

The Essential Guide to Doing Transition

Getting Transition started in your street, community,
town or organisation.

By the Transition Network team



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Your guide to starting Transition in your street, community, town or organisation.

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Lighthouses don't go running all over
an island looking for boats to save;
they just stand there shining.

- Anne Lamott



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Why this Beginner's Guide?

We now have 10 years' experience of supporting groups bringing Transition to life in over 50 countries, in towns, cities, villages, institutions. We have a pretty clear idea now of what works and what doesn't, and we want to share that with you so you can be as effective as possible as quickly as possible.

We have created a lot of resources to support groups doing and being, Transition. In this Beginner's Guide we will signpost you to everything you will need as you begin the journey to doing some extraordinary things where you live. Think of this as your Transition Starter Pack.

Take it, run with it, do amazing things.

Some Numbers

This Guide is based on 10 years experience of making Transition happen in 1,400 communities in 50 countries and contains:

64 pages

1 Transition Healthcheck

7 Essential Ingredients of doing Transition successfully

3 'Keepers' every meeting should have

1 'Magic Number'

7 Ingredients for ensuring diversity in your group

11 Tips for Good Celebrations

5 Stages of Group Life

37 ideas for practical projects you could initiate



1

Welcome to Transition!

Transition is an ongoing social experiment, a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world through a process of creating healthy human culture. It's a movement you can join. It is inspirational, positive, evolving, and if you've made it here, it may well be just what you're looking for. Whether you're excited by visiting a Transition initiative, have a particular project in mind, or have been inspired by seeing a film such as *Demain* or *In Transition 2.0* and have decided it's time to do something (you're right), this Beginner's Guide is here to help. So let's start with the obvious first question...

Left: Transition Town Tooting's 'Foodival' is an annual festival reimagining what local food means in an urban context.

What is Transition?

Transition is a movement that has been growing since 2005. It is about communities stepping up to address the big challenges they face by starting local. By coming together, they are able to create solutions together. They seek to nurture a caring culture, one focused on connection with self, others and nature. They are reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling themselves and weaving webs of connection and support. Courageous conversations are being had; extraordinary change is unfolding.

We'll tell you some of their stories as we go through. It's an approach that has spread now to over 50 countries, in thousands of groups: in towns, villages, cities, universities, schools. One of the key ways it spreads is through telling inspiring stories. We really hope you feel inspired to take part, we'd be honoured if you did.

Why?

People get involved with Transition for all sorts of reasons:

- To get to know their neighbours
- To feel that they are making a difference in the world, both now, and for future generations
- To overcome the sense of disconnection they feel from self, others and from the nature around them
 - because the world's huge challenges feel more manageable if addressed at the local scale
- To catalyse all manner of new projects, enterprises and investment opportunities
- To learn new skills
- To feel like they are creating a more life-enhancing story for their place
- To feel connected to other people, the natural world, and to something historic and exciting happening around them
- Because they feel it is "the right thing to do"
- Because they feel disenfranchised by politics and want to be able to take back a sense that they can influence the world around them

Here are some short videos in which people share why they do Transition.



<https://youtu.be/cdAcTU2GyGE>



https://youtu.be/E_hJQWlQJo4



<https://youtu.be/PwMYBLtY8HA>

Principles

Here are some principles which guide what we do:

We respect resource limits and create resilience: the urgent need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, greatly reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and make wise use of precious resources is at the forefront of everything we do.

We promote inclusivity and social justice: the most disadvantaged and powerless people in our societies are likely to be worst affected by rising fuel and food prices, resource shortages and extreme weather events. We want to increase the chances of all groups in society to live well, healthily and with sustainable livelihoods.

We adopt subsidiarity: self-organisation and decision making at the appropriate level. The intention of the Transition model is not to centralise or control decision making, but rather to work with everyone so that it is practiced at the most appropriate, practical and empowering level

We pay attention to balance: in responding to urgent, global challenges, individuals and groups can end up feeling stressed, closed or driven rather than open, connected and creative. We create space for reflection, celebration and rest to balance the times when we're busily getting things done. We explore different ways of working which engage our heads, hands and hearts and enable us to develop collaborative and trusting relationships.

We are part of an experimental, learning network: Transition is a real-life, real-time global social experiment. Being part of a network means we can create change more quickly and more effectively, drawing on each other's experiences and insights. We want to acknowledge and learn from failure as well as success - if we're going to be bold and find new ways of living and working, we won't always get it right first time. We will be open about our processes and will actively seek and respond positively to feedback.

We freely share ideas and power: Transition is a grassroots movement, where ideas can be taken up rapidly, widely and effectively because each community takes ownership of the process themselves. Transition looks different in different places and we want to encourage rather than unhelpfully constrain that diversity.

We collaborate and look for synergies: the Transition approach is to work together as a community, unleashing our collective genius to have a greater impact together than we can as individuals. We will look for opportunities to build creative and powerful partnerships across and beyond the Transition movement and develop a collaborative culture, finding links between projects, creating open decision-making processes and designing events and activities that help people make connections.

We foster positive visioning and creativity: our primary focus is not on being against things, but on developing and promoting positive possibilities. We believe in using creative ways to engage and involve people, encouraging them to imagine the future they want to inhabit. The generation of new stories is central to this visioning work, as is having fun and celebrating success.

Head, Heart and Hands

Doing Transition successfully is about finding a balance between these:

The Head: we act on the basis of the best information and evidence available and apply our collective intelligence to find better ways of living.

The Heart: we work with compassion, valuing and paying attention to the emotional, psychological, relational and social aspects of the work we do.

The Hands: we turn our vision and ideas into a tangible reality, initiating practical projects and starting to build a new, healthy economy in the place we live.

So, let's get started shall we?

2

The 7 essential ingredients for doing Transition



2. Vision

Imagining the future
you want to co-create



1. Healthy groups

Learning how to work
well together



3. Involvement

Getting the wider community involved
and developing relationships beyond
friends and natural allies



Networks & partnerships

Collaborating with others



6. Part of a movement

Scaling up your impacts by linking up with Transitioners elsewhere



7. Reflect & celebrate

Reflecting on how you're doing and celebrating the difference you're making



Practical projects

Inspiring others and building new infrastructures



Healthy Groups

Learning how to work well together

People often look at the great projects that come out of Transition: community energy projects; local currencies; ambitious food projects and so on, and they assume they happen by magic. But central to any project being successful is a healthy group. Creating healthy groups is something we aren't taught in school, or in most work settings. It requires a set of skills and tools that we may well not have. So over the last 10 years we have created various resources that will support you to co-create a group culture based on the trusting, caring and compassionate relationships needed to make decisions effectively, run nourishing and successful meetings and events, avoid burnout, navigate conflict healthily and maintain members in the longer term.



Crystal Palace Transition Town members who formed Crystal Palace Food Market: "We want the children to grow up thinking this is normal". Photo: Jonathan Goldberg.

People often look at the great projects that come out of Transition: community energy projects; local currencies; ambitious food projects and so on, and they assume they happen by magic. But central to any project being successful is a healthy group.

Creating healthy groups is something we aren't taught in school, or in most work settings. It requires a set of skills and tools that we may well not have. So we have created a number of resources about healthy groups that will give you a clear understanding of how groups develop, the ability to make decisions, the ability to run successful meetings, keep people in your group, document what you're doing and manage conflict.

“When we get together, it’s like everyone is feeding everyone else. There’s this atmosphere of ‘I tell you... you tell me’. Everyone listens, then someone comes up with another idea. It’s like collective excitement, collective inspiration, collective knowledge, coming together for the profit of the group. You can feel the thrill.”

- Emiliano Muñoz, Portillo en Transición, Spain.



Food is a time-honoured way of creating a good group culture. At the Transition in Action Youth Exchange in Hungary, Italian participant, Andrea, shares his pizza-making skills with the rest of the group. Photo: Hajnal Fekete

Transition Network Resources

You can find our guides to creating and maintaining healthy groups, making decisions and our Inner Transition activities for meetings at <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/healthy-groups/>



The Stages of Group Life

In 1965, Bruce Tuckman suggested there are 4 stages of group development: Forming; Storming; Norming; Performing. To his list we add a fifth, Mourning. They should help you make sense of what you see happening in your group, at whichever stage it may be.

Forming

At this stage everything feels wonderful. The air is rich with possibility, everyone is getting along great. We think our group is fantastic. We might look at other groups and wonder why they seem to struggle so much! But the reason it's working like this is that we haven't yet agreed our group culture, and are managing to avoid differences and disagreements. During this stage, it is important that your group:

- Take time to really meet and listen to each other. Create a shared sense of purpose
- Get to know each other better. How is each person under stress, what do they care about, how good are they are sharing their thoughts and emotions?
- Agree structures that will help the group work well
- Create group agreements, particularly around decision-making.
- Recognise that rather than just leaping into doing stuff, giving attention to this stuff is just as, if not more, important.

Storming

After a while you might find tensions arising, arguments happening, people who have taken on roles of responsibility being challenged. Things can feel contentious, uncomfortable and upsetting, especially to people who don't like conflict. But this is a key stage, and if your group can get through it, it will be much stronger and more resilient as a result.

What's happening is that you have reached a stage where there is enough trust in the group for people to feel able to challenge and disagree with each other. Groups often fail at this stage, but it is essential, it is your group working out how to operate. Several things can help get you through this stage:

- Good listening
- A neutral facilitator
- Repeating back: "what I heard you say is..."
- Patience
- Shared purpose

During this stage, some people may leave, and that's OK. This tends to be when the need for processes and structures is most keenly felt.

