

# Advancing Well-Being in an Inequitable World: Moving from Measurement to Action



Summary of Insights from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's  
Global Conference on Well-Being

Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center  
Bellagio, Italy, Sept. 10-14, 2018



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) convened an international group of thought leaders to explore how other countries are improving well-being through policies, programs, and other actions. RWJF is using insights from this group in our work to advance a Culture of Health, where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthier life, in the United States. We offer the insights as conversation starters for others working to improve health and well-being in their nations. *Please note that RWJF offers this paper in the interest of shared learning, not as a directive or recommendation.*



### **Bellagio Conference Participants**

*Front row:* Claire Nelson, Gora Mboup, David Bornstein, Shariha Khalid Erichsen, Karabi Acharya, Mallika Dutt, Alonzo Plough, Anita Chandra, Rita Giacaman, Anita Rajan

*Middle row:* Eric Friedenwald-Fishman, Katherine Trebeck, Éloi Laurent, Romlie Mokak, Tim Ng, Mao Amis, Tarek Abu Fakh, Walter Flores, Carol Graham, Jennifer Prah Ruger, Carrie Exton

*Back row:* Julia Kim, Nancy Wildfeir-Field, Kee-Seng Chia, Nils Fietje, Liz Zeidler, José Molinas Vega, Richard Besser, Harry Burns, Danny Graham, Jennifer Messenger Heilbronner

*(For titles and organizations for the individuals pictured, please see the appendix.)*

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# Executive Summary

Well-being—the comprehensive view of how people are doing and the condition of their community, society, and environment—is increasingly being used around the world as a measure of progress. Well-being metrics provide a more nuanced and predictive view than purely economic measures, illuminating conditions of inequity and despair that other tools mask, and expanding the notion of health far beyond absence of disease. But while measuring well-being is valuable, the real opportunity may lie in applying well-being data and concepts as a driver for action, informing practice shifts, policy and systemic change, and resource allocation, and ultimately creating a new definition of what matters.

Inspired by the growing global focus on well-being, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) convened an international group of thought leaders at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Conference Center in September 2018 to explore how countries and cities can accelerate translation of well-being measurement data into meaningful action to advance well-being and increase equity. RWJF's motivation was both to advance global dialogue and action, and to inform its own work to create a Culture of Health, where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthier life, in the United States. The group it convened in Bellagio, most of whom had never met, included practitioners who shared case studies and real-world experience, academics who shared theoretical insights, and a host of other leaders from diverse and complementary perspectives.

**This paper shares case studies and insights from the group's fresh and provocative dialogue that may be useful to practitioners, policymakers, researchers, economists, and others interested in well-being, whether they are taking the first steps or fine-tuning established practice.** *Please note that RWJF shares insights from this conference in the interest of shared learning, not as a directive or recommendation.* The overarching takeaway from the convening was an immense need to radically expand the definition of progress to include well-being as a complement to economic vitality and other measures. The group also identified tangible actions that are already propelling that shift and that can be scaled up. Distilled from that conversation and described below is a set of cross-cutting considerations to make well-being work effective and equitable, and potential pathways that practitioners might use as part of a well-being approach.



## Considerations Identified by Participants at Bellagio

- **A shift to well-being can begin anywhere and is rarely linear, so start now, where you can, and iterate rapidly.** Practitioners across sectors need safe space to experiment and collaborate in new ways. The best approach is often to pilot and prove promising practices at the community level, and create channels for government to learn and take up what works.
- **Recognize that a well-being approach varies greatly in different places and contexts.** Understanding cultural context, experiences, power dynamics, and other variables is vital in creating well-being measures, interpreting what they say, and taking action that will work in the specific context. In the United Arab Emirates, for example, a Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing in central government oversees policy and practice shifts; in the conflict zones of Occupied Palestine, where policy change is extremely difficult, well-being is advanced through deep engagement and local action.
- **Commit to a future-looking, intergenerational approach.** Well-being's future orientation—centered on proactive action, prevention, and sustainable use of resources—demands intergenerational leadership. Bhutan's well-being approach, which was first articulated as GNH (Gross National Happiness) in the 1970s and is increasingly seeing the need to engage youth as leaders of change, illustrates sustained focus, commitment, and multigenerational engagement.
- **Recognize the power of measurement beyond data alone.** Having the right data not only informs action, it plays a vital role in shaping the narrative. The strongest measures will be simple and relevant to everyday people, not just elites, but not overly simplistic or reduced to one number. In the United Kingdom, numerous cities are using measurement data to establish new narratives that “reset the compass” toward the well-being of people, places, and planet.

## Potential Pathways in the Shift Toward Well-Being Identified by Participants at Bellagio

- **Create a shift in individual consciousness among influencers.** People raised to see wealth as the singular marker of progress—and spending every day hearing narratives and living in systems that reinforce that status quo—may struggle to accept well-being as the societal goal if they have not experienced it themselves. In Singapore, plans are underway for universities to engage students as future leaders to replace a widely adopted “wealth-first” mindset with a “health and wealth” mindset.
- **Advance a relevant and compelling narrative that centers well-being as the goal.** This was a dominant thread throughout the Bellagio discussion—recognizing the impact of narratives to shift cultural expectations, hold leaders accountable, and shift the definition of what matters. Nova Scotia is exploring how to shift the province's deficit-based “sluggish economy” narrative to one focused on its abundant assets in natural resources, culture, and quality of life.

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*No matter where it starts or how rapidly it scales, taking a well-being approach is our generational opportunity to transform how we define progress and, in turn, transform the choices our societies make to impact our well-being.*

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- **Practice radical inclusion at the grassroots level and shift power to build equity.** Well-being measures, efforts, and outcomes must be relevant to all communities, and must address fundamental and structural issues of inequity and exclusion. So it is critical that discourse includes and builds power among the grass roots, and especially among often unheard voices, including Indigenous peoples, youth, people living with lower incomes, women, and many others who are regularly silenced. In Australia, The Lowitja Institute has been instrumental in supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers who are shaping research, policy, and services.

- **Align and collaborate across fields, sectors, and movements.** Taking a well-being approach is intrinsically cross-sector, breaking down silos and encouraging collaboration between health, business, economics, environmental protection, education, and many other fields. It creates the opportunity to link networks, social movements, aligned standards and agendas, financial and investment models, and other disconnected efforts to create a unified approach that advances both well-being and the goals of the individual entities. The Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) is creating connections across sectors for learning, collaboration, and action, while GBCHealth links businesses interested in prioritizing well-being in their corporate strategy.
- **Transform and align government systems at local, national, and international levels.** Similarly, a well-being approach creates an opportunity for far greater collaboration—along with efficiency and impact—within governments and between systems. A good example is the New Zealand Treasury’s central government leadership to create and use a well-being framework to inform policy and resource allocation.

