

Building the Global Brain Economy: Narrative to Action



80th United Nations General Assembly Brain Capital Meetings *Outcomes and Recommendations* September 2025

Background and Purpose

During the 80th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA80) in September 2025, a diverse coalition of organizations came together to position brain health and brain capital as global development priorities. Leaders from science, policy, business, philanthropy, government, and civil society convened across multiple settings in New York to advance a **shared vision: building a global brain economy that fosters human resilience, innovation, and sustainable growth.**

This convening happened at a unique moment in history. Humanity faces two unprecedented shifts: rapid global aging and the rise of artificial intelligence. Populations are living longer than ever before, creating enormous opportunities but also escalating health and social care costs. Population aging risks further slowing down productivity growth for many nations. At the same time, massive investments in AI—expected to reach [\\$630B by 2028](#)—are disrupting education, work, and healthcare systems that were designed for past eras. The brain provides the master key to unlock the future we want. As investment surges into machine intelligence, similar investment is needed in human intelligence to sustain contributions across the life course and mitigate [the multi-trillion dollar costs of brain disorders \(~\\$2.5–8.5T annually\)](#). At stake is also the enormous potential of the knowledge economy, estimated to contribute [~\\$26T in global opportunity \(+12% global GDP\)](#).

Current brain plans are poorly funded and lacking mainstream political, business, and philanthropic attention. They are mostly focused on solving neurological disorders in the traditional health context and insufficiently treat the brain as a key asset for productivity, skills, and flourishing. Brain economy-focused brain plans offer new hope to raise brain health and brain capital to the highest levels of political and private sector importance, and success is noted via the new World Economic Forum Brain Economy Action Forum, the G7 Calgary Brain Economy Summit, and the Center for Houston's Future Brain Economy Initiative.

The week's convenings were organized and supported by a broad alliance of partners, including the Brain Capital Alliance, European Brain Council, Davos Alzheimer's Collaborative, Lundbeck, The Business Collaborative for Brain Health, McKinsey Health Institute, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Rice University, The University of Texas Medical Branch, Play'n Go, U. Development Programme (UNDP), Steelcase, Crisis Text Line, the World Economic Forum, Roche, Eli Lilly, and numerous global research and advocacy organizations. This report consolidates the key outcomes and insights

Why Building a Brain Economy is a Global Priority

The brain economy frames brain health and brain capital as vital infrastructure for resilience, productivity, and sustainable growth. Prioritizing brain capital alongside physical and financial capital ensures societies can flourish, innovate, and respond to crises effectively.

- **Global Imperative:** Brain health drives education, workforce readiness, innovation, and healthy aging. Without action, brain-related conditions risk undermining economic and social stability. Faced with the headwinds of geoeconomic instability, a new economic operating model is needed with brain capital contributing to higher productivity growth.
- **UN Recognition:** Leaders affirmed that brain capital is central to advancing sustainable development and human development.
- **Connection to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs):** Integrating brain economy policies into NCD strategies strengthens prevention and early intervention, addressing dementia, depression, stroke, and related conditions.

Science and Policy: From Narrative to Action

Discussions throughout the week emphasized that the science-policy gap must be closed with new models of implementation.

- **Health Economics:** Societal impact of early diagnosis of brain disorders was presented, with insights from a pioneering new study. In addition, milestones in the lifecycle approach to brain health were explored.
- **Crisis Preparedness:** A brain economy framework for crisis response was introduced, demonstrating how protecting brain capital can strengthen recovery from displacement, conflict, and disaster. The framework called for embedding brain resilience into Early Recovery and development action, recognizing that brain health and brain skills can drive long-term stability.
- **Responsible Play:** Panels on gambling and digital environments highlighted how innovations such as algorithmic targeting and immersive AI experiences are reshaping risk. The proposed **Responsible Gambling Triple-P Framework (RG3P)** offers a comprehensive model spanning prevention, early detection, treatment, safer design, accountability, and research. It was recommended as a shared benchmark for governments, industry, and public health actors.
- **Science to Policy Pathways:** The Brain Days brought focus to prevention, early detection, nutrition, and women's brain health. For example, evidence on the role of nutrition in cognitive resilience prompted calls for scaling population-level interventions and workplace-based strategies. Experts emphasized that brain-positive systems must be embedded across education, healthcare, and work, not siloed in specialist programs.
- **Global recognition:** The United Nations Political Declaration on NCDs and Mental Health marked a historic milestone by explicitly including Alzheimer's disease and dementia among leading noncommunicable diseases for the first time. This recognition elevates brain health

as a global policy priority and creates new opportunities for coordinated prevention and care strategies. Throughout the week, WHO and PAHO emphasized the urgency of integrating brain health into NCD and mental health frameworks, showcasing cost-effective measures and highlighting the interplay between NCDs and infectious diseases in the Americas.

- **Implementation Hubs:** New implementation pathways are emerging: The [Center for Houston's Future Brain Economy Initiative](#) was formally launched as the first local model of a brain economy plan, and California Governor Gavin Newsom's Administration has challenged the field to propose a brain capital plan for the state.

Investment Strategies for a Brain Economy

A recurring theme was that **finance must be aligned with brain capital outcomes**.

