
Transition Network's feedback to wider movement's comments on new support offer framework

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First off I just wanted to say a big thank you to all those who fed into this consultation, it has been really useful to get your thoughts at this crucial stage of development. I have setup the feedback on your feedback as follows. It is broken down into the different questions we asked, which are stated under each section. I have then stated what we heard from the feedback, followed by our response to it.

I hope this all makes sense.

Also we are keen for people who are more interested in feeding into further development of the new support offer to become part of a reference group, this would involve looking at google docs of new materials and activities we are developing and commenting on them and possibly an occasional skype chat. It would be great to have your input. Please email michaeltomas@transitionnetwork.org if interested.

Thanks again for your time.

Mike Thomas - Transition Initiative Support Coordinator

General comments on New Support offer:

- A marvellous idea and boost for the initiative groups. Thank you for your interest in keeping the groups active and growing.
- Thanks.....we've been stuck. This might just pull us out of the quagmire again. :-)
- Thank you. I can taste the blood, feel the sweat, and weep the tears that went into this work. Thank you. TT is growing up right in front of my eyes.
- I'm so excited about this new approach to supporting groups. Our group is somewhat stalled - though some areas, like Inner Transition, are blossoming. The Health-Check especially sounds like it will be very important to our group. Thanks for all your hard work on this project!
- Could the process assist group to group mentoring. There are lots of projects that could be replicated from group to group, and we may not realise what neighbouring groups are doing. Obviously, local newsletters help - perhaps the Network could host these in an accessible place? I know you do your own which is very inspiring but often not at the top of our agenda, if you see what I mean! Good luck!
- This Health Check doesn't feel supportive. We need help to generate local Transition Town conversations and build coherence with other groups with similar interests. I am not getting this as helpful.

- We think there should be far more emphasis on Transition groups working in partnership with other local orgs and respecting their existing efforts. Several groups in Falmouth have been very active re environmental issues for a very long time (well over 20 years, and Transition Falmouth largely grew out of this).
- Greatly appreciate TN's efforts to engage with local groups, but concerned that Transition is becoming a brand rather than a process.

Question:

To what extent does this way of categorising the development phases of Transition Initiatives make sense to you?

What we heard:

Questions/observations:

- Confusion about the phases - not sure that these work.
- Practical projects happen all the way through.

What we will do:

- There was some confusion over the Phases in the document, these are Transition Networks are TN's development phases of this new process - not phases that transition groups go through (sorry for the misunderstanding). Though this did highlight the complexity of how groups form and function and this is something we have been well aware of. The new support structure will be framed in a way that presents it as a flexible process and not a defined structure, although certain elements would be highly recommended such as, setting up an initiating group, developing your group, community engagement and so on, as it would be impossible to do Transition without thinking about these.
- We recognise that practical projects happen throughout the Transition process and the new support framework will highlight this in the overview of the support offer.

The Support Offer is not a linear process (although it may appear that we are presenting it as that) as Initiatives can use the health check to access the relevant sections. Groups can ignore it completely if they wish, or just access the pieces that feel relevant to them. In practice though we would not recommend that as it would be very difficult to do transition without carrying out the following elements to some degree and the rest of it is there to help groups develop.

- Forming an Initiating group
- Developing a group
- Community engagement

We also recognise that this is a dynamic framework that can be built on or modified in the future to represent developments in Transition.

Question:

To what extent do you feel that these 12 Core Elements cover everything that is needed to set up a Core Group? Is anything missing?

What we heard:

Stats:

Covers everything	62.5%
A couple of gaps	34.38%
Lots of gaps	0%
You've got it completely wrong	3.13%

Some of the general Comments:

"WOW! Wish I had had this clarity when we started. We stumbled through all of this and the process about wore us out."

"In my experience many of these elements are missed out or not addressed as people often come together and start a project first , Not having talked about the above leads to problems at a later stage. Very important to have help with these elements."

"I love these core elements. It makes me feel supported and excited just reading them!!"

"I don't think our group started out like this! I am sure if we had we would have done much better."

