This is an example of applying AI in training, strategic consulting and evaluation:

Bloomin' Communities OR Communities In Bloom? : A Briefing Report to Communities Scotland on Applying Appreciative Inquiry to Community Regeneration by Bliss Browne, President, Imagine Chicago   **February 2004**

Background to the Masterclass on Appreciative Inquiry

On January 28, 2004, the Communities Scotland Centre for Community Regeneration sponsored a Master class on applying Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to community regeneration, led by Bliss Browne of Imagine Chicago and Margaret Wright of Imagine Scotland. Appreciative Inquiry is an organizing methodology that selectively seeks to locate, highlight, and illuminate the life-giving forces of an organization or community. It seeks out the best of what is to ignite the collective imagination of what might be. The aim is to generate knowledge that expands the realm of the possible and helps members of the group envision a collectively desired future and successfully translate images of possibility into visible actions and outcomes. Originally developed in the 1980's as an effective approach to corporate organizational development by David Cooperrider at Case Western Reserve University, AI is now in widespread use across many sectors, including community development. Extensive case studies documenting the practice and its outcomes can be found on the AI Commons website: appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu.

The earliest and best known application of AI to community regeneration is Imagine Chicago (IC), a project developed by Bliss Browne in 1992 to cultivate hope and creative civic engagement. (**www.imaginechicago.org**) It has enlisted young people, and often marginalized groups, as leaders in a process that brings to light the experience and hopes of ordinary citizens and enables them to work together in ways that benefit communities as a whole. In more than 100 intergenerational and intercultural partnerships– with schools, churches, businesses, community groups, and cultural and public institutions – Imagine Chicago has enabled and encouraged people to think about themselves as creators of their community's future, and to form effective and inspiring partnerships to bring that future to life.

Central to all IC initiatives is a common approach that moves from idea to action:
- **Understand** what is (focusing on the best of what is)
- **Imagine** what can be (working in dialogue and partnership with others)
- **Create** what will be (translating values and goals into visible outcomes)

Projects begin with and are grounded in asking and teaching others to ask open-ended, asset-based and value-oriented questions about what is life-giving, what is working, what is generative, what is important. Asking positive questions around affirmative topics encourages sharing of best practices, articulation of fundamental values, and reveals the positive foundation on which greater possibilities can be built. When we articulate and hear from others what's important and is working, we readily imagine how even greater transformation and innovation can happen. When this process happens within community partnership structures which encourage accountability and learning, the

expanded imagination can lead to concrete, practical outcomes that inspire more people to invest themselves in making a difference.

Imagine projects are now underway on six continents. Imagine Scotland was launched in April 2003, organized by Margaret Wright of Leith. Growing interest in appreciative inquiry was generated by that event, as well as by earlier presentations done by Bliss Browne in the UK over the past three years. The Centre for Community Regeneration felt that a Masterclass on Appreciative Inquiry led by Bliss and Margaret would be valuable in exposing local policy makers and practitioners to an approach that is proving effective in community regeneration all across the world.

The masterclass, held on January 28th at the Tannahill Centre in Ferguslie Park, was a participative experience of AI as used in the Imagine process in which delegates
- Received core teaching in appreciative inquiry;
- Engaged in an appreciative inquiry around regeneration;
- Designed appreciative questions to use in their work;
- Experienced the understand, imagine, create steps of the Imagine process; and
- Heard and shared stories of successful experience of community-led regeneration

A graphic record of the masterclass was done throughout the day by Graham Ogilvie, to capture the unfolding group story and to reinforce to participants the power of images.

Discovery: How Appreciative Inquiry Supports Community Regeneration

AI connects individuals and communities to what has meaning, value and purpose and builds positive relationships through positive communications. Three dimensions are especially noteworthy. First is the power of *positive framing*. Human beings of any age are full of potential, rich in strengths and talents, with energy and vitality to dream and create. Even complaints mask a deep desire for change. Much community talk and public forums currently focus on problems or needs, but they can shift to focus instead on how to harness our capacities to make lives and communities more vital. Challenging communities to state affirmatively what they value, what they hope, what they want, enables them, and their partners, to understand and act on behalf of that vision. Reframing negative comments into positive desires can provide a way out of traps and into possibilities.

Second, dialogue is invigorated by the power of *inspiring questions*. It is possible to investigate anything — unemployment and illiteracy or job creation and learning communities, causes for despair or reservoirs of hope. The questions we ask set the agenda and determine what we find. Honest, open questions, asked in a spirit of genuine interest, enrich and deepen dialogue and open up new images and understandings.

Active listening is creative; something new happens in the "in-between" space that listening and dialogue create. When people listen deeply to one another, they honor each other and cultivate the trust and relationships so crucial for community. They start not only to see, but also to 'hear' the possibilities for their collective future.

Attached, as appendix 1, is a summary of the foundation stones of AI. Some implications of these for community regeneration are summarized below:

1. The questions we ask determine what we find.
People want and need to think constructively; appreciative questions around affirmative topics minimize threatening and defensive behaviors and responses. Constructive questions move us forward and help us identify experience we can draw on to get there. People feel confident and energized to move into the future when they bring with them the best of the past, experience that is known and trusted, in areas that are of high value and impact.

2. **Words create worlds. Language is a moral issue.**
Much public discourse is currently problem and deficit oriented (for example, communities competing for funding on the basis of having the highest number of needs.) To frame community regeneration in problem talk creates expertise and focus on what communities don't want and what doesn't work. To regenerate communities requires focusing on possibilities, focusing on what works instead of what's wrong. The shift from deficit to visionary language opens up possibilities (and energy) for community renewal.

3. **Communities are multi-storied creations. Positive stories shape positive identities and connections.**
When inquiry helps communities identify and name strengths, skills, hopes, values, assets and constructive ideas, a positive image and community identity grows which can inspire higher participation and attract investment. Affirming one another's constructive stories and ideas publicly builds positive relationships and can give participants a constructive experience of difference that helps overcome shyness, suspicion and stereotyping.

