



H.Res.30 Project Scope

Committing the United States of America to support the UN SDGs

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Overview

The proposed topic is to highlight how the United States can and should commit to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (commonly known as the SDGs or Global Goals). The SDG framework consists of [17 goals](#) that all 193 member states of the United Nations General Assembly agreed to meet by 2030.

Based on the [2022 Social Progress Index](#), social progress has been stagnating in the United States since 2011 and actively sliding backward on Targets since 2017, which is impacting youth the most. For example, American youth is facing a mental health crisis as youth [suicides have risen](#) since 2020. This is one among other indicators, which severely hampers achieving SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being for young people and their families. Reading and [math test scores have also declined](#) considerably since COVID-19, which impedes on meeting SDG 4 Quality Education. The [poverty rate also is the highest](#) for youth compared to all age groups, and has even risen by 4.2 percentage points, endangering the opportunity to meet SDG 1 No Poverty. As these examples demonstrate, it would benefit the United States to re-examine and prioritize what the issues are that is causing this deceleration of progress, what Goals are faltering the most and why, and how to address them.

[A few points laid out by Brett Shaefer](#), Jay Kingham Senior Research Fellow in International Regulatory Affairs in Heritage's Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, captured key issues (seen in the appendix) that demonstrate the case for steering the United States towards investing in localized data capacity. In other words, for the United States to build capacity for local data collection. A local community has data capacity when they can access and use data to make decisions and improve outcomes where they live. [The Urban Institute](#) describes the two criteria that needs to be met to establish that a community has data capacity: 1) enabling needed resources and 2) a set of skills and practices held by individuals, or collectively, for organizations.

Localized data capacity-building would not only ensure that all people are represented but also aims to improve the quality of data being collected. Many of the SDG measurements have not been telling the full story for "[data deserts](#)," locations where certain groups are excluded from useful data collection (and sharing). For example, even today, [1 in 5 American households](#) still are not connected to the internet at home according to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. If households are not connected to the internet, they are nearly always excluded by the internet-only data collection mechanisms. Additionally, [measurements of prosperity](#) in rural areas where internet is sparse looks different from the urban and suburban counterparts. Therefore, how can anyone rely on what the current SDG data systems are capturing when these facts throw into doubt the accuracy of metrics in these regions?

Funding is another issue. There is a significant funding gap in that donor institutions do not have an interest in funding projects that focus on data as its own thematic area, let alone *localized data*. Oftentimes, it is up to the organizations on-the-ground to find a way to build capacity themselves (which often leaves them strapped for resources in funding their data teams). While funders such as the McGovern Foundation are one of the few philanthropic foundations that center data science and AI/ML in their giving strategy, their projects are more large-scale, often focusing on *country*-level data. This lack of funding creates a chronic challenge to the quality and completion of valuable, analytical data that results in various errors – as exemplified yet corrected by the [Bush Foundation](#) – that ultimately contribute to the underfunding cycle for those in most need.

Coupling local data issues with the stagnant bill [H.Res.30 - Supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), the role government that the plays in taking meaningful steps to meeting the SDGs should be addressed first. Therefore, providing resources and information is an exemplary starting point

for the government. Members of the [Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#) already create reports on [state-level benchmarking](#) of meeting the SDGs, yet the local level is where the American government is viewed the most positively and engaged. According to a [Pew Research Center poll](#), it was found that nearly two-thirds (66%) of Americans say they have a favorable view of their local government whereas only just over half (54%) have a favorable view of their state government and only one-third (33%) favorable of the federal government. Local government dashboards provide a ready foundation because of tracking COVID-19 at the county-level. For example, municipal-level tracking has provided key insights [into Indiana's COVID-19 response](#) specifically as well as for other states. It additionally helped inform of the 2015 HIV outbreak in Indiana's Scott County and presented overwhelming evidence for a clear path for legislative action.

These cases demonstrate that local data has high impact, proving that a localized system is reliable, trustworthy, and cost effective. Therefore, this proposal works to amend H.Res.30 by improving its focus on reinforcing data systems for municipal-level engagement and activation. The proposal aims to facilitate the passing of the amended bill in today's House of Representatives with bi-partisan support.

The deliverables of this project are the following: strategy policy document (communicated as a policy brief published in the [University of Notre Dame's research repository](#)), 'culture-setting' guidelines (communicated as blog posts), and key policy recommendations (communicated as a policy paper to be published in an academic journal). An impact analysis will be performed to determine whether the proposed systems and policy modifications will yield these desired outcomes for the policy paper.

