# Guiding Concepts of Appreciative Inquiry

**Appreciative** –   AI assumes there is 'good' in every system and values the goodness, recognizing the best in our people and our organizations.  The focus is on the 'life-giving forces' present when the system is performing optimally, and seeks to optimize and honor that talent.

**Inquiry** – AI is based on the simple premise that organizations grow in the direction of what we repeatedly ask questions about and focus our attention on.  It invites systematic exploration and discovery, opening us to seeing new potentials and possibilities.

**Complexity Theory / Systems View** – Our world is a constant flux of dynamic processes. Questions are significant and can set in motion powerful change.  AI helps us move from Understanding language as the Descriptor of Reality to Understanding language as the Creator of Reality.

**Positive Imaging** -- Appreciative Inquiry turns our thoughts toward that which is valued, that which gives us joy and feelings of worthiness.  These stories of positive and generative times lead to the creation of images that become the sunlight toward which people and our organizations turn.

**Social Constructionism / The Power of Stories** – We construct our realities through interactions with one another.  Stories are powerful constructs.  They stick like glue!  They make information easier to remember, build identities and foster relationships.  They are a medium for conveying values and vision, and move the internal dialogue of the system.

**Change and Transition** – AI is consistent with effective change & transition efforts – emphasizing collaboration and participation of all voices in the system, and approaching change as a personal journey (transition) versus just an event.  AI is not an intervention in and of itself; rather, it brings a blends with and builds on existing OD interventions/methodologies.

**Best of Today** – People become more confident when change includes carrying forward parts of the past.  We must capture the best of what and who we are when we're performing optimally, and build on top of that 'foundation of excellence.'

**Innovation for Tomorrow** – The building process includes inquiring into people's wishes in order to bring new innovation to our 'foundation of excellence.'  When the collective imagination is mobilized, people find ways to move the organization forward toward a shared image inspiring imagination and creativity.

**Problem Solving** – AI brings a new 'lens' to traditional problem solving approaches.  People who live inside the system identify what they wish could be different, and by starting from an appreciative perspective, create the energy to address the things that need to change.  AI does not deny problems.  It redefines them.

**Hope** – AI speaks to human hope, an underrated power in our lives.