4. **Every voice is important.**
Since collective visions emerge out of open-ended, generative dialogue, every voice is important. Uncommon partnerships often produce the most innovative outcomes since they often help to shift perspectives. Successful community regeneration therefore requires pathways to participation that include everyone. Positive experiences of difference (e.g. constructive conversations and joint action among unlikely partners) enlarge the possibilities for cooperative action and mutual accountability.

5. **Positive conversations and images lead to positive action.**
We can create only what we can imagine. To regenerate communities, communities need to articulate their own images of what they want and are willing to work for. That requires forums to develop affirmative competence, creative agency and collective dreaming. Using arts-based processes --drawing images, enacting stories, creating music, etc.-- can help liberate and focus the imagination of individuals and groups and reinforce the variety of gifts and capacity for creative thought. Imagining the future puts us into a realm of freedom and possibility. People find energy to move the future they have imagined and created together, if there are structures that support collective action on behalf of their visions. Focusing on individual and collective preferred futures (goals worth aiming at) helps the focus on present abilities, skills and actions needed to get there.

Role of the Masterclass

The 85 participants in the master class were able, in 6 hours, to experience and evaluate the power of the AI process along each of the key dimensions enumerated above. The class opened by asking participants to introduce themselves in small groups of 8 by sharing something their experience suggested opens up possibilities for community regeneration, as well as a question that had brought them to the master class. This participative activity created a vital link between each individual's experience and the topic at hand, and set a framework of constructive communication; participants became identified as members of a community knowledgeable about regeneration and committed to learning. Their insights and questions, posted together on the wall, produced an impressive array of best practices and worthy questions. They revealed a number of affirmative topics of current importance to participants, including understanding AI, building trust, inclusive engagement, effective partnership, sustainability, funding availability, creating learning communities, and keeping focused on communities rather than on bureaucratic preoccupations. (Summaries are attached as appendices 2 and 3.)

Bliss gave an overview of the theory and practice of AI, inviting participants to think through the "mental maps" used for assessing communities (for example, one tends to think appreciatively when assessing where to buy a home, or send children to school, even if the dominant policy mindset sees communities as collections of problems-to-be-solved.) Bliss reviewed the underlying principles of AI using handouts. Bliss and Margaret cited examples of practice from the work of Imagine Chicago and Imagine Scotland. Participants then had the opportunity to do a 45 minute paired appreciative inquiry so they could experience the process directly, in an inquiry focused on community regeneration and effective community partnerships.

The participants' interviews were brought into broader view after lunch by sharing their stories in small groups of eight, and creating imaginative representations of "the positive core" of community regeneration that emerged from their conversations. The groups' creativity was evident. Their "images of possibility", summarized in appendix 4, represent vividly what participants see as the vital core of effective community regeneration: reframing leadership from an expert model to teamwork; communicating inside out to determine direction; trusting open-ended process; local self-determination; harnessing energy rather than social control; positive framing; following a path of hope and respect; and taking risks.

After the presentations, participants were invited, in small groups, to select an affirmative topic fundamental to community regeneration, on which their group would concentrate for the afternoon. Following some suggestions about how to design powerful questions, each group created expansive, appreciative questions related to their topics and presented them to the plenary. Topics selected and questions created are attached as appendix 5. Bliss commented on each group's questions, giving examples of how they could be strengthened and pointing out the usefulness of beginning with questions that probe experience and moving on to ask about future hopes and visions for improvement. She

also spoke briefly about the usefulness of constructing "provocative propositions" (or "enchanting possibilities") around each topic that inspire curiosity about it and a desire to see the topic in a fresh way. Bliss concluded with some strategies for moving from inquiry into action, using the same approach of discerning where there is most energy and commitment for moving forward. Each participant was given time to summarize in writing what had been most useful to them from the session, ways they would like to apply it, and any support needed to do so. The evaluations are attached as appendix 6. The class ended with a closing circle in which each participant shared some of their reflections publicly. Someone mentioned almost every dimension of the day as having been helpful. One suggested powerfully that 'in Scotland, we are still subjects. This is about moving from being subjects to citizens'.

Conclusions from the masterclass and recommendations about next steps

The class demonstrated the generativity of appreciative inquiry and the value of asking a community to share its insights and creativity. Gathering to exchange ideas and imagination liberates the collective imagination and reminds us that we are complex beings called into community.

In sponsoring this master class, Communities Scotland demonstrated its support for a new spirit of regeneration. The master class helped expand the vision, skill building, momentum and connectedness of the emergent AI/Imagine community in Scotland. There is now a larger community of interest with an emerging infrastructure and common interest in the applications of this process.

Participants made clear that they place a high value on having communities be self-determining though they want the benefit of being connected to other communities who are also moving forward with this practice. This suggests the priority of treating every community as an independent entity – letting them develop their own structures, priorities and processes while encouraging the development and documentation of this community of practice. Some suggestions of how communities want to move forward are suggested by the evaluations as well as by the on-site community meetings conducted after the masterclass in Pollok, Greenock and Leith, reported separately.

Dream: AI's possible applications within Scotland

Creating a culture of AI in Scotland for community regeneration will need to involve government policy, community development, and the voluntary sector. AI can be an effective tool in getting the traditional culture of community development and voluntary sector development to come together and develop visions for community futures in a constructive way. The foundations of a learning community developed by the masterclass, and previous Imagine events, that, with nurturing and support, can develop into a community of interest in the practice of appreciative inquiry in community development in Scotland.

Imagine and appreciative inquiry are alive and growing in Scotland. The voluntary sector use AI through their Big Picture Peer Supporter group and a pilot project using AI took

place in the summer of 2003 to identify best practice between the two main bodies working in volunteering. A community of practice is growing up in Aberdeen and in the North of Scotland generally. The Land Reform Unit in Kyle have also explored the approach in working with communities faced with the opportunity to purchase estates or land like community woodlands. Teachers, educational psychologists and public sector managers have sampled its power. In the summer of 2003 island communities experienced appreciative inquiry too in Orkney and Uist.

