2019 –
A Year in Review

Transition US
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Overview

Transition is a movement that began in the UK in 2005 and has grown to communities around the world. Its premise is simple: to bring community members together, engage their knowledge and love of place, and unleash their collective genius to address some of the most pressing issues of our time. Currently, 1,200 Transition Initiatives are active in 50 countries on every continent except Antarctica, revitalizing local food systems, strengthening local economies, and reducing dependence on fossil fuels in response to resource depletion, climate change, and economic instability.

Transition US is the national hub for this international effort. Founded in 2009, the mission of Transition US is to catalyze and strengthen a national network of people-powered groups who are building local resilience through community action. There are now 169 official Transition Initiatives in 38 states activating the public, reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling community members, weaving webs of connection and support, hosting courageous conversations, and patiently mending the torn fabric of society.

To support these initiatives, we provide in-depth trainings, share replicable models, develop a wide variety of resources and tools, inspire thousands of local food, water, and energy projects, hold National Gatherings and Movement Strategy Summits, foster the growth of several regional hubs, and convene learning cohorts and working groups focused on the new economy, inner resilience, emergency preparedness, and more. After a decade of success, we believe that our national Transition Movement is currently poised for another leap forward in its reach and impact.

To effect greater change on the neighborhood, community, regional and national scales, our focus for the next three years will be on improving and enhancing all of our current offerings mentioned above, plus developing a concerted national strategy to bridge social justice and environmental efforts, develop specific materials that build social cohesion, and strengthen collaborative partnerships across related movements.

Mission and Vision

Our mission at Transition US is to catalyze and strengthen a national network of people-powered groups building local resilience through community action.

We accomplish this mission by inspiring, encouraging, supporting, networking and training individuals and their communities as they consider, adopt, adapt, and implement the Transition approach to community empowerment and change.

Ultimately, we envision a United States in which each community engages its collective creativity to unleash an extraordinary and historic transition to a future beyond fossil fuels — one that is more vibrant, abundant, resilient, and ultimately preferable to the present.
Building the Movement

The Transition Movement here in the US continued to grow in 2019 and Transition US took many positive steps this year to support the flourishing of an even larger and more cohesive US Transition network in the future.

Local Initiatives

Three new local Transition Initiatives were officially-recognized in 2019: Transition Rochester in Minnesota, the Phoenixville Area Transition Community in Pennsylvania, and Kingston Transition in New York. Cooperation Humboldt also took over as the 148th official Transition Initiative in the US from Transition Humboldt, in a remarkably peaceful and cooperative transition of power. These are just the latest members to join our robust network of 169 officially-recognized Transition Initiatives located throughout 38 different states. A complete list of official initiatives with links to more information can be found at our Initiatives Map.

This year, we also furthered an effort, started in 2018, to forge deeper connections with all of these local initiatives and provide the most up-to-date information about them on our website. As a result, we increased the percentage of confirmed listings on our website from 12% in 2018 to 27% in 2019. We plan to continue to build on this trend in coming years, foregrounding the work of “active” initiatives, honoring the accomplishments of “legacy” initiatives, and posting information about “emerging” initiatives to our website for the first time.

National Organizing Framework

With more and more interest in national-level collaboration coming from local Transition Initiative, regional hub, national working group, and Collaborative Design Council leaders over the past few of years, we’ve been working on a National Organizing Framework that can help to weave all of these different types of groups together into a more coordinated movement, one that is better able to facilitate networking, peer-to-peer learning, the sharing of information and resources, and the amplification our collective voice. We are currently discussing a new streamlined proposal among staff, which will then be sent to our Board of Directors and Collaborative Design Council before soliciting feedback and input from our wider network.
Building the Movement

National Working Groups

Social Justice Working Group
Launched in 2018, the mission of the Transition US Social Justice Working Group is to grow justice, equity and inclusion in the world, and to create the conditions for diversity to flourish in the Transition Movement. We do this by educating ourselves on social justice issues and sharing resources with the broader Transition movement, connecting and collaborating with the broader social justice movement, and implementing practical projects that incorporate justice and equity as integral aspects of building resilience.

