

Transition Roadmap

A Practical Field Manual

A cumulative, nonviolent pathway from mutual aid
to a peer-coordinated society.

worldintransition.org

The Basic Strategy

The transition is not a single revolution, election, or technological installation. It is a long process of building institutions that meet human needs more reliably, more fairly, and more sustainably than the ones we have now. The strategy is cumulative:

1. Listen before prescribing.
2. Solve one concrete problem in a way people can experience directly.
3. Turn successful projects into durable, democratically governed commons.
4. Link complementary commons into local systems of provision.
5. Federate local systems without concentrating authority.
6. Establish lawful compacts with municipalities and public institutions.
7. Expand unconditional access to essentials while reducing dependence on money.
8. Preserve pluralism, rights, ecological limits, and distributed power as the system matures.

Every stage must improve life in the present. A tool library, care circle, food cooperative, repair network, community land trust, free clinic, or renewable-energy cooperative is valuable in itself -- regardless of whether the broader transition succeeds. Nothing is wasted.

The decisive principle: do not abolish an old dependency before a safer alternative can actually carry its load.

Ten Operating Commitments

Every project using the Transition name should be able to affirm these minimum commitments:

1. Voluntary participation and meaningful exit. No one is trapped by debt, threats, loss of necessities, or social retaliation.
2. Universal human worth. Access to essentials is not conditioned on productivity, ideology, identity, or social status.
3. Nonviolence. The project does not pursue domination through force or cultivate dehumanization.
4. Distributed, recallable authority. Roles are limited, transparent, and removable. No permanent ruling class is permitted to form.
5. Subsidiarity. Decisions are made by the people most affected, at the smallest level capable of handling them.
6. Evidence and revision. Claims are distinguished from findings. Failures are reported. Rules can change.
7. Privacy and informational self-determination. Collect the minimum data needed and never turn participation into surveillance.
8. Accessibility and anti-discrimination. Design for disability, language, caregiving, income, migration status, and other real barriers.
9. Ecological responsibility. Provision remains within regenerative limits rather than displacing costs onto other people or the future.
10. Compatibility without capture. Projects may use existing law, money, grants, and public institutions during transition, while preventing funders, parties, corporations, or founders from controlling the direction.

Phase 0: Establish the Ethical and Operational Container

Purpose: Prevent the predictable problems that destroy young movements -- founder control, ambiguity, informal coercion, unsafe practice, mission drift, and burnout.

Recommended scale: 4-12 initiators, deliberately not all from one household, profession, or social circle.

Actions

1. Write a one-page provisional charter stating the concrete local problem, the ten commitments, and what the project will not do.
2. Establish temporary roles -- facilitator, record keeper, safety contact, treasurer if money is handled, operations coordinator. Set short terms and name backups.
3. Create a conflict-of-interest register. Funding, family relationships, political offices, business interests, and control of essential assets should be visible.
4. Adopt a simple decision rule. Use consent for ordinary reversible decisions, a higher threshold for constitutional or high-risk decisions, and a documented emergency procedure with automatic expiration.
5. Create an independent complaint route that does not require confronting the person accused of harm.
6. Decide what information is necessary. Avoid membership dossiers. Publish aggregated results rather than personal histories.
7. Check applicable law, insurance, safeguarding, food safety, tax, employment, disability access, and licensing requirements before offering services.
8. Write a shutdown and asset-transfer clause so shared resources cannot quietly become a founder's private property.

Readiness Gate

Do not invite broad participation until an ordinary person can understand: how decisions are made, how to leave, how to complain, who can see their data, and what happens to shared assets.

Warning Signs

- The founder's interpretation overrides written rules.
- Urgency is used to bypass consent or safety.
- Criticism is treated as betrayal.
- Informal labor falls repeatedly on women, disabled people, or the least powerful.
- The group offers medical, legal, childcare, construction, or financial services without competence and safeguards.

Phase 1: Listen, Map, and Choose the First Problem

Purpose: Begin with lived conditions rather than a preselected program.

Actions

1. Conduct a community needs-and-assets survey. Go to people -- don't wait for them to come to you. Include people who never attend meetings: shift workers, caregivers, disabled people, non-English speakers, skeptics.
2. Map existing community assets: skills, spaces, tools, organizations, informal networks, surplus capacity.
3. Publish a needs-and-assets snapshot. Keep it short, anonymous, and correctable. Name uncertainty and disagreement.
4. Evaluate candidate projects using a matrix: who benefits, expected benefit, risks, required competence, total labor, external costs, likelihood of success, and alignment with transition goals.
5. Choose one project that can produce a visible, measurable result within six months.

Readiness Gate

The chosen project should address a real need identified by the community -- not one assumed by the initiators.

Phase 2: First Pilot Project

Purpose: Prove that the group can deliver tangible benefit, learn from experience, and operate transparently.