AI is not just a theory but a practice. At least three Scottish communities are already piloting a more appreciative approach to community building. In Glasgow, the Greater Pollok Development Company is blazing a trail, training its staff in AI and applying AI in their plans to promote a learning community in Pollok. They hope to link up with other Imagine learning communities around the world. In Inverclyde, the Phoenix Community Health project have trained their staff and management committee in AI and are developing an appreciative organisation. The project leader Elspeth Gracey first heard about AI in Africa when she was on voluntary service and the Phoenix team's interest was piqued at the Imagine Scotland event in April 2003. They are planning the launch of Imagine Inverclyde with a large scale event on 19th June. In Leith, people are using AI to strengthen local communications, including the creation of a local newsletter, and a local TV station building on the success of the Leith Festival radio station.   Other communities in the Highlands and Islands have also heard about AI. As result of IS, there have been follow up community meetings in Auchtertyre around possibilities for communities to purchase land, in Orkney and in Uist in connection with the local council for voluntary services.

Design:
There has been interest expressed by each pilot community in ongoing relationship with Bliss Browne and Margaret Wright, to serve as connectors (within Scotland and abroad), mentors, trainers and facilitators. From our experience in community development using appreciative inquiry, the following conditions bring results:
  ❖ Empowering communities to act
  ❖ Continuing to develop the relationship
  ❖ Listening and supporting them in a practical way
  ❖ Allowing them to select a topic or issue of their choosing
  ❖ Assisting them to communicate their story and future aims effectively
  ❖ Building a learning community among them
  ❖ Providing them with the relevant technical assistance
  ❖ Developing their local capacity in facilitation and process design skills as required
  ❖ Identifying and supporting local leaders
  ❖ Providing some seed money that leverages their investment of time and interest and support a core communications function locally

Communities could be funded directly using the budget available to carry forward discussion and projects (preferably leading to visible outcomes) in their chosen issue areas. If some bursary funding could be found, (perhaps the 'Seeing is believing' fund), that would give a significant message to the communities that the outcomes and

responsibility are entrusted to them with real support available to them to build their capacity as they see fit.

The Imagine process offers a bold but simple way of working 'inside out' to strengthen civic participation and community identity and partnership. It's about people and places, vision and ideas, remaining constructive and open in mind and process. It builds confidence and constructive experiences of difference. It's practical and concrete. It overcomes shyness as we saw from the 80+ strangers at the masterclass-- working creatively together on issues of great importance to them.

The experience over many years in Chicago and internationally has shown that support and structure aid the process. Feedback from both the Pollok and the Greenock communities has highlighted this too. To start working in this way in a climate and culture that thinks about problems and sees disease rather than health takes courage, energy and practice. One of the ways to explore this approach and take it forward would be to offer ongoing support. This could take a number of forms: ongoing Email or phone contact, practical support in the field, forming a community of interest, a learning community, around AI and Imagine, learning and exchanging information and experiences with other Imagine projects both in his country and abroad, offering further training eg an intensive Imagine camp where groups of employees or community residents could learn more about the technique and how to apply it at workplace or home.

The Scottish Executive are keen that Scotland looks outward, welcoming and learning from other cultures. We have an ongoing opportunity to be part of a larger international learning community. John Watson will testify to the value of continually tying this broader global experience to his work in Pollok. We have an opportunity to do that through Bliss' contacts around the world and the large Imagine network which comprises at least 22 countries. Bliss will be teaching a 5 day masterclass in Denmark in September, and likely do trainings in both South Africa and Australia later this spring. In each case she will be travelling through Europe. This could provide an opportunity for us to connect again with her, share our experience and learn from those global communities with whom she works. The specific content of such additional masterclasses or on-site support would be open to discussion.   In depth training of teams from multiple Scottish locations might be done later this year, for example, at a 5 day Imagine camp at an away location – an invitational train the trainer event in which teams come to apply and refine AI ways if working and learn from each other's experience.

While working to support the individual communities who have embarked on this process it would also be important to raise awareness in other parts of the country and in other sectors. Two of the participants at the masterclass commented on the need for this thinking at middle and senior management and in local authorities. Business, Health and Education are ideal sectors to experience the power of this way of thinking and working. One week after the masterclass Margaret Wright attended a health and social inclusion seminar with four speakers, two of whom were from Pittsburgh and were talking about a similar approach to health and communities. There is already joint work taking place and these speakers are keen to team up with projects here in Scotland where communities are doing some very interesting things on the health front. The SCR is focusing on People,

Place and Asset Building in its three masterclasses ; all these things point to a desire for a different approach . Further events linking imagine, regeneration and other sectors such as health would raise awareness of the linkages and the holistic nature of regeneration. Further events outside the central belt would establish the interest of Communities Scotland in remoter communities who, by virtue of their location, often show the resilience and innovation required for regeneration work.

There is a place and a method for everyone in the above plan. Small groups work well as do larger events. In fact, small close groups have the power to magnify a message or idea as Malcolm Gladwell describes in *The Tipping Point*. Support for a number of Imagine communities would be a sensible way to proceed while supporting action research to establish what is working and how it is working. This would give valuable information for other communities wishing to get involved and for policy formation.

This is an opportunity to innovate, for a new form of sponsorship for today's communities. It's an opportunity to explore a new form of partnership where we are committed to designing something together for a shared purpose. It is about working together into a future which is as yet unknowable in a process that remains open ended.

APPENDIX 1
IMAGINE: Elements of Transforming Community Dialogue
A confident, connected, and inspired community
will prosper and attract investment

Traditional Change Management   Appreciative Inquiry
- **What problems are you having?**   . **What is working really well**
                                                       and how can you amplify it?

- **What are your needs?**   . **What impacts/outcomes do**
                                                       you hope to accomplish?

- **Fix what is broken.**   . **Search for best practices**
                                                      and most inspiring images,
                                             ideas and connections

The FOUNDATION STONES

Words Create Worlds
     Questions Determine Outcomes
          Positive Images Inspire Positive Action
               Stories are Powerful; Leaders Share Stories
                    Structures are needed to support community Visioning
                         *IMAGINE***: The Strength of Collective Imagination**

Words Create Worlds
Words have the power to both destroy and heal. The words we choose directly influence the
dynamics of our conversations... Think of the power of words like hope, imagination, community,
transformation, relationship, connection, integrity, learning, spirit, generosity, vision, creativity,
value, and possibility.

