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Data-driven social impact and societal reform

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Abstract: If knowledge is power then data is a superpower, especially for those working on the ground in communities to improve outcomes for people and effect positive social change. Seer Data & Analytics is a civic tech company helping communities harness the power of data to take action, reshape and reform society. Born out of the need to bridge the data divide between community organisations, Government and business, Seer is now helping communities across Australia to use data, gain knowledge and take transformational action. The overall impact of this venture is to enhance the delivery of services and policy development to improve lives and for a more efficient \$510B ‘for purpose’ sector.

Keywords: Data Analytics, Data Science, Data Sovereignty, Data sharing.

1. The success story

Seer Data & Analytics has developed a data platform specifically to help community organisations, not-for-profits and Government to assist in solving complex social problems. According to Kristi Mansfield Seer Co- Founder, “*Seer is a civic tech company turning data into action for people creating a better world*” [1]. The Seer platform has been co-designed with customers and allows users to safely access, analyse and share Open data alongside private data collections. Seer’s customers are everyday people who do not have analyst and data skills yet must use data for evidence-based decisions for the development of services and policy.

The fundamental problem being solved by Seer is that Business and Government have the resources and skills to gain easy and extensive access to data, yet those changing lives on the ground in our communities do not. This has created a data divide, which is widening, as data continues to be central to decision making for economies and society. Those at the coalface of communities are not empowered with the data they need to fundraise effectively, refine service delivery, or have a seat at the table to influence decisions and policy making. Seer is solving this issue – the data last mile - and helping to shift the power of data-driven, evidence-based decision-making to those on the ground who possess both an intimate understanding of their community and a deep desire for change.

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2. How did we start?

Co-founder Kristi Mansfield identified the problems faced by community organisations with little or no access to data while working as Executive Director for the Sydney Community Foundation and the Sydney Women's Fund. Organisations that can afford to pay a research consultant upwards of \$100,000 and wait 3 months for an analytical report on local needs to inform program and service delivery are generally not community-based organisations. Most community organisations, however, cannot afford either that level of cost or delay of time. Community voice, insight and instinct get lost without the data to back it up, and opportunities to effect real and lasting change along with them.

Kristi was moved by the personal stories of trauma and disadvantage she encountered and was motivated to solve the data access problem that was impeding the efforts of those trying to change lives and in turn, the system to give more power to the work of organisations acting locally. Mansfield embarked on a journey to bridge the data divide in order to make it easier for *“people of any skillset to engage with data for problem solving”*. Her ultimate goal was to ensure that Seer supported well-informed community decision making with *“the resulting actions being something from which everyone in society can benefit”*.



Figure 1. Seer's Co-founder's Kristi Mansfield and Adam Peaston combine philanthropic, social sector and Data Science expertise.

3. Our technology

Seer's Data Science and AI-generated data sets assist with problem-solving, through offering a deeper understanding of community complexity, service delivery impact and changing requirements. Seer's customisable data infrastructure and single point of access to multiple data collections facilitates meaningful conversations and collaboration. Data is used to build an

evidence base to identify need, refine programs and service delivery and understand community context. Users access Seer via annual subscription to create unlimited charts, insights and data storytelling dashboards which can be easily shared with partners, Government, philanthropic funders and Grantmakers. Conversely, Open and "closed" Government data can be stored in one location and easily and efficiently accessed and shared to communities through the Seer platform. Seer has been extremely well received by the sector and now helps organisations in communities across Australia, including many First Nation communities and all levels of Government. The value of sharing data into local communities from public and corporate sources is being proven through Seer's data sharing features.

4. The journey so far

Seer was founded in 2016 and initially provided Data Science consulting services to learn more about the needs of local communities to inform the design of the Minimal Viable Product (MVP). The concept of a self-serve Open and private data platform available on a subscription basis was tested with a range of customers. This market testing solidified the fact that there was both a fundamental need for easier access to data and a strong desire for change to the status quo. Seer then moved into Closed Beta, designing, testing, and refining the data platform in partnership with customers. For the first time, community organisations could share data across their community in a private, user friendly and secure environment through Seer.

Seer launched commercially in 2019 and has grown quickly, achieving 3 times recurring revenue in 2020-2021 Financial Year (FY) and is on track to achieve the same for 2021-2022 FY. When the COVID crisis emerged in 2020, Seer pivoted its business model to respond, offering Seer Standard for free to ensure all communities had access to the Open data they needed to inform the crisis response. The team worked closely with state-based Data Analytics Centres of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory Governments on COVID vulnerability modelling during this time.

