APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY IN BRIEF

Appreciative inquiry is a **strategy for purposeful change** that identifies the best of "what is" to pursue dreams and possibilities of "what could be."

It is a **co-operative search** for the strengths found within every system that hold the potential for inspired, positive change. It involves **collaborative inquiry using affirmative questioning** to collect and celebrate the good news stories of a community.

It involves an appreciation for the mystery of being and a reverence for life.

We use it to construct a vision of what their community **might be if they identify their strengths, then improve or intensify them.**

There are four steps to the appreciative approach.

![The Appreciative Cycle](image)

**Discovery phase (appreciating):** to appreciate the best of "what is" by **focusing on peak moments of excellence.** Participants then seek to understand the unique conditions that made the high points possible. People share stories, discuss the life-giving conditions of their community and deliberate upon what they most value and want to enhance in the future.

**Dream phase (envisoning/impact):** Challenge the status quo by envisioning more valued and vital futures. **This phase is practical,** grounded in the community's history, and **generative,** in that it seeks to expand the community's potential. Appreciative inquiry uses positive stories in the same way an artist uses paints to **create a portrait of the community's potential.**

**Design phase (co-constructing):** Participants create a strategy to **carry out their provocative propositions.** They do so by building a social architecture that re-defines their approach to leadership, governance, participation or capacity building.

**Destiny (sustaining):** Is a time of **continuous learning, adjustment and improvisation** in the service of shared community ideals. Everyone in the community re-aligns their work and co-creates the future. **Appreciative inquiry is a continual cycle.** The destiny phase leads naturally to new discoveries of community strengths, beginning the process anew.