Actions

1. Write a one-page operating sheet that tells a new person: how to access the service, who operates it, what is expected, what is prohibited, how to report harm, how information is used, and when the pilot will be reviewed.
2. Start small and record reality. Count demand and failure, not just success. Record the work performed by every role. Ask who tried and could not participate.
3. Review after 30, 60, and 90 days. At each review, choose: continue, change, pause, transfer, or stop. Publish the reasons.
4. Stabilize before expanding. Train backups, resolve legal issues, fund maintenance, and prove that the project survives the absence of its founder.

Readiness Gate

The project is ready to expand when it has survived at least one leadership change, one significant problem, and one honest public review -- and people outside the initiating circle are participating.

Phase 3: Build Durable Commons

Purpose: Turn successful projects into permanent, democratically governed community institutions.

Actions

1. Add one complementary function that uses existing capacity or closes a demonstrated gap.
2. Create formal governance: constitution, membership rules, dispute resolution, asset locks, and regular elections for rotating roles.
3. Establish legal structure (cooperative, community land trust, mutual benefit corporation, or equivalent under local law).
4. Build shared physical infrastructure: workshop space, storage, community kitchen, shared vehicles, or energy systems.
5. Document everything. Operating procedures, lessons learned, financial records, and governance decisions should be publicly accessible.

Readiness Gate

A commons is durable when it can survive the departure of any single person, fund its own maintenance, resolve internal disputes without external intervention, and demonstrate measurable benefit to participants.

Phase 4: Integrate into a Local System

Purpose: Link complementary commons so that they begin to function as a local system of provision.

Actions

1. Form a local node when two or more durable projects exist. Share administrative support and create consent-based referrals.
2. Map remaining gaps: what needs are still entirely dependent on market purchase?
3. Develop local production for identified gaps: food preservation, energy generation, clothing repair, digital services, educational programs.
4. Create internal coordination systems: shared scheduling, resource tracking, communication channels, and inter-project governance.
5. Begin reducing monetary transactions within the network where real capacity exists to replace them.

Readiness Gate

The local system is ready for federation when it provides demonstrable benefit across multiple domains, is governed by its participants, and has tested its resilience through at least one significant disruption.

Phase 5: Federate

Purpose: Connect local systems into regional networks that share capacity without concentrating authority.

Actions

1. Cooperate with another node on one specific task. Use a written compact and evaluate whether federation actually adds value.
2. Establish inter-node governance: how decisions are made between nodes, how disputes are resolved, how shared resources are allocated, and how nodes can withdraw.
3. Share specialized capacity between nodes with complementary strengths.
4. Create regional coordination for infrastructure: energy grids, water systems, transportation, communications.
5. Develop shared standards for quality, safety, accessibility, and environmental impact.

Readiness Gate

Federation should expand access without hollowing out local control. It requires enforceable rights, transparent performance, stable coordination capacity, independent audit, and tested procedures for disruption.

Phase 6: Establish Public Compacts

Purpose: Partner with municipalities and public institutions -- from a position of demonstrated operational proof, not ideological advocacy.

Actions

1. Seek public compact only after operational proof. Ask public institutions for land, procurement, recognition, infrastructure, or funding tied to rights and transparent outcomes.
2. Negotiate mutual obligations: the public institution provides resources or removes barriers; the transition network delivers measurable outcomes.
3. Maintain independence: grants include an exit plan rather than creating permanent dependency.
4. Advocate for legal recognition of cooperative and commons-based institutions, land trusts, and non-monetary exchange systems.

Phase 7: Guarantee Essentials

Purpose: Make survival progressively less dependent on wages, wealth, debt, and market access.

This stage must be defined by capacity, not rhetoric. Declaring housing or food "free" does not produce land, labor, materials, care, or energy.

For Each Essential Sector

1. Define the right or minimum service level in concrete terms.
2. Measure current need, capacity, external dependencies, ecological cost, and failure risk.
3. Guarantee a limited but reliable core before promising comprehensive abundance.
4. Make the core free at the point of use where feasible.
5. Preserve transitional accounting for external monetary costs.
6. Expand capacity through shared infrastructure, prevention, repair, and demand reduction.
7. Publish allocation rules for nonessential or scarce variants.
8. Stress-test for supply interruption, climate events, cyberattack, disease, and political hostility.
9. Expand the guarantee only after reliability is demonstrated.

Phase 8: A Mature Peer-Coordinated System

Purpose: Make access primarily needs-based while preventing a new elite from replacing owners and financiers.

A mature system is not the end of politics. People will still disagree. The goal is not unanimity but a society that can handle disagreement without anyone losing access to food, shelter, care, or dignity.