Norming

In this stage, agreements are reached about how you're going to work together, roles are defined, structures agreed upon, procedures for meetings. Relationships have deepened to a level very different from the Forming stage. In this stage, all group members move towards sharing the responsibility and commitment to work for the success of the group's goals. Things that help this stage go well include:

- Honouring people who leave: this may not work for everyone. If people choose to step out, find a suitable way to honour everything they have brought to the group
- It's happening: a sense that the group is coming together, is able to work well: it feels like being part of something exciting.

Performing

This is when you find yourselves feeling that you are being effective and getting things done easily. That feels good! You'll find your group competent and motivated, with each person clear as to their role and task. There is good communication and people work well together.

The group is good at making decisions together, and can hold people accountable for their tasks.

Differences and disagreements are seen as part of a healthy group culture. Achievements are regularly celebrated, and space is made for reflection as to where the group might like to go in the future.

Mourning

It may be that projects your group initiates will fail, that people leave the group, or even that the whole group stops for one reason or another. It's important to mark these endings appropriately.

If one or more people leave, mark the occasion: share a meal; give a gift, a card.

If the group is ending, have a shared event to celebrate all that you have achieved. Make space to talk about the loss and sadness people might be feeling, and to appreciate what it is that you have enjoyed about working with each other.

You may need to agree a way to pass on any assets the group may be left with.

Thoughts

In the life of a group it is rare that its evolution happens in the sequence set out here. Often they happen alongside each other. Your Norming could be accompanied by a lot of Storming, for instance!

You should also be mindful that when new people join, there will be a new Forming stage to include the views of who's joined without losing the valuable work which has gone before.

You can read a fuller account of these stages at: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/groups-develop-infosheet/>

Your first meeting

Your first meeting is really important. It will set the tone, and the culture, of how your group will work together. The aim is to get your group off to a good start, agreeing what you're all here to do, finding out about each other, establishing how you will work together, becoming friends. Some groups try to get on with doing things really fast, but often come unstuck later so let these early stages take a bit of time. This will give you a solid foundation to build on.

There are a few things you'll need to do in advance of the meeting:

- Invite those who are going to attend: give some thought to who should be there, and, so far as it's possible, try to get as much of your community's diversity in the room as you can
- Choose a venue: somewhere comfortable, that doesn't exclude anyone (whether through accessibility, religious or cultural reasons, or inaccessibility for those dependent on public transport)
- Appoint a facilitator: it's important to get into the habit of having a facilitator. This role can rotate, but for the first meeting, make sure someone knows they will be taking the role

One of the keys to good meetings is to open and close them successfully. So here are some ideas for your first meeting, as well as some suggestions for how to open and close them well.

Opening: Start with a check-in.

Start your meeting with a go-round where everyone speaks, uninterrupted, for a couple of minutes. They should introduce themselves, talk about how they are, what's happening in their life. You could also ask everyone, once they've done that, to reflect briefly on something they are grateful for at the moment or something they love about living in this place. Starting in this way sets the culture that we meet as friends who care about each other rather than as colleagues with an agenda to speed through. It really makes a difference.

It can also be useful to appoint 3 'Keepers':

A Keeper of the Time: whose role is to keep the meeting to time, to allocate times to different items and to make sure everything finishes on time

A Keeper of the Record: who keeps a record of the meeting, whether as minutes, a mindmap, or in whatever format the group feels would be useful

A Keeper of the Heart: whose role is to pay attention to the group's energy and dynamics, to point out when any intervention might be needed due to low energy levels, underlying tensions or other issues that might emerge and affect the smooth running of the group

The body of the meeting:

You could do all sorts of things during the meeting itself:

- Get to know each other, find out more about why each person is here and their hopes for the Transition group
- Develop a shared understanding of Transition
- Decide what area you want your Initiative to cover
- Find out what skills people have and other groups they may be linked to
- Understand each other's ways of dealing with stress: see our activity at <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/become-stress-busting-experts-inner-transition-activity/>
- If you have a programme of events planned, involve people in helping with these – it's good to do some things together to find out how you work as a team
- Actively develop the group, its relationships, understanding and ways of working

Take time to get to know each other. It is the relationships that you form that are a key part of what is going to keep you going through the rough patches, when there are disagreement and things maybe aren't going very well.

Our activity sheet 'Inner Transition activities for meetings' has some great practical exercises for bringing depth and energy to your meetings you can find it here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/inner-transition-activities-meetings/>

Closing: Make time to reflect on the meeting

It is good to get into the habit of making time at the end of your meeting to reflect on how it went and what worked, as well as what didn't work? What could be done better next time? Without it, there is no way to pick up if people are feeling excluded, frustrated or confused. It also creates a space to thank those whose good work made the meeting go well (see 'Stages of Group Life' above).

You might also need:

Tea, biscuits/cake, flipchart paper and pens, a laptop for taking notes, some way of keeping time.

Vision

Imagining the future you want to co-create

One of the key challenges with creating a low carbon, more resilient future is imagining what that might be like. Vibrant, diverse, delicious, connected and nurturing, or eating mouldy potatoes in a damp cave? Transition groups are great at helping people create visions of the future they'd like to see and then start taking steps towards it.

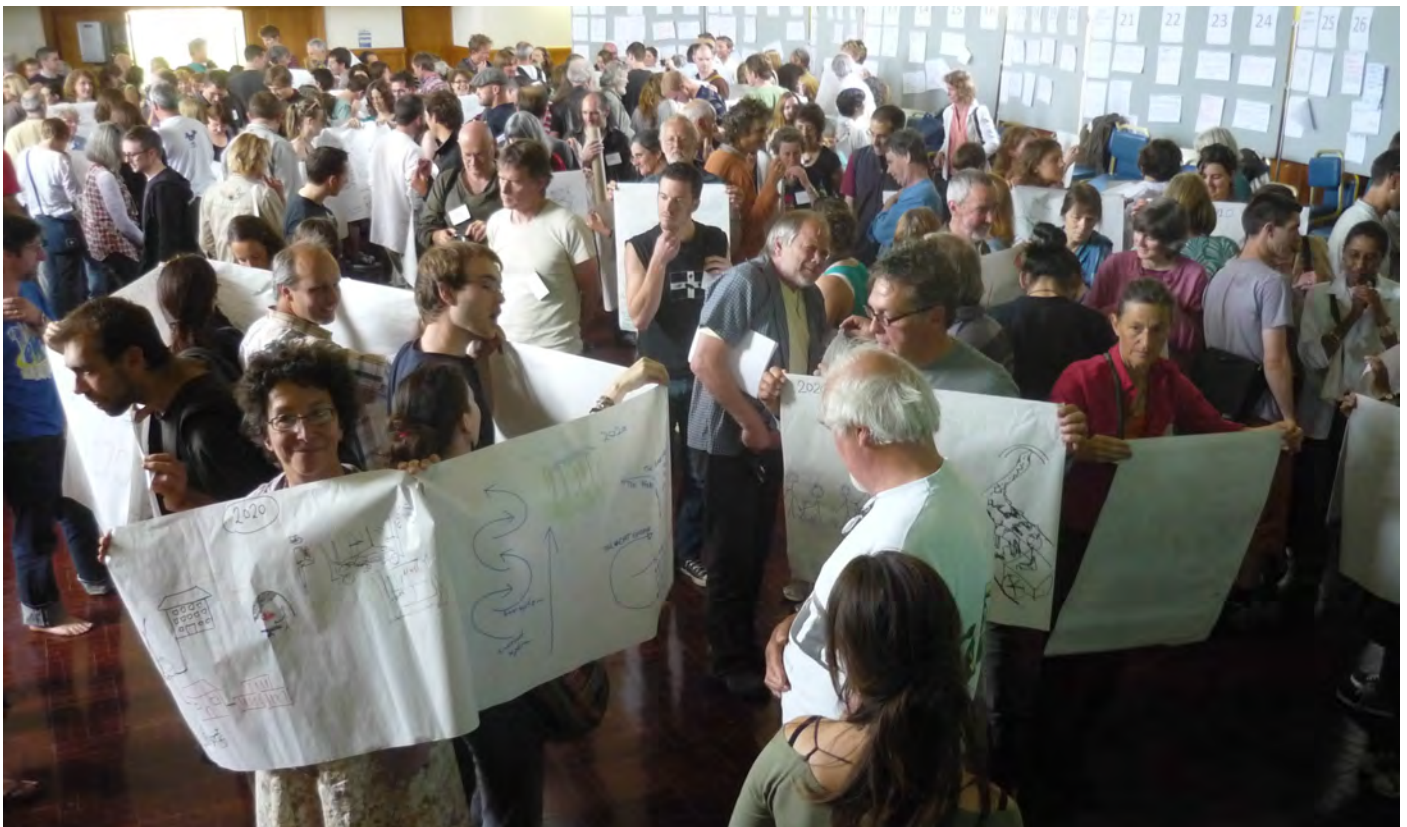


Transition Laguna Beach's vision of a low-carbon future. They're going to get some terrible salt spray damage on those aubergines. Image: Transition Laguna Beach.

Having a shared vision can help provide a real focus for your group and helps communicate to others what you are doing and why. It can also inspire local people and other groups to get involved and help make that vision a reality. Possibly most importantly, it encourages people to think of new possibilities for their future, which can be really empowering.

