

## DEVELOPING PRACTICAL PROJECTS

People:	Ideally everyone in your group
Time:	Depends on project
Resources:	This guide and a place to meet

### *How can this help us?*

Practical projects are the way that you do real things to bring big benefits to your Transition group through:

- Strengthening your group and learning more about how you work together
- Having practical actions that can get you publicity in the local media
- Partnering with other local organisations, and involving new people
- Having fun and sharing or learning new skills
- Getting the satisfaction and sense of empowerment from building a part of your vision of the future!

It is useful to print out this guide to refer to throughout the development of your new project and to give to people involved in the project.

### *The guide:*

#### How to go about Practical Projects in Transition

Starting and managing any kind of project tends to follow a number of stages – these are

- Visioning – what do we want to happen?
- Planning – getting specific. Who, what, when, where, how?
- Doing – the action stage
- Celebrating – celebrating together, sharing your story more widely
- Reflecting – what did we learn, what went well or could be better, what's next?

Be aware: People who like to Vision, Celebrate and Reflect are often not the people who like to Plan and Do – and vice versa. See if you can find each other's strengths and welcome them all at the appropriate time! The following outlines each of these following stages and things to think about:

#### Visioning

The first challenge is to decide what's the best practical thing to do in the early stages. Here are some tips:

- Go where the energy is.
  - oSee who has a lot of energy to make something happen, and follow that, rather than thinking of something you feel you "should do"
  - oThe role of the Initiating group can be to support what others want to happen, rather than being the source of all ideas and energy

- Use Open Space and similar events to give a place where other people with energy and ideas can find each other and decide to make something new happen. There is a downloadable guide to running open space in the Community Involvement Ingredient here: <http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/community-involvement/>
- Start with simple things that give lots of benefits
  - Doing small things and being successful will bring greater benefits than attempting something ambitious and risky
  - See our infosheet on small practical projects that the initiating group can do here: <http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/small-practical-projects-initiating-group-infosheet/>
- If you can't all agree on what should happen see if you can agree to support one idea now, and another later
  - Can you learn from the process of disagreeing and finding a good way forward that works for everyone?
- Don't do anything that is controversial, or likely to stir up opposition, support existing ideas that have broad support
- Do talk to anyone working in a similar area
  - E.g. If you're going to run bike maintenance workshops, talk to the local bike shop first and see how it can help rather than undermine them
- Consider if the project is realistic, think about the following?
  - Do you have the skills needed?
  - Do you have the capacity in terms of people and resources?
  - Once setup will you need to continue running the project, or will other people take on this role?
- If you have got a list of several projects then consent decision making might be a good process to go through to decide on your choice of project

## Planning

Once you have your group set up you can begin to plan it by:

- Doing a quick visioning exercise, discuss and write down what the project will look like once it has been developed and is up and running
- From this visioning exercise work backwards and produce a timeline on how you would get there, this can form the basis of your project plan
- Projects often fail because people had not thought through the whole project process. Avoid this by considering the following to develop a realistic project plan:
  - What are the different stages of the project:
    - What needs to happen at each stage
    - Often in the beginning you may need to input more effort and it is useful to consider this
  - What resources will you need and when will you need them, don't just include physical resources, also think about people and time
  - Are you hoping to get more people involved in the project, if yes how will you do this and when?
  - When will the project be actually up and running?
  - Are you going to have a project launch, if yes how will you use this opportunity to promote Transition?

- Will the project end or is it going to be ongoing, if ongoing who will be overseeing it?
- Plan in when you are going to review how you are going and to record what went well and what was challenging, it is good to do this regularly to avoid problems early on

If you want to really measure how well your project is doing you can use this great monitoring and evaluation guide that explains how to setup monitoring systems in a clear and simple way, to give you the information you need. <http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/monitoring-evaluation-guide/>

## Projects can bring a range of benefits

See how many benefits you can "harvest" from your project, these may bring more benefit than the action itself. Consider the following:

- Can you use this as a way to involve people who aren't already in the group?
  - oThink about how you can include people who are interested in getting involved
- How can you get the most positive media attention?
  - oAs well as using the story in your own website and newsletters, etc.
  - oInvite local celebrities, the mayor or local experts
  - oMake sure there are good photo opportunities!
  - oCould you make a short video?
  - oCan you share your learning with others in Transition?
  - oUse social media – tweets, face book, blogs to promote your work.
- When you are working on the project, pay attention to how you work together.
  - oWhat are people's strengths?
  - oWhat are you learning about each other?
  - oWhat is challenging?
- Can you include things that will add more colour, fun, depth, interaction to the event or activity? Dress up, invite local performers or artists to contribute? Have local food and drink? Share skills?
- Will someone take care of welcoming people, taking contact details, explaining about Transition and so on

## Developing your project group

We recommend that unless your group is very small or it is a small one-off project at the very start of Transition, then set up a sub group to focus on this project.

