

Reimagined in America: What Can the World Teach Us About
Building a Culture of Health?

Episode 10: Taking the Sustainable Development Goals Local

WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

On the June 4, 2021, episode of RWJF's [Reimagined in America: What Can the World Teach Us About Building a Culture of Health](#) webinar series, Majestic Lane of the City of Pittsburgh and Tony Pipa of the Brookings Institution, discussed how U.S. communities can use the Sustainable Development Goals to advance equity locally while uniting with others to improve health and well-being across the world.

A full transcript of the discussion can be found below.

Please note: Transcripts are produced by a third-party transcription service and may contain discrepancies.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Hello, and thank you for joining us for this episode of Reimagined in America. I'm Karabi Acharya and I lead the Global Ideas for US Solutions team here at Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. I'm excited for today's webinar on what we can learn from the world about taking the sustainable development goals, also known as the SDGs local. It's hard to believe, but we're already on our 10th episode of our Reimagined in America webinar series.

Please check out the link in the chat to listen to past episodes where we cover topics ranging from food justice, to connecting with you. Thanks so much to those of you who are returning to the series and for those of you joining us for the first time, welcome. So, before we start the conversation, just some quick housekeeping, we're using the webinar format. So you are welcome to use the chat, but if you have a question for us or one of the speakers, please use the Q&A button at the bottom of your screen. And that's where we will be pulling the questions from.

If you want to turn on live closed captioning, simply select the closed captioning button at the bottom of your screen. And also, the webinar's being recorded and you'll all receive a copy of the recording and links to resources that we discussed today in an email later today. Our webinars usually end after about one hour, but we've always found that we're in the middle of a fantastic conversation, and so, we tried something in our last episode that we're going to do today as well. We're going to host an after party of sorts.

We know that many of you might need to drop off after an hour, but for those of you who want to continue the conversation a little longer, we'll keep the line open for another 30 minutes and continue the Q&A with our speakers.

All right. Well, so today's story begins in 2015, when all the United Nations Member States, 193 countries to be exact, joined together to create a plan of action to drive efforts to end poverty, protect the planet, reduce inequities and improve wellbeing for all. This plan, which was called, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, built on decades of work done around the world to ensure that all people have what they need to thrive.

At the center of the agenda, are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals known as the SDGs for short, and the goals range from no poverty, to decent work and economic growth, to climate action. And each goal has targets that hone in on more specific issues. So, here's a quick look at all 17 goals and what they mean for our future.

VIDEO: ['We The People' for The Global Goals](#)

We can be. We must be the first generation to end extreme poverty. The generation most determined to fight injustice and inequality. The generation that saves the planet

from climate change. And this is how it will get done. The global goals—a 15-year plan for everyone, everywhere, with no one left behind.

We will live in a world where nobody anywhere lives in extreme poverty. Where no one goes hungry. Where no one wakes in the morning asking you if there will be food today. We will live in a world where no child has died of diseases we know how to cure. And where proper health care is a lifelong right for us all.

We will live in a world where everyone goes to school and education gives us the knowledge and skills for a fulfilling life.

We will live in a world where all girls and all women have equal opportunities to thrive and be powerful and safe. We cannot succeed if half the world is held back.

We will live in a world where all people can get clean water and proper toilets at home, at school, and at work.

We will live in a world where there is sustainable energy for everyone. Heat, light, and power for the whole planet, without destroying the planet.

We will live in a world where economies prosper. And new wealth leads to decent jobs for everyone.

And we live in a world where our industry, our infrastructure and our best innovations are not just used to make money, but to make all our lives better.

We will live in a world where prejudices and extremes of inequalities are defeated inside our countries and between different countries.

Where people who live in cities and communities are safe, and progressive and support everyone who lives there.

Where we replace what we consume. Planet where we put back what we dig out of the earth.

We will live in a world that is decisively rolling back the threat of climate change.

Where we restore and protect the life in our Ocean and Seas.

Where we restore and protect life on land, the forests, animals, the earth itself

With peace between, and inside countries. Where all governments are open and answer to us for what they do at home and abroad—and justice rules. With everyone equal before the law.

Where all countries, and we the people work together in partnerships of all kinds to make this world for all a reality for everyone, everywhere.

These are the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development. Let's get to work. Let's make it happen.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Great. So, I hope everyone was able to name all the celebrities in that video. I haven't quite gotten there yet, but... So these goals; government, non-profits, universities and communities around the world have made the SDG central to their work. They offer a framework to guide initiatives, as well as a way to measure progress. Within each goal, there are multiple targets and indicators to help us track progress on the specific parts of each goal.

And there's an end date. The agenda commits to reaching the SDGs by 2030. Embedded in the SDGs is the idea that no single entity can solve the problems that our society faces. They reinforce that we must work together in a meaningful way to ensure that no one is left behind. Although the United States hasn't made the SDGs a national priority or framework, like many other countries have American leadership is not absent.

Cities, states, universities, philanthropies, companies, non-profits across the country have embraced the SDGs in their work. From Los Angeles to Orlando, to Pittsburgh, local leaders are harnessing the power of the SDGs. And just as they're learning from an international movement, these cities are also contributing to global change. This incredible ingenuity is what we'll focus on today.

So before I introduce our speakers, I want to take a minute to hear from all of you. So we have two questions that should pop up on your screen. So, the first question is, are you aware of any efforts or conversations in your community or local government that are leveraging any of the sustainable development goals? Just to answer yes or no. And then you, you might need to scroll down to see the second question, which is why did you join today's webinar? And please, just select all that apply. I'll give you a couple seconds for that. Okay. And Kyle, just let us know when we've got the results.

