SIT Graduate Institute/SIT Study Abroad
SIT Digital Collections

Capstone Collection | SIT Graduate Institute

March 2019

Transition Towns and the Transition Model: An Investigation into the Movement's Use of Strategic Planning

Richard Burbridge
SIT Graduate Institute

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones

Part of the Civic and Community Engagement Commons, Community-Based Research Commons, Leadership Studies Commons, and the Organization Development Commons

Recommended Citation
Burbridge, Richard, "Transition Towns and the Transition Model: An Investigation into the Movement's Use of Strategic Planning" (2019). *Capstone Collection*. 3145.
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones/3145

This Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Graduate Institute at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.

Transition Towns and the Transition Model: An Investigation into the Movement's Use of Strategic Planning

By Richard Burbridge

PIM 70

Consent to Use of Capstone

I hereby grant permission for World Learning to publish my Capstone on its websites and in any of its digital/electronic collections, and to reproduce and transmit my CAPSTONE ELECTRONICALLY. I understand that World Learning's websites and digital collections are publicly available via the Internet. I agree that World Learning is NOT responsible for any unauthorized use of my Capstone by any third party who might access it on the Internet or otherwise.
Student name:: Richard Burbridge Date: 12/11/2012

ABSTRACT

The Transition Movement has spread around the globe in less than a decade, reaching 32 countries and 421 communities, with hundreds of projects, and harnessing the collective genius of tens of thousands of people. Despite the spread of the movement, no in-depth research of multiple initiatives within the movement has been done prior to this study. The main question investigated by this research is what tools and processes are Initiatives in New England using for SP and visioning, and how does this relate to their ability to transfer leadership and grow?

The triangulation method, as presented by Jick (1979), is a means of analyzing qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources, guided this research. The data collection methods included a literature review of writings on strategic planning and the Movement, personal observations made while conducting strategic planning sessions with Transition Town Putney, and an in-depth survey of multiple Transition initiatives in New England. The results revealed multiple areas where the Transition Town Network, the umbrella organization to all initiatives, could do more to prepare Transition initiatives for their eventual transfer of leadership and to assist these organizations in accessing long term strategic planning tools and resources, some of which are included in the paper's recommendations.

Abbreviations within this paper:

SP – Strategic Planning and the processes associated with it

TTI- Transition Town Initiative, when a Transition group has fully formed an initiating group within a community

TTP – Transition Town Putney, the TTI where I conducted the SP sessions and observations for this research

35
17

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this paper to my parents, friends and professors who have supported me in this endeavor and to those brave men and women who have set out to change the world before me.

Acknowledgements

Without the support of Marla Solomon, Paul LeVasseur, the Transition movement, Transition Town Putney, and SIT this project would only have been a fantasy, thank you for helping it become a tangible document.

Table of Contents-

Introduction and Background

The Transition Movement began in 2005 when Rob Hopkins, an Englishman teaching permaculture design in Kinsale Ireland, first learned of the peak oil (see foot note) concept from the renowned petroleum geologist, Colin Campbell. Afterwards Hopkins brought the information he had gleaned to his students which they used to create the Kinsale Energy Descent Plan, a guide to help the community wean itself off fossil fuels. This plan was later approved by the Kinsale town council and was the first strategic community planning document of its kind. After moving back to England to complete his doctorate, Hopkins wanted to take the concepts of peak oil out of the classroom and into the world. He did this by beginning Transition Town Totnes in early 2006 with co-founder Naresh Giangrande.

Unlike other groups focusing on the doom and gloom of the peak oil crisis, Hopkins infused optimism, creativity, excitement, and possibilities into this new movement. The areas of activism are peak oil, climate change, and economic instability. But, rather than simply opposing negative issues- i.e. protesting against things they're against as many movements do, the Transition Movements works to change things by tackling challenges locally, using minimal resources and focusing on possibilities. It looks to the community members themselves for solutions to combating the effects of these three challenge areas (Hopkins, 2008). Some of Transition Town Totnes first projects included raising awareness, such as movies and speakers, and included an Open Space event during which community members broke into small groups based on different interests. The first working groups were formed at this event; the areas of focus were food, transportation, energy, business and livelihoods, health and well-being, building and housing, and inner transition (transitiontowntotnes.org). Needless to say, the first initiative got off to a great start and other communities were soon

Peak Oil: When new flows of oil production are off-set by decreased production flows from existing oil reserves starting their own Transition Town groups all over Great Britain. (Hopkins, 2008). Almost a year after Transition Town Totnes launched its popularity was blossoming; Hopkins and Giangrande knew they were onto something big. During this period, many inquiries were coming to the Transition Town Totnes wanting to know how their communities could join, and with some networking with a local charity organization, donors, and some specialists, the Transition Network was formed.

The Transition Network is the global umbrella portion of the Transition Movement. This organization – responsible for registration, training, frameworks of the movement, answering questions, and updating information regarding the workings of initiatives- works closely with communities around the globe (transitionnetwork.org/about, 2012). In 2008, Hopkins published the first book about the Transition Movement: *The Transition Handbook*. This book laid out the blueprints for other communities who wanted to start their own initiatives, and, to date, has sold over 25,000 copies and has been translated into many languages. It has since been replaced by Hopkins' second book on the subject, *The Transition Companion* (transitionculture.org, 2012). As of June 12, 2012, there are 421 officially recognized Transition Town Initiatives in over 34 countries (transitionnetwork.org). The Movement's appeal lays in several areas such as "acting as a catalyst with no fixed answers, hope, optimism and proactivity as drivers of action, and targeted interventions" (Hopkins, 2008 p. 135).