Minimum Constitutional Guarantees

1. Guaranteed access to defined essentials independent of productivity or obedience.
2. Bodily autonomy, freedom of conscience, expression, association, movement, and meaningful privacy.
3. Equal protection and active accessibility.
4. Due process, understandable rules, independent appeal, and proportionate responses to harm.
5. Meaningful exit from associations and freedom to form alternatives.
6. Distributed authority with recall, rotation, term limits, and separation of powers.
7. Transparent allocation of scarce resources and auditable system models.
8. Ecological ceilings grounded in the best available evidence.
9. Independent journalism, research, auditing, and whistleblower protection.
10. Emergency powers that are narrow, reviewable, and automatically expire.
11. Regular constitutional review and sunset clauses for unproven institutions.
12. Protection against hereditary privilege and private conversion of common assets.

A Practical Local-Node Manual

This compact manual can be used by a neighborhood or small community without waiting for a national organization. Twelve steps, each building on the last.

Step 1. Form a diverse initiating circle.

Aim for 4-12 people with different relationships to the community. Disclose conflicts, adopt the ten commitments, and decide how to stop safely if the effort fails.

Step 2. Listen to at least twice as many people as are in the circle.

Seek out those least likely to attend a meeting. Offer telephone, paper, translated, asynchronous, and accessible ways to respond.

Step 3. Publish a needs-and-assets snapshot.

Keep it short, anonymous, and correctable. Name uncertainty and disagreement.

Step 4. Choose one six-month-or-shorter pilot.

State who benefits, the expected benefit, risks, required competence, total labor, external costs, and stop conditions.

Step 5. Write the operating sheet.

One page should tell a new person: how to access the service, who operates it, what is expected, what is prohibited, how to report harm, how information is used, and when the pilot will be reviewed.

Step 6. Start small and record reality.

Count demand and failure, not just success. Record the work performed by every role. Ask who tried and could not participate.

Step 7. Review after 30, 60, and 90 days.

At each review choose: continue, change, pause, transfer, or stop. Publish the reasons.

Step 8. Stabilize before expanding.

Train backups, resolve legal issues, fund maintenance, and prove that the project survives absence of the founder.

Step 9. Add one complementary function.

Choose an addition that uses existing capacity or closes a demonstrated gap.

Step 10. Form a local node.

When two or more durable projects exist, share administrative support and create consent-based referrals while keeping operational responsibilities clear.

Step 11. Federate around a bounded need.

Cooperate with another node on one specific task. Use a written compact and evaluate whether federation actually adds value.

Step 12. Seek public compact only after operational proof.

Ask public institutions for land, procurement, recognition, infrastructure, or funding tied to rights and transparent outcomes.

Common Failure Modes and Countermeasures

These are not hypothetical dangers. They are patterns that have destroyed real movements. Knowing them in advance is the best defense.

Founder capture

One person becomes indispensable, controls the story and relationships, and treats accountability as persecution.

Counter: Limited mandates, shared credentials, documented procedures, trained successors, independent complaints, asset locks, routine leadership turnover.

Ideological purity

Agreement with language or theory becomes more important than useful participation.

Counter: Open services, plain language, freedom of belief, behavior-based safety rules, roles for constructive skeptics.

Premature scale

Publicity and replication outrun operational reliability.

Counter: Readiness gates, limited pilots, replication manuals that include failures, a right to pause growth.

Invisible care labor

Meetings celebrate visible projects while a few people absorb scheduling, cleaning, mediation, and emotional work.

Counter: Measure all labor, rotate it, redesign it, compensate it where possible, treat maintenance as core capacity.

Grant dependency

The funder's categories replace local priorities; the project collapses when funding ends.

Counter: Diversified support, low fixed costs, shared assets, staged commitments, exit plan for every grant.

Legal romanticism

Participants assume moral purpose exempts them from labor, tax, safety, licensing, disability, or safeguarding law.

Counter: Competent advice, documented compliance, advocacy to change harmful law, no secret evasion presented as liberation.

Data centralization

Integration produces a comprehensive profile of everyone's needs, behavior, and relationships.

Counter: Data minimization, local storage, separation of datasets, short retention, consent, offline access, independent security review.

Majority domination

Local democracy becomes permission for exclusion or abuse.

Counter: Enforceable rights floor, independent appeal, protected minority participation, federation-level review limited to rights violations.

Burnout and permanent emergency

Chronic urgency erases boundaries and makes abuse seem necessary.

Counter: Workload ceilings, rest, backups, paid coordination, planned closures, incident review, automatic expiration of emergency authority.

External capture

A party, corporation, state, or security service supplies resources in exchange for control, data, or exclusion of critics.

Counter: Funding firewalls, transparency, no single-source dependency, narrow contracts, conflict disclosure, right to terminate partnerships.

This roadmap is a working draft. It will be revised as research advances, as communities test its proposals, and as evidence accumulates about what works and what doesn't.

The destination is ambitious. The next action should be small enough to perform, valuable enough to matter, and honest enough to learn from.