

## Level IV – Improving Performance on the World Stage

“Either you are adding societal value or you are subtracting value.”  
*Dale Brethower, Professor Emeritus, Western Michigan University*

Whatever your organization’s product or service, it is critical for every function in your enterprise to determine what value it contributes to suppliers, customers, the marketplace, and the world. Ultimately, every employee should be able to easily explain how her work makes a difference in the larger society. And for many workers today, it is a priority to be associated with an employer that adds value to society.

### A Retrospective

In a series of Columns in 2011–12, we introduced the four organizational levels Performance Architects investigate to pinpoint the sources of performance issues and opportunities. We then shared key models and tools we use to clarify the challenges and generate sustainable solutions.

We anchored our discussion of Level IV – The World/Society Level – with the United Nations’ **Eight Millennium Goals** established in 2010. We focused on a range of performance issues at this level and summarized sample initiatives undertaken by a number of large organizations that supported the Goals. The Goals were to be met by 2015.

Indeed, the Goals generated tremendous activity around the world and resulted in measurable changes in just a few years:

- Lifted more than one billion people out of extreme poverty
- Made an impact against hunger
- Enabled more girls to go to school than ever before
- Protected our planet
- Generated new partnerships
- Spurred public opinion
- Demonstrated the tremendous value of setting ambitious goals
- Put people and their immediate needs first
- Re-shaped decision-making in both developed and developing countries (MDG Report, p. 3)

## Up Next: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Building on the success of the **Eight Goals**, the UN has taken the next step and created the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to “transform our world.” (Sustainable Development Goals)

“The emerging post-2015 development agenda, including the set of Sustainable Development Goals, strives to...build on our successes and put all countries, together, firmly on track toward a more prosperous, sustainable and equitable world.” (MDG Report, p. 3)

The **Sustainable Development Goals**, or **SDGs**, leverage the successes of the **Eight Goals** and aim, ambitiously, to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities, and address climate change. And all of this while making sure that no one is left out.

Uniquely, the new Goals call for all countries, regardless of their level of wealth, to take action to promote prosperity while protecting our planet. (The Sustainable Development Agenda)

As Performance Architects, we follow trends in the workplace and look for successful examples of initiatives that contribute to the betterment of the world while enhancing results for contributing organizations. Here, we spotlight three very different organizations we respect: **Performance Improvement Institute, USAID, World Learning**, and offer a glimpse into the work each is doing in support of one or more of the **SDGs**:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Motivation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals

## Performance Improvement Institute

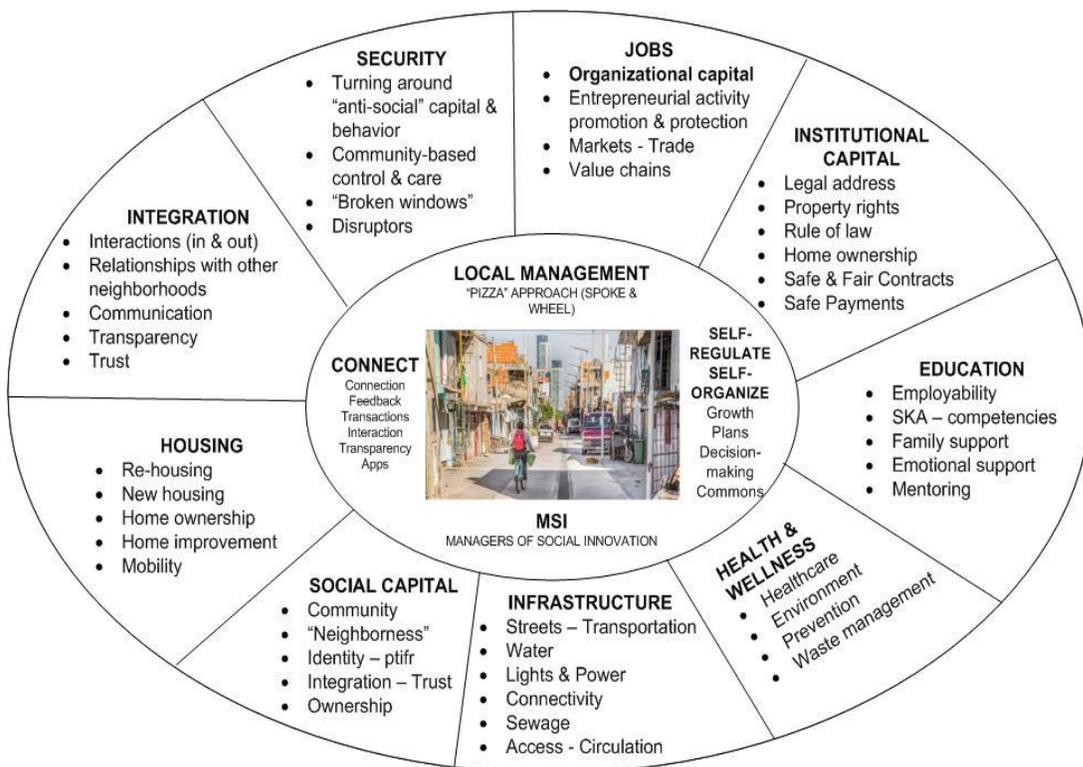
While cities worldwide are growing and are valued for their progress and innovation, they are subject to boom and bust cycles that create blight, ghettos, and white flight. In the US we have the city of Detroit, which is struggling to stop the bleeding after the upheaval in the automotive business and rebuild in a new image. (Detroit: Ruin and Renewal). San Francisco strives to balance the benefits of on-going

gentrification while whole neighborhoods become homeless encampments as housing costs skyrocket and people are pushed out of the city.

