



Center for *Business as an Agent of World Benefit*

Rethinking the WORLD ECONOMY

Case Western Reserve University
10900 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44106-7235
Phone: 216-368-3809
Fax: 216-368-0077
<http://worldbenefit.case.edu>

Creating Inquiry Communities
A Practical Guide

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Introduction

Imagine our globe as a network of inspired and transformative ideas, like a net of jewels that reflect light off one another. Our job at the Center for Business as Agent of World Benefit (B.A.W.B.) is to connect the lights – the innovations. We are a global learning community focused on the strengths of business innovations that create wealth. When we use the word “wealth”, we mean it in terms of its original definition of “well being”. Wealth can be thought of as an increase in value, both for businesses in the traditional sense, but also for the world in its entirety. The innovations that provide this kind of profit often take place at a local level and many stories of spectacular innovations remain unheard. Our job is to help uplift the stories behind the innovation so that more people around the world become aware of the extraordinary possibilities that business possesses to change the world for the better. Across the globe many of us are passionate about helping create a better world for all. Join us in our journey to spread stories of innovation and enhance peoples’ awareness that businesses can be agents of world benefit. Join us as people recognize new possibilities for constructing an ever flourishing world.

The Center for **Business as an Agent of World Benefit** (B.A.W.B.) is a global forum uniting the best in business with the call of our times. At the heart of the Center is the World Inquiry - a global search for the many ways that the business sector is putting its people, resources, imagination and assets to work to benefit humanity. The Center is synthesizing the work being done by business practitioners, civil sector actors, and the academic community in business-in-society innovation.

To learn more about B.A.W.B. visit: www.worldinquiry.org

This workbook has three goals: to introduce the idea of the worldwide inquiry, to make it easier for people to form an inquiry community that is supported by online learning technology, and to make it easy to connect to a global learning community.

The World inquiry

The World Inquiry is a worldwide, growing network of people, groups, organizations and schools searching for innovations in what we are calling “Business as an Agent of World Benefit”. As the core of B.A.W.B. it is a vehicle for people and organizations to collaborate in a new kind of world dialogue. Organized as a series of one-on-one interviews, classroom conversations, virtual summits, publications, and conference workshops, it is dedicated to discovering, appreciating, and mobilizing the best in business with a task of creating prosperous inspired and sustainable societies that work for all. The World Inquiry Interview is a form of appreciative inquiry interview that generates stories about business innovations that help businesses succeed while benefiting the world.



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Inquiry Communities

An inquiry community is a group of people who come together around a topic relating to business as an agent of world benefit. Often inquiry community members learn together by conducting appreciative “world inquiry” interviews with leaders whose businesses generate healthy revenue while benefiting the world in a tangible way. The stories gathered by these interviews increase awareness of the potential for business to transform society for the better. Inquiry communities can be as small and informal as 3 or more people who want to meet every few months to discuss and take part in a worldwide learning effort and as large as 50,000 people who convene in conferences and through online technology.

There are innovations in every single company, small or large, and no story is too small to energize, motivate, and inspire someone around the world in a positive way. Our hope is that Inquiry Communities use their momentum to uplift the best in business in their community and work with us to contribute to a worldwide visioning process, helping us develop a world that works for all.

Outcomes of Inquiry Communities depend on the community. Thus far, Inquiry Communities have consisted of two types of groups, both of which are engaged in a subject of shared interest.

1. One form of Inquiry Community focuses on social change. An example is B.A.W.B. Brazil:

B.A.W.B. Brazil began in 2003. Centered in Curitiba, Brazil, B.A.W.B. Brazil focuses on social awareness and poverty reduction through inquiry and action. Its members use the “world inquiry” interviews to engage in action research that inspires, guides, and teaches its members and organizations in Brazil how to better achieve sustainable business practices that positively impact its citizens and the world.

