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Adding a Tri-sector Lens to Maximize the Impact of Tampa's Connect & Propel Tampa 2019 Summit

Have you ever wondered what might be possible if you activated the power of the private (business), the public (government) and social (non-profit) sectors with your Appreciative Inquiry work? Connect & Propel Tampa 2019 was curious and partnered with NewImpact to discover what was possible.

Connect & Propel Tampa 2019 was an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) summit held in Tampa, FL on November 4-6, 2019 (<https://connectandpropeltampabay.org>). The summit was organized by Mike Echevarria and Sherri Sutton from Positive Impact Force and facilitated by Dr David Cooperrider, Dr Lindsey Godwin and Pru Sullivan from the Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry at Champlain College, VT. Mike and Sherri wanted to bring the experience of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to the businesses, non-profits and local governments in Tampa, Florida, in hopes that more organizations would adopt this whole-system framework. The affirmative topic was to co-create a vision for the city of Tampa, where every citizen has the opportunity to flourish. It was a broad, noble topic and one that needed to be fully embraced by government, non-profits and businesses.

The steering committee for Connect & Propel Tampa 2019 developed a subcommittee called the rapid advancement group, whose focus was to rapidly make executive decisions on budgeting, brand management, advertising or any issues the working groups needed assistance resolving. This group began meeting in February 2019, directly after the steering committee meeting, and continued to meet until the summit was held in November 2019. This team

They wanted a speaker to complement the event, not overpower the process.

finalized budgets, attended events, created marketing materials, hired resources, followed-up on action items, and directly supported the working group teams. The rapid advancement group also selected the emcees and the keynote speaker. Five names were presented as emcee candidates and, after much debate, the group decided to ask them all to share their work over the two-and-a-half-day event. Their reasoning was that they wanted to create a space where everyone felt comfortable and by having such a diverse group of emcees, the space would be welcoming to everyone.

The rapid advancement group took similar care and thoughtfulness when selecting the keynote speaker for the summit. They wanted a speaker to complement the event, not overpower the process or have their own following. The keynote speaker needed to spark creative thinking and innovation and inspire possibility. Jens Molbak was the obvious choice.

The promise of tri-sector innovation

Some people see the world through rose-colored glasses; Jens views the world through a tri-sector lens. We live in a tri-sector world, from the moment we wake in the morning to the sound of an alarm clock manufactured and purchased from the private sector to the showers we take using public water (in some locations), to our first morning drink, a fair-trade coffee blend sold by a non-profit retailer. Jens believes that the power of the tri-sectors – *private* (business), *public* (government) and *social* (non-profits) – to transform people's lives is enormous. This tri-sector lens, or mindset, is one in which we see opportunities to innovate and solve pressing problems by aligning resources and interests from the private, public and social sectors. By adopting a tri-sector mindset, organizations can break down sector silos, unlock assets and provide impactful solutions that create common benefit.

Jens Molbak started on his tri-sector path when he founded Coinstar, a coin-cashing machine, with the goal of creating a company that could simultaneously benefit the private, public and non-profit sectors. The initial purpose of Coinstar was to give people an easy way to convert their jars of pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters into significant spending power. By seeing the \$150 billion coin usage in the US as a “market”, Coinstar has become the de facto national coin recycling system. Coinstar today has processed over \$60 billion, raised \$150 million for non-profits, and has saved the US government billions in reduced costs. The business model was a true tri-sector win-win-win.

Jens continued to deepen this approach and started applying it to all of his work, which eventually led to the creation of [NewImpact](#), a non-profit,

Tri-sector business models could be adopted and applied to countless organizations and impact areas, with the potential to help transform society for the greater good, faster and at scale.

humanity-benefit organization. Looking across the US alone, there is \$250 trillion in existing assets that could be used more wisely and impactfully. He realized if he could change the way people looked at their businesses and their communities, shifting to a recognition of the interdependence across our institutions, tri-sector business models could be adopted and applied to countless organizations and impact areas, with the potential to help transform society for the greater good, faster and at scale.

In Jens' [keynote](#) at Connect & Propel Tampa 2019, he reviewed the Coinstar story and talked about how he has continued to use this tri-sector lens with start-ups, organizations and communities. This inspired the emergence of a working group called platform catalytic innovation. The aspiration statement from this group became:

The community platform for catalytic innovation is the go-to resource venue for bringing together the public, private and social sectors in the community in more data-based collaborative and effective ways.