RWJF and other participants from the Bellagio conference are incorporating these ideas into their work and continuing to explore global approaches to well-being. A more extensive exploration of insights will be included in a special volume of RWJF’s series with Oxford Press in early 2020. Please share this paper in your networks and use it to start or advance conversations and collaborations that move well-being into action. No matter where it starts or how rapidly it scales, taking a well-being approach is our generational opportunity to transform how we define progress and, in turn, transform the choices our societies make to impact our well-being.

# Section I:

## Introduction and Context for the Discussion at Bellagio

### Why a Focus on Well-Being is an Imperative Now

Ever since the World Health Organization (WHO), in 1948, defined health as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of illness or infirmity,” interest in how to define and measure well-being has grown steadily. International bodies have refined indicators; global commissions have advocated for inclusion of well-being in measures of progress; and some cities and countries are beginning to use well-being indicators to set policy and to measure progress.

#### Well-Being Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, **well-being** is defined as the comprehensive view of how individuals and communities experience and evaluate their lives, including their physical and mental health and having the skills and opportunities to construct meaningful futures.<sup>1,2</sup>

**Well-being measurement** usually happens at three levels: individual, community, and civic. Metrics include subjective indications of how people report they are feeling in the moment and in their lives as a whole; objective measures based on data about health, income, safety, and other factors; and measures of environmental health and its impact on human well-being. Please see the box on page 8 and Figure 1 on page 11 for more detail.

**“Using a well-being approach”** or **“shifting toward well-being”** describes the use of well-being as a guiding principle to inform decisions and create impact. Cities, countries, businesses, and leaders taking this approach are incorporating well-being into the way they define and pursue progress.

**“Progress”** refers to broad definitions of human, social, and environmental progress—a broader definition of the way government, business, and other sectors measure “success” or advancement beyond economics alone.

1 National Research Council. 2013. Subjective Well-Being: Measuring Happiness, Suffering, and Other Dimensions of Experience. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/18548>

2 RAND Corporation, “Measuring Wellbeing to Help Communities Thrive,” <https://www.rand.org/capabilities/solutions/measuring-wellbeing-to-help-communities-thrive.html>

For example, The New Zealand Treasury adopted the Living Standards Framework and an accompanying dashboard of indicators ([www.treasury.govt.nz/lstdashboard](http://www.treasury.govt.nz/lstdashboard)) to measure national well-being, to guide policy proposals, and to evaluate whether existing policies are advancing well-being. This Framework draws on substantial international research, work by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>3</sup>, and more than 30 years of work on what New Zealanders value. It uses 12 indicators of current well-being: income and wealth, housing, jobs, health, knowledge and skills, leisure, safety and security, environment, civic engagement and governance, social connection, life satisfaction, and cultural identity. It also considers how the well-being of future generations will be sustained or improved by tracking natural, physical/financial, social, and human capital. Among the many benefits of this approach are the ability to understand how policies affect individuals, households, and communities (as opposed to simply the nation or per capita averages) and the ability to see how well-being is distributed among different subpopulations.

**There is great promise in evaluating concepts of well-being, and a growing imperative to translate them into action to increase equity, human progress, and a sustainable environment.**

Yet in most societies, health continues to be defined as an absence of disease. Many health care systems focus almost exclusively on curative care, with limited understanding of the social determinants of health. Most nations and communities implicitly endeavor to improve the well-being of their people, yet too often focus on short-term policy objectives with little consideration of the interlocking strategies that promote well-being across the whole of society.

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3 See the OECD's Better Life Index, [www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/11111111111](http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/11111111111)

## Elements of Well-Being Measures

Well-being measures draw on psychology, neuroscience, sociology, public health, economics, and many other disciplines to understand human flourishing and prosperity. Most of these measures take into account some combination of objective well-being (quantifiable indications of conditions), subjective well-being (self-reported life satisfaction measures), and the state of the environment and its impact on well-being. (See Figure 1 on page 11.)

Well-being researchers note that this blend of measures is crucial; relying on subjective measures alone can mask inequities, allow individual blame, and be manipulated to justify political agendas. Objective measures alone, on the other hand, can mask cultural context and ignore the wisdom of lived experience.

Evidence-based measures available from entities such as OECD, Gallup, and the WHO provide a starting point, and then must be highly informed and customized through robust engagement to align with local/national context, cultural tradition, values, and priorities.



What's more, many governments, international bodies, and dominant narratives have long defined progress by largely economic measures, which is a significant driver of both policies and practices. There has been significant progress made during this century, including global reductions of poverty; increased access to water, food, and education; increased life expectancy; and many others. However, the relative dominance of economic indicators, like the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), on our dashboard of progress has failed to help us understand or make progress on increases in inequity, grave disparities in lived experiences, unsustainable draws on natural capital, and serious damage to intergenerational prosperity.

Motivated by these mounting measures of despair and the opportunity to address them earlier, a shift is beginning. For over a decade, countries and municipalities have been using indices that measure conditions and outcomes for equitable well-being. Well-being metrics are required as part of policy cost-benefit analyses in places as varied as the United Kingdom, Canada, Paraguay, New Zealand, Bhutan, and the United Arab Emirates. Local municipalities are putting well-being goals and planning at the core of their community development and vitality strategies. Economic and public health leaders from the OECD to the WHO are seeing well-being as core to their work and helping to advance evidence-based understanding of collective responsibility for human flourishing.

Used as a complement to standard income, productivity, and health indicators, well-being metrics illuminate conditions that these other tools mask. Consider the long list of things that GDP "counts" because they cost money, but that do not contribute to—or negatively impact—well-being: incarceration, oil spills, natural disasters, massive development, cars and machines that gobble natural resources, etc.

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***"(GNP) measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans."***  
***—Robert F. Kennedy***

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As Robert F. Kennedy famously pointed out during his presidential campaign in 1968: "Our Gross National Product ... counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. ... Yet the Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans."<sup>4</sup>

4 Robert F. Kennedy, Remarks at the University of Kansas, March 18, 1968. [www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-speeches/remarks-at-the-university-of-kansas-march-18-1968](http://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-speeches/remarks-at-the-university-of-kansas-march-18-1968)

Economic reports paint a picture of unprecedented prosperity, but a well-being lens can reveal that prosperity is not broadly shared, and that the most prosperous also experience deep desperation and isolation. Take, for example, the rising rates of “deaths of despair” among white people living in poverty in the United States. These deaths by suicides and drug overdoses are the tragic culmination of tension, trauma, and ill-being. Well-being indicators could have raised alarm bells about these predictive factors earlier, alerting policymakers and informing preventive action rather than being surprised by these dire facts conveyed by traditional health data.<sup>5</sup>

A well-being approach is also intrinsically cross-sector, drawing on broad, discipline-spanning indicators to assess human and societal conditions. It breaks down silos and entrenched approaches in science and research, government and policymaking, business, funding streams, and elsewhere. It encourages collaboration between health, economics, environmental protection, education, and many other fields. Economic prosperity for some is often related to growing poverty for others; by contrast, well-being at the individual level has generative qualities at the group level. Through a well-being lens, a deeper, more dynamic framing unfolds about how people interact with systems and environments and the impact that has on their ability to flourish.

