

Appreciative Inquiry Breaks Down Walls: Foundation Facilitation of District and University Collaboration

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*“Alone we can do so little.
Together we can do so much.
Only love can break down the walls....”*

(Hermann, 1999, p.222)

Background and Related Research



- District/university collaboratively designed graduate program
- Free to teachers
- Teachers give back by providing PD at their school
- Foundation funded

- Breaking down silos and overcoming past negative experiences can be difficult (Hansen, 2009; Kise, 2012; Robertson, 2007; Wasonga, Rari, & Wansare, 2011)
- Research demonstrates the important role **foundations** can play in creating strong buy-in and shared leadership for public school projects (Sage & Scott, 2012)



A Midwestern family-based foundation **built trust** between a university and district implementing a collaboratively designed and delivered graduate program in literacy for in-service teachers by:

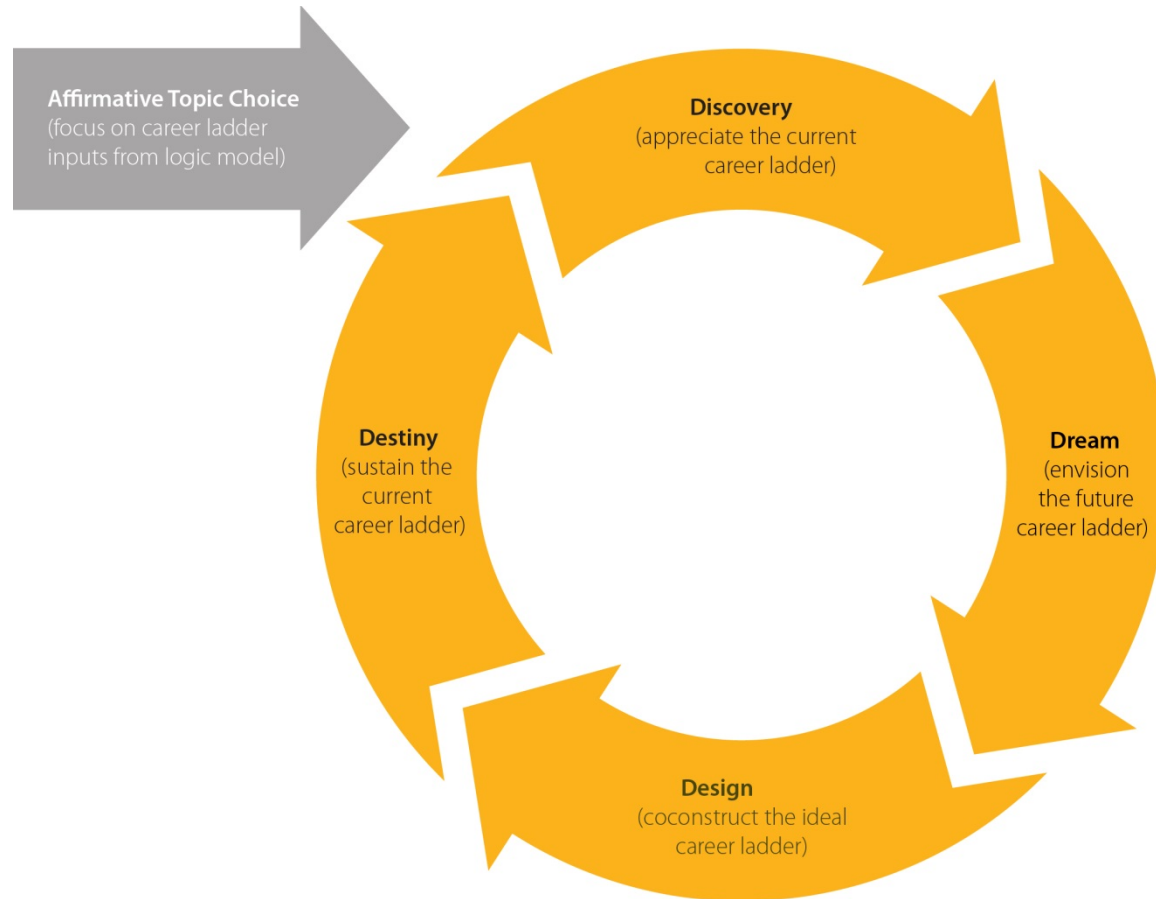
- Instituting monthly Leadership Team meetings
- Facilitating these meetings using an appreciative inquiry process

Career
Ladder
in Reading

*Empowering literacy leaders
to enrich reading instruction
for every student in every subject*

The Appreciative Inquiry Cycle

(Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005)



