

Leadership through Partnership: A Collaborative, Strengths-Based Approach to Strategic Planning

Loretta H. Randolph
O. D. Systems

Organization sustainability depends on the creation of innovative partnerships that engage organization members at all levels in setting strategy and achieving goals. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an approach to exploring what gives life to human systems when they function at their best. The use of an AI approach to strategic planning, invites stakeholders to co-create their preferred future by discovering the best of what is, envisioning a desired future, and co-constructing that future.

Keywords: Appreciative Inquiry, Strategic Planning, Collaboration

Traditional models hold that planning should be in the hands of organizational leaders and decision makers. Typically planning activities draw upon market share, financial and operations data, and a broad environmental assessment which includes predictions about the environment, competitors, and changes in regulations, among others. The plan usually outlines a detailed, multi-year plan and action items to accomplish. Others maintain that strategic planning provides a framework for action that is embedded in the mind set of the organization and its employees and is a process by which guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future (Goodman, Nolan, & Pfeiffer, 1993).

Often times, the plan in and of itself is the main reason for the planning activity. Because planning is in the hands of a select few at the top of the organization, organization members often are unaware that a plan has been generated and continue to do what they have always done with little or no attention given to new performance indicators. Outmoded ways of thinking may be perpetuated and the very changes leadership hopes to enact may be undermined.

Given the radical changes in today's competitive environment, the old model of strategic planning is not up to the task of producing the types of strategy and strategic plans that will propel business forward into the rapidly evolving future. Rather than another strategic planning model, managers need a strategic thinking framework to quickly and smoothly guide an organization through this process while engaging the whole system (Stavros, Cooperrider, & Malloy, 2003). By approaching planning from such a perspective, the strategic planning process can provide an opportunity for organizations to conduct in-depth conversations with stakeholders that creates an actionable shared vision.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths and values based process grounded in the assumption that inquiry about strengths, hopes, and dreams is, in itself, transformational. AI is a philosophy of organizing based in two key premises: social constructionism (i.e., we create our reality through our language and in dialogue with others) and positive image leads to positive action (i.e., to the extent that we create a clear vision of what we desire, we act to make that vision a reality). Cooperrider and Whitney (1999), offering a practice-oriented definition, define AI as the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. AI involves systematic discovery of that which gives a system 'life' when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential. AI is an affirmative worldview that shapes the factors explored in organizational inquiry. It involves a conscious value choice to seek the most affirmative, valuing, and generative information available. Whether the organizing unit is a small team or hundreds of people, AI mobilizes inquiry through crafting an 'unconditional positive question.' The intention is to discover and build upon the strength and vitality of human systems as experienced and reported by their members.

AI is a novel approach to organizational change work. The affirmative value choice is the factor distinguishing AI from other approaches and methodologies. It influences every aspect of AI, from the identification of topics to design of questions to explore, data analyses, and feedback. As a strategy of change, AI inspires collaborative action that engages and serves the whole system. (Fitzgerald, Murrell, & Newman, 2001)

Members of non-profit boards and governing bodies serve organizations that face radical changes. In this capacity, they are called upon to create strategic plans that propel their organizations forward in dramatic new ways.

Copyright © 2006 Loretta H. Randolph

As part of the process, they seek to engage and include a broad spectrum of stakeholders, and to create dynamic energy that will move their organization toward successful realization of their vision and mission. AI offers a powerful perspective shift and a pragmatic model for successfully engaging an entire system and diverse stakeholders in the strategic planning process and harnessing their collective energy for change. It provides for inclusion of the data from lived experiences in working in and with the organization. This case study focuses on the use of AI as an alternative way of approaching strategic planning in a national, non-profit organization.