Without a doubt, the benefits of applying a well-being approach beyond measurement are taking hold. For example, early efforts are challenging the status quo by aligning national and local decision-making with well-being outcomes in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Bhutan; establishing new narratives centered on well-being in Nova Scotia and Singapore; and testing local programs to improve well-being in Occupied Palestine. **But these efforts are in their early days, and while they are encouraging, some essential questions remain about how to fully move well-being to an expected, accepted, and leading driver of policies and programs and indicator of progress:**

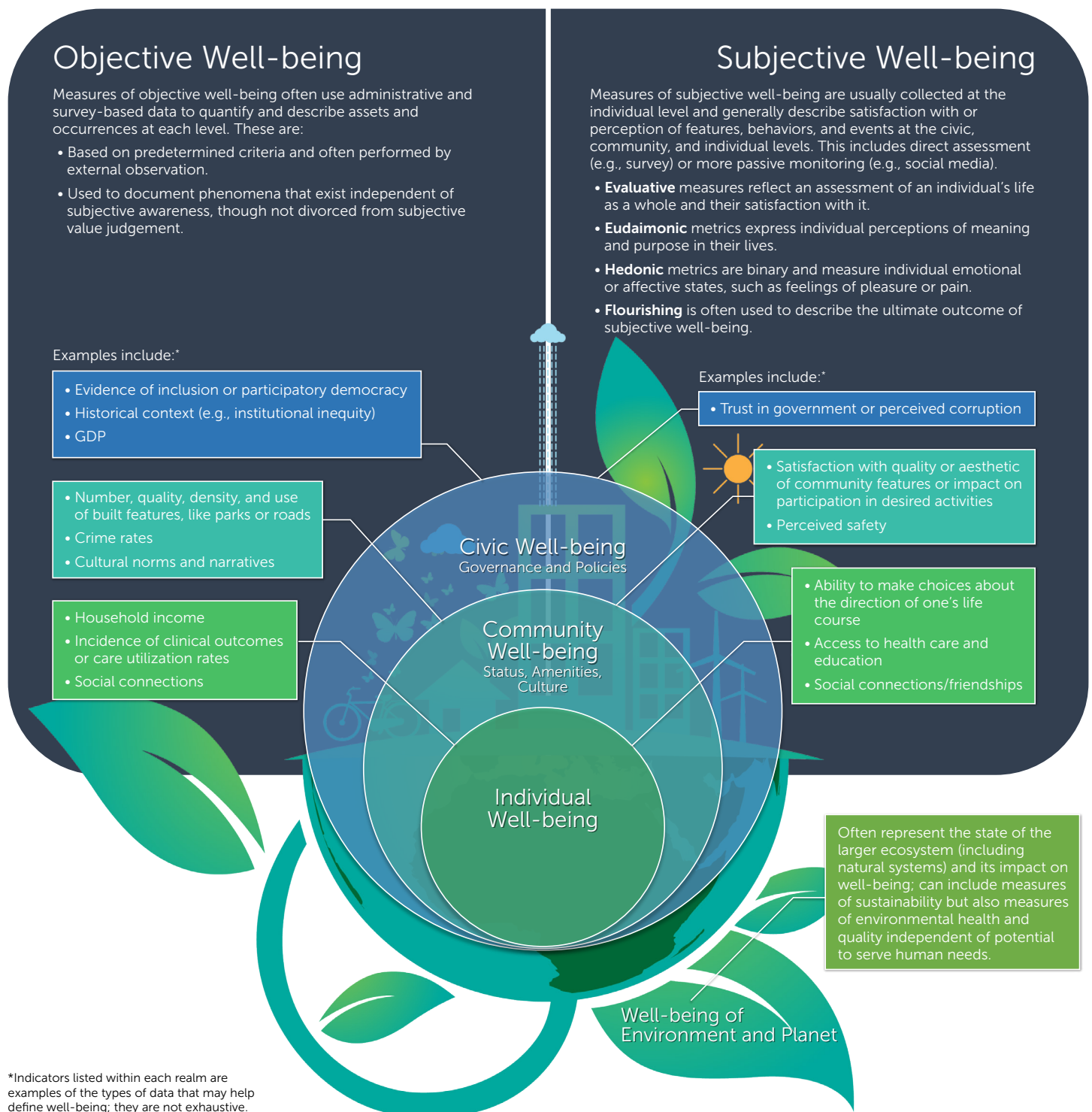
- How does well-being become a shared goal and an intentional driver of local and national policymaking, decision-making, and expectations so that everyone has the opportunity to achieve “complete physical, mental, and social well-being?”
- How can advances in well-being be equitable and inclusive of all voices and applicable across all contexts?
- To date, most well-being research has focused on refining measurement, based on the hypothesis that it is possible to change what is measured. How can measures continue to become more relevant and also be applied to shift narratives and mindsets, and to create meaningful action by communities and policymakers?

The rest of this paper explores these questions, drawing on the insights of global leaders at a unique gathering in the summer of 2018.

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5 Graham, C. and Pinto, S. 2018. “Unequal Hopes and Lives in the U.S.: Optimism, Race, Place, and Premature Mortality.” *Journal of Population Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-018-0687-y>

**Figure 1. A Framework for Understanding Human Well-Being<sup>6</sup>**



\*Indicators listed within each realm are examples of the types of data that may help define well-being; they are not exhaustive.

6 By Trené Hawkins, RWJF, with collaboration and input from Anita Chandra, RAND Corporation, and Carol Graham, Brookings Institution. Developed for the 2018 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Bellagio Center Conference, Advancing Well-Being in an Inequitable World: Moving From Measurement to Action. Environment. Vector image credit: <https://www.kisspng.com/png-energy-conservation-natural-environment-vector-ene-163280/download-png.html>

## RWJF's Global Gathering: Diverse Perspectives on Moving Well-Being to Action

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the largest philanthropic organization in the United States focused exclusively on health and well-being, knows that good ideas have no borders. To inform its efforts to build a Culture of Health in the United States, the Foundation examines promising solutions from around the world, and explores how other countries have undergone significant cultural shifts and brought about large-scale change to improve health and well-being. One idea we are exploring is how other countries and cities measure their residents' well-being and how they use those measures to inform policy, programs, and resource allocation. This work informs and dovetails with the Foundation's vision for a Culture of Health in the United States—a culture where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthier life.

