Age-Friendly Communities Conference
Overview of Appreciative Inquiry

Overview

Appreciative Inquiry looks at what works well and uses that as a foundation for future development. It is essentially life-affirming rather than deficit-based and as a result, increases the amount of energy and enthusiasm for moving the organization forward. During an Appreciative Inquiry the focus is on what is happening in an organization when it is at its best. The objective is to learn from the successes and use that newly created knowledge to generate positive change and innovation.

Appreciative Inquiry's approach to strategy, change, development, and evaluation focuses on:

- Using a positive and strength-based approach
- Finding the best in people and the world around them
- Co-creating inspiring future images
- Focusing on what we want more of
- Finding and unleashing the positive core

Assumptions underlying Appreciative Inquiry

- What we focus on becomes our reality; we must be the change we want to see.
- In every society, organization, or group, something works.
- Reality is created in the moment; multiple realities.
- The act of asking questions is an intervention.
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past.
- It is important to value differences.
- The language we use creates our reality.
- People are motivated to act when they have a choice in what they will do.

Basic Principles underlying Appreciative Inquiry

- Constructionist principle - (solutions are possible, we construct our own reality) language creates reality; we create more of what we give attention to.
- Simultaneity principle - (solutions are available, happening now) inquiry, action and change are not separate/separable moments, the questions become the answers, not about right questions/answers but about seeing how they lead us to the good, the better, the possible.
- Poetic principle - (life, and solutions, as story) the story of the organization, past present future, is constantly being relearned, reread, re-interpreted, like great poems, continually we find new meaning in old story lines.
- Anticipatory principle - (solutions must be made visible) images of the organization, the stories we WANT, can be looked for, moved toward, create action.
- Positive principle - (solutions are pulling us forward, by definition) the ideal solution is hope, excitement, caring, inspiration, camaraderie, sense of purpose, shared meaning and value, joy of creating.

Addressing Challenges and Issues in a New Way

Problem Solving	*Appreciative Inquiry*
"Felt Need" – Identification of Problem	Appreciating and valuing the best of "What is"
Analysis of Causes	Envisioning "What Might Be"
Analysis of Possible Solutions	Dialoguing "What Should Be"
Action Planning	Innovating "What Will Be"
Assumes organization is a problem to be solved	Assumes organization is a mystery to be embraced
Back Door: What's in the way of what you want?	Front Door: What do you want to create?

When to Use Appreciative Inquiry
- to create a positive change; develop new and exciting images and plans for the future
- to enhance strategic cooperation, overcome conflict/competition; move away from silos
- to catalyze whole-system culture shift
- to facilitate high participation planning
- to mobilize design and development
- to conduct evaluations that are participatory and learning focused
- to facilitate organizational learning
- to integrate multiple change efforts
- to support mergers and acquisitions

When not to use Appreciative Inquiry
- when you are already getting what you want
- when there is no commitment to positive change (clinging to deficits, problems) or a willingness to implement the outcomes of the meeting
- when the issue is technical and the solution is clear and known

The Appreciative Inquiry Process
The AI process can be adapted to any number of people and amount of time available. The following briefly describes the four phases and includes a minimum time estimate needed to implement each phase.
1. Inquire - what gives life? (best of what is) - Appreciating, acknowledging, valuing, interviews, stories; Asks, "What's working?" Involves paired interviews, sharing stories, identifying themes (60-90 minutes)
2. Imagine - what might be? (what the world is calling for) - envisioning impact, stories, presentations; Asks, "What makes it work?" Involves individual reflection, small group conversation, identifying themes, visualizing the future (45-90 minutes)
3. Innovate - what should be? (the ideal) - Co-constructing, proposing, design statements; Asks, "What's next, and who will benefit?" Involves individual, pair and/or small group brainstorming, sharing, development of themes (75-120 minutes)
4. Implement - how to empower, learn, and adjust and improvise - Sustaining, acting, activating, propositions, next steps; Asks, "Who will do what, by when?" Involves individuals/groups choosing which actions they wish to be responsible for making a reality (60-120 minutes)

Facilitation Guidelines

Room Set-Up
- Round tables that seat 6-8

Materials Needed:
- Flipchart paper for each table
- Markers
- 2x2 post it pads

Interview guides and other handouts as needed

Ground Rules
- All ideas are valid
- Everything is captured (flip charts, PC)
- Listen - really listen
- Observe time frames
- Seek common ground and action
- Differences and problems are acknowledged – but not worked on
- Confidentiality – understand what is said in the room is part of a process

Group Member Roles
- Each small group manages its own discussion, data, time and reports. Here are the roles for self-managing this work. Roles should be rotated. Divide the work as you wish:
- Discussion Facilitator - Assures that each person who wants to speak is heard within time available. Keeps group on track to finish on time.
- Timekeeper - Keeps group aware of time left. Monitors report-outs and signals time remaining to person talking.
- Recorder - Writes group's output on flip charts, using speaker's words. Asks people to restate long ideas briefly.
- Reporter - Delivers report to large group in time allotted

The Interview Guide
Creating the customized interview guide (protocol) is an important task - What we ask determines what we "find." What we find determines how we talk. How we talk determines how we imagine together. How we imagine together determines what we achieve:
- Knowledge and organizational destiny are intertwined – words create worlds
- Inquiry and change are simultaneous moments
- Organizations are more like great poetry than machines – they are an endless source of inspiration, and we can ask about any aspect of organizational life
- Our images of the future influence how we are in the present
- Just like negative energy, positive affect is also contagious. The more positive the question, the deeper the change

Characteristics of Great AI Questions
- Are stated in the affirmative
- Help forge a personal connection between the interviewer and interviewee
- Build on the assumption that "the glass is half full" (rather than half empty)
- Give a broad definition to the topic. They give room to "swim around"
- Are presented as an invitation to tell stories rather than abstract opinions or theories
- Value "what is". They spark the appreciative imagination by helping the person locate experiences in the past or present that are worth valuing
- Convey unconditional positive regard
- Evoke essential values, aspirations and inspirations
- Draw on people's life and work experience
- Suggest action