The basic structure and creation of a Transition Town Initiative is very much the same the world over. This usually starts with several community members who read one or both books mentioned above and decide whether or not the Movement has a place in their community. While deciding if the Movement is something they want to be a part of they are known as a "mulling" group. This stage is usually followed by an awareness raising campaign based around the three areas of focus mentioned above – peak oil, climate change, and economic instability. When the mulling group feels that the community is ready to progress, the next step is holding “Open Space” meetings. At these meetings, community members are invited to discuss their interests and concerns and begin to form project groups, designed to focus on certain areas of concern. These original groups, if they remain intact, become known as “working groups.” After the formation of these working groups, the mulling group that ran the awareness raising campaign becomes the “initiating group.” From this point forward, the initiating group’s focus is building capacity within the working groups so that, when the time is right, the initiating group can step down and each working group can elect one of its own members to represent their group in the “Core group, steering committee, or Council of Working Groups” as they are sometimes referred to. This Core group then takes on the role of the initiating group, becoming the main administration for the community’s Transition Initiative and the torch bearers of Transition's values.

These values, the philosophical underpinnings of the movement, include: the study of addiction – how people naturally go through the 'Stages of Change' by Carlo DiClemente; the 'wiki' approach to collaborative information sharing; the concept of 'leaderless organizations' as proposed by Brafman and Beckstrom in *The Starfish and the Spider*; the study and science of resilience; the design-led Permaculture; the science of happiness – that it can be measured; and several other people’s work regarding optimism and how self organizing groups function naturally. These are combined with the principles of Transition include positive visioning, helping people access good information and trusting them to make good decisions, inclusion and openness, enabling sharing and networking, building resilience, inner and outer transition, self-organizing, and decision making at the appropriate level (Hopkins 2011). With a model based on permaculture principles, and a positively focused framework for getting started and organized in anyone's community, it is not difficult to see why the movement has been so quick to spread.

Transition Town Putney (TTP) is one of the Initiatives with whom I have been working over the past year. This Initiative was begun in January 2010 and quickly grew. Following a group of community members who read *The Transition* Handbook, an initiating group was formed. After raising awareness within the community about the three big challenges facing them – peak oil, climate change, and economic instability- working groups were formed to focus on the specific areas of importance to the community. These areas of focus first included economics, food, energy, transportation, health, heart and soul, and livelihoods.

These areas of specific focus soon branched outwards, creating new projects and building support within other organizations in the community. Some of these projects, which have come to fruition, include food and food security (Putney Farmers Market, Putney Community Garden, Putney Central School Garden, Localvore Potlucks, Neighborhood Greenhouse Project), the local economy (Local Currency, Local Investment Fund project, two Economic Summits, aging in Putney (One Call Does it All), mapping Putney's assets (Asset Mapping Project), building strong neighborhoods (Neighborhood Resilience Project), education (twice monthly Re-skilling Workshops, ongoing Film and Speakers Series about Transition topics), school-based community service initiatives (Putney Service Corps project, an integrated student community service initiative of Putney's five schools), health (Health and Wellness Group), transportation (Ride Share projects), energy (with the Putney Energy Committee), homesteading (Homesteading Group), and art (Artist-in-Residence Program). In addition, Transition Putney has held forums and open space events, pub nights, and book discussion groups, hosting more that 170 community events in 2011 (NEGEF grant application from Transition Putney, 2012).

Though TTP had raised the community's awareness of the three main areas of concern and had created several working groups when I joined the organization in June 2011, there was little planned as far as how to turn over control of the organization to the working groups as outlined within the Transition Movement's framework. How to prepare the working groups to take on these new responsibilities was the issue the organization faced. After many discussions regarding whether or not the working groups were ready for this transition, the next question raised was how to properly prepare them for the turn-over. With little more than the Transition Movement's framework as a guide, the initiating group decided that they should just ask the working groups if they were ready to take control of TTP. With some gentle arm twisting, and some training, the working groups became more willing to take on increased responsibility for the overall running of the organization. This culminated in TTP's "Great Unleashing," a town-wide celebration in which control of the organization was officially passed on to representatives from each of the working groups. After this event, the representatives from the working groups were recognized as the Core group, and the initiating group dissolved, completing the final step in forming a Transition Town.

Research Statement

Within *The Transition Handbook* and *The Transition Companion* there are only a few passages in which Hopkins discusses visioning and strategic planning. The mentions of visioning include little more than community members writing futuristic news stories about what they would like the community to look like in fifteen to twenty years. The strategic planning component in the Transition model is, in part, the framework for how the mulling, initiating, and core groups evolve from one phase to the next, with the end goal of having community members step in to fill new and more important roles as leaders of the organization. The other part of the strategic planning is derived from the news stories written about the future and seeing what steps or projects need to be completed for those fictional news stories to become a reality.

This, however, leaves a number of questions for initiatives to answer for themselves, such as deciding how to best prepare the working groups to take on more responsibilities. I wanted to find out what, if any, tools other Transition Town Initiatives (TTIs) had used to help fill this gap within the literature of the Transition Movement, particularly what visioning and strategic planning tools and resources they may have used in the past and how effective these tools and resources were. The goal of this research was to create a more comprehensive list of best practices that could be utilized by new initiatives in their formation and planning phases so that they may not have to struggle with the same difficult questions faced by TTP regarding how to turn over control of the organization to the working groups.

The research contained in this paper is an examination of strategic planning within the Transition Movement and some of its independent initiatives to determine if a more in-depth strategic planning process would benefit the organizations that have come into existence as well as those groups who have yet to form. Bryson defines strategic planning as "... a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it" (2004 p. 6). Allison and Kaye define it as "a systematic process through which an organization agrees on – and builds commitment among key stakeholders to – priorities that are essential to its mission and are responsive to the environment. Strategic planning guides the acquisition of resources to achieve these priorities" (2005 p.1). Both definitions have a similar end result as their goal of what the process is meant to achieve and have been crucial in the formation of the main research question and the subsequent questions answered by this research.

