

## Applying Appreciative Inquiry to Evaluation Practice

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## Objectives

- *By end of this workshop, participants will:*
  - Understand the basic principles of AI.
  - Have experienced conducting an appreciative interview.
  - Understand how to reframe common issues and questions using affirmative language.
  - Understand the ways in which AI can be applied to an evaluation context.

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## Requirements for Today's Evaluators

- Involve stakeholders
- Design evaluations to enhance use
- Be more transparent and responsive
- Be culturally competent
- Focus on performance improvement
- Build evaluation capacity

*Oh, and do it quickly and cheaply...*

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## Evaluation and the Problem Solving Approach

- Identify the issue or problem
- Determine root causes
- Brainstorm solutions and analyze
- Develop action plans

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## Problem Solving Approach Assumptions

- There is some ideal way for things to be.
- If a situation is not as we would like it to be, it is a "problem" to be solved.
- The way to solve a problem is to break it into parts and analyze it.
- If we find a broken part and fix it, the whole will be fixed.

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## Unintended Consequences of Problem-Based Inquiry

- Fragmented responses =
- Focus on yesterday's causes =
- Few positive images of future; single loop learn =
- Reinforces and produces negative vocabulary =
- Reinforces culture of blaming =
- Lack of holistic view
- Slower change, less momentum
- Lack of creativity, innovation
- Lethargy, apathy - low energy, hopelessness
- Lack of trust, less risk-taking, fewer relationships

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## The Half-Full Assumption

- 78% of Americans who say they see the glass as half-full, or are optimistic.
- 17% who say the glass is half-empty, or are pessimistic.



Survey conducted by Opinion Research Center, Summer, 2003

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## Reframing Our Mental Models (from deficits to affirmative models of thinking and acting)

“The only real voyage of discovery exists, not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

*Marcel Proust (French novelist)*

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## Appreciative Inquiry Phase 1: *Inquire First Class Client Relationships*

- Think of a time when you were working on an evaluation, and the relationship with your client was exciting, energizing, and successful. You are fairly certain that this relationship increased the overall effectiveness of the evaluation process and outcomes. This experience was so rewarding that you might even say that it was a highpoint of all the work you have done with clients.
- Where did this happen? Who was there? What was the situation? What did you do that made this relationship so successful? What did the client do to make you feel this way?

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## Instructions for Appreciative Interviews

- Take turns interviewing each other (7 minutes each).
- As the interviewer, listen carefully – don't tell your story; listen for a memorable quote. You may ask probing questions.

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## Ap-pre'ci-ate, v.

- Valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems
- Synonyms: valuing, prizing, esteeming, honoring

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## In-quire', v.

- The act of exploration and discovery
- To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities
- Synonyms: discovery, search, study, systematic exploration

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## Appreciative Inquiry...

Seeks what is 'right' in an organization. It is a habit of mind, heart, and imagination that searches for the success, the life-giving force, the incidence of joy. It moves toward what the organization is doing right and provides a frame for creating an imagined future that builds on and expands the joyful and life-giving realities as the metaphor and organizing principle of the organization.

Watkins & Cooperrider (2000)

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## The Appreciative Philosophy

- What we focus on becomes our reality; We must be the change we want to see.
- In every society, organization, or group, something works.
- Reality is created in the moment - multiple realities.
- The act of asking questions is an intervention.
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past.
- It is important to value differences.
- The language we use creates our reality.
- People are motivated to act when they have a choice in what they will do.

Hammond, 1996; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2002

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## Implementing Appreciative Inquiry

Phase 1: <i>Inquire</i> <i>Appreciating the best of "what is"</i>	Phase 2: <i>Imagine</i> <i>What might be?</i>
Phase 3: <i>Innovate</i> <i>What should be the ideal?</i>	Phase 4: <i>Implement</i> <i>Navigate the change</i>

4-I Model is from Encompass, LLC, Potomac, MD

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## Implementing Appreciative Inquiry

### Phase 1: Inquire – Identifying the "best of what is"

- Paired interviews
- Core questions:
  - Best or peak experience
  - Values
  - Wishes
- Share stories in groups of 6-8
- Identify themes

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## Implementing AI

### Phase 2: *Imagine* – Identifying images of a desirable future

- Small groups envision a possible future state
- What will the program/organization look like 3, 5, 10 years from now?
- Visions shared in words and/or visual images
- Groups share their visions and images
- Discussion of themes

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### Appreciative Inquiry – Phase 2: *Imagine* *Developing a vision for the future based on past success*

Imagine that is now 2008 and you are preparing for an awards ceremony to celebrate the successes you have had in developing client relationships. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* wants to write an article on how you have been able to develop such effective evaluator-client relationships.

