

GUIDE

MOVING FROM INITIATING GROUP TO A TRANSITION CORE GROUP ACTIVITY

People:	At least 2 people, ideally everyone in your group
Time:	35 minutes
Resources:	This activity sheet, a place to meet

Why should we do this?

The following outlines the process of moving from an initiating group to a core group.

In the first phase of a Transition project the Initiating group:

- Sets up the Transition project
- Ideally, worked through the basic core elements of Transition, though this is not always the case

The last part of this phase is to bring into being the new structure which will take the project forward in the long term. In some Transition groups it's possible to create Theme groups and Practical projects and the new structure is designed to include all of these - see Part One below. In other places there isn't the energy to create other groups, in which case the pathway forward is different - this situation is covered in Part Two.

Here are some of the tasks of this phase, with more information and activities below.

Part One: How to form theme groups, practical projects:

1. Activities to Seed Theme groups and Practical Projects and develop the core group:

- These are groups that operate autonomously
- That are also connected to Transition core group

2. Continue the elements of Transition – evolving the Core:

- How to plan how the core activities of Transition will continue to happen

3. Design and put in place a new structure:

- This gives different groups a say in how you are run
- Also attends to all the legal requirements for the activities you want to do

4. Manage the Shift in Culture from Pioneers / founders to Next Generation:

- Ways to explore and manage the shift in culture in order to move from the start up phase to becoming established

5. How to bring in new people;

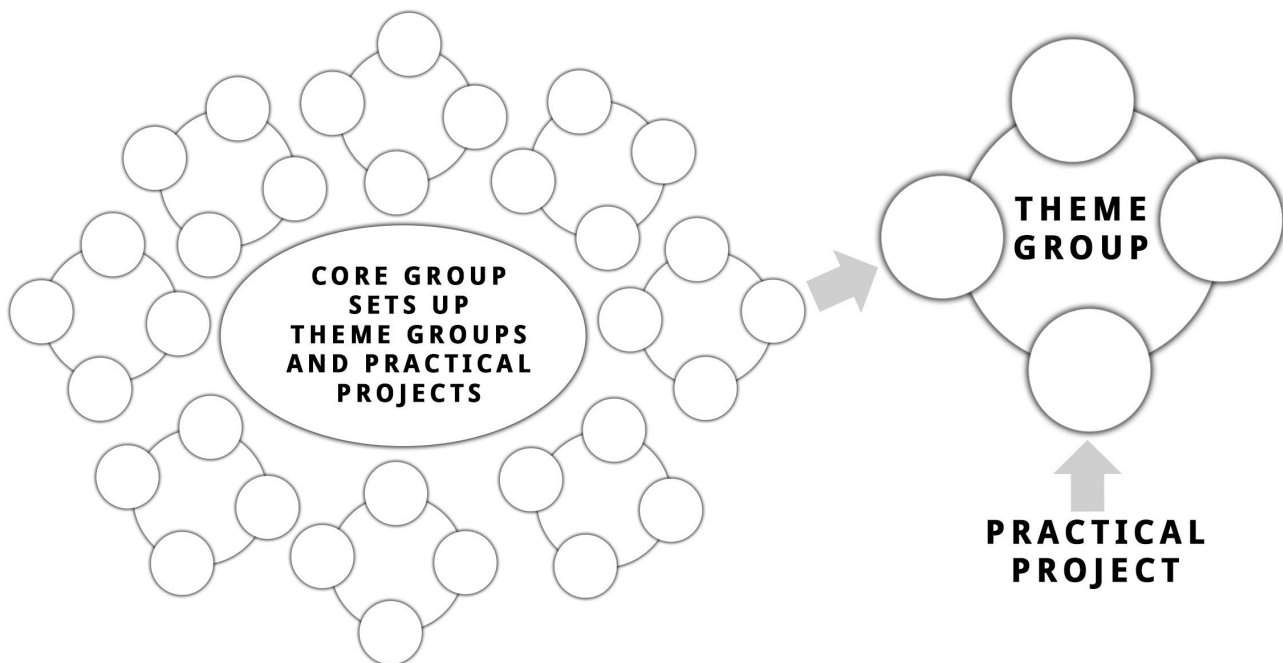
- How to develop clear processes for bringing new people into the group

Part Two: What to do if you can't get theme or projects to form and how to continue transition.