Primary Research Question:

What tools and processes are Initiatives in New England using for SP and visioning, and how does this relate to their ability to transfer leadership and grow?

Secondary research questions:

Do TTIs follow the consensus model for making decisions as outlined in the books?

Is there a relationship between the framework outlined by the Movement and the absence of a strategic planning process in the viability of Transition Town Initiatives to further their organizational goals, and what tools and processes are Initiatives using?

Methodology

The methodology I used to answer my primary and secondary research questions was based on the triangulation methodology presented by Jick (1979) and focuses on three types data collected: a literature review of the existing materials regarding strategic planning and organizational structures, both within and outside the Movement; my personal observations and the results of my action-based research; and a region-wide survey of Transition Town Initiatives from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Maine, and Vermont which collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The specific reasons and methodologies behind each of these data collection techniques are described in more detail below. The triangulation of these three collection areas, according to Jick, allows for a greater number of viewpoints which, in turn, allows for greater accuracy in the findings regarding a single phenomena. In this case, a literature review, my observations, and the results of my action-based research which resulted in the survey data collected will make up the three angles of perspective to give the results increased validity and not merely create a methodological artifact (1979). These three complementary methods of data collection each have their own strengths and weaknesses which are compensated for and counter balance one another leading to a greater level of generalization of the end results of this research (Jick, 1979). The strengths and weaknesses of the data collection methods in the research are located in Table 1. The effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the weaknesses in each single method will be compensated by the counter balancing strengths of the other methods used (Jick, 1979).

The analysis of this data will be done thematically according to the research questions answered by the different types of data collected. The literature review was done to broaden my own knowledge and understanding of the strategic planning process in organizations and to gain insights as to what that process should look like both internally, according to the Transition Movement, and externally, according to organizations and entities outside of the Movement.

The action research component is based both on my personal observations and the outcome of the strategic planning process undertaken by TTP with my guidance and input. The basis of the action based portion of my research, which focuses on the structural organization of Transition Town Putney, was inspired and guided by Daniel Selener's *Participatory Action Research and Social Change* in which he identifies the features of participatory research as “[the] participation of the group or community in the entire research activity, which is directly related to transformative actions” (1997, p. 18). On the same page he outlines the components and characteristics of participatory research into six points: the problem is community created and community solved, the transformation of social reality is aimed at improving community members lives, the entire research process requires full and active participation of the community, the process involves all members of the community, the research creates greater awareness of people's own resources and mobilizes them for self-reliant development, and participatory research gains a more accurate and holistic analysis of the social reality (1997, p. 18-20). The survey is focused on and modeled after the work of Michael Schratz and Rob Walker's *Research as Social Change; New Opportunities for Qualitative Research.* I will use a pragmatic approach as is outlined in Robson's *Real World Research* because of its appropriateness for this mixed method approach as described by Reichardt and Rallis (1994, p.85) who describe this approach as “feasible because of the compatible values of qualitative and quantitative researchers” (Robson, 2002 p. 43).

The survey data collected during my research builds upon my own experiences at TTP and seeks out the experiences of others within their own Initiatives, giving this research both more validity and more convergence (Jick, 1979). The larger survey incorporated guidelines described in Colin Robson’s *Real World Research*, *2nd Edition*. The surveys were presented at TTIs core or initiating group meetings, in person when possible. The reasoning for the targeting of core and initiating group members rather than working group members is described in much greater detail below. For these meetings I used Robson's guidelines for running qualitative research interviews (2008) because of the similar characteristics of the meetings. However, the recording of these sessions are the surveys themselves as well as my own research journals. This is due to the fact that this research “focuses on the meaning of a particular phenomena to the participants” and “individual perceptions of process within a social unit”, i.e. Transition Town Initiatives’ core or initiating groups and, to a lesser extent, on “individual historical accounts” about the organization's past planning and visioning strategies (Robeson, 2008, p. 271).

Within their book *Research as Social Change; New Opportunities for Qualitative Research*, Michael Schratz and Rob Walker describe research which uses the metaphor of several blindfolded people trying to describe an elephant through their sense of touch; each person focuses on one particular part of the elephant and tries to generalize the entire animal based only on the part that they are touching. However, the elephant proves too large for any one of them to accurately describe what they are touching. This is the same relationship made in this book with quantifiable data: numbers are numbers and, as such, can only identify a problem rather than identifying the causes of that problem. Without qualitative data, the socially constructed reality is more difficult to identify and explain (1995). The results from the literature review and the action based research during the data analysis phase have given me a much greater depth of insight into the data analysis process and of the larger regional survey as described above.

This literature review will examine the strategic planning process outlined by the Transition Network and the writings of Rob Hopkins in *The Transition Handbook* and *The Transition Companion*. It will also examine other works on strategic planning from a variety of sectors including public, private, and nonprofit. This will allow for a greater analysis and critique of the Transition Movement's prescribed strategic planning model. This review will focus on the strategic planning processes outlined by core sources, similarities and differences in the methods examined, and what types of research have already been written about the Transition Movement and how my research fills a void in the literature. To further my own understanding of the strategic planning process I will examine that area first. I will continue my research by examining what is outlined in the Movements' literature and how my research fills voids in both academia and the Movement itself.

