

ESF Evaluation of the Inner Development Goals (IDGs)

Name: Inner Development Goals (IDGs)

Originating entity: Inner Development Goals Initiative

Primary focus: A global initiative cultivating the inner and collective capacities needed to address complex societal and planetary challenges.

ESF Evaluation Score: 15/20

Introductory Context

The Inner Development Goals initiative addresses an important dimension of global transformation: the human qualities through which knowledge, intentions and shared commitments become meaningful action. Its Inner Development Guide brings together 25 capacities across five dimensions - Being, Thinking, Relating, Collaborating and Acting - offering a common language for learning and change. [1,2]

A particular strength is its understanding that inner development unfolds through relationships, communities and institutions. This gives the initiative relevance beyond personal development, connecting human growth with the cultures and systems through which people live and work. Its resources span education, leadership, organisational development and sustainability practice. [1,3]

From an ESF perspective, the IDGs offer a substantial contribution to the human foundations of flourishing. Their strongest integration lies in human capacities and cultural relationships, with a developing connection to ecological and regenerative economic practice. This assessment considers the Guide alongside its wider resources and applications.

1. Natural Environment Integration

Score: 3 / 5

The IDGs are grounded in a concern for sustainable futures and the relationship between people and planet. Their current thinking identifies disconnection from nature as part of the challenges facing society, making ecological relationship relevant to the work of inner development. [1]

This connection is expressed through resources on climate action and regenerative food systems, and through nature-based educational practice. A Southern African case in the 2026 higher-education casebook explores how wilderness learning can deepen ecological identity and relational awareness. [3,5]

These are valuable foundations for ecological flourishing. Further integration would connect such learning more consistently with stewardship, biodiversity, ecosystem health and the regeneration of the places in which people live.

ESF judgement: Partially integrated. The initiative connects inner development with ecological awareness and selected forms of practice, with scope to make the health of living systems a more explicit organising concern.

2. Circular and Regenerative Economies Integration

Score: 3 / 5

The IDG Business Coalition explicitly seeks to support a transition from extractive business models towards regenerative contributions to society and planetary health. Its attention to strategy, governance, organisational culture and collaboration gives inner development a practical role within economic transformation. [6]

From an ESF perspective, this is a significant connection. Economic decisions are shaped by values, assumptions, relationships and the ability to consider consequences beyond immediate organisational interests. Developing these capacities can support more responsible approaches to production, investment and resource use.

The opportunity is to make the economic expression of this work more concrete: circular material flows, equitable livelihoods, community wealth, fair distribution and local resilience. These would help connect changes in leadership and culture with the material conditions that support flourishing.

ESF judgement: Partially integrated. A clear regenerative direction is present, with further potential to connect inner and organisational development to circular, equitable and place-based economic systems.

3. Cultural Values and Identity Integration

Score: 4 / 5

The IDGs demonstrate strong alignment in this domain. Shared reflection, relational learning and collaboration support the development of trust, ethical awareness and more constructive ways of living together. The Guide also makes room for interpretation across cultures and contexts. [1,2]

Its research co-creation process includes localisation, while the 2026 higher-education casebook shows how institutions can work with the approach in varied settings. This flexibility supports cultural relevance and enables communities to bring their own experience to the work. [4,7]

The next opportunity is to deepen attention to culture as an intergenerational field of meaning: language, heritage, spiritual traditions, collective memory and relationships with place. Indigenous and Global South traditions can enrich both the understanding of development and the ways in which shared knowledge is created.

ESF judgement: Well integrated. The IDGs make a substantial contribution to relational values and collaborative cultures, with scope to deepen their engagement with inherited meaning, worldview and cultural continuity.