To explore this question, RWJF convened a diverse group of global thinkers at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center from Sept. 10 to Sept. 14, 2018, for *Advancing Well-Being in an Inequitable World: Moving from Measurement to Action*. The goal of this conference was to advance shared knowledge, energy, and commitment to establishing well-being as a driver of policy, resource allocation, and other action. This paper offers key takeaways from that gathering as a thought starter for others exploring well-being approaches.

With just 32 seats at the table, RWJF very carefully built a multidisciplinary group representing many perspectives, including academics and economists who have pioneered well-being approaches, as well as practitioners who are working within governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and business to design policies and programs to improve well-being. To infuse this existing wisdom with fresh insights, RWJF also invited thought leaders in equity and gender rights; Indigenous and grassroots leaders; a futurist, a social entrepreneur, and a green economy leader; and experts in narrative change. A full list of participants—spanning 19 countries and five continents—as well as the team from RWJF is included as an appendix.

"I've never been to a meeting where I know so few people!" was a common refrain and a sign of success for RWJF. Bringing together such a diverse group with very few existing relationships—with each other and with RWJF—was a risk for the Foundation. It conducted thoughtful pre-interviews with each participant to gain understanding of the viewpoints and areas of expertise coming into the room. A collection of level-setting pre-reads and case studies (summarized in the following section) helped create shared understanding. The agenda design and facilitation approach created space for discussion of heady concepts, exploration of tangible opportunities, and connections on a personal level. The Foundation's newness to the conversation allowed it to be a neutral convener and curious participant, with no pre-determined goal guiding the conversation.

**The risk paid off.** The group quickly connected on both a professional and personal level and generated rich and multidimensional ideas about advancing well-being.

There are certainly many other perspectives that would have added nuance and value to the conversation. Ultimately, nearly every sector, field, and culture needs to be part of a widening global movement toward well-being.



## Section II:

### Insights on Moving Well-Being to Action

The group at the Bellagio conference was not charged with designing a complete change strategy, and there can be no one strategy for advancing well-being. However, in the discussion of how to move well-being to action, the group kept coming back to the need for a radical expansion in the definition of progress, and a set of considerations and pathways with the potential to make this happen.

#### **“What kind of ancestors do we want to be?”**

The core take-away from the conference was the immense need to move well-being into action, using it to shape policies, programs, and resource allocation, and ultimately to redefine the way nations define and pursue human progress beyond solely economic goals.

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***The question posed by one participant, “What kind of ancestors do we want to be?” went to the heart of this generational opportunity to turn the tide from inequitable and unsustainable trendlines to a future defined by broadly shared emotional, physical, social, economic, and environmental well-being.***

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This shift has the potential to open the doors to significant transformation of systems, structures, and cultural expectations. “Me-first” behaviors, such as amassing tremendous personal wealth or making natural resource management choices that deplete the environment, will become less appealing. “We” behaviors with collective benefit, such as funding strong education systems, will be incentivized. Those policy and practice shifts, in turn, will be supported by a narrative that connects people to each other and to our planet, links to shared values, and drives shifts in leadership, expectations, and behaviors. A new collective consciousness, or public will for well-being, will create a long-term increase in demand for and expectation of well-being approaches, accountability, and collective action.

The question posed by one participant, “What kind of ancestors do we want to be?”, went to the heart of this generational opportunity to turn the tide from inequitable and unsustainable trendlines to a future defined by broadly shared emotional, physical, social, economic, and environmental well-being. Will our time be the time where leaders from across sectors and cultures make these fundamental changes? How does that change happen?

## Core Considerations

The conversation referenced and reinforced existing knowledge on concepts such as the need for a strong foundation in measurement and evaluation, a commitment to equity and inclusion, best practices in grassroots engagement, and the need for continual iteration and learning to achieve a change of this magnitude. Exploring these issues through the lens of well-being brought out nuances and fresh perspectives in many of these concepts and surfaced some provocative considerations for this work.

**Well-being can begin anywhere and is rarely linear, so start now, where you can, and iterate rapidly.**

Efforts to advance well-being are iterative and multilayered, with concurrent strategies and actions informing and advancing each other. For example, shifting the narrative helps advance changes in expectations, shifts in power dynamics, and experimentation; at the same time, each of these changes builds currency for the new narrative. There is no single place to start. Engagement, planning, and action must happen simultaneously at both “bottom-up” and “top-down” levels. Local, national, and international bodies play essential and complementary roles, and must connect to and inform each other, opening significant opportunities for interconnection and collaboration.

All that said, every well-being approach starts with a single step, and organizations, ministries, agencies, and champions need room to try new ideas, iterate rapidly, and learn continuously to find the best approach. When they share their experiences, they build the evidence to provide proof of concept; to inspire others to act; and to identify and share approaches, policies, and practices that are making a difference. From very diverse experiences and perspectives, Bellagio participants encouraged trying many approaches (or as one participant said, “Try 100 things”) and capturing and sharing what is learned. Rapidly advancing a well-being framework demands progress over perfection and an openness to learn, ideate, prototype, validate, adapt, and take to scale. Enabling conditions for this rapid experimentation include:

- **Safe space, courage, and incentives for experimentation across sectors and at all levels of government.** This means a culture that allows for failure, enables experimentation, is nimble, and values learning. It means engaging collaborators, partners, and champions from all sectors, including radical, unlikely, or even heretical allies. It may need to include scenario planning in communities to create understanding and comfort with what a well-being approach might look like, and to make a plan to get there.
- **Resources, including money, networks, and ideas.** This is complex, long-term work and must be prioritized and resourced appropriately. There is an opportunity for funders to dedicate resources to ongoing exploration, sharing, and networking; governments to prioritize well-being actions, even in pilot form; business to invest in new approaches that prioritize well-being; etc.

- **A mechanism for learning and translating learning into action.** Across sectors, people need to hear stories of successful well-being approaches and outcomes, have access to models that work, and be inspired by the power of co-creators. The best approach is often to pilot and prove promising practices at the community level, and create channels for government to learn and take up what works.

### **Recognize that a well-being approach varies greatly in different places and contexts.**

Pathways to well-being—and even the definition of well-being itself—vary widely depending on cultural context, experiences, power dynamics, and other variables. Understanding that context helps illuminate not just how to advance well-being but also the whys behind it: why conditions are the way they are, why well-being matters in a particular culture or setting, why people and institutions will be motivated to join a well-being movement.

## **Stories from the Field—Case Studies of Well-Being in Action**

The discussion at Bellagio relied heavily on real-world insights from practitioners leading various approaches to well-being. The examples they shared included both nascent efforts and more established examples, and explored both discrete programmatic action and broader national policy change. **The point is that well-being can start anywhere, at any scale.** These glimpses into communities and countries around the world provide perspective about how different these approaches can and must be to align with local cultures, needs, and opportunities. Several of the case studies shared at the conference are summarized in this paper; one appears below and others are referenced throughout this paper.