Within the guidelines of the Transition Movement regarding how initiatives are supposed to be organized, there are several steps and stages involved in the process that boarder on strategic planning but fail to make explicit how the idea of a plan can get from beginning to end. Some may argue that the design of the Transition framework is itself, a strategic plan. However, the ability for starting initiatives to fully grasp this concept and putting it in motion is quite difficult. The framework for a community that wants to become a Transition Town is the same across the entire globe and is outlined as such in both *The Transition Handbook* and *The Transition Companion*. Hopkins has what he calls “The Twelve Steps to Transition” for which he gives some reasoning for the specific steps. The major organizational steps, in order, are:

1. Set up an initiating or steering group and design its demise from the outset
2. Awareness raising
3. Lay the foundations
4. Organize a Great Unleashing
5. Form working groups
6. Develop visible practical manifestations of the project
7. Facilitate the Great Reskilling
8. Build a Bridge to Local Government
9. Let it go where it wants to go…
10. Create an Energy Descent Plan

Now, despite these being the “12 steps to Transition”, Hopkins states within *The Transition Primer* and other sources mentioned previously that “[these] are not meant to be in any way prescriptive. Each project assembles these in different ways, adds new ones, disregards others” (2008, p.148). In the description of each step, Hopkins offers very little in the way of technical explanations for the achievement of the step. Instead, he offers more of a justification for the step. For instance, in the description for step one, “set up a steering group and plan for its demise from the start,” Hopkins details things that need to be discussed from the beginning, such as how the group members will interact with one another, how the group will be organized, and how decisions will be made, yet never offers any clear method for the dissolving of the steering committee other than that sub-groups should elect new representatives. Even this particularly important point is not mentioned in *The Transition Companion*. In the handbook Hopkins justifies his first step with the analogy that people generally try to grasp onto power and responsibilities too tightly, or hold on for too long, which can be damaging to the group’s dynamic. He states that, to avoid this damage, one should plan ahead for retirement from the steering committee. This task, it would appear, has been difficult to adhere to for many starting Initiatives, something I witnessed firsthand at Transition Town Putney, which I will discuss in-depth shortly, which has resulted in its removal from the latest Transition book. For forming the initiating group, a list of useful skills for the members to have is listed on page 103 of *The Transition Companion*. However, how to build capacity within the sub-groups formed as a result of the steering committee is not included in *The Transition Companion* (2011).

The organizational structure outlined within the literature of the Movement is designed and explained in a way to contend with what Bolman and Deal call “basic structural tensions.” These include things such as the division of labor, the organization of groups around knowledge and skills, and groupings within a place or geography, just to name a few (2008). The individual Initiatives are designed to have a very lateral organizational model which allows for greater flexibility and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The organizational structure known as “Helgeson's Web of Inclusion,” as first explained by Sally Halgenson, is a more organic architectural form, more circular than hierarchical, and is built from the center outwards (Bolman & Deal, 2008 p. 86). This model most closely represents the lateral and inclusive nature of Transition Initiatives while also making several connections to the values of Transition mentioned and discussed above

The lack of specifically prescribed capacity building and strategic planning elements throughout the literature was the inspiration for the survey and action research based portions that I conducted as part of this research. My goal was to better identify what tools and strategies were working for existing Transition Initiatives in the New England region. Within the literature of the Transition Movement, including Hopkins' *The Transition Handbook*, there is a wealth of information about how the first initiative got started. In the first chapter of his book, Hopkins discusses the reality that is “peak oil” and “climate change.” The problem of peak oil comes from the current state of cheap oil, a state in which everything we depend on (goods and services) is dependent on the finite resource that is fossil fuels. And once these recourses begin to run out, as many sources agree, these fuels will become overwhelmingly expensive; our society will undergo a dramatic shift in order to justify continued use in order to make our modern world function. The resulting climate change that is occurring, caused by greenhouse gasses emitted by the burning of fossil fuels, makes the problem two-fold (Hopkins, 2003, p. 18).

Hopkins' approach for alleviating the most severe of these shocks is resilience, which he defines as the ability of a system, whether it is naturally or culturally created, to sustain and survive shocks and changes to its environment from outside (2003, p. 12). In chapters four and five he describes how, before cheap oil, most communities were much more resilient than they are today. This was due to the forced localization of things when shipping goods, such as clothing, halfway around the world wasn't financially feasible. This is just one of many examples; look at anything around you, and, unless it's a rock or a native species of plant in a field, it probably used oil in its manufacturing or shipping. Once oil becomes too expensive a commodity for shipping companies to purchase, there will be a huge shift to the localization of goods that many communities will not be able to handle. By taking the initiative and focusing on resilience and the re-localization of the production of goods and services, the Transition Movement offers communities a way to help mitigate the most drastic of shocks caused by both peak oil and climate change (Hopkins, 2003). As Rob Hopkins is a trained permaculturalist, he views communities in much the same way as he does a natural ecological environment, thus refocusing a community on its own resilience and sustainability is stressed throughout his books. The concept of Transition is based on four assumptions:

1. That life with dramatically lower energy consumption is inevitable, and that it's better to plan for it than to be taken by surprise.
2. That our settlements and communities presently lack the resilience to enable them to weather the severe energy shocks that will accompany peak oil.
3. That we have to act collectively, and we have to act now.
4. That by unleashing the collective genius of those around us to creatively and proactively design our energy descent, we can build ways of living that are more connected and more enriching and that recognize the biological limits of our planet.

(Hopkins, 2003, p.135)

Hopkins' first book, *The Transition Handbook* also gives readers tools and lists of ideas and methods that the first Initiative, Transition Town Totnes, used during the first year of its existence so as to give readers an opportunity to see what the organization looks like in action. *The Transition Companion*, also by Hopkins, expands on the teachings in the handbook so as to include organizational structures suggested by the Movement (2011) and includes tips and ideas about how to recruit volunteers and how to keep them interested in the movement. Hopkins also includes additional information on the importance of monitoring and evaluating to support grant applications and donor requests (2011, p. 159-160). However, just as in the visioning and strategic planning (SP) portions of the literature, the non-inclusion of specific tools, instructions, and suggestions about how to accomplish these specific tasks is to be noted.

