

# IMAGINE

## Singapore

APPRECIATE WHAT IS

IMAGINE WHAT CAN BE

CREATE WHAT WILL BE

IMAGINE Singapore is about creating hope and possibilities through conversations that matter. It is an effort to bring people from all walks of life together to discover the true essence of our strengths, qualities, and spirit that have stood the test of time. It is also about the discovery of our communities' hopes and aspirations, verbalised through active dialogue and engagement. Through simultaneous interviews and the sharing of high-point stories, Imagine Singapore aims to unleash the collective capacities of our nation.

*Simply put, we imagine a nation in conversation.*

Imagine Singapore deploys a simple and accessible methodology called **Appreciative Inquiry** – a positive oriented approach towards change. Singaporeans from all walks of life will be equipped through workshops to conduct interviews that will help in the expression of the hopes of our families, friends and neighbours.

Over and over again, we have experienced the ability of this simple approach to bring about positive changes - the mere act of being asked these questions serve to deepen the quality of connection between people and strengthens the individuals' sense of hope for the future.

**“Human systems grow in the direction of questions we most frequently ask ourselves.  
Positive images precede positive action.”**

### **Why this project is central to the mission of the Sustainability Institute**

Sustainability Institute aims to build sustainable organisations through our WISE framework - great Workplaces, Innovations for sustainability, Societal and community engagement and Environmental conscience. The mission of Si is to create **lasting positive impact**. Our programmes are aimed at development of strong and sustainable individuals, organizations and communities. Through Inquiry into the best of (practices, hopes, dreams and ideas) in our human systems - whether families, business or communities – we hope to further recognize and propagate self-directed positive innovations amongst Singaporeans. Imagine Singapore is the first societal engagement project embarked on by the Institute. Our interest is also on downstream research on positivity (hope and optimism), community-engagement and outcomes of shared vision processes.

## **SYNOPSIS OF IMAGINE SINGAPORE - AGE UNLIMITED INQUIRY & SUMMIT**

The *Age Unlimited* inquiry is part of the larger Imagine Singapore movement. Through the “Imagine Singapore – Age Unlimited” project, we hope to raise awareness amongst the population on the merits of active aging, as well as help the senior community to unearth their shared hopes for themselves, their families, friends and community. The fruits of the process will be more self-generated initiatives and innovations that are for greater societal benefit.

Specifically, the primary target group will be seniors, engaged through intergenerational interviews. For the seniors, the intention is to facilitate life-long learning, activism, entrepreneur spirit, creativity and societal engagement, thereby enabling them to lead a more meaningful active life.

For the youths, the objective is to inculcate service learning, national education, and appreciation of the perspectives, concerns and needs of our aging population, as well as to sensitise them to living an active life right from the beginning.

The working community is just as important as a target group as they are in the category colloquially known as the “sandwich” generation, and an important group to reach out to, so that we can begin imbuing the mindset for leading an active life and plan for the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of their lives ahead of time. We share in C3A’s vision for Singaporeans to remain physically, psychologically, economically and socially robust even as they advance in years.

### **❖ Key objectives of project**

Mutual understanding precedes mutual respect. Regardless of race, age, culture, income or religion - through designing conversations that matter, we believe the young and the old can learn to take time to listen and understand each others’ perspectives.

Specifically, we aim to:

- Help to increase awareness and foster an active aging mindset amongst Singaporeans of all ages by conducting cross-inquiry, focusing on the topic of “Age Unlimited”;
- Promote intergenerational bonding by creating opportunities for dialogue, shared understanding and mutual appreciation;
- Generate opportunities for networking with other like-minded senior citizens who aspire for similar initiatives or social innovations that are of interest, value and meaning for themselves;
- Develop better and more self-sustaining social or business projects by tapping on community resources;

- Raise the sense of self-regard and dignity amongst the seniors, especially their psychological and social well-being, through the various opportunities for engagement created by the project;
- Encourage tri-sectorial (people, public, private) engagement on aging issues, so as to create a reservoir of innovations that will help to meet the needs and aspirations of our senior community (e.g promotion of the Silver Industry)

❖ **IMAGINE Singapore through Appreciative Inquiry – AGE UNLIMITED**  
**- Example of Partnership with Bendemeer Secondary School**

Bendemeer Secondary School is the first school to come on board the Age Unlimited inquiry. The school has been proactively engaging its students for the last four years in sensitizing youth to eldercare and geriatric needs. Proud recipients of the Lee Kuan Yew National Education Awards, Bendemeer has found its unique innovation of connecting students with the eldercare.

Around 40 over students have been trained in a preparatory workshop on 14 Aug 09 on the skills of conducting Appreciative Inquiry Interviews. Pursuing the theme of Age Unlimited, the students are to submit stories and photos of up to 3 interviews; one within the school compound interviewing teachers, non – teaching staff and the other interviewing an aged person in their own family to search for positive stories about active aging.

❖ **Desirable Outcomes for Schools Participating in the Imagine Singapore – Age Unlimited Project**

By participating in this project, the students in our community benefit from a deeper understanding of the concept of aging through positive dialogues with our older generation of Singaporeans through the process of AI.

Specifically, they also acquire the following skills and sensibilities:

- Verbal Proficiency – The students learn the art of interviewing through AI in a safe environment and get the opportunity to interview, take notes and submit all in English, by which we hope they will grow in their confidence.
- Non verbal proficiency – Body language is an off shoot of the practice to be a good interviewer to put their interviewee at ease and to enjoy the experience.
- Service Learning – Sensitising to the needs of the senior community, and community issues at large helps to imbue empathy and compassion amongst our youths;
- National Education – Awareness about the challenges of Singapore help to expand the worldview and perspectives of our young
- Empowerment in action using self as the medium – The students will be pioneers in the Age Unlimited Imagine Singapore concept, learning AI to lead and make a difference within the school (as they interview someone from within the school) within their families (as they interview someone from within the family) and create friendships and understanding in the process that will hopefully last.

## WHAT IS APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY?

The essence of Appreciative Inquiry can be drawn much from the definition of the words:

*Appreciate* - The act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, success, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems; and

*Inquire* – The act of exploration to be open to see new potentials and possibilities

An action-research methodology pioneered by Dr David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University and practiced in Organizational Development as a process that engages individuals within an organizational system in its renewal, change and focused performance.

Appreciative Inquiry is often depicted as a 4-D process or cycle of:

- DISCOVERY – “Best of the Past and Present” which leads to the emergence of the ‘Positive Core’ of a community or organisation;
- DREAM – “What might be?” which leads to clarity in shared vision and encourages ownership of the possibilities;
- DESIGN – “How can it be?” which leads to charting aspiration statements and action plans; and
- DESTINY – “Fulfilling what must be” – ownership and follow through of actions for vision fulfillment.