- **Brain Lens investing:** Panels explored applying a brain lens across finance, from venture capital to sovereign wealth funds. Proposals included standardized metrics for brain-positive investments and accounting frameworks so businesses can measure their brain capital impact.
- **Catalytic public investments:** Texas's Dementia Product Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT) was cited as a model for how targeted public financing can be spur private-sector innovation, accelerating discovery, and building workforce capacity. It offers a model for other states seeking to align investment with brain capital outcomes.

Catalytic Strategies for a Brain Economy

Better coordination across key topics was noted as vital.

- **Global Coordination Strategy:** Leaders from MHI, the Milken Institute, WEF and the High Lantern Group emphasized the need for a unified framework to align governments, investors, philanthropy, and civil society. This would reduce duplication, clarify priorities, and amplify impact.
- **Brain economy research strategy:** Researchers discussed how the brain economy approach relates to existing research on brain health, emphasizing the need for new kinds of research that allow for proposing and testing the components that contribute to measuring brain capital and the need for brain health interventions across scale to be evaluated for impact and not just statistical significance.
- **Nutrition, Technology, and Workplaces:** Corporate leaders underscored how investment in nutrition, workplace design, and women's brain health generates productivity gains and resilience. Panels on workplace readiness and design demonstrated how brain-friendly environments foster innovation and wellbeing.
- **Lighthouse Projects:** The launch of the *Center for Houston's Future Brain Economy Initiative* was highlighted as a first-in-world local implementation hub. Similar place-based efforts, such as Africa's emerging brain health roadmap, show the value of anchoring global goals in local practice. A Spanish Brain Plan is also being developed according to brain economy principles.

Structure, Alignment, and the Path Forward

The convenings underscored the importance of building a central entity to act as the connective tissue across brain economy efforts worldwide. This entity would serve as the hub in a hub-and-spoke system, linking sectors, shepherding leadership, and aligning resources. Its role would be to

accelerate global impact through three core functions: cross-sector coordination, thought leadership, and resource support.

Within this vision, participants identified four essential elements to move from narrative to action:

- **Shepherds:** A core group of organizations must act as collaborative servant leaders, centering the narrative, marshalling thought leaders, and measuring progress. The central entity would reinforce and amplify their work rather than replace it.
- **Sectors:** The brain economy transition requires the active cross-sector engagement of finance, policy, science, nutrition, technology, and business. The hub structure allows each sector to plug into a common framework while pursuing strategies tailored to its strengths.
- **Lenses:** Brain-focused metrics—such as brain-lens investing, new accounting frameworks, and integration into gross domestic product (GDP) and sustainable development goal (SDG) reporting—will provide the evidence base and accountability structure needed to guide investment and policy. The central entity can help standardize and scale these approaches.
- **Locations:** Implementation must happen on the ground through pilots, regional task forces, and city-based hubs that test, share, and scale proven models. These “spokes” connect back to the central entity for alignment and learning.

The entity will also be tasked with driving coordination, investment, and action, backed by a sustained multimillion dollar seed investment over 2 years. A stepladder framework can illustrate how momentum and measurable impact will grow from year one through year five and beyond.

Participants committed to drafting a collective “Path Forward” document that aligns international organizations, governments, and civil society with shared milestones, drawing lessons from climate and energy transitions.

Next Steps Across All Tracks

- **Servant Leadership Core:** Establish a group of organizations willing and able to center the narrative and advance the movement.
- **Cross-Sector Engagement:** Engage leaders across fields to ensure comprehensive adoption of brain economy principles.
- **Metrics and Accountability:** Develop standardized measures of brain capital impact to guide investment and policy.
- **On-the-Ground Implementation:** Expand lighthouse projects like Houston’s initiative and Africa’s roadmap to provide replicable blueprints.
- **Policy Windows:** Feed outputs into World Health Summit Berlin 2025, COP30 Brazil 2025, G20 South Africa 2025, WEF Davos 2026, G7 France 2026, and upcoming UN High-Level Meetings on NCDs and Development as well as state and regional meetings including a planned summit at UCLA in California.

This outcomes summary report consolidates discussions and recommendations from UNGA80 Brain Economy Week. Meetings included:

- [Brain-Positive Innovations in Crisis Recovery and Development Working Session](#), Friday, September 12th, organized by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association and Rice University. Online invite only discussion.
- [Building the Brain Economy: Aligning for the Transition Ahead](#) session, September 23rd, organized by the World Economic Forum and McKinsey Health Institute at the offices of The Child Mind Institute.
- [Better Gambling Forum](#), Tuesday, September 23rd, organized Brain Capital Alliance @ the UN Brain Economy Summit, at The Venue On Music Row Hard Rock Hotel
- [Brain Economy Summit](#), September 24, organized by the Brain Capital Alliance Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA), the Brain Capital Alliance, the Brain Economy Hub, NeuroCentury, and Rice University, at Steelcase WorkLife Center
- **Roundtable Discussion, UN Headquarters**, September 24, organized by the European Brain Council and XX, at UN Headquarters
- [EBC Brain Days](#) – September 25–26, organized by the European Brain Council and partners, at CURE

UNGA80 Brain Days Partners