In May 2019, three members of the Social Justice Working Group – Jul Bystrova, Theo Talcott, and Don Hall – traveled to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota to help out for a week with the Oglala Lakota Economic and Cultural Revitalization Initiative (OLCERI). Bryan Deans, the founder of OLCERI who invited us, has already set up several local food hubs (for production, education, and distribution) throughout the Reservation in order to combat widespread food insecurity. He is currently working on establishing additional hubs and building an Earthship on his ranch to house and provide workspaces for volunteers. Once this first Earthship is completed, Bryan hopes to build 1,000 more to address approximately 25% of the problem of substandard housing on the Reservation. OLCERI is interested in Transition US and the Social Justice Working Group sending more volunteers to help with these projects in the future.

Since returning from Pine Ridge, we’ve continued to share information about OLCERI activities through our social media accounts, and coordinated with OLCERI to publish an article in the Fall/Winter 2019 issue of Orenda Healing International’s Four Winds Journal about their hugely inspiring work.

Inner Resilience Network
The national Inner Resilience Network (IRN) was formed in 2018 to support practitioners, facilitators and activists engaged in personal and collective transformation. In 2019, the IRN hosted 9 monthly “deep dive” conversations on topics ranging from death and climate grief to personal resilience practices. In addition, in October and November the IRN hosted a 3-part “Building Bridges” healing dialogue series aimed at empowering activists to build connections and collaborate with communities outside their own. The IRN also began organizing a weeklong “Regenerative Activism” training and retreat, in partnership with Animas Valley Institute, which will be held in 2020.

Politics & Policy Working Group
The Politics & Policy Working Group was formed in late 2019 to educate and share resources on Transition-aligned policy solutions. It is hosting a webinar series in spring 2020 with webinars on public banking, campus-level policy change, and more.

Collaborative Design Council
Our Collaborative Design Council was convened in March 2016 in order to strengthen the US Transition Movement by increasing grassroots participation in national-level strategy and program development. As a hub for national-level Transition organizing in the US, the CDC connects local organizers from across the country, fosters the creation of national level working groups, and hosts important national-level strategic conversations. Its current members include:

- Aleisa Myles, Transition Town Media
- Janice Lynne, Transition Fort Collins
- Jessica Cohodes, Transition Milwaukee
- Jul Bystrova, Inner Resilience Network
- Laura Philon, Wilmington in Transition
- Leslie Mackenzie, Transition Twin Cities
- Sari Steuber, Transition Town Media
- Shakarti Belew, Transition Trainer
- Sylvia Holmes, Transition Pasadena
- Theo Talcott, Transition Town Manchester
- William Mutch, Transition Palo Alto
- David Cobb, Cooperation Humboldt
- John Foran, UC-Santa Barbara & Eco Vista
- Galen Meyers, Inner Resilience Network
- Kaat VanderStraten, Transition Wayland
- Marissa Mommaerts, Transition US

On their way to volunteer for a week on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Theo Talcott, Jul Bystrova, and Don Hall stop off in Fort Collins, Colorado to visit with fellow Social Justice Working Group member, Marissa Mommaerts, and her son, Gabriel.

16 Council Members
While we partner with other organizations for almost every project we do, a few of our most significant collaborations in 2019 were with Post Carbon Institute and around our Building Bridges dialogue series and Ready Together.

Post Carbon Institute
PCI has been a close partner and frequent collaborator of Transition US since they helped to establish the organization in 2009. This year, we collaborated with them on two major programs: their Think Resilience guided course with Richard Heinberg and a mini-grants program for official Transition Initiatives. After each of the first six sessions of Think Resilience, Transition US staff participated in live video calls alongside Richard and other PCI staff. We also hosted a seventh live video call specifically to discuss applying Richard’s ideas to grassroots community resilience building. Participants in the course (and later, all official Transition Initiatives) were invited to apply for $1,000 mini-grants through PCI. Winners included Transition Town Media for their Media Circle of Aunts and Uncles investment fund, Cooperation Humboldt for their Food Not Lawns Greenhouse, and Resilient Helena for a day-long convening of strategic partners to encourage greater collaboration throughout their local community.