POLL

Are you aware of any efforts or conversations in your community or local government that are leveraging any of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? (Choose one)

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Why did you join today's webinar? (Check all that apply)

- I want to know more about the SDGs and how I can use them in my work
- I'm looking for solutions that I can bring to my own community
- I want to understand what we can learn from other countries

PRODUCER: Kyle McLoughlin, Burness

Sure. Right. About 75% now. (silence) We're at 90%, so we'll leave it open for another 10 seconds or so.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Okay. Great. (silence) All right. So, very interesting. We've got, in terms of people's awareness of using the SDGs in your community, it's a split. About a third, say yes. A little more, almost 40% say no. And then some aren't sure. And then, why did you join today's webinar? 76% are interested in the SDGs, others interested in solutions they can bring to their own community, and 50% want to learn from other countries.

Fantastic. So, a wonderful group for the session today. All right. So, I am really excited to introduce our two speakers. Tony Pipa is a Senior Fellow for Global Economy and Development at the Center for Sustainable Development at Brookings Institution. He studies place-based policies to advance social progress, such as using the SDGs at the local level. He also studies the future of US International Aid and lessons from around the globe to improve rural development in the United States.

Prior to joining Brookings, Tony served as the chief strategy officer for the US Agency for International Development. Tony brings a really unique perspective on the SDGs today. In 2015, he was a special envoy at the State Department, and he led the US delegation at the United Nations to negotiate and adopt the goals.

Majestic Lane serves as the Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief Equity Officer for Mayor William Peduto in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In his role, he leads the administration's

focus on ensuring opportunity for all residents through education, workforce development, safe and healthy communities and digital inclusion. He also manages the administration's engagement with national organizations on equity and inclusion efforts.

Majestic has led Pittsburgh's efforts to adopt the SDGs, making it one of a handful of US cities to do so. He has worked with partner organizations across the city from universities to the healthcare sector to bring this framework to life.

Welcome and thanks so much to both of you for being here today. I'm going to kick things off with a couple of questions of my own, and then we will take questions from the audience. And just as a reminder, if you have questions, please submit them through the Q&A button at the bottom of your screen. So, let's dive in. Tony, let's start with you, how many the SDGs translate from the global to the national, and then even to the more local level? Tell us about what you're seeing in terms of cities adoption of the SDGs.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

Well, thanks Karabi, and it's wonderful to be here and thanks for hosting this session, and it's great to be here with Majestic as well. Because I really look forward to hearing more about what the progress that Pittsburgh's made on this agenda. So, just to dive in a bit, one thing I think to keep in mind is that the SDGs really reflect a modern conception of development that is, no matter the income of a country that there's still work to do. And so, they apply to every country itself.

And that's the way in which when we were in the general assembly, we were thinking about these. So, no matter how well we're doing economically in the United States, we still have issues of poverty. We still have issues of inequality. There are still things that we can do around biodiversity and climate change and good health and wellbeing. And so, these apply to us as much as they apply to the rest of the world as well.

The second thing is, we negotiated these, the SDGs are created from the perspective of national governments. The goals of the targets are at the national and the global level, but because they encompass a comprehensive vision of development and how those things fit together, many different sectors and lots of local leaders have seen it reflected in the things that they're trying to do in their own local communities.

And so, you've seen mayors and you've seen local business leaders say, "These apply to us." The SDGs have a goal. SDG 11, that's really about cities, but if that's from the nat... That's the viewpoint of a national government, and we're talking about cities saying, "Look, we want to make progress on issues of inequality as well as issues of climate and environmental sustainability."

So, when we think about this, there's been a growing global movement of cities and local leaders taking these on. And when I look at the globe, I look at places like Bristol, in the United Kingdom. Eighth largest urban area in the UK and really always known for its environmental sustainability practices and goals. It was the European Green Capital in 2015, but also, and it's a very prosperous, it's one of the fastest growing metros pretty prosperous, but at the same time has really stark inequality.

In fact, 16% of its population live in 10% of the most deprived areas in the country. And so, you've got the really stark difference even as it's a very progressive and prosperous place. And their Mayor Marvin Risa, "This won't do it. It doesn't do to take just action on climate change when we've got these kinds of inequities, especially as they intersect with race in the city."

And so, as they set out to create a city strategy, they said, "Look, what we really want to accomplish is reflected in the SDGs." And so they use the SDGs as a framework by which they brought lots of different parts of the community together; business leaders, the university, civil society leaders, people from the neighborhoods, they created even a governance structure with a set of boards that people could serve on to help create a city strategy that reflected the SDGs with some very specific metrics and benchmarks that they would try to create.

And then created a series of sprints on a yearly basis to say, "Here's how we're all going to join together to make progress on this particular goal in this particular way and contribute toward that." And you're seeing that, with other cities, they also said to themselves, "Look, even as we do procurement and buy services for our city, how do we integrate the social value of what we're trying to achieve through our strategy in the SDGs into the cost benefit analysis of how we're going to spend our money."

And you see that in other cities, like Mannheim, Germany, Malmö, Sweden you've really seen cities start to pick this up and to start to say, "How do we actually even measure and report on our progress and even start to do local reports and reviews, something that we call a voluntary local review, as to what the progress looks like in their city."