One of the simplest tools for visioning is just to invite people to close their eyes and imagine themselves walking down the street in 2030 and stopping to look around. Ask them what they can see or hear. Invite them to record their impressions through drawing, painting, or writing poetry, stories, or perhaps small ad columns from a future local newspaper. Much of what we read in the popular press is based on conflict, so creative exercises that, for example, invite people to write newspaper articles from the future, can work really well for some people.

"I was deeply disturbed and sad about the state of the natural world and society. Getting involved with Transition Pasadena has meant going from despair to community and being able to follow a passion and get help with it. It changed my relationship to the problems".
- Laurel Beck. Transition Pasadena, US.



A 'gallery' of crowd-sourced visions of the future: Transition Network conference 2010, at Seale Hayne, Newton Abbot, Devon, UK. Image: Mike Grenville.

Transition Network Resources

You'll find our guides for 'Visioning a post-Transition future' and 'Producing a Timeline' here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/vision/>
Open space events are also a great way to generate visions you can find the guide for running them here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/run-open-space-events-guide/>



What's your vision of the future?

Here are some ideas to get you started...

Urban Agriculture

In a Transition world, food will be grown closer to home, organically, in intensive systems that enhance biodiversity, and we'll all have the skills to do it. It will change the way our towns and cities look and feel.

Celebration

Vital to this being successful is ensuring as many opportunities for celebration as possible. This process should after all, as Richard Heinberg put it, "feel more like a party than a protest march".

"Food Belt"

The land adjoining our towns, villages and cities will be reconnected to feeding that place, creating more jobs, and reconnecting people with how, where, and by whom their food is grown.

Productive Trees

In the future, why would we plant ornamental, unproductive trees, when we could plant fruit or nut trees? Let's reimagine our towns and cities as food forests.

Community Energy

Energy generation, where possible, will be in community ownership. This brings many benefits to local economies, creates jobs and decentralises power (in both meanings of the term).

* Transition Network offers From Burnout to Balance workshops to support the co-creation of new culture based on collective and self-care, find out more here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/training/trainings/burnout-balance-re-building-resilient-communities/>

From Burnout to Balance*

Transition groups are learning how to co-create a new culture based on collective and self-care and which recognises our own health and wellbeing as essential to truly helpful engagement in Transition. Some groups have mentoring schemes, where professional counsellors and therapists support those at the heart of Transition, minimising the risk of burnout.

Participatory Democracy

Decisions are made in a far more decentralised, engaged, bottom-up way, with the role of government being to support what communities are deciding.

Cycling

Many Transition groups promote sustainable transport, learning bike repair skills, supporting new cyclists to gain confidence.

Local economy

We can reimagine our local economies to serve the many, not the few: incubating new enterprises and valuing the local.



Involvement

Inviting your community to get involved in Transition

Through the work of thousands of Transition groups, we are learning loads about how to involve our wider community in Transition. We have learned that it is primarily about learning to develop relationships beyond just our friends and natural allies - and that this takes time and patience. Rather than asking how can we engage people in Transition, we need to start by asking: how can we make Transition relevant to everyone in our community? We need to ask and listen to what people's respective needs are - especially those who are most marginalised, both economically and socially.

Doing this well can really help to raise awareness about Transition, and help people to understand the issues that Transition addresses. It also helps people to see that they can actually make a change in their community, and it can inspire new people to get involved.



Cardiff Transition's public picnic was a great way to invite the public to meet the project and to get involved. Photo: Cardiff Transition.

Community involvement is absolutely crucial to the success of Transition in your community. As more people come into the project, you will help them form their own self-sustaining projects, or theme groups that work with a particular focus such as Food, Energy, Communication or Wellbeing.

“It’s more than a garden, it’s a place in the neighbourhood where we can stay and have a few words with the neighbours, people you normally pass by. We are seeing all different people talking to each other, all ages, from children to old people. It’s a social meeting point”.

- Sébastien Mathieu, 1000 Bruxelles en Transition.



Transition Haslemere's 'Sustainable Harvest Picnic': Photo: Transition Haslemere.

Transition Network Resources

You can download all our resources for community involvement including the 'Big List' exercise (a very simple way to identify people and groups in your community who could help you deliver Transition), our 'Planning and Putting On Events' guide (which will come in very helpful), the 'How to get and keep people involved in Transition' guide and our 'Events and fun things to do' infosheet here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/community-involvement/>





Diversity

Working to ensure our Transition groups are as diverse and inclusive as possible isn't easy, but it's vital that we do it.

Here, taken from our Transition guide, *7 Ingredients for a just, fair and inclusive Transition*, are those ingredients:

Listening

When we really listen, we are able to find common ground and start from where people are at. Real listening is about being prepared to be changed by what we hear.

Meeting everyday needs

An important question for Transition groups working with marginalised communities is how can people even begin to think about building resilience against the future impacts of peak oil and climate change if their fundamental needs are not being met in the here and now? What are our fundamental needs? Although our wants and desires may vary, we all ultimately hold the same basic needs in common. According to the Development Specialist, Manfred Max-Neef, there are nine basic, fundamental needs: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, freedom. These are very useful to bear in mind when planning Transition projects.

Deepening inclusion

There are many ways to place inclusion at the heart of your Transition group: making sure your meetings are not in venues that exclude some people, not presented in ways that exclude people and are physically accessible to all. Individually, people can be very committed to ideas around diversity and inclusion but as a whole, they can form a culture that feels exclusive to others. All too often, this culture is drawn from, and reflective of, the culture that is dominant in society. Those that are excluded by it are therefore also the people who tend to have less power or privilege in society at large.

Building bridges

How can Transition succeed in building resilience if it doesn't build friendship and trust across all "barriers"? Think about who needs to be part of what you're doing, and go and see them - don't expect them to come to you. 'Hard to reach' is only hard to reach if we don't try to reach out and find out how to make Transition relevant to everyone.

Celebration

Diversity opens the door to celebrating the different ways we have of expressing the things that we hold in common. Celebration enables people to comfortably move out of their comfort zone. Celebration enables people to revel in life and creative expression. Make sure you weave celebration through all that you do.

Exploring rank and privilege

As Process Worker Arnold Mindell says, "Any power, good or bad, if not recognised, can become oppressive and harmful". We need to make a concerted effort to understand our relationship with power and privilege to enable us to use this to co-create a more caring, just, equitable and life-enhancing world - in solidarity with those who our current culture most marginalises.

Embedding diversity

If we are to build a truly inclusive and equitable Transition, perhaps the most important ingredient we need to take away is that of threading a commitment to diversity and social justice through everything we do. Our '7 Ingredients' guide offers a wealth of advice on this.

You can download our guide *7 Ingredients for a just, fair and inclusive Transition* here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/7-ingredients-just-fair-inclusive-transition-inner-transition-guide/>

Left: Transition Town Tooting's 'Tour de Tooting' began with a question: "*Once upon a time in a town called Tooting, there was big windmill whose sails had not turned for a very long time. A group of children got together and wondered - if they took to the streets asking everyone to create energy from their whistles, clicks, thumbs up, high fives and smiles - could the get the sails to turn again?*" Photo: Luke Harris.

Networks & partnerships

Collaborating with others

Collaboration is vital to building Transition in your community. The skilful building of partnerships and collaborations will enable you to reach much further and achieve much more. It will enable you to:

- Avoid duplicating each other's work
- Meet new people
- Develop new opportunities, ideas and solutions
- Scale your work up to effectively address the gravity of challenges we currently face
- Develop joined up strategic approaches to co-creating innovative, cross-cutting, impactful and long-lasting solutions



The Aardehuis ecovillage project in the Netherlands is a great example of a Transition initiative working in a symbiotic way with a project that was already underway in the local community.
Photo: Vereniging Aardehuis

One option is to build a network of groups that support each other locally, another is to work in partnership with groups on shared projects. Transition is about the art of finding, and building, common ground, and this is particularly true in this context.

“One thing we have is the ‘Power to Convene’. Somebody comes and has a great idea, such as ‘I really want to start a bicycle taxi business’, and young people who are graduates of a local bike mechanic programme say ‘we know how to take care of bikes, we’d like to start a business’. So we pulled together a community event, and got 70 people there who were interested, and we got a whole bunch of new stakeholders and allies, and now they have a working group and are working on setting up that business. I think we just keep doing that in every area where there is both a problem and people who want to do something about it. We can get a crowd together, help identify resources and spark them”.

- Chuck Collins: Jamaica Plain New Economy Transition, Boston, US.

5 ways you can work in partnership

1. **Sharing information:** share information with your network about other things happening locally, and invite them to do the same with your events. This helps avoid clashes in terms of events, and opens up new possibilities for collaboration, and avoids any sense that you are trying to “take over”. [Commitment level: low]
2. **Asking good questions:** this is a great way to build support and relationships, and shows you are open to the views of others. [Commitment level: low]
3. **Deciding together:** find effective ways to maximise meaningful engagement in decision-making around key projects from local stakeholders. [Commitment level: medium]
4. **Harnessing ‘the Power to Convene’:** inviting your supporters to invest time, money or energy in local projects, A Local Entrepreneur Forum is a great example of this. [Commitment level: medium]
5. **Delivering projects together:** this kind of partnership working can be great, and can generate some great creative challenges. Our guide to ‘How to create partnerships’ has lots of advice on this. [Commitment level: high]

Transition Network resources

Read all our guides for creating Networks and Partnerships here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/networks-and-partnerships/> You could also do our Big List activity, which offers a simple way of identifying people and groups in your community who could help you to deliver Transition you read more here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/big-list-activity/>



Build a network

Most of us are naturally part of networks, be it our family, friends or community. Networks empower people as the health of the whole community depends on the health of the community as a whole, so the more you can work together and support each other the more you strengthen and nourish each other. Building networks is about building mutual friendships and support for your project and the work of others.