The organizational structure suggested in both of Hopkins' books incorporates a member of each working group (a smaller group of Transition people who generally focus on one area, such as agriculture, community wellness, energy, etc.) coming together to form the "core" Transition team for the community (Hopkins, 2011, p.134 & 2003, p. 221). One reason I am focusing on the structural component of Transition is that working group members don't always step up to the proverbial plate, or, as in Transition Putney's case, these working groups are too loosely organized to have identifiable members who are willing to join the core. This, combined with the wide variety of tasks, projects, and programs associated with TTIs is why I am utilizing Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal's Structural Perspective from *Reframing Organizations; Artistry, Choice, and Leadership fourth Edition* to examine how the Transition model fits into their work.

The structural perspective originally focused on efficiency, division of labor, and a hierarchy of offices (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 48) but has expanded as the needs of organizations have changed and expanded beyond the for-profit sector. What they describe as lateral coordination, or organizational rules not set by performance, are seen as less formal and more flexible (2008, p. 57), which is much like the Transition model.

Literature Review

There are many works that are relevant to this study including, Allison and Kaye's *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations*, and Bryson's *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations,* for identifying how they describe what the strategic planning process is and why it is necessary. In the third edition of *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, Bryson draws on Olsen and Eadie (1982, p. 4) by defining strategic planning as "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it"(2004, p. 302). This is in line with Bolman and Deal's definition of strategic planning within the structural frame as they identify it as "strategies to set objectives and coordinate resources" (2008, p. 6). The other two definitions that I identified through the course of this research come from *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations* by Michael Allison and Jude Kaye and *The Art of Scenarios and Strategic Planning: Tools and Pitfalls* by Michel Godet. As mentioned above, Allison and Kaye define strategic planning as "a systematic process through which an organization agrees on – and builds commitment among key stakeholders to – prioritize functions that are essential to its mission and are responsive to the environment. Strategic planning guides the acquisition of resources to achieve these priorities" (2005, p. 1). Godet, in an effort of clarification, states that strategic planning needs to use both foresight and innovation and says

> [an] organization can plan (take the future into consideration) without actually committing to planning (a formal procedure) even if it does draw up some plans (explicit intentions). In reality, the issue is not really planning, but rather the manner in which planning is

carried out" (2000, p. 7).

Each of these definitions, though different, stresses the importance of the process used to create the strategic plan. The processes identified by each author are differing in significant ways which are detailed below.

Bryson describes his approach to strategic planning very succinctly with his "ABCs of Strategic Planning" where He asks the following questions: Where are you?, Where do you want to be?, and How can you get there? (Bryson, 2004 p. 8) Under each of these questions is a list of items that are beneficial to answering the question. For instance to answer the question "where are you," Bryson suggests organizations look at their mission and mandates, structure and systems, communications, programs and services, people and skills, and budget and support. Using the organization's existing goals, mission, and vision, Bryson suggests that the areas just mentioned should all be examined and improved within the course of designing a strategic plan, what he has termed the Strategy Change Cycle. The end goal of Bryson's model is in the creation of public good through the meeting of an organization's mission and mandates. To achieve that end, there is a ten step process he advocates. The steps are:

1. Identify organizational mandates.
2. Clarify organizational mission and values.
3. S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of environments.
4. Initiate and agree on a strategic planning process.
5. Identify the strategic issues facing the organization.
6. Formulate strategies to manage the issues.
7. Review and adopt the strategies or strategic plan.

8. Establish an effective organizational vision.

9. Develop an effective implementation process.

10. Reassess the strategies and the strategic planning process.

Bryson argues that this cycle should lead to “actions, results, evaluation, and learning” (2004).

Allison and Kaye (2005) present a more introductory approach to strategic planning and focus specifically on nonprofits. They offer three levels of strategic planning processes relating to what resources and time constraints the organization is under. These are: abbreviated, for organizations with only one or two days to form a strategic plan; moderate, for organizations with more planning time – one to three months; and extensive, for organizations with an extended planning time – from six months to a year. The end result of each of these levels varies for obvious reasons: the more resources expanded on the plan, the more solid and permanent the advantages of the plan should be. The outcomes associated with each of the levels of processes in the table below.

Abbreviated	Moderate	Extensive
• Consensus among board and staff on mission, future strategies, list of long term and short term priorities • Guidance to staff on developing detailed annual operating plans	• Consensus among board and staff on mission, future strategies, list of long term and short term priorities • Articulation of program and management/operating goals and objectives • Greater understanding of the organization's environmental • Guidance to staff on developing detailed annual operating plans	• Consensus among board and staff on mission, future strategies, list of long term and short term priorities • Articulation of program and management/operating goals and objectives • Greater understanding of the organization's environmental • Guidance to staff on developing detailed annual operating plans

For each of these levels of processes, Allison and Kaye put forth seven phases of strategic planning in their work *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations* (2005). They include:

1. Preparation

2. Articulate mission, values and vision

3. Assess your situation

4. Agree on priorities

5. Write the strategic plan

6. Implement the strategic plan

7. Evaluate and monitor the strategic plan and results

This seven phase approach is similar to Bryson's approach in that, in the end, you evaluate the plan, and as Allison and Kaye mention, sometimes the plan needs to be revisited and changed depending on how effective the created plan turns out to be.

Bolman and Deal, rely on Alfred Chandler's 1962 definition of strategic decisions which is stated as being future oriented, concerned primarily with long term direction, long range goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and allocation of resources to carry out those goals.