The B.A.W.B. Brazil Inquiry Community is led by CEO Rodrigo Loures, who uses it as a way of reinventing the value of his organization for the people of Brazil. He creates social momentum by holding large conferences in which representatives of innovative businesses share their stories with citizens who wish to get involved in eliminating poverty in the Brazilian State of Parana.

2. The other form of Inquiry Community focuses on action learning. An example is the MPOD Inquiry Community:

MPOD inquiry community members are students in the Master of Science in Positive Organization Development program at Case Western Reserve University. Their educational experiences are centered on the growing fields of Positive Organization Science and Transformative Change Leadership. These strength-based approaches to leadership development and systems change provide the bases for their experiential learning. Students are part of an online community which supports their learning environment so that they can learn together while working in various locations.

As part of the program, MPOD inquiry community members conduct world inquiry interviews both domestically and abroad. These inquiry interviews provide data which are used to populate the B.A.W.B. Innovation Bank.

Both forms of Inquiry Community have flourished thus far. We imagine many more forms of Inquiry Communities will emerge in the future and we invite you to use creativity as you help form your own Inquiry Community.

In summary, Inquiry Communities customize their missions and desired outcomes to fit a specific context; respecting the history, culture, and environment from which they emerge. They utilize the world inquiry interview methodology to understand the tangible business case for businesses helping the world.

The World Inquiry team partners with inquiry communities to clarify methodologies, train and educate, facilitate, and guide those interested in joining our work. For questions about these inquiry communities or to learn more about how to form an inquiry community contact Inquiry Community Manager, Bauback Yeganeh at bauback@case.edu.

To learn more about current inquiry communities visit:

http://www.weatherhead.cwru.edu/bawb/bawb_wi_community.html.

Creating an Inquiry Community

Imagine a growing number of inquiry communities, then imagine yourself joining with others to be a part of one.

Imagine how an inquiry community could take root where you live to address a particular need or interest.

Discuss how such a group could develop from the passion, determination, creativity and resourcefulness of the people in the group. Are there businesses that are doing things to help the community? Are there innovations that create profit for the business and others at the same time? Do you know of any people who could help think through these questions?

Explore why an existing group to which you already belong might desire to engage as an inquiry community member.

Discuss the benefits of sharing in a relationship with similar groups around the world.

Create a Shared Vision and Mission

Articulate a purpose that is powerful enough to guide others.

A Call for Stories- Using The World Inquiry Interview

The World Inquiry is an open invitation, sponsored by the Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit, to participate in a new kind of world dialogue and inquiry. Business people around the world today are making decisions and taking actions that impact everyone. Many business people choose to conduct their business in innovative ways that not only produce a profit, but also benefit their employees, their local communities and regions, and the environment. We want to know:

- Who are the people who do business in a way that benefits society?
- What are they doing and how are they doing it?
- What is their motivation for doing business in a way that benefits society?
- What is the impact of their actions on others: organizations, community and world?

People can help us answer these questions by joining a World Inquiry that searches for stories of business innovation that promote a healthier, stronger society. Three easy steps are all it takes to participate: Do an Interview, Write a Story, and Submit Your Story. For more information on interview protocols and how to do an interview visit:

http://www.weatherhead.cwru.edu/bawb/bawb_wi_involved_guide.html

The stories that best highlight business innovations that focus on synergistic profit in both individual and broad terms are selected by the B.A.W.B. editorial team and "profiled" in the **B.A.W.B. Innovation Bank**, an open collection of innovations for anyone to visit, study, and educate from.

To view the B.A.W.B. Innovation Bank and search through current innovation profiles visit:

<http://www.weatherhead.cwru.edu/bawb/archive/default.cfm>

Appreciative Inquiry

The World Inquiry offers new ways for people to share stories of exceptional business and social practices, to connect and conference with one another, to experience each other's talents, and to articulate across cultures a 21st century vision of what it might mean for business to be an agent of benefit to the world.