They help build Transition in your community by raising awareness of what you are doing and building a network of support that can bring all kinds of surprises, such as:

- More opportunities may come your way when developing projects
- You may find that you already have a relationship with potential partners
- May find you start to get help and support from your community just when you need it
- You unleash the collective gifts and genius of parts of your community you weren't even aware of

Building networks is all about supporting each other

Strong effective networks develop when people support and trust each other, the following are some of the ways that you can do this:

- Organize an event where local resources can be promoted and shared
- Support & publicise other groups' projects and events on your web site and newsletter etc...
- Ask a local group or agency to host a web site listing all the brilliant and dedicated local groups and projects working for a more caring and life-enhancing world
- Ask local groups and a diverse range of respected leaders to be Advisors to your Transition group

Who to network with and ways to build your network

The Big List Exercise here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/big-list-activity/> is a great exercise to really think about all the potential groups or individuals in your community who may support your work. This might help you to decide some of the groups and people it could be useful to develop networks and partnerships with.

Building networks is all about developing relationships, so it is always great to meet people in person if possible. It really helps if you do it a bit of research on the group/person you are meeting beforehand so that you can:

- Learn a bit about the group, for example what their aims are, what needs they are addressing and how long the group has been going for
- Think about what it is that you like about their group
- Consider how you will introduce yourself and your group

- Think of some of the ways that you can support their group
- Think about mutual benefits of being in contact with each other
- Prepare some good open questions that help you to better understand how Transition might be relevant to them and the needs and challenges they are facing

Remember Transition is about collaboration not competition, so if groups already exist in your community who are doing Transition-type activities, then think about how you can support each other by working collaboratively. It is also very important that people don't feel that you are trying to take over their group. When interacting with people always be thinking about collaboration, ask for their advice on what you want to do, offer them opportunities to get involved and so on.

Example of a first meeting outline

- Honour the past accomplishments & ongoing work of a group before telling them about Transition, and most importantly, ask questions that will help you to better understand their needs and challenges - and how Transition could be relevant to them
- Learn about their mission, goals, programs
- Find out who they reach, or seek to reach, in the community?
- Share information about some of the challenges that Transition is attempting to address such as rising energy costs and the economic impacts on the community
- Ask them how the Transition movement could support their organisation's work in the community?
- Ask them for support, what would they like to give to support the community's transition? (e.g. help connect to other groups and leaders, places to meet, copying, events, etc.)

Building long term relationships:

As Transition is about a whole community process then it is very important to maintain your networks, stay in contact with groups and support each other wherever possible. Here are a few ways you can do this:

- When planning events or projects always think about other groups that you could get involved, especially those who include the more marginalised members of your community
- Support an existing project, such as helping a community orchard out during harvesting time
- Promote other groups' events and work at your events
- Invite other groups to your social events
- Consult with groups when planning new projects

Transition needs to have strong networks to be really effective at the necessary levels of scale, so take time to build up those relationships as you never know where they might lead. *We are indebted and deeply grateful to Tina Clarke for this activity.*

Practical projects

Inspiring others with what you do

The success of the Transition movement rests on us making tangible changes in the world. For some of us this means stepping out of our comfort zone and moving beyond ideas and meetings to taking tangible action. There is real power in stepping across into action, into making tangible changes to the place where you live. There is no prescriptive list of projects you should do, rather these will emerge from your group, its interests and its passions. You will, however, find a list of suggestions for ideas of small practical projects you can run as Transition overleaf and here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/small-practical-projects-initiating-group-infosheet/> As time goes on, these projects will become increasingly ambitious and impactful.



Members of 1000bxl en Transition in Brussels building the raised beds for their 'Potager Alhambra' food garden in the centre of the city's red light district. See more about their work and other projects in the video to the right. Photo: Jan Leerman.

"It's amazing. I've been living in Portalegre forever, 37 years, and I have felt my community and my city crumble, people turning their backs on each other. The community garden we created tells me it is possible to do things with other people. It is possible, we just need to wake up to each other again".

- Sònia Tavares, Portalegre em Transição, Portugal.

Practical projects provide lots of different ways for people to get involved in Transition, as well as acting as really important demonstrations and public manifestations of Transition in action.

Ultimately, they can be what leads to the creation of new enterprises in your community, and of new livelihoods and employment and training opportunities. One of them might even morph into your new career! They are also vital because they show that not only is change possible, but that it is already happening.



<https://vimeo.com/143176993>

Transition Network Resources

You can download our guide to 'Developing Practical Projects', which is packed with insight and good ideas for ensuring your projects have the best chance of success here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/developing-practical-projects-guide/>

It may be that running Open Space events is a great way of generating ideas and enthusiasm for your Practical Projects, see the guide here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/run-open-space-events-guide/>



Doing stuff

You could start a bakery, or...



Pen and ink drawing: Rob Hopkins.

Photo credits for the following pages:

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Over, page 34:

Michele Vander Syp, Julian Andrews/Eye R8 Productions Ltd, Cristiano Bottone, Maud Dan, Jonathan Goldberg, Rob Hopkins, Kazuhiro Hakamada, Karen Whitelaw, Chris Rowland, Leamington Spa Courier, Ann Carranza, Loughborough Echo.

Over, page 35:

Jonathan Goldberg, Alfredo Cáliz, Transition Town Totnes, Jonathan Goldberg, Mike Thomas, Paul Mackay, Jonathan Goldberg, Jonathan Goldberg, Romania in Tranzitie, Transition Usk, Transition Network.



Start a Repair Cafe
Pasadena, USA



Host a Local Food Summit
New Forest, UK



Organise a 'Food Gleaning'
Sarasota, USA



Mentoring for burnout
Totnes, UK



Create a new food market
Coin, Spain



Organise a street carnival
Tooting, London, UK



Share skills
Totnes, UK



Open a community shop
Slaithwaite, UK



Start a Hop Club
Crystal Palace, London, UK



Create a Surplus Food Cafe
Fishguard, UK



Run a community Open Space
Fujino, Japan



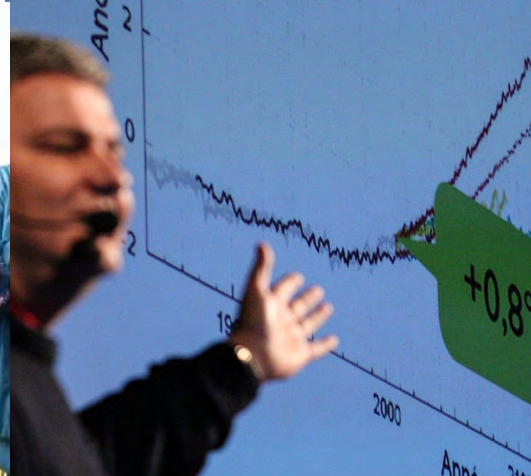
Help a school to grow food
Newent, UK



Start a local currency
Grez, Belgium



Community wine-making
Kilburn, London, UK



Give a public talk
Cristiano Bottone, Italy



Hold large public events
Liege, Belgium



Run a 'Potato Day'
Stroud, UK



Start a co-housing project
Ungersheim, France.



Start a community energy company
Fujino, Japan



Run 'Transition Streets'
Newcastle, Australia



Invite community investment in renewables
Lewes, UK



Plant some fruit/nut trees
Leamington IJK



Start a Seed Library
Healdsburg, USA



Make apple juice
Loughborough, UK



Learn natural building
Transition Heathrow, UK



Community beekeeping
Zarzalejo, Spain



Start a community cinema
Totnes, UK



Dress up as a carrot. A bit random.
Crystal Palace, London, UK



Make space for reflection
University of St. Andrews, Scotland.



Run 'Draughtbusting' sessions
Brixton, London, UK



Learn to forage
Transition Heathrow, UK



Harvest fallen fruit
Kensal to Kilburn, London, UK



Start a 'Free Market'
Bucharest, Romania



Offer free bike repairs
Usk, Wales.



Do some Transition Training
Anywhere!



Find more in our '21 Stories of Transition'.

Part of a movement

Linking up with other Transitioners

Transition is happening in over 50 countries around the world. So once you start an initiative, you become part of that huge learning network of people sharing their insights, learnings and wisdom. Make the most of it! Becoming more connected to what's happening around the world helps you to do several things:

- Share what you have learnt
- Find out if your country has a national 'Hub' organisation and make contact with them
- Save time by learning from what others are doing
- Support each other
- Make new friends
- Deepen your understanding of what Transition is about
- You will feel you are not alone. Many small actions add up to something bigger



Whether it's webinars, TransitionNetwork.org, our conferences, networks of regional Transition groups or connecting through social media, becoming more connected to the wider movement, according to our experience, really helps Transition groups to do better. You may also find that there are regional networks of Transition groups where you live who can give you support and advice.

And don't feel you can only share your successes. Sharing your challenges and hurdles, and your reflections on why things didn't work, is just as useful. There's a movement out there, make the most of it!

"When we get together, it's like everyone is feeding everyone else. There's this atmosphere of 'I tell you... you tell me'. Everyone listens, then someone comes up with another idea. It's like collective excitement, collective inspiration, collective knowledge, coming together for the profit of the group. You can feel the thrill."
- Emiliano Muñoz, Portillo en Transición, Spain.

"Transition provides me with the knowledge and contacts I need for the uncertain future ahead".
- Russ Carrington.



Photos: Mike Grenville

Transition Network Resources

Read our guide to Making the most of being part of the Transition movement here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/>



Why does it matter to be part of an international network of Transition initiatives?

We asked people attending the Transition Hubs Gathering in Copenhagen (2014):



"It's so remarkable to speak with people from 20 countries, the perspectives, the genuineness, it's been really moving".

- Carolyn, US

"Things can seem so fuzzy when you've been working all day long with Transition in a group process, it can get a bit complicated, you don't always see exactly a clear focus. To talk with all the people here and get feedback from people who are doing such similar jobs, that really helps to see more clarity and also to feel confidence that you are going in the right direction".

- Lynn, Netherlands

"It's been great because of all the diversity of the gathering, sharing stories and the friendship, the interconnection, the heart and soul and the brain also for dealing with our own realities back home and it's been a very friendly environment so thanks for the invitation".

- Raúl, Mexico



"I made a lot of new friends internationally and I had a chance to really explore how I can connect more to the international part of Transition. Also it's been really enriching to experience how things get cooked and prepared on this scale. And also it's been really funny, this is inside information, it's been really fun and I loved it".

- Andre, Romania



"It really has become a family including all the people who have not been here before, so even the people who are within the national network for the first time feel very included right from the beginning, if we can keep this spirit and this kind of meetings then globally Transition is going to be wonderful".

- Gerd, Germany



"We feel like we are not alone here. We feel that this change is possible and it's already happening, so I am very happy".

- Juan, Spain



"The last few days have had lots of creativity and inspiration and I think I've got lots of energy for the coming things we have to do"

- Ana, Spain

Every revolution needs its banners: the role of creativity in Transition

An extract from a blog post by Rob Hopkins

Every movement, every coming together of people to bring about positive change, needs its flags, its icons. Transition is no exception. When you are doing Transition in your community, always invite in creativity, design and the arts. One manifestation of Transition's 'let it go where it wants to go' spirit is in the huge diversity of logos groups create for themselves.

One of the greatest icons of the Transition movement is the Brixton Pound £10 note. The one featuring David Bowie. Notice how you had already heard of it and, most likely, could already visualise it. In the event that you didn't, here it is, among its fellow notes. It's bright, it's simple, it's colourful. I have taken it to many places. What has often amazed me is how its reputation has gone ahead of it so that, on at least 4 occasions, just my holding it up during a talk has generated a round of applause. When I went to Paris recently and visited a project run by Le Pre Saint Gervais en Transition, we were visited by the local Mayor Gérard Cosme.

Did he want to have his photo taken with the group of people there? With me? Not really. The key thing he wanted was a photo of himself with the Brixton Pound £10 note, "the one with David Bowie on" (see photo below).

It starts conversations. It embodies the sense that a Transition future could be more fun than the alternative futures currently on offer. It embodies possibility. It is delightful. Why would anyone want to settle for the dull money currently on offer, when we could have bright funky money with David Bowie on? No, seriously... why would you?

And if you won't settle for that, why settle for anything else? It opens the possibility of actually refusing to accept the planet-trashing, attention span wrecking, community atomising, wealth-concentrating nonsense that makes up so much of what we accept in modern society.



My point is that we need more things in our life that we care about. Personally speaking, I care more about a Totnes £21 note than I care about a £20 note. The things Transition does, whether urban gardening, new food markets, Transition Streets groups, are all about creating things that people care about.

The remarkable 'Transition Town Anywhere' activity Lucy and others facilitated at the Transition Network conference in 2009, where 350 people built a living, working High Street economy from string and cardboard left me caring far more deeply about my own High Street than I had before. And art and design have a vital role to play in that.

Every revolution needs its icons, its tokens, which embody much more than appears at first glance. But it's about more than art and design. It's about what those things can act as a gateway to. I always loved Jean DuBuffet's quote:

"Art does not lie down on the bed that is made for it; it runs away as soon as one says its name; it loves to go incognito. Its best moments are when it forgets what it is called".

For me, the moments when Transition most touches and inspires me are the moments when it "forgets what it is called", when it comes up with unexpected and delightful approaches. A £10 note with David Bowie on is a perfect example of that. So is "a shop with nothing for sale but lots on offer".

So is a project to plant fruit trees that is also an art project with oral histories, tours, poetry, maps and storytelling. So weave creativity through your Transition project, allow it to be beautiful, challenging, inclusive. And share the stories of what you do with the wider movement.



Transition Kensal to Kilburn in London harvest local fruits and then run workshops on preserve-making, adorning the final product with these beautiful labels.
Photo: Jonathan Goldberg.

Transition Network Resources

Download our guide to 'Putting on an Annual Celebration' here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/putting-annual-celebration-guide/>
It is also very useful to have an understanding of the Action Learning Cycle, you can find our guide on this here: <http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/action-reflection-cycle-inner-transition-guide/>



Reflect & celebrate

Acknowledging the difference you're making

Reflecting on how your group is doing and celebrating what you've achieved is an essential part of Transition. It's important to create space to assess what you have done and explore how well you work together as a group.

Discussing and addressing issues early, can help you avoid burnout and respond in a healthy way to conflict. And, if you take time to understand the impact your activities are having in the world then you know if you are moving towards the vision you have developed for your community. Remember appreciation is usually a good place to start!

Make sure you stop and celebrate what you have achieved. Otherwise, you can forget all the great stuff you have done and it's also a good excuse to get together and have a party.

"Food is really, really important. In a slightly personal way, I bake biscuits for the council meetings that I chair. And it's really interesting how that broke down a whole formality, just by starting a meeting with tea and coffee and biscuits that come from a recipe that my mum made. It makes the whole thing more human and acceptable, and that's exactly the kind of thing that Transition groups are doing all the time".

- Peter Macfadyen, former Mayor of Frome and founder of Transition Frome.



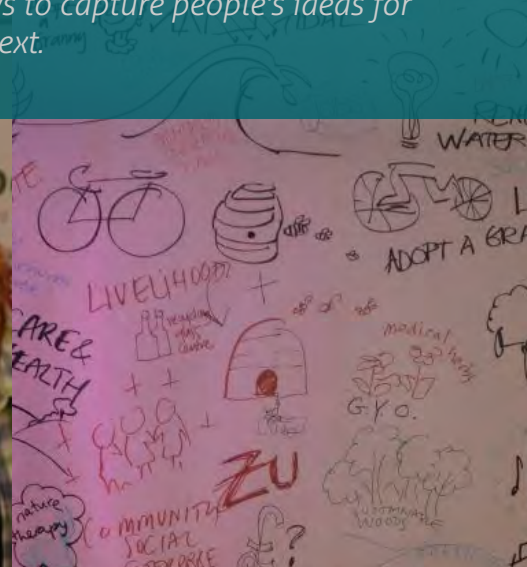
Transition Brixton's amazing 'Unleashing Cake'. Photo: Amelia Gregory.



2. Food and Drink: *It's a celebration, and celebrations need refreshment. Feast well. Celebrate your local food culture.*



4. Look Forward: *This celebration is not the end of the whole thing, merely a pausing point. Where might the group go next? Find fun and engaging ways to capture people's ideas for where to go next.*



9. No graphs!: *By all means have someone along to give a talk, but keep it upbeat and positive. Tell stories, make it funny. Keep the energy up. It's a celebration, remember!*

How to do good celebration

Lessons from Transition Town Lewes' 'Seven Year Itch' Transition Party



5. Keep it changing: *At the Transition Lewes event there was a choir, a couple of talks, some poetry, a raffle, more singing, bagpipes, dancing, the opportunity to interact with Transition Town Lewes projects, mention of the campaign for a community take-over of the site we were on, food, drink. Keep it changing.*



6. Dancing. *A good celebration really benefits from the opportunity to have a good dance. The perfect way to wrap up a good celebration.*



7. A sense of context: *Invite other local organisations you've interacted with to have stalls, whatever they like. Celebrate the web of connections and relationships you've created and the sum total of what you have produced between yourselves.*



10. Critical Mass: *A really good celebration needs a good turnout. Try to make sure you have a good crowd in.*

3

In Depth: How to start Transition

The aim of this Beginner's Guide is to get you up and running doing Transition, and to point you to the online resources you'll need in order to do that most successfully. We'll tell you more below, but for now, we just need to make an important point.

One of the things that we have learned from doing Transition is to distinguish between the kind of group you will now be forming, – either an Initiating Group or a Core Group – and the kind of group that your Transition initiative will end up being.

Our Transition Launch training is one of the best foundations for starting Transition. Find out more here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/training/trainings/transition-launch-training/>



An Initiating Group

Getting Transition started in a community needs a group who can commit time and energy and have a range of skills and experience. It doesn't happen by magic! This group will carry out the first stage of the Transition process and we call them the Initiating Group. It would be ideal if everyone involved in this process read this guide and then meet to come up with a plan on how to start Transition.



A Core Group

The Core Group comes a bit later, built on the foundations laid by the Initiating Group. It may contain none, some or all of the same people. The Core Group is the group that in general catalyses all those great projects you associate with Transition. But it stands on the shoulders of what the Initiating Group did. We'll tell you more about that in the next section.

Above: Core group meeting. Photo: Jonathan Goldberg.

Initiating Groups

Some key things to think about

People.