Background and Significance

The organization is a foundation serving a network of 370 volunteer centers in 49 states in the United States (U.S.) and providing services to more than 50% of the U.S. population. The centers act collectively as a system despite variations in size, structure, and programs. The centers are conveners for the community, catalysts for social action, and key local resources for volunteer involvement. They bring people and community needs together through a range of programs and services based upon community needs, demographic area, population size, and other factors. The center's role in the community is centered on the ability to connect people with the opportunity to serve, build the capacity for effective local volunteering, promote volunteering, and participate in strategic initiatives that mobilize volunteers. The foundation works in partnership with the centers to help mobilize people and resources to find creative solutions to community problems. On an annual basis, the network formed by the foundation and the centers connects more than two million volunteers to 100,000 organizations that serve 145 million people in the U.S. In existence since the early 20th Century, the centers are each independent, with their own management and governance structures. The foundation has been in existence since the 1980s and provides educational, advocacy and research support to the centers from its Washington, DC headquarters. There is a volunteer center national council that serves as a liaison body between the centers and the foundation.

The foundation wanted to use AI to guide the development of a strategic plan for their network of volunteer centers. It convened a nine-member task force to work with the network's governing council, with the goal of the partnership to co-create a national strategic plan. The task force hired a group of external consultants, including the author, to guide the task force through the strategic planning process using the AI approach. The strategic planning process also followed the stages of volunteer management, including understanding, planning, recruiting, orienting and training, supervising, and evaluating (Styers, 2005). The results of these stages are highlighted in the Next Steps section of this paper. It was important for this project to succeed in the eyes of the organization as it was the first time they had used external consultants to facilitate a strategic planning process. Initially, the chair of the planning task force and the foundation met resistance to the approach from the task force. Some members felt that such a participative process took too much time and questioned why a small group of executives couldn't complete the plan. This hesitancy underscored the high profile nature of the project. Throughout the process, the researchers continually modeled AI values and behaviors as a way of demonstrating the approach.

This study is significant because it demonstrates ways in which AI can be used systemically in a nationwide network to conduct a strategic planning process, bringing stakeholders together and shifting the dominant dialog from negative to positive. This shift deepened commitment and strengthened partnerships at many levels. Four reasons for choosing AI for large scale applications are: when high levels of participation and cooperation are required, the change process needs to be accelerated, the work requires innovation among diverse groups in a high stakes environment, and/or multiple change initiatives need to be synthesized (Whitney & Cooperrider, 1998). All four of these reasons were present in this project, and application of the AI theory supported project success.

Methodology

The primary research question posited for this study was: *Can AI, a strengths-based strategic planning approach be taught to internal organizational partners and have them use it across a national system to develop a strategic plan that reflected the hopes and preferred future of all stakeholders?* A second question was: *Can three, distinct entities—the consultants, the foundation, and the volunteer center national network—successfully create a strong web of relationships for accomplishing the strategic planning process?* The goal of the project was to use an AI approach to a national planning effort that involved a complex set of partnering relationships, all interdependent on each other. The consultants, all organization development (OD) practitioners, were the researchers in this project. Because of the relative newness of the AI approach, a residual benefit of this project was to show that strategic planning using an AI approach could be effective in a complex, large-scale planning process. Also, limited funding encouraged creative and innovative ways to accomplish the task at hand using nominal resources.

The project was conducted over a 10-month period beginning in October, 2003. In a day-long session, the consultants taught the AI strategic planning process to a core team of 25 task force members. These task force members included foundation staff and volunteer center national council members. The intent of this training was to teach the new methodology, and also to promote self-sustainability by having a cross section of internal stakeholders take ownership of the process. A multi-media communication plan was developed to insure maximum stakeholder involvement in the planning process. This initial meeting was the first of only three face-to-face meetings that would take place during the planning process.

Between October, 2003 and February, 2004, task force members conducted more than 300 individual interviews throughout the U.S. Interview subjects included volunteer center paid staff, volunteers, foundation governance board members, corporate sponsors, and recipients of volunteer services. The task force members met in person in February, 2004 for the first round of data analysis. At that time they decided to conduct more interviews. Between February and April, 2004 100 more interviews were conducted.

The next step in the process occurred at the regional level. The task force and consultants conducted full-day visioning sessions at three, geographically separate locations across the country (i.e., Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, DC). Again, to promote sustainability, these sessions were designed in consultation with the consultant/researchers, facilitated by task force members, and supported by the foundation. At these sessions, data was presented and the 100 participants worked in small and large group to review the data and identify themes and planning implications from the volunteer center, state, and regional perspectives. The AI approach suggests that participants make meaning out of data through some creative, right-brained activity. In the case of the regional meetings, participants created images that reflected what they read and heard in the interview data, then created images for a future vision of the organization. Among the disparate participants, the images were remarkably similar. Energy grows when people are able to see that they are not alone and they can see a way to move forward in words and pictures. This was very true for foundation and the network. Their pictures presented images of people working in partnership and collaboration in support of the communities they serve. The very powerful images encouraged participants at the regional meetings and helped the task force focus on what was important for the future.