What language frames the way you think and speak about community? Is your language asset-
based? Is it inspiring? What questions might you ask others that would liberate their imagination
about community and how they can help shape it?

Questions Determine Outcomes
- The act of asking questions influences the person, group or community.
- If you inquire into problems, you will focus attention on what is wrong.
- If you inquire into what is going well, you will discover best practices on which you can
  build even more
- People, groups and communities will grow in the direction of the topics into which they
  inquire.
- Questions are generative; Every time we ask a question, we are inviting a possible new
  version of life.

Positive Images Inspire Positive Actions
- Pygmalion effect: Students identified as high potential perform better than those identified as
  low potential
- Health: Placebo: If you expect to get well, you are more likely to do so
- Sports: Edited videotapes of exceptional performance lead to much more positive outcomes
  than highlighting errors
- It is important to be able to say what we DO want

We can provoke broader thinking by creating value-based possibility statements that connect the best of ''what is'' to a vision of what ''might be''; we invite others to stand in the future worthy of our commitment now, as though it already exists.

Stories have Power and Energy

- People organise experiences into stories.
- Stories shape the professional identity of the individual, work group, organisation or community to which one belongs
- Individual team, company and community identities are socially constructed through the exchange of stories.
- No one story defines a person, team or an organisation. All are multi-storied creations.
- The stories a person or a group decides to focus on become reality.

Structures Are Needed to Encourage Visionary Dialogue and Thinking

- People are amazing and gifted at envisioning and creating the future, if they have a proper forum and encouragement to do so. Since much public discourse is now deficit-based and problem-oriented, we must construct forums to develop affirmative competence, creative agency and collective dreaming.
- People will naturally move toward a picture of the future they have imagined and created together—especially if there are structures and partnerships that recognize and support their acting on behalf of their visions.

Summary: The Strength of Collective Imagination

Problem solving as a process for inspiring and sustaining human system change is limited. Deficit analysis, powerful in diagnosis, often undermines human organizing, because it is likely to create a sense of threat, separation, defensiveness and deference to expert hierarchies.

Change management methods that evoke stories, and affirm and compel groups of people to envision an image of the future grounded in the best from the past, have the greatest potential to produce deep and sustaining change.

Stories engage the heart and imagination in such a way that a deeper level of listening is activated, which opens the eyes of perception. Deep learning happens in the unspoken story that is generated by the mind mixing images called forth during the telling, in the open sacred space experienced in the process. The thinking mind is kept entranced by the content; the images awaken and engage the dreaming imagination and intuitive intelligence of the listener.

When the collective imagination is mobilised, people innovate. Working together, they can create effective and inspiring ways to move toward the shared ideal images and find energy and power to do so.

MOVING FROM IDEA TO DIALOGUE TO ACTION

UNDERSTAND: DISCOVERING THE BEST OF WHAT IS

The core task in the discovery phase is to appreciate the best of *what is* by focusing on peak times of organizational or community excellence -- when people have experienced the organization/community as most alive and effective. Seeking to understand the unique factors (e.g., leadership, relationships, technologies, core processes, structures, values, learning processes, external relationships, planning methods, etc.) that made the high points possible, people let go of deficit analysis and systematically seek to isolate and learn from even the smallest wins. In the discovery phase, people share stories of exceptional accomplishments, discuss the core life-giving factors, and think through the aspects of their organization or community history that they most value and want to bring to the future. Participants come to know their community <u>history as positive possibility</u> rather than a static, problematized, eulogized, romanticized, or forgotten set of events. Empowering and hopeful conceptions of organization/community frequently, if not always, emerge from stories that are grounded in organizing at its best. *Where appreciation is alive and stakeholders throughout a system are connected in discovery, hope grows and organizational/community capacity is enriched.*

IMAGINE

The IMAGINE Phase involves envisioning more valued and vital futures and end results. This includes designing the social and technical architecture necessary to support the collective dream. Since images of the future emerge out of grounded examples from a positive past; they are compelling and trustworthy possibilities. The data can be complemented with benchmarking studies of other communities. In both cases, the inspiring stories are used to create a portrait of possibility.

CREATE

- This phase involves implementing the new images of the future and is sustained by nurturing a collective sense of a compelling shared vision. It is a time of continuous learning, adjustment and improvisation (like a jazz group), all in the service of shared ideals. The momentum and potential for innovation is extremely high by this stage of inquiry. Everyone is a participant and owner of the desired future. Key to sustaining the momentum is to build an "appreciative eye" into all the organization or community's systems, procedures, and ways of working. For example, thinking through how to move from <u>e</u>valuation to valuation. This culture shift often involves accelerating competency development of positive communication, inquiry, dialogue and collaboration. It can often be more effective by creating uncommon partnerships that connect partners who think in quite different ways – for example, different generations or cultures.

__What Questions Would You Like to Ask Your Community??__

The seeds of change—the things that people think about, that inform dialogue and inspire action-—are implicit in the very first questions we ask..... and the language we choose to use**.**

Some Examples of Questions for Imagining Community Futures…

1. What gives you hope that community regeneration is possible?

2. What stands out for you as a time you felt you were involved in a really "good" community team effort-- something significant, empowering, and effective—which gave everyone involved a way to contribute their talent and make a difference?
    *   How and why did you get involved?
    *   Who else was involved?
    *   How did you work together?
    *   What made it a powerful experience?
    *   What were some challenges you had to deal with in building a team? How did you most successfully deal with those challenges?
    *   What did you accomplish and how did it feel?
    *   What was especially meaningful to you about the process and result?
    *   What did you learn about how community regeneration happens?

<u>Best qualities and skills</u>
Yourself. Without being too humble, what is it that you value most about   yourself as it relates to *things you bring* to building community? What are your best qualities, skills, approaches, values, etc.?

Your group. What are your organization's best practices, skills, values, policies that help it work effectively in a partnership environment?

<u>Why community teamwork?</u>
Why does working together make sense? What, in ideal terms, are the benefits and outcomes of forming strong community partnerships?

<u>Core "life-giving" factors</u>
As you think about what it takes to build high quality partnerships, (especially across cultures or generations), what is *the* "life-giving" factor in such partnerships (without it, good community partnerships would not be possible)?

