/17), thereby diminishing the importance of all Goals achieved together, as well as, the quantifiable need for Goals 14 and 17.

With the majority of the world’s population in urban areas, the Institute’s 2013 research discusses the need for a standalone SDG, tying together sustainable development and urbanization, and arguing that most of the current Goals are urban-focused. This research is incredibly important, as most NGOs reside within urban areas, and would therefore have greater access and opportunity to achieving the Goals, than those organizations in other development environments. While the article portrays a singular urban SDG as manageable, I believe this would devalue those Goals not particularly applicable to urban environments, thereby dismissing the importance of all Goals achieved together, and it further diminishes the incredible need of comprehensively achieving the Goals.

**United Nations**

Also known as the “Paris Climate Accord,” the UNFCCC document outlines the desired emissions reductions for each country, as manifest in their “nationally determined contributions,” while also stressing the importance of sharing information with the global community. The Accord is important for my research, in that it is an international commitment, but does not define which sector shall contribute to which reduction, thereby allowing the individual country to determine the best option. Unfortunately, as with other major conventions, this is a non-binding agreement, so inaction by any sector would not be held accountable.

Agenda 2030, also known as UNGA Resolution A/RES/70/1, provides significant detail into the need for the 17 SDGs and their related targets, encouraging the participation of as many parties as possible, in obtaining the 2030 targets. The Agenda is important in my research, in that it serves as the basis of my Capstone, and it is the pinnacle document for which all sector actions can be based upon; where all parties can equally understand the call to action. Unlike with the Millennium Declaration, the Agenda does not include the Goals’ 242 indicators, which would provide more clarity and conciseness to achieving the Goals, and while it lays out action based upon local, regional, national, etc., levels of collaboration, the division of labor by sector is miniscule.

Although a non-binding agreement, the Action Agenda provides parties with many suggestions for establishing, maintaining, and securing existing financial resources for development from the public sector, the potential collaboration between private sector and financial institutions, as well as, how international development cooperation and trade will further the success of development finance. The Action Agenda is important to my research, in that it encourages public and private institutions to build capacity with NGO’s and other civil society organizations in the achievement of development finance. As noted with other international agreements, while there is an emphasis on following through with data collection and updating efforts for finance, there is no cost accountability to any actor, especially developed economies.

Having read the Summary piece, the research by UN Women shows which countries will need the most assistance in bringing about gender equality (Goal 5), as well as, promoting gender equality among the other relevant Goals. This is especially important for research, in that the participation of women and other marginalized populations will allow the nonprofit sector to achieve the Goals, far more than other sectors. The report lacks mention of these gender unequal countries being significantly religious, and how the institution of religion promotes gender inequality and marginalization.
Section 3: Methods and Approaches

A mixed-method approach was utilized for this project, consisting of a variety of primary research methods—such as expert interviews and a detailed survey, as well as, secondary research, through literature reviews.

The literature, as discussed in section two, was thirty-two publications, ranging from including official UN reports, governmental publications, and sector-specific guides, as well as, peer-reviewed academic and professional journal articles.

Expert Interviews

In order to preserve the integrity of interviewees and because of their hectic schedules, interviews via email were conducted with three subject-matter experts:

- **Simone Joyaux, ACFRE, AdvDip, FAFP**—Nonprofit Consultant Practitioner and international expert on fundraising and philanthropy.
- **Brian Kastner, MA**—Director of Global Philanthropy, for the Council on Foundations.
- **Jeff Unsicker, Ph.D.**—Professor of climate change and sustainable development, University of San Diego and the School of International Training.

The interviewee’s findings are located in Section 4.

Survey

Lastly, a 29-question survey was employed and distributed to over 1,000 parties; 24 questions were required, and 5 were for providing further detail to the required questions. However, only nine respondents completed the survey. In correspondence with a cohort member, the survey was considered “laborious and detailed,” therefore implicitly limiting its scope of participants to academics and sector professionals. Because of the small number of respondents, no statistically significant statements can be made from the aggregated results. While the survey findings will be included in the next section on data analysis, hopefully an expansion of survey can occur, later in time. However, as mentioned prior, these results cannot be considered statistically significant, nor a true and accurate voice of the sector’s opinion.
Section 4. Data Analysis

As mentioned in Section 2, the literature, overall, did not provide significant examples, nor research for Goal education and implementation. While publications and research from the UN and the Council on Foundations has done a lot of work advertising the Goals, many nonprofits are still unknowing of the Goals. The survey below finds that a multisector and multi-actor effort—media, academia, professional associations, etc.—will be absolutely required, advancing the Goals’ education and implementation, in the nonprofit sector. As well, and found within survey results and expert interviews, tying funding with Goal implementation is believe to make the biggest difference in nonprofit sector integration, not only regarding funding from foundations, but also having available funding from the public and private sectors—grants and contracts—tied to Goal implementation.