Building Bridges Series
What started out as a Transition US-led project was subsequently taken over by our national Inner Resilience Network and Social Justice Working Group, who subsequently partnered with Common Ground Networks and the international Transition Network. Recognizing Transition US as an international leader in addressing issues related to social justice and diversity, TN provided funding and helped to promote this series. We view it as a great example of something we hope to see more of in the future: national working groups taking on larger projects in their respective areas of expertise. While the first three installments of Building Bridges concluded in November, another four-part series is already being planned for 2020, featuring expert presenters on a diversity of topics.
Following the last several years of severe wildfires, hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanoes, we became even more convinced that growing social cohesion on a neighborhood scale (even street-by-street) was critical to our social and physical well-being. In 2019 we updated our Transition Streets neighborhood program, and developed an enhanced water-saving edition for drought-prone areas and a version more suitable to renters called Transition Streets On-A-Budget. With partners, NewStories and City of Renton's Office of Emergency Management, developed Ready Together: A Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Handbook.

Transition Streets
Transition Streets is a neighborhood carbon-, water-, and waste-reduction project adapted from the UK’s Transition Network by a host of extraordinary volunteers convened by Transition US. The Transition Streets project is comprised of: a seven-chapter curriculum of practical, concrete actions that reduce household energy, water, waste and transportation miles; a set of facilitation and outreach guides; plus additional support and resources from Transition US.

Visitors to the Transition Streets website find the handbook, a rich array of support materials (including a one-minute Transition Streets animation), and everything else needed to successfully implement this project in their neighborhoods.

Transition Streets Water-Saving Edition for residents in drought-prone areas, and Transition Streets On-A-Budget for renters and those on tight budgets will soon be available on the Transition Streets website.

The Emergency Preparedness Handbook Ready Together can serve as a standalone guide for action-oriented gatherings with neighbors, or as a prequel or sequel to Transition Streets.

Ready Together brings together clusters of near neighbors over seven sessions to work through a user-friendly handbook full of practical, affordable tips to help each household prepare for emergencies of any kind. The self-guided handbook’s topics include: potential home and neighborhood hazards and their mitigation, essential supplies of food, water and medicine to have on hand; go-bags to cover all household members in case of evacuation; emergency response and contingency plans to facilitate calmness and clarity in critical times; mapping our neighborhoods so that no one falls through the cracks; hands-on strategies for dealing with specific crisis situations; and ways to connect with fire departments, community emergency response teams and other support structures.

The presence of the gentle peer pressure of neighbors; as groups work through our highly accessible curriculum ensures that people do get prepared and that behaviors do change.

Supplementing and supporting Ready Together are webinars for group-catalyzers, workshops for the community, additional resources, and a variety of facilitation, partnership and outreach guides. A Community of Practice, facilitated by Transition US, will provide additional, ongoing support for community leaders.

2019 was the year for working with partners (NewStories and City of Renton’s Office of Emergency Management) and completing the Ready Together handbook and draft website: http://readytogether.net/. Piloting the handbook will take place in early 2020 and by Spring 2020, Ready Together will be rolled out nationally.
Leadership Development

Taking a local Transition initiative or other community resilience-building effort from a mere idea to full realization can be hugely challenging and complex. That is why we offer webinars and trainings to share best practices from around the world and grow communities of mutual support.

Webinars

Transition US offered three free webinars in 2019:

- "Grant Writing: It Doesn’t Have to be Stressful to be Successful" with Jana Hexter of GrantsChampion.com
- "What the Climate Movement Is Missing" with Ann Hancock of The Climate Center (formerly the Center for Climate Protection)
- "Advancing Sustainability Through Hyper-Local Action" with Clayton Louis Ferrara of IDEAS for Us

128 people participated in real-time and an additional 600 have already watched the recordings on our YouTube channel or Facebook page. We also held a very special online event in May with one of the co-founders of the international Permaculture movement, David Holmgren. This 90-minute exploration of David’s most recent book, RetroSuburbia: The Downshifter’s Guide to a Resilient Future was attended by 70 people, with an additional 85 people registering to access the recording.

