

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative Inquiry is a strategy for intentional change that identifies the best of ‘what is’ to pursue dreams and possibilities of ‘what could be’; a cooperative search for strengths, passions and life-giving forces that are found within every system and that hold potential for inspired, positive change. (*Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987*)

Assumptions

- In every community something works
- What we focus on becomes our reality
- Reality is created in the moment – there is more than one reality
- The act of asking questions influences the community in some way
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey into the future when they carry forward parts of the past
- If we carry forward parts of the past, they should be what is best
- It is important to value differences
- The language we use creates our reality

What is Appreciative Inquiry good for?

Appreciative Inquiry is useful when a different perspective is needed, or when we wish to begin a new process from a fresh, positive vantage point. It can help move a group that is stuck in “what is” toward “what could be”. Appreciative Inquiry can be used with individuals, partners, small groups, or large organisations.

Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
“Felt Need” Identification of the Problem	Appreciating and valuing the best of “what is”
Analysis of causes	Envisioning “what might be”
Analysis of possible solutions	Dialoguing “What should be” Innovating “What will be”
Basic Assumption: An organisation is a problem to be solved	Basic Assumption: An organisation is a mystery to be embraced

General Flow of an Appreciative Inquiry process:

Appreciative inquiry can be done as a longer structured process going through 5 phases of

- **DEFINITION:** surfacing the focus for inquiring appreciatively
- **DISCOVERY:** identifying organisational processes that work well.

- **DREAM:** envisioning processes that would work well in the future.
- **DESIGN:** Planning and prioritising those processes.
- **DELIVERY:** implementing the proposed design.

The basic idea is to build organisations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't.

At the start is a **positive topic choice** – how we ask even the first question contains the seeds of change we are looking to enact.

Appreciative Inquiry can also be used as a way of opening a meeting or conversation by identifying **what already works**. What do you value most about your self/work/organisation?

For more information: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