Now, this isn't just global or we're going to hear some of what's happening in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the US, but it's also a growing movement in the US and you mentioned Los Angeles and Orlando, Hawaii has a whole bevy of local leaders that are doing this work. We're seeing it pop up in San Diego, Phoenix, Minneapolis different places in Florida. So, it's really exciting to see that international and global framework also start to provide a frame for how US communities can do better as well.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. Thanks, Tony. So Majestic, well, let me turn to you. Pittsburgh was one of the first US cities to adopt the SDGs. And could you tell us a little bit about what went into that decision, and then what is happening? What does it look like in practice? Are

you seeing any impacts already? And then finally, as you think about transition to the new mayor, how do you think the city will keep the momentum going?

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Sure. Thank you. Well, one, I think the origin of it really was a couple of things. I'm a confluence of events one, was the city's participation as we came out of our postindustrial economy and went into our technological economy. You started to see a lot of the attention that was given to the city and the city became an attraction, really for global talent and global discussion.

But at the same time, we knew that we had a lot of things that were going on in our city, that fundamentally were challenges for us. And along with some of our other work around equity and inclusion that have been happening, we knew we needed a framework that gave us more of a broader view, and a broader view of how we were to see ourselves, people may remember when President Trump spoke about, he hears a represent Pittsburgh, not Paris, and the mayor said, "Well, Pittsburgh is aligned with Paris. Pittsburgh is part of a global community."

And that's just an example of how we had to see ourselves, even though things that are happening locally, as connected to the global environment. And what you will find in the SDGs, for me is that many of the same things that countries are grappling with, cities are now grappling with. Like large and even mid-sized cities like Pittsburgh are grappling with many of these same issues around poverty, around gender equity, around education, around decent work, around people being well.

I mean, these are not issues that are just the domain of federal governments and national governments now, but actually the domain of cities that have many of those same issues within it. So, by being able to identify with this framework, we were then able to really start putting our work in silos, but also silos that are cross cutting so that we know that certain actions have multiple benefits in multiple parts of the goals, which allow us to then track and see, what are we doing?

What are the activities that are going towards our water? We've had some issues with our water and sewer authority. So. the idea of our water is just as relevant as the national conversation. And so for us, it's organized our thoughts allowed us to really look at our departments and authorities and say, "Who's working on what? And how do we put those things in the appropriate places to be able to then measure them and then manage them." [inaudible 00:20:10] said, "What you can't measure, can't manage."

So, the SDGs give us the ability to measure what's happening, see what's cross-cutting, see what are the most effective activities that government can do to actually impact multiple goals, and then move forward to see what impacts we're having going forward. One of the things that have been important about it, is to Tony's point, the conversation

around using the SDGs as a unifying North Star, if you will, between a city, corporations, universities, and nonprofits.

So for example, in Pittsburgh, as the city adopted the SDGs, we also have Carnegie Mellon who has adopted the SDGs, a university in Pittsburgh. We also have Covestro international company that's located in Pittsburgh that has also adopted them. So, there you have a confluence between corporate, universities and the city, and additionally, there's a nonprofit called the Forbes Fund that also adopted them.

So now you have a conversation around a shared set of ideas that become difficult in this time with so many things happening in cities and across the country, it can be difficult to agree on a North Star or difficult to agree the efforts that you're doing in particular places. So, the SDGs have been great for us to allow us to do that and connect with other like-minded institutions to set that North Star.

And the third question around, what will happen as a transition? What we think is that, the work of the SDGs has been that powerful and that there are other really strong institutions that have also been working on them. And the SDGs are aligned with much of our equity work, they're in though, and this year we'll be going through our second VLR, aligning it with the budget and procurement.

So we think that going into the next administration, that many of these things will just be part of the way that work is done. And that's also part of our goal. How do we make sure that the SDGs are just something to be thought about? And then also, that external stakeholders, didn't say, "Administration, mayor, how are you connecting with the SDGs? Because we knew how the prior administration was." To really set the framework and setting a base for folks really to see where we can go from here.

That's fantastic. That's fantastic. So, for both of you, what advice do you have for local US communities and policy makers who are interested in incorporating the SDGs? And maybe Tony, if we will go to you first and then Majestic, but, what's your advice for local communities?

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

So, especially at the local level, we found is that, the SDGs can seem really a bit intimidating and at some level almost overwhelming, like Majestic said, and we earned 17 goals, but even underneath those goals, as you said, Karabi, there's a set of targets and a set of metrics, so it's really 169 targets. And then, even more a set of metrics trying to measure progress against those targets.

And that just seems, especially for government of a mid-sized city, or even for a local business, or something like that, "Wow, that seems like a lot." But what we've found, especially at the local level is typically there's somewhat of a shared sense of priorities

on the three, or four, or five things that that community really wants to make progress on, or work on most.

And we really think of it not as 17 or 169, but the rule of three. So, the SDGs force you to think through three different dimensions at once. The social/human dimensions, the economic dimensions, and the environmental dimensions. And what you do is look at those sorts of priorities through all three of those dimensions and making sure that you're trying to multi solve or make progress on those three different dimensions at once.

And so, thinking in those terms seems to whittle it down and also make it more right-sized for the local level. I guess I would say.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Great. Majestic, what will you add/advice to communities, local communities, who are interested in incorporating the SDGs?

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

I would say really, it's just using it as a North Star and as a measure to say, "Hey, these 17 things, what's important to us and how many of these things fall within our jurisdiction? Maybe you may have some situations where some things don't fall in your jurisdiction. So, maybe you might want to share and evangelize with the others, that it does fall in their jurisdiction to share that, but focus on what you do.

And also what we've done is really married it with our equity focus and our equity lens to say, "As you look at the 17 issues who was being unduly impacted by this particular goal." So we're saying decent work. Who's at work, and who's not at work. If we're looking around gender equality and women who we know what women are doing well in the city and what women aren't.

