

## Appreciative Inquiry

When considering topics such as organizational change and personal mastery, it is sometimes natural to take the perspective of the “deficit” – “We are *here* right now, but we should be *there*. We’re going to need to improve to make things better; we need to change because there is a distance between what *is* happening now, and what *should* be happening.”

Appreciative Inquiry involves a thinking approach that encourages us to focus directly on exploring the root causes of success (appreciation) and using questioning to uncover the most positive aspects of what is happening in an organization or group and identify potential (inquiry). The Appreciate Inquiry approach is an alternative way to address what is usually called “problem-solving”. It’s not a single procedure, but instead a collection of processes, attitudes, and methods that build upon various aspects of the “4-D” core model, which defines movement through phases in a cycle, first defined by Cooperrider and Srivastva in “Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life” (1987):

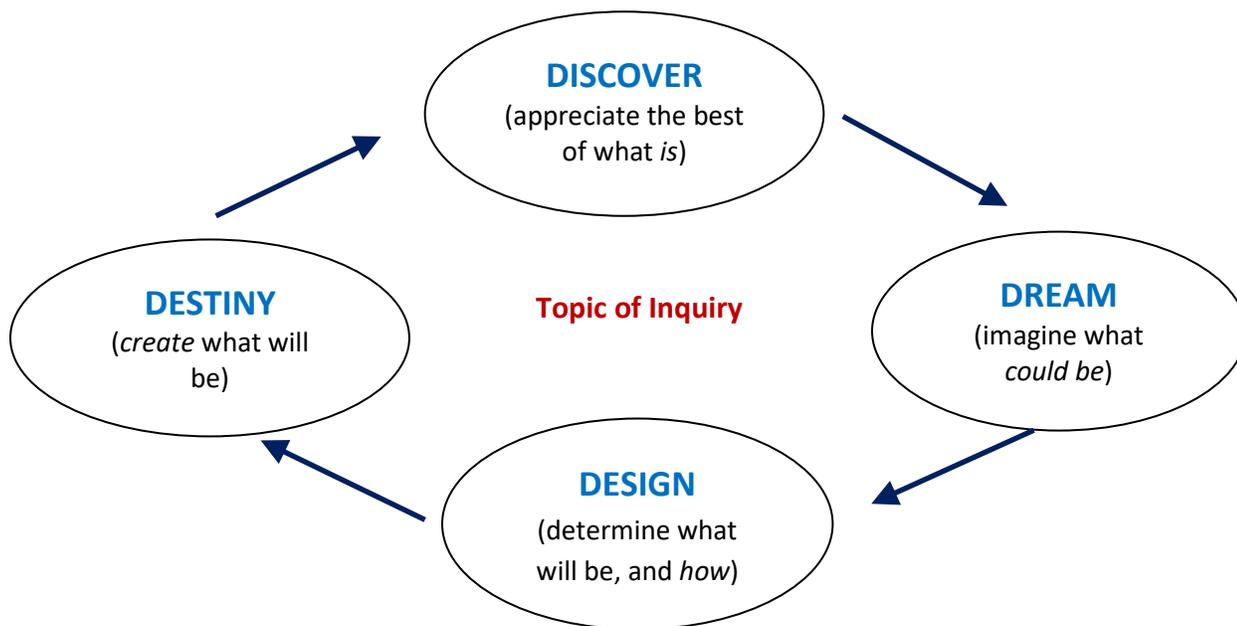


Diagram based on “The Voice of the Learner” (Vega Associates, Smith, 2003).

**Discover** = Find out what has worked in the past; what are people most proud about, most enthusiastic? (use appreciative interviews)

**Dream** = Consider how the past can inform the future; how can great experiences be revisited?

**Design** = In the present, how can we put ideas into practice? How, who, what, when?

**Destiny** = What does it take to sustain change? How do we embrace a willingness to change? How can we live the reality that we want to create?

Additionally, the approach embraces principles that rest on five key themes:

1. **Constructionist**: what we believe leads what we do; thought and action emerge out of relationships
2. **Simultaneity**: inquiring about what needs to change is part of the creative process that itself leads to change
3. **Poetic**: organizational reality is composed of stories told by the people in it, and there is ongoing, collaborative story-telling that ultimately shapes the organization
4. **Anticipatory**: actions today depend upon what we expect most about tomorrow
5. **Positive**: having a positive affect promotes the social connections that support collective inquiry and change (emotions can be experienced deliberately, and be causes of change, not just effects)