What do you tell the reporter about what is happening that makes your evaluation work so successful? What changes or events have made this success possible? What are your clients saying?

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## Implementing AI

Phase 3: *Innovate* – Translating the vision into actionable statements

- Develop provocative propositions for themes from stories and visions
- Stretch the imagination, go beyond the obvious
- Represent the organization's social architecture (culture, leadership, policies, business processes, communication systems, strategy, relationships, structure)
- Are stated in the affirmative and present tense

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## Implementing AI

Phase 4: *Implement* – Making the provocative propositions become reality

- Participants select those propositions they wish to work on
- Monitor, evaluate, and celebrate progress
- Keep the conversation going

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## Applications of AI to Evaluation: *To Focus an Evaluation*

■ Using the *Inquire*, *Imagine*, and *Innovate* phases:

- Develop a program logic model
- Clarify the evaluation's purpose
- Identify the evaluation's stakeholders
- Determine the evaluation's key questions
- Develop measures/indicators
- Develop an evaluation plan

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## Applications of AI to Evaluation: *To Develop Interview Guides & Surveys*

■ Using the *Inquire* and *Imagine* phases:

- Redesign an existing instrument
- Add one or more AI questions to an existing instrument
- Develop a fully appreciative instrument

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## Applications of AI to Evaluation: *To Develop an Evaluation System*

■ Using the *Inquire*, *Imagine*, *Innovate* and *Implement* phases:

- Add to existing evaluation system
- Develop new evaluation system

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## AI for Focusing an Evaluation NM Coalition for Sexual Assault Programs

- Take a moment to think about your work with the Coalition over the last several months. Remember a particular moment or time, when you knew that what you were doing on behalf of the Coalition was having a significant impact. You were excited by this realization and were proud of what you were doing. You had the intense feeling that you (Coalition) were making a difference in the lives of people with whom you interacted.
- Describe this peak experience. Where were you? What were you doing? Who else was there? What was the context? Why did you feel or think this way?

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## NM Coalition for Sexual Assault Programs

- If the Coalition wanted to ensure that you had more of these positive, energizing experiences, what resources would be particularly important for making this happen?
- Without being humble, what do you most value about yourself with regard to the work you do with the Coalition?

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## Designing a Survey Using Appreciative Questions Maui High Performance Computing Center (MHPCC) Organizational Survey

Starting back at the time you began working at the MHPCC....

- What first attracted you to the MHPCC?
- What were your initial impressions when you joined?
- How have your impressions changes since then?
- What keeps you here?

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## Maui High Performance Computing Center (MHPCC) Appreciative Inquiry Organizational Survey

*Peak Experiences:* In your work here, you have probably experienced ups and downs, some high points and low points. Think about a time that stands out to you as a high point- a time when you felt most involved, most effective, most engaged. It might have been recently or some time ago.

- What was going on?
- Who were the significant people involved?
- What were the most important factors in the MHPCC that helped to make it a high-point experience? (e.g., leadership qualities, rewards, structure, relationships, skills, etc.)

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## Maui High Performance Computing Center (MHPCC) Appreciative Inquiry Organizational Survey

*Values*

- What aspect of your work do you value most? (i.e., most interesting, most meaningful, most satisfying)
- Describe one outstanding or successful achievement or contribution of which you are particularly proud.
- What made it outstanding?
- What unique skills or qualities did you draw on to achieve this result?
- What organizational factors helped you to create or support your achievement?

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## Maui High Performance Computing Center (MHPCC) Appreciative Inquiry Organizational Survey

*Wishes*

- What are three things we do best that you would like to see the MHPCC keep or continue doing – even as things change in the future?
- What three wishes would you make to heighten the vitality and health of the MHPCC?

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## Using AI to Develop an Evaluation System CEDT Evaluation System

- Think of a time when you knew that a CEDT evaluation process *was working well*. You were confident and excited that important and useful data were being collected and you felt energized about the evaluation process.
- What was happening? Who did it involve? What made this evaluation process (or outcome) so successful? Why was it successful? What was your role?
- What value *did you add* to this evaluation process?