What do you think are some of the essential conditions to enable (our) community as a whole to prosper?

<u>Learning Methods</u>
Every good partnership results in learning on the part of both parties. As a "teacher," how does you approach the learning process? As a "learner," how do you accelerate your learning from others?

<u>Images of the Future – Catalyzing Improved Cooperation</u>
What three wishes do you have for the future of (our) community?

What do you consider important next steps that should be taken to help establish and support more effective, more productive community partnerships?

- How can we create a culture of hope and civic participation?
- What public processes will enliven communication?
- What will be the first signs of success?
- How can this event become a catalyst for engaging many more people in improving the quality of life for everyone in (our) community?

What support do you need to move forward on behalf of the potential for (our) community that you can see?

What will keep you going when you get stuck?

<div align="center">

For more on Imagine Chicago: see www.imaginechicago.org
For more on Appreciative Inquiry, see appreciativeinquiry.case.edu
Questions? Contact Bliss Browne   bliss@imaginechicago.org   773-275-2520

</div>

Key Stages of Appreciative Inquiry (a worksheet)

Setting Affirmative Topics:

> Communities move in the direction of what they ask about. An affirmative topic serves as an orientation point for values and practices to strengthen in the community.   Example: clear

What affirmative topics do you feel would be good orientation points for an appreciative inquiry based community assessment that builds community capacity and engagement?
           1.   2.   3.

Creating Open-Ended Constructive Questions:

> Good Appreciative Inquiry questions are positive, expansive; they elicit deeply held values, passions, the best of what is. Ex. What do you especially value about this community? What's your

Around a topic your group has selected, create a set of questions you feel would be important to ask and answer to better understand the possibilities for community regeneration:

Provocative Propositions ("enchanting possibilities")

> A provocative proposition invites and inspires you to think more deeply about a topic. Ex. Honest communication opens possibilities.

Create a concise provocative proposition around one of your affirmative topic choices that inspires people to be more curious about it and want to think it through in their own experience:

2. **Moving from Inquiry into Action:**
   - *What are some ways that your inquiry could provoke action?*
     What might be a tangible result from this inquiry?

APPENDIX 2
WHAT OPENS UP POSSIBILITIES FOR COMMUNITY REGENERATION?
(summary of participant answers posted in response to opening question)

Trust/High Expectations/Local control
+ Challenging negative images of local community.
+ Individuals with ideas and strong feelings
+ Giving communities access to /control over resources and assets.
+ Recognising that what motivates 'professionals' will motivate others eg status, reward, recognition, good environment, sense of self worth.
+ Bottom up approach
+ Hand over responsibility to the people
+ Go with the gifts and achievements that locally are available.
+ Freedom of thought + speech at the grassroots level that is trusted, honoured + valued by decision makers
+ (Leadership in communities can find new areas and achieve great things...but become targets for criticism –''there must be something dodgy here!'')
+ Trust
+ Hospitality, being truthful. All players being open & honest
+ Don't be afraid of mistakes

Broad Engagement
+ Commitment to a process and culture that engages all relevant stakeholders.
+ Active engagement ; people (all shapes and sizes)
+ Getting a 'whole' community whether geographic or of interest to work together and take ownership of 'their' community regeneration.
+ Involving children and older people in planning for communities-they have so much to offer.
+ Use the skills of our older people to reach the young
+ Willingness of community to participate and drive process.
+ Collective and shared motivation by whole community. An end to fragmentation and detachment.

Working together/cooperation and partnership
+ Believing in people
+ Decision –making processes (multi –agency working)
+ Shared concerns and aspirations
+ Shared ownership and vision
+ People looking towards same aim.
+ Multi agency approach
+ Willingness amongst key agencies, across the organisation to involve communities and commitment of resources.
+ Agencies being prepared to be flexible and give up some control.
+ Community engagement requires commitment from powerful partners to listen and respond.
+ Connecting to the policy makers 1) what are the best /most helpful services or initiatives in your area? 2) what is good about them? (these questions can be put to communities/elected members/public agencies.
+ Partnership working, being realistic, having community workers to work with groups.
+ Partnership working isn't just about being in the same room at the same time. It needs nurturing.
+ Partnership working Statutory + voluntary sector & communities working together.

Good communication and information sharing
+ Talking to people we don't usually talk to. Talking to those we do usually talk to in new ways.
+ Anything that helps people not actively involved to feel valued enough to value their own opinions + share with the wider community. Listening is key.
+ Helping people to discover what 'community' really means to them.
+ Information

+ It's more than physical-ie horses. Opportunities arise when information is shared and not seen as a bargaining tool or a means of increasing or reducing power.
+ Breaking down communication barriers.
+ Stop long consultation and get working
+ Stories-proof that change is possible.
+ Having something special as an example (where people can influence + make a difference) can be a catalyst for further change.
+ Sharing experiences and good practice
+ Specific issue can be a catalyst to regeneration
+ Better communication across all fields organisations including the voluntary sector.

Places to come together
+ A 'focus' for people ie a good community centre. Somewhere /some organisation they can share.
+ Having an area within a community-open space/derelict land that can be developed for public good.

Funding
+ Easy access to money
+ MONEY £

APPENDIX 3 WHAT QUESTIONS BROUGHT YOU HERE TODAY?

Appreciative Inquiry
+ What is appreciative enquiry and how can I use it?
+ How can we use AI to affect community regeneration?
+ How is appreciative enquiry different from other techniques for engaging with communities?
+ How is appreciative enquiry significantly different from other experiences?
+ Is there room for negativity?
+ What will people think of this method?
+ How will this create a positive ethos in community?
+ How will this lead to improving practice in community engagement?
+ How do you make this work in a rural area, especially when it's the same people on the committees?
+ How can we overcome cynicism? (that passes for sophistication!)

Trust
+ Building trust-- how do we gain it and keep it?
+ How do we build and maintain trust?
+ How can we be 'open and honest'?