### **Case Study: Bhutan**

The concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) was introduced in the 1970s by the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Today, the country conducts a national assessment of well-being (as defined by nine GNH “domains”) and uses this data and framework to guide policy, planning, and resource allocation. Advanced from within the government (GNH Commission); the Center for Bhutan Studies ([www.grossnationalhappiness.com](http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com)); and from an NGO, the GNH Center Bhutan ([www.gnhcentrebhutan.org](http://www.gnhcentrebhutan.org)); concepts of well-being are taking hold across key sectors, such as education, business, and government. Resulting policies, actions, and shifts in national narrative have resulted in innovative natural resource and tourism policies as well as Bhutan’s status as the world’s first carbon-negative country.



Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness draws inspiration from the Buddhist “middle path” of sustaining a balanced development that recognizes both the tangible and intangible aspects of well-being. (Photo courtesy of Julia Kim.)

Consider, for example, how radically different contexts in the United Arab Emirates and Occupied Palestine lead to radically different approaches to advancing well-being. In a context of economic stability and strong political leadership, the UAE established a Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing<sup>7</sup> to centralize and lead well-being efforts across the government, and is investing in programs ranging from a national well-being strategy focusing on personal, social, and national well-being, to hosting international convenings to continually advance knowledge. In the conflict zones of Occupied Palestine, advocates use community-based programs to address the trauma of war and its impact on collective well-being, aiming to scale up and create de facto policies in the absence of opportunities for national policy change.

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7 <https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-uae-government/government-of-future/happiness>

## Case Study: New Zealand

The New Zealand Treasury uses its Living Standards Framework and Dashboard ([www.treasury.govt.nz/lstdashboard](http://www.treasury.govt.nz/lstdashboard)), alongside existing economic and fiscal frameworks, to inform policy development and resource allocation across the government and work with the country's government ministries about how the policy decisions they make are likely to affect New Zealanders' living standards. This is a part of the New Zealand government's work towards its first well-being budget in 2019. Various ministries are beginning to use multidimensional well-being concepts and non-monetary cost and benefit analysis to assess needs and inform solutions. For example, the Ministry of Education has received funding to provide targeted support to 3- and 4-year-olds with oral language needs who are at risk for literacy difficulties; and the Ministry of Justice is aiming to reduce youth offending among high-risk 14- to 16-year-olds by providing cognitive behavioral therapy, functional family therapy, and professional youth mentoring services.



New Zealand's Living Standards Framework incorporates important well-being values in New Zealand, including enjoyment of a healthy natural environment and time with family. (Photo courtesy of Tim Ng.)



## **Commit to a future-looking, intergenerational approach.**

Well-being takes a future orientation, looking beyond the now to proactive action, prevention, and sustainable use of human, environmental, and financial resources. Intergenerational connections are vital to inform and lead this look to the future, honoring the role and wisdom of elders, building on the experience and expertise of practitioners, and leveraging the innovation and potential of young people in their teens and 20s. Nova Scotia, Singapore, and Bhutan are identifying a strong need and challenge for millennials to understand and own the well-being narrative. And at universities around the world, student-led groups are springing up to call for inclusion of a well-being approach alongside traditional economic models.

Advancing well-being is a long-term commitment; consider that Bhutan has articulated its approach to development since the 1970s and continues to iterate. It is essential that people currently doing this work stay focused, become more connected to each other, and build the evidence and best practice base of this still nascent movement together—and that new voices from all sectors commit to collaboration and action. Global interest can be fleeting, transitions in leadership can threaten the durability of commitments to prioritize well-being, and the “next new thing” can distract. We must maintain and increase the focus on well-being.

## **Recognize the power of measurement beyond data alone.**

While the Bellagio conference was not a conversation only about well-being measurement, there was rich discussion about how and what to measure, not only to evaluate conditions and assess progress, but to drive action and shift the narrative. Key thoughts included:

- **Fewer and sharper measures, expressed in a compelling and relevant way, are vital.** The strongest measures will be simple and relevant to everyday people, not just elites, but not overly simplistic or reduced to one number that hides the nuance and wisdom of this approach. These powerful measures will be incorporated in the prevailing narrative and can change it. In the United Kingdom, numerous cities are using measurement data to establish new narratives that “reset the compass” toward the well-being of people, places, and planet.

### **From anthro- to eco-centric: Measuring and advancing environmental sustainability as a core element of well-being**

The dominant narrative of well-being measurement tends to be anthro-centric, looking first and foremost at the human condition. But for eternity, many Indigenous communities and environmentally-focused cultures have taken an eco-centric approach, inextricably linking human well-being to environmental sustainability and the intrinsic value of the land to a culture or community. In Bhutan, for example, a key component of the well-being narrative and approach is interdependence with the web of life, recognizing that all beings and the natural world are interdependent, and that the well-being of non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value. As a result of climate change and other environmental crises, more attention is being given to eco-centric models. Both measures and approaches must take this perspective.

- As well-being measurement becomes more precise and clearer, **equal priority is needed on shifting beyond measurement science to application, action, and impact.** As one participant noted, “We can have perfect measures and go nowhere. Or we can have so-so measures and create an action that touches people.” At the same time, it remains essential to measure and analyze well-being application to policy, practice, and culture in order to determine what works and document the impact of this approach.

## Potential Pathways in the Change Strategy

How a paradigm shift toward well-being forms and moves varies tremendously across different settings—there is no one approach. In most cases, it will likely require some combination of public sector “top-down” policy actions, incremental change from within systems, radical activism from outside the system, and engagement and integration of grassroots and social movements. The group at Bellagio identified some potential pathways to effectively advance well-being, along with some potential risks and cautionary notes.

### Case Study: Occupied Palestine

Most Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory have spent their lives in warlike conditions. Many learn to normalize occupation, which builds capacity to endure and resist, but can also take away agency. Birzeit University and its cross-sector partners are measuring and addressing well-being within this unique cultural context. With few opportunities for effective policy change, their approach relies on implementing and evaluating pilot projects that can be scaled up. By reframing

and addressing trauma as a socio-political issue, rather than an individual “problem to be treated,” they are alleviating social isolation and stigma. They are informing well-being measurement by developing new indicators related to suffering, such as humiliation, human insecurity, and deprivation. As a result of this work, local and international groups are increasingly taking into consideration “the wounds inside,” related to war and conflict, which can negatively affect well-being.



In a reality defined by ongoing warlike conditions, local and international groups in Occupied Palestine are beginning to address “the wounds inside” related to war and conflict, and their negative impact on well-being. (Photo courtesy of Rita Giacaman.)

