Discover Your Community via Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry Model

Appreciative Inquiry is a philosophy of relationship building and problem solving. It flips the focus from what isn't working to what is working, and how to build on that. When the positives of a situation or relationship are highlighted, stakeholders are energized, responses are constructive, and confidence in a strategy for moving forward becomes mutual.

This activity can be conducted with staff or (better still) with staff along with community members.

Conducting the Appreciative Inquiry using the 5-D Model

The 5-D model breaks down the activity into discrete steps. Each step involves all participants and can take minutes or hours, depending on the depth of the discussion.

Define: participants discuss and define the topic of inquiry. For the Principles of Trustworthiness project, the broad topic is engaging with the community in ways that demonstrate trustworthiness. This step can be further defined and honed by the participating group.

Discover: participants explore "the best of what is," identifying the organization's strengths, best practices, and sources of excellence, vitality, and peak performance. Provide specific examples as you consider questions such as:
- What has worked best when engaging in your community?
- What are your organization's strengths?

Dream: participants envision a future they really want – a future where the organization is fully engaged and successful around its core purpose and strategic objectives. Consider these questions:
- What does your community really want from a partnership with the organization?
- What does the ideal situation look like when the organization is working and partnering with your community?
- How can you work to integrate your organization into the community rather than engage as an outsider?

Design: participants leverage the best of what is, and their visions for the future, to design high-impact strategies that move the organization creatively and decisively in the right direction. Think about and discuss ideas such as the following:

- List the best of the current community/organization's relationship.
- Envision that relationship in the future. Describe what it looks like in specific detail.
  - o Environment, setting, location
  - o Meeting times and location
  - o Activities you're both involved in
  - o Roles within that relationship

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Destiny (may also be called Deploy): participants put the strategies into action, revising as necessary. They discuss and plan an implementation strategy based on the mutually agreed upon vision from the Design phase.

Source: Appreciative Inquiry Commons - The Appreciative Inquiry Commons (champlain.edu)

Conducting the Appreciative Inquiry using the Appreciative Interview Model

Liberating Structures (Appreciative Interviews) has adapted the 5-D Model, using the interview as a method to more quickly gather information among participants. It is structured in way that enables progress in about an hour.

The following information was taken directly from the **Liberating Structures** website:

In less than one hour, a group of any size can generate the list of conditions that are essential for its success. You can liberate spontaneous momentum and insights for positive change from within the organization as "hidden" success stories are revealed. Positive movement is sparked by the search for what works now and by uncovering the root causes that make success possible.

Groups are energized while sharing their success stories instead of the usual depressing talk about problems. Stories from the field offer social proof of local solutions, promising prototypes, and spread innovations, while providing data for recognizing success patterns. You can overcome the tendency of organizations to underinvest in social supports that generate success, while overemphasizing financial support, time, and technical assistance.

There are 5 Elements to Appreciative Interview:

1) Structuring Invitation
   - Ask questions such as:
     o Tell me a story of a time when your community and the organization partnered well on a project or initiative.
     o What made it successful?
   - Have participants partner up in pairs.

2) How Space is Arranged and Materials Needed
   - Unlimited number of groups
   - Chairs for people to sit in pairs face-to-face; no tables needed.
   - Paper for participants to take notes
   - Flip chart to record the stories and assets/conditions

3) How Participation Is Distributed
   - Everyone is included
   - Everyone has equal time and opportunity to contribute

4) How Groups Are Configured
   - First pairs, then groups of 4.
   - Encourage groups to be diverse

5) Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation
- Describe the sequence of steps and specify a theme or what kind of story participants are expected to tell. 3 min.
- In pairs, participants take turns conducting an interview and telling a success story, paying attention to what made the success possible. 7–10 min. each; 15–20 min. total.
- In groups of 4, each person retells the story of his or her pair partner. Ask participants to listen for patterns in conditions/assets supporting success and to make note of them.
  15 min. for groups of 4.
  - Collect insights and patterns for the whole group to see on a flip chart. Summarize if needed. 10-15 min.
  - Ask, "How are we investing in the assets and conditions that foster success?" and "What opportunities do you see to do more?" Use 1-2-4-All to discuss the questions. 10 min.

Attribution: Liberating Structure developed by Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless. Inspired by and adapted from Professor David Cooperrider, Case Western Reserve University, and consultant Dr. Tony Suchman.

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