Supporting information

Theme: A Data Lens Approach

This work is approached with a **data lens**.

We use the term "data lens" to accentuate an evidence-based approach to designing research, programmatic interventions, and policy. Rigorously collected data is used to generate models and analytics. These, in turn, are used to validate expectations and assumptions, understand the policy and living landscape, identify rich research opportunities, and delineate factors which determine metrics, actions, solutions, and investment opportunities. Data lenses tie observations to effective action and verifiable outcomes. The proposed deliverables squarely meet on demonstrating and highlighting the need for localization of the SDGs around the world through such a development lens via data systems strengthening and could inform the types of scalable solutions in the sustainable development space from a policy perspective.

Collaborations

The author's professional associations, and potential partners in this project, span academic, nonprofit, businesses, and government in a way that is required to develop and implement solutions. More specifically, there are 7 organizations with relationships to the author that are relevant for garnering. Support seen in the table below:

Organization	Description	Author Relationship	Author Contribution
University of Notre Dame Pulte Institute for Global Development	The Pulte Institute is an integral part of the Keough School of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame working to address global poverty and inequality through policy, practice, and partnership.	Visiting Associate	<p>The author is sponsored by the Visiting Associate Program of the Pulte Institute and works with the Pulte Institute to write evidence-based, strategic publications to positively influence global development policy and practice.</p> <p>Dr. Paul Perrin is most aligned with the work described in this proposal through the development of his county-level scalable and adoptable SDG Dashboard as well as his deep focus on supporting the conceptualization, design, implementation, analysis, and reporting on M&E and implementation science activities. His experience in adult education and technical writing, including briefings for senior government officials, peer-reviewed publications, and technical reports, is conducive for the application of this work as it pertains to working with United States legislators.</p>
United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA)	The UNA-USA is a nonprofit that works to build support to the United Nations for achieving the SDGs. UNA has over 20,000 members (60% under the age of 26) and more than 200 chapters across the country.	Member-at-large	The author meets regularly with the UNA-USA leadership team. At a collegiate level, the UNA-USA is currently introducing the author to the Notre Dame chapter student group and Purdue's chapter. In addition, the author is meeting UNA's Grassroots Advocacy Manager and Senior Director for Policy & Programs to prepare for civic engagement at the UNA-USA Leadership Summit on June 6th at Capitol Hill with state representatives. The author will also be speaking at UNA-USA's Youth Declaration for Human Rights SDGs event on June 8th.
United States Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC)	USGLC is a 500-organization member coalition working to make America's international affairs programs a keystone of US foreign policy.	2023 Next Generation Leader	On June 7th-8th, the author will return to Capitol Hill to engage with state representatives to speak about the SDGs. Pulte Institute's Executive Director Mr. Michael Sweikar is a State Advisory Committee member of USGLC, which is important for gathering inside momentum. USGLC may be interested in partnering on this topic for an event in September for the Global Goals Week. This partnership will bolster the Next Generation Leadership Fellowship where upon graduation of the fellowship in December 2023, the author will become a State Advisory Committee member.
Foreign Policy for America (FP4A)	FP4A is a nonpartisan, membership-based advocacy organization to strengthen support for principled American engagement in the world.	Next Generation Delegate	As a delegate, the author was able to publish their first article on advocating for U.S. support of the Global Goals alongside their partner Instick Media , an online policy commentary journal. FP4A is interested in formally partnering on this topic on an event in September for the United Nations General Assembly and corresponding Global Goals Week.
Global Futurist Initiative	Global Futurist Initiative is a youth organization that the author co-founded that has key relationships with SDG advocates.	Co-Founder	This organization is interested in formally partnering on this topic as an event collaboration for Global Goals Week. Key associations include both individuals and organizations. They are the following: Peter Fusaro , former Advisor on Energy to the President of the United States for the Bush, Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations (key player in removing lead in gasoline with the EPA), Sherman Teichman , Founding Director Emeritus of Tufts University Institute for Global Leadership, United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, UNICEF, and the UN Youth Office.
United Nations Foundation (UNF)	UNF is a nonprofit focused on issues that center on the SDGs, build initiatives across sectors to solve problems at scale, and engage influencers and citizens who seek action.	N/A	One such example related to this work is the Data Partnerships for Sustainable Development initiative that the author is in touch with its leadership team. Another example is the American Leadership on the SDGs that the author is also in touch with through UNA-USA to which the UNF is the parent organization.
World Benchmarking Alliance	WBA is a nonprofit with a two-fold purpose: 1) to develop benchmarks series assessing the most influential companies on their contributions to meeting the SDGs, and 2) to build a movement to incentivize businesses and hold them to account for the SDGs.	Member Ally	Global Futurist Initiative is a member Ally as well as the United Nations Foundation. The way WBA works with the author is through the Alliance community, a voluntary community that requires no costs but mutual interests with bringing SDG 17 to life. Upon becoming a member, the author and the organization is working to co-curate partnerships and collaboration opportunities with Allies based on these mutual interests and priorities.

