The positive core of organizational life is one of the greatest, yet least recognized, resources in the change management field today. AI has demonstrated that human systems grow in the direction of their persistent inquiries, and this propensity is strongest and most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated. In the AI process, the future is consciously constructed upon the positive core strengths of the organization. Linking the energy of this core directly to any change agenda suddenly and democratically creates and mobilizes topics never before thought possible.

The concept of the positive core is separate from, yet central to, the 4-D Cycle. It has been stated several times that AI is more than the 4-D Cycle. The cycle is simply a tool that allows the practitioner to access and mobilize the positive core. The positive core lies at the heart of the AI process. In this respect, the organization’s positive core is the beginning and the end of the inquiry. This is where the whole organization has an opportunity to value its history and embrace novelty in transitioning into positive possibilities.

This positive core is woven throughout the 4-D Cycle. It is identified in the Discovery phase, mobilizing a whole-system inquiry into the positive core... that which gives meaning to the organization. It is amplified throughout the Dream phase, creating a clear, results-oriented vision in relation to the discovered potential and in relation to questions of higher purpose. It is woven into the “organizational architecture” through the Design phase, creating provocative propositions of the ideal organization, and organizational design that people believe is capable of magnifying the positive core. Finally, it is implemented throughout the Destiny phase, strengthening the affirmative capability of the whole system. Thus, AI begins and ends with valuing that which gives life to an organization. In this sense, the organization’s positive core can be expressed in any one of a number of ways, all of which can be identified through the inquiry. The following are some of the ways in which the positive core is expressed:

- Best business practices
- Core and distinctive competencies
- Elevated thoughts
- Embedded knowledge
- Financial assets
- Innovations
- Organizational achievements
- Organizational wisdom
- Positive emotions
- Positive macro trends
- Product strengths
- Relational resources
- Social capital
- Strategic opportunities
- Technical assets
- Values
- Visions of possibilities
- Vital traditions
- Strengths of partners
- Capacities worldwide