Graphic art capturing Jens Molbak's keynote at the Connect & Propel Tampa Summit

Created by Drawing Impact

The summit was only the beginning

As anyone who has organized a summit knows, the end of the summit is just the beginning of the work! Inspired by the work that this group began to envision during the summit, Jens was interested in helping Tampa start a tri-sector innovation project and offered his support to help catalyze the ongoing work needed in the community.

During the summit-planning process, a great insight that the rapid advancement group had was the need to form a non-profit to continue the work after the summit. As such, Connect & Propel Tampa Bay, Inc. was formed with three board members: Mike Echevarria, Guy King III and Jan Baskin, all leaders in the community.

Mike has spent years giving back to his community through his foundation and contributing time, resources and money for non-profits and businesses to make a positive difference. Guy King, who unfortunately passed away in the summer of 2021, was a leader, philanthropist and mentor in the community. Jan Baskin is a community leader who believes in the power of connecting resources and building on the assets already available in the community. She currently chairs and serves on several health-related boards and committees in the Tampa Bay area, throughout Florida and at the national and international levels. Russell Johnson, a known community leader, joined the board in 2021.

Since the summit was held in November of 2019, there was a delay for working groups to begin meeting and most working groups planned their first meetings in January of 2020. Perhaps not surprisingly, the political climate, pandemic, and the disruptions of 2020 changed the focus and commitment of many of the working groups. As a result, Connect & Propel Tampa Bay, Inc. shifted its focus to inspiring hope and bringing positive stories to their community, which they refer to as “propellers.”

Following the summit, Jens kept in close contact with Connect & Propel Tampa Bay, Inc. and, in January 2021, the group began looking for a tri-sector catalyst project opportunity to advance the ideas seeded in 2019. After multiple conversations exploring project opportunities in the area, in August 2021, a new project opportunity emerged that invited a partnership between NewImpact, Connect & Propel Tampa Bay, Inc., University of South Florida (USF), and the Urban League of Hillsborough County (ULHC) to begin Tampa’s first tri-sector innovation catalyst project. The opportunity statement for the project became: Increasing the success of high-potential Black-owned small existing businesses earning \$125,000 or more in East and West Tampa. The ULHC was started in 2019 by Stanley Gray, who believed that one of the most significant impacts they could have in the community is to help small, minority-owned businesses grow, expand and flourish.

The NewImpact framework: A compliment to AI

To launch this tri-sector innovation catalyst project, the team began following the NewImpact framework, which uses data, technology, interviewing, mapping

The tri-sector mindset requires looking at the ecosystem with curiosity to objectively understand what is available today.

and a final “connecting of dots” to create innovative, new solutions to pressing problems. The tri-sector mindset requires looking at the ecosystem with curiosity to objectively understand what is available today, asking the following questions:

- Where are the opportunities for impact?
- What does the community want and/or need?
- What to focus on first?
- Where are there bottlenecks or unmet needs?
- Who is on the team?
- What resources can be leveraged and repurposed?
- Where are there aligned interests?
- How can the model be strengthened for better results and greater impact?

By harnessing the sustaining powers of aligned self-interests, organizations can achieve stronger financial returns and make a greater social impact.

By harnessing the sustaining powers of aligned self-interests, organizations can achieve stronger financial returns and make a greater social impact. This process is very similar to the Discovery and Dream stages of AI because it is a nonbiased inquiry identifying and appreciating what is and discovering opportunities. We used the following innovation tools from the NewImpact toolkit:

- Tri-sector mindset
- Spotlight interviews
- Community insights
- Spotlight mapping
- NewImpact Wiki
- Impact journey

Identifying individuals to spotlight is similar to creating a stakeholder map for a summit.

Tri-sector mindset

The most powerful and fundamental step in this innovation process is adopting what is referred to as the “tri-sector mindset,” in which innovators (anyone willing to take this journey) are able to see opportunities and begin to solve pressing problems by aligning resources and interests from the private, public and social sectors. NewImpact offers the training and tools to place innovators “into the mindset” and helps guide them toward real solutions.

Spotlight interviews

Spotlight interviewing is just that: placing a spotlight on someone with deep knowledge in a relevant impact area and asking them questions designed to find out what they know, what they think, what they’ve done and what they wish they could do. Identifying individuals to spotlight is similar to creating a stakeholder map for a summit, with the emphasis being on talking with people from public, private and social sector organizations who are operating in different facets and at different levels of the problem statement’s impact area. The questions we used for the ULHC project were:

1. What is your role within the organization/community?
2. What is the most pressing issue in the community, or your organization?

Second (or other) most pressing issue?

Third (or other) most pressing issue?
3. If you had a magic wand, what would you do?
4. A. If you could control any COMPANY, and were in charge, what resources would you use to help achieve your desired outcomes?

