



## Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator Training (AIFT & vAIFT) PRACTICUM GUIDELINES AND FORMAT

Now that you have completed the 26 hour Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator Training in a face to face (AIFT) or virtual (vAIFT) format, you are ready to begin to put into practice your learning by beginning to Design and Facilitate an Appreciative Inquiry. We recognize the individual and professional feelings of uncertainty and risk that you may feel as you initiate your introduction of Appreciative Inquiry at your worksite or some other location. *Suggestion: Start small with a leader/group who are open to joining you on this learning journey.*

1. If you have completed the AIFT face to face you will have these guidelines in your participant handbook and access to additional materials to support you.
2. If you have completed the vAIFT on-line you will have access to all the materials on the LearnDash site, including these practicum guidelines, for one year.

It is not required, but is recommended, you design and facilitate two inquiries. We have learned over the years that the practice of two inquiries (within one year) benefits your practice in multiple ways including:

- A rich learning flow so that you may adapt and improve from one inquiry to the next, and
- Inquiry become a regular part of your practice

The process to become certified by Company of Experts Inc. as an Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator is:

1. Participate in an Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator Training AIFT or vAIFT.
2. Within one year of participating in the AIFT or vAIFT complete the experiential/practical portion (design and facilitate an inquiry either face to face or virtually) needed for facilitator certification.
3. Complete and submit your Practicum (a narrative of experience and learning throughout the AI Facilitation process). We will provide you with an initial mentoring session of up to one hour (by phone or email) to plan, as well as preview your inquiry materials and provide feedback. If you require additional time, please let us know so that we may advise you.

If you are developing your practicum using another AI method (ie. SOAR, 4Ds) ensure you connect with Kathy Becker [kathy@centerforappreciativeinquiry.net](mailto:kathy@centerforappreciativeinquiry.net) to ensure your work will qualify for the practicum.

For your Practicum, you will design and facilitate at least one Appreciative Inquiry session for an organization, group, or community using all five generic processes see the “**Checklist**”. Please follow the **Practicum Format** below when you begin to write your inquiry.

### “Checklist” for Facilitating a Small Systems Change

by Nancy E. Stetson, Ed.D., Expert on Call, Company of Experts, Inc. (2005; updated 2017)

Appreciative Inquiry is an appreciative approach to change, a mindset. It also is a process; it is *not* a linear process. Ai is highly generative, which means that each of the five generic processes can move in *many*

different directions. Therefore, there really is no such thing as a "checklist." Nonetheless, people learning how to facilitate the five generic processes may find the following "checklist" helpful.

Trust the process, the people and yourself! Hold positive energy that the people will be in the moment and their outcomes will be what they most want more of.

### **Before you begin**

Introduce yourself and your plan to the organization or group (you may want to call it Appreciative Inquiry or you may want to call it a collaborative, strengths-based approach to change).

Form a Core Team (if your Practice or Client Group is larger than 8 people or so); the Core Team is a representative cross-section of the Practice/Client Group and/or all stakeholders. If this is a group smaller than 8 we recommend that one of the stakeholders co-designs and plans the inquiry with you.

### **1. Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry (Definition)**

- Discuss and agree on what everyone agrees is an important--even strategic--problem, issue, or gap (or opportunity, success); reframe, if needed, into a positive topic. If desired, Core Team can survey Practice/Client Group
  - OR (if the group can't choose or agree on a topic)  
You may choose to use the first three questions of the Generic Interview Guide to help them choose the topic (paired interviews, share stories, brainstorm themes, then discuss and agree on topic).
- **Important:** Review your process and questions to ensure that you are in alignment with the what the Practice/Client group want more of and with the Principles of Appreciative Inquiry
- Topics are bold, generative (positive); genuinely desired, provoke action and create a spirit of inquiry
- Modify Generic Interview Guide to fit the positive topic. What we ask determines what we find, how we talk and what we imagine together. What we imagine sets the stage for what we achieve
- Test the Modified Interview Guide. Modify and adjust the Summary Sheet.
- Design and plan the flow of the inquiry (time, location, agenda, schedule, stakeholders, etc.). How will you collect the narrative data?