In April, 2004, a full-day meaning making session was facilitated by the consultant/researchers. Four strategic direction goal statements were developed based on the data from the individual interviews and the regional group work. These statements formed the foundation for the draft strategic plan. This session was conducted virtually, with the consultant/researchers and foundation staff members together at foundation headquarters in Washington, DC, and task force members situated at their offices across the country. Synchronous communication was conducted via telephone and on-line meeting software.

In June, 2004 at the foundation's 2004 National Conference the consultant/researchers facilitated a design summit of 100 participants. The objectives of this half-day session was to solicit feedback and garner approval of the draft strategic direction, begin to develop action steps, gain commitment to finalize the writing of the plan, and develop a plan for implementation. At the end of the session, 30 participants volunteered to continue the process of finalizing the strategic plan and developing the implementation plan. The final strategic plan and implementation plan was written by the volunteer participants and task force members between June and September, 2004. The completed plan was to be presented to the foundation and its governance board in September, 2004.

OD Methods

Action research is a way of generating new information about a system while at the same time trying to change the system (Lewin, 1946). Lewin introduced the concept and most OD work is based on the concept. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) first articulated the idea and coined the term "appreciative inquiry" as they re-envisioned the possibility of action research. Action research had not "achieved its potential for advancing social knowledge of consequence and [had] not, therefore, achieved its potential as a vehicle for human development and social-organizational transformation." Action research had become too focused on the client and the solving of the client's problem, to the exclusion of the theory generating aspects so essential to the very definition of action research outlined by Lewin. Today, many practitioners still too often focus exclusively upon linear problem solving of immediate, symptomatic organizational issues, which clients most readily understand and expect. In this project, there was great resistance to using an AI approach when most of the task force had experience using more traditional strategic planning methods. Their desire was to allow the task force be the developers of the strategies and the plans and not elicit input from the network. One task force member noted, "We know what is going on. We can write the plan right now."

Planned Change Methods

Unlike traditional planned change methods that place the consultant in the role of neutral observer, OD practitioners that use AI serve as active participants and co-creators of meaning. Because of budget limitations, time

constraints, and the geographically dispersed stakeholders, one of the biggest challenges facing both the client and the researchers in this project was that most of the work would be done virtually with limited face-to-face interactions. Monthly conference call coaching sessions were held to assure the project direction and support task force members as they worked throughout the data collection and analysis. To reinforce the partnership at all times, the task force, foundation, and consulting team were involved in decision making around the content, timing, and process. Generally, decisions were made during face-to-face sessions and, when not face-to-face with the task force, during the coaching calls.

Problem Solving vs. Strengths-Based Methods

Conventional theories of planned change focus on overcoming resistance to the change (i.e., restraining factors) in order for the change to occur (French & Bell, 1973; Lewin, 1951). This view has created a deficit model with supporting rhetoric positing that organizational analysis and development is a problem to be solved. When applied to strategic planning, the process usually involves identifying the current and desired states, gap analysis, determining the barriers to attaining the desired state, developing solutions that address the barriers, and formulating an action plan for overcoming the barriers to achieving the desired state. Conversely, a strengths-based change approach such as AI invites practitioners and organizations to consider that an appreciative stance to organizational change leads to a more innovative and longer-lasting transformation (Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney, & Yaeger, 2000; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

AI Strategic Planning Method

AI is based on the assumption that dialogue and questions about strengths, hopes, values, and dreams are themselves transformational. AI suggests that human organizing and change, at its best, is a relational process of inquiry grounded in affirmation and appreciation (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Framing principles of AI include appreciation of people and the organizational system, and articulation of organizational best practices as a means of creating a better vision for the future. The aim is to generate new knowledge and enable members of an organization to collectively envision a desired future and manifest that desired future by building on the best of the past. Cooperider, Whitney, and Stavros (1999) highlight basic assumptions of AI, including:

- In every society, organization, or group, something is working.
- Collective creation of a desired future is most powerful when it is based on the best of what already exists.
- Looking for what works well and doing more of it is more motivating and effective than looking for what does not work and doing less of it.
- Systems are capable of becoming more than they are, and they can learn how to guide their own evolution.
- Systems move toward what they choose to study or focus on.
- The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences or changes the group in some way.
- The language we use to describe reality helps to create that reality.
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey into the future (i.e., the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (i.e., the known); continuity is as important as change.