We can't do this on our own. There certainly are lots of things we can do on our own, cutting energy use, eating more seasonal food and so on, and all that stuff really matters. But doing Transition needs more people than just us. You might already know some others who might get involved. They might be friends, colleagues at work or University. They might be members of a different group you are already part of. If you don't already know them, here are a few suggestions for how you might find people:

- Contact friends, like-minded people or groups that are already doing similar things
- Publicise it through your networks and social media channels
- Put on a film, talk or other event and invite people to join, find out how here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/community-involvement/>
- Talk about Transition on your local radio station
- Go along to groups with similar aims and start to make connections

We were once contacted by a woman in Australia who bemoaned the fact that no-one else in her town would be interested in Transition, that she was the only person who cared about that kind of thing.

"Are you sure?" we asked her.

Questions we hear a lot:

How can we put on events that are appealing and relevant to our community?

Some people will be interested in broad global issues like climate change or energy supplies. Many more are interested in local issues – health and well being, feeling connected in their neighbourhood, house prices, or unemployment. Making Transition issues relevant to local concerns is a real skill. How can you celebrate local history through stories from older people? Or create local food celebrations, healthy outdoor activities, projects which connect neighbours and allow people to feel safe in the own homes and streets?

A month later she rang us back, her despondency replaced with elation. She had put an ad in her local paper, and had received over 120 replies, and thus her Transition group was born.

The Magic Number? 1? 12? Or somewhere in the middle?

As we said before, if your group consists only of you, it is definitely too small. So how big is too big, and how small is too small? From our experience, the ideal group size is between 5 and 8. 12 is probably too many. Although it may sound obvious, it is important that those people are interested in Transition, interested enough to, perhaps, read this Essential Guide, or some of the other literature about Transition. Even better, they might have done a Transition Training, or perhaps visited an existing Transition initiative.

Who?

Starting Transition successfully needs many different kinds of people. Here's a list of skills or qualities that we have found to be really helpful. If you're a small group looking for some more members it is useful to go through this list, find out what skills you already have. Then see if you can bring in what's missing - either by inviting other people, or getting people trained up. Don't let this list put you off as people can develop skills needed and you can always ask people for specific help.

- Skills in organising: managing projects, getting a group to work well, coordinating different people's activities, working with volunteers



On Earth day 2015, Transition Granja Viana in Brazil spent the day with the kids from the local OCA Cultural School, learning about climate change, collecting waste around the school, ending with a lantern walk. Photo: Isabela Maria Gomez de Menezes

- People skills: being friendly and welcoming, working with different outlooks, culture and worldviews, knowing how to work well with differences and conflict
- Skills in running effective, enjoyable meetings: setting up and running meetings, and developing how the group works
- Designing and running good events: public speaking, booking rooms, showing DVDs, running Open Space, facilitating discussions
- Experience of networking: with existing organisations and people
- Publicity skills: contacting press, designing posters and flyers, writing blogs and using social media
- Managing information: email lists, bulletins, phone lists
- Designing and maintaining websites
- Connections with and knowledge of local community groups
- Knowledge of local history and local issues

As well as gathering together the right skills, it's also helpful to find people who are:

- Able to dedicate some of their time: and it's OK to be specific about this (half a day a week? a day per month?)
- Fun: they know how to make this kind of work enjoyable
- Reliable: they do what they say they'll do
- On the same page: they share some understanding of the reasons why Transition is needed, and what it is
- Caring: are realistic about what a group of volunteers can do, and pay attention to well being
- Inclusive: they're good at including others, so one or two don't dominate the group or its decisions - an awareness of issues around power, privilege and rank and how this impacts on both our groups and more widely

You may well not have all these skills from the beginning, but you can actively seek out new people who might bring them. Remember too that support is available through Transition Training, this Essential Guide and our 7 essential ingredients.

Putting on great events



Liege en Transition launched their Ceinture Aliment-terre Liégeoise project with a big public event . Photo: Liege en Transition.

Engaging widely with your community will require putting on events that are inspiring, thought-provoking and which provide as many opportunities for interaction as possible.

Transition groups learned pretty early on that putting on a bleak film is not a very effective way of inspiring and motivating people to get involved. We can do better than that.

Transition groups around the world have put on countless events, so here are a few of their tips for how to put on great ones.

Maximising the opportunities for people to meet each other is really important. Start every event by inviting people to turn to their neighbour and say their name, where they've come from and why they're here. Listen to the energy in the room buzz! We have also heard of several relationships that formed as a result of two people meeting in this way, and even of one baby!

If you're showing a film or giving a talk give people a chance to talk in a small group – 3 or 4 maximum – afterwards, maybe before you invite questions. See our tips for hosting good events for more details here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/planning-putting-events-guide/>

Have clear pathways for people to get involved, for example:

- Always take emails or contact details at events – and ask if people are willing to help out
- Have someone designated to talk to people who might be interested in getting more involved, a “welcome” person or “volunteer coordinator”
- Look out for people who might be a little shy or under-confident and ask them to help with specific tasks or events
- Find ways that people can contribute their time without coming to all the meetings – have a list of people willing to help with events or projects
- Have an online list of “help wanted”, or publish this in your bulletins or newsletters

There are a few things you need to nail down quite early on.

Transition Where?

Getting the scale right is important for a Transition initiative. Towns of a few thousand to tens of thousands seem to work well. Within a city it's usually good to work within a neighbourhood, though some have worked with a whole city of several hundred thousand. In rural areas you might have an Initiative that covers one or several villages.

Your decision will be based on what feels manageable, and where you feel you can have an impact. It's good to consider what is the recognisable identity of the place you live, is it a neighbourhood, a city, a district? On the whole we recommend starting smaller and letting things grow – and inspire your neighbours!



A community art project in Brasilândia, a favela in São Paulo, Brazil, co-ordinated by Transition Brasilândia. Photo: Boa Mistura.

Questions we hear a lot:

I live in a village in a rural area. Surely I can't do Transition here?

Where people are spread out often many villages combine to create a Transition Initiative. If there's a town with an initiative near you they may also provide some groups and meetings that you can work alongside.

Working with others

In the same way that we can't do Transition on our own, your Transition initiative will struggle to do what it wants to without networking with other groups.

For example, in the early days of Transition Town Totnes, a lot of energy was put into networking with other groups and co-presenting events and so on. See our '*How to create partnerships*' guide here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/create-partnerships-guide/>

Start networking

This is a good point to register as an initiative with Transition Network, a very simple process. You should also sign up for the Transition Network newsletter by registering as an individual so you can keep up with news and developments. You could also find out which other initiatives exist near you, and make contact with them, or with your regional network if one exists. All of this can be done here: <https://transitionnetwork.org>



Audience members introducing themselves to each other at a Transition event in Luxembourg. Photo: Carole Reckinger.

Up and running



Transition Kensal to Kilburn's 'Unthinkable Drinkable' urban winemaking project celebrates its first taste of the final product. Photo: Jonathan Goldberg.

Congratulations! Your Transition group is now up and running. That feels good doesn't it? By now you probably find yourselves making connections with organisations, groups and individuals who are largely supportive, finding ways to put on events together and promote each other's work, and building the Transition Initiating Group to become effective at working together.

You might also take time to do some training or a workshop together – learning about effective meetings, exploring "The Work that Reconnects" (the work of Joanna Macy), attending a Transition:Launch training (this is also available on-line). As you engage more people you'll be building a contact list, maybe setting up a website or social media site such as a Facebook page, keeping people informed about what's happening and much more.

There are some questions that often come up in this phase: see the FAQs here: <http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/how-to-start/> for some answers to things like

- **Should the group be open or closed?**
- **When should we seek funding?**
- **How should we structure ourselves?**

In the Healthy groups ingredient here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/healthy-groups/> you will find information on how to run effective meetings, how a group develops, how to get and keep people involved in your Transition initiative and how to make decisions, but there are some other things to think about as the Initiating Group:

- Initiating Group meetings may be more relaxed than big public meetings, but you should still take them seriously and make sure that you decide on actions and agree who will carry them out
- It is very important to decide as a group how you are going to make decisions, as you will need to make lots of them
- Make sure to have fun as the Initiating Group, celebrate successes, value each person's contribution, and have a social side to your group as well as doing stuff together! This might be the most important thing of all to do

Sustaining the group & involving new people



A Transition Town Brixton making day.
Photo: Jonathan Goldberg.

When you have a good group of people you may want to close the group, so you can get on with working together. This is fine – and you need to think about how people leave the group, and how new people join.

There may be many people coming to your events who want to be involved – see if you can find ways to do this without letting the Initiating Group get too large, or having new people constantly coming in. Some initiatives have created working groups to help with things like an events programme, building partnerships, getting projects started, or to look at a particular theme such as food. Events like Open Space can help people to get things started for themselves, see our guide here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/run-open-space-events-guide/>

Because inclusion is important in Transition some groups feel they have to accept anyone – but some people don't have the skills or personal qualities that enable them to

contribute positively to a coordinating group, and it's fine to help them find a place in another part of the whole Initiative.

When new people come to your group it's good to think about what they need to know so they can join in fully – and what you need to know about them! Will you accept anyone into your group? Are there criteria for joining (Being able to give a certain amount of time? Agreeing with the group's mission statement? Signing up to a Code of Conduct?).

You might have a person in your group whose role it is to speak to new people before they come to a meeting to give them an idea of what is expected and where the group is at.