1. How to carry on Transition if it is difficult to get projects or theme groups up and running
2. What if everyone's gone off to do projects and there's no one at the centre?
 - What to do if all members of the core group are doing projects

The phases where theme groups and practical projects form:

DELIVERING TRANSITION IN COMMUNITY



Activities to Seed Theme groups and Practical Projects

The most important thing to do first is to find and invite people who can help with this shift, and have the energy and skills to take the project forward. One of the best ways to do this is through developing seed projects and theme groups.

To develop these Seed projects and Theme groups put on events with speakers, films, or Eco-fairs. At these events or soon after run some public Open Space sessions (this short film explains open space) which are brilliant for getting groups of people with energy to have the conversations which lead to action, ensure you:

- Have time at the end of open space for discussions
- Discuss the next steps of the group
- Agree the details of the first meeting of a continuing group

See the Community Engagement core element for guides to help you with all of this here: www.transitionnetwork.org/support/community-engagement

Some Theme groups and projects are set up by individuals in the following ways.

- Invitation by the Initiating group
- They do it spontaneously!
- Initiator starts the group in a similar way to Transition – by putting on events or a launch and inviting people to set up a group
- Putting on a “Transition Dragon’s Den” [Totnes example – are there others?] or projects marketplace where people present ideas to an audience interested in supporting local projects – with money, time, space, advice, skills and so on
- Existing projects might also like to be connected with Transition in some way because they could use your help – but be careful about bringing two different visions and cultures together!

Continue the elements of Transition – evolving the Core

The new Transition structure needs a slightly different version of the elements of the animal to develop. The “Strengthening” section of Project Support has more information on this.

The Core of the project needs particular care, or all the energy will move out into projects (see below). This is fine – but it means there is limited new energy coming into the whole Transition initiative to sustain its energy and possibly growth.

You need to consider who will:

- Continue to put on events
- Connect with the media
- Hold key relationships with other community organisations?

Often the initiating group evolves into a supporting group which provides these “services” to all the other groups, taking on the following new roles:

- Coordinating activities to avoid clashes and duplication
- Looking for synergies and opportunities
- Developing a guiding strategy that works for all
- Taking care of the well being of the whole

Design and put in place a new structure

Principles for designing a structure for your organisation:

- Takes care of legal requirements including:
 - o Financial responsibilities
 - o Insurance
 - o Health and safety
 - o Child protection
 - o Personal liability
 - o Other legal responsibilities
- 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 and maintains some continuity while allowing in new ideas, people, and ways of doing things

Manage the Shift in Culture from Pioneers / founders to Next Generation

This is the stage where:

- Founders of a project let go
- They may step back altogether or increasingly hand over the running of a project to the next wave of people
- This is a key make or break phase in many organisations

Some issues to think about to help this to happen well:

Founders at some point need to let go and hand over or share power and control with new members:

- Without this, new members are likely to feel frustrated and limited
- It can help founders to know that this last part of their work could be the most important – to create a self sustaining organisation which can stand without them

Often there is a shift in the vision as the founders let go:

- Sometimes it's a power struggle, sometimes it's peaceful
- There can be a feeling that the first radical vision is watered down somehow
- Sometimes a gentler version of the vision is needed so that it appeals to more people
- Sometimes the world has moved on, and it needs to be expressed differently to be relevant

Tell and honour the history:

This could be a long "timeline" on a roll of lining paper;

- Mark the years on it
- Use words or images to record what has happened
- Make sure everyone's joining date is marked on
- Add all significant events, internal and wider
- Take time to reflect together on the journey
- Celebrate the achievements, learning's and changes

You could also stand in a line with "longest serving" at one end, and "newest" at the other.

- Ask what do people appreciate about those in another part of the line
- A healthy organisation will have the whole line filled, and all are able to see the value of the others
- Have an open conversation about how it is to be a new member in this group
- Ask the pioneers how is it to have set it up and how they feel about letting go
- Some groups create process or ritual for handing over the reins, so the moment of some letting go and stepping up is officially marked
- Vision how it will be when this has happened really well
- Have each person describe one thing that will be different about how they do things
- It can be helpful to have external facilitation for this process if there are charged feelings about it

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Often when an organisations starts up:

- It runs on goodwill
- People are responding to whatever is needed at that moment in time
- Informal understandings are developed within an often small and committed team

As it becomes established and new people join it helps to empower new people by creating an induction pack which:

- Explains how things are done
- Outlines the history of the group

This may feel frustrating and slow to the original group, but it can help Transition to run more smoothly.