These assumptions are synthesized in the AI 5-D Model (Figure 1) used for this project. During the *definition* phase planners identify specific area of inquiry. They then move into the *discovery* phase and explore the best of

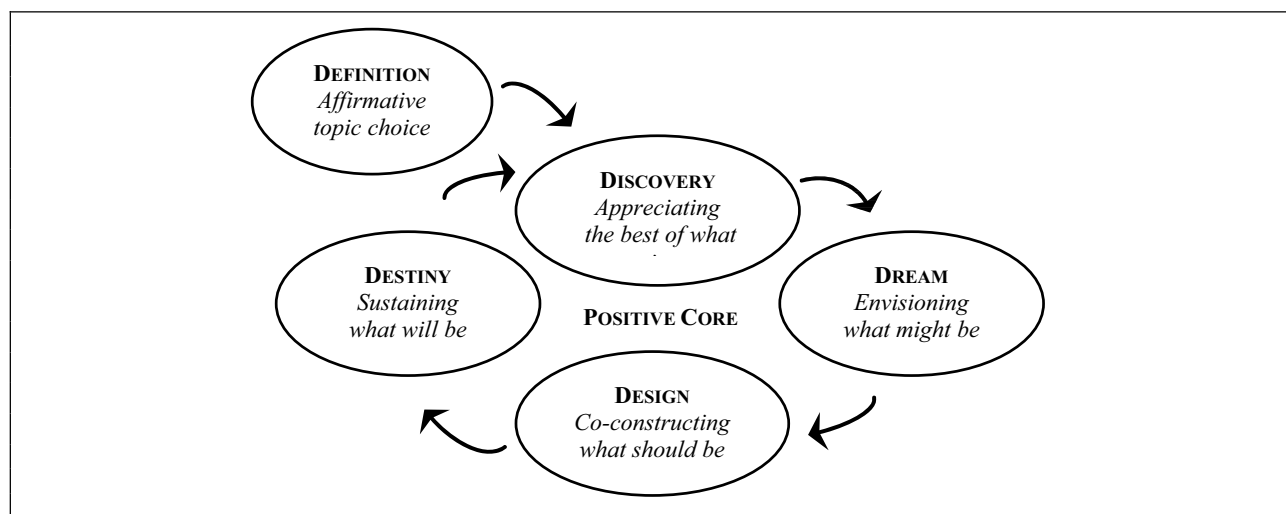


Figure 1. *AI 5-D Model*

“what is” through interviewing and dialogue with organization members around high-point experiences, identify what is most valued about themselves and the organization during those times, and share their hopes for the future. During the *dream* phase, participants collectively envision “what might be” by creating a shared image of the future that captures the mind, and body (energy) and elicits positive emotion about that preferred future based on peak experiences of the past. In the *design* phase planner participants determine “what will be” by creating provocative statements (propositions) on how participants will work together and further identify appropriate design strategies to make the vision a reality. In the *destiny* phase, planner participants identify and commit to specific actions that each individually and as a group will do to move the organization toward the desired outcomes.

When the consultant/researchers taught AI as part of the strategic planning process, task force members did not trust the methodology and, naturally, resisted. Once they participated in the field research of interviewing stakeholders, however, they saw a clear, desirable connection between the method they were taught and the stories they were hearing (i.e., the data). The interviewers had significant conversations with stakeholders and identified the future they wanted to create together. Experiencing the AI approach created an opportunity for them to see things differently. They experienced the energy generated by using a strengths-based approach. They then worked from that point forward to develop a plan and commitment to take action to implement the plan.

