APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO DISCOVERING
WHAT GIVES 'LIFE' TO LIVING SYSTEMS

DESCRIPTION AND CORE PRINCIPLES:

Appreciative Inquiry is a strategy for intentional change that identifies the best of 'what is' to pursue dreams and possibilities of 'what could be'; a cooperative search for strengths, passions and life-giving forces that are found within every system and that hold potential for inspired, positive change. (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987)

Appreciative Inquiry (A.I.) is essentially a mindset - a way of seeing the world around you. However, it is also model for analysis, decision-making and the creation of strategic change, particularly within organisations.

Appreciative Inquiry is built on the following assumptions
- In every community something works
- What we focus on becomes our reality
- Reality is created in the moment—there is more than one reality
- The act of asking questions influences the community in some way
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey into the future when they carry forward parts of the past
- If we carry forward parts of the past, they should be what is best
- It is important to value differences
- The language we use creates our reality

The basic idea is to build organisations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't. At the centre is a positive topic choice—how we ask even the first question contains the seeds of change we are looking to enact. A.I. can also be used as a way of opening a meeting or conversation by identifying what already works. "What do you value most about yourself, work and organisation?"

THE 5D MODEL
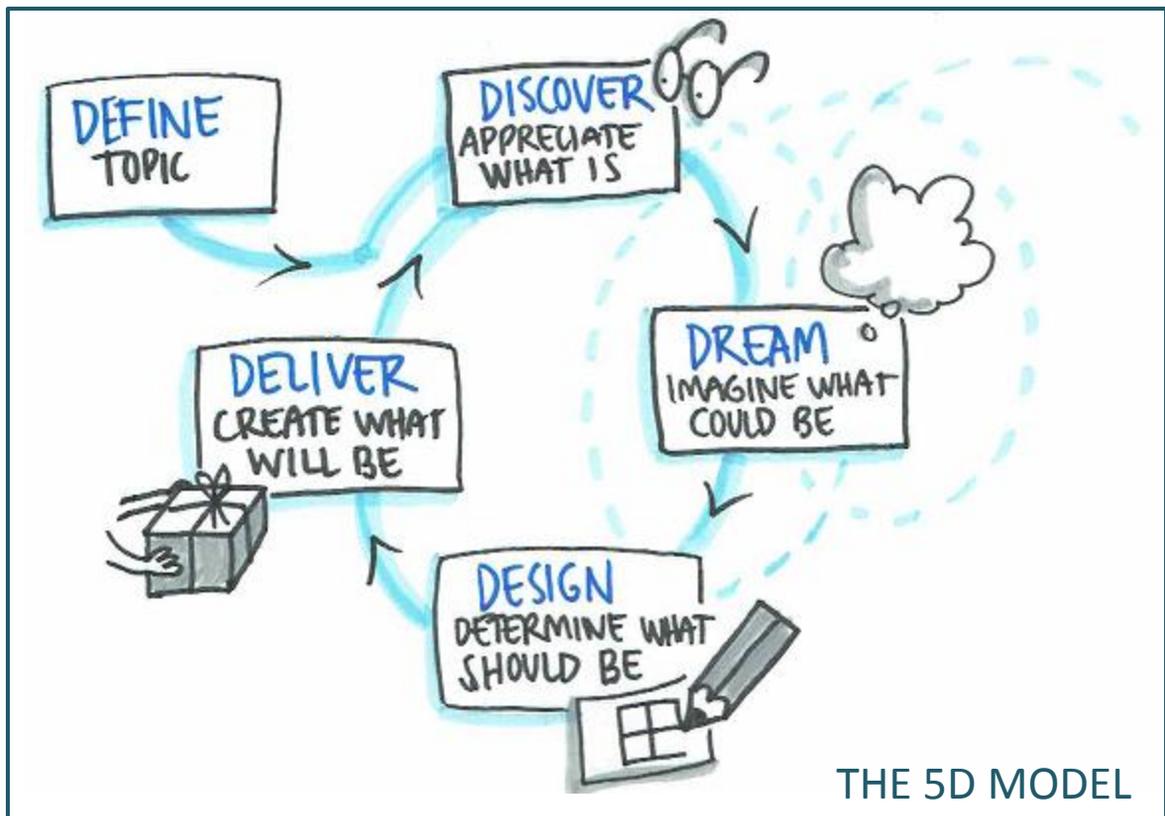
Appreciative inquiry can be incorporated as a longer structured process going through 5 phases. The general flow of an A.I. process is:

Definition: Surfacing the focus for inquiring appreciatively.
Discovery: Identifying organisational processes that work well.
Dream: Envisioning processes that would work well in the future.
Design: Planning and prioritising those processes.
Delivery: Implementing the proposed design.

"A.I. seeks, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul and visions of valued and possible futures. Taking all of these together as a gestalt, A.I. deliberately seeks to work from accounts of this "positive change core" and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized."