

# INFOSHEET

## FROM FOUNDERS TO THE FUTURE

People:	Ideally all of your group reads this
Time:	30 minutes
Resources:	A copy of this infosheet

### *Why should we read this?*

This factsheet explains the different stages that you can find in groups and how they relate to the people involved based when they got involved. It discusses founders, first supporters and later generations. It provides some ideas about the key stages of a project and what helps create a sustainable and successful project. This is not "the truth" – but intended to help generate discussion, but you will probably recognise many of these stages and dynamics from your own experience. This infosheet is really can also be used with the 'Succession for long term success' guide which also contains activities that require this info sheet. <http://transitionmovement.org/resources/succession-long-term-success/>

### *Infosheet:*

The following outlines the different stages that groups go through and how the different groups explained below respond to them.

Founders	First supporters (shapers)	Later generations	Dynamics to attend to
<p>Visionaries – can see something that doesn't exist already</p> <p>Enjoy uncertainty and challenge – and often speed</p> <p>Have energy and resources to create the new</p> <p>Often happy on their own</p>	<p>See something is needed and step in</p> <p>Help create structure out of possibilities</p> <p>Often get bored once the shaping process is done</p>	<p>Often need more stability – but still want to bring their creativity</p> <p>May be more collaborative, liking to work alongside others</p> <p>Good at maintaining something and developing it</p> <p>Happy going a bit slower</p>	<p>All are needed to make a successful project</p> <p>One person may have all the characteristics within them</p> <p>Often we need many people to bring all the skills needed</p>

The following outlines the different stages:

- Gestation and development
- Beginning the group
- Finding a form that works
- Consolidation and development
- Broadening the project
- Going forward into the future

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## Gestation and development phase:

This phase is where the group forms, connections are made and ways of doing things are tested.



Founders	First supporters (shapers)	Later generations	Dynamics to attend to
<p>There may be many ideas and version of the project</p> <p>Learn about existing projects and practices</p> <p>Bounce ideas off many people</p> <p>Start to build connections and support</p> <p>May include early prototypes</p>	<p>May be part of the initial conversations, or not</p>	<p>Does the founder have any "later generations" in their circle of connections?</p>	<p>Who do you really want to reach, and how are they represented in the shaping of ideas?</p>

## Beginning the group phase:

This stage is often exciting, people are visionary, there is lots of emergence occurring and lots of possibilities.

Founders	First supporters (shapers)	Later generations	Dynamics to attend to
<p>Pour energy into the project</p> <p>Processes created as needed and informal – all are in the loop</p> <p>The feeling is spontaneous, fast, responsive, open</p> <p>Founders will tend to attract and invite people like them unless they specifically pay attention to diversity</p>	<p>Attracted by the original vision and energy</p> <p>Can see that additional roles are needed</p>		<p>Overwhelm!!</p> <p>Founders often put their lives and relationships on hold to successfully birth something.</p> <p>What support is needed?</p> <p>Can founders ask for help?</p>

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## Finding a form that works:

This is where the group becomes more effective and begins to draw in more people.

Founders	First supporters (shapers)	Later generations	Dynamics to attend to
<p>Satisfaction of the vision made real</p> <p>Loss of possibilities may bring sadness</p> <p>New developments keep it exciting</p> <p>Still largely informal and emerging fast</p>	<p>Often play roles of shaping, getting the vision grounded in reality, setting up structures and form.</p>	<p>Get interested or connected – may be early adopters</p>	<p>Celebrate successes as well as noticing disappointments.</p> <p><b>START TO THINK ABOUT SUCCESSION</b></p>

## Consolidation and development:

This is where the group creates structures and forms in order to last, longer term planning happens and relationships beyond the original group take more time to develop.

Founders	First supporters (shapers)	Later generations	Dynamics to attend to
<p>Finding new places the project can reach and impact</p> <p>Formalising how we work loses the speed and excitement</p> <p>Relationships less based on personal connections</p>	<p>Thinking about longer strategy – where could we take it?</p> <p>Formalising structures and procedures, roles, legalities</p>	<p>These people may need a direct invitation</p> <p>More formal processes makes the project more accessible for later generations</p> <p>May bring a more mainstream approach which helps the project connect to a wider audience</p>	<p><b>PLANNING FOR SUCCESSION WHILE THERE IS STILL ENERGY IN THE ORIGINAL GROUP</b></p> <p>Attend to founders letting go or shifting roles</p> <p>Be proactive about updating roles and recruiting necessary skills and roles</p>

## Broadening the project :

This is where the group reaches more people in order to bring more growth and impact. There may be tension in the group over the original vision and there can be a dilution of the original intention. Bringing in more members or staff requires much slower processes and more formal structures.

Founders	First supporters (shapers)	Later generations	Dynamics to attend to
<p><b>May feel betrayed by the diluting of the vision in order to reach more people.. Or just bored by the formal processes and structure.. Or still passionate about the idea.</b> Three strategies arise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accept the changes and adapt (see below)</li> <li>2. let go and move on,</li> <li>3. kill the project (not recommended!)</li> </ol> <p><b>Founders who stay (also shapers)</b></p> <p>May need space to feel the loss of the original excitement, and figure out how to keep that going without putting the project in service to their needs</p> <p>Get 1-1 support</p> <p>Get feedback from trusted advisors and supporters</p> <p>Get external facilitation or coaching to support the transition.</p> <p>Founders who let go need to resist the temptation to "rescue" the project if there are issues as the new leaders find their feet.</p>	<p>May be starting to get bored and looking for a new challenge</p> <p>Some may enjoy the shaping challenge of bringing in a wider engagement</p> <p><b>If shapers stay, they may also need to look at how they limit the project, hold onto power, and stop its natural growth and succession.</b></p>	<p>Harnessing and valuing these people's creativity at this stage enables them to start to take ownership and lead the project into the future</p> <p>There usually needs to be an active and conscious process of handing over to new leadership.</p> <p><b>If space isn't made for these people to step up there may be conflict, complaints about power, or a revolution / coup.</b></p> <p><b>Or they may leave.</b></p>	<p>Attending to the handover of power and leadership</p> <p>Honouring the original intention, the founders as parents, the shapers who helped give it form and the next generation who will take it forward</p> <p>Acknowledge what's been let go of Celebrate the new form that has a future</p> <p>Founders or shapers who stay can unconsciously sabotage the process of new leaders stepping in.</p> <p>Getting help with this stage is often a make or break decision</p> <p>There is often a dip in the project after the first handover, then there may be a resurgence as the new leadership finds their direction</p>

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## Going forward into the future:

This is where the group is moving forward into the future where roles have significantly changed.

Founders	First supporters (shapers)	Later generations	Dynamics to attend to
<p>Can founders move into a supportive role e.g. as elders?</p> <p>Do they found something else to keep the radical fire burning?</p>	<p>Are shapers happy to move into maintenance, or do they find new satisfying challenges in the project's development?</p>	<p>This generation also needs to attend to succession – ensuring there are ways for new people to join, be invited or recruited, and to develop their own path.</p>	<p>Keep paying attention to succession and developing the people in a project.</p>

## More support:

For more support and information on developing your core group go here:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/moving-to-a-core-group/>

Check out the 7 essential ingredients of Transition here:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/>

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