So I think it really gives you different places to look into and then asking yourself, the next question of, "Here's the issue, here's our metrics, but then how do we dis-aggregate our metrics to be able to really get to what's happening in our city and see the nuance of who's doing well, or maybe not as well, where's the opportunity for growth?"

So I really think marrying it with an equity lens and also obviously our resilience lens. So, with those two lenses looking at it, I think we've been able to really make it doable and bite-sized it, if you will, to have that dialogue, but then also have a team thinking about all of it and putting it together.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. That's great. Well, the questions from the audience are pouring in, so why don't we turn to them? And just as a reminder you can ask questions in the Q&A button at the bottom of your screen. So, let's turn to some of those. So, one of the questions is, how do we learn what is already happening in the United States? Is there a central information center? Is there anything happening at the state level? Would we need to learn about efforts state by state? It seems like cities are taking the leads. Is there a coalition or entity to share efforts or outcomes? I think Tony, that question is made for you.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

A lot of questions in that one question, too. So, a couple of things, I guess I would say. To the point about states or cities, I do think in the US we've seen more traction and more leadership within cities, or even surrounding areas of cities. More regions, Orlando, for example, Orlando City has committed to them. You have the Community Foundation, Central Florida Foundation also using that as a basis, and they're working together with university. And then, even the outlined county and region are starting to work together.

Hawaii as a state has done the first statewide review of progress. And it actually organized four different county mayors as part of that, but they are doing it. And the Sustainable Development Solutions Network has done an index in the past that looked at state by state what the progress has been on the SDGs. But in terms of leadership at a state level, I would point to Hawaii.

I know that there's some analysis happening in other states that are predominantly located within universities. For a central clearing house on what's going on in the US, so we've got local leadership on the SDGs program at Brookings, but that's global. It's not just the US it's global, but there's still a lot of resources on there. And we've partnered with the United Nations Foundation in the past, on an event called American Leadership on the SDGs.

And you can find those two programs, actually out of that, we are about to launch a partnership with the UN Foundation. And one of the key pillars of that particular partnership will be a web resource that tries to show what's happening in different sectors and in different geographies across the United States. So keep your eyes open for that. It's actually going to launch quite soon over the next couple of weeks.

And there will be continued in content put on it, in terms of small stories, and case studies, and things about who's doing what across the US. But you do have activity in different sectors from philanthropy, to civil society, to the business sector, to city and state governments.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. Thanks, Tony. Here's a question about, so you mentioned that the SDGs are created, and I think, maybe Majestic, if you want to start with this question, you mentioned that the SDGs are created from the perspective of national government. When we talk about localizing the SDGs, how do we also take into account furthering a grassroots approach to the SDGs? So, I don't know, Majestic, if you want to start and then Tony to chime in.

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Sure. No. I think that's a challenge in the opportunity for cities across the board is, how do you make sure that you have this level of maximum participation and you don't have something coming from on high? Even if it's good, still may not have the support of a broader community. So, I think it's really about engagement. And in Pittsburgh, for example, we were able to do workshops and some things to let people know what the SDGs were. And we've also had the benefit of that. There are some grassroots organizations who had already aligned themselves with the SDG work.

For example, there was an organization that works with young people around sports and leadership, and they had already connected to the SDGs without even really knowing that we were doing it, frankly. They just saw it as important for the work to have a global vantage point.

So, we've had some grassroots organizations and some grassroots leaders that have connected to it. But I would say [inaudible 00:30:59] an opportunity in the future, is to make sure that there's ample time and opportunity to really workshop what the SDGs are and make them part of the common language of community often, and what they're asking for.

Just as, right now you're hearing equity and inclusion and resilience be part of the conversation. I think the SDGs as a framing could be a really good way for community to say, "Hey, what are we doing around decent work? What are we doing around water? What are we doing around equity? What are we doing around education? What's happening?" And that's just, I think a city taking the time and the resources to really roll that out in a grassroots level, alongside with building it at the grass tops as people would say, in institutions to make sure it's institutionalized.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

And Tony, I know this is happening in many countries, really at a popular level.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

I was just going to say, for example, a city like Mannheim in Germany, they actually use the SDGs as the basis for public survey, when they were starting to develop what their city priorities were, as well as a series of focus groups and just public convenience that people came to. But the SDGs offered them the organizing principle.

And in fact, we've done a partnership in the past with the Rockefeller Foundation for this signature program called 17 Rooms where we would bring together global leaders on their SDGs in the true, and then cross-pollinate, but that model actually, we've seen other institutions and even locality use that as a way to just convene people from their communities and come together and say, "Here's what we think is both important, and here's what we think we individually can make a contribution," which is really interesting.

And I think the other thing that we should not forget about and actually really elevate when we talk about grassroots leadership, on this is youth leadership. I mean, this is really an agenda that has a lot of resonance with youth in schools or universities, and you've seen lots of different efforts. Even across the US, Orlando has a great example of an organization that's just using the SDGs as a way to bring youth leadership together, to work together, and plan together, and address a particular community issue by using the SDGs as the framework for that.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Yeah. So, let's talk about data for a minute. As you mentioned, Tony, the SDGs were developed at a national level with national level indicators. And so, the question and Majestic, particularly for you, is when you think about the targets and metrics that you're setting within Pittsburgh, what are some of the biggest challenges that you've had related to data availability and quality at the city level? And how have you had to adapt the national level indicators and targets to a city level?

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Well, I think one of the challenges is the generally availability of the levels that you need to hit with your targets. So, if you're talking about water, and how water is dealt with then, "Okay. Was there someone that already had created some data on that? Or do you have a data relationship with a data collaborative in Pittsburgh?" We're fortunate that, because of our universities, we have no shortage of people who are willing to share data.

