Once the basic concept of the positive core is understood, the 4-D Cycle can be better explained. The first step in an AI intervention is selecting the **affirmative topic choice**. This is, in short, the selection of topic(s) that will become the focus of the intervention.

Selecting the **affirmative topic** choice begins with the constructive discovery and narration of the organization’s “life-giving” story. The topics, in the initial stages, are bold hunches about what gives life to the organization. Most importantly, the topics (usually three to five for an inquiry) represent what people really want to discover or learn more about. The topics will likely evoke conversations about the desired future.

The seeds of change are implicit in the first questions asked. The following two broad questions form a basis by which groups and organizations can create their own customized topics.

- **What factors give life to this organization when it is and has been most alive, successful, and effective?** This question seeks to discover what the organization has done well in the past and is doing well in the present.
- **What possibilities, expressed and latent, provide opportunities for more vital, successful, and effective (vision-and-values congruent) forms of organization?** This question asks the participants to dream about and design a better future.

Since human systems typically grow in the directions about which they inquire, affirmative topic choices encourage people to select topics they want to see grow and flourish in their organizations. The choice sets the stage for AI through the application of the 4-D Cycle.

Careful, thoughtful, and informed choice of topics defines the scope of the inquiry, providing the framework for subsequent interviews and data collection. When AI was first being used, the design was an open topic choice, the “homegrown topic.” The power of this type of discovery and dream led to the affirmative topic or topics to be studied by the organization, beginning with the AI foundational questions, as follows:

- Describe a high-point experience in your organization, a time when you were most alive and engaged.
- Without being modest, what is it that you value most about yourself, your work, and your organization?
- What are the core factors that give life to your organization, without which the organization would cease to exist?
- What three wishes do you have now to enhance the health and vitality of your organization?