## City Doctors

The standard response to these problems takes a systems approach to improve performance. Local governments address issues piecemeal by function—housing, security, infrastructure, transportation, real estate. In contrast, the **City Doctors** ([www.doctors4cities.org](http://www.doctors4cities.org)) program developed at the **Performance Improvement Institute** takes a holistic approach to improving the performance of cities. It considers the city through the eyes of its stakeholders—residents, homeowners, visitors, businesses, industries, and investors—all components of an “integrated social and organizational ecosystem.” (Bernardez, p.3).

Rather than calling in an army of specialists, **City Doctors** treats the city’s problems as a family doctor would, guided by the model below:



Used with permission **Figure 1: City Doctors Framework**

## Colon City, Panama

As the start date for the Panama Canal’s expansion in 2012 approached, the formerly vibrant and popular Colon City reached a low point in a near 50-year downward

spiral. Beset with problems ranging from a deteriorating historical center to gangs, drug cartels, crime, and poverty, Colon City needed help. The Minister of Tourism contracted with the **City Doctors** team to develop a project to transform Colon.

By actively involving all the key stakeholders in defining a shared vision for the city, **City Doctors** crafted a systemic approach to addressing the many problems plaguing Colon. A new governing administration sanctioned the transformation, using the **City Doctors** plan as a guide. Results to date meet or exceed the estimates for improved job creation, crime reduction, tourism and housing. (Bernardez, p.10) Continued sustainability will depend on critical cultural changes in which public housing moves from a welfare program for those in need to one that requires residents to actively participate in design and construction, much like the Habitat for Humanity model in the US.

The **Sustainable Development Goals** impacted by this on-going project include:

#1 No Poverty

#8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

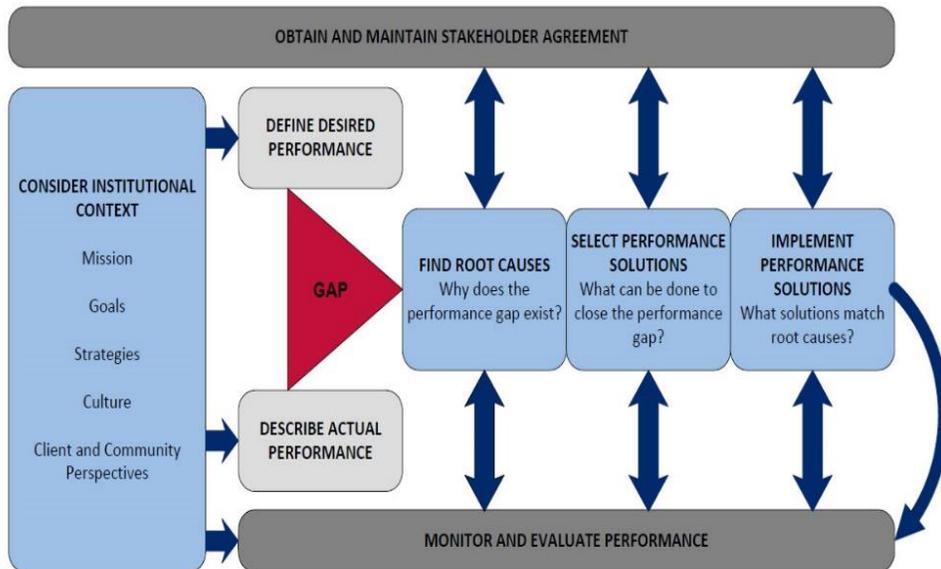
#11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

## USAID

**USAID**, [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov), is the lead U.S. Government agency working to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential. The agency funds projects through various organizations around the world. Many such projects support one or more of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Performance Improvement projects are conducted using **USAID's** Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) initiative. The HICD provides methodologies and tools to help USAID's partner organizations strive for excellence in performance. "The ultimate goal of HICD is to help USAID's partners improve performance in critical areas leading to measurable results in achieving the organization's goals and objectives." (HICD Handbook, p. 7)

One of **USAID's** recent efforts was a large-scale agricultural project in Rwanda, working through implementer DAI, [www.dai.com](http://www.dai.com). The project aimed to increase efficiency, accountability, and sustainability in selected local organizations so that they could expand their capacity for their development and poverty reduction activities. KNO Worldwide, [www.knowworldwide.com](http://www.knowworldwide.com), conducted the performance assessments for this project and provided expertise for selected interventions. The project ran from 2012 – 2017, guided by the HICD Performance Improvement model below:



(HICD Handbook, p. 9) **Figure 2: Performance Improvement Model**

## Ingabo

One of the selected local organizations, **Ingabo**, is a farmers' trade union that operates in five districts in Rwanda. It is a registered NGO. Its mission is to improve economic conditions for its members by supporting agriculture production, access to markets, and advocacy. **Ingabo** has a solid structure and more than 14,000 members, making it particularly effective at delivering grassroots services.