B. If you could control any NON-PROFIT, and were in charge, what resources would you use to help achieve your desired outcomes?

C. If you could control any GOVERNMENT AGENCY, and were in charge, what resources would you use to help achieve your desired outcomes?
5. Do you have a wish list of solutions that are needing to be invented?
What is a solution that you wished you had the resources to make?

6. Would you be interested in staying in touch about our project's progress or sharing feedback on ideas and opportunities that emerge?

Notice the similarities between the format of an appreciative question and the spotlight interview questions. There is more to the interview than simply asking these questions, but these examples illustrate the spirit of this work. Each interview needs to be set up with the goal of understanding more about the expert. For example, it could certainly be helpful in this setup to ask an appreciative question, such as, "what is your greatest accomplishment, or what is your best day?" Developing a rapport helps create a safe space for honest and direct answers.

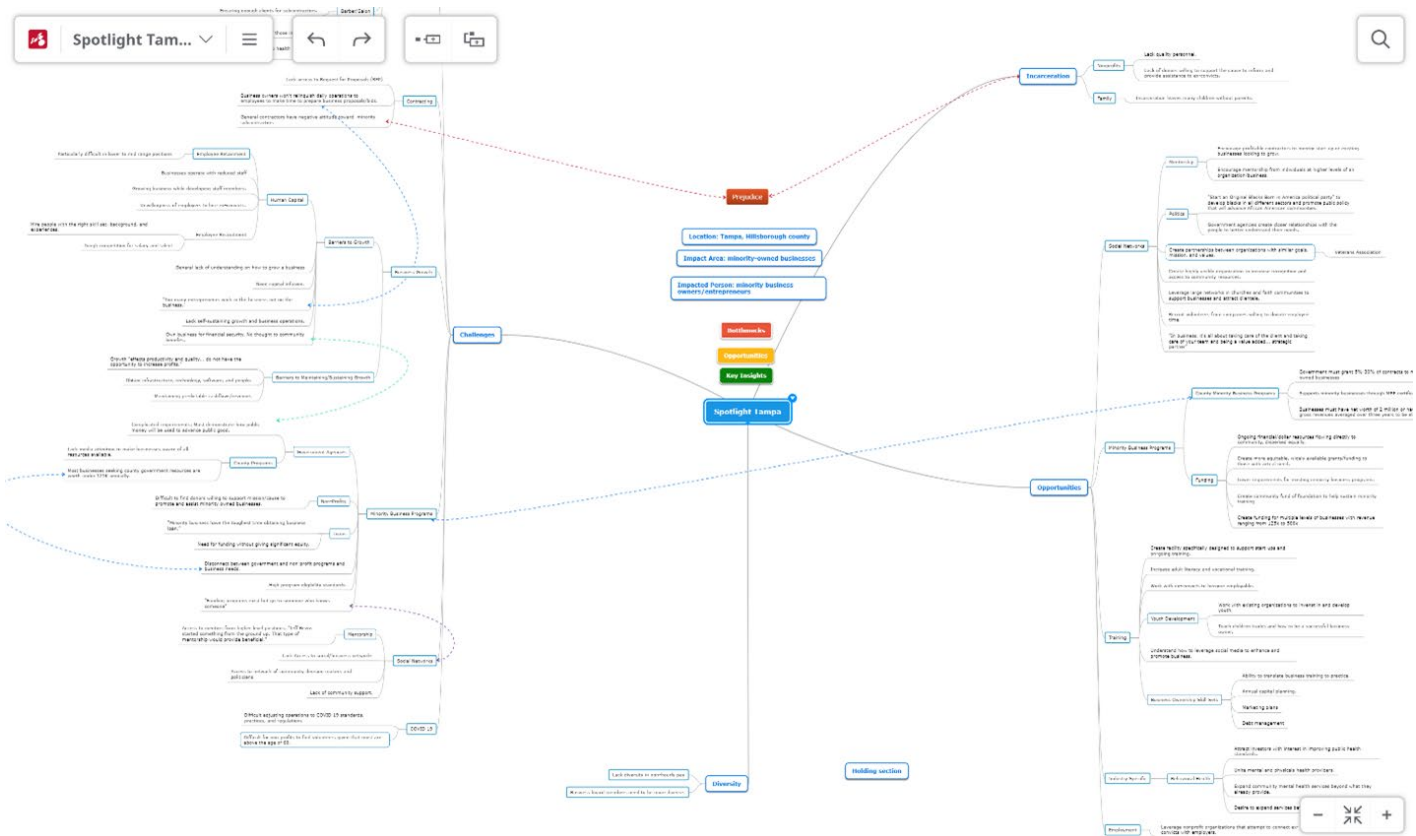
Community insights

The community insights research-and-interview approach is focused on gathering feedback from those with lived experience in the impact area. For the ULHC project, we used the community insights approach to gather and synthesize existing interview data on Black-owned businesses, as well as conduct our own new interviews with those involved in Black-owned businesses. The questions we used were:

1. What is your growth plan for your company/organization?
2. What is prohibiting you from doing that now?
3. What do you feel is in your control that you can do?
4. What do you feel is out of your control?
5. If you had a magic wand, what are three things you would do today to open your door of opportunity?
6. Do you know of any programs or organizations that are available to help you grow your business?

Spotlight mapping

The data provided from the above inquiries gave us the information we needed to create a spotlight map of the ecosystem, which offered us a snapshot of what we heard during the interviews. It also allowed us to visually group and identify themes and ideas we heard from the interviews.



Spotlight map for ULHC tri-sector project

NewImpact Wiki

We also used the collected information to start creating a database of all of the private, public and social entities we identified in the ecosystem. This database will be called the NewImpact Wiki and allow easy identification of organizations and resources in an ecosystem. This is not only a key component for the current project and impact area being focused on, but it also provides a valuable asset that will continue to support future work in that community.

Imagine creating a stakeholder map having this data easily accessible for anyone to view! During the entire process we worked on what we called the desk research document, which was a collection of our findings, hypothesis, understanding and questions. The entire team has contributed to this document throughout the process to share notes and ensure we have a deep and thorough understanding of the problem itself. Once we felt we understood the problem, talked to enough resources in the community, input information into the NewImpact Wiki, and studied the stakeholder map, it was time to create an impact journey map. While the NewImpact Wiki will be available in the future for sharing, at the time of this printing, it was not yet available.¹

1 Further information from Connect & Propel Tampa and the tri-sector catalyst project with ULHC can be found at: <https://www.comnexus.ai/Community>.

As more information is added to the map, bottlenecks and opportunities begin to emerge, along with organizations and resources that could be leveraged.

Impact journey

The impact journey maps the path an impacted person encounters within an impact area – in our case a Black-owned business that wanted to expand – and identifies positive outcomes, negative outcomes, bottlenecks, forks and contextual information (such as public, private and social sector organizations and resources) associated with each step, bottleneck or fork within the journey. The impact journey is created by the team as they talk through what they have identified and heard through the research and interviewing process. As more information is added to the map, bottlenecks and opportunities begin to emerge, along with organizations and resources that could be leveraged or reallocated to support innovation and scale. This ultimately helps the team to identify the leverage points within the system that are ripe for innovation and scale.

Once the impact journey map is complete, phase two of the project begins, which is selecting where to focus solutioning efforts and creating an action plan to create a more positive outcome. This is also a great time to organize an AI summit, sharing the research and data and co-creating an action plan for greater impact.

The NewImpact tri-sector mindset and tools are a perfect complement to defining an affirmative topic and understanding the resources and ecosystem for the focus of the summit. This front-end work will provide working groups all of the tools and resources necessary to help them identify who has resources and aligned self-interests that could be helpful to the solution, and where to begin with their action planning, saving both time and money in reaching impactful results.

Where we go from here

The current plan is to create a tri-sector community hub that provides resources, mentoring and a healthcare facility in the communities where the businesses operate.

The ULHC is actively engaged in identifying the right partners to continue their work to increase the success of high-potential Black-owned small existing businesses earning \$125,000 or more in East and West Tampa. The current plan is to create a tri-sector community hub that provides resources, mentoring and a healthcare facility in the communities where the businesses operate.

This community hub will strive to be a positive institution as defined by Drs David Cooperrider and Lindsey Godwin in 2011:

... organizations and structured practices in culture or society that serve to elevate and develop our highest human strengths, combine and magnify those strengths, and refract our highest strengths outward

Tri-sector work is key for us to be able to elevate, combine and magnify strengths across our ecosystems of institutions.

in the world benefiting ways leading, ultimately, to a world of full-spectrum flourishing.

(Cooperrider & Godwin, 2011)

Tri-sector work is key for us to be able to elevate, combine and magnify strengths across our ecosystems of institutions regardless of whether it is in a community initiative or an organization. It identifies opportunities for collaboration, growth and reinventing the way we work together, maximizing resources and human capital. Using the tri-sector tools as a launching pad to identify opportunities in the ecosystem prior to bringing whole systems together using the AI framework is an opportunity to create a world of full-spectrum, sustainable flourishing.

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