Table 1. Nonprofit Sector Sustainable Development Goals Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question*</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Chart / Visual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What type of nonprofit are you affiliated with? (N=09)</td>
<td>Public Benefit Charity-03 Community Foundation=03 Academic Institution=02 NA / Not Listed=01</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is the staff size of your nonprofit? (N=09)</td>
<td>127, 40, 2414, 08, 28, 20, 05, 01, 300</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is your nonprofit recognized by the IRS? (Example: Section 501(c) or 508 recognition.) (N=09)</td>
<td>YES=07 NO=01 UNSURE=01</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is your nonprofit recognized by the California Franchise Tax Board, or your state’s IRS-equivalent agency? (N=09)</td>
<td>YES=05 NO=01 UNSURE=02 NA=01</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How many years old is your nonprofit? (N=09)</td>
<td>25, 109, 31, 70, 09, 70, 76, 22, 100+</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What is the focus / specialization of your nonprofit? (Health, social services, environment, -Transportation -Urban development, civic engagement -Consultant specializing in governance, management, fundraising, planning -higher education -Mental Health Advocacy -Membership -Support the ideals and vital work of the United Nations)</td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Through public giving, strengthen our community and the nonprofits who provide services to our residents - Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What is your nonprofit's geographic focus area? (N=09)</td>
<td>Outside of California=02 International=03 California–Bay Area=04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Have you heard of the United Nations' &quot;Sustainable Development Goals&quot; (SDGs)? (N=09)</td>
<td>YES=08 NO=01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If you have heard of the SDGs, what has been you and/or your nonprofit's interactions with them, as of now? (N=07)</td>
<td>- I studied them in graduate school - None - they are taught in a number of courses - limited - It intersects with all of the SDGs, since it is an organization dedicated to advancing them - Trying to get a full picture of what the goals encompass and how we can best contribute our efforts. - Trainings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. What sector do you feel the SDGs “pertain to” the most? (N=09)</td>
<td>All Sectors=06 Nonprofit / Social Sector=03</td>
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<td>11. If you selected &quot;Other&quot; above, which sector? (N=0)</td>
<td>NA NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do you feel the sector just mentioned is adequately implementing the SDGs? (N=09)</td>
<td>YES=02 NO=02 UNSURE=05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How strongly do you feel the SDGs are for the nonprofit sector’s / NGO’s involvement? (Using a Likert Scale (1-10), ‘Not Strongly’ ranged to ‘Very Strongly’) (N=09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do you believe adopting and/or implementing the SDGs, has an appropriate place in the work of nonprofit organizations, whether through governance,</td>
<td>YES=08 UNSURE=01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Frequency Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administration, service delivery, collaborations, etc.? (N=09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Which geographic focus do you feel would be able to take part in /</td>
<td>Regional Organizations=02</td>
<td>All Geographies Listed=06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accomplish the SDGs the best? (&quot;Organization&quot; described below includes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public charities, foundations, and churches / religious groups.) (N=09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. If you selected &quot;Other&quot; above, please explain. (N=0)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Do you feel there is an opportunity - financially, programatically,</td>
<td>Unknown=04</td>
<td>Government=02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionally, etc. - with the nonprofit sector adopting / implementing</td>
<td>Government=02</td>
<td>Climate=01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the SDGs? (N=09)</td>
<td>Climate=01</td>
<td>Academic=01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonprofit=01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. What sector is currently doing the best with SDG adoption /</td>
<td>Unknown=04</td>
<td>Government=02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implementation? (N=09)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Climate=01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic=01</td>
<td>Nonprofit=01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Can the sector mentioned above possibly improve SDG adoption /</td>
<td>Every organization can improve.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implementation, and how? (N=03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. If many, or most nonprofits, are not aware of the SDGs, why do</td>
<td>More targeted messaging needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you believe this is so? (N=09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15

