Flourish Project
The Ecology of Wellbeing

ESF Evaluation of *OECD Better Life Initiative*

Originating entity: ESF Evaluation of the OECD Better Life Initiative

Originating entity: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Primary focus: A multidimensional wellbeing framework designed to move beyond GDP by measuring quality of life and material conditions across OECD member countries. The initiative integrates indicators relating to housing, income, employment, community, education, environment, civic engagement, health, life satisfaction, safety, and work-life balance into a comparative international wellbeing architecture.

ESF Evaluation Score: 15/20

Introductory Context

The OECD Better Life Initiative represents one of the most influential international attempts to redefine societal progress beyond narrow economic growth metrics. Developed in response to increasing recognition that GDP alone cannot adequately capture human wellbeing, the framework has played a major role in legitimising multidimensional wellbeing measurement within international policy discourse.

The initiative is organised around a broad range of interconnected wellbeing dimensions including:

- income and wealth
- jobs and earnings
- housing
- health
- education
- civic engagement
- environmental quality
- social connection
- life satisfaction
- safety
- work-life balance

The framework explicitly recognises that wellbeing depends upon both material living conditions and broader quality-of-life factors. It also seeks to provide governments with a more integrated evidence base for policy development and comparative evaluation.

From an ESF perspective, the OECD Better Life Initiative represents one of the most important transitional frameworks moving global governance beyond purely economic models of progress. The framework demonstrates particularly strong alignment in multidimensional wellbeing measurement,

social conditions, and policy integration.

However, it remains less developed in relation to ecological interdependence, regenerative systems thinking, developmental psychology, worldview formation, cultural meaning systems, and the deeper relational dimensions of flourishing.

As such, it can be understood as: a highly influential multidimensional wellbeing framework, but not yet a fully integrated ecosystemic flourishing model.

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1. Natural Environment Integration

Score: 3 / 5

The framework demonstrates moderate alignment in this domain.
The OECD Better Life Initiative explicitly includes environmental quality as a core dimension of wellbeing and recognises that pollution and environmental degradation directly affect quality of life and long-term human wellbeing.

The framework includes attention to:

• air pollution
• water quality
• environmental health
• sustainability concerns
• living conditions
• environmental risk exposure

Its inclusion of environmental indicators within a mainstream international wellbeing architecture represents a major shift away from purely economic policy models.
However, environmental conditions are still treated primarily as contributing factors to human wellbeing rather than as intrinsic dimensions of a living ecological system.
There remains limited explicit attention to:

• biodiversity
• ecological regeneration
• planetary boundaries
• nature connectedness
• regenerative ecological systems
• ecological identity
• reciprocal human-nature relationships

The framework therefore remains more environmentally adjusted than deeply ecological in worldview.
ESF judgement: Moderately integrated. The initiative recognises environmental quality as important to wellbeing, though ecological flourishing is not yet treated as foundational to societal flourishing.

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2. Circular and Regenerative Economics Integration
Score: 4 / 5
This is one of the framework's strongest areas of alignment.
The OECD Better Life Initiative explicitly challenges narrow GDP-centred understandings of progress and promotes a broader conception of prosperity that includes wellbeing, inclusion, security, and quality of life.
The framework includes substantial attention to:

• income inequality
• employment quality
• housing affordability
• economic security
• social protection
• work-life balance
• long-term wellbeing outcomes
• distributional equity

Its integration into OECD policy discourse has also given multidimensional wellbeing measurement unusually strong institutional legitimacy and policy influence.

From an ESF perspective, the framework represents an important transition beyond purely extractive economic thinking toward more human-centred economic systems.

However, the initiative remains more reformist than regenerative in economic orientation.

There is limited explicit attention to:

• circular economies
• regenerative enterprise
• local resilience systems
• bioregional economics
• ecological economics
• community wealth-building
• reciprocity-based systems

The framework still largely operates within existing economic structures rather than proposing a deeper civilisational transition toward regenerative economic models.

ESF judgement: Strongly integrated. A substantial post-GDP economic framework, though not yet fully regenerative in worldview or economic architecture.

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3. Cultural Values and Identity Integration

Score: 3 / 5

The framework demonstrates moderate alignment in this domain.

The OECD Better Life Initiative includes meaningful attention to:

• social connection
• civic engagement
• institutional trust
• safety
• democratic participation
• social inclusion
• community wellbeing

Its recognition that wellbeing extends beyond material wealth and includes relational and social dimensions represents an important conceptual advance within international policy discourse.