And we're part of a Western Pennsylvania Data Collaborative where the county and a lot of other institutions share data. So, there's a place to be able to get the information, to extract it, so we have an embarrassment on riches on that level. So, for us it's been a

little easier to say, "Where's the data on these 17 issues?" And then even again, breaking it down, "Can we desegregate it to look at the equity levels from a racial and gender perspective in regard to that."

But I would say it would be challenging, but there's also a lot of these national clearing houses that I think in cross-walk the information that's out there, to some of the challenges that are in your respective cities. And to think about whichever goal you're thinking about like, "Okay. Who focus on that." And then try to think about what metrics you need from them, and then start that outreach as your baseline.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Thanks so much Majestic. And Tony, what are your thoughts? And what are you seeing in terms of the data piece of this? And how cities are making sense of it and adapting it to a local level?

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

So, there's a commonly set of accepted indicators for the national level. That's the formal architecture through the UN. There's no such set for localities. And that's both a challenge and an opportunity as Majestic was saying. And I think it goes to the importance of a community, or a city, knowing what they want to prioritize, and then developing the data ecosystem. And it might not just be what they're collecting, but they also might be working with organizations, or neighborhood groups, or universities, to help with that.

And we do see a lot of partnerships between cities and universities. But I think the one thing to emphasize is that the SDGs aren't necessarily built, especially for the local level to be a compare and contrast on the same indicators. But actually, I don't think that's where cities or localities are finding their value, anyway. They really see it as a way to create a common language that as Majestic said, means city government can connect with philanthropy, business, nonprofits, universities, but also city to city, or community to community then can exchange their own practices, innovations, challenges from a common place.

They don't have to go through a lot of explanation with each other. They can say, "We're honed in on this set of SDGs, this is where we're trying to get to over the next 10 years." The third thing I guess I would say is you are seeing in Pittsburgh is an example of the data analysis. They didn't have real art, but you're also seeing cities like Los Angeles, and what's happening in the state of Hawaii, actually create data dashboards online, so that they can just be as transparent and real time as possible about what kind of progress they're making.

It can be difficult to get the data you need, and that it be dis-aggregated to the level you really want when you're looking at issues of equity, and spatial inequality and things like that, but I think that's a really important step forward because it creates a different dialogue between the citizens and their governments as well.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Great. Thanks. So, another question that's come in and this is really, it would be great to hear from both of you. How do you make the case for city or regional leadership to take on at the SDG framework? What compels them to use the SDGs and then, our grants, or other funding, typically involved to help kickstart the process?

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

So, I'll start, from a city perspective, I think it's really... Talking about the compelling reality of having and sharing a North Star. Often, they're very amorphous things that are promised during campaigns, and people run on very amorphous ideas of what's going to happen making a city better, but often don't have the metrics or the measurements to really define what that looks like and what that means.

And I think to the SDGs give you a lens and give you a really portable structure in which to do it. And then also, an international perspective of what that looks like and means and other places. So, it really gives structure to two, I think a hazy way that people may look at how you judge and how you judge governing cities.

So, I think that's really, the really one that, how do you create a North Star that everyone can get around, that everyone can connect to, that cities can be held accountable to, communities can be held accountable to, everybody can really say, "This is what success, not just failure, but this is what success looks like." And I think far too often, we don't really have that lens of, "This is what success looks like," but the SDGs gives you that.

And the second question, I'll say, I think is really, Pittsburgh, we've been fortunate to engage with philanthropy that supports many of these ideas and as well as national organizations that want to make sure that we're at the table talking about these things as an example of our leadership. But I really think once you can talk about why you want to do it, get the North Star, use it as an organizing principle for leadership, then I think the resources can flow from there.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

And Majestic, I've also heard, and I think this has been true for Pittsburgh is that, part of the pool is also the opportunity for our city to contribute globally, to this larger global goal. Could you speak to that a little bit too?

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Absolutely. Absolutely. It was part of the Mayor Peduto's vision was just to really take the things that are working in Pittsburgh and really present them to the world and talk about the levels of collaboration that are happening, that are going on that then other people could look at and really having cities share what we often call, best practices, but I just look at it as city sharing what's going on and then what you can take from it. And how you can maybe use it and pivot on it and do certain things.

So, it's really about how do we engage in a global community with our local challenges, and in a very same way, we know that there are things that we may not do as well, but other cities may be doing well, and we can learn from that. So, it's really that communication, that language from city to city, that Tony talked about, that allows us now to talk about our shared priorities and shared interests as cities for the good of our citizens in ways that we can understand what we're talking about and can get in for information transfer.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Thanks. Tony, how do you make the case to cities and local region?

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

Well, just building on what Majestic had said, I do think there's an inbred discipline. Actually having, as Majestic was calling the North Star, but having an end date and an end point really sharpens the basis for partnership as well. So, I saw in the chat early on, somebody who was pointing to collective impact, and I used to call, when I was at the UN, I used to call the SDGs, collective impact on steroids. Because it's not just collective impact around one particular issue, it's actually, what do we want as a community for all levels of wellbeing?

And how do we put out the targets, the very precise, as precise as we can get the targets that we're trying to reach by a particular time? And if we can do that and get agreement on it, then it really mobilizes action. You can pre-create partnerships the kinds that Majestic's talking about, amongst the city, and the philanthropies, and local nonprofits, and universities, where everyone's comparative advantage is all pulling together. And it can also be across jurisdictional boundaries.

