



Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry: A tool used to build on existing strengths and engage stakeholders to create change. It can be used as an overarching framework for one MCH priority area, and is especially useful for engaging stakeholders (Step 1), assessing needs (Step 2), examining capacities (Step 3) and identifying activities (Step 7). It is based on the assumption that every human system has something that works right—things that give it life when it is vital, effective, and successful. Appreciative Inquiry begins by identifying this positive core and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy, sharpen vision, and inspire action for change.

USING THE TOOL

The needs assessment team will:

- Gather the needs assessment team and stakeholders, identify a facilitator to lead the process, and review the Appreciative Inquiry Interview Template and its four-step process.
- Define the affirmative topic by flipping the problem into a positive statement.
- Discuss current strengths and capacities about what is working (Discover Step) by interviewing each other in pairs.
- Discuss the team's ideal future state and list what the team wishes they had to move their efforts to get to that desired state (Dream Step).
- Plan what steps are required to get to that desired state using what they have and what they wish for (Design Step).
- Delineate what steps are required to ensure sustainability in their design plan (Delivery Step).
- Record and synthesize all discussion points from the process. Utilize this information to decide next steps in who to engage and identifying the main needs.

USING THE INFORMATION TO INFORM NEXT STEPS IN THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

To ensure the information is used to inform the needs assessment process, the team should spend time identifying next steps. The team might:

- Identify new potential partnerships to add to the current list of stakeholders.
- Prioritize the list of needs, based on the discussion from all 4 steps.
- Share the list of prioritized needs, existing capacities, and plans for a desired state with stakeholders.
- Discuss necessary implementation tools for next steps.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY SCRIPT

The facilitator will:

- Describe Appreciative Inquiry as a method that utilizes a positive approach for change.
- Guide the group to define the affirmative topic.
 - The team will acknowledge the problem they are addressing and flip it into a positive statement. Ensure this is a statement your team wants to use going forward and believes can take their project or team to a successful future state.
 - As a group, agree on the wording of this statement.
- In the Discover step, engage the team to discuss what is currently working with regard to the selected affirmative topic.
 - Organize the team into groups or pairs to interview each other about the topic. Discuss what's working, what their passions are, and their general thoughts or concerns about the project.
 - Instruct the interviewer to ask open-ended questions, to fully listen, and focus on letting the interviewee share their single perspective. Encourage them to probe the interviewee to explore their thoughts.
 - Make sure every individual gets the opportunity to share their perspective.
 - This step will help map out who the team works well with, what resources are accessible, and what is currently helpful to their efforts.
- In the Dream step, engage the team to describe their ideal future state.
 - Arrange the team into several large groups.
 - Encourage the team to speak freely about their desires around the topic. Have them describe the desired future state in detail and specifically articulate their wishes.
 - Allow individuals to speak freely about their dreams, regardless of practicality.
 - Other members should listen and probe to continue the conversation and build on each other's ideas.
 - Record the dreams and recast any problems into "I wish I had..."
 - This step will lead to a list of potential connections, partnerships, resources, technologies, etc. that the team wishes they had for their efforts.
- In the Design step, engage the team to plan for the future. Ask "*What can we design right now, to help us achieve the Dream in the future?*".
 - Explain that the first design goal is to build on what exists and amplify strengths.
 - Use a capacity checklist and other tools to focus on adaptive actions.
 - The second goal is to build capacity to enable key elements of the "Dream" future state.
 - Identify action steps to build capacity for what the team wants to do in the future.
- In the Delivery step, engage the team to co-create a plan that will create and sustain the effort.
 - Discuss how the team plans to utilize capabilities of the system and the individuals participating in the effort.

- Use additional implementation tools to discuss a plan for sustainability and anticipate how to adapt over time.
- Conclude the process by reviewing the team's ideas and plans.
 - Reflect on the list of current strengths: stakeholders, partnerships, resources, technologies, etc.
 - Reflect on the list of desires and wishes: expanded stakeholder list, different resources, support or assistance, etc. they wish they had to achieve the ideal future state.
 - Reflect on the action steps to help plan their desired state and the sustainability of that future success.

Resources:

Cooperrider DL, Whitney D, Stavros JM. Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: For Leaders of Change. Crown Custom Publishing, 2008.

<https://www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/more-on-ai/what-is-appreciative-inquiry-ai/>, accessed 1/3/19.