Inclusion
+ How can we meaningfully engage communities as a whole? (Methods)
+ How do we involve all the community not just a few?
+ When you are engaged in a statutory process –how do you engage people when they suspect they don't have the power to make the decision?
+ How do we engage the 'vulnerable' within our communities?
+ How do we make sure that marginalised groups are also there?
+ How do we engage with a community who have been historically let down and unengaged with varying service providers?
+ How do you ensure the 'active' participation of your particular target group and sustain that participation? How to get different groups in communities engaging?
+ How do you engage the community in a meaningful way? And change organisational culture?
+ How to get more involvement other than the usual suspects?
+ How do we re-engage with communities who have become disengaged from regeneration process?
+ How do we make sure there is a greater focus on young people and children getting involved?
+ How do we draw together a divided community?
+ How do we deal with 'false' barriers to see 'one' community?
+ How do we get people to have the confidence to take control of their lives?
+ How do you get people to believe they can change things?
+ How do you get people to believe that something is going to happen-especially when there may be a long timescale?
+ How to inspire + enthuse a community + staff?

Partnership
+ How to get organisations in communities working in partnership?
+ How do we encourage commercial organisations to share expertise? What's in it for them?
+ How do you prevent partners working at cross purposes?
+ How do you get partnership working to make real changes in communities and not be just a talking shop /bureaucracy?
+ How do we achieve more effective partnership working and maintain the momentum and commitment of partners?
+ Ensuring that equal partnership is equal and not tokenism?
+ How do you change the dominant culture, which suppresses responses? –including government media
+ How can we persuade those powerful decision makers to be less scared of sharing/letting go of power?
+ How do you encourage the powerful people to take into account other people's views and less powerful people to speak out more?

Funding
+ How does the money get spent in the best possible way? How do we prioritise funding?

+ Where can we access the funds to realise initiatives?

Sustainability
+ How do you manage expectations after a visioning exercise?
+ How do we change poor PR image of our communities?
+ How do we keep people motivated?
+ How do you stop worrying about your project running out of time?
+ How we maintain community involvement/enthusiasm?
+ Having engaged with people/community what methods can be used to try and ensure sustainability?
+ How to sustain community engagement/involvement in a period of significant change?
+ How can I do more to support active and innovative change ?
+ How to maintain momentum and enthusiasm when faced with problems and setbacks?

Sharing/Learning
+ Who has the answers?
+ What training and development is needed to raise awareness?
+ How do you draw the development of individual into the wider total regeneration of an area?
+ How do we share best practice?
+ How do we make that cultural shift to share knowledge?
+ How do we share dialogue?
+ How can I get more first hand experience of community regeneration?
+ How can we encourage genuine learning from doing?
+ How do you develop an approach to enable you to find out what really works?
+ Questions- How to make use of this rich resource?
+ How do we get the right information to the right people at the right time so it becomes knowledge?

The "Institutionalising" of Regeneration
+ Why is regeneration such a top heavy business- a few doing.....hundreds checking????
+ Has regeneration become part of the bureaucratic process? How do we stop paying attention to the organizations we work for and start paying attention to the communities we work with?
+ How do we stop doing 'regeneration work'?
+ Are communities inevitably disintegrating under globalisation?
+ How can we resource communities with knowledge/info & then trust then to make decisions on important issues?
+ Putting into practice in the field?
+ How do we stop the goalposts from 'moving' constantly?
+ How do we get statutory agencies to think imaginatively and less corporately?
+ What are we expecting empowered communities to do? (Concern that there is an expectation that the community take over delivering the service)
+ How can the great ideas + actions at a community level work their way up the 'food chain' to influence policy?
+ How is it possible to include issues of morale, spirit, trust in regeneration strategies?
+ How do you know when you 'know' your community?
+ If we do not address the structural poverty and disadvantage are we only using 'sticking plaster' to cover a major problem?
+ How can we mobilise this creativity of AI in large bureaucratic organisations who may be scared or who do not want to let go of power?
+ How do we continue to develop communities when there are often wider forces at play e.g. bigger political picture /power-plays/resource diversion?
+ In an environment where there is so much emphasis placed on formal evaluation (HMI) how can we ensure that lessons learned from each other + communities are valued and trusted as true?
+ How do you 'conquer' moribund institutions?
+ How do we reduce the 'dependency ' culture which is built into many public sector interventions?
+ How do we start doing things rather than talking about things?
+ Can we slim down the reporting structures?

APPENDIX 4   IMAGES OF THE POSITIVE CORE OF REGENERATION

❖ **Reframing leadership from expert model to teamwork serving the whole**.
Image: musicians jamming. Best players give up power to support the whole.

❖ **Need to communicate to find direction**. Image: Human sculpture. Begins as
individuals looking in different ways and directions. Slowly start turning to and talking
with each other. End up looking in same direction, getting somewhere. Unfettering the
imagination about what is possible. Not planned by committees. Not Political. Civic
regeneration beyond town hall. Inside out rather than outside in process.

❖ **Trusting open-ended process**. Image: an open book. Some chapters are not yet
written but there is a history here. Communities get to write their own next chapters
building on a proud past. Requires policymakers to respond to what communities propose
rather than to set out agenda communities have to fulfill.

❖ **Local self-determination**. Image: Snake. Local community wanted a snake. Outside
decision maker said no. Now she thinks she should trust what local community wants.
Hearts, minds and determination to reach the goals.

❖ **Harnessing energy rather than social control**. Sometimes the crisis we try to
suppress/solve/prevent can be a positive experience and should be allowed to happen –
Image: community folk surrounding central figure with big heart who is holding a bottle
of community spirit. No grass growing under their feet. Range of community
gifts/perspective. Peer education.. I'm a great listener. I'm a great organizer. I'm looking
for funding…this will never work. Well rounded community member.

❖ Second image: bureaucratic maze drawing- garden with only one way in. Sorry no way
through. This way only. Expected/accepted route. Above maze hovers pair of individuals
mutually supporting each other, "How do we know we cannot fly?" How can the future
be determined by communities rather than by external forces?

❖ **Need for positive framing and actions**. "Bloomin' communities" or "communities
in bloom"? Solving problems creates co-dependency between organizations and
problems. There is an alternative. Image: bright yellow flower not yet finished growing.
Grass roots are ideas (ah-ha moments). Stems of development support growth. Petals are
different sectors.