Why Appreciative Inquiry? AI is a strength-based narrative inquiry process that searches for stories of everything that "gives life" to organizations, communities, and larger human systems when they are most alive, effective, and healthy in their interconnected ecology of relationships. It is founded on the assumption that inquiry into and conversation about strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams triggers life-affirming change, and that human systems move in the direction of what we most persistently, actively and authentically ask questions about. Three things make Appreciative Inquiry uniquely suited to an initiative of this nature and scope:

1. AI uncovers grounded stories of possibility that are anchored in the direct experience of inquiry participants.
2. AI can work at a scale of wholeness, engaging hundreds - even thousands - of people in system-changing conversations.
3. AI is a conversation based form of change. It can transform the nature of public discourse, providing us with a vocabulary of relationship that lifts up more positive possibilities for the future.



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Parts of an Inquiry Community

Host Organization

Successful inquiry communities have hosting organizations that provide resources for people to organize and participate in the world inquiry. The amount of funding required is determined on the scope of the Inquiry Community mission. For example, an inquiry community of 4 people who submit stories from interviews and discuss them may need little to no funding, versus a larger inquiry community of 30 people who host a conference for 600 people to learn about the innovations and engage in follow up steps.

B.A.W.B. Point of Contact

This person is the project manager of the particular inquiry community. The point of contact for an inquiry community is a coordinator and convener who is responsible for the success of the inquiry community core team. S/he interacts with via email and phone with the Inquiry Community Manager in Cleveland, Ohio to coordinate, learn, discuss, and grow.

Core Inquiry Community Team Member

These are people who help with conceptualizing the purpose, conducting interviews, organizing meetings and/or conferences,

Media Coordinator

This is an inquiry team member who can help engage the local media to uplift the story of work being done by the inquiry community. This can help build momentum and attract additional participants.

Getting Started

1. Envision various forms of your Inquiry Community, brainstorm and record your ideas –
 - a. What are the outcomes of your Inquiry Community?
 - b. How do World Inquiry Stories of Innovation play a role?
 - c. Who is your core team made up of?
 - d. Who in the community participates?
 - e. Who can help with sponsorship?
 - f. In what ways can the Inquiry Community help you and your community?
2. Begin to talk about your ideas with others around you who you think may be able to help you keep up momentum and further develop your vision.
3. Contact the Inquiry Community Manager, Bauback Yeganeh at bauback@case.edu to set up a phone call to discuss your ideas and clarify purpose. This is also an opportunity for B.A.W.B. to answer any questions you may have.
4. Formulate a Core Team.
5. Continue collaboration with B.A.W.B. and begin working towards the goals of your Inquiry Community!



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Online Collaboration – An Option for Helping Your Inquiry Community Thrive

B.A.W.B. offers an online project management and community learning software for all inquiry community members to use if they believe it will help with their work.

What is Icohere?

iCohere is an web-based environment that contains an integrated suite of tools that enable people to join together and create vibrant online communities including learning communities, communities of practice and project communities. Through a secure, password-protected website, iCohere supports group processes that focus on relationship building, learning, knowledge sharing, and project collaboration – all in the context of a larger community with designated workgroups or teams.

Our B.A.W.B. Icohere software offers simple and effective levels of customization. When working within the options that our template offers, we will provide the software free of charge. However, above and beyond this level of customization, we must negotiate the work through Icohere. We have found that the software is useful in helping inquiry community members manage documents, dialogues, projects, and learning. In order for an inquiry community to use this software, they must have an assigned online facilitator who manages the space. For more information on this, contact the Inquiry Community Manager, Bauback Yeganeh at bauback@case.edu.

Icohere Training

If you choose to use Icohere, we recommend the following training steps:

1. Conduct 1-2 online/teleconference training sessions between the Inquiry Community Manager and the Point of Contact that includes familiarization with Icohere.
2. Conduct an online/teleconference Icohere training session with the Inquiry Community core team to launch their projects.

What We Have Learned About When Icohere Works for Inquiry Communities

Thus far, online learning communities have thrived because:

Use of the online Icohere tool is mandated by a level of leadership that has strategically planned the tool as part of a core process to the existence of the group. For example, in the MPOD Inquiry Community, students use an online space to center discussions, learn about assignments, post completed papers, and ask for help.

Experience has taught us that online use dissolves when inquiry community host organizations work within an existing electronic communication infrastructure and choose not to emphasize the importance of a separate inquiry community online learning space for the inquiry community to manage work and learning.

It is not required to use the Icohere tool, rather we offer it as a means of helping your work. Part of our consultation to you is to help think through the pros and cons of using the Icohere tool for your particular endeavor.

Benefits of Creating an Inquiry Community

- Join an innovative and exciting new form of organization development practice
- Engage in an online network of exceptional people with exceptional ideas for developing business leadership
- Create greater institutional legitimacy for a community of people interested in business acting as an agent of world benefit
- Get invited to online B.A.W.B. conferences
- Create action research and action learning opportunities for others
- Connect to a network of people with similar interests and access to resources
- Mobilize a community and help it develop
- Practice skills in community and organization development
- Enhance your experience and the experiences of those around you
- Gain access to open source documents and guidance on methodologies for creating change in the world



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Future Learning Opportunities

As more inquiry communities emerge and begin to flourish, we plan on facilitating quarterly group teleconferences that allow the inquiry community Points of Contact to come together and share learning experiences and best practices. Mini-case studies on inquiry community experiences will be shared and dialogues will be designed to help us actualize as a global learning community.

What Next?

Thank you for taking the time to read through our information! We appreciate your interest and would like to help you the best we can. If you are interested in forming an inquiry community, please email the Inquiry Community Manager, Bauback Yeganeh, at bauback@case.edu. Response time is usually within 1-2 days.

Business as an Agent of World Benefit - World Inquiry Team

The World Inquiry team strives to bring the best of business to the entire world by uplifting awareness of extraordinary examples. Our team is based in Cleveland, Ohio at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. WIT consists of faculty and doctoral students in the Organizational Behavior Department, as well as several full-time staff.



(Several World Inquiry Team members at the United Nations Global Compact Leaders Summit)

World Inquiry Team Collaboration

Our intent is to help a group and/or organization in its ability to work towards the healthy advancement of business in society. We believe business has the potential to create a better world for all. With this in mind, the world inquiry team, in a limited capacity, can partner to clarify methodologies, train and educate, facilitate, and guide those interested in creating an inquiry community. We help inquiry communities form and sustain. If inquiry communities need assistance above and beyond regular hours donated by B.A.W.B., the potential for developing for more time is limited to the availability of staff.

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Case Western Reserve University
345 Peter B. Lewis Building
11119 Bellflower Road
Cleveland, Ohio 44106-7235
Phone: 216.368.3809
Fax: 216.368.0077

B.A.W.B. Inquiry Community Manager
Bauback Yeganeh: Cleveland, OH
bauback@case.edu

B.A.W.B. Knowledge and Media Manager
Rachel Wilkins: Cleveland, OH
rcw13@cwru.edu

B.A.W.B. Russia Contact & Editorial Team Manager
Nadya Zhexembayeva: Cleveland, OH
ntz@weatherhead.cwru.edu

B.A.W.B. Brazil Contact
Vinicius R. Gasparetto: Curitiba, Brazil
Vinicius.Gasparetto@fiepr.org.br

B.A.W.B. Beijing Contact
Ellen Raboin: Pepperdine, CA
ellen@thedialoguegroup.com

B.A.W.B. MPOD Contact
Tim Ewing: Cleveland, OH
htewing1@sbcglobal.net

B.A.W.B. Executive Director
Judy Rodgers
judy@jroddgers.net

B.A.W.B. Academic Coordinator
Lindsey Godwin: Cleveland, OH
lng2@case.edu

Research Associate
David Bright: Cleveland, OH
brightds@comcast.net