Results

The inputs and outputs of this project can be compared to the six stages of volunteer management: understanding, planning, recruiting, orienting and training, supervising, evaluating (Styers, 2005). Understanding activities included the initial meeting and introduction to AI training. The scope of the project was over nine months, included 300 interviews, three regional meetings, and a national summit. Planning activities included the selection of AI approach and the process of selecting AI facilitators. Recruiting activities included the soliciting and selecting the strategic planning task force members. Orienting and training included the October, 2003 AI training for the task force and National Council, and the February, 2004 planning meeting. Supervising activities included monthly conference coaching calls, regional meetings, virtual meaning making, and the national summit. Evaluating activities included validation of the new strategic plan and creation of new relationships.

In September, 2004 the network adopted its first ever strategic plan developed in consultation with stakeholders across the country. The plan outlined a new vision for the network, *to strengthen the nation by igniting volunteering and social action through volunteer centers in local communities*. The plan is based on the four strategic direction goal areas: strengthening individual centers and the network, embracing a common identity and marketing, creating dynamic partnerships and collaborations, and developing abundant, sustainable resources. Two months after the plan was adopted, it was instrumental in helping the foundation increase its relevance to the centers and for the foundation to target some of its resources more effectively to strengthen the centers in the field. The plan has served as a roadmap for leadership and has provided a framework for all activities and accomplishments. The data from the interviews and the graphic interpretations continue to be used to help guide the future direction of the network.

At the end of the national summit, participants were asked to submit comments about the strategic planning process. When asked what they liked most about the process, 80% called out the inclusivity. Representative comments include:

- *“The level of input the field has had, I really feel that this is a true “bottom-up” product that has built-in buy-in and ownership by the volunteer centers.”*
- *“You found multiple ways to involve as many people as possible from the field – we drew from “experts” in the field.”*
- *“All voices have had the opportunity to be heard – many voices have been heard and the process was positive and upbeat.”*
- *“Including everyone in the network has given us an opportunity or input. We accomplished so much without boundaries.”*

Bushe & Khamisa’s (2004) identify two qualities of appreciative inquiry: a focus on changing how people think instead of what people do, and a focus on supporting self-organizing change processes that flow from new ideas rather than leading implementation of centrally or consensually agreed upon theory and practice of large systems change. These qualities were present in this project. The strategic planning process in and of itself helped to inform wider foundation initiatives. Concurrent with the strategic planning process, the foundation began the process of redefining partnership agreements with the volunteer centers. Because the task force felt empowered and had taken ownership of co-creating their future, they informed the foundation that they could not finalize partnership agreement discussions until they had successfully concluded the planning process. This was the start of conversations on how the foundation and the network would partner on multiple issues. On another front, the

incoming president and new national council of the network determined that the committee structure of the governance body would be re-structured to reflect the strategic initiatives outlined in the strategic plan. Hearing about the planning work of the task force, a meeting was arranged between task force members and the director of the federal organization that provides support to the foundation. The meeting began with the executive wanting to hear about the problems in the organization. Task force members, having embraced the AI philosophy, shifted the conversation to talking about their highest hopes for collaboration. The meeting ended with both entities deciding to have further discussions about expanding their partnership and collaborating.

Traditionally, the foundation and network were in opposition and within the network the focus or dominant discourse was negative. When project participants saw the reality that they were not alone and collectively they had the experience, talent, skills and energy to carry out the new image of the future, they began to shift energy toward their positive image, starting first with their strong focus on the purpose of the network. This positive process brought a unique focus to the creation of highly functioning entities throughout the organization. The planning approach sought to discover and leverage volunteer centers that were healthy, working optimally, and which allowed staff and volunteers to perform at their best. The approach invited participants to describe even a powerful moment of great difficulty, yet focus on the strategy used to overcome the situation and perhaps make some good out of the difficulty.

A critical shift occurred after the first round of interviews when the task force members realized the positive potential of questioning respondents about successful moments around valued topics. Individuals and groups gained tremendous energy to dream and construct a better future together. One benefit of the project was that the client system re-identified with what the network was all about, and why people were involved. There was a re-engagement of all parties to find new ways to collaborate and fulfill their mission. This was evidenced by the re-examination and re-crafting of the vision of the network.

