

Beyond GDP

A Balanced Economic Dashboard for Human Flourishing

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Core proposition

Economic measurement should be derived from economic purpose. If the telos of an economy is human flourishing, then GDP can remain useful only when situated within a broader dashboard that also measures equity, opportunity, ecological costs, resilience, innovation, psychological well-being, institutional sustainability, and long-term viability.

Executive Summary

For nearly a century, gross domestic product (GDP) has served as the dominant measure of national economic performance. Governments celebrate GDP growth, financial markets respond to GDP forecasts, and media outlets often treat GDP performance as a shorthand for the health of an economy. GDP is useful because it tells us something important about the scale of measured economic activity. Yet GDP was not designed to measure societal well-being, human flourishing, ecological viability, opportunity, resilience, or the quality of growth.

This white paper introduces the Balanced Economic Dashboard (BED), a multidimensional framework for evaluating economic performance in relation to eudaimonia, or human flourishing. The dashboard does not reject GDP. It transcends and includes it. GDP is treated as one important indicator within a broader architecture, much like a measure of central tendency in statistics. The mean is useful, but no serious analyst would use the mean alone to understand a complex dataset. Likewise, no society should rely on GDP alone to understand its economic and social condition.

The framework begins from a simple but far-reaching question: What is the economy for? If the purpose of an economy is only to produce more measurable activity, then GDP may appear adequate. If the purpose of an economy is to enable people, communities, institutions, and future generations to flourish, then economic measurement must become broader, deeper, and more temporally intelligent. The dashboard is therefore rooted in telos. It begins with purpose and derives indicators from that purpose.

BED organizes indicators into six clusters: Economic Foundation, Distribution and Inclusion, Value Quality, Ecological and Social Costs, Resilience and Future Capacity, and Flourishing Outcomes. These clusters include GDP per capita, inflation, unemployment, median disposable income, poverty, income inequality, intergenerational mobility, Empty GDP, harmful GDP, externalities, economic diversity, public debt sustainability, industrial sophistication, healthy life expectancy, and a psychological and social well-being composite.

The framework is grounded in a five-dimensional approach to economic systems. Ontologically, it treats the economy as a complex socio-economic-ecological system rather than a production machine. Epistemologically, it argues that economic health requires multidimensional evidence. Axiologically, it makes explicit the values embedded in measurement. In terms of praxis, it provides actionable signals for governance and institutional learning. Teleologically, it grounds economic life in the pursuit of human flourishing.

Unlike many one-size-fits-all measurement systems, BED is universal in architecture but adaptive in weighting. A developing economy may reasonably place greater weight on growth and poverty reduction, while an advanced economy may place greater weight on sustainability, mobility, quality of life, psychological flourishing, externalities, and the reduction of Empty GDP and harmful GDP. This flexibility allows societies to pursue different relative utopias while remaining anchored in a shared concern for flourishing.

The dashboard therefore functions less like a speedometer and more like a navigation system. GDP tells us how fast the economic engine is moving. A dashboard tells us whether the society has enough fuel, whether the engine is overheating, whether passengers are safe, whether the route is sustainable, and whether the destination is worth reaching.

1. Introduction: The Question Behind Economic Measurement

How should we judge the success of an economy? At first glance, this appears to be a technical question. It seems to call for data, formulas, indicators, and statistical comparisons. Yet beneath the technical question lies a deeper philosophical one. To decide how to measure an economy, a society must first decide what an economy is for.

Every measurement system reflects an underlying vision of success. Organizations measure what they value. Schools measure what they hope students will learn. Hospitals measure what they understand health to mean. Businesses measure what they seek to optimize. Nations are no different. A country that measures success primarily through GDP will tend to privilege production, output, and growth. A country that measures success through human flourishing will need a wider and more nuanced set of indicators.

GDP became dominant because it answered an important twentieth-century need. Governments required a standardized measure of economic activity. National accounting helped states manage war economies, post-war reconstruction, industrial expansion, fiscal policy, and macroeconomic stabilization. GDP gave policymakers a common language for production, recession, recovery, and growth. It remains valuable in that role.

The problem emerged when GDP shifted from being a measure of output to being treated as a measure of national success itself. A tool designed for one purpose was asked to perform another. GDP was not designed to answer whether people are healthy, whether opportunity is broadly available, whether communities are cohesive, whether ecological systems are being degraded, whether psychological well-being is strong, or whether future generations are inheriting a viable world.

This white paper argues that the limitations of GDP cannot be solved merely by adding a few additional indicators. The deeper challenge is to reconnect economic measurement with economic purpose. If we do not clarify the purpose of the economy, the choice of indicators will remain fragmented. If we do clarify that purpose, then measurement can become coherent, transparent, and useful for collective navigation.

The Balanced Economic Dashboard begins with the proposition that the economy exists to support eudaimonia, or human flourishing. This does not mean ignoring growth, productivity, investment, trade, technological sophistication, or fiscal stability. Rather, it means situating them within a broader account of what makes economic life meaningful and sustainable. Growth is important when it expands capability, reduces deprivation, strengthens resilience, and supports human development. Growth is less admirable when it is empty, harmful, extractive, or dependent on shifting costs to vulnerable groups, ecosystems, or future generations.

Figure 1. From GDP to Relative Utopias

Economic measurement should be derived from economic purpose.

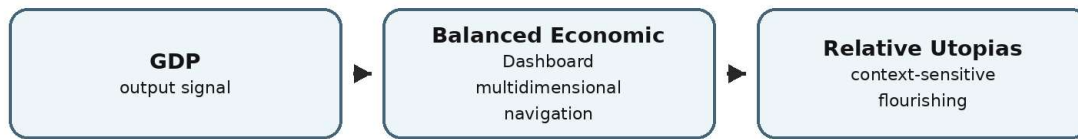


Figure 1. GDP remains useful, but it becomes meaningful only when placed inside a broader dashboard oriented toward context-sensitive forms of flourishing.

2. GDP as Economic Central Tendency

One of the clearest ways to understand GDP is through an analogy with statistics. GDP resembles a measure of central tendency. The arithmetic mean is useful because it condenses a large amount of information into a single number. It provides a first approximation of the center of a distribution. Yet the mean is never the whole story.

Two classrooms can have the same average grade while having very different distributions of learning. In one classroom, nearly all students may perform well. In another, a handful may excel while many struggle. The average conceals variance, inequality, outliers, and distributional structure. A serious analyst would therefore examine dispersion, skewness, subgroups, trends, and relationships among variables.

GDP functions in a similar manner. It tells us something about the aggregate scale of measured economic activity. Yet two countries with similar GDP per capita may differ profoundly in poverty, inequality, mobility, health outcomes, ecological burden, public debt, social trust, mental health, and industrial sophistication. A GDP figure alone cannot tell us whether prosperity is broadly shared, whether growth is sustainable, or whether economic activity contributes to flourishing.

This analogy helps avoid an unhelpful debate. The point is not that GDP is useless. The point is that GDP is partial. Just as a statistician does not reject the mean when they also examines variance, the Balanced Economic Dashboard does not reject GDP when it adds other indicators. It transcends and includes GDP. It recognizes that GDP provides valuable information, but refuses to mistake one informative statistic for the whole condition of a society.

A related way to frame the problem is through the idea of explanatory power. GDP may explain some of the variance in flourishing, especially in contexts where basic material deprivation remains high. However, as societies become more affluent and complex, the variance in flourishing is increasingly shaped by distribution, health systems, ecological quality, mobility, psychological well-being, institutional trust, social cohesion, and future capacity. The problem is therefore not only that GDP omits important variables, but that no single indicator should be expected to explain enough of the

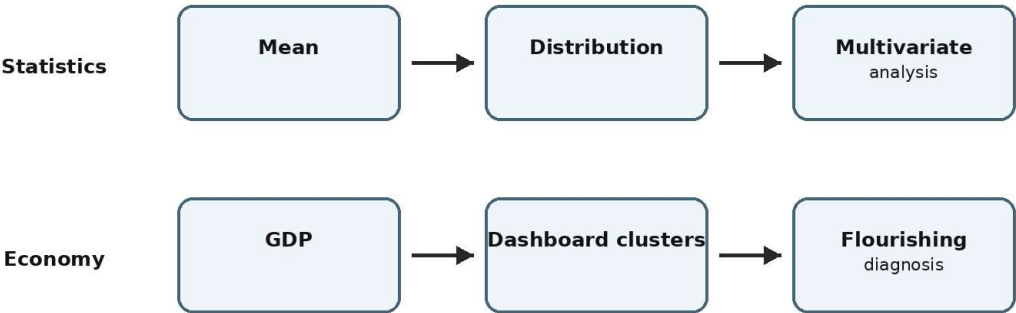
variance in flourishing to function as a master measure. GDP is best understood as one partial predictor within a broader multivariate architecture.