So, it could be the city government with the county government, or regional thing thinking together. So, I think it's both the North Star and then the bases that provides you for partnership because of the common language. And because of everybody being able to see what they can reflect in this, it can create a different way of even pulling together and governing.

And I do think, Karabi, to your point, the global facing aspect of it is just exciting. I mean, what we've found in working with local communities is, you don't start by bringing the SDGs and say, "Hey, you all got to commit to the SDGs." You start by saying, "What are your local priorities?" And as those get defined, then you say, "Actually, making progress on those would contribute to these global issues in this particular way. Let's just creates another level of excitement and another level of momentum."

And frankly, for some cities, larger cities, it provides them a globally facing framework in which to speak the language of what's happening, just globally. And so, if you're wanting like Pittsburgh, to be recognized globally, the SDGs provide you a way to be able to do that.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. That's great. So, we have a question around narratives and narratives of progress. And I think as you both know, that for a long time, the narrative around progress has largely been around consumption and economic growth. The focus on SDGs turns that on its head a bit saying that what matters most is social and human dignity, connection, environmental sustainability, and a host of other things, where our economy is one of those dimensions.

So, how are you both seeing the narrative? Are either shared assumptions we hold about how the world works. How are you seeing the narrative change a city policy and operations aligned with the SDGs? Are we setting different societal narratives and expectations? Who would like to jump in on that one?

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Tony, if you can start with that one, now I'll come right after you. That's a big one.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

Well, I think we've at least seen the conversation change. I don't know that we've seen the behavior change yet, which is, how do we create the reality out of our rhetoric? I do think you've seen a recognition of that, and especially in a COVID environment or a post COVID environment. We've seen that economic growth doesn't provide the resilience

and security for our communities, or even particular families, or particular people in the way in which we think it might. And the SDGs capture that.

And it also doesn't allow us to decouple that economic progress from impacts to our climate, or to our environment, or what those trade-offs might be amongst different neighborhoods spatially, for example. So, I think you've seen that recognition and I think the SDGs provide you an entry point on how to try to struggle with that recognition.

Frankly, I think one of the reasons why cities have become such leaders on the SDGs, is because the trade-offs amongst those different things, like at a national government level, becomes too abstract. It's like, too easy for it to be divorced from real people. But in a city, as a government and as a local business, the people who are being affected are very near to you. And so, you can try to understand what the impacts are on multiple dimensions, more concretely, more tangibly at the local level.

But I think we need a whole new language like, is economics just money? Or how is sustainable economics different than what we typically think of as economics? And how do we measure that? And what are the ways in which we think about that? I think the SDGs are definitely pushing us to get the answers to those questions more quickly. I think it's still a bit of a process though, and an evolution of how well we're doing on that. I don't know. And I'll be interested... Majestic will make this more tangible.

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Just to add on to what Tony was saying. I think, the beginning of that forming language that norming language X, is not just forming, it's a norming language, if you will, the norms of what we should be talking about, and what we should be looking at, and what things are going back to what I said in the beginning, what things are happening at across cross cutting.

For example, where's the efficiency of our activities that are having the most impact on the environment? On our economics? And on our social equity? And if we really looking, and if we start to have that level of discipline, that Tony talked about, we're saying, "Okay. You know what? There are certain activities that we do to have multiple impacts.

I think that starts a language and a discipline that really gets people in this space where they need to be, and it may not produce the results right now, but it's the language of an organizing principles that from all accounts, will produce the results. When people are on the same page, and can operate off the same page, things happen faster and they usually happen better.

And so, in our cities, we need that to occur. And that's a challenge that I think a lot of mid-size and large global cities have. It's about really, how do we get on the same page,

especially when you have tough stratification often by class, and race, and gender, and country of origin? How do you start to resolve that? And I think the SDGs really helped with that.

And the other thing that I would really say about it is that, it's part of a broader process, even for us as a transition is going to occur. It's about us now saying, "Hey, here's a language that you have to be able to speak with Mannheim, Germany and Malmo, Sweden. Here's a language that you have to be able to really have this broader dialogue, which I think cities are going to have to have, because we don't get the ability to... Our desegregation is pretty small.

If you have a country exactly that this aggregation of Sweden, or this aggregation of Pakistan, is pretty big, as far as what's going on, but it just aggregation of Pittsburgh, isn't that big. We're 57 square miles. So, you're only going to get so far in the accountability that you have is actually much quicker. There's a much quicker turnaround of accountability on SDG work, and on metrics work than it would be in a national context. So, I think that's going to be really important as well.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. That's great. Well, this is a fantastic discussion, and I think we need to transition, and we'll go into the after party, but I'm really inspired by what I've been hearing and learning from both of you. So, for folks who can stay on a little bit, please stay on the line and we'll keep the conversation going while we have questions coming in.

But before we go to the after party, I just want to share a couple of resources, our famous Blue Marble Quiz. If you haven't taken it, please do. We developed the Blue Marble Quiz to serve as a simple, yet powerful tool to help people discover the value of global learning. Take the quiz, share it with everyone you know, share it with your kids, it's super fun.

For folks who have to leave now, and we totally understand if you do, when you go to sign out, there's a very short survey that will pop up on your screen for feedback, really, truly helps us, and of course, we'll make the recording available to everyone so that you can see the entire conversation later and can share that with your networks.

So, thanks to everyone who could join us, and if you need to sign off, go ahead and otherwise, let's continue the conversation, and go back to some questions. Great. So, let's see. One question that's come up is, what advice do you have around how to collaborate and work with various local entities to achieve the SDG goals? And also for gaining public support and funding? So, what advice do you have for collaboration at the local level?