They could:

- Get everyone to introduce themselves and their roles when new people come to meetings
- Ask new people to give a brief overview of why they want to get involved in Transition and what they can bring to the group
- Explain at the start of the meeting how decisions are made and what you are discussing

We have a more in depth guide on involving new people here:

<https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/get-keep-people-involved-transition-guide/>



Forming working groups on different interest areas is a very useful strategy.
Photo: Mike Grenville.



Transition Stroud's 'Potato Day' in a local shopping centre: Photo: Jonathan Goldberg.

Developing Transition can be chaotic, but don't worry!

Don't worry if it feels chaotic developing Transition in your community as any new project when being set up has to find its own way. The core elements are there to help you do this, but don't let them constrict you or stop you doing stuff. Most of all have fun, enjoy the challenges and build the future you want for your community.

Here is a checklist to see if you have got everything in place in your Initiating Group.

- We understand the role of an Initiating Group
- We know all the skills that we have in our group and the gaps
- We understand what Transition is
- We have decided on what geographical area we want to cover
- We have thought about how Transition will fit into our environment
- We have registered on the Transition Network website or with our National Hub
- We have contacted nearby Transition Groups
- We understand how to run effective meetings
- We have decided how to make decisions as a group
- We have thought about how to involve new people
- We have looked at the Support resources available on the Transition Network website
- We understand the need to actively seek and create balance between Task, Process and Relationships?

Transition Network Resources

You can find a whole range of resources to help you achieve the above here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/>



4

In Depth: Consolidate

Moving beyond the Initiating group to an established Transition initiative

Once you have worked through all the basic elements, the Initiating phase is complete. Well done! You've got an Initiating Group! Sounds like a cue for celebration. There may be specific working groups and projects now, or just the Initiating Group. Either is fine.

There is now a shift to the next phase of the Transition process, in which your aim is to:

- Establish the Core group of the Initiative
- Set up groups to look at Transition themes such as food, energy etc.
- Develop the organisation's structure to enable more ambitious, more impactful projects



Photo: Jonathan Goldberg.

Consolidating

In the move to a Core Group, your focus shifts:

- **From** laying the foundations for your group **to** embarking on ambitious and impactful projects
- **From** a group of people who are foundation layers **to** a group of people who will build a great and beautiful building upon those foundations
- **From** decisions being made by a group of people who have come together because they want the Transition group to exist and to thrive, **to** a group that wants a number of specific projects to exist and thrive.

All those really great projects you associate with Transition: the local currency schemes, the intentional relocalisation schemes, the community energy projects, the urban agriculture initiatives: they all need the foundations, structures and processes in place that the Initiating Group creates, but they also need a Core Group where the decisions are made by those who are running the projects on the ground.

You will know that your Core Group is working well when it:

- Gives those affected by decisions a say in making them
- Creates ways to be accountable and transparent about its activities to those within it, and those it serves outside
- Balances transparency with enough privacy to create internal safety for discussions and process
- Maintains some continuity while allowing in new ideas, people, and ways of doing things
- When it is creating new ideas and helping to seed (but not necessarily doing on its own) new projects and new enterprises

So, what are some of the things you need to ensure you get in place in your Core Group?

Theme Groups

By now you will probably have some theme groups forming (for example: food, energy, Inner Transition, education and so on).

Having healthy functioning theme groups is vital to your being able to build a Core Group, as the Initiating Group steps back to provide the active support that those doing the projects need.

If you don't yet have Theme Groups, here are some ideas for how you might bring them into being:

- You could put on events with films or speakers which look at a particular aspect of Transition, like food or energy
- Follow those events up a few days later with some public Open Space sessions (you'll find our Open Space guide [here](#))
- At the end of both, announce that you are hoping these will lead to the creation of a Theme Group on that subject, and invite people to come forward
- You could also explicitly invite people you think might be good, and ask them if they'd like to take on setting up one of the groups
- Sometimes people will come to the group and ask if they can set one up!
- You could seek out existing projects already working in the field you'd like to create a Theme Group on, and ask them

Once they are up and running, invite them to send one member to each meeting of the Core Group, so that the group becomes shaped by and focused on the needs of the people who are doing the projects on the ground.

Project Support

Rather than every theme group needing its own:

- Website
- Bank account
- Office
- Newsletter
- Twitter/Facebook accounts
- Events diary ... and so on

The Initiating Group can evolve into a Project Support group that provides that project support to the wider project. That group, let's call them 'Project Support', can hold a number of roles. They can:

- Hold and manage relationships with key local organisations
- Pull together funding applications
- Support the wellbeing and good running of the wider organisation.

To be able to support larger and more impactful projects, they will also need to take care of legal requirements, including:

- Financial responsibilities
- Insurance
- Health and safety
- Child protection
- Personal liability
- Other legal responsibilities

While this work might not be quite as "sexy" as making the on-the-ground projects happen, it is just as vitally important, and some people love doing that kind of thing!

Shifting to the next generation

What would happen if your founder members were to all be run over by a bus, and their collective knowledge of the project were to be lost? Carrying all that organisational know-how in just a few people is a big risk for the project. While the energy of founders is vital at the outset of Transition, over time it can prevent new people getting involved, and can come to dominate the group. New members can find themselves feeling frustrated by trying to make new things happen in the shadows of more established members.

For the founders, it is important to recognise that for the project to become self-sustaining in such a way that it no longer needs them is actually a huge sign of success. Although it can be the toughest move to make in a project, the move to step out of it, it can also be the most important in terms of the group being able to develop and evolve.

One thing that can really help here is for the group to make the space to tell and honour its history, to dedicate some time to capturing the story of how the group came to be, who came in when, and how it unfolded (like Transition Town Totnes did here). If people feel they are recognised in the group's story, it can really help them to start thinking about how they might step out.

When this happens, sometimes it can be a smooth transition, or it can lead to a bit of a power struggle as the group reimagines its vision and its purpose. It needs to be done though, when the time is right, and you'll most likely find that the project really thrives as a result. Inviting an external facilitator in to support this process can be very helpful.

Skillfully managing new members and volunteers

One of the concerns we often hear from Transition groups is how hard it is to keep new members and volunteers, that perhaps they come for a few meetings and then drift away again. We've given some thought to why that might be, and so here we'd like to offer a few suggestions for how you might best keep them engaged:

You could give them an induction pack that explains the basic structure and procedures of the organisation, and includes:

The basic structures of the organisation

- Who is in what role and what they do
- How finances are dealt with
- What form of structure the organisation is, i.e. charity, social enterprise etc.
- How decisions are made and recorded and followed up
- How meetings are run, including agenda setting, ground rules, roles, location etc., and who to approach and talk to if you have concerns about group or relationship dynamics

This can really help people to orient themselves and to feel clear about how they can best contribute.

Some other things that might help are:

- Having a someone whose role is to greet and meet new volunteers initially and act as a contact for them
- This person can answer any questions they may have and explain how things work outside of a general meeting and support them into the group

When new people take on roles, it can really help to be clear about:

- What role is needed or being handed over
- The skills and time commitment
- How the handover will happen



Transition Kensal to Kilburn (London, UK) harvesting fruit from their local fruit trees. Photo: Jonathan Goldberg.

If possible, produce a volunteer description document for the role. You can do this for trustees, core group members, volunteers, helpers as well as paid roles.

So here is a sense of the kind of sequence that might happen when someone stands down:

- The person holding the role gives notice they will stand down
- Define as much about the role as possible when this happens
- It may take more than one person to replace them, sharing out the tasks
- Then invite others to step into some or all of the role

It is important to remember that bringing new people in takes time and that in the long run new members is the only thing that makes a group sustainable. Also, don't let the pressure of "doing" stuff get in the way of supporting new people to be effective and happy.

We have a guide for helping with this, find it here: <http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/get-keep-people-involved-transition-guide/>

Beware the doughnut

Some Transition groups report what they call 'The Doughnut Effect'. This is when the energy of the group, the focus of the most energetic people, ends up being given to the active projects, rather than to the initial group, to the co-ordinating and joining up of what's happening.

So, it could be that in Year One of your group, you have a very active Core Group which is putting on a lot of events and starting lots of projects. By Year Five, you might have a community garden, a community energy company, a regular Repair Cafe and a variety of workshops happening, and everyone is so busy with those that they don't have enough time to enable the Core Group to continue functioning. So perhaps, by Year Ten, you have loads of great projects established and thriving, but the fact that they emerged from Transition is but a distant memory.

In some ways that's not a problem. You've got some great projects, so why does it matter? Well it matters because it can mean that limited new energy is coming into the whole Transition initiative, which makes it hard to sustain its energy and possible growth. Some groups get round this by finding funding either from within or from outside their community to enable a Project Manager who plays the role of drawing all the threads together and allowing all the different elements to feel part of something.

Find our full guide to moving from Initiating Group to Core Group here:
<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/moving-core-group-guide/>

Or...

If the whole doughnut analogy doesn't work for you, you might think of it like eating your dinner in space. Unless you're very attentive, your starter might float over there, your pudding over there, and your knife and fork somewhere else entirely. Keeping them all on the tray takes some conscious effort. Likewise with Transition, keeping everything feeling like part of the same process needs some focused attention.



5

The Transition Healthcheck

It is useful as your group progresses and does more and more, that you pause regularly to both celebrate what you've achieved (see p41) and also to check-in with each other about how it's going. We have created what we call the Transition Healthcheck to help with that.

