

HCI PARTNERS WORKSHOP: SETTLING INTO THE NEW NORMAL

Appreciative Inquiry process - summary report

"It is possible to find a path of contribution and meaning if we turn our attention away from issues beyond our control and focus on the people around us who are yearning for good leadership and engage them in work that is within reach. It is possible to use our influence and power to create islands of sanity in the midst of a raging destructive sea."

Margaret Wheatley (*Who do we choose to be? Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity*)

1. Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a powerful change management or development approach that focuses on identifying what is working well and finding ways to do more of it.

An Appreciative Inquiry process begins by focusing on strengths and resources rather than problems or deficiencies. We then use those insights to develop a clear vision of the desired future and to think and plan practically and specifically about how we can design and deliver it.

There are four basic stages to an AI process, (in this workshop we touched on the first three stages only):

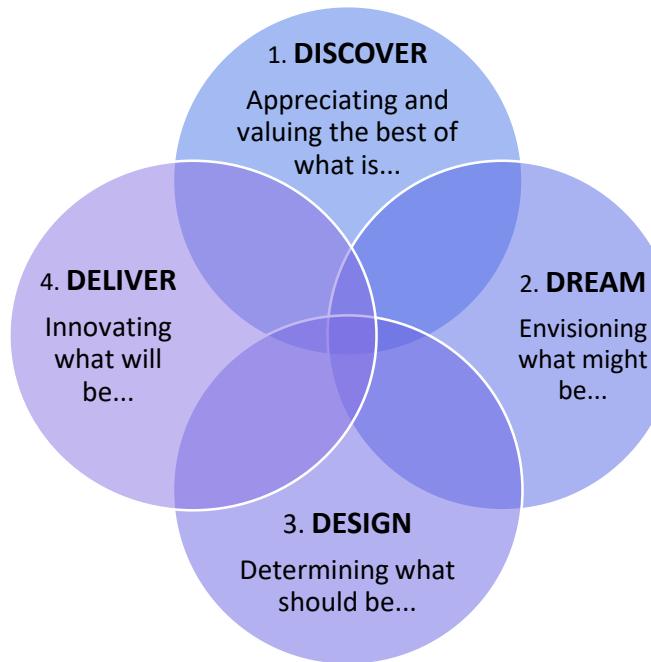


Figure 1 – Adapted from AI Commons

2. Stage 1 – Celebrating what is

Key themes from pre-session survey:

QUESTIONS:

What have you most appreciated about your organisation and your colleagues?

What strengths and resources have enabled you all to get through this time?

Adaptability & Innovation

Willingness to try

Agility

New technology

Creative thinking

Flexibility

Thinking "out of the box" and being creative

everyone said 'yes' and tried to make the new modes of operation work.

We have been agile and responsive!

Staff adapted very quickly during the pandemic and learned how to use technology to communicate.

Our resilience when things didn't go according to plan.

We have previous experiences of having to adapt fast to changing circumstances.



Solidarity & Collaboration

Looking after each other

Strong relationships

Teamwork

Partnerships

Sense of unity

We have given each other space to deal with the personal crisis.

You are not alone - it is TEAM WORK!

I felt cared for and part of the collective. This really fuelled my inspiration to give my best.

The team work and support to help each other through a phase which was new and intimidating to all of us.

So many people willing to share and talk and listen.

Concern for the welfare and well-being of all our staff.



Commitment & Purpose

Faith in vision & mission

Positive attitude

Resilience

Courage

Shared values

Willingness to take on tasks outside their job descriptions and comfort zones.

The resilience that the team demonstrated throughout the period is immeasurable.

Just 'get up and do it' attitude

Our faith and hope has been the glue that bound us together.

Total commitment to the shared outcomes of the organisation

My colleagues were brave enough working under very difficult and risky situations



Material support

Maintaining employment

Donations of goods

Reserves

Additional funding

Donor flexibility

Our funders trust us and have stayed with us even during these hard times.

Reserves which we have been able to generate over the years.

Donors were approachable ... they immediately responded with support by donating funds and goods or allowing us to reallocate funds

Funders agreeing to payment of full salaries

Thankfully we have gone through very robust financial planning and management the year leading up to covid,



QUESTION:

What opportunities has this period offered you?

- DISCOVERING NEW SKILLS AND ABILITIES – seeing how much we could do under the most challenging circumstances, opportunities to step up and lead
- RETHINKING WAYS OF WORKING – finding new ways of doing things, pivoting and repurposing existing resources, streamlining, finding more cost-effective ways of working
- LEARNING TO USE NEW TECHNOLOGIES – expanding reach, realising the possibilities of remote and virtual working

- DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS – meeting new people, reinforcing partnerships and structures for collaboration
- RECONNECTING WITH THE PURPOSE OF OUR WORK – taking stock, focusing on what's important, slowing down, re-strategizing for now and into the future
- Strengthening our reputation – showing people they could count on us, building trust and goodwill, new kinds of recognition for our work

3. Stage 2 – Imagining what might be

QUESTION:

In your sector, what would be the most powerful way that you could emerge from this?

VISION STATEMENTS:

Day 1

ECD (GROUP 1) - We will be a sector that strives to appreciate all the existing resources we have in order to offer quality, holistic ECD programmes that inspire a love for learning among all we reach. We will use technology in simple ways as an enabler for engaging all stakeholders, without losing the human element that's essential to the nature of our work.