The inclusion of social relationships and civic participation reflects growing awareness that social fragmentation, loneliness, and institutional distrust significantly affect societal wellbeing.

However, the framework remains relatively limited in its treatment of:

• cultural identity
• worldview
• spirituality
• shared meaning
• ethical formation
• intergenerational narrative
• Indigenous knowledge systems
• civilisational values

Culture is primarily approached through participation and social cohesion rather than through deeper questions of meaning, identity, and collective purpose.
As a result, the framework captures important aspects of social wellbeing, but gives less explicit attention to the worldview and cultural dimensions shaping long-term flourishing.
ESF judgement: Moderately integrated. Strong on social participation and inclusion, though less developed regarding worldview, meaning, identity, and deeper cultural dimensions of flourishing.

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4. Human Capacities and Potential Integration
Score: 5 / 5
This is the framework's strongest area of alignment.
The OECD Better Life Initiative demonstrates substantial attention to:
• health
• education
• life satisfaction
• wellbeing
• employment quality
• safety
• social participation
• work-life balance
• housing security
• access to services
Importantly, the framework explicitly recognises that human wellbeing cannot be reduced to economic output alone and incorporates both objective and subjective dimensions of quality of life.
The initiative strongly aligns with several dimensions of the ESF developmental model, particularly in relation to:
• security
• relationship
• engagement
• aspects of fulfilment
The framework has also played a major role in legitimising subjective wellbeing as a serious area of international policy concern.
However, the framework remains more outcome-oriented than developmentally oriented.
It gives limited explicit attention to:
• early childhood development
• developmental psychology
• creativity
• agency
• inner development
• contribution
• spiritual development
• transformational growth
• meaning-centred flourishing
Education is primarily approached through attainment and capability measures rather than through a broader flourishing-based conception of human development.
ESF judgement: Very strongly integrated. The framework provides substantial multidimensional coverage of human wellbeing and quality of life, though it remains less developed regarding inner development and long-term developmental flourishing.

Overall ESF Score

ESF domain	Score
Natural Environment	3

ESF domain	Score
Circular and Regenerative Economics	4
Cultural Values and Identity	3
Human Capacities and Potential	5
Total	15 / 20

According to the ESF evaluation scale, a total score of 15 / 20 places the framework in the category of:
Moderately - Highly Integrated

Overall Assessment
The OECD Better Life Initiative represents one of the most influential international frameworks currently shaping the global transition beyond GDP-based models of progress.
Its principal strengths are:
• strong multidimensional wellbeing architecture
• major international policy legitimacy
• integration of subjective and objective wellbeing
• substantial post-GDP economic thinking
• strong comparative policy relevance
• recognition of social and relational wellbeing
• institutional influence across multiple nations
The framework's greatest contribution lies in its recognition that:
• wellbeing
• economic security
• health
• social connection
• civic participation
• environmental quality
must be understood together rather than as isolated policy domains.
However, from an ESF perspective, the framework remains incomplete as a fully ecosystemic flourishing model.
Its principal limitations are:
• limited ecological systems integration
• weak regenerative economic framing
• limited developmental psychology integration
• insufficient attention to worldview and meaning systems
• minimal spiritual or existential dimensions
• limited treatment of inner development and transformational growth
• weak integration of cultural and ecological identity
As a result, the framework provides a highly influential multidimensional wellbeing architecture, but does not yet fully integrate the developmental, ecological, cultural, relational, and meaning-centred dimensions from which long-term flourishing emerges.

Concluding Assessment
The OECD Better Life Initiative should be regarded as one of the foundational international wellbeing frameworks emerging within the global movement beyond GDP-based governance.
It already shares ESF's concern with:
• multidimensional wellbeing
• quality of life
• social inclusion
• institutional trust

• sustainability
• wellbeing measurement
• long-term societal resilience
However, it stops short of ESF's deeper contribution, which is to show that flourishing is not only:
• economic
• institutional
• social
• material
but also:
• ecological
• developmental
• relational
• ethical
• cultural
• meaning-laden

ESF Assessment
The OECD Better Life Initiative represents one of the most important current transitions beyond GDP-based governance towards a more multidimensional and human-centred understanding of societal progress.
The Flourish Project is a global initiative dedicated to advancing the Ecosystemic Flourishing (ESF) Framework - an integrative approach to wellbeing that recognises the deep interdependence between human development, cultural values, regenerative economies, and the natural world. Rooted in systems thinking, relational practice, and emerging research on flourishing, the project seeks to support the development of compassionate, resilient, and ecologically conscious individuals and communities through education, policy innovation, research, and cross-sector collaboration.
The Harmony Project, founded by Richard Dunne and linked with the Sustainable Food Trust

Primary focus: An educational approach that places Nature's principles of Harmony at the heart of teaching and learning. The model uses values-based education, enquiry-led learning, nature connection, geometry, Great Works, student-led sustainability, local food systems, biodiversity projects, and community partnerships to support young people in learning how to live sustainably and well.