We recommend you do the healthcheck at least once a year to get an idea of how your group is doing. The healthcheck can also point to ways forward for your group, and can help to head off problems before they occur. It has been tested by many Transition groups (across many cultures) and is a distillation of wisdom of what makes a Transition group work well and what doesn't.





Workshop on how to use the Transition Healthcheck.
Transition Penwith's Penwith REconomy Day, February 2015.
Photo: Mike Thomas.

The Transition Healthcheck is designed to help you:

- Reflect on where your initiative has got to
- Spark conversations about what's working well and what could be strengthened
- Celebrate your strengths and successes
- Identify areas which might need more work, skills, or resources
- Clarify appropriate next steps – which might include doing less.

Many groups have found that using the Healthcheck raises lots of questions, and sometimes the discussion it starts supplies the answers. The focus is on how your initiative is working.

Every Transition group is different in the mix of people involved, the opportunities and challenges of your context, and the external events that influence people to join, or not. We hope the result of doing the Healthcheck is that you celebrate what you have achieved rather than feeling overwhelmed with what hasn't happened. No initiative that we know of could get it all right!



Participants at the 2015 Transition Roadshow in Lancaster undertaking the Transition Healthcheck for their initiative.

We like to think of the Healthcheck in terms of an animal. It's not a particular animal: for different cultures, animals have different connotations. So it's an animal, with 4 legs, a tail, head, the usual. Ours looks oddly like Pikachu (from Pokemon), but you can imagine it as you wish.

Its four legs represent the foundations, the four elements without which your Transition group isn't going anywhere. They are:

1. Get your community involved in Transition
2. Healthy Groups
3. Networks and Partnerships
4. Practical projects

Have an honest and open discussion in your group about how well you are doing each of these? You could give each a mark between 1 and 5.

Next, our animal's eyes represent Vision. How clear would you say your group's vision was, for itself and for what it wants to create?

The heart represents Reflect and Celebrate. Does your group have a healthy heartbeat? Are you taking time regularly to reflect and celebrate together?

Lastly, the world around our animal is Part of a Movement. To what extent does your group feel connected to Transition groups in your area, to the Transition movement nationally as well as internationally?

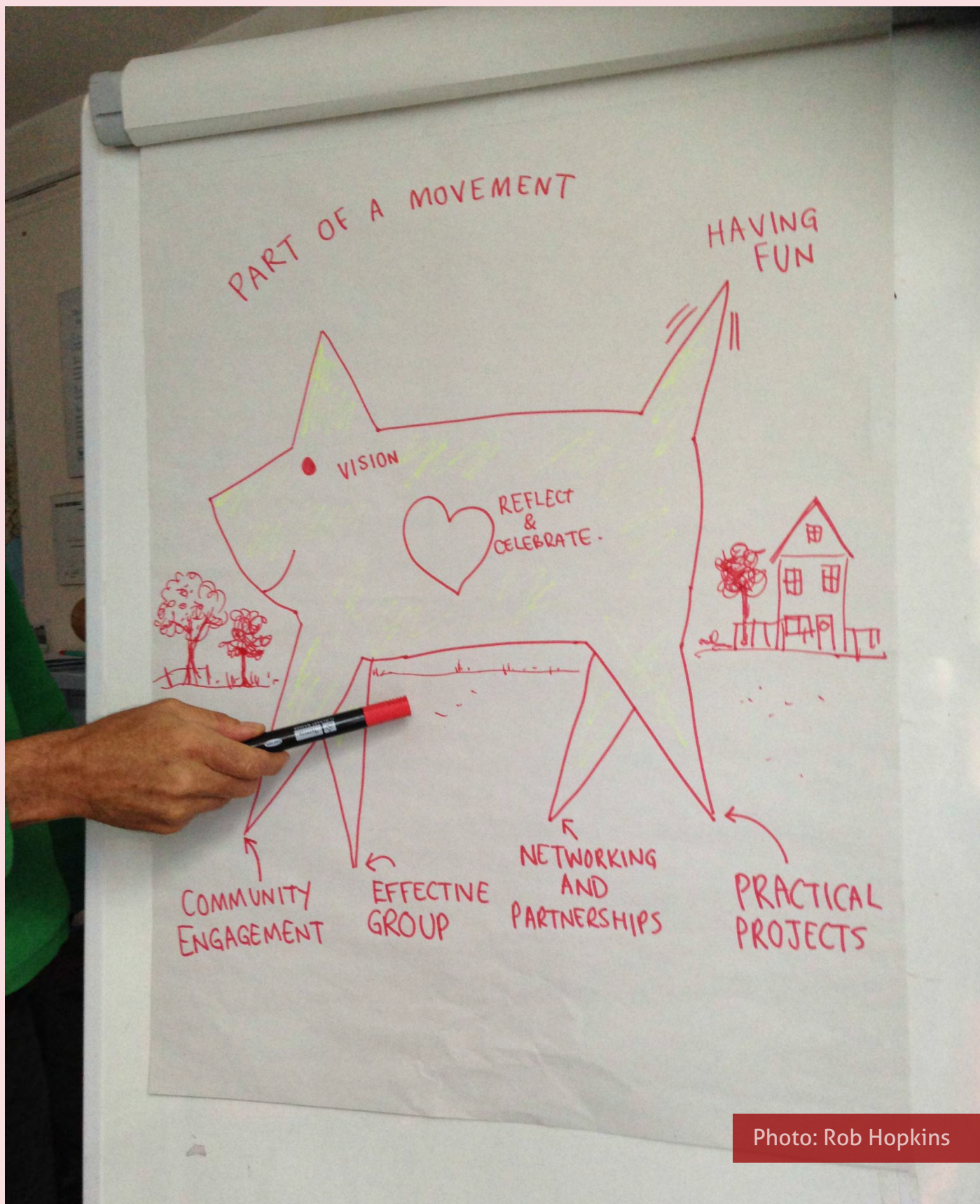


Photo: Rob Hopkins

Make it an annual thing...

You could make an evening of doing the longer Healthcheck. Perhaps have a shared meal, draw out your own version of the Animal, and use it as the opportunity for a really good, appreciative discussion of where the group has got to. It's a great thing to do annually, as part of a wider review of how it's all going. You can find the healthcheck here: <https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/healthcheck/>

Where next?

Well that's very much up to you. We really hope that this colourful and, hopefully, inspiring guide has given you everything you need to kick this process off where you live. With the right structures and processes in place, you will be able to do some amazing things. What do you long to do? What do you long to create and see emerging into the world around you, into the place you call home? Transition starts with smaller projects, which are vital in giving people confidence, a sense that change is possible, and what might be their first ever experience of working collaboratively with other people.

Transition is deeply ambitious. It wants to change the way the places we live feed themselves, house themselves, employ themselves, power themselves. That's a big ask. And it will take time, determination and togetherness. But what's vital to remember is that how you do your projects matters as much, if not more, than what the projects are. What we are doing here isn't just creating projects that reimagine and rebuild the world. What is just as important is that the way we work, the organisational cultures we create, should also model the kind of world we want to create. There's no use trying to create a new, healthier and more resilient culture if we end up replicating the unhealthy ways of relating and working that underpin our current culture.

So what you do, what you create, is limited only by your creativity and by the degree to which you allow yourselves to believe that anything is possible. Keep your inspiration up by keeping an eye on what other Transition groups are doing around the world. And then go change the world, starting with your own little corner of it.



Ungersheim in France is an amazing example of what Transition can achieve with the full backing of the local government. It's a story that is now the star of it's own film, *Qu'est ce qu'on attend?* (*What are we waiting for?*) created by film maker Marie-Monique Robin.

RESOURCES

You will find the resources covered in this guide and lots more in the Doing Transition section of <https://transitionnetwork.org/doing-transition/>. Look out in particular for the pages on the Seven Essential Ingredients, Inner Transition and REconomy.

Books

Local Sustainable Homes: how to make them happen in your community. Bird, C. (2010). Transition Books/Green Books.

Transition in Action: Totnes and District 2030: an Energy Descent Plan. Hodgson, J, Hopkins, R. (2010). Transition Town Totnes/Green Books.

The Transition Companion: making your community more resilient in uncertain times. Hopkins, Rob. (2011). Green Books.

The Power of Just Doing Stuff: how local action can change the world. Hopkins, R. (2013). Green Books.

21 Stories of Transition: how a movement of communities is coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world. Hopkins, Rob. (2015). Transition Network.

You can also find all the 21 Stories, and films about them, on our special 21 Stories microsite.

Local Money: how to make it happen in your community. North, P. (2010). Transition Books/Green Books.

Local Food: how to make it happen in your community. Pinkerton, T, Hopkins, R. (2009). Transition Books/Green Books.

Communities, Councils and a Low Carbon Future: what we can do if governments won't. Rowell, A. (2010). Transition Books/ Green Books

Films

In Transition 1.0 (2009): can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Seal8H8Sss4>

In Transition 2.0 (2013): can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFQFBmq7X84>

Demain (Tomorrow) (2015): see the film' website here: <https://www.demain-lefilm.com/e>



In Transition 2.0 is the best overall introduction to Transition and how to do it.

<https://youtu.be/FFQFBmq7X84>



The story of Transition Bro Gwaun's 'Surplus Food Cafe' from our '21 Stories of Transition'.

https://youtu.be/R_8zbYqiSKA



Greyton Transition Town in South Africa are the stars of this short video.

<https://youtu.be/Kseu08YYY0s>



The story of Greenslate Community Farm (from our '21 Stories of Transition'.

<https://youtu.be/kEZnuiY30hg>

