Handout: Overview of Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

# ****What is Appreciative Inquiry?****

* Appreciative Inquiry (AI) means to both ‘appreciate’ and ‘inquire’.
  + To ‘appreciate’ means to value and recognize the best in people, our strengths or the world around us.
  + To ‘inquire’ refers to exploring and discovering new potential and possibilities.
* AI is different from other problem solving approaches because it focuses on strengths and new possibilities, rather than on what has been wrong in the past.
* AI is a process that engages people at all levels of an organization to produce positive change.
* AI is based on the assumption that every organization has something that works right. The AI process seeks to discover what it is that gives life to an organization when it is most successful and connected to its members and community.
* AI begins by identifying what is positive about an organization and then uses those strengths to envision possibilities for the future.

# ****What can you achieve by using Appreciative Inquiry**?**

AI can benefit any organization, large or small, because it all involves all people at all levels. Some of the objectives AI can achieve include:

* Creating a common-ground vision and strategy for the future
* Uniting staff and management in new partnerships
* Creating new dialogue to foster shared meanings
* Building new relationships and teams to facilitate positive change

# ****What are the steps in an AI process?****

| **Steps** | **Description** |
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| 1. Dawning | The purpose of Dawning is to build trusting, supportive relationships with the culture change team. Group members will develop skills and knowledge related to the philosophies guiding their work. The work of the Dawning phase prepares groups to move forward to Discovery. |
| 2. Discovery | The purpose Discovery is for the Culture Change Coalition members and larger group or organization to reflect on the positive experiences, or the best of what is, within their community or organization. During the Discovery stage, the group gathers positive stories from key stakeholders about what gives the community or organization life to prepare themselves for Dream. |
| 3. Dream | The purpose of Dream is to identify what could be and envision new possibilities for the future. Using information from Discovery, participants create a set of aspiration statements which help drive the design of future actions. |
| 4. Design | The purpose of Design is to identify actions that will support the new possibilities identified in the Dream phase. Participants will create and commit to actions that will help make the aspiration statements a reality. |
| 5. Destiny | The purpose of Destiny is to identify ways to support and sustain the actions planned in the Design phase. Participants will identify the supports needed to implement and uphold the positive changes. |