1. I think most are aware but are unsure how to engage.
2. US nonprofits are not used to UN frameworks.
3. Funders (e.g., government, foundations, and private donors) are not encouraging the adoption of the SDGs.
4. Because they are not familiar with the work of the United Nations and/or their work is not related to any of them so they are not encouraged to learn about them and how can they contribute to advancing them.
5. Too much media overload for ‘help us’ types of solicitation - it makes us oblivious and numb to the really important work (like SDGs)
6. Partner with academia

21. What would be the best way to educate the nonprofit sector about the SDGs? (N=09)

- Unknown
- Offer funding for non-profits doing work directly tied to the SDGs
- Best blogs & newsletters, Conferences, Professional associations, Academic education.
- Coordinated/integrated movement.
- Don’t know
- Provide funding engagement opportunities
- Make it relevant by connecting it with the work they are already doing. Make it less about the UN and the process, and more about the work and the outcomes.
- Taking a workshop, class or seminar from an organization like the United Nations Association
- Community workshops and in-person presentations by Community Foundations in partnership with nonprofits who have begun work toward implementing the SDGs.
- NA

22. Based on your response above, what is the best single educational source for this to take place? (N=09)

- Nonprofit Press / Media=02
- Academic Institutions=01
- Nonprofit Associations=01
- Multiple Sources=05

23. If your selection above is "Multiple Sources" or "Outside the Sector / Other," please briefly describe.

- See my notes above.
- News media is important, but there must also be champions within the nonprofit sector itself -- whether it be funders requiring reporting on the SDGs or peers publicly adopting them. True permeation of the SDGs must come from everywhere.
- Foundations, Associations, Press and social media platforms

24. Please briefly review the PDF handout located at: http://bit.ly/2USZgC9 (The handout is also attached below, as an image.) Do you feel you have a general understanding of the "Three-Tiered Model"? (N=09)

- YES=05
- NO=02
- UNSURE=02

(YES = 55.6%, NO = 22.2%, UNSURE = 22.2%)

(The handout is also included as Appendix 03.)
25. Do you believe the "Three-Tiered Model" visual (the image you see below) would be effective for increasing nonprofit SDG education? (Pictured below is the California Green Academy's Three-Tiered Model.) (N=09)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>UNSURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The visual is also included as Appendix 04.)

26. Do you believe greater understanding and proliferation of the "Three-Tiered Model" process (the procedure described in the prior handout), would result in more nonprofits taking-part in SDG adoption / implementation? (N=09)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>UNSURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. Do you believe the "Three-Tiered Model" process would result in YOUR nonprofit taking-part in SDG adoption / implementation? (N=09)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>UNSURE</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. What major incentive(s) could promote SDG adoption / implementation in nonprofits? (N=09)

- Unknown
- Funding
- Institutional funding sources encouraging/demanding ... as foundations did/did/sometimes for diversity on boards.
- don't know
- attached to funding
- Since the incentive will likely not come from government, it must come from donors (institutional or private) or from within the sector itself (i.e. a champion model). Nonprofits might understand why the SDGs are important, but they need to know why it's worth adopting them and that case has not been strongly made to them, especially very local ones.
- I think it would be useful if nonprofits that promote SDG adoption/implementation receive a recognition/certification/diploma from the United Nations or the United Nations Association in their area
- Not sure, but funding is and will be needed to help get nonprofits onboard to adopt and implement - then there's the tracking and progress reports.
- NA

NA
**Section 5: Implications and Recommendations**

Despite the universal prevalence of the Goals—*including U.S. adoption in 2015,* the American nonprofit sector is not very involved in the Goals’ implementation, even with most interviewees and survey participants (89%) stating they, or their nonprofit, know about the Goals. Further, most nonprofit organizations are already involved in some of the Goals, especially promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16), and building partnerships for the Goals (17), and those that are directly applicable to the organization’s mission and vision.

Four recommendations are provided, all considered significant to increasing the US nonprofit sector’s adoption and integration of the Goals into the organization’s work. As well, the last recommendation proposes actions public and private sectors actors can take, greatly encouraging nonprofit SDG adoption; mainly, Goal alignment and implementation as a requirement for contracts and/or grants, from these sectors.

**First Recommendation:** Pilot a new campaign (*statewide, with the expansion goal of growing nationally*) highlighting the Goals, and providing the resources needed for SDGs adoption and implementation; the campaign being a multi-organizational effort.

As of this writing, there is no multi-organizational campaign for nonprofits—*similar to the private sector and the UNGC or Impact 2030*—providing the resources, referrals, and best practices for sector implementation. While there are some “civil society” resources and publications provided by the UN Office of Partnerships and the United Nations Association, in addition to, reports outlining the potential opportunities with implementing the SDGs authored by the Council on Foundations, there is no complete campaign linking nonprofits to SDG implementation, such as the private sector initiatives mentioned above. My project proposes the creation of the “NPOs-for-SDGs” (“NfS”) campaign, bringing together nonprofit organizations for SDG implementation.

The campaign would ultimately provide the education for the SDGs, the importance of nonprofit partnerships for implementation, as well as, the resources for nonprofits to implement relevant SDGs into the organization’s work.

In its initial stages, NfS could be overseen collectively by the California Association of Nonprofits, Philanthropy CA [a partnership of three major regional grantmaking associations], nonprofit media and academic programs, as well as, other major
statewide environmental organizations. Public sector involvement and resource sharing could come from the California Environmental Protection Agency and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research.

With its sight on eventual national expansion, NPOs-for-SDGs could be an effort later overseen by the National Council of Nonprofits, the Council on Foundations, Nonprofit Quarterly and the Chronicle of Philanthropy, the United Nations Association, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, as well as, working with UNGC, Impact 2030, and___

Second Recommendation: Employ the proposed SDG Three-Tiered Model, as a major resource for campaign introduction and involvement.

As mentioned in the Three-Tiered Model handout in Section 4, many nonprofit organizations, or individuals affiliated with these organizations, want to assist with SDG implementation, but they are not sure how to be involved, or believe involvement means working on all seventeen Goals. The Three-Tiered Model emphasizes individuals and organizations placing their emphasis on “Primary” level (direct) and “Secondary” level (indirect) Goals, with the levels determined by the organization, in the same manner as a stakeholder analysis or strategic planning process. With the individual or organization focusing on what they can do best (Primary and Secondary level Goals), collectively, this helps stakeholders achieve the Goals, far greater than individual efforts.

With 56% of survey respondents agreeing, the Three-Tiered Model process would be a key resource for nonprofit organizations becoming more involved with SDGs. (In the same question, 22% were unsure, and another 22% did not believe the Model would better assist with implementation.) Further, the model creates a visual representation of the nonprofit’s involvement with SDG implementation, serving as a symbol that the organization’s local or limited efforts are a part of the greater effort.

Third Recommendation: If the campaign has been ‘effective’—achieved agreed upon/objective metrics, consider making the campaign an entirely new nonprofit.
Following a planned timeframe and an evaluation of many metrics, if the campaign—state or nationwide—has successfully achieved its initial mission, consider the establishment of a separate nonprofit, gaining IRS recognition. This would be similar to the ‘Truth’ campaign initially being partnered with various state health departments, then becoming a separate organization, or the multi-organization “Directory of American Charities” campaign, later becoming GuideStar.

A separate and independent organization would, most importantly, centralize resource development and sharing for nonprofit SDG implementation, as well as, provide a singular funding source for developing efforts further.

Fourth Recommendation: Following the establishment of an independent nonprofit, efforts to involve the public and private sectors in nonprofit SDG implementation should be pursued, widely and freely sharing best practices and innovations for multisector collaboration and development. These innovations would include the major effort to have private and public sector funders requiring SDG alignment and implementation, as a requirement for potential funding.

Section 6: Conclusion

With eleven years left for the Sustainable Development Goals campaign, significant effort is still required, not just much for the implementation and action of the Goals, but even for the education of the Goals, to the nonprofit, and many other sectors, especially in the Global North.

These efforts to educate the nonprofit sector will take time, and will require the nonstop work of many sector professionals continuously advancing the Goals and organizational implementation. Thankfully, this is a desired effort, as expressed in the survey results, and implementing a multi-organizational campaign and the Three-Tiered Model will make a huge difference in Goal education and implementation.