A useful tip is for early members of a group to remember:

As pioneers they're the kind of people who see something that needs doing and step in to do it. People who join later may be less confident and need to be actively invited or supported to step up to taking responsibility.

How to bring in new people

New people will approach you to get involved with your Transition through your awareness raising activities, or you can actively seek to recruit people. The following explains how to ease new volunteers in.

Some things that help new people to find their feet and pick up responsibility instead of waiting at the edge, or leaving..

Give them an induction pack that explains the basic structure and procedures of the organisation include:

- Basic structures of the organisation:
 - oWho is in what role and what they do
 - oHow finances are dealt with
 - oWhat form of structure the organisation is, i.e. charity, social enterprise etc.
- How decision are made and recorded and followed up
- How meetings are run, including agenda setting, ground rules, roles, location etc.

Supporting new volunteers:

- Having a person who greets and meets new volunteers initially and acts as a contact for them is a good way of getting new people engaged
- They can answer any questions they may have and explain how things work outside of a general meeting and support them into the group

Sometimes you may want to specifically recruit someone with specific skills:

- Identify the skills and experience
- Actively find someone in your networks, or by advertising
- You can do this for trustees, core group members, volunteers, helpers as well as

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When new people take on roles, be very clear about:

- What role is needed or being handed over
- The skills and time commitment
- How the handover will happen
- If possible produce a volunteer description document for the role

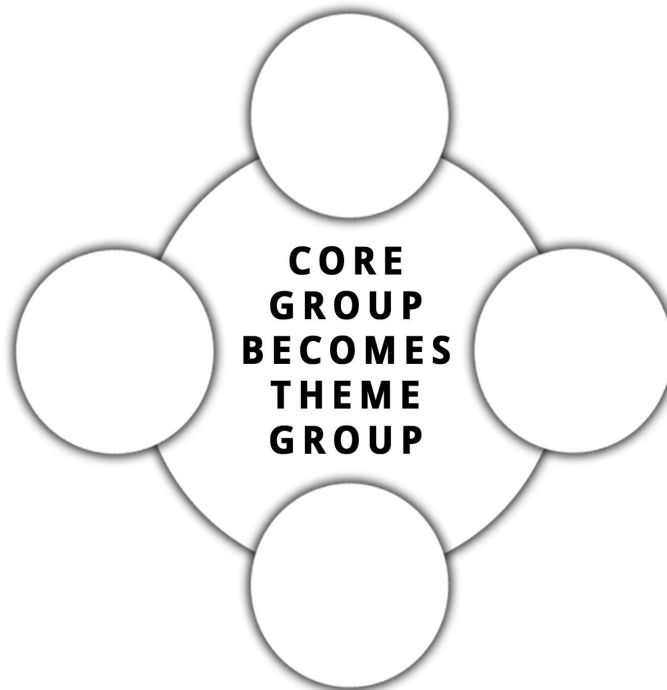
Ways to bring the new person into the role:

- 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

Important to remember:

- Bringing new people in takes time
- In the long run new members is the only thing that makes a group sustainable
- Don't let the pressure of "doing" stuff get in the way of supporting new people to be effective and happy

What if we can't get projects or theme groups started?



In many places it's not possible to get enough people active to do this. Ideas for continuing Transition without them are...

The Initiating group becomes the Core group

- The Core group often decides where to put its energy by:
 - oResponding to what's happening in the community
 - oDeciding what group members have the energy for and an interest in
 - oThere is no right programme for any Transition Initiative – you are the best people to decide what to do