ESF Evaluation Score: 18/20

Introductory Context

The Harmony Project represents one of the strongest currently available education models for aligning learning with ecological literacy, values formation, student agency, and regenerative practice. Its Teachers' Guide describes education as needing to move beyond dry, detached knowledge acquisition toward purposeful, meaningful, real-life learning rooted in Nature, sustainability, creativity, and community. It is built around four central elements:

• values
• enquiries of learning
• Nature's principles of Harmony
• Great Works
The framework identifies seven principles of Harmony in Nature:

- Interdependence
- The Cycle
- Diversity
- Adaptation
- Health
- Geometry
- Oneness

These are then translated into curriculum design, school culture, sustainability projects, food growing, biodiversity work, energy monitoring, community partnerships, and reflective learning. From an ESF perspective, this is a highly aligned model because it treats education not simply as academic preparation, but as the development of right relationship between self, others, place, community, and the living world.

As such, it can be understood as a deeply integrated educational flourishing model, with particularly strong alignment across ecological, cultural, developmental, and regenerative dimensions.

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1. Natural Environment Integration

Score: 5 / 5

This is one of the framework's strongest areas of alignment. The Harmony Project places Nature at the centre of learning, not as an additional topic, but as the primary teacher and organising principle.

The Teachers' Guide explicitly focuses on:

- planetary boundaries
- biodiversity loss
- climate change
- ecosystems
- food systems
- wildflower meadows
- bees and pollination
- local rivers and oceans
- energy use
- water conservation
- seasonal learning
- outdoor observation

The model's central claim is that young people need to understand how Nature works if they are to learn how to live sustainably and well. Particularly strong is its use of Nature's principles as an organising curriculum architecture. Interdependence, cycles, diversity, adaptation, health, geometry, and oneness provide a coherent ecological language through which children can understand living systems.

The project also moves from awareness to practice through:

- school biodiversity projects
- orchard regeneration
- beekeeping
- composting

• food growing
• wildflower meadows
• energy monitoring
• water conservation
• local ecosystem studies

ESF judgement: Very strong alignment. The Harmony Project demonstrates an exceptional understanding that children's learning, wellbeing, and future citizenship must be rooted in ecological awareness and direct relationship with the natural world.

2. Circular and Regenerative Economics Integration

Score: 5 / 5

The framework demonstrates very strong alignment in this domain.

The Harmony Project does not treat sustainability as abstract knowledge. It translates circular and regenerative principles into practical school life.

The Teachers' Guide includes strong attention to:

• circular systems
• food waste recycling
• composting
• local food procurement
• seasonal food
• organic growing
• school gardens
• orchard regeneration
• energy conservation
• water conservation
• reducing plastic waste
• sustainable farming systems

Its treatment of the principle of the Cycle is especially important from an ESF perspective. It explicitly teaches that sustainable systems must be cyclical, that Nature has no waste, and that human systems should learn from this logic.

The project also has a strong link with food and farming education through the Sustainable Food Trust, which works to accelerate the transition to more sustainable food and farming systems. However, while the framework strongly supports circular and regenerative practice in schools, it is less explicitly developed as a broader economic framework for community wealth building, regenerative enterprise, or policy-level economic transformation.

ESF judgement: Very strongly integrated. The project offers one of the clearest practical educational models for introducing children to circularity, regenerative food systems, and sustainable resource use.

3. Cultural Values and Identity Integration

Score: 4 / 5

The framework demonstrates strong alignment in this domain.

The Harmony Project places values at the heart of school culture. It encourages schools to develop a shared values language through consultation with students, staff, families, and the wider community.

The Teachers' Guide highlights values such as:

- respect
- unity
- peace
- trust
- responsibility
- courage
- care
- fairness
- appreciation
- belonging
- friendship
- co-operation

It also connects values directly to Nature's principles, helping children see that moral life is not separate from ecological life.

The framework also supports cultural identity through:

- local history
- local food
- community elders
- traditional stories
- cultural festivals
- sacred geometry
- architecture
- music
- art
- intergenerational learning
- community partnerships

The inclusion of Oneness gives the model an unusually strong spiritual and meaning-centred dimension. It invites reflection, silence, contemplation, mindfulness, belonging, and connection to something greater.