## **“We can’t promote what we ourselves have not experienced.” Create a shift in individual consciousness.**

Historic practices and dominant narratives have informed powerful cultural values, training many people over their lifetimes to view the world through an individual rather than collective lens, and to behave in ways that place personal gain and economic wealth ahead of societal well-being, and nation-state wealth and power ahead of global equity and sustainability. Systems, practices, and narratives, in turn, reinforce and reward this mindset and these behaviors. Advancing well-being at the societal level will often require shifting individual consciousness among business leaders, policymakers, advocates, funders, and scientists, many of whom are not familiar with well-being as the status quo. This is a profound shift, it will take time and effort, and it is key to making significant advances in well-being. The case study in Singapore (see page 22), where universities and the Ministry of Health are helping future leaders explore and adopt a “health and wealth” mindset over the dominant “wealth-first” mindset, is an important example to watch and potentially replicate.

## **“How do we create meaning?” Advance a relevant and compelling narrative that centers well-being as the goal.**

RWJF expected that narrative change would be an important component of the discussion at Bellagio since the economics-dominant status quo has shaped the existing narrative, which in turn shapes mindsets and behaviors and builds policies and systems. The surprise was that this thread wove through every discussion. There is an urgent need to create a clear and consistent meta-narrative—an overall case for well-being—that redefines progress and the purpose of society. Built into that meta-narrative must be respect for the many unique cultural narratives about what well-being means. And from that meta-narrative, national and local movements can co-create and spread locally relevant narratives that frame well-being for diverse stakeholders and needs.

Narratives are shared ideas that help people make meaning of their world. Founded on underlying and often unspoken beliefs, they influence—through stories, experiences, and environments—people’s interpretation of how things are, how things should be, and what is better or worse. They are built over time, most often intentionally by a group in power in order to institutionalize and maintain its power. The current, dominant narrative across most of the world is that wealth and consumption are the ultimate indicators of progress and power, at both a country level and an individual level. This narrative is not a truth, but an assumption and acceptance that has built over time, shaped and reinforced by current systems—and one that certainly has not led to greater well-being. Shifting to a well-being narrative is a fundamental pathway in the change strategy.

The new well-being narrative must be relevant within diverse cultural contexts and grounded in shared values, which can only be defined through extensive engagement at the grassroots level. It must be built on wisdom and stories, and on cultural strength—again, co-created with the grass roots. For example, as Engage Nova Scotia explores a well-being narrative (see page 21), it is in a deep listening mode to identify ways to shift from an entrenched narrative

of “what’s wrong with us” to one that embraces a fierce pride in place and community assets. It will create a vision of what is possible, establish why a new approach is needed, and point the way to action. It will spread through constant and consistent repetition across leaders, organizations, and movements, and—as policies and actions begin to change—across practices, systems, environments, and experiences.

A few cautionary notes:

- **The desire to quantify well-being and assign “value” creates the risk of reinforcing the economic-only paradigm.** Insistence on monetizing well-being or making the business case, tying well-being to extrinsic motivation, or focusing on short-term gain could backfire and reinforce the existing paradigm. It will be important to start with societal values and show how well-being aligns and advances those values.

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***A narrative shift at the international, national, and local levels, across all sectors, has the potential to unleash agency, create cultural expectation, hold leaders accountable, and drive changes in policy and practice—and to ultimately reshape the shared expectations of society.***

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- **Words matter.** This growing movement must own the term “well-being” loudly and clearly so it is not co-opted or conflated with softer terms like “wellness.” Again, cultural context and specificity matters here. For example, “success” is a largely Western term rooted in individual advancement and irrelevant in many cultures; better is the word “progress,” which the authors have used throughout this paper. When core ideas and concepts of well-being combine with cultural context and closely-held values, a meaningful narrative emerges.
- **Be wary of “well-being imposters”** who may co-opt the term and claim they are advancing a well-being agenda without adherence to principles and shared definition, thereby weakening the credibility of the movement. Guard against this with clarity of message and ownership of narrative.

A narrative shift at the international, national, and local levels, across all sectors, has the potential to unleash agency, create cultural expectation, hold leaders accountable, and drive changes in policy and practice—and to ultimately reshape the shared expectations of society.

**“Voice with teeth.” Practice radical inclusion at the grassroots level and shift power to build equity.**

By its nature, well-being relies on so many societal factors that it must be relevant to all communities and must address fundamental and structural issues of exclusion—which can only be done with a radically inclusive approach that rebuilds power structures, elevates voices that have traditionally been silenced, and eliminates systemic bias. Shifting an inequitable paradigm established and stewarded by those in power will require that people and communities on the front lines are at the table with real decision-making power (not merely representation) to design the structural changes required to advance real well-being. Discourse must include, and build power among, the grass roots, and especially among often unheard voices, including Indigenous peoples, youth, people living with lower



incomes, women, and many others who are regularly silenced. For example, in Australia, The Lowitja Institute has been instrumental in supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers who are shaping research, policy, and services. In India, Tata STRIVE builds power among young people by connecting them to work and civic engagement.

This power shift must be both an outcome of well-being efforts and a vital part of the process itself. In order for a well-being agenda to take root, it must be co-created with and owned by communities. The very measures used to define well-being must be shaped by the populations they aim to measure if they are to be believable and meaningful. An authentic well-being narrative must be authored at the local level to account for cultural context, local values, and relevant definitions of what constitutes well-being. Top-down policies and programs won't work here; the grass roots have to own them, demand change, and hold decision-makers accountable.

## Case Study: Nova Scotia

This Canadian province's advantages are difficult to quantify—abundant natural beauty, a strong sense of community belonging, and high life satisfaction. But because “the good life” has been equated with fast economic growth, the current narrative centers on a sluggish economy rather than these positive attributes, which impacts culture, perception of strength, and decision-making. Engage Nova Scotia (*engagenovascotia.ca*), an independent NGO supported through

funding from the public, private, community, and academic sectors, is beginning to assess well-being indicators through the Canadian Index of Wellbeing along with robust public engagement. This data will inform prototype projects to shift cultural narratives, illuminate the full cost of public policy decisions, and, ultimately, enhance factors like community vitality, social integration, a sense of belonging, social trust, and strong relationships.



When asked, “How should we measure success?” 68 percent of Nova Scotians recently surveyed said “through economic growth,” while 81 percent said “by improving our quality of life.”

Understanding the history and context of existing power dynamics is fundamental to efforts to change them. The status quo that drives much decision-making across sectors and cultures was intentionally created and is intentionally maintained through systemic and historic racism and gender discrimination. Current systems were built to deny people rights, voice, and economic mobility, and have left many with little or no bargaining power. Nearly unprecedented levels of global migration due to violence and environmental change are creating even more communities without meaningful voice in the decisions that affect them, while a wave of anti-immigrant and anti-migrant sentiment is establishing a harmful new narrative influenced by racism, false information, and fear-based judgment about “who belongs” and “who deserves.” Youth, both in these communities and throughout society, will be so vital in the shift toward a well-being paradigm, yet are regularly excluded from power and decision-making.