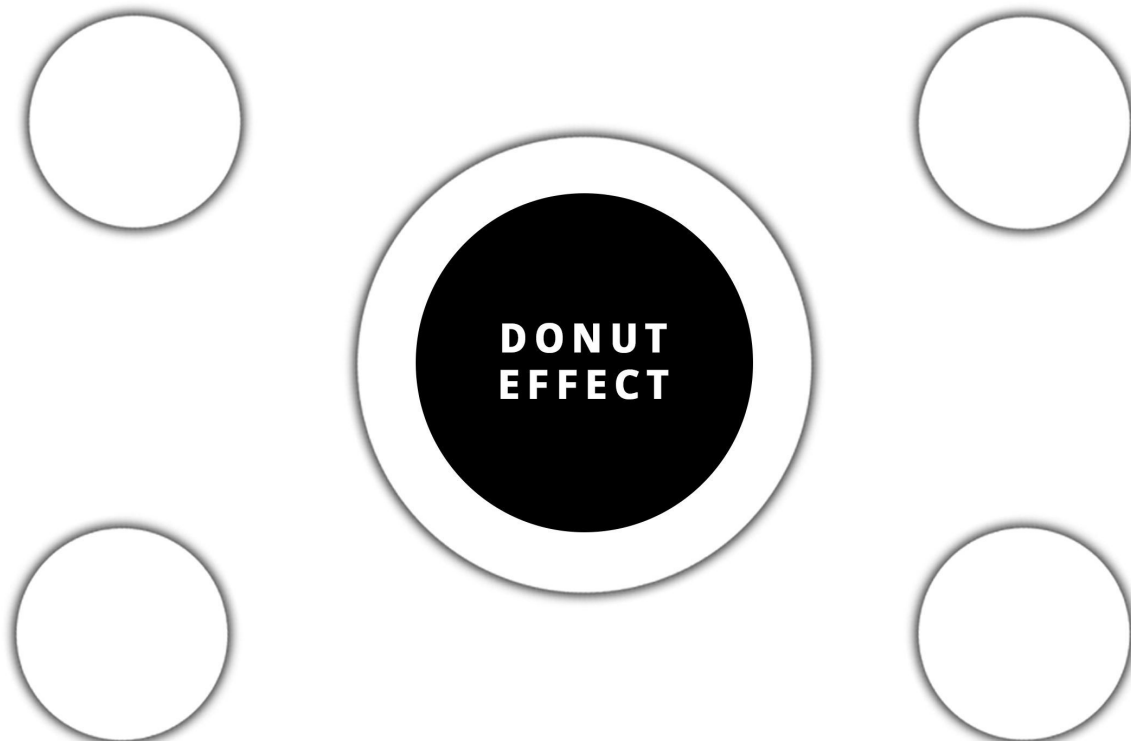
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Often the group does activities from phase 2 of Transition one at a time, such as:

- Putting on awareness raising events, Reskilling or other workshops, to bring in new people and energy
- Offering training, talks or information about Transition to other organisations or events
- Running practical projects such as:
 - Setting up a community garden
 - Planting trees
 - Doing a bulk buy of solar panels (or a hundred other things!!)..
 - These might be projects which get funding and and generates some paid work
- Taking time to consolidate by:
 - Check on energy levels
 - Recruiting new members and deepen together
 - Rethinking groups purpose and vision by thinking about:
 - What's our purpose?
 - What are our agreements?
 - How do new people come in, and how do we welcome them?
 - How are our relationships with others in our place?
 - How is our personal and group resilience?
 - What could we improve about how we work together?

What if everyone's gone off to do projects and no one's at the centre?



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Some have called this the “doughnut” initiative:

- Lots of projects around the edge with a hole at the centre
- The Core Transition group then ceases to operate
- It can happen to Theme groups as well – a great idea for a project comes along, and everyone goes off to do it

On the one hand, this is fine, and it’s great that practical stuff is happening. What is lost is the advantage that comes from many groups working in a similar direction collaborating together, listed above under “evolving the Core”.

In the longer term it’s worth inviting people from the different projects to think about the benefits of having a shared “support” function that could help with tasks that are general to all projects such as:

- Publicity
- Financial accounting
- Insurance
- Recruiting new people and so on

This group should make it easier to run projects and not be a drain. You need to consider how it would operate and if you need to get new people involved who are good at organisations and less passionate about doing things.

A healthy Transition initiative will value both of these kinds of activity, knowing that both are needed!

Good luck

Moving Transition to the next level is a challenging yet rewarding task and sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is hard.

Thanks for joining us on this Transition journey, it is only through people like yourselves putting the time and energy in that Transition can be successful.

More support:

Check out the 7 essential ingredients of Transition here:

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

End.