In addition to the Government, Seer has formed partnerships with major philanthropic Grantmakers, peak bodies and sector specialists and is now preparing for Series A funding. Seer is backed by an impressive Board of Directors with strong domain expertise who were also early investors including Deanne Weir - philanthropic sector expert and investor, Rod Johnson- founder and creator of Spring Source and Dr Ian Oppermann - Chief Data Scientist of NSW.

Currently, one community Seer is working alongside is the town of Bourke; a small town situated approximately 800km Northwest of Sydney. It is a town that has experienced high levels of crime [2]. Seer is working to support the Maranguka Just Reinvest Initiative. Mansfield laments that *"by automating data access and data sharing guided by Indigenous Data Sovereignty Governance and the leadership of Maranguka and the Bourke Tribal Council in their systems transformation"*[1]. Bourke is the subject of the first major justice reinvestment project in Australia and data has been critical to understanding the issues and tracking change. Early signs from the project have been extremely positive.



Figure 2. Kristi Mansfield, Adam Peaston (Seers Co- Founders) and Tyra Kelly – Data Analyst from Maranguka in Bourke.

5. Look to the future

In Australia, there are more than 300 local Communities, almost three million Australians in distress, decline or disadvantage [4]. Due to multiple recent crises, there are hundreds of formerly stable and thriving communities now socially, environmentally, and economically vulnerable. To overcome crisis, we need to see the big picture and act locally. COVID and climate-related disasters have created the conditions for community-led decision making as a driver for societal reform around the world. Every community has its own story, data can transform that story into a powerful narrative. Now more than ever, communities and connectedness matters. Every person has their own domain knowledge, expertise, and story, yet very few have the skills or resources to effectively share it. Mansfield is adamant that *“data storytelling is the fundamental enabler of systems change and Seer’s future vision is to ensure that people of all skillsets and circumstances have access to it”*.

Seer is committed to creating new ways for all people to participate in problem-solving to benefit society now and into the future. Seer will continue to harness the power of evolving technologies including the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine-learning models powering Data Science work, improving data automation and expanding Seer’s library of Open data, AI-

generated datasets, and Smart Insights. Seer's mission is to empower communities with the confidence they need to take the right actions, the efficiency to know what's working and what's not, and the power to change the system to create a better world.

Acknowledgments

Seer wishes to acknowledge the many people who have collaborated with us to develop the Seer data platform including Lisa Mackenzie and the team at The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project and the backbone teams at Maranguka Initiative, Burnie Works, The Hive, Logan Together and the many more users who have tested concepts to bring the platform to life. A large thank you to Kristi Mansfield and Catherine Baker for being interviewed.

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The company



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Investment Rounds (collected in 2016 & 2017)

| Angel | 2016 | Angel Investors | \$330,000
| Seed | 2019 | Angel Investors | \$1,040,000

Main facts (collected in 27.05.2021)

The Company started in 2016.
The first product was delivered 2019.
The company currently employs 12 people.
The next milestone is Series A funding.

Dr Jennifer L Cooper is currently a lecturer for Torrens University in the Public Health Department. The focus of this role is to deliver high quality education to Master of Public Health students in the areas of Social, Behavioural and Cultural factors in Public Health, and Qualitative Research methods.

Jennifer holds a PhD in Public Health, a Master's in Nursing, a Post Graduate Diploma in Community Health and a bachelor's in nursing.

Jennifer has spent many years of her career living and working abroad in the Middle East (Abu Dhabi), the United Kingdom (London) and she has also carried out work in Nairobi, Kenya. During this time, she has managed many projects, programs, and teams of staff.

Jennifer was part of the digital transformation at Sheikh Khalifa Medical City in Abu Dhabi where the hospital moved from paper-based patient information to a digital platform. This also included the training of health professionals to deliver the required clinical care through a digital medium. Jennifer is currently involved in a virtual Intercultural exchange pilot between students studying at Torrens and a University in Georgia, Atlanta in America. It provides an opportunity to learn with and from each other collaboratively in a virtual medium.



Kristi Mansfield is the CEO & Co-founder of Seer Data & Analytics. Kristi is an entrepreneur, thought leader and published author. She has served on several boards including the North Queensland Cowboys Community Foundation, The Stella Prize, the Australian Women Donors Network, Sharing Stories and the NSW Government's Family and Community Services Advisory Board for Social Investment. In 2015, she was named one of Australia's 100 Women of Influence by the Australian Financial Review.



Catherine Baker is the Director of Marketing for Seer Data & Analytics. Catherine is a marketing specialist with extensive leadership experience in strategic marketing, creative direction, communications and branding. While managing the philanthropic program in a previous role, Catherine was inspired to turn her passion into purpose and utilise her multi-disciplinary skillset to benefit the social purpose sector.



Catherine has been involved in the Seer journey since its inception, initially in an advisory role, before coming into the business to lead the Marketing and Growth team and help turn the Seer vision into reality.