"To help others" and "to improve lives." These are, by far, the two most frequent answers I hear when asking I-O psychologists why they chose psychology as a career field. Very noble and aspirational goals, with the underlying theme of making a difference in the world. As I-O psychologists, our study and application of science for a smarter workplace certainly fits that bill; however, with technology and social media connecting the world so rapidly over the past few years, many in our field have found new opportunities to help others and improve lives. SIOP’s Bridge Builders and affiliated prosocial programs are noteworthy examples, yet they’re just scratching the surface.

If you get inspired by the prospect of using I-O to make an impact in the world around you, you’re not alone. In fact, you very well may be in the majority. So much so that the entire 2016 SIOP Theme Track is dedicated to making it easier for you to identify and make a new meaningful impact. All you have to do is show up, and you’ll have already begun.

The Theme Track sessions on Thursday, April 14, are packed with insights, examples, tips, and guided planning activities that will turn your “maybe someday” ideas into an actionable plan. Inspired by the multilevel approach to enhancing impact offered by SIOP President Steve Koźlowski, this year’s Theme Track provides all you’ll need to get started (see full list of titles, presenters, and descriptions; all sessions in Convention Center 204C):

Session 1 (10:30am): How Small Local Efforts Can Yield BIG #Impact
In this inspiring IGNITE session, you will be inspired by others who have made a difference in their local communities, learn to make a difference at any career stage by thinking locally, and take action by finding communities that could use your assistance.

Session 2 (12:00pm): #Impact the World Through Organizations: The Power of One
In this TED-style session, you will learn how I-O can be used to help the environment, enable sustainable living, help workplaces focus on the greater good, facilitate volunteerism, and have other forms of practical impact.

Session 3 (1:30pm): Using I-O to Make an #Impact on the Larger Society
With this high-profile panel of global influencers, you will learn to translate I-O for policy makers, hear how your peers are solving global problems by applying research findings, be inspired by the broad reach of our impact, and connect with other I-Os who wish and know how to make a difference at the policy level.
Session 4 (3:30pm):
Creating #Impact With(in) SIOP
In this how-to session, SIOP introduces a new framework that enables you to identify and support emerging grassroots I-O opportunities, assemble with peers to start new grassroots initiatives, and request support (e.g., advocacy, funding) from SIOP’s Executive Board. You will also hear how small grassroots initiatives used peer support to become official SIOP-supported initiatives.

Session 5 (4:30pm):
Making a Difference Together in #Impact Action Teams
In this hands-on capstone session, join an Impact Action Team (new to SIOP this year!) and begin putting an Impact Action Plan into motion. Find others with similar aspirations and craft an achievable goal, define success, and get specific about a plan toward success, all during this session. Whether you arrive with an impact idea or prefer to join a team and enhance its impact, there’s a spot for everyone to make that meaningful contribution. No preparation necessary, but if you have ideas in advance, please post to social media using #SIOP16 and #Impact.

Follow @SIOPtweets, #SIOP16, and the #Impact hashtag on social media to share your ideas and look for new opportunities to make a difference at any level. Start thinking about your “maybe someday” ideas—“someday” will be here April 14th.

On behalf of your Theme Track Committee (Emily Stehura, Stu Carr, Tara Behrend, Ryan Johnson, and Gloria Gonzalez-Morales), see you at the conference!