Appreciative Inquiry is a process designed by organizational development specialists as a tool to help create and support sustainable change. Rather than studying and addressing existing problems and focusing on solutions – an inherently negative experience, Appreciative Inquiry begins by helping groups in shared work settings systematically explore past successes to create models for future success.

Central to the Appreciative Inquiry method is a belief that pride in ones’ organization is a largely untapped resource. As individuals, then groups, review success they can then raise the bar for the future to mirror past, best standards of achievement. In such shared planning, people will more easily commit to an energetic process of working toward highest standards.

Steps in the Appreciative Inquiry Process:

1. Facilitator assists group in choosing a topic/work process that is important to the organization. (Example: Successful meetings)
2. The group creates a specific focus within the topic. (Agenda planning)
3. People discuss successes in this area of focus in the past. Facilitator helps group move from anticipated “politically correct” examples to those that are based in a genuine, heartfelt pride.
4. Group discusses the “conditions” of the success. What was it, how did it happen, how could we do more of this in the future?
5. Group writes “provocative propositions” related to the success. It is important for the entire group to participate and for the facilitator to move the group from individual will to group will in this step. The provocative propositions are affirmative statements of future expectations of success based in past success that challenge the status quo. These statements should:
   - Challenge or interrupt the current day to day reality
   - Be grounded in past examples
   - Be what everyone really wants
   - Be bold, and stated in the present tense as if the future success were occurring right now

(Adapted from the Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry by Sue Annis Hammond)