Task force members and foundation members came to the same conclusion upon review and analysis of data generated from the initial interviews. When they read the positive data and all the ideas generated from the interviews, there was a reminder of the many things they have in common. They realized their core strength was the impact they had on communities and the people who ensure there are volunteers available to support the needs of the communities they serve. This reinforced the importance of partnership. They felt connected and more empowered as a unit to co-create a way to move forward.

A significant benefit of the partnership was the enhancement of confidence, continuous feedback, commitment and leadership taken as the situation warranted. The feedback rich process required everyone to be abundantly clear about their individual agendas and motivation for wanting to be part of such a project. Maintaining open communication allowed for hidden agendas to become explicit and trust to be built.

The project had financial and time limitations that required the consultant/researchers to continually innovate and evaluate the technical and group processes used in the project. This was evidenced in the virtual meaning making session, when funding was not available to bring the task force together for a data analysis session. Together the consultant/researchers and participants developed a creative plan to conduct a virtual meaning making session using telephonic and web based methods. Because participants could not see each other, they had to clearly verbalize their thoughts and ideas. This challenge provided greater clarity and resulted in rapid sense making. It was during this process that the foundation and network re-examined and re-drafted the mission of the network. Participants identified this as one of the more powerful experiences of the project.

The consultants were confident that the AI approach would work. AI has the capability to create connection, relationship and common ground where none, or little, existed before hand. When aggregated across an organization, these impacts strengthen the social and interpersonal fabric of the system, building trust, hope for the future, energizing optimism, and a determination to take action to make images real. Building on this energy and new sense of connectedness, the system can collectively dream of new possibilities for the organization's future (Arcoleo, 2001).

Although the consultant/researchers realized the value of trusting the process and their knowledge and experience with AI, it is always a challenge to encourage a group to take a new path. The researchers knew that the participants would gain more insight and build engagement for the process if they opened up to input from network members and stakeholders. Holding the space for them to come to a similar conclusion required the researchers to have the confidence to work through the difficult moments when it might have been easier not to. A lesson here for the consultants and their peers/colleagues is the value of being mindful of our own fear as we hold that space for others.

Another significance benefit of the project was the increased value of partnership; the gains that outweigh the challenges of partnering with others. The task force and the volunteer centers had a commitment to the mission of their centers. The researcher consultants had a commitment to the AI process. The organization had a commitment

to volunteering. All parties showed a sincerity of interest and commitment to the project's success. These high degrees of commitment, when combined, provided better outcomes. The organization moved to a place of doing things *with* the volunteer network, versus doing things *to* them, or *for* them. Similarly, the consultant/researchers worked with the organization, guiding the process rather than doing the organization's work.

Institutionalization

Evidence of institutionalization of the strengths-based approach exists both in the volunteer network and the foundation. This planning process confirmed that AI is a process that can be successfully used across a large, complex system for strategic planning efforts. New webs of relationships were created and have been maintained between and among the foundation, the volunteer center national network, field representatives, and the consultants. There has been a renewed commitment to the organization's mission and to volunteering. There has also been a commitment to the AI process. Virtual teaming was tested and proven to be highly successful and cost effective when working with geographically dispersed teams and limited budgets. Intentionally using an innovative approach to the strategic planning process, the project modeled a collaborative process; recognized the challenges of diverse styles, personalities, and interests; mirrored the organizational system; and, maximized opportunities for success. Positive participant energy grew when they saw commonalities and observed in words and pictures a way to move forward. The consultant/researchers had to stand back and let the participants go because the group had learned and was implementing that learning.

Implementation of the strategic plan began in earnest. The foundation and network developed new and different ways of partnering. Recognition of the network has been enhanced because of the internal and external visibility of the planning process. Just as the planning process itself allowed participants to rethink their vision for the network, the plan and the language of the plan, particularly the four goal areas, have been adopted by the larger foundation. The foundation disseminated the results throughout the foundation and to the 370 volunteer centers. Continuing the partnership, the client and the consultant/researchers presented the case study at the 2nd International Appreciative Inquiry Conference, September, 2004. Also, the consultants were recognized by the American Society of Training & Development and given a citation of excellence in research to practice for their work on this project.