Trainings

In addition to the Think Resilience course with Post Carbon Institute described above, we also hosted a second round of Effective Collaboration Online Training for 46 participants in April and the pilot version of Transition Thrive Online Training in September. Although we only had 19 participants register for Thrive Online, it received a lot of positive feedback and we plan to offer it again in the Fall of 2020. Its design was initially informed by a survey that 119 people from 19 different countries responded to. It was then developed over a period of nine months by two US and two Canadian Transition Trainers. We have already offered to share our design with the international Training community for it to be translated and adapted into other languages in other countries.

This Spring, we expect to offer our first three-session online Transition Talk Training to help launch a new national speakers’ bureau for Transition. Those who are confirmed as “Transition Speakers” will be listed on the Transition US website, sent referrals for speaking engagements in their vicinity, and have their talks promoted nationally through our many communications channels. Speakers will not be required to take Talk Training in order to qualify, but it will be provided as a support.

Altogether, more than 10,000 people have participated live and over 60,000 have watched or listened to recordings of 418 Transition US-organized webinars and teleseminars since 2009. Free webinars on “Transition Declares a Climate Emergency” with The Climate Mobilization and “From What Is to What If. The Role of Imagination in Transition” with Transition Movement co-founder Rob Hopkins have already been scheduled for January and February 2020, respectively.
Spreading the Word

A big part of our role as a national hub is to raise awareness of the Transition Movement and share its many inspiring stories to encourage people everywhere to get involved. Here’s how we did this in 2019, through presentations, articles and interviews, and the publication of 10 Stories of Transition in the US.

Presentations

In lieu of flying around to big national conferences, Transition US Co-Director, Don Hall, focused this year on giving presentations to groups and at events in and around Sarasota, Florida where he lives:

- A short talk about the Transition Movement’s approach to building a more equitable and resilient economy before a longer presentation by Move to Amend’s Keyan Bliss at the Forgartyville Community Media & Arts Center.
- A 90-minute overview of “Transition Towns: The Future Is Ours to Save” for the Freethinkers speaker series at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota.
- A presentation on “Creating Enlightened Society: Shambhala and Transition Towns” at the Shambhala St. Petersburg meditation center.
- A panel discussion on “Social Permaculture” and the mutually-beneficial relationship between Permaculture and intentional communities, with founders of several Permaculture-inspired intentional communities, at the seventh annual Florida Permaculture Convergence.

Articles & Interviews

As our primary spokesperson for Transition US, Don Hall was also interviewed for several podcasts, books, articles, and TV segments in 2019:

- An in-depth exploration of the Transition Movement’s relationship to Permaculture and the wider movement for regenerative communities with Oliver Goshey of the Abundant Edge Podcast.
- A conversation about the evolution of Transition in the United States and the Five Stages of Transition with Michael Brownlee for his forthcoming “Voices of the Deep Revolution” podcast.
- A section about Transition and repair cafes in John Wackman’s forthcoming book about the international Repair Café movement.
- A five-page article about Transition Sarasota, Transition US, and the international Transition Movement for LWR Life Magazine.
- A similar segment for SNN News TV, undertaken in collaboration with Transition Sarasota.

Don Hall leading a panel on “Social Permaculture” at the 2019 Florida Permaculture Convergence.

SNN News reporter waiting to interview Don Hall in his front-yard food forest at the intentional community he founded in Sarasota, Florida.
10 Stories of Transition in the US

Having first been posted in serial to our website, www.resilience.org, and www.transitionnetwork.org during 2018, 10 Stories of Transition US: Inspiring Examples of Community Resilience-Building was more widely distributed as a print and digital publication in 2019. In addition to the titular 10 stories, which include “Transition Sarasota’s Suncoast Gleaning Project,” “The Evolution of Transition Town Media,” “Local 20/20’s Local Investing Opportunities Network,” “Transition Milwaukee and the Victory Garden Initiative,” and “Transition Fidalgo & Friends’ Vision 2030,” this 80-page, full-color, illustrated book – beautifully designed by Lisa Berry of Wish Media – features an introductory essay from Don Hall, information about Transition US, and a top 10 list of ways to get involved.