ECD (GROUP 2) - We will be united in our ECD Sector work; promoting and strengthening the collaboration we found to be so powerful over the last months. We will take centre stage in the sector, to ensure that every child has access to early childhood development

ECD & PRIMARY EDUCATION (GROUP 3) - Change the hierarchy of our education system to enable innovative and productive interventions to succeed. Strengthen ECD interventions for all the children who are left behind. Inclusive education is also even more important now more than ever. Ultimately, re-visioning education priorities to make sure the education system supports the learner to catch up, teachers to adjust to the new demands and the schools to put in place the necessary support structures

PRIMARY EDUCATION (GROUP 4) - We will be reinforcing education by appreciating the basics, strengthening community and parent involvement and utilizing new technology to get children and youth to drive for creativity, innovation and believe in themselves.

TERTIARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION (GROUP 5) - An education system that builds on the intellectual resources of parents and children, such as their languages. A high quality education that empowers young children to be agents of change in their own communities.

HEALTH, DISABILITY, OVC (ROOM 6) - We will be an adaptable, accountable sector. Found in kindness in the communities, supporting their agency. Through meaningful collaboration.

Teachers who have access to high quality materials, technology skills, data and reliable connectivity to provide learners with high quality education.

ARTS & CULTURE (GROUP 7) - As a sector we understand the value of being adaptable, resourceful, mindful, innovative and proactive in accessing high level networks to continue our work in shaping lives and achieving our greatest potential

Day 2

ARTS & CULTURE (GROUP 1) - We will continue to be resilient through all situations by providing the space to tell and express our human story with skill.

EDUCATION (GROUP 3) - If you keep your feet on the ground, we can reach for the stars. (FEET: Metaphor for having had to stop everything and redirect budgets to food - Maslow at the coalface! - STARS - cyber space and online on fire!)

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (GROUP 2) We will leverage collaborations, prioritise self-care for staff members, build personal and organisational resilience and continue with technological approaches

HEALTH, DISABILITY, ECD (GROUP 4) - We will be caring without ending in our collective quest to share resources to meet common goals

MIXED (GROUP 5) - To collaborate and work/build together to protect and empower the most vulnerable and to continue use technology more.

MIXED (GROUP 6) - Head on, hearts on, hands on. Through grassroots collaboration and togetherness, we could do more and impact more communities.

4. Stage 3 – Designing what will be

QUESTION:

What is one practical action that you will commit to taking forward from this meeting to move towards your vision statement?

ACTIONS:

Day 1

ECD (GROUP 1) - Create a small, safe community of sharing and positivity to encourage sharing and insights across different parts of the sector to strengthen all our programmes/offering to our stakeholders.

ECD (GROUP 2) - Committing to strengthen the M&E through local collaborations with cognisance of funding/financial constraints, to promote adaptive programmes in the time of uncertainty

ECD & PRIMARY ED (GROUP 3) - Don't panic about the big picture and collaborate with real intentions to deliver practical solutions to deliver education without parents/learners incurring additional costs, offer beneficiary centred solutions for real learning to take place and ensuring teachers receive the necessary professional development

PRIMARY EDUCATION (GROUP 4) - Collaborate and connect to advocate for education! On the basis of heads, hands and hearts.

TERTIAL & SECONDARY EDUCATION (GROUP 5) - To explore use of digital technologies to strengthen teaching and learning. This will enable both the expansion of reach of teacher education and development programmes as well enriching their quality. One of the key outcomes will be increased capacity of teachers to pass on advanced technology skills to their learners and to mediate teaching and learning through technology.

HEALTH, DISABILITY, OVC (GROUP 6) - We will commit to meet with partner organisations. We will take a step back and normalise the spirit of generosity which we established this year. We know that being

together will make us more visible and will help us advocating for the care of the parent. By continuing to focus on the family, we improve the well-being of the child

ARTS & CULTURE (GROUP 7) - Build on our use of and understanding of modern technology (through HCI and other platforms?). Programmes moved home: Capitalise on opportunities to build relationships with parents /guardians (intentional)

Day 2:

ARTS & CULTURE (GROUP 1) - Changing and pivoting direction, reviewing our theory of change, including beneficiaries and more staff in our organisation in how we are structured and our strategy going forward. Continue to be resilient, paying attention to mental health and delivering to the best of our ability. Adopting the Appreciative Inquiry method as a way to engage with communities, beneficiaries and partners.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (GROUP 2) – At organisational level “review organisational policies towards building caring organisational cultures that promote a balanced approach to work and self-care”. At sectoral level “leverage collaborations for skills sharing and access to resources geared towards building learning organisations that embrace innovation and change”. Needed resources: human resources/capacity, funding, partnerships.

EDUCATION (GROUP 3) - To continue and not lose the value in staying connected - and with what works - online of course, but some groups like the elderly loves pen and paper! And we need to balance the "science" of M&E with the heart of anecdotal stories.

HEALTH, DISABILITY, ECD (GROUP 4) - We commit to connect with the members of our breakaway group, share info and give time to be a sounding board to one another in order to grow meaningful future conversations and possible future collaboration. Also suggested an HCI driven regional stakeholders networking opportunities

MIXED (GROUP 5) - Strengthening of partnership, collaboration, and sharing of resources. Integrating M & E process to collect data and review mission and vision to ensure relevancy of service rendering.

MIXED (GROUP 6) - Collaborating to simultaneously work more directly with communities and other organisations with similar outcomes to address society inequalities at a strategic level

We exist in a bundle of life.

We say, “A person is a person through other people.”

It is not “I think therefore I am” [but rather] I am human because I belong, I participate, I share.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu