Kavana Tree Bressen ✶ Facilitation & Workshops

www.effectivecollective.net • kavana@effectivecollective.net • (541) 343-3855 • Chanchifin, Oregon

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY
VISIONING AGENDA

1. Explain AI
2. Interviews
3. Share Highlights
4. Creative Work from Themes
5. Write Design Propositions
6. Craft into Vision Statement

Note: In order to lead a group through these steps, a facilitator needs to have done some advance learning about Appreciative Inquiry theory and methods.

Explain AI (just a little)

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY definition: A process, philosophy, and life practice grounded in research demonstrating that focusing on what's working and aspirations for the future achieves more and does it faster and more sustainably than solving problems.

Give a few examples, such as the gender relations at Avon Mexico story.

SESSION 1: 10:30am-12pm

(50) Interviews in pairs: 20-25 minutes each way (= ~50 minutes total) (see typical interview later in this document)

(40) Sharing Interviews
If group is 12 people or less: Back in full group, introduce your partner to the rest of the group, say the *highlights* of your partner's story and what you learned.

Facilitator write themes that emerged from interviews onto snow cards.

1. High points
2. Continuity (things we want to keep)
3. Images of the future we want

If group is more than 12 people, have the interview pairs double up into groups of 4.
Introduce your partner to the rest of the group, say the *highlights* of your partner's story and what you learned.

Someone in the group write themes that emerged from interviews onto snow cards.

1. High points

2. Continuity (things we want to keep)
3. Images of the future we want

Then turn in snow cards to the facilitator.

End session there, give the facilitator time to cluster cards and add Theme labels.

LUNCH, 12-12:45pm

SESSION 2: 12:45pm-2:15pm

(15) Review themes

(30) Using the themes that emerged, create a joint artwork (or dance, or song, or skit, but it must be something JOINT not solo, and something CREATIVE not merely rational—this is an essential step of the process!)

(15) Explain criteria for Design Propositions (FLIP CHART)

1. Is it provocative? Does it stretch, challenge, or interrupt the status quo? Does it make your hear soar?

2. Is it specific? Does it create a picture of possibility that you can envision—provocative, yet practical?

3. Is it desired? If this actually came to pass, would it be what you want?

4. Is it stated boldly, affirmatively, and in the present tense?

Give examples from other AIs.

(30) Get into two groups to write Design Propositions (onto full size sheet snow cards).

Pass to the facilitator for organization and clustering.

BREAK: 2:30-2:45pm (facilitator finish clustering and labeling)

SESSION 3: 2:30pm-4pm

(15) Review and do multi-voting process on design propositions.

What is the common ground we are ready to move forward on?

(60) Craft and polish into a core vision statment.

(15) Evaluations & Closing

NAME OF GROUP

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY INTERVIEW

Take turns interviewing each other using the following questions. Be a generous listener. Do not dialogue, rather take turns to actually conduct an interview. If you need more information or clarification, it's fine to ask additional follow-up questions. You can use this sheet to take notes on the interview and record highlights. Later we'll be presenting highlights and learnings to others in the group.

Before starting the round of interviews, take a moment to read the questions and think of what you might want to say when it's your turn. Maybe even make a few notes on the back of the sheet if you want, to help you remember. Then proceed with the interviews, giving full attention to the interviewee.

1. Looking back over your involvement with *[name of group]*, recall a time when you had an especially positive experience of the group. An experience where you felt really alive and engaged, or really useful, or very connected, or had great fun. What was happening? Who was involved? What made it so wonderful or significant for you?
   (If your experience with this group is too limited to have yet given rise to such an occasion, think of a story of this kind you could tell about another community you have been part of. It doesn't necessarily have to be a residential community—it's the sense of aliveness in community that's most important.)

2. Without being humble, can you please tell me what you value most deeply about your contribution to this group? (For the purposes of this question, your answer does not necessarily have to be something that typically counts as official "work.")

3. What is the core factor that gives life and vitality to *[name of group]*–the one thing without which this group would just not be the same?

4. If you had 3 wishes for this group, what would they be?

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Excerpted from an article by Sue Hammond.

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of thinking, seeing and acting for powerful, purposeful change in organizations. Appreciative Inquiry works on **the assumption that whatever you want more of, already exists in all organizations.** While traditional problem-solving processes separate and dissect pieces of a system, Appreciative Inquiry generates images that affirm the forces that give life and energy to a system.

Appreciative Inquiry is a complex philosophy that engages the entire system in an inquiry about what works. The inquiry discovers data that is then analyzed for common themes. The group articulates the themes and dreams of "what could be" and "what will be." *What will be* is the future envisioned through an analysis of the past. The entire system
maintains the best of the past by discovering what it is and stretching it into future possibilities. This differs from other visioning work because the envisioned future is grounded in the reality of the actual past.

The assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry are:

1. In every society, organization or group, something works.
2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
3. Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities.
4. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.
5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
7. It is important to value differences.
8. The language we use creates our reality.

This set of assumptions may look reasonable to you but the application of the set may be a challenge. For example, #4 counters the traditional social research model that the researcher can remain a neutral observer or interviewer. I believe that our very presence in the group changes the group dynamics in some manner.

Appreciative Inquiry truly honors the past and that is another reason it is a wonderful way to help people manage change. Those of us who use it often use the word "magical" when we describe the power we have experienced. The magic comes from the great relief from participants that the message isn't about what they've done wrong or have to stop doing. It is an affirmation that much is well and ready to be nurtured.