Research Questions and Data Sources

Research Questions

How do **Leadership Team meetings** and **appreciative inquiry** relate to changes in collaboration in terms of:

- The content of Leadership Team meetings
- The ability to make collaborative decisions
- The creation of the program goals



Data Sources

Collected monthly from January 2014 to July 2014

- Online surveys prior to meetings
- Meeting agendas and notes

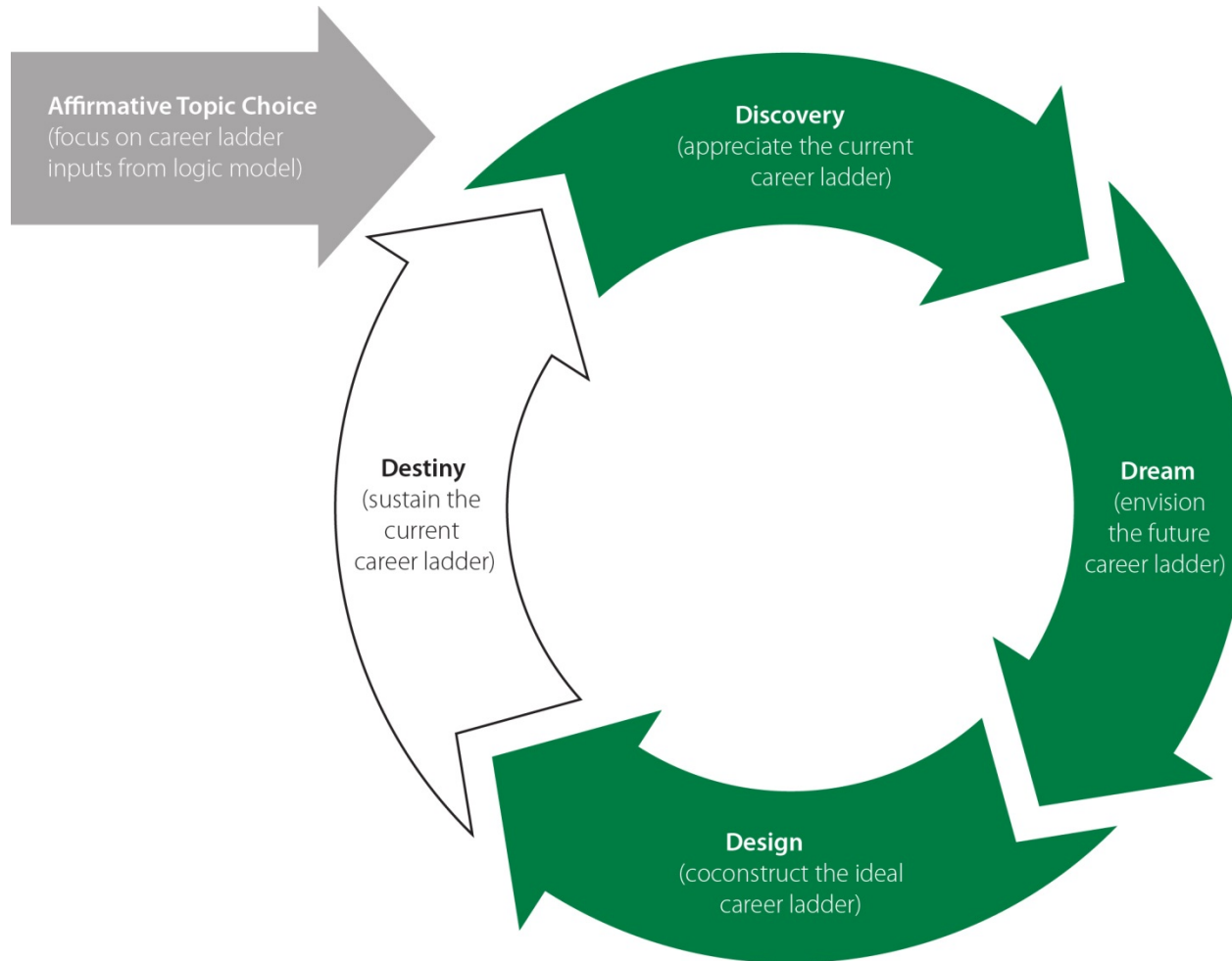


Results

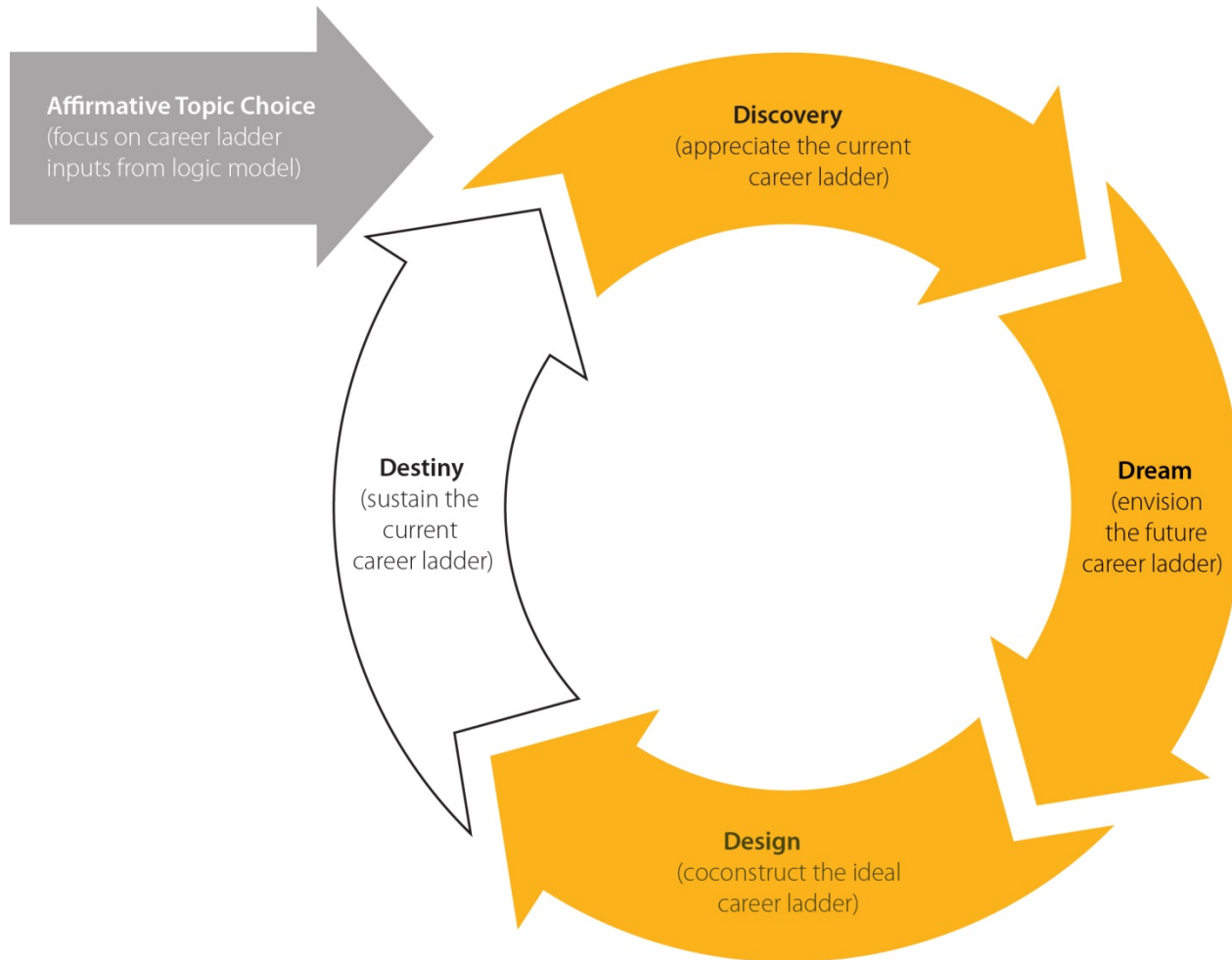
Primary Meeting Focus

Date	Number of Attendees (n 13)	Technical Challenges	Meeting Expectations	Vision	Meeting Design	Collaborative Decision Making	Evaluation
1/7/2014	13	√	√	√			
2/4/2014	12	√	√	√		√	
3/4/2014	12	√	√		√	√	
4/1/2014	10	√	√			√	
5/6/2014	11	√			√		√
6/3/2014	13				√	√	√
7/1/2014	9					√	√