For this project, **Ingabo** developed a **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)** system that regularly checks data on farmer profitability by crop and season. With technical assistance from HICD, and staff training on how to track individual farmers' expenses and income, Ingabo piloted this new **M&E** system in one of its districts. Next, staff trained member farmers to record and report information that was then entered into the **M&E** system. As a result, for the first time **Ingabo** knew which crops were most profitable for its members and the farmers could see which crops were best to plant at various times.

With this success, **Ingabo** expanded its **M&E** system across all districts, providing the necessary training for implementation. The success of the **M&E** system has generated additional results for **Ingabo**. The union now:

- Better serves members and has strengthened its sustainability as an organization
- Speaks with confidence to local government about agricultural policies related to crop performance and then pursues governmental policy adjustments
- Has lowered poverty levels by transforming from habit-based farming to evidence-based agriculture, resulting in increased crop yields and more food for the local people

The **Sustainable Development Goals** impacted by this project include:

- #1 No Poverty

- #2 Zero Hunger
- #3 Good Health and Well-being
- #17 Partnerships for the Goals

## World Learning

World Learning (<https://www.worldlearning.org>) does what its name implies: it helps the world learn. Recipients of World Learning programs include students, young adults, teachers, organizations, refugees, and everyone else imaginable. Their work helps people to

...” find their voice, transform, lead, and become the best version of themselves...We help individuals, communities and institutions create the change needed for a more peaceful and just world.”

**World Learning** showcases *Success Stories* on its website, <https://www.worldlearning.org/our-impact/success-stories/>. Each story features the key people who carried out a successful project, and each project currently listed supports at least one of the **17 SDGs**.

### Leaders Advancing Democracy – Mongolia (LEAD Mongolia)

**LEAD Mongolia** is a two-year initiative funded by USAID and run by World Learning. It brings aspiring leaders from Mongolia to the US to learn about democracy. They explore working together to address Mongolia’s most critical issues such as corruption, poverty, discrimination, urbanization and the environment.

One of the most pressing problems is the extreme pollution in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. UNICEF has identified smog-induced pollution as the leading cause of death among children under five in Mongolia. Dr. Lodoisamba Delgerzul, a medical doctor who works in public health at Mongolia National University, is a **LEAD Mongolia** participant investigating the effects of pollution on Mongolia’s population. Improving air quality to build a healthy future for all Mongolians is a critical challenge for the country.

Dr. Delgerzul says a main cause of Ulaanbaatar’s pollution is the old-fashioned stoves used during the winter. Although the problem is worsening, the government has done little to help. When the stoves are not used in spring and summer, the pollution levels are not a problem so the government does not act.

In January of this year, two demonstrations demanded action from the Mongolian government: a group of more than 1000 protesters gathered at Mongolia’s parliament building demanding that the government combat pollution, while simultaneously, **LEAD Mongolia** participants at the University of Virginia marched carrying protest signs saying, “Air pollution is everyone’s problem!” and “Clean Air is a human right! #Air Pollution #BreatheMongolia”.

As for the future, Dr. Delgerzul and the other **LEAD Mongolia** participants are planning projects to reduce air pollution and to ask the government to use the funds from vehicle taxes to find solutions to the problem. Dr. Delgerzul says the **Lead Mongolia** program taught her that to change society, people have to team up to educate the public, “...because real power is in the hands of the citizens, not the hands of decision makers.”

The **Sustainable Development Goals** impacted by this project include:

#3 Good Health and Well-being

#13 Climate Action

#15 Life on Land

- #17 Partnerships for the Goals

### **Organizational Value-Added**

These three examples of Level IV performance improvement are inspiring and potentially far-reaching. Now, let's bring our perspective back to the organizations where we work. Recall our opening: "Either you are adding societal value or you are subtracting value."

We leave you with these two questions:

What value does your organization offer to society?

How does your work contribute to that?

## **Summary**

Organizations across the globe are increasingly held accountable for producing goods and providing services in responsible, sustainable ways. The fourth organizational level, World/Society, speaks to the impact organizations have on our world and allows us to explore what such institutions can do to improve living conditions for everyone.

We are guided by the United Nations **17 Sustainable Development Goals**, established and agreed to in 2015. The work done worldwide by organizations like the **Performance Improvement Institute**, **USAID**, and **World Learning** support the **SDGs** and their results demonstrate performance improvement at the Societal Level.

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