Proposed Policy Recommendations

[H.Res.30 - Supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) commits the United States to the Global Goals and was introduced in 2021. The bill is sponsored by Rep. Barbara Lee [D-CA] and co-sponsored by 8 other Democratic House representatives. Since its introduction, the bill has been stalled in the Republican-majority Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations within the Committee on Foreign Affairs in Congress.

The two overarching goals of the project are the following:

1. Amend H.Res.30 to focus on localized data systems strengthening.

Specific key policy recommendations include the following amendments:

- A. Invest in localized data systems for collecting data on the SDGs at a county-level.
 - a. Support data collection needs similar to the capacity building needed for the census in “data deserts” and/or create pathways for citizen-generated data ([see case study here](#)).
 - b. Fund the development of dashboards and technical infrastructure required to support local capacity.
 - c. Define and fund staff resources for collecting, aggregating, analyzing, visualizing, and reporting.
- B. Define dashboard triggers for investments and for state actions to address large SDG gaps (i.e., if an indicator calls for aggressive action) as measured by the county-level SDG dashboard.

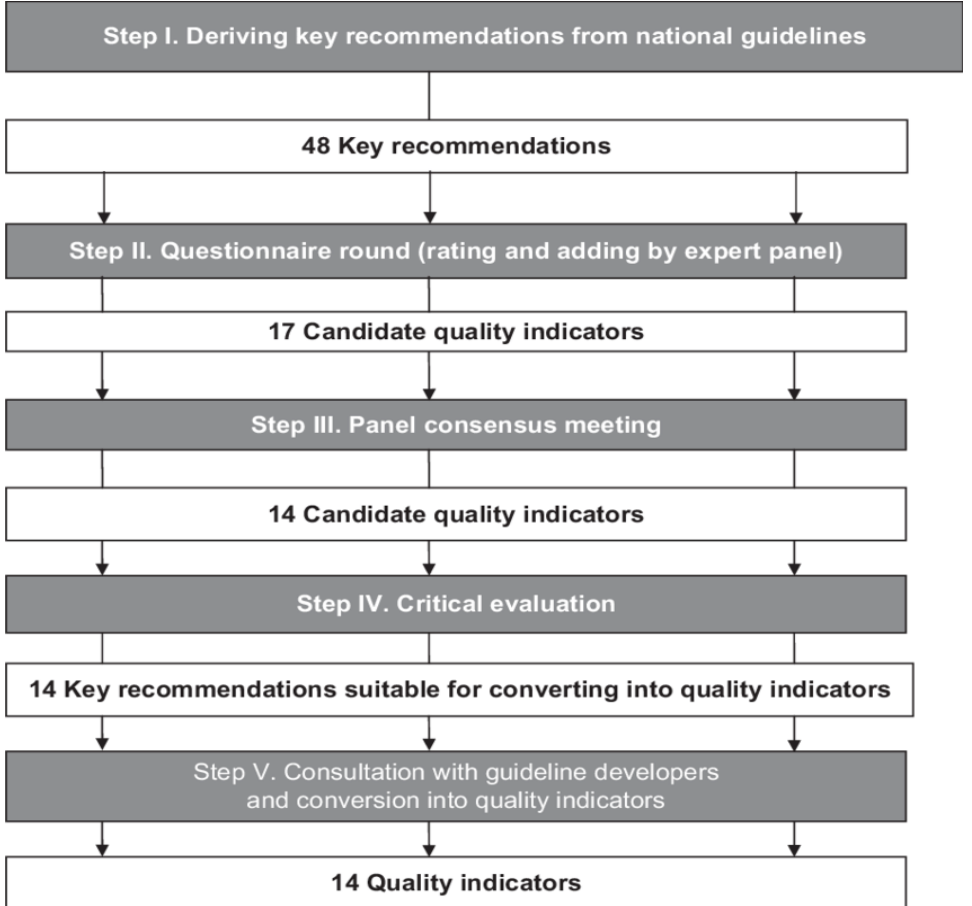
2. Pass the amended H.Res.30 for immediate implementation.