Given the importance of accomplishing many of the Goals—especially Goal 13: Climate Action, there is absolutely no time to spare, and the American observance of global isolationism and exceptionalism must end, for the sake of all people, and the planet.
List of References


Joyaux, S. (2019, April 28). Email interview.

Kastner, Brian. (2019, April 27). Email interview.


O'Neill, Megan. (September 28, 2015). $3-Trillion U.N. Development Plan Sets Ambitious


Unsicker, J. (2019, April 29). Email interview.

Appendix A: List of Interview Questions

Because all interviewees had little time to spare, I conducted the interview via email, so as to allow responses to be on the interviewer’s schedule, and to protect the integrity of their responses. Interviewees were encouraged to view the survey, and were provided a handout of the Three-Tiered Model. The following questions were asked of them, and all interviewees had prior knowledge of the SDGs and the Paris Climate Accord.

1) In your professional opinion, how urgent is achieving the SDGs? Can the global community come close to completing the targets—like the MDGs, or is climate change dictating we achieve all of them, or at least those climate-related?

2) Why do you think most American nonprofits are not aware of the SDGs, and how do you feel the federal administration’s hostility to the Paris Climate Accord possibly affects nonprofit aversion?

3) What do you think will be the breaking point for the nonprofit sector, or even overall society, in understanding that accomplishing the SDGs, or at least those climate-related, is absolutely needed?

4) What is the most needed tool, resource, skill, etc., for nonprofit SDG education and implementation?

*Source: Author’s unpublished email interview questions.*
Appendix B: List of Survey Questions

My survey employed twenty-three principle (required) questions, with an additional five questions, for further clarification. Questions with an asterisk represent the required responses, and all external materials / documents were included visually, or with a URL address. (The survey can be accessed at: www.calgreenacademy.org/sgssurvey.)

1. What type of nonprofit are you affiliated with? *
2. What is the staff size of your nonprofit? (Not including volunteers.) *
3. Is your nonprofit recognized by the IRS? (Example: Section 501(c) or 508 recognition.) *
4. Is your nonprofit recognized by the California Franchise Tax Board, or your state's IRS-equivalent agency? *
5. How many years old is your nonprofit? *
6. What is the focus / specialization of your nonprofit? (Health, social services, environment, community development, etc.) *
7. What is your nonprofit's geographic focus area? *
8. Have you heard of the United Nations' "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs)? *
9. If you have heard of the SDGs, what has been you and/or your nonprofit's interactions with them, as of now?
10. What sector do you feel the SDGs “pertain to” the most? *
11. If you selected "Other" above, which sector?
12. Do you feel the sector just mentioned is adequately implementing the SDGs? *
13. How strongly do you feel the SDGs are for the nonprofit sector's / NGO's involvement? * (Using a Likert Scale (1-10), 'Not Strongly' ranged to 'Very Strongly')
14. Do you believe adopting and/or implementing the SDGs, has an appropriate place in the work of nonprofit organizations, whether through governance, administration, service delivery, collaborations, etc.? *
15. Which geographic focus do you feel would be able to take part in / accomplish the SDGs the best? ("Organization" described below includes public charities, foundations, and churches / religious groups.) *
16. If you selected "Other" above, please explain.
17. Do you feel there is an opportunity - financially, programmatically, professionally, etc. - with the nonprofit sector adopting / implementing the SDGs? *
18. What sector is currently doing the best with SDG adoption / implementation? *

19. Can the sector mentioned above possibly improve SDG adoption / implementation, and how?

20. If many, or most nonprofits, are not aware of the SDGs, why do you believe this is so? *

21. What would be the best way to educate the nonprofit sector about the SDGs? *

22. Based on your response above, what is the best single educational source for this to take place? *

23. If your selection above is "Multiple Sources" or "Outside the Sector / Other," please briefly describe.

24. Please briefly review the PDF handout located at: http://bit.ly/2USZgC9 (The handout is also attached below, as an image.) Do you feel you have a general understanding of the "Three-Tiered Model"? *

25. Do you believe the "Three-Tiered Model" visual (the image you see below) would be effective for increasing nonprofit SDG education? (Pictured below is the California Green Academy's Three-Tiered Model.) *

26. Do you believe greater understanding and proliferation of the "Three-Tiered Model" process (the procedure described in the prior handout), would result in more nonprofits taking-part in SDG adoption / implementation? *