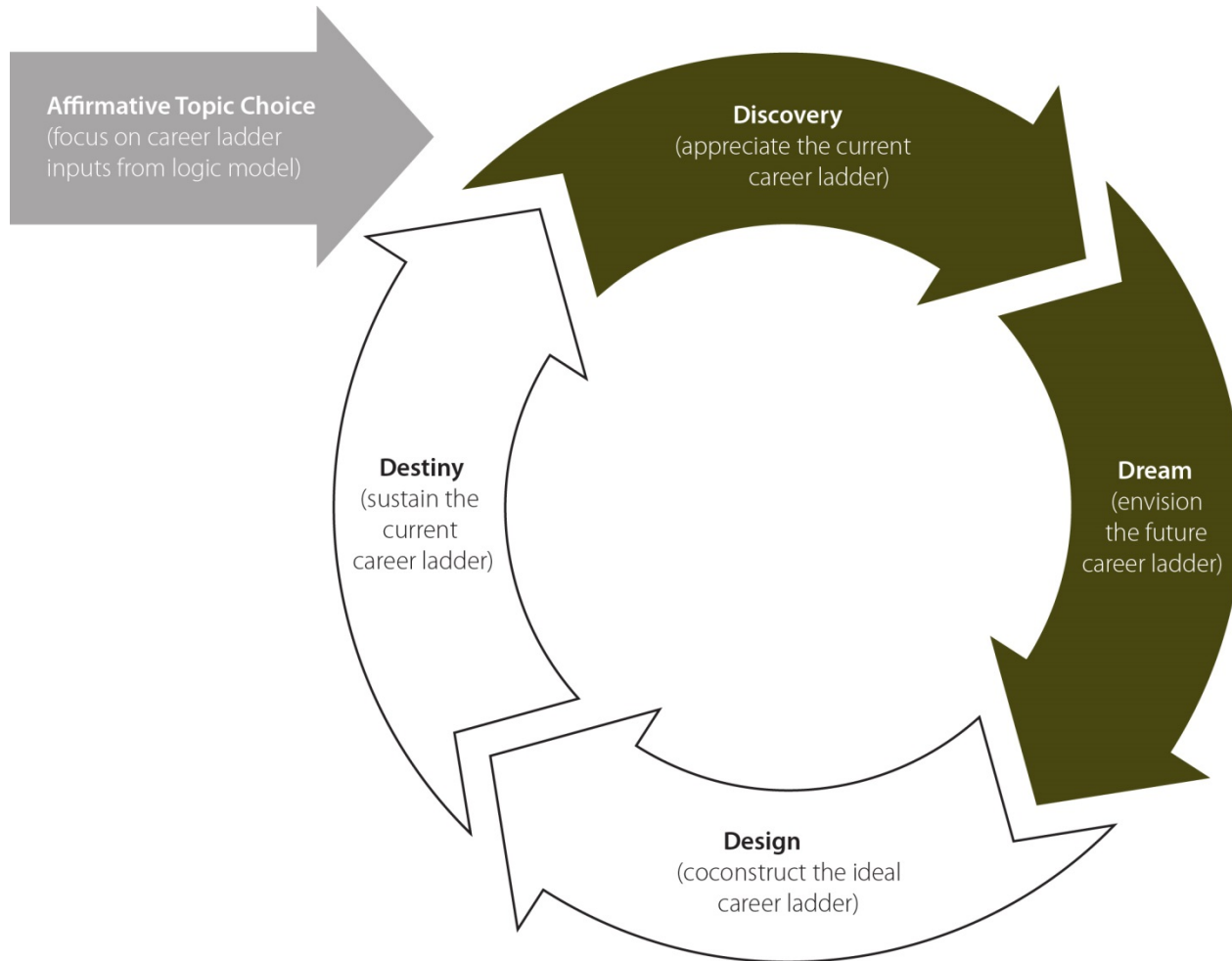
Professional Development



Collaboration



Identifying Participants



Pre

6-Month Goals

2-Year Goals

Successful collaboration
between district and UNO

District and university
designed a rigorous
program that meets the
needs of teachers

Improved literacy instruction

Improved literacy
instruction

*Increased leadership in
literacy*

*Efforts concentrated in
schools with a strong
commitment to improving
practice*

*Increased student
achievement in reading*

*Teachers sharing knowledge
with peers*

Coursework is consistent

Post	6-Month Goals	2-Year Goals
	Successful collaboration between district and UNO	Increased leadership in literacy
	<i>Improved literacy instruction</i>	Improved literacy instruction
	Coursework content solidified	Increased student achievement in reading
	Evaluation results informing decision making	Cohorts 3 and 4 are even better and the program is self-sustaining
	Recruitment and selection process in place	<i>Stronger alignment between university reading endorsement and university curriculum</i>
	Teachers sharing knowledge with peers	<i>Successful collaboration between district and university</i>
	Leadership team has learned from cohort 1 and changes translated into practice	

Significance

Demonstrates the role a foundation can play in **breaking down the walls** and facilitating positive growth in collaboration between this university and district



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