Thanks to continued generosity from the Cottonwood Foundation and others, we were able to distribute free printed copies to 48 people who were interviewed for the series or helped make it possible in some other way. 46 people have so far purchased print or digital copies of 10 Stories through our website, and excerpts appeared this year in the February/Spring edition of Permaculture Design Magazine and the Fall/Winter 2019 issue of Orenda Healing International’s Four Winds Journal. We continue to seek out stories of exemplary local community resilience-building efforts to publish on our website and potentially include in future collections similar to this one.

Communications and Outreach

The ideas and visionary models that fuel the Transition Movement are sprouting up all around the world, but too few people are aware they exist. Transition Initiatives across the US are building local momentum with community solutions, however the movement at large is underreported and unknown to large segments of the population. To help amplify grassroots work, we share their stories on a broader stage and deepen relationships between storytellers and design council members in our network.

• “Good News from Transition” is our monthly newsletter containing updates from us at Transition US and the latest stories from the field. We gather community-building resources, pertinent events, and inspiring stories from across the movement and compile them in a monthly newsletter sent to 7,500 subscribers. The newsletter is syndicated on the websites of numerous Transition initiatives, allies, and community groups both inside and outside of the US, and archived on our website.

• In 2020, we will be consolidating the main Transition US website, the Transition Streets website, and the Transition Gathering website to streamline our communications and simplify our messaging for all visitors. We will continue to feature stories from Transition Initiatives and provide easy access to tools, inspiration, and replicable models.

• Our social media presence on Facebook (11K followers), Twitter (5.8K followers) and Instagram (146 followers) has been growing and providing a platform for engagement daily.
People Power

All of the projects described above have been made possible through the dedicated efforts of Transition US staff, our Board of Directors, and the generous contributions made by Transition leaders and volunteers. Beyond their direct involvement in Transition US activities, the many people listed below have also profoundly shaped our strategy, demonstrating that Transition is truly a people-powered, bottom-up, grassroots movement.

Staff
Our staff team changed in 2019 and we said goodbye to Nils Palsson and welcomed Ratih Sutrisno to the role of Communications Coordinator. Carolyne Stayton and Don Hall remained in leadership positions within the organization, supported by Director of Programs Marissa Mommaerts. It is a testament to their commitment and creativity that so much was accomplished this past year with just four part-time staff tasked with supporting a large and growing national movement.

Board of Directors
In 2019, along with quarterly governance meetings, we implemented quarterly strategy meetings. Board members were able to contribute more of their good thinking to the organization’s direction and we saw increased connection and satisfaction. After three years of service, Maggie Seeley rotated off the board in June to focus more of her efforts on her local LaMontanita Co-op Board.

We want to celebrate Mark Juedeman, our Board President and Asher Miller, our Secretary and Treasurer for their continued leadership, and Erik Lindberg, Sam Weschler and Mario Yanez for their gracious service on the Transition US Board of Directors.

Transition Leaders and Volunteers
The US Transition Movement would simply not exist without the heartfelt dedication of countless Transition leaders and the many volunteers working every day to build community resilience through their engagement with their own local initiatives, regional hubs, and community interest groups. Their hours are impossible to count and as are the ripples of their impacts. For all of their courageous and inspiring efforts, we are eternally grateful.

Within the scope of Transition US’s own efforts and projects we also have a number of people and efforts to celebrate. In 2019, Leslie Mackenzie from Transition Twin Cities in Minnesota both updated our Transition Streets neighborhood energy-, water-, waste-reduction handbook, along with developing the adaptation: Transition Streets On A Budget. Mary Mertz used her valuable skill of proof-reading to fine tune these editions. At the same time, Linda Currie of Transition Berkeley helped create the Transition Streets Water-Saving Edition focusing on indoor and outdoor water-saving actions, and Sylvia Holmes of Transition Pasadena offered us valuable feedback after piloting this edition in her neighborhood.