The dashboard therefore extends the logic of serious analysis to economic life. If society is complex, then economic measurement must be multivariate. If flourishing has many dimensions, then the measurement of flourishing must include multiple dimensions. GDP is a starting point, not a destination. It is one instrument in the cockpit, not the flight plan.

Table 1. GDP as Economic Central Tendency

Statistical concept	Economic analogue	Why it matters
Mean	GDP or GDP per capita	A useful summary of aggregate economic activity.
Variance	Inequality and regional disparities	Shows how unevenly benefits are distributed.
Outliers	Extreme wealth, extreme poverty, and harmful sectors	Reveals distortions hidden by averages.
Time trends	Growth, debt, mobility, and industrial sophistication	Shows trajectory rather than a static snapshot.
Multivariate analysis	Balanced Economic Dashboard	Combines multiple dimensions of flourishing.

Figure 2. GDP as Economic Central Tendency



The problem is not the mean or GDP. The problem is treating one summary as the whole diagnosis.

Figure 2. GDP should be treated as an economic analogue to the mean: useful, but insufficient without distributional and multivariate analysis.

3. Telos: What Is the Economy For?

Most debates about economic indicators focus on methodology. Researchers debate data sources, formulas, normalization procedures, and weighting schemes. These questions matter, but they are secondary. The primary question is teleological: What is the economy for?

If the purpose of an economy is growth, then GDP may appear sufficient. If the purpose of an economy is financial return, then asset prices and profitability may dominate. If the purpose of an economy is human flourishing, then the measurement system must change. Indicators should not be selected merely because they are familiar or easy to measure. They should be selected because they illuminate the conditions under which people and societies flourish.

This white paper adopts the position that the telos of an economy is eudaimonia. In the Aristotelian tradition, eudaimonia refers to flourishing or living well. It is not reducible to pleasure, consumption, or subjective happiness. It involves capability, virtue, participation, meaningful activity, health, and the realization of human potential within a social world (Aristotle, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999).

The capability approach provides an important bridge between flourishing and measurement. Eudaimonia specifies the ultimate purpose of economic life, while capabilities describe the real opportunities people possess to develop and exercise valued forms of functioning (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Many indicators within the Balanced Economic Dashboard can therefore be understood as capability indicators, including mobility, health, income, agency, psychological well-being, and access to opportunity.

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Economic flourishing therefore requires more than wealth. It requires that people have access to real opportunities. It requires that children can develop their capacities. It requires that work is not merely available but sufficiently dignified and meaningful. It requires public goods, social trust, health, education, ecological stability, psychological well-being, and institutions capable of balancing present needs with future responsibility.

This does not imply that all societies must pursue the same social model. Eudaimonia can be expressed through multiple relative utopias. Some societies may place greater emphasis on equality and social cohesion. Others may emphasize innovation, pluralism, cultural continuity, ecological restoration, democratic participation, or capability expansion. The dashboard provides a common language for flourishing without imposing a single universal blueprint.

The teleological move changes the entire logic of economic measurement. The question is no longer simply, “how much output did the economy produce”? It becomes, “to what extent does economic activity contribute to flourishing lives, flourishing communities, and a flourishing planet”?

4. Existing Attempts to Move Beyond GDP

The Balanced Economic Dashboard stands within a long tradition of efforts to move beyond GDP. These frameworks have made crucial contributions by showing that economic success cannot be reduced to production alone. Yet each remains partial in ways that create space for a more integrated approach.

The Human Development Index made a major contribution by combining income with health and education. It helped shift development discourse away from income alone and toward human capability. Its strength is clarity. Its weakness is narrowness. It leaves out ecological limits, inequality in the standard version, public debt, Empty GDP, harmful GDP, industrial sophistication, and the temporal structure of development.

The Genuine Progress Indicator goes further by attempting to distinguish beneficial economic activity from social and environmental costs. Its strength is that it recognizes the qualitative difference between activity that advances well-being and activity that compensates for damage. Its weakness is methodological complexity. It often requires assigning monetary values to forms of value that may be difficult or controversial to monetize.

Although BED overlaps with the MEW, ISEW, and GPI lineage in its concern for externalities, defensive expenditures, and welfare-distorting economic activity, its primary lineage is different. Rather than beginning with the correction of GDP, it begins with economic telos and draws on eudaimonic philosophy, the capability approach, balanced scorecard logic, and phronetic governance to construct a multidimensional dashboard for flourishing. BED is therefore not best understood as a monetized welfare adjustment to GDP, but as a telos-first governance architecture that retains GDP while situating it within a broader account of flourishing.

The OECD Better Life Index expands the range of indicators to include housing, jobs, education, environment, safety, civic engagement, and life satisfaction. It is valuable because it reflects a broader conception of well-being. However, it is less clearly grounded in an explicit philosophy of economic purpose and does not function as a tightly integrated navigation system for development priorities.

Doughnut Economics offers one of the most compelling conceptual advances in contemporary economic thought. It defines a safe and just operating space between social foundations and planetary boundaries. Its great strength is conceptual elegance. Its limitation is that it is less operational as a weighted comparative dashboard.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide broad coverage and global legitimacy. They incorporate poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, climate, institutions, and more. Yet their breadth is also a challenge. Seventeen goals and many targets can become difficult to prioritize, communicate, and use as a concise economic navigation system.

The Economic Complexity Index provides another valuable contribution by measuring the sophistication and diversity of a country's productive capabilities. It helps identify whether an economy is producing simple goods or complex, knowledge-intensive products. Yet ECI does not measure distribution, health, ecological cost, poverty, or human flourishing. It is powerful but narrow.

The Balanced Economic Dashboard seeks to integrate the strengths of these models. It is broader than HDI, less monetization-dependent than GPI, more operational than Doughnut Economics, more focused

than the SDGs, and more human-centered than ECI. Its distinctive contribution is not merely the number of indicators it includes, but the way it derives measurement from telos.

Table 2. GDP and Alternative Frameworks

Framework	Telos	Strengths	What it omits or underdevelops
GDP	Production and growth	Clear measure of output and macroeconomic scale.	Distribution, flourishing, externalities, resilience, opportunity, and psychological well-being.
HDI	Human development	Adds health and education to income.	Sustainability, innovation, harmful GDP, Empty GDP, and industrial sophistication.
GPI	Net welfare after costs	Subtracts social and ecological costs.	Difficult monetization and less explicit dashboard logic.
OECD Better Life Index	Multidimensional well-being	Broad set of life-quality indicators.	Limited teleological grounding and future-readiness logic.
Doughnut Economics	Safe and just operating space	Strong ecological and social vision.	Less operational as a weighted comparative tool.
SDGs	Comprehensive sustainable development	Global legitimacy and broad scope.	Too broad for concise economic navigation.
Economic Complexity Index	Productive sophistication	Measures productive capability and future potential.	Narrow economic scope and no flourishing lens.
Balanced Economic Dashboard	Human flourishing and eudaimonia	Integrates output, equity, ecology, resilience, innovation, psychology, and time.	Requires empirical testing, methodological refinement, and contextual weighting.

Some Beyond-GDP measures have been criticized as “measures without theory” because they combine indicators without a sufficiently explicit account of what those indicators mean, why they matter, or how they should inform policy. BED responds to this problem by making its theoretical commitments explicit. Its grounding is not primarily a conventional welfare-economic model or a national-accounting adjustment. Rather, it is a transdisciplinary architecture grounded in eudaimonic philosophy, the capability approach, systems thinking, practical wisdom, and the 5D framework of ontology, epistemology, axiology, praxis, and telos. This theoretical grounding allows the dashboard to explain not only what is measured, but why those dimensions matter and how they should support governance for flourishing.