Specific deliverables of this project include the following:

- A strategy document for passing this bill or another such bill that commits the United States to support and invest in local capacity building for data systems that measure progress towards meeting the SDGs based on a prioritized list of concerns that need addressing from key policy actors.
- ‘Culture-setting’ guidelines about how legislators of any party can embrace the SDGs, transcending political affiliation and to the benefit of their constituents.
- Recommendations to policymakers, activists, researchers, and other decision makers about the value of a bi-partisanship and how parties can move closer towards collaboration.

Research Methods

An impact analysis will be performed to determine whether the proposed systems and policy modifications will yield the desired outcomes. Two proposed methods for this analysis are 1) forecasts to determine whether the proposed modifications would yield significant impact on a given population and 2) a stepwise RAND-modified Delphi method to generate quality success criteria to determine the viability of the amended bill to bring to the floor of the House of Representatives for a vote.

Method	Description	Output
Forecasting	<p>Relevant experts/legislatures are shown an intervention and are invited to give a numerical estimate of its likely impact on a given population if that intervention were to be adopted. They also provide their level of certainty (Tetlock, 2005). Evidence has shown that by averaging across the right pool of experts, or in this case legislatures, and taking advantage of ‘wisdom of the crowd’ effects, we can accurately rank the likely impact of such interventions (Otis, 2020). Such methods have begun to be used for selecting and prioritizing interventions (e.g., Wein et al, 2020). Legislatures are identified as the co-sponsors of the H.Res.30 and Subcommittee members of where H.Res.30 sits. Experts are identified based on a set criterion to be determined by the applicant and the faculty member collaborator, but a preemptive list has already been put together to date.</p>	<p>A prioritized list of most promising modifications as well as the most promising opportunities for collaboration and a pathway forward.</p>
Stepwise RAND-modified Delphi method	<p>Delphi methods are used for rigorously eliciting an expert consensus. Experts/legislatures will answer multiple rounds of structured questionnaires, and after each round receive anonymized feedback on the incipient group consensus, until full alignment is reached (Fletcher & Marchildon, 2014; Rosokowsky et al, 2018). This analysis, as depicted below (Luitjes et al, 2012), will be accompanied by the expert panel and insights (in reference to the potential partner even during Global Goals Week 2023 and/or 2024 as part of Step III.).</p>  <pre> graph TD S1[Step I. Deriving key recommendations from national guidelines] --> R1[48 Key recommendations] R1 --> S2[Step II. Questionnaire round (rating and adding by expert panel)] S2 --> R2[17 Candidate quality indicators] R2 --> S3[Step III. Panel consensus meeting] S3 --> R3[14 Candidate quality indicators] R3 --> S4[Step IV. Critical evaluation] S4 --> R4[14 Key recommendations suitable for converting into quality indicators] R4 --> S5[Step V. Consultation with guideline developers and conversion into quality indicators] S5 --> R5[14 Quality indicators] </pre>	<p>A categorization which will bring a consensus to the list of possible modifications that have been suggested to address potential concerns raised.</p>

Proposed Policy Audience

Several audiences are relevant to this work; these include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Subcommittee on [Global Health, Global Human Rights & International Organizations and Committee on Foreign Affairs](#)
- [Cosponsors of H.Res.30](#)
- State governments. Indiana's will be the pilot project to be followed up by [Kansas](#), [Minnesota](#), and [Hawai'i](#) as they are already proponents of the SDGs.
- Multilateral agencies (including but not limited to UNICEF, UNCTAD, and the United Nations) as the author has relationships with each of the three named organizations.
- Public sector organizations such as the United States EPA and Department of State as the author has networks in these named departments.
- Civil society organizations such as the [Indiana Council on World Affairs](#), USGLC, FP4A, [Brookings Institution](#), and others who have a vested interest in and close connections with US policymakers and international dignitaries in the sustainable development space.