Many national projects were furthered in 2019 by the vision, skill and creativity of a number of exceptional people and teams. Bob Stilger of NewStories and Deb Needham of the City of Renton’s Office of Emergency Management contributed over 250 hours in the writing and editing of Ready Together, a neighborhood emergency preparedness handbook. The Collaborative Design Council, Inner Resilience Network, and the following Working Groups: Social Justice, Transition Universities, Policy and Politics, and Regional Hubs each held meetings and generated additional network synapses and mutual benefit activities. Together they contributed over 900 volunteer hours. The Thrive Training development team, those working on Transition Initiative updates, the 2020 National Gathering Organizing Team, and a number of other professionals who gave of their skill and time to Transition US efforts contributed another 500 hours, bringing the combined total of volunteer hours in 2019 to 1,678 - almost 42 weeks of dedicated work!
Financial Overview

Our total income for 2019 was $170,497, which included a $40,000 grant from Yavanna Foundation, a $20,000 general operating grant and a $15,000 National Gathering project grant from the New Visions Foundation, a $5,000 matching grant from Overbrook Foundation, and a $10,000 grant from the Biggs Family Foundation. To complete our Ready Together: Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness Handbook we received $5,722 through a Threshold Foundation Funding Circle called Thriving Resilient Communities, and to complete our work on Building our Network and hosting a series on Building Bridges we received $9,723 in seed-funding from Transition Network. All of this was supplemented by $8,476 in online training income and $3,492 in nonprofit contributions.

Transition US received gifts of all sizes from more than 154 individual donors. Of these donors, 81 responded to our crowdfunding campaign which raised over $8,400 to adapt our Transition Streets Handbook into an “On A Budget” version, and by year’s end individual contributions totaled $49,512.

Small corporate contributions plus sales of our publications 10 Stories of Transition in the US and Transition Streets provided our remaining income. Expenses for the year totaled $155,798. These included:
• $26,333 in contract services, which included trainers for our online trainings, and program services including writers of 10 Stories of Transition in the US and Ready Together;
• $108,943 in staff wages, taxes, and benefits;
• $6,316 in operations and project expenses;
• $9,860 in rent and insurance; and
• $3,332 in business admin expenses.

Entering into 2020, we have a cash forward balance of $67,018 with an additional pledge of $40,000 expected in February.

Looking Forward to 2020 and Beyond

After a decade of building, our national Transition Movement is poised for another leap forward in its reach and impact. Consequently, for the next three years, we will:

• Deepen and further develop all of our educational training, networking, and neighborhood programs, as well as,
• Continue to provide support for local Transition Initiatives, regional hubs, national working groups, and our Collaborative Design Council in ways simply too numerous to count;
• Complete and launch our National Organizing Framework - a collaborative project with Regional Hubs and our Collaborative Design Council;
• Develop a three-series Talk Training and national Speakers Bureau,
• Pilot and nationally roll-out Ready Together, an emergency preparedness handbook and process that near-neighbors go through together to both get their households prepared, and build social cohesion right there on their street;
• Plan, develop and convene a June 2020 National Gathering, “From What Is to What If: Reimagining and Rebuilding Our World” in Castleton, Vermont. This Gathering will bring together 300 dreamers, idealists, visionaries and activists from various walks of life, movements, organizations and efforts for three days of collaboration and knowledge-sharing;
• Organize, facilitate and convene a Movement Strategy Summit following the National Gathering to foster deeper, on-going collaboration between leaders of both similar and diverse movements;
• Inspire thousands of local food, water, and energy projects, through newsletters, stories, blogs, articles, presentations, and a podcast series called “Hope with Its Sleeves Rolled Up”;
• Launch a New Website to showcase promising community sustainability models from varying constituencies, highlight local change-makers and offer resources and tools for