If you don't do this you may find that the core Transition group falls apart, as you focus all your energy on the project. Projects should be running as well as the core group and not become a replacement for it. When this does happen, we call it the donut effect, where you end up with projects happening but no core group holding it all together. This means you lose the holistic vision of Transition.

To avoid this it is useful to think about how you will connect the project with the core group at the beginning. One of the easiest ways to do this is to have someone from the project group involved in the core group.

## GUIDE

A project group needs to be thought about in the same way as your Transition core group, as it is just a slightly different version of that model. If you have worked through the essential ingredients of Transition then you will have a good understanding of what is needed for a healthy group. We recommend that you revisit these resources and apply them to your project group as this will give your project a really good starting position.

You will definitely need to consider the following things:

- Who will take on what roles, be clear about responsibilities, it can be useful to write this down
- Think about how the practical activity will go. Some groups actually act it out, so they can see what they haven't thought of!
- How you will manage the project, don't be afraid to have a project coordinator as it can be useful for someone to have an overview of the project and there maybe people with project management skills in your group

For a practical project to be successful you will have to meet to decide and plan what you are going to do throughout the life of the project, so consider the following:

- How will you run meetings and make decisions
- Only meet when you need to, this will be mainly for planning activities and making decisions, don't meet for the sake of it
- At the first meeting decide together how you will make decisions as a group, as there is nothing more likely to cause conflict than people making decisions that have not been agreed

How to run effective meetings:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/run-effective-meetings-guide/>

Decision Making – Guide:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/decision-making/>

How to get and keep people involved in transition:

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

How groups develop:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/groups-develop-infosheet/>

It is really important to think about HOW you are doing as individuals and HOW you are working together. Doing this allows you to check how people are doing and what is working and helps you to complete the project successfully. It also can help when planning future projects. Think about what sort of culture you want in the group and what qualities will enable this culture.

For example, being open and a principle that everyone is kept informed might be important, as could caring about each other and recognising that people's well being, these things can be as important as the outcome you are trying to achieve. Using the following Inner Transition activities from the healthy groups essential ingredient can help you to develop a positive culture.

Become stress busting experts – Inner Transition Activity:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/become-stress-busting-experts-inner-transition-activity/>

Group and personal sustainability – Inner Transition Activity:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/group-personal-sustainability-inner-transition-activity/>

Inner Transition activities for meetings:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/inner-transition-activities-meetings/>

If your planning has gone well then the Doing can be fun and energising. Invite an attitude of positive flexibility – Transition is all about dealing well with the unexpected!

Important: A practical project is very similar to a Transition group, so most of the 7 essential ingredients also apply, they can be found here:

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

## Who can help us

Next up is to think about any potential partners or networks who could help you, you can use the big list exercise to do this. You may think this is not relevant for your project if it is only small, but it may identify people whom you may have not thought about as being supportive. It is also a great opportunity to contact people to tell them what you are doing and building an inclusive culture where you share ideas with others.

Big list activity:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/big-list-activity/>

## Engage your neighbours

Another thing to consider is how to engage the community, as getting support from them can really help your project to be successful. It could be as simple as getting the local newspaper to publicise what you are doing, or you could run a launch event for the project.

- Check out the community involvement section for a list of ideas for events that you could use to promote your event and for a guide to running events
- Don't forget that your project is an opportunity to get people involved in Transition and it is worth thinking about how that could happen
- You could even put a call out for volunteers to help, try to have some really easy things that people could do as well as more involved tasks

Once your project is ready to go, you have a great opportunity to announce yourself to the wider community through a launch event. It doesn't have to be anything too demanding just an open invite to where the project is based, or something larger if you feel like it.

Community involvement section:

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

# GUIDE

## Celebrating

Take time to celebrate afterwards -

- Save some energy for the follow up – celebrating with media coverage, blogs, tweets and so on
- Share your learning on the Transition Network or other national websites
- The people who did the work of dreaming, planning and doing come together to celebrate. Some groups always have a party after every event

## Reflecting

A bit different to celebrating, reflecting involves looking back over the whole process.

- What went well?
- What did we learn about our group and how we work together?
- What could we do better next time?
- Is there something else which needs to happen now, to help the project be effective in the long term?
- Even if it feels unfamiliar or a bit lengthy, take time to appreciate each person's contribution so everyone is valued. Being recognised for what you've given is a simple way of giving energy back, helping individuals and the group to be sustainable

Action reflection cycle:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/action-reflection-cycle-inner-transition-guide/>

Monitoring and Evaluation – Guide:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/resources/monitoring-evaluation-guide/>

If you follow most of this guide, then you will have a really good chance of developing a great Transition project. So go out into your community and be the change you want to see and most importantly make sure you have fun doing it.

It can be useful to print out this guide and store it in a folder about your group so you can refer to it in the future and show new members of your project so they understand the processes you use.

## More support:

For more support for putting on events read our practical projects section:

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

Check out all the 7 essential ingredients here:

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

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