The Balanced Economic Dashboard can also be read as an attempt to operationalize several of the core recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission. The Commission argued that GDP should not be treated as a sufficient measure of social progress and called for greater attention to household living standards, distribution, quality of life, subjective well-being, and sustainability. The present framework incorporates these concerns but organizes them within a more explicit architecture: measurement is derived from telos, economic activity is classified according to its contribution to flourishing, indicators are arranged as current, leading, and lagging signals, and weights are adapted to developmental context and social value hierarchies.

Table 3 summarizes how key recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission are translated into specific components of the Balanced Economic Dashboard. While the Commission identified areas requiring greater attention, the present framework seeks to organize those recommendations within a coherent architecture grounded in flourishing, temporal intelligence, adaptive weighting, and practical governance.

Table 3. Stiglitz Commission Recommendations and BED Operationalization

Stiglitz Recommendation	BED Operationalization
Greater attention to distribution	Income inequality and intergenerational mobility
Greater attention to household living standards	Median disposable income, poverty, and income measures
Greater attention to quality of life	Flourishing Outcomes cluster
Inclusion of subjective well-being	Psychological and Social Well-Being Composite
Greater attention to sustainability	Externalities, economic diversity, public debt sustainability, and industrial sophistication
Moving beyond GDP	Full multidimensional dashboard architecture
Attention to future well-being	Current, leading, and lagging indicator structure

5. What Makes the Balanced Economic Dashboard Distinctive

The distinctiveness of the Balanced Economic Dashboard does not lie in the general claim that GDP is incomplete. That claim is now widely accepted across many post-GDP frameworks. Nor does the dashboard claim that economic performance should simply be measured with a longer list of indicators. Many existing frameworks already include health, education, well-being, sustainability, inequality, or ecological cost. The contribution of the Balanced Economic Dashboard lies instead in the architecture through which economic measurement is organized, interpreted, and connected to purpose.

Before examining its distinctive features, it is useful to clarify the dashboard's relationship to existing frameworks. The Balanced Economic Dashboard does not seek to replace prior efforts so much as to transcend and include them. It retains GDP's concern with economic output, HDI's concern with human development, GPI's concern with welfare-adjusted activity, the OECD Better Life Index's multidimensional conception of well-being, Doughnut Economics' concern with social foundations and ecological boundaries, the SDGs' broad sustainability agenda, and the Economic Complexity Index's attention to productive sophistication. Its contribution lies in reorganizing these insights within a telos-first architecture oriented toward eudaimonia, adaptive weighting, temporal intelligence, value quality, and practical governance. In this sense, BED functions not merely as another alternative indicator, but as an integrative framework that synthesizes many of the strongest insights of the post-GDP movement.

The dashboard can also be understood as a phronetic governance instrument. In the Aristotelian tradition, phronesis refers to practical wisdom: the capacity to make context-sensitive judgments regarding competing goods under conditions of uncertainty. Economic governance routinely requires balancing growth, equity, sustainability, resilience, innovation, and well-being. BED supports such judgment by making these dimensions visible simultaneously. In this sense, the framework functions not only as a measurement architecture but also as an information architecture for practical wisdom.

First, the dashboard is telos-first. It begins not with the question, “What does GDP leave out?” but with the deeper question, “What is the economy for?” This shift matters because indicators are never neutral. They always imply a vision of success. If the economy is understood primarily as a production system, then GDP may appear to be the master indicator. If the economy is understood as a system for supporting human flourishing, then GDP becomes one important measure within a broader architecture. The dashboard therefore derives measurement from economic purpose rather than adding indicators to GDP after the fact.

Second, the dashboard makes its philosophical assumptions explicit. Economic measurement always rests on assumptions about what an economy is, how economic health can be known, what should be valued, what kinds of action should follow, and what ultimate purpose economic life should serve. These assumptions are often left implicit in measurement systems, which can make them appear more value-neutral than they really are. By grounding the dashboard in ontology, epistemology, axiology, praxis, and telos, the framework makes its assumptions available for reflection, critique, and refinement.

Third, the dashboard distinguishes the quality of economic activity. Conventional GDP counts market activity without asking whether that activity contributes to flourishing. The Balanced Economic Dashboard introduces a more refined interpretive structure by distinguishing Empty GDP, Harmful GDP, and externalities. Empty GDP refers to economic activity that increases measured output while generating little corresponding increase in flourishing. Harmful GDP refers to activity that contributes positively to GDP while actively undermining flourishing. Externalities refer to costs shifted onto other people, ecosystems, or future generations. This distinction allows the dashboard to move beyond the simple question of how much activity occurred and ask what kind of activity the economy is producing.

Fourth, the dashboard is temporally intelligent. Many economic indicators describe present conditions or past outcomes, but they do not always distinguish clearly among immediate experience, future-forming capacity, and cumulative system effects. The current, leading, and lagging indicator architecture

addresses this limitation. Current indicators show how people are experiencing the economy now. Leading indicators reveal what future the economy is creating. Lagging indicators show what the system has already produced over time. This makes the dashboard a tool for governance and foresight rather than merely a retrospective scorecard.

Fifth, the dashboard is adaptive rather than one-size-fits-all. It uses a universal architecture, but its weights can change according to developmental context, institutional capacity, ecological vulnerability, and social value hierarchy. A developing economy may reasonably place greater weight on poverty reduction, employment, and material foundations. An advanced economy may place greater weight on externalities, Empty GDP, psychological well-being, mobility, and long-term resilience. Adaptive weighting therefore operationalizes the idea that societies should not all be judged by identical priorities at all times.

Finally, the dashboard supports relative utopias. It does not impose a single model of the good society, but neither does it collapse into radical relativism. Different societies may pursue different configurations of flourishing, emphasizing equality, innovation, sustainability, cultural continuity, capability development, or social cohesion. The dashboard provides a shared language for comparing and improving economic systems while allowing plural pathways toward flourishing.

In this sense, the Balanced Economic Dashboard is not merely another alternative index. It is a telos-based, value-explicit, development-sensitive, and temporally intelligent architecture for economic measurement. Its purpose is not only to supplement GDP, but to change the logic through which economic success is interpreted.

A related but more technical contribution is the dashboard's use of reverse scoring to preserve interpretive coherence. Several important indicators are desirable when lower rather than higher, including inflation, poverty, inequality, unemployment, externalities, Empty GDP, and Harmful GDP. Reverse scoring ensures that all final dashboard scores move in the same normative direction: higher scores indicate stronger contribution to flourishing. This is not merely a bookkeeping device. It allows mixed indicators to be integrated into a coherent governance architecture in which the meaning of improvement remains consistent across clusters.

6. The 5D Foundations of the Dashboard

A common weakness of measurement frameworks is that they present indicators without making their philosophical assumptions explicit. The Balanced Economic Dashboard attempts to avoid this by grounding measurement in five dimensions: ontology, epistemology, axiology, praxis, and telos. Readers familiar with the author's broader metatheoretical work will recognize this as an application of the 5D framework to economic measurement; readers approaching the paper from economics or policy can treat it simply as a transparency device for making assumptions visible. This makes the framework more reflective than a purely technical index.

Ontology asks what kind of reality an economy is. If the economy is treated as a simple production machine, then GDP may seem adequate. If the economy is understood as a complex socio-economic-ecological system, then health, mobility, public debt, ecological costs, institutional trust, psychological

well-being, and industrial sophistication become central rather than peripheral. BED assumes the latter ontology.

Epistemology asks how we know whether an economy is healthy. GDP answers through aggregate output. The dashboard answers through multidimensional evidence. It treats economic knowledge as a form of systems diagnosis. No single indicator is sovereign. Instead, the health of the economy is inferred through patterns across several dimensions.

Axiology asks what is valued. GDP often appears value-neutral, but it embeds a value hierarchy. It privileges measured market activity. The dashboard makes its values explicit: prosperity, fairness, opportunity, sustainability, resilience, health, psychological well-being, innovation, and intergenerational responsibility. Making values visible allows them to be debated rather than smuggled in as technical assumptions.

Economic measurement is never ethically neutral. Every measurement system privileges some goods while obscuring others. GDP privileges measured market output. BED explicitly foregrounds flourishing, opportunity, sustainability, resilience, health, psychological well-being, and intergenerational responsibility. The framework therefore treats measurement not merely as a technical exercise but as an ethical act that shapes governance priorities and public attention.