❖ Second image: People shifting from being knocked back by "is it robust and sustainable?
Is it teatime? Are we doing this this year? Can we afford it? This is never going to
work…" to "How it might be this way…everybody just do it… everyone coming
together around good ideas"

❖ **Following path of hope and respect.** Image: Path of hope with inspiring
people…fun…laughter, telling stories, working in partnership, engaging…optimism,
creativity, action purpose honesty, realism, this makes sense to me…

❖ **Risk taking**. Image: Can of worms in various stages of being opened. Have to risk
opening can of worms for other things to become possible. Various stages of openness.
But if you open up the cans, worms can escape.

APPENDIX 5   Appreciative Inquiry Questions (designed by small groups)

HOW DO YOU CONNECT COMMUNITIES WITH POLICY MAKERS?
HOW DO YOU PUT THE PUBLIC INTO PUBLIC POLICY?
+ Why short term funding for long-term initiatives? (Question could be improved by asking, "how do we get long term funding for long term initiatives?")
+ How can we help you to provide a longer sustained funding stream e.g. three years rather than annual applications? Would this help you to be more effective?
+ How do we change innate perceptions?
+ How can we show that our project is interesting to the community? Then how do we show that interest to policy makers?
+ How do we find stories that bridge the divide?
+ How do we get smarter at achieving multiple wins? (policy & community perspectives)
+ What are the benefits to you (as a funder) of offering grant funding beyond 12 (e.g.) months?

MUTUAL SUPPORT TRUST AND APPRECIATION
+ What is the best event you have been to in your community and why?
+ Imagine you were still involved in helping your community in 5 years time, what would have kept you involved?

POSITIVE PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS
+ What do you especially value about the partnership? Why does working together matter?
+ What's your favorite partnership ? Why?
+ What do you give to a partner and what do you hope to get?
+ What could we achieve by working together?
+ Why are you part of the partnership?
+ Whom do you want to work in partnership with and why?
+ What do you expect of each partner ?
+ How should decisions be made?
+ What's your most positive productive partnership experience?
+ What can you bring to this partnership? What is your role?
+ Can I do this better on my own?
+ Is it an equal partnership? How could it become so?

HOW DO YOU SUSTAIN THE MOTIVATION OF INTERMEDIARIES?
+ What experience has made you feel most positive that you were making a difference?
+ What is the most exciting thing that has happened in your work in the last year?
+ How does your work fit into the bigger picture? What difference does it make to the whole?

POWER
+ How do you feel in control in your life?
+ What power do you want to have?
+ What is your experience of power/politicians enabling your vision/improvement of your community?
+ When have you done something really powerful and what made it powerful? When did you (the community) achieve what it most wanted?
+ Who or what makes you feel more powerful?

ASSESSING ACTUAL + REAL NEED WITHIN A COMMUNITY
+ Tell me a good thing about where you live.
+ What would you like to see more of?
+ What's needed to achieve this?
+ What is working for you?
+ What do you think young people/senior citizens/adults see as the best things about this community?

PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS (WRITTEN FEEDBACK FORMS)

WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS EXCITING AND IMPORTANT ABOUT APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY/ IMAGINE ?

- It has fantastic hope and potential and is a way of doing things differently.
- Fresh ideas /approach
- It taps into our only unlimited resource: personal creativity.
- It is so simple but so important. Will help me to turn on its head the approach that starts with problems to an approach that builds on success.
- Effective approach to partnership building.
- Accessing what's really important.
- Great way to engage with young people.
- A positive thought provoking approach-but that can be applied to practical community initiatives.
- Pushes my power into starting things rather than worrying about why things are so slow
- Doing a new approach to re engage with disengaged communities leading up to community planning partnerships.
- Looking at things from a different angle.
- It frees the imagination
- Raises the spirit and helps individuals to view the world and their relationships positively.
- The power of language and the care required to construct good questions.
- It is a process that can lead to helping to understand how to communicate with people.
- We hear a lot about social capital – this has helped me to clarify for me what it is, how it can be built and why its worth building.
- Refreshing to be focusing on what is possible.
- It focuses on positives.
- Alternative and positive view of process that can underpin community regeneration.
- Use of language - positive thinking
- Challenging and thought provoking
- It's positive and empowering. No threatening...or positively threatening perhaps?
- Positivity of philosophy
- Getting things done
- It works!
- Grasping people's vision
- Importance of the positive approach
- Understand Imagine Create
- Challenges the deficit mindset. Encourages dialogue, Systems approach.

PLEASE SHARE THREE THINGS YOU FEEL ARE ESSENTIAL TO STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY REGENERATION IN SCOTLAND

- More teachers, SE officials hearing about appreciative inquiry, learning how to share power and let go of it, listening
- Good communication, clarity of roles, trust/partnership working
- Vision, bravery, sharing success
- Meaningful capacity building of individuals communication skills, collaboration between communities of interest and geography, listening