### **2. Inquire into exceptionally positive moments (Discovery, 1)**

- Facilitate Appreciative Interviews. This will be an important decision with many factors to consider in the definition phase as you design the inquiry. There are many ways to facilitate Appreciative Interviews (pairs, trios, forums, online, or some other method of interviewing). In each of the ways there are considerations of how you create connection and ensure participation.
- Have each participant complete Summary Sheets

### **3. Share the stories and identify life-giving forces (Discovery, 2)**

- Form groups of six or eight
- Share the stories (listen first)
- Brainstorm themes - flip chart so all can see (quantity, not quality)
- Discuss and agree on 3-5 life-giving forces (what people MOST want to create MORE of in their group or organization), no voting
- Post each group's life-giving forces. If doing a face to face you can post on a wall; have individuals do a scatter-gram for locating the energy (dots), or positive core, not for voting. If doing a virtual AI you can use a post-it note program or a share virtual white board for this section.

- Each group discusses and agrees on the life-giving force (with supporting themes) that they MOST want to create MORE of

#### **4. Create shared images of a preferred future (Dream)**

- Create a visual image (metaphor) illustrating the life-giving force - skits, collages, songs, drawings, etc.
- Create a word image (Provocative Proposition--PP, Possibility Statement, Vision) based on the metaphor

#### **5. Innovate and improvise ways to create that future (1. Design; and 2. Destiny/Delivery)**

- Answer the question: how are you going to make this happen?

#### **Design:**

- Small groups develop strategic intentions or initiatives or pilot projects
- Individuals develop Commitments, Offers, Requests;
- Can use red, yellow, green cards (in large groups) to validate PP and/or initiatives in face to face, if relevant or if doing a virtual AI you can use an emoji function.
- Focus first on high-impact/low-effort (leveraged) initiatives (early wins)

#### **Destiny/Delivery:**

- Volunteer groups meet/convene
- Allow people to volunteer their energies for the intentions or initiatives that engage their passion
- Encourage people to improvise
- Everyone: notice and celebrate every success that moves toward the PPs
- Build an appreciative eye into existing processes and structures
- Train more people to facilitate AI
- Build AI into the normal way of doing business

**Recommendation:** Planning and timing is crucial for the inquiry. You may spend about 40 hours for this inquiry. This will include contracting with the client (who, what, how, when); designing and delivering your inquiry; reflecting and writing your Narrative Summary and Practicum Report. We usually budget about 4 hours for planning for every hour with the client.

#### **PRACTICUM FORMAT**

Here's the format for your Practicum Report in two parts – be sure to include as much information as possible so that we (panel of seasoned AI Practitioners reading your report) experience the energy of the stakeholders, and know that you understand the principles of AI and, of course, what you learned and what you would like more of going forward.

#### **IMPORTANT: Please include on each page and document that you submit:**

- Your name, title, email address, phone number and agency that you work for
- The dates, location of the AIFT that you received your training
- The names of your trainer(s)
- Brief description of the organization, group, or community you worked with
- Number your pages
- Submit in a Word document.

## **Part I Narrative Summary (this portion will be posted on the Center for Appreciative Inquiry website)**

Appreciative Inquiry is narrative-rich and story-based. As we share stories we deepen our understanding of our beliefs, perceptions and differences helping us to build bridges towards our ideal futures.

Write a short (up to one page is perfect) story of your highlights. Tell us how the inquiry enriched or excited you. What excited the people (clients)? We want to embrace your inquiry and feel the energy come to life. As we read your narrative story, we want to experience the high points of the stakeholders, know that you understand the principles of AI, what you learned during your AI Facilitation experience, and what you would like more of in the future.

## **Part II Practicum Report (the details that provided the foundation for the Narrative Story to flourish):**

Develop a report along with supporting information and documentation to demonstrate knowledge (pictures, projects and outcomes) report of that experience. **This portion will be posted with the Narrative Summary unless you advise us that you do not have permission.**

Be sure to include as much information as possible so that we (those of us reading your report) experience the energy of the stakeholders, know that you understand the principles of AI, what you learned during your AI Facilitation experience, and what you would like more of in the future.

Note: What we typically look for is that you understand the D's but more importantly that you understand the AI principles – how and why AI works. AI is about the stories – the Constructionist Principle. Our realities are socially constructed through language and conversations. That energy you get when the participants and the facilitator are deeply into the Positive (Affirmative/Generative) Topic, engaging in dialogue through discovery, dream and design. And your reflection on the learning; what did you learn, what would you do differently and what do you plan next?

- Include your name, title, email address, phone number and agency that you work for. (Please include your name on each page and document that you submit)
- Include the AIFT Dates and location that you received your training.
- Brief description of the organization, group, or community you worked with.
- Was a Core Group established? (Recommended if your Practice or Client Group is larger than 8 people or so) If so, list the names and/or category of stakeholders you included in the Core Group, the cross-section of people that helped you identify the topic and modify the Interview Guide.
- What was the positive topic that was identified for the inquiry? What method did you use to help identify the topic?
- Attach or include the modified Interview Guide they used, i.e., the Generic Interview Guide slightly modified for the positive topic of the inquiry.

- What method of interviews did people use to inquire into exceptionally positive moments, face to face paired interviews, virtual interviews, or some other way?
- Attach or include a list of the themes, high-points or Life-Giving Forces (LGFs). What they MOST wanted to create MORE of - that the group identified in the stories they shared. Please refer to your participant handbook or LearnDash for definitions.
- Attach or include the Provocative Proposition(s) the group or organization created from the themes or LGFs.
- Attach or include the Strategic Intentions or action plans the group or organization developed to realize the Provocative Proposition(s) they created.
- Impact or Results: What organizational, group or community attitude, process or structure changes have people made as they move toward realizing the Provocative Proposition(s)? What progress have people made toward their Action Plans, Strategic Intentions, Initiatives or Pilot Projects? What stories of success can you share?
- What will you do to ensure that people continue to move toward realizing the Provocative Proposition(s)? How will you help them gather stories of success? How will you help them celebrate? How will you, as the AI Facilitator, support their ongoing success?
- Reflecting on your inquiry and the full experience, please share with us which of the Appreciative Inquiry Principles really stands out for you and why.
- What did you wish for in the inquiry? What did you learn from the inquiry about yourself and your facilitation? What was your "personal best" experience related to facilitating the Inquiry?
- If you do not have permission from your client or clients to share their names or specific organization details, please say do not post **Practicum Report** here.
- Include any materials such as power points, agendas, etc. It helps for us to "experience" your facilitation. Also, if you take pictures and we may use those, please include them.

Please submit your Practicum Report to Kathy Becker at [Certification@CenterForAppreciativeInquiry.net](mailto:Certification@CenterForAppreciativeInquiry.net). In addition to your trainer(s), Kathy Becker is also available to answer any questions. Please include in the subject line of your email: AIFT Certification. Thank you.

When you submit your report, please put the following in the subject line: **AIFT Certification – (insert your last name here)** and plan to complete the certification process within one year following completion of the four-day AIFT©. **IMPORTANT: Please include on each page and document that you submit:**

- Your name, title, email address, phone number and agency that you work for
- The dates, location of the AIFT that you received your training
- The names of your trainer(s)

- Brief description of the organization, group, or community you worked with.
- Number your pages.
- Submit in a Word document.

Note: *Your trainer is available as an advisor to you during your practicum (typically one or two phone calls) plus reviewing your materials – at no extra cost. If you would like mentoring, coaching or someone to co-facilitate the inquiry, please advise us.*

*At least one of your trainers will also be part of the panel that reviews your practicum once it has been submitted. The Review Panel may contact you to engage in a conversation about your work once you have submitted your practicum. Typically, they will respond with questions, to deepen their and your shared understanding of and learning about AI. The practicum review is therefore a dialogical and interactive process.*