Praxis asks how knowledge informs action. A dashboard should not only describe. It should guide. If inequality rises, if mobility declines, if Empty GDP grows, if harmful GDP expands, if psychological distress increases, if debt becomes unsustainable, or if industrial sophistication erodes, policymakers need signals that can guide intervention. BED is therefore designed for governance learning, not merely academic description.

Telos asks what the economy is for. This is the anchoring dimension. BED is rooted in eudaimonia. It evaluates economic life in relation to human flourishing. Without this teleological anchor, the framework would risk becoming another list of indicators. With it, the indicators become a coherent map of economic purpose.

Table 4. 5D Foundations of the Dashboard

5D dimension	Guiding question	Dashboard implication
Ontology	What is an economy?	A complex socio-economic-ecological system, not merely a production machine.
Epistemology	How do we know it is healthy?	Through multidimensional indicators rather than GDP alone.
Axiology	What do we value?	Prosperity, opportunity, sustainability, innovation, resilience, health, psychological well-being, and intergenerational responsibility.
Praxis	What actions follow?	Indicators guide policy, institutional learning, public deliberation, and governance.
Telos	What is the economy for?	Human flourishing and eudaimonia.

7. Dashboard Architecture: Indicator Clusters

The dashboard is organized into clusters because a list of indicators is not enough. Clusters reveal the logic of the framework. They show that economic flourishing includes material foundations, distributional inclusion, value quality, ecological responsibility, future capacity, and embodied as well as subjective well-being.

The Economic Foundation cluster asks whether the economy generates stable and usable prosperity. GDP per capita remains important here, but it is joined by inflation, unemployment, and median disposable income. These indicators capture both the scale of production and the lived experience of households. A high GDP economy may still fail if disposable income stagnates, unemployment rises, or inflation erodes purchasing power.

The Distribution and Inclusion cluster asks who benefits and whether people can move upward. Poverty measures material deprivation. Income inequality measures how benefits are distributed. Intergenerational mobility measures whether life chances are excessively determined by family background. Together these indicators connect outcomes and opportunity.

The Value Quality cluster asks whether economic activity actually contributes to flourishing. This cluster includes Empty GDP and harmful GDP. It challenges the assumption that any activity counted in GDP is equally valuable. It distinguishes between activity that creates genuine value, activity that merely circulates resources, and activity that produces harm.

The Ecological and Social Costs cluster asks what costs are being shifted elsewhere. Externalities include pollution, carbon emissions, ecosystem degradation, preventable health burdens, congestion, noise, and social disruption. These costs may not appear fully in prices, but they appear in lives, communities, ecosystems, and future constraints.

The Resilience and Future Capacity cluster asks whether the economy can adapt and sustain prosperity over time. Economic diversity reduces vulnerability to sector-specific shocks. Public debt sustainability protects future fiscal flexibility. Industrial sophistication captures the depth and complexity of productive capabilities.

The Flourishing Outcomes cluster asks whether the economy is supporting actual human well-being. Healthy life expectancy is included as a cumulative indicator of health, environment, inequality, public systems, lifestyle, and social conditions. Psychological and social well-being are added because flourishing is not only objective. It also includes experienced agency, meaning, mental health, trust, and life satisfaction.

Table 5. Dashboard Clusters

Cluster	Indicators	Core question
Economic Foundation	GDP per capita; inflation, reverse scored; unemployment, reverse scored; median disposable income.	Is the economy producing stable and usable prosperity?
Distribution and Inclusion	Poverty, reverse scored; income inequality, reverse scored; intergenerational mobility.	Who benefits, and can people move upward?
Value Quality	Empty GDP, reverse scored; harmful GDP, reverse scored.	Does activity genuinely contribute to flourishing?

Ecological and Social Costs	Externalities, reverse scored.	What costs are shifted to society, nature, or future generations?
Resilience and Future Capacity	Economic diversity; public debt sustainability; industrial sophistication.	Can the economy adapt, endure, and create future prosperity?
Flourishing Outcomes	Healthy life expectancy; psychological and social well-being.	Is the economy supporting embodied, subjective, and social well-being?

8. Empty GDP, Harmful GDP, and Externalities

One of the most distinctive contributions of the dashboard is the operational treatment of Empty GDP. This paper does not claim to have invented the idea that some GDP may be empty or low value. Its contribution is to conceptualize, distinguish, and operationalize Empty GDP within a dashboard architecture explicitly grounded in flourishing.

Empty GDP refers to economic activity that contributes to measured output while generating little corresponding increase in human flourishing, capability development, social well-being, ecological regeneration, or meaningful public value. It is not necessarily harmful in a direct sense. It may simply be low-value activity that inflates output without materially improving life.

Examples include excessive bureaucracy, planned obsolescence, redundant financial activity, unnecessary administrative complexity, defensive expenditures, over-medicalization without health gains, and spending that compensates for avoidable failures. A society may spend more because it has designed systems poorly. GDP may rise, but flourishing may not.

Harmful GDP is different. It refers to economic activity that actively undermines flourishing while contributing to measured output. Tobacco is the clearest illustration. The production, distribution, marketing, sale, and treatment of tobacco-related illness can all contribute positively to GDP. Yet the broader system often reduces flourishing by increasing preventable illness, addiction, household financial strain, premature mortality, and public health costs.

The tobacco example is powerful because it reveals the moral ambiguity of measured output. A tobacco factory contributes to GDP. Advertising services contribute to GDP. Retail sales contribute to GDP. Hospital treatment of tobacco-related disease also contributes to GDP. From the perspective of GDP accounting, all of these activities may appear as economic positives. From the perspective of flourishing, they form a chain in which measured activity is partly generated by preventable harm.

Externalities are different again. They refer to costs shifted onto other people, ecosystems, or future generations. Pollution, carbon emissions, congestion, noise, health burdens, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation are externalities when the full costs are not borne by the producer or consumer. Externalities may arise from otherwise useful activity. Harmful GDP points to activity whose basic structure is more directly damaging. Empty GDP points to activity that is low in meaningful contribution.

These distinctions create a more refined language for GDP critique. Not all problematic GDP is the same. Some activity is empty. Some is harmful. Some shifts costs elsewhere. A serious dashboard

should distinguish among them. Without such distinctions, policy can mistake economic motion for economic contribution.

Table 6. Empty GDP, Harmful GDP, and Externalities

Category	Definition	Examples	Scoring logic
Empty GDP	Measured economic activity with little corresponding increase in flourishing.	Excessive bureaucracy; planned obsolescence; avoidable administrative burden; redundant financial activity.	Reverse scored.
Harmful GDP	Measured economic activity that actively undermines flourishing.	Tobacco production, marketing, and treatment chain; predatory systems; destructive industries.	Reverse scored.
Externalities	Costs shifted onto other people, ecosystems, or future generations.	Pollution; carbon emissions; congestion; biodiversity pressure; health burdens from environmental damage.	Reverse scored.

9. Psychological and Social Flourishing

A flourishing-centered dashboard cannot rely only on objective indicators. Healthy life expectancy, income, mobility, poverty, and ecological conditions are essential, but they do not exhaust flourishing. People also experience economic life subjectively. They may feel secure or insecure, hopeful or trapped, meaningful or alienated, trusted or isolated.

For this reason, the BED treats psychological and social well-being as a composite indicator within the Flourishing Outcomes cluster. The purpose is not to reduce eudaimonia to happiness. Rather, it is to recognize that flourishing includes both objective capability and lived experience. A society may achieve high output while producing anxiety, loneliness, loss of agency, social fragmentation, or meaning deficits. Conversely, a society may have moderate income but strong trust, social cohesion, meaning, and perceived agency.

The composite can include sub-measures such as life satisfaction, social trust, mental health burden, perceived agency, meaning and purpose, loneliness or social isolation, and psychological safety. These should not be treated as six separate dashboard indicators in the headline scoring model. Rather, they are internal components of one composite measure that receives a single dashboard weight. In a global comparison, life satisfaction, mental health burden, and social trust may be easier to standardize. In national policy contexts, deeper measures of agency, meaning, belonging, and social connection may be added.

Aggregation should be transparent. A pilot version may give equal internal weight to the available sub-measures after normalizing them to a common scale and reverse scoring distress-oriented measures such as mental health burden or loneliness. A more mature national version could use participatory weighting or factor analysis to determine the internal composition of the composite. This preserves parsimony in the dashboard while making the subjective dimension visible enough for policy learning.

This addition matters because many advanced economies face a paradox: material prosperity rises while psychological distress, loneliness, and insecurity remain high. A dashboard that omits subjective well-being may miss a central feature of contemporary flourishing. It would measure the economic body but not the lived human experience the economy is supposed to support.

Table 7. Psychological and Social Well-Being Measures

Sub-measure inside composite	What it captures	Possible interpretation
Life satisfaction	Overall evaluation of life conditions.	A broad subjective outcome, best interpreted alongside objective indicators.
Social trust	Confidence in others and institutions.	A proxy for social cohesion and civic reliability.
Mental health burden	Prevalence or burden of psychological distress.	Reverse scored because higher burden signals lower flourishing.
Perceived agency	Whether people feel able to influence their lives.	A bridge between capability and subjective empowerment.
Meaning and purpose	Whether people experience life as significant and directed.	An explicitly eudaimonic indicator, not merely hedonic happiness.
Loneliness or isolation	Deficit in meaningful social connection.	Reverse scored and especially relevant in advanced economies.
Aggregation note	Sub-measures are normalized and combined into one Psychological and Social Well-Being Composite.	The composite receives a single dashboard weight; internal components should be reported transparently.

10. Temporal Intelligence: Current, Leading, and Lagging Indicators

Most public economic discourse is biased toward the short term. Inflation, unemployment, quarterly growth, and current income dominate attention because they are immediately visible and politically salient. Yet societies are shaped by longer-term forces that may remain hidden until they become crises.

Current indicators answer the question: How are we doing right now? They capture immediate economic conditions experienced by households and markets. GDP, inflation, unemployment, poverty, and median disposable income belong here. They are politically salient because citizens feel them quickly.

Leading indicators answer the question: What future are we creating? Economic diversity, industrial sophistication, debt sustainability, Empty GDP, and harmful GDP reveal emerging patterns that shape future capacity. These indicators may not always create immediate pain, but they indicate whether the society is building or eroding future flourishing.

Lagging indicators answer the question: What has our system produced? Healthy life expectancy, intergenerational mobility, externalities, and psychological well-being often reflect cumulative system performance. They tell us what past policies, institutions, and economic patterns have produced over time.

This temporal structure is especially important for governance. Politicians are often rewarded for short-term gains and punished for short-term pain. Yet responsible leadership requires attention to what is forming beneath the surface. A dashboard that includes current, leading, and lagging indicators can help make future consequences visible before they become irreversible.

Table 8. Current, Leading, and Lagging Indicator Architecture

Indicator type	Question	Examples	Governance use
Current indicators	How are we doing right now?	GDP; inflation; unemployment; poverty; median disposable income.	Immediate stabilization, household relief, and public communication.
Leading indicators	What future are we creating?	Economic diversity; industrial sophistication; debt sustainability; Empty GDP; harmful GDP.	Strategic investment, prevention, industrial policy, and structural reform.
Lagging indicators	What has our system produced?	Healthy life expectancy; mobility; externalities; psychological well-being.	Long-term evaluation, accountability, and course correction.

Figure 3. Temporal Intelligence Architecture

The dashboard combines immediate conditions, structural formation, and cumulative outcomes.



Figure 3. Current, leading, and lagging indicators allow the dashboard to operate as a governance and foresight tool rather than a static scorecard.

11. Baseline Dashboard and Adaptive Weighting

Weights are always partly normative. This is not a weakness if the value structure is transparent. GDP already embeds a weight of one hundred percent when it is used alone. The Balanced Economic Dashboard makes the weighting explicit and open to debate.

The baseline profile gives GDP substantial weight, but not dominance. GDP matters because production matters. Yet production is situated within a wider set of flourishing conditions. A society can be productive and still fail in distribution, ecological responsibility, mobility, psychological well-being, or long-term resilience.

The current version of the BED uses reverse scoring language for indicators where lower raw values are generally better. Inflation, unemployment, poverty, inequality, Empty GDP, harmful GDP, externalities, mental health burden, and unsustainable debt should not be described simply as lower-is-better in the final score. They are reverse scored so that higher dashboard scores consistently represent stronger contribution to flourishing.

The baseline profile is not a universal ideal, a global average, or an implicit claim that one weighting scheme fits all societies. It is a generic reference model used to demonstrate the dashboard's logic before context-specific weights are applied. In actual use, the adaptive profiles should supersede the baseline. This distinction matters because the baseline explains the architecture, while the adaptive profiles translate that architecture into developmental and cultural context.

The weights are therefore a starting point rather than a final formula. They are designed to make the dashboard usable for broad comparison while leaving room for adaptation. The dashboard is meant to support inquiry and governance learning, not freeze moral judgment into a rigid technical system.

Table 9. Baseline Dashboard Weights

Indicator	Baseline weight	Scoring direction
GDP per capita, PPP	20%	Positive scored.
Inflation	7%	Reverse scored, with ideal range preferred over simple minimization.
Unemployment	6%	Reverse scored.
Median disposable income	7%	Positive scored.
Poverty rate	8%	Reverse scored.
Income inequality	8%	Reverse scored.
Intergenerational mobility	6%	Positive scored.
Empty GDP	6%	Reverse scored.
Harmful GDP	6%	Reverse scored.
Externalities	8%	Reverse scored.
Economic diversity	5%	Positive scored.
Public debt sustainability	5%	Positive scored or reverse scored if debt stress is used.
Industrial sophistication	4%	Positive scored.
Healthy life expectancy	4%	Positive scored.
Psychological and social well-being composite	4%	Composite score; positive scored overall, with distress-oriented sub-measures reverse scored internally.

A central feature of BED is that it is universal in architecture but adaptive in weighting. This distinction matters. The broad dimensions of flourishing are relevant across societies, but their relative importance changes according to developmental stage, demographic structure, ecological vulnerability, institutional capacity, and cultural aspiration.

A low-income country may legitimately place greater weight on GDP growth, poverty reduction, infrastructure, and basic health. In that context, growth can directly expand capabilities. Electricity,

sanitation, roads, hospitals, schools, and basic jobs are not luxuries. They are foundations for flourishing.

A middle-income country faces a different challenge. It may need to move beyond low-cost production toward higher-value sectors, broader mobility, and stronger institutions. For such countries, industrial sophistication, economic diversity, and inclusive opportunity become central.

A high-income society faces yet another challenge. Additional growth may produce diminishing returns if it comes with rising loneliness, ecological overshoot, mental health strain, inequality, or Empty GDP. Advanced economies may therefore place greater weight on sustainability, mobility, quality of life, psychological well-being, and the reduction of wasteful or harmful activity.

Table 10. Adaptive Weighting Profiles

Indicator	Developing	Emerging	Advanced	Sustainability-oriented
GDP per capita	30	25	15	12
Inflation	8	8	7	6
Unemployment	7	7	6	5
Median disposable income	6	7	7	6
Poverty rate	14	10	5	5
Income inequality	5	8	8	8
Intergenerational mobility	4	6	7	7
Empty GDP	2	4	8	9
Harmful GDP	2	4	8	10
Externalities	3	5	9	12
Economic diversity	5	6	5	5
Public debt sustainability	5	5	5	5
Industrial sophistication	4	6	4	3
Healthy life expectancy	3	4	4	4
Psychological and social well-being composite	2	5	7	8
Total	100	100	100	100

12. Relative Utopias and Value Hierarchies

A flourishing-centered economic dashboard should not become a new technocratic universalism. Societies differ in history, geography, culture, institutions, developmental stage, and ecological constraints. A good framework should allow these differences to matter without collapsing into relativism.

The concept of relative utopias helps navigate this tension. A relative utopia is not a perfect society. It is a contextually meaningful improvement in the direction of flourishing. It is relative because it depends on existing constraints, values, and possibilities. It is utopian because it orients society toward a better form of life rather than merely managing decline or maximizing output.

Value hierarchies are central to this flexibility. Every society privileges some values over others, even when the hierarchy is implicit. Nordic societies may place equality, security, and sustainability high in

the hierarchy. The United States may place opportunity, innovation, and liberty high in the hierarchy. Costa Rica may emphasize sustainability and well-being. Singapore may emphasize capability, effectiveness, and stability. These examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive, but they show why a universal dashboard requires context-sensitive weighting.

Adaptive weighting operationalizes differing societal value hierarchies while preserving a common flourishing-oriented architecture. The dashboard therefore combines comparability and pluralism, allowing societies to pursue different expressions of flourishing without abandoning a shared evaluative framework.

The Balanced Economic Dashboard can serve as a navigation system for relative utopias. It does not tell every society to become identical. Instead, it helps societies clarify their priorities, understand trade-offs, and examine whether their chosen path actually supports flourishing.

This approach avoids two extremes. It avoids rigid universalism, where every country is judged by a single fixed ideal. It also avoids pure relativism, where every society uses entirely different measures and comparison becomes impossible. The dashboard provides shared architecture with contextual priorities.

Table 11. Relative Utopias and Value Hierarchies

Context	Illustrative value hierarchy	Possible relative utopia	Dashboard emphasis
Nordic countries	Equality, security, sustainability.	High-trust social flourishing with ecological responsibility.	Inequality, mobility, health, externalities, social trust.
United States	Opportunity, innovation, liberty.	Inclusive dynamism in which innovation expands capability rather than inequality.	Mobility, industrial sophistication, inequality, harmful GDP, health efficiency.
Costa Rica	Sustainability, well-being, social investment.	Ecologically grounded well-being with moderate prosperity.	Externalities, health, psychological well-being, income, poverty.
Singapore	Capability, effectiveness, stability.	High-capacity resilience with broad social security and future readiness.	Economic diversity, debt sustainability, industrial sophistication, health, agency.
Developing economy	Capability expansion, basic security, poverty reduction.	Rapid capability building without locking in future harm.	GDP, poverty, health, infrastructure proxies, debt sustainability, externalities.

13. From Ego-System to Eco-System Awareness

The dashboard also resonates with Otto Scharmer's distinction between ego-system awareness and eco-system awareness (Scharmer, 2018). This connection is not meant to make Scharmer's work a foundation of the model. The dashboard does not measure consciousness directly. Its relevance is more practical: it changes what the measurement system invites policymakers to notice.

GDP-centered reporting can narrow attention to aggregate production while leaving distribution, externalities, social trust, future capacity, and subjective well-being in the background. BED structurally widens attention by placing those dimensions beside GDP. In that limited but important sense, the indicator architecture can induce more system-level attention: not by preaching eco-system awareness, but by requiring decision makers to see more of the system before judging economic success.

14. Illustrative Application: United States, Northwestern Europe, and China

The dashboard can be used to compare countries or regions, but its purpose is not simplistic ranking. A single final score may be useful for communication, but the real value lies in the pattern of strengths and weaknesses. Different societies may perform well in different ways, and those differences matter.

An illustrative comparison between the United States, Northwestern Europe, and China shows how the dashboard can reveal different developmental profiles. The United States tends to perform strongly on GDP per capita, median income, innovation capacity, entrepreneurial dynamism, and some dimensions of industrial sophistication. However, it faces challenges related to inequality, poverty, healthcare inefficiency, public debt, intergenerational mobility, harmful GDP, psychological distress, and externalities.

Northwestern Europe tends to perform strongly on health, equity, public goods, lower externalities, mobility, social protection, and social trust. Its vulnerabilities may involve lower GDP per capita relative to the United States, slower growth in some sectors, demographic pressures, energy constraints, and concerns about competitiveness or technological dependence in particular domains.

China presents a different profile. It has achieved extraordinary growth and major industrial upgrading, including movement into higher-complexity sectors. Yet it faces challenges associated with pollution, demographic change, inequality, debt in parts of the economy, social control, and uneven opportunity across regions.

The value of the dashboard is that it allows these differences to be discussed without reducing national performance to GDP alone. It encourages questions such as: What kind of prosperity is being produced? Who benefits? What costs are being shifted? Is the economy becoming more resilient? Is it expanding or narrowing future possibilities?

A GDP-centered comparison might treat the United States as clearly superior to Northwestern Europe because of higher output per capita and stronger innovation performance. The dashboard complicates that judgment by asking whether some of this apparent advantage is offset by weaker health outcomes, higher harmful GDP, higher externalities, lower mobility, or weaker psychological and social well-being. Conversely, Northwestern Europe may appear less dynamic in GDP terms but stronger in converting economic activity into broadly distributed flourishing. The dashboard therefore shifts the question from Which economy is larger? to Which economy converts activity into flourishing most effectively?

Table 12. Illustrative Tradeoff Profiles

Region	Likely strengths	Likely vulnerabilities	Strategic dashboard question
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United States	GDP, innovation, entrepreneurial capacity, advanced technology sectors, median income.	Inequality, health inefficiency, public debt, externalities, mobility challenges, harmful GDP.	Can innovation be converted into inclusive and embodied flourishing?
Northwestern Europe	Equity, health, public goods, mobility, social protection, lower externalities.	Growth constraints, competitiveness concerns, demographic pressure, technological dependence in some domains.	Can high social flourishing be paired with future industrial capacity?
China	Growth, industrial upgrading, infrastructure, manufacturing depth, strategic capacity.	Pollution, inequality, demographic pressure, debt risks, uneven opportunity, agency concerns.	Can productive upgrading become broad human flourishing?

15. Implementation Challenges

Recent work on Beyond-GDP implementation suggests that the difficulty is not simply conceptual. Taylor and O'Hara's systematic review found five recurring barriers to the adoption of alternative measures of economic progress: mission alignment, fiscal and resource constraints, communication barriers, commitment barriers, and knowledge barriers. Their review also highlights the relative lack of attention to practical operational issues, despite the fact that public agencies are typically responsible for collecting, maintaining, and applying economic and social indicators. BED should therefore be evaluated not only as a measurement framework, but also as an implementation challenge requiring institutional alignment, communication strategy, capacity building, and policy integration.

These barriers can also be interpreted through the 5D framework. Many Beyond-GDP measures have struggled not only because of resource, communication, commitment, mission, and knowledge barriers, but because they leave one or more deeper dimensions underdeveloped. Ontologically, they may continue to treat the economy as a corrected production system rather than a complex socio-economic-ecological system. Epistemologically, they may accumulate indicators without clarifying what kind of knowledge is needed for governance. Axiologically, they may embed values without making them explicit. Praxically, they may lack clear pathways into budgeting, policy design, and institutional learning. Teleologically, they may define themselves against GDP without offering an equally compelling account of what economic life is for. BED responds to these limitations by making all five dimensions explicit and organizing measurement around the telos of flourishing.

Any serious alternative to GDP faces obstacles. The first is data availability. Resource barriers should also be interpreted developmentally. In lower-income or administratively constrained contexts, fiscal limitations may directly restrict data collection, statistical infrastructure, and staff capacity. In high-income industrial economies, however, the issue is less likely to be absolute fiscal incapacity than administrative burden, data-system fragmentation, staff time, interagency coordination, and the political opportunity cost of maintaining a new measurement system. For this reason, BED is designed as a staged and modular dashboard rather than a maximalist indicator inventory. Some indicators are already standardized across countries, while others require further development. GDP, inflation, unemployment,

debt, and life expectancy are relatively available. Empty GDP, harmful GDP, psychological well-being, and certain measures of mobility or externalities may require proxies and staged refinement.

The second challenge is weighting. Because weights reflect values, they are likely to be contested. This is not a reason to avoid weighting. It is a reason to make weighting transparent, participatory, and adjustable. GDP already weights output at one hundred percent when used alone. The dashboard simply makes value choices visible.

The third challenge is political resistance. Metrics create accountability. If harmful GDP, externalities, mobility, or psychological distress become visible, powerful interests may resist. Measurement is never merely technical. It changes what societies can see and therefore what they can contest.

The fourth challenge is communicability. GDP is simple. A dashboard is more complex. The solution is not to collapse complexity into one number, but to design clear visualizations, cluster-level summaries, and layered reporting for different audiences. Citizens may need a simple public-facing version. Policymakers may need a more detailed diagnostic version. Researchers may need full methodological transparency.

BED addresses communication barriers by combining conceptual simplicity with analytical depth. Rather than presenting itself as a replacement for GDP, it frames GDP as a useful but partial indicator within a broader navigation system. Its six-cluster structure organizes complexity into a communicable architecture, while concepts such as Empty GDP, Harmful GDP, and relative utopias provide intuitive language for public and policy discussion. The framework can therefore be communicated in layers: a public-facing narrative, a policy dashboard, and a technical scoring model.

The fifth challenge is institutional adoption. Statistical agencies, finance ministries, media institutions, and international organizations are accustomed to GDP-centered reporting. Shifting practice will require demonstration projects, pilot dashboards, and gradual integration into policy processes.

Table 13. Implementation Challenges and Responses

Challenge	Why it matters	Possible response
Data availability	Some indicators are not globally standardized.	Begin with proxies and refine over time.
Weighting disputes	Weights reflect values and priorities.	Use transparent and participatory weighting.
Political resistance	Indicators expose hidden costs and vested interests.	Frame as governance learning, not punishment.
Complexity	Dashboards are harder to communicate than GDP.	Use clusters, visuals, and layered reporting.
Institutional inertia	GDP is deeply embedded in policy routines.	Pilot applications at city, regional, and national levels.

16. Methodological Roadmap

The dashboard can be developed in stages. The first stage is conceptual: define the indicators, clusters, and weighting logic. The second stage is operational: identify data sources, proxies, and scoring rules. The third stage is comparative: apply the dashboard to selected countries or regions. The fourth stage is

participatory: invite policymakers, scholars, civil society, and citizens to debate weights and priorities. The fifth stage is iterative: refine the dashboard in response to use.

Implementation should therefore be sequenced rather than assumed. The Balanced Economic Dashboard need not be adopted all at once. A government could begin with a core dashboard based on indicators already collected by statistical agencies, then gradually add more demanding measures as institutional capacity develops. Distributional and resilience indicators may be added once cross-agency data systems are aligned. Value-quality indicators such as Empty GDP and Harmful GDP may be introduced after methodological protocols and proxy measures are established. Psychological and social flourishing indicators may be added once survey capacity, cultural adaptation, and interpretation practices are sufficiently mature. In this sense, the addition of new indicators should be synchronized with capacity building. BED is therefore not only an indicator framework but also a staged institutional learning process.

Capacity building should include at least four forms of learning. Statistical capacity is needed for normalization, reverse scoring, weighting, sensitivity analysis, and composite construction. Interdisciplinary capacity is needed to understand how health, ecology, psychology, inequality, and industrial structure interact. Policy-translation capacity is needed to connect dashboard signals to budgeting, planning, regulation, and institutional decisions. Adaptive-change capacity is needed to manage resistance, competing values, stakeholder learning, and shifts away from GDP-centered routines.

Implementation can also be understood through the diffusion of innovations and the accumulation of change across scales. Rather than attempting to introduce the full dashboard at once, BED can begin with paradigm-compatible micro innovations, move through mini-level changes in indicator architecture and institutional practice, and eventually support a macro-level shift in economic governance. Early implementation should therefore prioritize indicators that fit existing statistical routines and policy paradigms, while more conceptually disruptive measures such as Empty GDP, Harmful GDP, adaptive weighting, and psychological flourishing should be introduced as institutional capacity, legitimacy, and user familiarity develop.

Table 14 Phased Diffusion of the Balanced Economic Dashboard from Micro Innovations to Macro-Level Institutionalization

Stage	Innovation scale	Main focus	Rogers adoption group
1	Micro	Familiar indicators within existing routines	Innovators
2	Micro-to-mini	Cluster structure, reverse scoring, temporal logic	Early adopters
3	Mini	Capacity building and interagency integration	Early majority
4	Mini-to-macro	Empty GDP, Harmful GDP, flourishing indicators	Late early majority / late majority

Stage	Innovation scale	Main focus	Rogers adoption group
5	Macro	Integration into budgeting, planning, and governance	Institutional normalization

Normalization should be transparent. Indicators can be converted to a zero-to-one-hundred scale, with higher scores indicating stronger contribution to flourishing. Reverse scoring should be used for inflation, unemployment, poverty, inequality, externalities, Empty GDP, harmful GDP, mental health burden, and unsustainable debt. Some indicators may require thresholds rather than simple linear scoring. For example, very low inflation and very high inflation can both be problematic, while moderate inflation may be acceptable.

Empty GDP will require the most methodological development. At the pilot stage, it may be represented through proxies such as excessive administrative costs, defensive expenditures, healthcare spending that does not translate into health outcomes, commuting burden created by poor urban design, and replacement spending caused by low durability or planned obsolescence.

Harmful GDP may be operationalized through sectors or expenditures that generate clear social or ecological harm. This will require careful judgment because some activities may be necessary in limited form but harmful when excessive. Tobacco can serve as an initial anchor case because the chain from production through treatment of preventable disease makes the GDP-flourishing contradiction visible.

The psychological and social well-being composite can be operationalized through a staged approach. A global pilot may use standardized measures such as life satisfaction, mental health burden, and social trust. National versions can add culturally appropriate measures of agency, meaning, belonging, and social connection. In the headline dashboard, these components should be aggregated into one composite indicator with one weight. In the technical appendix, the sub-measures should be disaggregated so that policymakers can see whether the composite is driven by distress, loneliness, weak trust, low agency, or lack of meaning.

The dashboard should be treated as a living framework rather than a fixed index. Its value lies in the discipline of asking better questions: What is the economy producing? Who benefits? What is being depleted? What capabilities are expanding? What future is being created? What is happening to the human beings the economy is meant to serve?

A pilot version could begin with countries or regions where data availability is strong. Once the logic is tested, it could be adapted for cities, regions, development agencies, or national strategic planning. Over time, BED could be used not only for comparison but for scenario planning, policy simulation, and public deliberation.

Table 15. Operationalization Roadmap

Stage	Task	Output
1. Conceptual definition	Clarify indicators, clusters, definitions, and boundaries.	Conceptual model and glossary.
2. Proxy selection	Identify available data sources and preliminary measures.	Pilot indicator set.

3. Normalization	Convert indicators to comparable scoring scales.	Zero-to-one-hundred scores with documented rules.
4. Weighting	Apply baseline and adaptive profiles.	Cluster scores and full dashboard score.
5. Sensitivity analysis	Test how results change under different weights.	Robustness report.
6. Participatory review	Invite stakeholder deliberation on values and weights.	Contextual weighting profiles.
7. Iteration	Refine definitions and data sources through use.	Versioned dashboard methodology.

17. Policy Uses of the Dashboard

The Balanced Economic Dashboard can serve several policy functions. First, it can act as a diagnostic tool. Instead of asking whether an economy is growing, policymakers can ask where the economy is strong, where it is fragile, and where it is producing hidden costs.

Second, the dashboard can support strategic planning. A government could use it to identify whether a national development strategy is over-reliant on GDP growth while neglecting mobility, sustainability, psychological well-being, or industrial upgrading. The dashboard can reveal strategic imbalance before it becomes crisis.

Third, the dashboard can improve public communication. Citizens often experience economic life differently from official growth statistics. When GDP rises but housing is unaffordable, mobility is stagnant, health outcomes are worsening, externalities are rising, or mental distress is high, public distrust grows. A broader dashboard can better align official reporting with lived experience.

The barriers to Beyond-GDP adoption should not be understood only as technical or statistical problems. They are also adaptive-change challenges. Moving from GDP-centered reporting to flourishing-centered governance requires shifts in institutional routines, professional assumptions, political narratives, interagency coordination, and public expectations. For this reason, BED implementation should draw not only on economics and statistics, but also on adaptive leadership and change-management insights, including staged implementation, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, holding environments for value deliberation, and attention to the losses generated by measurement reform.

Fourth, the dashboard can support policy evaluation. A tax reform, industrial strategy, infrastructure plan, health policy, education reform, or climate policy could be assessed not only through its effect on GDP but also through its effects on distribution, resilience, externalities, psychological well-being, and flourishing outcomes.

Fifth, the dashboard can support foresight and scenario planning. Different policy pathways can be compared according to their likely effects across current, leading, and lagging indicators. This makes the dashboard relevant to futures work, not merely economic reporting.