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## CEDT Evaluation System - *Imagine*

- Imagine that you have been asleep for 5 years, and when you awake, you look around and see that the CEDT Department has developed a comprehensive, effective, and efficient evaluation system.
- This system provides timely and useful information for decision-making and action relative to the programs and services the Department provides in the areas of education, development and training. The evaluation system has been so successful that the United States Secretary of Energy has announced that the CEDT Department will be receiving an award for ***outstanding evaluation practice***. As a result, the *Albuquerque Journal* is writing a story about your evaluation system.
- You agree to be interviewed by one of the newspaper's reporters. In your interview you describe what this evaluation system does, how it works, the kinds of information it collects, who uses the information, and how the information is used. Discuss what you would tell the reporter.

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## CEDT Evaluation System - *Innovate* *Sample Provocative Propositions*

- Evaluation findings are commonly used for decisions.
- We use evaluation tools that collect reliable and valid data.
- The system is on the network and is accessed easily.
- Reports are generated using a variety of parameters.
- "Evaluation" is socialized as a common language.
- Results are reported monthly through multiple channels.
- Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected.
- CEDT management has created a business case to secure funding for ongoing evaluation.

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## Reframing Deficits into Assets

### Deficits

- Incompetent Leaders
- Lack of collaboration
- Lack of trust
- Unused human potential
- Lack of motivation
- Corporate arrogance

### Assets/Strengths Based

- Inspirational leadership
- Exceptional partnership
- Integrity in action
- Strategic opportunities
- Fun at work
- Visions of a better world

From: Whitney, Cooperider, Trosten-Bloom, and Kaplin (2002)

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## Reframing Survey Questions into Appreciative Interview Questions

- Your team also decides to take a previously used customer satisfaction survey and reframe it into an appreciative *interview guide* that will be used to interview past evaluation clients.
- With 2-4 others, use the concepts represented in these survey questions and develop two or three appreciative interview questions (see handout).

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### *Activity*

## Reframing Evaluation to be Appreciative

- Your organization has been providing internal evaluation services for about five years. Recently, there have been rumors that some clients are not completely satisfied with your unit's evaluation services – particularly with regard to relationship building. You decide to evaluate your client-service effectiveness with a small team of your colleagues. You consider naming this study:

### ***A Study of Client Dissatisfaction***

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## Appreciative Inquiry Can Be Successfully Applied to Evaluation When...

- The organization is interested in using participatory and collaborative evaluation approaches.
- There is a desire to build evaluation capacity.
- The evaluation includes a wide range of stakeholders.
- There is limited time and resources for conducting the evaluation.
- The organization values innovation and creativity.
- The organization wants to use evaluation findings to guide its change efforts.

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### *After reflecting on this title...*

- You decide that you would rather take an Appreciative Inquiry approach to the evaluation, and thus rename the study:

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### *In closing...*

Every step you take  
should move you  
in the direction  
of your vision.

Paul S. C. (1992). *Interactions*. San Francisco: Harper.

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**Appreciative Interview Guide**  
**Topic of Inquiry: First-Class Client Relationships**

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Most evaluators would agree that for any project to be successful, having a strong, productive, and trusting relationship with our clients is critical. Being successful in evaluation is more than being technically competent – it is more than designing instruments and analyzing data. Rather, it is often about how we communicate and relate to those with whom we work. That is, our evaluations are more exciting, more energizing, more meaningful, and ultimately, more useful, when we have established effective working relationships with our clients.

*Directions: Interview each other for 7 minutes (each) using the following questions.*

**Best/Peak Experience:**

- Think of a time when you were working on an evaluation, and the relationship with your client was exciting, energizing, and successful. You are fairly certain that this relationship increased the overall effectiveness of the evaluation process and outcomes. This experience was so rewarding that you might even say that it was a highpoint of all the work you have done with clients.
- Where did this happen? Who was there? What was the situation? What did you do that made this relationship so successful? What did the client do to make you feel this way?

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**Memorable quote from your partner's story:**

<b>Reframing Survey Questions into Appreciative Interview Questions</b>
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Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the work done by the *Evaluation Services Department* in the past 12 months.

	Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Process of focusing the evaluation	1	2	3
Building our capacity to do evaluation			
Cost effectiveness of the evaluation	1	2	3
Quality of communications during the evaluation	1	2	3
Quality of the evaluation report	1	2	3
Competence of the evaluation team	1	2	3
Involving all stakeholders appropriately	1	2	3

Group Task:

Using the concepts in the above survey questions, *develop 2-3 appreciative interview questions.*

1.	
2.	
3.	

## References and Additional Resources

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### **Websites**

- Taos Institute ([www.taosinstitute.com](http://www.taosinstitute.com))
- Appreciative Inquiry Commons ([www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu](http://www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu))
- *The AI Practitioner* ([www.AiPractitioner.com](http://www.AiPractitioner.com))