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# Using Appreciative Inquiry in Community Development

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# CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

June 25, 2008

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension

Institute of Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Department of Agricultural Economics  
<http://www.agecon.unl.edu/Cornhuskereconomics.html>

## Using Appreciative Inquiry in Community Development

Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ago	6/20/08
<b><u>Livestock and Products,</u></b>			
<b><u>Weekly Average</u></b>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.....	\$86.05	\$94.00	\$94.59
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.....	*	118.11	123.09
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.....	*	111.26	112.25
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.....	142.70	156.32	158.20
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated.....	75.98	75.72	74.86
Feeder Pigs, National Direct 50 lbs, FOB.....	56.00	41.53	34.30
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean.....	78.20	80.90	79.24
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Woolled, South Dakota, Direct.....	103.25	102.50	117.00
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB.....	256.96	255.46	272.32
<b><u>Crops,</u></b>			
<b><u>Daily Spot Prices</u></b>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.....	5.21	7.45	8.29
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Omaha, bu.....	3.54	5.61	6.75
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Omaha, bu.....	7.32	12.87	14.18
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.....	5.86	9.52	11.39
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN, bu.....	2.70	3.96	4.09
<b><u>Hay</u></b>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.....	135.00	*	195.00
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.....	92.50	77.50	77.50
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Premium Nebraska, ton.....	*	*	*
* No market.			

The Center for Applied Rural Innovation (CARI), an outreach effort of the Department of Agricultural Economics, is committed to being relevant and responsive to the needs of Nebraskans. Under the leadership of Dr. Alan Baquet, a trained facilitator in Appreciative Inquiry, CARI and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension are working with communities using an appreciative inquiry approach.

Communities have primarily used community development methods that look directly at the needs or problems, rather than on what is working well. This often leads to a focus on a certain project or program. Technical resources may be brought in to address a particular issue or situation; a conflict may develop that activates community members to change, or; communities may create a collective vision addressing needs. Appreciative Inquiry builds on strengths and looks at what is going well. Through an inquiry process a community can find out what it wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been.

Appreciative inquiry is an approach to human organizing and change grounded in the belief that the most effective way to create positive action is through a relational process of inquiry, grounded in affirmation and appreciation. The method used to implement the appreciative inquiry approach is often referred to as the 4-D cycle.

**Discover** – explore the best of the past and identify present strengths.

**Dream** – Imagine “what might be.”

**Design** – Create the future.

**Deliver** – Make it happen – “what will be.”

First, the community must define the focus. This focus, the Affirmative Topic Choice, establishes the purpose around which the inquiry process operates. Looking at the positive allows communities to see the possibilities. During this inquiry process, communities have the opportunity to discover what people value and begin a process of positive change. Using an



appreciative inquiry approach does not mean that problems will be denied or that they will not exist. Instead, problems are listened to and acknowledged, then the issues are re-framed in a positive light, with a goal to move beyond the situations that existed.

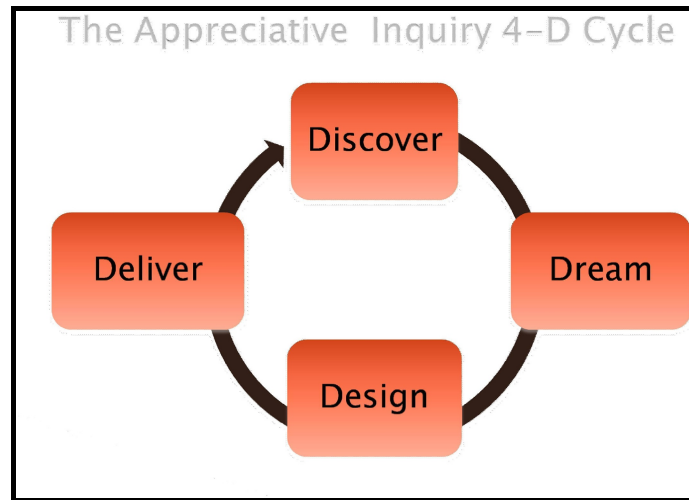
During the design phase, it is important to develop a plan of action that will:

- Establish a timeline
- Assign roles and responsibilities
- Establish benchmarks
- Create a communication system (check-in)
- Maintain accountability
- Manage challenges immediately
- Celebrate successes

Currently, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is working with Cheyenne County to create a county-wide vision. Connie Hancock, Cheyenne County Extension Educator, began working with a key group of individuals focused on the future of the county in 2007. Upon her recommendation, this key group looked at the appreciative inquiry approach and in January 2008, Alan Baquet led a discussion with a steering committee of forty individuals representing various communities and groups in the county. During this inquiry process, individuals listened to each other as they talked about what they appreciate in the county. Through this process we learned that people are involved and connected with the community, and that is what keeps people there. Many of the respondents indicated the importance of maintaining the connectedness and small town environment into the future. The common elements in the stories from this initial process were identified to create the questions to ask county residents.

During March 2008, the county residents were asked nine open-ended questions through one-on-one conversations and an on-line survey. While appreciative inquiry is generally designed for one-on-one conversations, creating the opportunity to answer appreciative type questions through an on-line process allowed 511 people to participate in the discovery process. All communities were represented in the responses. (See Table 1 on next page for a breakdown of responses by gender, age and location).

Individuals shared their opinions related to well-being, youth commitment, involvement, attitude and attributes. One of the final questions asked people to think about the county in the year 2020, and it is everything you want it to be, and more. Respondents shared many ideas for the future, and a number of the participants also indicated that they are willing to volunteer and help the community succeed. The common



elements under each question were identified, and the results were recently shared with the initial key group and then the county-wide steering committee.

The next step is to begin sharing the discovery/dream results with the county residents and move into the design stage of the process. The future of Cheyenne County is with the people that live in the county. Key to the success will be individuals willing to carry forward the vision. The Uni-

versity will continue to be responsive in assisting with the process as the county determines its future.

UNL extension team members include: Alan Baquet, UNL Department of Agricultural Economics, Connie Hancock, UNL Extension, Charlotte Narjes and Linda Tesch, UNL Center for Applied Rural Innovation.

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**Table 1. Demographics**

<b>Gender:</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
<b>Male</b>	43.6%	223
<b>Female</b>	56.4%	288
Answered Question		511
Skipped Question		0
<b>Age Range:</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
18 and Younger	10.4%	53
19-29	20.0%	102
30-39	24.3%	124
40-49	18.4%	94
50-59	19.0%	97
60-69	6.1%	31
70 and Older	2.0%	10
Answered Question		511
Skipped Question		0
<b>Where Do You Live?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Dalton	5.5%	28
Gurley	3.9%	20
Lodgepole	3.3%	17
Potter	4.9%	25
Sidney	63.8%	326
Sunol	0.8%	4
On a Farm or Ranch	9.0%	46
Rural Area, but not on a Farm or Ranch	4.9%	25
Other (please specify)	3.9%	20
Answered Question		511
Skipped Question		0

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