Creating a lasting shift in power across systems—regulatory, operational, education, financial, philanthropic, and others— requires these critical considerations:

- **The notion of “efficiency” has to change.** Traditional concepts of process need to be reframed, destigmatizing the time it takes to engage. Well-being cannot work if it is controlled by the elite; it must become a movement of the people, and it cannot move faster than the development of trust. This is not about “bringing well-being to the community”; it’s about going to the people who already have the answers needed to define and create well-being. It may take more time to listen and co-create than it does

## Case Study: Singapore

This country has changed dramatically in the last half century, developing rapidly and expanding opportunities for economic mobility—and inadvertently spawning a pervasive wealth-focused value system. Two recent public health initiatives, “War on Diabetes” and “Total Workplace Safety and Health,” revealed how a change in value system is needed to combat the scourge of non-communicable disease. The country, in a partnership between the Ministry of Health and two major universities, is planning to launch a narrative and culture change initiative to raise a cohort of university graduates who value health just as much as wealth, and can create social movement toward healthy lifestyle as a default.



The same advances that took the Singapore River from polluted to gleaming over the last generation also ingrained a pervasive “wealth-first” mindset that now jeopardizes health. A new initiative seeks to re-establish “health and wealth” as the dominant narrative.

to barrel ahead, but it is far more effective to ensure buy-in and ownership than to launch quickly.

- **Governance is in all sectors, not just government.** Many of the decisions that drive well-being will be made by public sector entities, but many will not. It is imperative that increased voice with real power is built into governance of private sector, civil society, and other non-governmental bodies with significant well-being impact.
- **All well-being actions must address underlying causes of inequity,** including systemic and structural racism. Truth telling is an important first step in the process. Only by revealing the truth of history, experience, and impact can there be healing and creation of a different future together. Blocking the truth is cutting off power, a phenomenon visible worldwide in the inaccurate and detrimental anti-migration narrative that continues to gain ground.
- **Context and cultural assets are critical.** The cultural context and historic and contemporary experiences of a community shape its pathway to power in unique ways. Does a community have land tenure, treaty rights, legal standing? Does a community have assets that serve as bargaining power, such as labor, knowledge, land, access to media, and others? Cultural knowledge, wisdom, and lived experiences; relationships of trust with broader populations; and the perspectives that diverse voices bring to the table are a significant set of assets that lead to better decision-making—and that too often are excluded from contribution.
- **Mobilization in context has impact.** The experiences of communities seeking meaningful shifts in power have found that mobilization is a key pathway to change, and that the efficacy of different approaches to mobilization is context dependent. Recent victories have included utilization of shareholder activism to drive changes in corporate policies and practices; litigation in local, national, and international venues to drive changes in policy and in authority; and media and community activism to drive shifts in public opinion and to press private and public sector institutions to make policy and practice change.
- **The next generation of leadership needs investment.** In addition to ensuring places at the table for younger generations, communities must increase focus, investment, and support in fostering the next cadre of skilled, talented, engaged, and connected young people. This shift must be done within cultural context and must engage a far more diverse cadre of leaders than in previous generations.

Across these considerations, there is a dual benefit of better advancing well-being by shifting to and better advancing more equitable power structures by increasing the use of a well-being paradigm as the progress driver. Successful well-being initiatives are practicing radical inclusion to create measures and approaches, craft the narrative, shift power, and implement

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*Cultural knowledge, wisdom, and lived experiences; relationships of trust with broader populations; and the perspectives that diverse voices bring to the table are a significant set of assets that lead to better decision-making—and that too often are excluded from contribution.*

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and evaluate the strategy. In its work in Bristol, U.K., for example, the Happy City team (see box below) spent its first few years in the heart of communities—in schools, prisons, shopping centers, businesses, community halls, and other places—listening to “non-experts” talk about what mattered to them, how they defined and found well-being, and what a thriving place looked like. This solid grounding informed measurement tools, approaches, and narrative.

### **Align and collaborate across fields, sectors, and movements.**

Well-being is intrinsically cross-sector, spanning health, economics, housing, education, and many other fields. Yet those fields traditionally work—and are incented to work—in isolation more than collaboration. Achieving and advancing well-being as a new paradigm requires alignment across sectors: the private sector engaging with government; social movements collaborating for greater power and capacity; marketplace incentives aligning to spark investments that improve well-being; certification and ratings systems adopting well-being principles. The opportunities are expansive and the potential benefit—to both well-being and the progress of each of these sectors—is profound.

The group in Bellagio began to identify existing networks that could connect innovators in communities of interest to share transformative learnings, provide peer support, identify promising ideas, and bring them to scale, including: the Wellbeing Economy Alliance ([wellbeingeconomy.org](http://wellbeingeconomy.org)), which connects people in civil society and academia; Wellbeing Economy Governments ([wellbeingeconomygovs.org](http://wellbeingeconomygovs.org)), which links national and regional governments; and GBCHealth ([www.gbchealth.org](http://www.gbchealth.org)), a coalition of companies and organizations committed to investing their resources to make a healthier world.

### **Case Study: United Kingdom**

Happy City ([www.happycity.org.uk](http://www.happycity.org.uk)) is an NGO that works to support the shift to an economy and society whose compass is the well-being of people, places, and planet. It has developed a new set of measures of progress to make that shift practical in places large and small, alongside training, campaigns, and projects to help spread a well-being compass across sectors and communities. It publishes the Thriving Places Index for all 172 local authorities in England and Wales, and is working with local governments, businesses, and civil society movements to fully embed the framework into their ways of working.



Happy City is working with Birmingham, the U.K.'s second largest city and one of the most diverse, on a three-year program to support more active lifestyles across the life course, with a particular emphasis on marginalized groups and neighborhoods.

*(Photo courtesy of Liz Zeidler.)*




Beyond these well-being focused organizations, there are several priority opportunities to align well-being with sectors that prioritize many of the same outcomes. Opportunities for alignment include:

- **Values-based business networks.** For example, Business for Social Responsibility, World Economic Forum, B Lab, Global Alliance for Banking on Values, and others both expected and unusual. What's needed: a compelling case for well-being and tools for use.
- **Other measures, standards, and agendas that advance and benefit from a well-being paradigm and that have higher levels of power and currency.** For example, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) approaches; Open Government Partnership; and the International Integrated Reporting Council. What's needed: proof points to show government officials how taking a well-being approach helps advance their goals.
- **Social movements with individual priorities that could be bolstered by advances in well-being.** Aligned advocacy across many social movements could accelerate engagement with the grass roots and adoption of a well-being paradigm. As with the discussion of the grass roots, it will be important not to "bring well-being" to the movements, but rather to understand aligned needs and demonstrate how a well-being frame helps advance them.
- **Alignment of financial and investment models.** The goal is to incent actions to advance well-being, including alignment within and across philanthropy to amplify impact; development of "well-being lens investing" following the model of gender lens investing; and emphasis on well-being approaches to fulfill the "social" aspect of ESG investing and integration of well-being incentives in public policies that impact business investment.