The limitation is that the model could go further in explicitly addressing cultural diversity, Indigenous knowledge systems, decolonial perspectives, and plural worldviews beyond the existing references to traditions, religions, and cultures.

ESF judgement: Strongly integrated. The framework provides a rich values-based and meaning-centred approach to school culture, though it could further deepen its engagement with cultural plurality, Indigenous knowledge, and worldview formation.

4. Human Capacities and Potential Integration

Score: 4 / 5

This is another strong area of alignment.

The Harmony Project supports a wide range of human capacities, including:

- curiosity
- creativity
- confidence
- reflection
- responsibility
- observation
- fine motor skills
- self-esteem
- leadership
- agency
- collaboration
- communication
- ecological awareness
- practical problem-solving

Its enquiry-led model helps children ask deeper questions and apply learning to real life. Its Great Works approach supports confidence, refinement, presentation skills, creativity, and collective achievement.

The framework is especially strong in relation to the ESF levels of:

- relationship
- engagement
- fulfilment
- contribution
- growth

Student-led sustainability is also a major strength. The Teachers' Guide explicitly states that young people should see themselves as leaders with responsibility for projects that move the school community toward sustainability.

However, the model is less explicit about developmental psychology, early childhood foundations, trauma-informed practice, neurodiversity, and the full ESF sequence of security, relationship, independence, engagement, fulfilment, contribution, and growth.

ESF judgement: Strongly integrated. The model offers a powerful whole-child approach to agency, creativity, leadership, ecological awareness, and purposeful learning, though it could be strengthened through a more explicit developmental and inclusion framework.

Overall ESF Score

ESF domain	Score
Natural Environment	5
Circular and Regenerative Economics	5
Cultural Values and Identity	4
Human Capacities and Potential	4
Total	**18 / 20**

According to the ESF evaluation scale, a total score of **18 / 20** places the framework in the category of: **Highly Integrated**

Overall Assessment

The Harmony Project is one of the strongest education initiatives currently aligned with the Eco-Systemic Flourishing perspective.

Its principal strengths are:

- exceptional ecological integration
- strong values-based school culture
- practical sustainability projects
- student leadership
- real-life enquiry-led learning
- circular food and waste systems
- biodiversity and nature connection
- community partnership
- meaningful creative outcomes through Great Works
- spiritual and contemplative dimensions through Oneness

The framework's greatest contribution lies in its recognition that education must help children understand how life works. It does this not by adding sustainability to the curriculum, but by reorganising curriculum, culture, practice, and school life around Nature's principles.

However, from an ESF perspective, the framework could be further strengthened through:

- a more explicit developmental psychology model
- clearer mapping to the full ESF seven levels of human flourishing
- stronger attention to early years development
- more explicit inclusion of neurodiversity and trauma-informed practice
- deeper engagement with Indigenous knowledge and plural worldviews
- more developed links to regenerative economics beyond school practice

As a result, The Harmony Project can be seen as a highly integrated educational flourishing framework, especially powerful in its ecological, cultural, and practical dimensions.

Concluding Assessment

The Harmony Project should be regarded as a leading example of how education can be reimagined for a regenerative future.

It already shares ESF's concern with:

- ecological interdependence
- values formation
- whole-child development
- community belonging
- regenerative practice
- student agency
- meaning and purpose
- living systems thinking

However, it stops just short of ESF's broader contribution, which is to integrate these educational practices within a full life-course model of human development, cultural worldview formation, regenerative economics, and systemic wellbeing assessment.

ESF Assessment

The Harmony Project represents one of the most advanced educational models currently available for translating ecological wisdom, values-based learning, and student-led sustainability into everyday school practice.

The Flourish Project is a global initiative dedicated to advancing the Ecosystemic Flourishing (ESF) Framework - an integrative approach to wellbeing that recognises the deep interdependence between human development, cultural values, regenerative economies, and the natural world. Rooted in systems thinking, relational practice, and emerging research on flourishing, the project seeks to support the development of compassionate, resilient, and ecologically conscious individuals and communities through education, policy innovation, research, and cross-sector collaboration.
A global multidimensional framework designed to complement GDP through the measurement of equitable, inclusive, and sustainable wellbeing across present and future generations. The framework integrates wellbeing, inclusion, sustainability, resilience, institutional quality, and environmental conditions into a unified dashboard architecture for national and international policy application.