So I'm sure Tony will be able to eliminate some net international context. But for us, it's really about relationships, and acknowledging that even if you haven't worked with an

organization before the fact that we share some goals here, and then building a relationship really, really matters because you have to sit down and be thoughtful through some of this stuff, no, I want to say our Chief Resilience Officer Grant Ervin and his team have just been really, really, really important in the weeds mechanics of sitting down with Carnegie Mellon. Sitting down with Tony and Sarah. Sitting down with the Forbes Fund, as well as myself.

And those are the mechanics of what we're doing, and how we're aligning in our metrics, and their metrics, is really where the rubber meets the road, and you start to get that level of collaboration. So, I really think it's about the relationship, and then the development of understanding how this stuff works together is really helpful, for how you make it go past just the performance of saying, "We're all using them, but then really connecting with. We're not just all using them, here's where it matters, where we intersect." And I think those intersection is where the power and the greatness starts to occur.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

Yeah. I'd agree. I think setting a table by which those relationships can happen and really honest and frank conversations can happen is important. And different localities have used different models. You've seen SDG alliances grow up in some cities, and those are generally multi-stakeholder. It's not just a nonprofit community, it's the nonprofit community, and universities, businesses, and finding a way in which they also intersect with government. You also see actually... So Bristol, back to Bristol, interestingly, the university who is able to succumb somebody from the university into city council and then that person also acted as a liaison back to a larger SDG collaborative in the city.

And so, there are different models. There's just different ways, and in the US we might steal from the collective impact model and the tables that get set through collective impact, for example.

But as Majestic said, I think the real starting element there, is to build the conversation and the relationships, and then there are different models by which those can sustain themselves as you go forward. But I think the key element from all of those is building that level of communication and relationship amongst different sectors within the city that allows collaboration.

And then, I guess one of the things I would say is, we shouldn't forget about communications. I mean, I think one of the things that Pittsburgh has done really well is, the city and the mayor have talked about the SDGs, the provost that Carnegie Mellon talks about the SDG's like, and the CEO of Covestro. I mean, it's something that they're also willing to use the language and the commonality of that language to say, "This is a basis for a ways in which we're working together as well."

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Yeah. I guess a related question is, how have you handled skepticism, and frankly, unfamiliarity with the SDGs? Not a lot of folks in the United States are all that familiar with them.

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Yeah. I mean, for us, we really made sure that we, from a more of a grassroots perspective, we made sure that we connected it with things that people understood around equity. And then when we said, "Hey, there's also this alignment with these global goals to keep people well, and make people well." And so, people can understand that, because we led with, for some communities, people don't want to hear you're leading with the global context, they want to hear that you're leading with a local context and then going global.

There's other stakeholders that want to hear that you're thinking globally, and making it local. So, I think it's really just the creativity and the perceptiveness of, "Okay. Who am I talking to? And what should I share where?" But that's one way that we've been able to really make it successful is to say, "Hey, we're leading around equity in these outcomes, and also we're attaching these 17 goals, because these 17 goals outline and connect with all of the things that the activist community may care about." That then helps them understand why we're using this context in this lens.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

Yeah. That outside in approach is definitely the way in which we've seen the goals resonate and build momentum locally. But honestly, awareness in the US is quite low of the SDGs and it's not that they're completely recognized by everyone globally as well. And I think we also see a little bit of these were negotiated under the umbrella of the UN, and do we want an outside body coming in and telling us what to do?

So, to Majestic's point, really focusing on, "This is what we care about. This is what we think is important for ourselves as a community. And by the way, it connects up to this global movement." I think the other thing I would say that's probably related to this is that, what we have seen, I think over the last year and a half, is also given what's happened with COVID and the inequities that that's exposed and given, even the global recognition of what happened after the murder of George Floyd, and the global tone that took on, not just in the US, I think we've seen a lot more interest actually in the SDGs, or at least a desire, or our willingness to say, "Huh, how do these all fit together" And how do they fit with our context?"

Because I think initially in the US, we were also budding up against the, "Oh, these don't really mean we're fine. We're doing well. How much do these really resonate with us. This might be for other places in the globe, but we're like a leader on all these different kinds of things." And I think those kinds of events have really given lie to that particular thinking.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. I think we'll just take another one or two questions. There's a question they say, I liked the discussion on the importance of community engagement. This seems key to developing intrinsically driven change that is grassroots. Do you have further ideas, recommendations, resources in terms of engaging?

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Yeah. I think again, I said it's a place where we have done okay. We could have done better. And so I think for folks thinking about applying it to their regions definitely whatever means they have, whether it's from a municipal perspective and using outreach folks, or if you're partnering with a community organization that can hold workshops and have kitchen table dinners, and really talk to people around what's happening, whatever means you think is important to get people connected to the idea, I think is important. So that the concept of the SDG lives longer than the administration.

I think that's going to be a really important part of it becoming a bigger thing in America is, if it is the lingua franca of what's happening in community, then that's what people are going to be asking for. Versus this is the language of government talking about the best interest of community. So wow, I think it has to be done from there to scale, it also has to have that conversation.

I do think that going forward cities should really think about, how do you engage with the nonprofits or use your outreach and your arms to be able to engage and do primers on language and primers on SDGs and how it really meets the goals of community as well as a global context.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

I think also, what's interesting is that, I feel conceptually, what is important to the SDGs, even what I see in the chat, the interconnectedness of all these different things. So, let's think about it. If you were to put a hundred people in the room and you ask them, what's the most thing that they feel most passionate about the world making progress today? Probably 99 out of the a hundred responses, and maybe even all the a hundred responses would be somewhere in the SDGs.

They would all be different, but they would all be reflected in this pretty comprehensive interconnected framework. And it just points out the interconnectedness both of people's passions, and also of the issues that we're trying to deal with. And so, I feel that's starting to seep into the DNA, and we might not even call it SDGs all the time.

If you look at, this doesn't answer the question directly, because that was more at the grassroots level, but if you look at the Biden/Harris, administration's, executive order on climate change, it's not just about climate change. Look at the look at the mission statement for the task force that is set up through that executive order. It's the SDGs. It's about good jobs. It's about environmental justice. It's about equity. It's about innovation. It's about infrastructure. It's about an enormous amount of things that basically met...

So even if they're not using the exact language of the SDGs, conceptually, that's interconnectedness of the different things that we're trying to do together, is starting to infiltrate. And I think that is getting that earlier question around narrative shift. I do think that that's actually starting, and I think Majestic made a great, that word of norms, like the normalization of this. This is what we're actually trying to be about. I think is really important.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. Completely agree. So, there's a question, in the next 10 years, do you think we'll see a pivot from communicating the importance of the SDGs to achieving the SDG targets? So, you can agree or disagree with the premise of the question, but Tony, you want to tackle that one first?

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

Well, I got to say, look, it might seem took a lot of years, like what we've been talking today, is process. It's preliminary. But you do have to get everything together. Like you have to get your house in order, you've got to get everybody speaking the same language, you want to get your baselines around all the different metrics, and clarity on the aspirations. But then you have to do it.

So, I think we're moving from that phase of, "Okay. Now we're getting there." And even in the previous set of goals, like the millennium development goals, I think we saw an enormous amount of effort over the last eight years of that 15 year period. So, I suspect coming out of COVID, coming out of the new conversation we're having around racial injustice in the US, and the focus on equity, and even the way businesses are saying, thereabout stakeholder capitalism, rather than shareholder capitalism.

I suspect we'll see a lot of effort being made. Will we achieve the goals? I don't know. I have my own thoughts about how close will come, but I'm cautiously optimistic that we'll definitely see some targeted action and some real intentionality around that, and increase momentum around that.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

Majestic, do you want to chime in on that?

GUEST SPEAKER: Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Pittsburgh

Yeah. Really quickly. I would say, I see it very similar to the conversation around equity as a structural conversation. 5-7 years ago, you didn't see many to any Chief Equity Officers, or resilience... 5-10 years ago, you didn't see any Chief Resilience Officers, and now they're all over the country, both. Chief Equity Officers and Chief Resilience Officers are everywhere.

And even now we have a federal government for the first time that being explicit around equity and resilience. So, that is 5-10 years of organizing to normalize that dialogue, where now we have a federal government talking about it. I think that the SDGs have the ability to be in the same space, because really, as Tony said, what you see in many cities and federal government states are challenged, I think, because of the small p and big P political issue.

But you see now, that cities in the federal government are actually since doing this now is just naming it and saying, "That's the target and how fast are we going to pivot towards the target? What are programs, policies, procedures that actually get us closer to the target?" And that's where... It's the next step, where we say, "Okay. If we say we're going to reduce poverty by 20%, what activities, what set of activities do that? What are the first four things you're doing that actually have been proven or emergent around reducing poverty."

Or, "If we're going to reduce our use of fossil fuels by this percentage, and we're going to divest from fossil fuels in Wall Street and the global markets, what things do you have to do to actually get to that place?" So, right now we're normalizing it and then we're really have to then say, "Who can implement it and understand those policies, programs, and procedures to get us to that place."

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. That's great. So one last question before we close our after party, this goes back to the issue of data. And there's a question about, what can we do to increase the amount of data being submitted to the UN? Looking at the SDG tracker, and there are

many goals that have no data from the US for example. Tony, you want to start with that?

GUEST SPEAKER: Tony Pipa, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution

So, a couple of different things. There was an online portal where, sdg.gov, which really hasn't been updated in quite a while. There is more data on the UN site, yet the US portal has gone in, but it's a good point. And US, let's be honest, is the only G7, G20 OECD country not to have done a voluntary national review of what progress looks like on the SDGs.

I'm hopeful that that might change with this particular administration, and especially given the focus that they're putting on issues that are really central to the SDGs, like Majestic was saying, around issues of equity, around issues of climate, those kinds of things. And I think that you'll also see an ecosystem of outside organizations, and you're seeing this already, start to do more and more analysis of where the US lines up on the STGs against other countries.

It's part of SDSN global index every year, and you've had the social progress index also, map back to the SDG, they're comparing the US where they are, to other countries. And like I said, you've had some state by state and city by city analysis. I think, this is a good conversation to continue to push our national government on, and I also think it's a place where local leaders in their intersections with national leaders can also be helpful.

And I think you are seeing some of our local leaders really, even globally, being recognized for their leadership on some of these issues. But I hope we'll then provide some motivation to the national government to be doing better reporting and be taking this more seriously and updating what they're doing. And I think it's not just around the SDGs, but it's around the agendas overall.

I mean, transparency of outcomes is just really important to know where we are as a country. And so, I think as many voices clamoring for that to the US can be very useful.

MODERATOR: Karabi Acharya, Senior Director, RWJF

That's great. That's great. Well, thanks so much to Tony and Majestic for the conversation today. Really, really interesting, and I'm really excited to see what happens next. I think there's just tremendous potential, and it'll be great to see what happens next. And thanks so much to those who stayed on for this after party. I hope you all have a great weekend. Please fill out the very short survey and don't forget, of course, to take the Blue Marble Quiz, stay safe, be well, and I'll see you on the next Reimagined in America webinar. Bye-Bye.