One risk across all potential channels for alignment is the fatigue that comes with "another way of measuring" or the perception that this is the same work with a different label. The case for a well-being approach needs to show how all this action is moving in the same direction, not competing; show the demand and the impact; and create cover for decision-makers to explore and use this approach.

### **"It's all connected." Transform and align government systems at local, national, and international levels.**

Government at all levels is characterized by hardened systems that aren't built for collaboration or rapid iteration. A well-being paradigm will need to change incentives, systems, and structures of government to create opportunities for innovation. It will need to move from an activity- and field-driven organization of the government structures model—for example, education, health, and labor—to outcome- and impact-driven models such as vibrant communities, individual and family well-being, and others. And it will need to continually share model policies and impacts to facilitate and make the case for change. These changes often start with measurement and policy screens to see how decisions will impact well-being. But this is not just about changing the gauge on the dashboard or creating new justification for action; it's about rebuilding programs, systems, and structures to advance well-being.



There is a highly appealing selling point here: Because well-being is more inclusive and takes a systemic and proactive, prevention-based approach, it has the potential to create new alignment and efficiencies. For example, when the United Arab Emirates formalized its work on well-being with a dedicated leadership position, rather than create an isolated ministry, it established a minister within central government to provide linkages and reinforce that well-being is not a singular responsibility. Now ministries and leaders across the government are focusing on well-being. Singapore has used a similar approach with new dual-focus minister positions.

All of the principles and approaches discussed above are playing out and are relevant at local, national, and international levels. Because of the differences in how the work happens at these different levels, and the need for them to relate to and influence each other, the group at Bellagio explored the key pathways necessary for advancing well-being at each level.

## Vital considerations for well-being at various levels of government

### Local

- Ask, listen, and be driven by local wisdom.
- Create a consciousness shift that is echoed in a narrative shift.
- Try many things, then hold up what works.
- Measure and share stories of change—locally, with other communities, nationally, and internationally.
- Practice radical inclusion, including addressing historic wrongs.

### National

- Start at the national government level with adoption of a well-being framework and measures, then endorse well-being and incentive its adoption across sectors: business, civil society, faith, social movements, NGO, health systems, etc.
- Place a well-being leader or body within the government where they have influence and are integrated in central decision-making rather than being siloed on their own. For example, in New Zealand, the Treasury is taking the lead on establishing well-being as a principle in government budgetary and finance functions, touching all other ministries. The United Arab Emirates created a minister within central government. Bhutan's GNH Commission is situated within the government and applies a policy screening tool to monitor integration of GNH into policies and projects. Another option is to center leadership for well-being outside government in an organization or position with influence, which is the model for Engage Nova Scotia and the What Works Centre for Wellbeing in the U.K., both of which are NGOs with direct links to and influence with government.

- Create and reinforce a relevant narrative grounded in cultural context.
- Break silos. Restructure to allow departments and ministries to collaborate.
- Bring together national policy and local action. Central government needs to ask what it can do to be helpful (and not a barrier) on the ground, and to learn from and scale up the disruptive change happening at the local level.

### International

- Prioritize a shift in consciousness and global cultural expectation from "me" to "we," and from "how much" to "enough."
- Advance standards that are already aligned with well-being (e.g., SDGs and ESGs) and integrate well-being into other international standards, goals, and accords.
- Commit to representation and power shifts in who is creating international standards.
- Measure impact at the highest level (e.g., reduction in war and violence, increase in economic equity) versus merely tracking changes in systems and structures, then make the causal link between a well-being approach and that impact.
- Increase dedicated resources that advance the well-being agenda, including tangible models of policies, practices, approaches, and incentives for leaders to adopt and advance well-being outcomes.
- Create better connections between international bodies and action and learning on the ground. Continually adapt and iterate international measures to align with and advance local successes.

## Next Steps

RWJF is actively incorporating ideas from this conference into its programmatic and research work in the United States and continuing to observe and discuss global approaches. It will continue learning with participants and others interested in well-being through informal ongoing conversations. Many of the participants report that they are reflecting on and applying insights in their work as well.

A more extensive exploration of implications for moving well-being into action globally will be included in RWJF's series with Oxford Press, with a well-being focused volume coming out in early 2020. To sign up for the notification list for that book's release, please email [wellbeingconference@rwjf.org](mailto:wellbeingconference@rwjf.org).

We encourage you to share this paper in your networks and use it to start or advance conversations and collaborations that move well-being into action. If you're already working on well-being or components of a well-being approach, we encourage you to connect with existing networks or programs—many of which are represented by the conference participants listed on page 29—to learn and share experiences. If you're newer to well-being, those resources will help you as well, and we encourage you to explore existing metrics and information; consider what levers you control personally and organizationally and how to integrate well-being in your work; and begin to frame your work in the language of well-being.

The small and diverse gathering of committed leaders RWJF brought together at Bellagio shared a sense that making a paradigm shift to well-being holds tremendous potential for individuals, communities, nations, and global society. It also requires unprecedented collaboration, transformative systems and structures change, continual learning, sharing, investment, and scale-up. That said, the first step is to take a first step; change can start anywhere and will look different in every context.

**No matter where it starts or how rapidly it scales, taking a well-being approach is our generational opportunity to transform the definition of progress and, in turn, to transform the choices societies make to impact their people's well-being. It is time to raise the bar and move the finish line. Survival is not enough. Our society should expect and dedicate itself to nothing less than for all people to have the conditions to flourish.**



# Appendix

## Participants and Contributors

The ideas in this paper reflect the discussion, writings, and contributions of the diverse, multi-sector group that generously participated in this exploration in September 2018.

### **Participants at the 2018 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Bellagio Center Conference, “*Advancing Well-Being in an Inequitable World: Moving from Measurement to Action*”**

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## **Hosts**

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Alonzo Plough, *chief science officer and vice president*, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, United States

Karabi Acharya, *director*, Global Ideas for U.S. Solutions, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, United States

## **Facilitators and Manager**

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## **About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

For more than 45 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working alongside others to build a national Culture of Health that provides everyone in America a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](http://www.rwjf.org/twitter) or on Facebook at [www.rwjf.org/facebook](http://www.rwjf.org/facebook).

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