What we heard about the overall structure:

Questions/observations:

- Groups could do the health check up front.
- It feels more strategic with objectives like in the business world, is this a good thing?
- Needs to be realistic about how much work is needed to get transition going, keep process simple - not everyone has these skills or want to gain them.
- Be careful with visioning - needs intermediate steps.
- Recognition that the whole thing is fluid and will slide around and also fail sensationally at times and this is all fine

What we heard about the content of elements:

Questions/observations:

- It's a lot! might put people off.. need to emphasise bringing a group with different skills and resources to make up the whole. We find the "12 core elements" a bit limiting and prescriptive. Better though than calling it "12 steps" as per early Transition Network material as this suggested AA's original "12 steps" but for something quite different.
- Would be good to have something about communication within an Initiative and with partners, also be good to have something about Non Violent Communication as well.
- Stuff on conflict resolution would be useful.
- Partnership is important especially with other ecological groups.
- Lots of groups take different paths, but most steps still apply.
- Diversity is important, be good to know how to engage around different issues that are important to community. skills needed to reach beyond the middle class ghetto
- Something about diversity / hierarchy and celebrating difference within groups
- Fun events with social and cultural focus for community
- Managing conflict creatively, guidance on legal structures, checklists of useful skills for groups to have
- Effective leadership from the start is essential if an Initiative is to keep going. Transition training at the start can be very helpful. Reading the Transition books is important. The social element is very

important so that transition activity is fun and not excessively formal. Having a 'buddy' who can act as advisor can be helpful.

- Needs to be flexible, not prescriptive or too complicated. Something we could dip into and use bits of.

What we will do:

The overall structure:

- We would recommend that groups do the health check up front if already running, then they can concentrate on potential gaps in experience or knowledge.
- We don't want to replicate the business world, the framework is based on what we have found to help groups have longevity and be successful in their aims.
- We recognise that transition is a big undertaking and will state this in the overview of Transition that will accompany the support offer, also groups don't have to do everything all at once it can be incremental.
- We also believe that it is okay to fail, in fact failing is how we learn what works. Transition is an experiment and this will be reinforced in the overview of the support offer.

The content of elements:

- We have heard that it seems a lot and may feel overwhelming so we have had a rethink and reduced it down to 9 elements, that now include an element about having fun which includes celebrating, the new structure looks like this:
 1. Forming an Initiating group and getting started
 2. Developing your group
 3. Networking and Partnerships
 4. Visioning
 5. Having fun - how are we doing
 6. Practical Projects
 7. Community engagement
 8. Inner Transition
 9. Part of a movement
- All of the other suggestions for content, will more than likely be covered in the above elements, or be addressed in the strengthening sections of the element where additional resources will be made available.

Question:

How helpful do you feel this 2-part structure of "basic" and "strengthening" is in making the Core Elements more usable?

What we heard:

Stats:

Very helpful	49.23%
Helpful	40%
Only a little helpful	9.23%
Not helpful at all	1.54%

Some of the general Comments:

"Helpful, but only to our core group, again others would be less inclined to join projects if we made them read this stuff."

"Too complicated for me."

"Really very useful."

"Yr are all about process! Think of the time the processes you suggest take before a group does something and gets results."

"keep it simple or you will turn people off from initiating their our movement."

"Good concept."

"In our Initiative these elements have been mixed together. Your Strengthening topics came up early on for us."

"I think our group died at STRENGTHENING. This is EXCELLENT. With this structure, we may be able to start again."

"Can't wait for access to this for Fremantle.."

Questions/observations:

- Support from advisors and other TIs would be helpful.
- Would be good to be able to give feedback to improve support as we use it.
- Different cultures have different views and ideas around leadership, participation and hierarchy / other structures.
- It is difficult to distinguish basic and strengthening.

What we will do:

- Support from other Transition Initiatives and National Hubs is something that we are constantly thinking about, we are also considering how we can make it easier for groups to contact each other through the new website we are developing. Also in the 'Part of a movement' element we would be promoting the idea of groups supporting each other and making contact with nearby groups for advice and support.
- We would love to receive feedback on how to improve the support offer, also there will be the ongoing development of the strengthening section where new materials can be added. We will also periodically review the support offer.
- We recognise that different cultures will have different values and ideas, we hope that National Hubs will take the framework and modify it to fit the cultural values of their country.
- The basic and strengthening sections will be much clearer once online.

Question:

How helpful do you feel the new Transition Initiatives Primer would be for an Initiative?

What we heard:

Stats:

Very helpful	56.72%
Helpful	35.82%
Only a little helpful	7.46%
Not helpful at all	0%

Some of the general Comments:

"Not everyone in our steering group has probably read the primer or even know it exists. They need to be succinct and useful to encourage people to look at them."

"Might be helpful for a new person who wants to join an Initiating Group and doesn't have much background."

"Will give good directions."

" One of the things I like about Transition is that it adapts to fit different circumstances. This sounds very regulated and samey."