27. Do you believe the "Three-Tiered Model" process would result in YOUR nonprofit taking-part in SDG adoption / implementation? *

28. What major incentive(s) could promote SDG adoption / implementation in nonprofits? *

29. Is there any perspective you would like to add?

30. Email Address (optional)

Source: Author’s unpublished survey.
Appendix C: California Green Academy's Three-Tiered Model Handout

**Sustainable Development Goals**

*"Three-Tiered Model"

In the spirit of “thinking globally, acting locally,” many nonprofits organizations have become steadfast in their adoption/implementation of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (“Goals,” pictured above). Although a nonprofit’s commitment to achieving all seventeen goals would be ideal, in reality, and given most nonprofit’s lack of various resources, organizations should not feel diminished, nor less engaged, when employing what is the “Three-Tiered Model” process (“model”), for potentially implementing the Goals. The model believes when all organizations focus on what they can do best, we all benefit, and the Goals become even more achievable than before; i.e., focusing on each nonprofit’s most reachable Goals, in order for the global community (collective) to achieve all of them.

In the model, the seventeen Goals are layered, displayed horizontally in “Primary,” “Secondary,” and “Tertiary” tiers. The top tier, **Primary Goals**, are those Goals that an organization has the greatest impact and/or influence with, as these goals relate directly to the organization’s mission, vision, and services delivered. The middle tier is the **Secondary Goals**—those goals in which an organization has some impact with, but not as directly as their primary goals; the secondary goals are mostly influenced by action involving the primary goals. The bottom tier, the **Tertiary Goals**, are the goals for which an organization has no direct or indirect influence over. However, because addressing every Goal is vital to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, tertiary goals are visually included in the model—despite the nonprofit’s minimal and/or non-existent influence, reflecting the importance of achieving all seventeen goals, by 2030. Below are two examples of a nonprofit “Three-Tiered Model.”

**Organization Example #1**

**Organization Example #2**

With the construction of a nonprofit’s model, there is no requirement, or recommendation, for how many goals, and what goals are listed in each tier; the amount of goals, and which goals to include in each tier is solely the decision and responsibility of the nonprofit. Furthermore, the process of designing a nonprofit’s model should be treated in the same fashion as a stakeholder analysis and a strategic planning process; with every stakeholders’ contribution being appropriately valued and appreciated.

There is a limitation to employing the model, such as an undesired visual depiction. When a nonprofit is focused on few primary, and hence, secondary goals, this can appear as though the nonprofit is not as involved with such efforts, regardless of the organization’s historical and/or rigorous implementation of such goals. In this case, the nonprofit would be advised to display just the Goals promoted directly.

*The “Three-Tiered Model” is an academic design, created by the nonprofit California Green Academy (EIN: 92-0794342), and was created solely for educational and non-commercial purposes. The Three-Tiered Model is not officially endorsed, and/or affiliated, with the United Nations, or any U.N. agency, administering the Sustainable Development Goals, or any other element of the 2030 Agenda.*
Appendix D: California Green Academy’s Completed Three-Tiered Model

Source: California Green Academy.
Author’s Bio

Justice is the founder of the California Green Academy (“CalGreen”), and serves as CalGreen’s Chief Sustainability Officer (CEO/ED). He double-majored at U.C. Davis in Public Service and Law & Society, minoring in Professional Writing—with emphases in legal and technical writing. He has previously worked for Unitrans, Caltrans’ Division of Rail, California Air Resources Board, California Environmental Protection Agency’s Scientific Support and Peer-Review Program, for State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, and Dr. David Long, California Secretary of Education.

Justice is also Founder and Editor of TransportiCA, Founder and Principal of Aggie Writing Services, as well as, former President and Acting Executive Director of the University of San Francisco’s Nonprofit Student Council. Justice is now pursuing a M.B.A. and a Master of Science in Management and Leadership, from Western Governors University.

His passion for the sustainability, the Sustainable Development Goals, and sustainable and active transportation, comes from, despite being a Los Angeles native, not having a driver’s license, nor planning to obtain one in the future. Lastly, Justice is proud to acknowledge his mental disabilities, and hopes the academic community becomes more tolerant of mental health issues, especially amongst the LGBTQIA community.