- That people feel it is genuinely possible, that there are facilitators who ask the right questions + use an empowering process, that everyone feels they are worthwhile
- Clear national policies from Scottish Executive, more shares expertise on successes, higher profile at national level...
- Real conversations about issues of importance, helping to connect people, creating different learning opportunities.
- Wider engagement with clients, dedicated funding for capital and revenue projects, realistic targets.
- 'Real' partnership working – with clear goals that are revisited regularly., involvement of all community members- to do this, ask them what they want, disseminating information-not sitting out
- Put the community's needs at the top of the hierarchy of purpose and construct organizations as support for that, make people accountable for process actions taken, not outcome indicators selected by funder.
- Common vision/issue, positive thinking/attitude, 2-way learning process between community and workers.
- Listening to community groups, listening to people in communities not in groups, listening to peers
- Building relationships between widely disparate types of people; genuine partnership working-statutory, voluntary, community; educating community workers in practical ways to achieve goals.
- True commitment to engagement by statutory agencies; trust that each other wants to improve quality of life; sharing information
- Discussions about process-sharing information about ways of working with people; leadership development for key people in communities; confronting the negativity and cynicism with optimism, confidence and belief in people.
- Making people believe they can make a difference; convincing everyone that they are needed; helping 'the authorities' e.g. planners to involve the community.
- More such events @ national level + local level; more innovation in how we communicate to each other, e.g. why not use theatre to disseminate; need better vocabulary for communicating-less jargon.
- More partnership working; put time/energy/resources in to developing partnerships that work (accentuate the positive); make the links between community and policies.
- Trust between stakeholders; more focus on the positive
- Positive outlook-shared goals-; coherent policy; sharing/benchmarking
- Avoidance of duplication so waste of resources
- Communication with people at all levels; partnership working; (grass root) from the bottom up, being there for people.
- Project where bureaucrats/decision makers spend time at the coalface; honoring + valuing the knowledge of communities; effective partnerships
- Genuinely listening to communities; trusting people to know their own issues; willingness to engage honestly with partners.
- Vision and commitment to carry it through; bring people together; break down apathy & small thinking
- Opportunity to involve communities properly; proper support for that
- Listening to the community; making everyone's input important; involve all equally
- Bottom up approach; commitment to empowering communities; utilising the community members' skills and knowledge.
- Empowering communities/decision making processes; every community is valued

- A willingness to remain <u>open</u> to potential outcomes & commitment to <u>process;</u> celebrate 'small' wins –don't think action has to be big; develop reflective practice <u>within organizations</u> (as well as communities)

WHAT WAS MOST USEFUL?

- Group work was a great way to learn and hear from others.
- How to ask effective/positive questions.
- The space to think
- Meeting folk in the task
- Hearing it then putting it into practice
- Bliss' and Margaret's own experiences
- Discussing perceptions/expectations/what is important with others
- Understand --Imagine---Create transition
- Learning and thinking about the key stages of appreciative inquiry.
- Peer examples
- All of it
- The handouts. The examples of where they had worked in other places-the BA story, he examples of good questions.
- Thinking about 'positive questions' (e.g. community safety v crime statistics)
- BBrowne very persuasive speaker. A great chance to get to know/hear other people's stories in a bit of depth.
- Networking/time to think/ talking in a positive way about some of the work I have been involved in
- Getting an introduction to AI
- Overview of the AI process
- Connecting with others
- All of it
- Networking; thinking outside the square
- Other organisations' experiences. Very affirming
- Learning a small part of the AI approach., with a view to utilising it as a tool.
- Reminder of people's creativity.
- Hearing about other projects
- Group task in creating open-ended constructive questions
- Personal insights from story (retold)

WHAT APPLICATIONS IN YOUR OWN WORK DO YOU THINK WOULD BENEFIT FROM AN AI APPROACH?

- Most of them
- Community consultations
- Within our organisation to review and develop with others to be more positive
- The way I think about myself and my value
- My work with activists in my area
- Energising reluctant clients
- Already using it extensively
- Many aspects especially where working with young people. Approaching any lessons learned activities.
- My teaching planning

- Use of youths + asking questions of community to change perceptions/apply in community conference as fresh approach
- Initial client exploration
- In my own community; with community groups
- All of my work involves me in trying to bring out the best in people and see themselves more powerfully-so everything I ask people will have this technique at the back of my head.
- Making community council meetings more positive
- Need to think a bit more about how I organise meetings to be more rewarding for participants.
- Developing the aspects of a community learning and development strategy for Dumfries and Galloway.
- The development of local neighbourhood planning in Aberdeen. Rebuilding broken relationships.
- Team building
- Need more time to reflect
- Setting a topic
- Working with 'excluded' (yet to be included); Individuals involved with community groups, facilitation
- Too many to mention. I'm um-med out!
- <u>All of it(4)</u>
- Community planning; drawing communities together

WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT/INFORMATION/TRAINING WOULD YOU NEED TO APPLY AI TO YOUR COMMUNITY REGENERATION WORK?

- Details of how to go about organising events such as today please.?
- Practice plus third party evaluation (positive/supportive) plus resources (money etc)
- A simulation exercise? A network of people from today who want to apply it.
- Intensive long term (6 months); initiate an action learning set.
- Have regular upbeat session like today; an opportunity to explain my approach; would like to hear more stories; will look up web site + read more about it.
- Don't know yet.
- A follow up session of sharing experiences
- The email contacts you have given me. A chance to be at the event.
- Maybe a workshop for the Leith community Councils focused on involving young people.
- Partnership working to be working, training
- A workshop for middle & upper managers (not too 'touchy feely' though!)
- Get the bosses in (I work for a local authority)
- Continued contact
- More information on rural aspects
- More information of case studies, methods
- More opportunities to introduce it to staff in organization (as a trainer) & make wide links with action research.

WHAT WAS THE HIGHLIGHT OF TODAY?

- Bliss Browne is inspirational
- Appreciative inquiry questions
- The concept of 'enchanting possibilities'

- Finally making it to meet the folk of Ferguslie
- Extremely provocative
- Given me a method to work with
- Straightforward explanations that have worked in the past.
- 1 to 1 conversation
- Sharing images of regeneration
- Looking at 'asking questions well' – relating to outcomes and emphasizing positivity
- Discovering again that Bliss is talking about succeeding, not just trying.
- Listening to stories of other communities' experience of appreciative inquiry.
- Drawing the group artwork.
- Bliss' session at beginning re: viewing the positive rather than concentrating on the negative
- That the language you use is a moral choice… I enjoyed Bliss' constructively reshaping the questions.
- The examples given of things that have worked.
- Great that whole day was set up for group work- a chance to get to know /hear people's stories in a bit of depth.
- Feeling ok about feeling positive about community/about Scotland/about young people.
- Reflecting on my current practice or work and identifying how AI could open new doors/opportunities.
- Break out sessions
- Say what you do want not what you don't
- Bliss had such a simple way of communication; felt very spiritual in the hall today.
- Affirmation of my knowledge & skill
- To learn a new approach and feel strangely cheered up!
- Lunch was good! Meeting lots of interesting committed people
- The creative bit after lunch
- Meeting inspiring people
- Networking-meeting other like-minded people.
- The interviewing task
- Sharing stories