4. Human Capacities and Potential Integration

Score: 5 / 5

This is the defining strength of the initiative. By bringing together Being, Thinking, Relating, Collaborating and Acting, the Guide recognises that meaningful human development involves the quality of our inner lives, our understanding of the world, our relationships and our ability to contribute. [2]

The approach supports an expansive understanding of education and leadership. It encourages people to reflect on how they learn, relate and act, and provides a language that can connect individual growth with collective purpose. Educational applications include experiential learning, teacher preparation, communities of practice and institutional development. [7]

Across the seven ESF levels, the strongest connections are with relationship, independence, engagement, fulfilment, contribution and growth. Security provides an important foundation: safe relationships, supportive environments and the material conditions that enable people to exercise their capacities. Bringing these foundations into application would strengthen the developmental coherence of the work.

There is particular potential to extend this contribution across the life course, including early childhood, embodied learning, play and creativity, and the relationships through which values and worldviews first take shape.

ESF judgement: Fully integrated in its central focus on inner and relational capacities. The IDGs offer a rich and practical contribution to understanding and cultivating human potential.

Overall ESF Score

ESF domain	Score
Natural Environment	3 / 5
Circular & Regenerative Economies	3 / 5
Cultural Values & Identity	4 / 5
Human Capacities & Potential	5 / 5
Total	15 / 20

A score of **15/20** places the initiative in the **Moderately Integrated** category of the ESF evaluation scale. It combines considerable developmental and relational depth with opportunities for stronger integration across ecological and economic systems. [8]

Overall Assessment

The IDGs make an important contribution by bringing the quality of human development into conversations about sustainability and systems change. Their value lies in helping people and institutions cultivate the capacities through which shared ambitions can become thoughtful, collaborative action. Stronger connections to the ecological, economic and cultural conditions of everyday life would extend this contribution across the full ecosystem of flourishing.

Recommendations for Stronger ESF Alignment

First, deepen ecological integration. Connect inner development with direct relationships to the living world through nature-based learning, stewardship and the regeneration of local ecosystems.

Second, make regenerative economics tangible. Link leadership and organisational development with circular resource use, equitable livelihoods, community wealth and resilient local economies.

Third, strengthen cultural and worldview depth. Create space for communities to explore how language, inherited narratives, spiritual traditions and place shape their understanding of development and contribution.

Fourth, extend the developmental lens across the life course. Include early relationships, care, embodiment, play and creativity alongside the capacities needed in adult leadership and organisational life.

Finally, bring these connections together in practice. A school, community or city inquiry could explore a shared issue such as food through all four ESF domains, connecting personal and collective learning with changes in everyday systems.

Concluding Assessment

The Inner Development Goals initiative offers a valuable language and growing body of practice for the human dimensions of transformation. Its relational and collective orientation provides a strong foundation for collaboration with approaches concerned with the wider conditions of flourishing.

ESF Assessment: The IDGs are a strong contributor to ecosystemic flourishing, particularly through their treatment of human capacities and relational culture. Their further potential lies in connecting this developmental depth with the ecological and economic systems that sustain life.

Sources and Assessment Basis

This prototype assessment applies the published ESF methodology to the IDG Guide webpages, official resources and selected application summaries available on 20 October 2026. The score concerns integration across the four ESF domains.

[1] Inner Development Goals (n.d.) Guide. [Read source](#)

[2] Inner Development Goals (2025) Guide version 2025. [Read source](#)

[3] Inner Development Goals (n.d.) Resources. [Read source](#)

[4] Inner Development Goals (n.d.) Research Co-Creation. [Read source](#)

[5] Wolf-Gillespie, I. (2026) Nature-Based Wilderness Field Trips as Inner Development Guide (IDG) Interventions. Chapter synopsis. [Read source](#)

[6] Inner Development Goals (n.d.) Business Coalition. [Read source](#)

[7] Shtaltovna, Y. and Rodriguez Carreon, V. (eds) (2026) Casebook of IDG Implementation into Higher Education. Publisher synopsis and contents. [Read source](#)

[8] Flourish Project (2026) The Ecosystemic Flourishing (ESF) Evaluation Methodology. [Read source](#)