Outreach

The following are initial avenues for outreach:

- The [UN Foundation's American Leadership on the SDGs Blog](#) is a viable option for submitting a press story as they tell stories about other state initiatives as seen in the above section demonstrating use cases by Kansas, Minnesota, and Hawai'i. [Instick Media](#) has also already asked the author to submit an op-ed as well for Global Goals Week.
- Foreign Policy for America and USGLC have "take action" activities that must be completed for the author to complete their program as a fellow. This proposed work would qualify as viable "take action" activities because of the nature of the SDGs and thus would be recognized by leaders of the organization. These organizations have resources for completing these activities such as partnerships with journals, but they also have resources to host panels, salon dinners, and other quality engagements for this proposed project to be a centerpiece highlight of the program. One example is the proposed Global Goals Week event.
- The author is booked for speaking events that include, but are not limited to, the following: [Youth Assembly](#), [Declaration of Human Rights by American Youth](#), and [YOUNGA Forum 2023](#). A repository of other opportunities that focus on the SDGs that could be of interest include the USGLC Capitol Hill Day, UN General Assembly/Global Goals Week (many side panels), and [World Benchmarking Alliance](#) gatherings.

The following key organizations are active on their social media accounts, and the author alone has a following of 4,000 on LinkedIn with a history of "trending posts" so there is great opportunity for wide outreach.

Social media (LinkedIn) following:

- University of Notre Dame – 190,000
- UN Foundation – 165,000
- World Benchmarking Alliance – 15,000
- US Global leadership Coalition – 10,000
- UNA-USA – 3,000
- Foreign Policy for America – 2,000
- Pulte Institute – 1,500
- Global Futurist Initiative – 200

Practical Planning

Timeline

The timeline is amenable to changes, but this is a proposed visualization of how this work will proceed over the course of the rest of 2023 and into 2024, inclusive of both major communications activities (the Washington, D.C. advocacy travel and the Global Goals Week proposed partnership activity).

Activity	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Initial discussions and planning	■											
Communications Activities (D.C. advocacy trip)		■										
Method and questionnaire development			■	■								
Expert Panel and Insights (Global Goals Week)					■							
Research permissions and IRB at institution					■							
Data collection						■	■					
Communications Activities (USGLC Forum)								■				
Analysis								■	■			
Draft & publish policy brief										■		
Draft paper											■	
Contingency												■

Appendix

Background

Secretary-General António Guterres speaks of “[rescuing the SDGs](#)” — and for good reason. Based on current data, the world is [43 years behind schedule](#). According to the 2022 UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Region report, [only 26 out of 169 Targets](#) are on track to be achieved by 2030. Some of these Targets include eradicating extreme poverty of people living on less than \$1.25 a day, ending preventable infant deaths and of children under 5 years old, and achieving universal and equitable access to potable drinking water, which should be celebrated. It is also important to note that the impact of COVID-19 is not reflected in the UNECE report, and based on [other reports](#), COVID-19 has accelerated the setback of progress for meeting the SDGs.

Similarly, the [Social Progress Imperative](#), a global nonprofit organization, follows the [progress](#) of 149 countries in order to determine the world’s ability to achieve the SDGs. Based on the [2022 Social Progress Index](#), the United States has been stagnating in social progress since 2011 and actively sliding backward on Targets since 2017. Personal rights are also declining in the United States, along with the United Kingdom and Canada. Regression within the United States is primarily related to the [SDGs](#) of good health and well-being, quality education, and peace, justice, and strong institutions, but all SDGs have taken a setback, which is why it is important for the United States to re-examine and prioritize what the issues are, where is being hit the hardest and why, and how to address them.

[A few points laid out by Brett Shaefer](#): Jay Kingham Senior Research Fellow in International Regulatory Affairs in Heritage’s Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, captured key issues driving the reason to steer the United States towards investing in localized data capacity building. It is not only a matter of ensuring that all are represented by the data, but also of improving SDG measurements/data themselves.

As Brett Schafer writes: “Even highly developed countries are still not able to report more than 40-50% of the SDG indicators... [overall] four years into the implementation period of the 2030 Agenda, only 44% of SDG indicators have sufficient data for proper global and regional monitoring.”

Further, as the economist William Easterly observed: “The MDGs were so appealing because they were so precise and measurable. ... As a later U.N. document in 2005 made clear, the MDGs held everyone accountable for meeting these ‘quantified and time-bound’ targets. In the SDGs, it is hard to imagine what the time-bound and quantified target is for harmony with nature.”

He even goes on to say that “while many individual SDG targets may be useful and worth tracking, asserting a top-down development strategy based on metric achievement merely repeats past failures. [...] *There is a role for governments*—and the U.N.—but the drive and ambition of people in a free environment are the crux of development.”

Therefore, the timing could not be better for the Biden administration to catalyze commitment to the SDGs from a localized perspective as Americans struggle with inflation in the post-COVID economy. President Joe Biden campaigned on creating a foreign policy for the American middle class. It’s time for the president, his cabinet, and all US policymakers to recommit to the American people and deliver on the SDGs.