In July 2005, progress on the plan was reported at the foundation's 2005 national conference. Accomplishments in each of the goal areas were significant and reported to the meeting. Of particular note, a direct result of the project was the securing of substantial, multi-million dollar additional funding from the foundation for the network, naming of four additional network seats on the foundation's governance board, and commencement of a new affiliation agreement process. The strategic planning project has been continually held up as the example of productive collaboration within the foundation and network. Instead of the network having to conform to the traditional models used for foundation planning, the foundation is adopting the processes and language of AI and other strength based approaches to organizing and planning.

Subsequent correspondence with the foundation and network revealed that lessons learned in the strategic planning process are being institutionalized throughout the organization. Specific outcome examples cited are that the process gave the network a vision for its future, restructured network committees and work around the four goal areas, and the network has been able to clearly articulate its priorities for programming and funding. Individual volunteer centers have adopted an AI approach to their own strategic planning process. All of these changes are direct results of the success of the strengths-based strategic planning process. The project has also set in motion the initiative to develop an official affiliation status for volunteer centers with the foundation and a true volunteer system across the country.

Conclusions

Success in this project contributes to the field of human resources development and to the body of knowledge of AI and strategic planning sustainability. Specific areas of contribution are in the area of partnering and cooperation among consultants; *coopetition* as opposed to competition. Each of the three consulting firms had something unique to offer the client. This was further extended in exploring unique and different ways for consultants to partner and collaborate with client systems. The process caused both the consultants and the organization to renew commitments to both the core work of the organization (i.e., volunteering), and on the part of the consultants, to the AI approach. The area of virtual teaming was enhanced. The innovative ways of co-creating meaning from data and involving stakeholders in contributing to that data and to turning the strategic planning process over to them after the summit demonstrated that, once the stakeholders had been involved and learned from that involvement, they were empowered to own the process and carry it to fruition. This also provided the impetus for heightened

energy on the part of the stakeholders, task force members, and the foundation. Because of its inclusional, and socially constructed nature, AI brought forward the learning from the organization, participants, and the consultant/researchers together to inform the body of knowledge, perhaps differently than much social science research. The life and implementation of the plan will continue to be monitored, studied and written about to further this understanding.

References

- Arcoleo, D. (2001). *Underneath appreciative inquiry: The power of positive conversation*. Santa Barbara: The Fielding Institute.
- Cooperrider, D., & Srivastara, S. (1999). *Appreciative management and leadership: The power of positive thought and action in organizations*. Euclid, OH: Williams Custom.
- Cooperrider, D., Whitney, D. & Stavros, J. (1999). Appreciative inquiry: A positive revolution in change. In T. Devane & P. Holman (Eds.), *The change handbook* (pp. 245-261). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Cooperrider, D., & Whitney, D. (2003). *Appreciative inquiry handbook*. Bedford Heights, OH: Lakeshore Communications.
- Fry, R., Barrett, F., Seilig, J., & Whitney, D. (Eds.) (2002). *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field*. Westport, CT: Quorum.
- Goodstein, L., Nolan, T., & Pfeiffer, W. (1993) *Applied strategic planning: A comprehensive guide*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mohr, B. J. (2001). Appreciative inquiry: Igniting transformative action. *Systems Thinker*, 12, 1.
- Mohr, B. J., Smith, E., & Watkins, J. M. (2000). Appreciative inquiry and learning assessment: An embedded evaluation process in a transnational pharmaceutical company. *OD Practitioner*, 32(1), 36-52.
- Stavros, J., Cooperrider, D., & Malloy, D. (2003, November). Strategic inquiry/appreciative intent: Inspiration to SOAR: a new framework for strategic planning. *AI Practitioner*, 11.
- Styers, D. (2005, October) *Strength based planning efforts*. Presentation to the O.D. Systems Consortium.
- Watkins, J. M., & Cooperrider, D. L. (2000). Appreciative inquiry: A transformative paradigm. *OD Practitioner*, 32(1), 6-12.
- Watkins, J. M., & Mohr, B. J., (2001). *Appreciative inquiry: Change at the speed of imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.
- Whitney, D., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2003). *The power of appreciative inquiry: A practical guide to positive change*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.