

Funders, Professionals, Communities: 3 stakeholder circles working together to deliver holistic community development.

A project of [CTRL Shift](#) / [SONEC](#) / [AFS](#)

Summary

Over three months, we will run two events and a series of meetings to bring together three key stakeholder groups that are essential to implementing what we call holistic community development: funders, community leaders, and development professionals. We aim for approximately 30 individuals distributed evenly across the three groups. We will facilitate a process by which they get to know one another, identify their needs and objectives within their stakeholder group, and develop project proposals together across all three groups. At the end, all participants will have the opportunity to join projects developed during the three month period. These projects will be monitored over the following nine months, with reports going back to ALL stakeholders (including funders). In this way, we create genuine collaboration between these stakeholders and shift control toward local communities, so they become genuine partners co-creating their own development projects.

Project Description

There are institutional boundaries in place that prevent holistic community development. We aim to bridge that gap.

A tradition of professional impartiality keeps funders at arms length from the communities they support, and the professionals (social entrepreneurs, charities, ethical businesses) they pay. While the desire to prevent corrupt self-dealing is admirable, and it is important to preserve a tradition of service, this distance makes it harder for everyone involved to deliver development that truly meets local needs while approaching Global Goals. Holistic community development requires all stakeholders to work together.

What if funders could clearly communicate their institutional needs to communities and holistic community development professionals, and those stakeholders could respond with their own needs and priorities? What if they could be part of a collaborative conversation without compromising the quality or fairness of decisions on funds distribution?

This builds on the [idea of holistic community development](#), which is co-led by communities that know their local needs, professionals who are experts on implementing programs that have worked elsewhere, and funders who represent society's larger goals and the democratic institutions that set those goals.

We expect the professionals in particular to bring a bouquet or ecosystem of complementary programs covering all necessary areas of practice or focus. Different ecosystems of programs may be better suited to meeting the needs of different communities, so this ought to be an experimental and exploratory process rather than a polished and prescriptive one.

Structure

We want to try establishing a **holistic community development implementation circle** that has three **sub-circles**: one for funders, one for professionals, and one for community members. Whatever goes well, we hope to duplicate in subsequent efforts.

Who

We aim to invite ~10 participants for each circle (excluding facilitators).

By communities, we mean neighbourhood level groupings, such as intentional communities, cohousing and housing cooperatives, neighbourhood mutual aid networks, Transition Towns (including Transition Bristol), as well as other working class advocacy groups, and independent politics (e.g flatpack) groups that are connected to a specific locale.

Providers will be invited from these categories: self-governance / sociocracy, regenerative justice, circular/ regenerative economics, environmental conservation or regeneration, lifelong learning, and community organising.

Funders, from these categories: charitable foundations, philanthropic, local government, entrepreneurs. Further, the Social Change Agency has offered to support our outreach by inviting members of their 'Association of Charitable Foundations' group, and connecting us with the forward thinking Lankelly Chase.

How does this relate to the Transition Towns movement?

We (the facilitators and organisers of this project) believe that this project will support existing Transition movement groups and advance Transition movement goals.

The AIM of the Transition movement is to empower communities to transition to low carbon and post-oil societies. The holistic community development model provides a blueprint for a positive post-transition future, and this project provides a structured collaborative path toward it.

The Bristol Transition Town and other Transition groups will be invited, as will providers who are experienced acting on these topics (e.g. Permaculture UK, Bristol Energy Network, Transition Towns trainers). In our experience of teaching Sociocracy and

similar practices within Transition Towns in Lewes, Brixton, Brighton, and Wales, simply participating in this project will provide valuable practical learning that will empower participating Transition groups. It will also help them run fundable projects that accomplish their goals.

Process

Each **sub-circle** will be professionally facilitated. Decisions will be made by sociocratic consent. The sub-circles may meet as often as they wish, but the plan is to bring them together for one or two days, twice in a three month period. Each time they gather, they will focus on the needs they identify within their group, what they can offer to the other two groups, and what requests they may have.

The **holistic community development implementation circle** will meet at least twice a year for one day to integrate the perspectives of these sub-circles. Support staff will help the circle to write up a **brief** report (a single page summary and up to six pages in substance), with the understanding that only a brief report is likely to be widely read.

Based on the priorities and potential areas of collaboration identified, coalitions of professionals, communities, and funders may launch projects to run throughout the year.

Detailed schedule - fourteen months

This schedule will be modified by the circles according to their needs, but it is indicative of our plans.

- Further mapping and invitations sent to potential collaborators in each group
- Intake sessions held via Zoom; intake sessions are not segregated by group
- Implementation Circle convenes for first time (1 day)
 - Each circle sets its meeting schedule and agenda
 - Each circle selects one or more representatives to a **steering circle**
- Each circle meets twice via Zoom with facilitators (2-3 hours), in one month increments. Circles may choose to meet more often or have subgroups meet more often to do any work that they choose to take on.
 - Brief reports from each meeting are circulated to the other circles.
- The steering circle meets monthly with facilitation support between the other circle meetings. The steering circle may support the other circles in working together.
- At the end of the three-month period, the whole Implementation Circle convenes for one or two days. At this point, any member or group of members may propose a project. Projects will be reviewed by the Implementation Circle as a whole. Members (and their organisation or community) may choose to join

projects, but the Implementation Circle as a whole will not make a decision to either pursue or not pursue a project, as the Implementation Circle does not have an ongoing budget or set of committed resources. Such decisions are made by budget holders or other relevant decision-making groups in the member organisations.

- Projects to which people commit will agree to report on their progress every quarter in a lightweight way
 - A final report will be published with the list of projects that have been proposed, the projects that have been adopted, and which participants have committed to which projects
- After the three month period completes, the steering circle will meet quarterly to monitor the progress of projects.
- At the end of a year, an annual report will be shared with all participants. The cycle may be continued, and the group may be expanded.

Location

Because some of our members live in Bristol and have begun organising their local community, and because Bristol is already poised for such development, we plan to start in Bristol. If we are successful in Bristol, we will set up similar implementation circles elsewhere.

Costing tbc

 3 circles costing and gantt.xlsx