Finally, the dashboard can serve as a platform for democratic deliberation. Weighting should not be treated as a purely technocratic exercise. Citizens, experts, and policymakers can debate what matters most in their context. This debate is not a weakness. It is part of making economic purpose explicit.

18. Why This Is Not Just Another Index

Many alternative indicators attempt to correct GDP by adding missing variables. The Balanced Economic Dashboard does something related but distinct. It does not begin with the question, What does GDP leave out? It begins with the question, What is the economy for? This shift changes the status of the entire framework.

If the economy is for flourishing, then GDP is neither the master measure nor the enemy. It is one indicator among many. Its importance depends on context. In a poor society, additional output may be strongly linked to capability expansion. In a wealthy society, additional output may have weaker or even ambiguous links to flourishing. The dashboard is therefore developmental rather than dogmatic.

The framework is also distinctive because it incorporates quality of activity. GDP treats all market activity as equivalent within the accounting frame. BED distinguishes productive, empty, harmful, and externally costly activity. This distinction is crucial for advanced economies where a growing share of activity may involve defensive spending, complexity maintenance, remediation of preventable damage, or harmful commercial activity.

The framework is also distinctive because it integrates time. Many indices provide a snapshot. BED distinguishes immediate lived experience, future-forming structures, and cumulative outcomes. This makes it useful for governance, strategy, and futures thinking.

Finally, the framework is distinctive because it connects economic measurement to relative utopias. It does not assume that all societies should look the same. It allows different configurations of flourishing while maintaining a shared architecture. This is what allows the dashboard to be pluralist without becoming incoherent.

19. Future Research Program

A full research program could develop the Balanced Economic Dashboard in several directions. The first task would be conceptual refinement, especially around Empty GDP and harmful GDP. These categories are promising precisely because they name something that conventional GDP critique often leaves vague. However, they need clear operational definitions and careful boundary conditions.

The second task would be empirical testing. A pilot study could apply the dashboard to a small set of countries representing different developmental contexts: one advanced liberal market economy, one coordinated European economy, one East Asian developmental state, one middle-income emerging economy, and one lower-income economy. This would test whether the adaptive weighting profiles make sense in practice.

The third task would be sensitivity analysis. If weights shift, do the results change dramatically? Which indicators drive results? Sensitivity analysis would help distinguish robust findings from weight-dependent artifacts.

The fourth task would be participatory weighting. Citizens, policymakers, economists, business leaders, youth groups, and civil society organizations could be invited to assign weights according to their priorities. The differences among these weightings would themselves reveal important information about social values and tensions.

The fifth task would be visualization. The dashboard should not remain a spreadsheet. It should be represented through cluster scores, radar charts, temporal layers, and narrative summaries. The goal is not only to calculate but to help societies see themselves more clearly.

The sixth task would be institutionalization. A dashboard becomes influential when it enters routines of reporting, planning, budgeting, and evaluation. The long-term aim would be to make flourishing-centered economic assessment part of regular governance practice rather than an occasional academic exercise.

Future research should also examine BED as an implementation process. Key questions include whether adaptive weighting improves policy uptake, whether a six-cluster structure improves communication, how many indicators can be maintained before administrative burden becomes prohibitive, whether staged implementation improves institutional adoption, and how dashboard results can be connected to budgeting, strategic planning, and public deliberation.

20. Conclusion: From Speedometer to Navigation System

GDP is not the enemy. It is a useful but partial instrument. The problem arises when a partial instrument becomes the dominant image of national success. GDP is to economic assessment what the mean is to statistical analysis: useful, informative, and often indispensable, but insufficient when interpreted in isolation.

The Balanced Economic Dashboard offers a different approach. It treats the economy as a complex system embedded within society and nature. It measures current conditions, future-forming structures, and cumulative outcomes. It makes values explicit. It allows adaptive weighting. It supports relative utopias. Above all, it reconnects economic measurement with economic purpose.

The central claim is simple: economic measurement should be derived from economic telos. If the economy exists to support human flourishing, then our indicators must measure the conditions of flourishing. Production matters, but so do opportunity, equity, sustainability, resilience, innovation, health, psychological and social well-being, and intergenerational responsibility.

The logic of the framework can be summarized as a sequence (Figure 1). Telos identifies the purpose of economic life. Eudaimonia specifies flourishing as that purpose. Capabilities provide a bridge between flourishing and measurement. Relative utopias represent context-sensitive expressions of flourishing. Phronesis guides the navigation of competing goods. The Balanced Economic Dashboard provides the information architecture that enables such judgment. In this sense, BED is not merely a measurement system but a governance framework for flourishing.

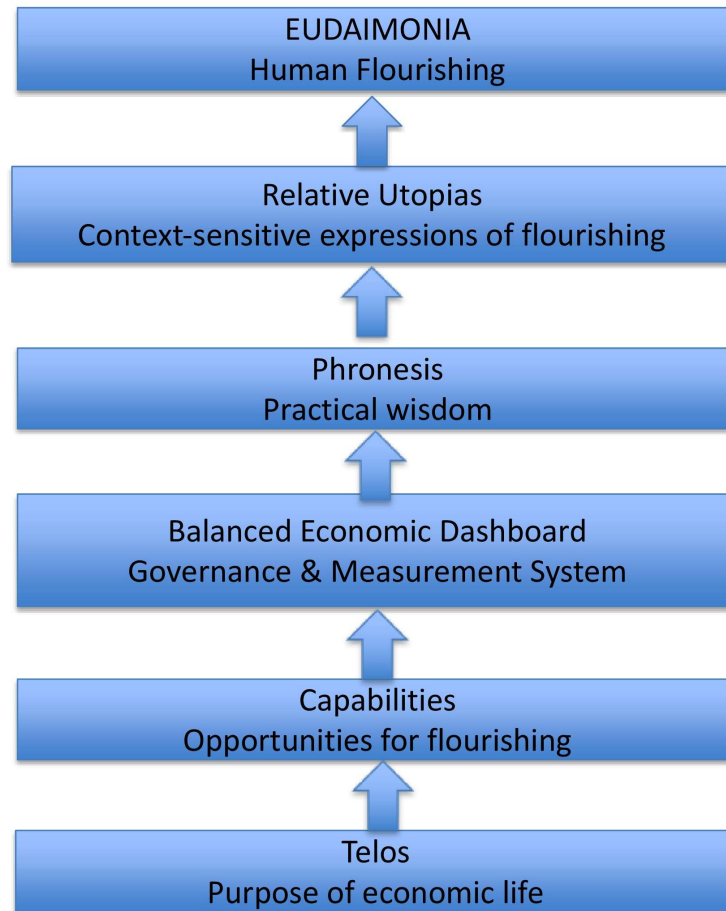


Figure 1 Conceptual architecture of the Balanced Economic Dashboard

A speedometer can tell us how fast we are moving. It cannot tell us whether we are going in the right direction. The Balanced Economic Dashboard is intended as a navigation system for societies seeking not merely to grow, but to flourish.

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Appendix A: Compact Dashboard Summary

Table A1. Compact Dashboard Summary

Cluster	Indicator	Purpose
Economic Foundation	GDP per capita	Measures productive scale.
Economic Foundation	Inflation	Measures price stability, reverse scored.

Economic Foundation	Unemployment	Measures labor market access, reverse scored.
Economic Foundation	Median disposable income	Measures usable household prosperity.
Distribution and Inclusion	Poverty	Measures material deprivation, reverse scored.
Distribution and Inclusion	Income inequality	Measures distribution of benefits, reverse scored.
Distribution and Inclusion	Intergenerational mobility	Measures opportunity across generations.
Value Quality	Empty GDP	Measures low-flourishing activity, reverse scored.
Value Quality	Harmful GDP	Measures activity that undermines flourishing, reverse scored.
Ecological and Social Costs	Externalities	Measures displaced social and ecological costs, reverse scored.
Resilience and Future Capacity	Economic diversity	Measures resilience to shocks.
Resilience and Future Capacity	Public debt sustainability	Measures future fiscal flexibility.
Resilience and Future Capacity	Industrial sophistication	Measures complexity and innovation capacity.
Flourishing Outcomes	Healthy life expectancy	Measures embodied well-being.
Flourishing Outcomes	Psychological and social well-being composite	Measures subjective, relational, agency-based, and meaning-based flourishing through a composite.