"Looking forward to read it :)"

" In effect, putting together the 12 Core Elements and the Primer, you are developing a self-education programme for TIs, a structured course for them to work through."

" Thank you for all that wonderful work for the Earth and us."

Questions/observations:

- Is there a better name for it than Primer, What about 'Handbook' 'Reference' 'Manual' 'Guide'
- Primer won't help to sustain momentum, but helpful at start and for new members and it needs to be adaptable and flexible for different circumstances.
- Having template resources to explain transition to outside or new members e.g. ppt slides / prezi.
- Updated primer good for resources - films, books
- Is the existing written guidance enough would it not be better to spend time on direct support
- Be good to include examples of successes and not so successful Transition Projects
- Wonderful!

What we will do:

- There could be a different name for the Primer, but as it is now what people refer to the previous document as it is probably best to keep it.
- Primer may not help sustain momentum, though as it is explicitly linked to the health check it will help groups to make sure they have the basics covered. What will help sustain momentum will be the strengthening sections for each element that will provide additional activities and information for groups, above and beyond the primer.
- In terms of resources to help explain Transition to outside world, Transition Network is currently working on the Transition Story, which would incorporate the What is Transition and Why do Transition elements. There will potentially be resources developed to accompany this to help groups communicate Transition.
- We will periodically update the Primer along with the Support Offer.
- One to one direct support would be great, but realistically we are a small staff team which has nowhere near the capacity to do this, but we are looking into ways of getting more experienced Transition Initiatives to support other Initiatives.
- Case studies will not be in the printed primer, but we are considering case studies for the online support offer.

Question:

How helpful do you feel the Health Check would be for an Initiative?

What we heard:

Stats:

Very helpful	62.69%
Helpful	31.34%
Only a little helpful	5.97%
Not helpful at all	0%

Some of the general Comments:

"Can't wait! exactly what we need.. will support existing review process.. "

"Any group gets complacent. This is a great way to measure our strengths and weaknesses"

Regular review of group by those participating always useful and is ongoing, the health check potentially an additional useful tool."

"It would be interesting to have it as a regular tool that can chart changes."

"Our initiative did a version of this with the animal diagnostic from the Thrive training and found it was helpful"

" I reckon my group would love this!"

Questions/observations:

- Be good to have an outside perspective as well as internal one, could be from community, neighbouring Transition Initiatives.
- There could be different opinions within initiative.
- Could have different formats and it needs to be easy & quick to do.
- Different versions for groups with good facilitation and those not?
- Prefer to consider strengths rather than weaknesses.

What we will do:

- Having an outside perspective can be useful, there would be no reason why you could not invite someone externally to your meeting when you are carrying out a health check.
- There will almost definitely be different opinions in your group, this is actually a good thing as one of the benefits of doing the health check is open up a dialogue so that the group has a conversation.
- The format is at present a worksheet that groups work through in a session, it is pretty easy and quick to do, once launched we would be happy to hear from people about how it could be improved.
- We are considering developing a guide for facilitating the delivery of the healthcheck.
- The healthcheck identifies strengths and weaknesses (or gaps if you prefer), the aim is not to grade your group but to use the healthcheck as a tool to open up new opportunities.

Question:

Would you encourage your Initiative to do the Health Check?

Stats:

Yes	85.07%
No	1.49%
Maybe	11.94%
N/a	1.49%

Question:

Do you have any comments or concerns about the proposed new status system?

What we heard:

Some of the general Comments:

"It is good to get rid of official / muller, people much prefer registered / active."

"Many liked the idea of having an annual health check."

"May help groups who are flagging to restart, get clarity, resolve different pulls."

"Sounds like an excellent way to proceed."

"That's a really good idea!!! I hope the Health Check gets done in more than name only"

" very happy with it -- will resonate much better with Dutch culture than the old system, which therefore got very little response."

" Wouldn't want the health check to become a bureaucratic nightmare or an obligation that gets in the way of other things/distracts from what the group is doing."

Questions/observations:

- Should result of health check affect status?
- Do mullers automatically become registered?
- Does health check need to be every year?

What we will do:

- Results of health check do not affect status, status is changed if they fail to do a health check once a year, the purpose of this is to keep an accurate overview of groups that are actually active and doing stuff. There was also suggestion from National Hubs consultation of having a dormant status and we are considering this.
- Mullers will automatically become registered, but if they fail to do an annual health check they become dormant or registered.
- Currently it is thought that health check should be done annually, mainly to help a group reflect on where it is at and potentials for development.