Godet offers a different perspective on strategic planning and argues that every strategic plan is really just a way to prepare for different scenarios. He lists five prerequisites that any "strategic scenario" must encompass; they are: relevance, importance, coherence, plausibility, and transparency (2000 p. 11). These five prerequisites are further explained more elaborately in his work *The Art of Scenarios and Strategic Planning: Tools and Pitfalls* and are best summarized by saying that these five things are necessary for any strategic process to succeed. In order for a strategic process to be undertaken, he outlines a nine phase approach:

> The first phase attempts to analyze the problem posed and to define the system under examination. One must position the prospective process in its socio-organizational context so as to introduce and simulate the whole process by means of prospective strategic prospection.
>
> Phase 2 is based on a complete X-ray of the firm, from know-how to product lines, represented by the competence tree.

Phase 3 identifies the key variables of the firm and its environment by means of structural analysis.

Phase 4 seeks to understand the dynamics of the firm's retrospective in its environment, its past development, its strengths, and weaknesses in relation to the principal actors in its strategic environment. The analysis of a firm's battle fields and strategic stakes reveals the key questions for the future.

Phase 5 attempts to reduce the uncertainty surrounding the key questions for the future. One can use inquiry methods with experts to highlight mega-trends, wild cards, and finally to draw out the most likely environmental scenarios.

Phase 6 highlights coherent visions and projects; in other words, the strategic options compatible both with the firm's identity and the most likely scenarios for its environment.

Phase 7 is wholly concerned with assessing strategic options; a rational approach would encourage the user to fall back on a method of multi-criteria choices, but this is rarely the case; the reflective phase prior to decision and action ends with this phase.

Phase 8 emphasizes strategic choices, and is crucial because it means moving from thinking to making a decision. The strategic choices and organization of objectives into a hierarchy are the responsibility of a steering committee or its equivalent.

Phase 9 focuses entirely on implementing the plan of action; this involves contracts of objectives (negotiated or provoked), setting up of a system of coordination and follow-up and the development of a strategic watch-dog (external)" (2000 p. 10).

The watch-dog Godet references in his ninth phase is the equivalent of a committee in charge of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the plan designed for that firm's specific scenario. By allowing this independent committee to monitor and evaluate the progress and success of the plan, it allows for the plan to be much more accurate in predicting future trends and how to adjust the plan for the changing realities within its environment.

Though Godet takes a much more business and specifically profit oriented approach with his scenarios framework, the phases of his process are similar to both Bryson's and Allison and Kaye's approaches to strategic planning. Each of these guides aims for the process to be future oriented, involve key stake holders, examine the organization’s current situation, create a direction for the organization or entity including a plan of action, and monitor and evaluate that plan after it is put in place. Each work referenced offers different tools, matrixes, and diagrams to accomplish what is a very similar end: the planning for a future in which the organization or other entity is successful in meeting or exceeding its goals. These different tools will be more closely examined for their level of appropriateness of use to the Transition Movement in my findings and recommendations, starting on page 59 of this paper. With these similarities in mind, the level of sophistication and detail involved at each stage varies greatly among these authors.

The depth and applicability of each source mentioned above varies, from Allison and Kaye's look at only nonprofits that offers a beginners how-to guide which focuses more on accomplishing individually outlined steps to Bryson's much more in-depth look at both public organizations and nonprofits and how each type needs to be aware of creating public good through many specific steps, describing each in great detail. And though Godet takes a much more business/profit driven approach with his strategic scenarios approach, steeped deeply in quantifiable data collection for the understanding of the entity’s environment, it is not without its own merits and worth in the nonprofit sector.

There have been a plethora of other academic papers written about the Movement, including looking at specific projects being sponsored by individual Initiatives, considering the feasibility of bringing the Transition Model to urban settings, looking into zoning laws and how they affect Transition Towns, studying how initiatives are formed (which is beginning research this summer), and considering how the Movement's rhetorical use of the term “Community” can be used to understand the Movement itself. The only other research that has been done regarding the capacity of Transition town initiatives is research a colleague of mine completed while also working with Transition Town Putney. Sombat Month’s in-depth study of the Putney Farmers' Market, which was one of the organization’s earliest projects, looked at the capacity of the overall organization. As beneficial as this information was to Transition Town Putney, there was no way to compare his results to what the current conditions were like at other Transition town initiative throughout the Movement. The research conducted for this study fills this void by being the first in depth examination of multiple Transition town initiatives and comparing data against the prescribed model. This research can be utilized by pre-existing and yet-to-exist Transition town initiatives.

Observations While with Transition Putney

I started with Transition Town Putney (TTP) in June 2011 and worked with the organization for twelve months. Just as I was arriving, the two previous interns Annik Paul and Cait Williams were on their way out to write their own capstones. One of the first lessons I learned about TTP was regarding their reliance on interns to run the day to day operations of the group. These operations ranged from managing the TTP office, publicizing upcoming events, setting up and cleaning after events, creating procedural manuals for the various tasks, recruiting volunteers and interns, and managing volunteers, all while we, the interns, lived outside of Putney due to the high costs of rental units within the community. During my first months with the organization, TTP was initiating a number of events, in some cases three or four per week, with a solid dependence on the initiating group and interns for the publicizing of every one of them. I had previously read *The Transition Handbook* and knew how things were supposed to be organized and managed according to the literature on the Movement, and I noticed that TTP was slightly different than the model outlined in the book. The reliance on the interns for the general running of day to day operations, and the unavailability and full work load of the initiating group members of the group to complete these vital tasks, led me to start thinking about where the organization was headed. I wanted to explore in what ways this dependence on the interns and the initiating group could be alleviated in order to increase the organization's own sustainability and resilience. By the end of the summer of 2011, the core, including myself, continued to plan and publicize events that focused on many areas including food, health and well-being, bicycle repair workshops, environmentally friendly building practices, and the local economy, but none of these addressed the long term health of the organization itself. To further the sustainability and resilience of the organization I approached my supervisor with TTP, Paul LeVasseur, about doing a series of strategic planning sessions with key stakeholders of the organization and was given approval to begin planning the processes to be completed.

To begin the planning, I examined the visioning and planning guidelines from the Movement's literature, which included *The Transition Handbook* and *The Transition Companion*. Unfortunately, there where there are only a handful of passages in which Hopkins discusses visioning and strategic planning. The mentions of visioning included little more than community members writing futuristic news stories about what they would like the community to look like in 15 to 20 years. The strategic planning component in the Transition Model is, in part, part of the framework in which the mulling, initiating, and core groups evolve from one phase to the next with the end goal of having community members step in to fill new and more important roles as leaders of the organization. How to proceed in this endeavor, I felt, could be answered with strategic planning involving key stakeholders such as TTP initiating group members, working group members, and community members.

The resulting plan of action that I designed was based on the three to six month moderate strategic planning guidelines by Bryson (2004), broken down into four separate sessions, each of which were scheduled to be at least three hours in length. This process was designed to be as comprehensive as time and participants would allow in order for maximizing the future planning potential of the organization. These four separate sessions were planned in the following way: Session 1) With core members only, we as a group, discussed time frames for the following three strategic planning sessions, discussed past successes – memorable TTP events, projects- and conducted a Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats analysis; Session 2) Introduction to the process, mission statement and defining key terms; S.W.O.T. analysis converted to S.O.A.R. analysis, introduced and expanded upon; initiated the organizations goals and objectives discussion and reviewed and introduced organizational norms created by former intern Cait Williams; Session 3) Expanded and finalized discussions and decisions about the best ways of achieving organizational goals and objectives; focused on steps and actions needed to make these goals and objectives a reality; and Session 4 concluded the SP sessions of TTP by examining all of the information developed in the first three sessions and during this session the group determined a plan of action for developing the capacity of the working groups to prepare them for their take-over of the initiating groups responsibilities, with monitoring and evaluation also included for the processes outlined.

This plan was designed to meet all of Bryson's steps in his Strategy Change Cycle and also to meet the requirements of Action Research as mentioned in the methodology above. The resulting follow up to this plan, as described in detail below, did not necessarily go as planned but still met all of Bryson's steps. The circular feedback loop contained within his framework, as seen in Appendix C, was very useful when revisiting the process mid-completion. The four sessions mentioned above were designed to meet Bryson's steps in the manner laid out in his book, with steps one through four being completed or begun in the first session, steps four through six completed in the second session, steps seven through nine completed in the third session, and step ten completed in the fourth and final session. In the end, there were five formal sessions, and one informal session to review the final decision, as well as a final meeting between the initiating group and Tina Clarke, one of the aforementioned U.S. Transition trainers, before reaching our end plan and executing that plan. The steps in Bryson's framework are described in the synopsis of each of the sessions below; additionally, there is an explanation as to why the sessions were held in the order they were.

The first session was scheduled as one of our twice-monthly initiating group meetings. This was for several reasons including convenience, time constraints, and availability of all group members in order to gain the group's approval to continue the process. This first session, which only included the initiating group of TTP, resulted in the following notes:

> Visioning a Vision
> Transition Putney Core meeting notes for 7/13/2011
> Facilitated by Richard Burbridge
> Notes by Richard Burbridge
>
> After initial check in, a time frame discussion was held about the strategic planning meeting and the time frames that were to be discussed at the meeting. This resulted in the discussion being taken in a direction focusing on themes and values of the organization.
>
> After this initial discussion, core members were asked to remember a really fun and exhilarating/rewarding Transition Putney event or gathering. These were shared amongst the group and generalizations/common themes were identified. The specific events were not important but the sense of excitement was. Common

> themes revolved around: the Magic of Intentions, a sense of community, inclusion, group oriented projects, expansion vs. diffusion of resources, scalability, and fostering leadership. This worked its way around when some great ideas on community leadership/involvement and re-skilling ideas were produced.
>
> The next and final portion of the evening was focused more narrowly on Transition Putney's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, or S.W.O.T. … After the initial analysis, the group preformed a head, heart, and hands check and answered the following questions
>
> Head: Did we think things through and come up with reasonable answers? - yes
>
> Heart: Did we do it coming from the right place with the best intentions for all? - yes
>
> Hands: Do we as an organization have the resources needed to achieve these changes/make progress towards lessening our weaknesses? -Maybe, we're still checking into this one...
>
> We then did a group go-around, and everyone listed a gift that they were taking from the session and adjourned.

The finalized S.W.O.T and S.O.A.R. analysis is located in table 2, and the description of this analysis is explained with the notes from the fourth session. This S.W.O.T. analysis was extended to the second session and expanded to include the views and concerns of the working group members and to deepen the understanding of the hurdles facing the organization from those outside the initiating group.

This first session was very important for setting the tone for the follow-up sessions; I made a point of making sure everyone was focused on the person speaking and tried to limit interruptions to a minimum to help create an environment where people felt they could express themselves freely and openly. With the help of the long-term and close relationship the initiating group members had, and have, with each other, it was not very difficult for this receptive environment to materialize. The opening discussions centered on the purpose and focus of the strategic planning and fit the first step of Bryson's “Strategy Change Cycle’s” (2004), though it did not include a written agreement other than these recorded minutes. The second step was also met in this process by discussing mandates of what the initiating group wanted to focus on. Many of these mandates made it into the process as goals for the organization in implementing the conclusions of this SP process. One of the methods I utilized as the opening question, having initiating group members remember of a positive TTP event or project, and asked them to identify who they were with, what were they doing, and when the event occurred. Members were asked to answer these three questions and write them on a piece of poster paper. This created a physical action to go along with the naming of the past event and having a visual aid for reference allowed for a more in-depth discussion about similarities and differences between these past experiences.

The initial S.W.O.T. analysis went very well and produced a snap shot of what issues the initiating group felt the organization was facing, though it was, by no means, whole in its comprehensiveness. This opening analysis was expanded upon in sessions two and three, with finalization taking place during the fourth session as described below. Though group think may have had something to do with the positive answers to the head, heart, and hands questions given at the end of the first session, these answers were a glimpse of what was to come.

The second session was designed to have a broader input from stakeholders, including initiating and working group members, as well as a few very interested community members who had asked to be included. It was hoped that many of the working groups’ members would attend, and they were invited through several avenues of communication such as email, telephone, and face to face interactions. The goal was to have each working group begin discussing their own goals and objectives. Unfortunately, the turnout was low for a Saturday morning strategic planning session and had only ten participants: three current or former interns, three core members, and four working group members. The agenda and the corresponding meeting notes are as follows:

Agenda: Overview of Session 1
- Definitions
- Review of mission Statement
- Goals
- Organizational Norms
- Closing

Opening: The session started with an overview of the last visioning session I held with the TTP core members in July, in which I guided the group through a S.W.O.T. analysis of the organization. These were identified by the core and used as a tool during the goals portion of this session. Since starting the visioning process I have discovered S.O.A.R., which stand for Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results, an appreciative inquiry tool, which I and the core feel is a tool much more in line with the principles of positive thinking within the Transition Movement.

Definitions:
Transition Putney's definition of resiliency and sustainability, and what they mean to the organization, was something identified in the first session that we felt needed to be revisited. In this direction we made great progress and still have some word-smith-ing before the definitions are completed, but we feel that our definitions will be easily understood and applicable to the whole community.

Resilience: Everyone in the Putney area to hold together in the face of change and shocks, to feel connected and supported through taking care of one another. Transition Putney creates a platform for the community to access and share its own wisdom and resources in order to create the life the community longs for.

Sustainability: We recognize we humans are part of the interdependent fabric of life. In that we must meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of the Earth to meet the needs of future generations of all life.

Mission Statement:
The mission statement was revisited for the benefit of the organization and of the interns currently involved in research with TTP. The mission statement read “Transition Putney engages the creativity, expertise and skill-sets of our friends and neighbors in the design of a sustainable, resilient, socially just and mutually supportive community. We collaborate to embrace the extraordinary challenge and opportunity of climate change, peak oil and economic instability. Together we reinvent, rethink, rebuild and celebrate our community and the world around us.” After a reading of the this mission statement, a short survey of the participants, and a discussion, a few tweaks were made.

The changes include a more inclusive ideology behind who has the capability of sharing things with the Putney community but also a more inclusive environmental meaning as well. The new/altered mission statement reads -

“Transition Putney engages the creativity, knowledge and skills of our community in the design of a sustainable, resilient, socially just and mutually supportive community. We collaborate to embrace the extraordinary challenge and opportunity of resource depletion, climate change, and economic instability. Together we reinvent, rethink, rebuild and celebrate our community and the world around us.”
We removed the term “expertise” because many of us aren’t experts but have the know-how to share our skills and knowledge to the larger community. The discussion behind the alteration of the term “peak oil” was very energetic and encompassed many ideas on how to reach the larger environmental movement as a whole. The term “resource depletion” includes peak oil, mining, soil depletion, the extinction of species, et cetera. This came to relevance when looking at our east coast neighbors, and to the south in the Carolinas and Virginia, where whole tops of mountains are being removed for coal. They are much more focused on the struggle to save their land than they are worried about peak oil and are pursuing some of the same goals as us here at TTP.

The goals discussion was planned in a way that allowed for each working group to meet separate from the larger group in order to form a framework for creating their own goals. But, due to the low turnout, the larger group discussed goals for the entire organization moving forward. Many of the goals discussed were structural goals regarding ways the organization could more effectively garner community participation and support through increased transparency and communication throughout all levels of Transition Putney, from the core to working groups, volunteers, and community members. The S.W.O.T. analysis created during the first session was used in the prevention of duplicating ideas and to add further input from stakeholders present.

The goals produced by this group setting were impressive for their scope and perceptions of details that many initiating group members had over looked but were all focused in the direction of a change in leadership.

- Mentoring of groups wanting to become a working group
- A desire for increased communication, decentralizing communication paths
- “Plan for your retirement” from the Transition Model
- Practicing the process of the Model
- Whole Movement conferences
- Have more celebrations
- Open spaces – safe places to discuss the community's needs
- Open up the process
- Structural elements become common knowledge

These initially identified goals will be further discussed in the description of the forth session. Something of significance occurred when a participant of the second session suggested that the third session be planned using a digital scheduling tool that would ask for and gather invitees’ availability so that the session could be scheduled when most convenient for the largest number of people possible. Everyone at the meeting agreed that this would help increase turn-out of the three targeted groups of stakeholders: initiating group members, working group members, and community members.

This second session met and completed steps three and five of Bryson's list which are to clarify the organization's mission and values as well as identify strategic issues facing the organization. Step four of the framework was also expanded upon with the goals discussion, which partly fulfilled step eight as well, establishing an effective organizational vision. In addition, the goals were alternatively worded to fit into the S.W.O.T. analysis, a process which is described in the fourth session.

In the time between the ending of the second session and the scheduling of the third, several preparatory steps were taken. After I wrote the report on the second session, it was emailed to everyone who was invited to the second session and responses and additions to the S.W.O.T. analysis, the initial goals discussion, and the organizational norms were requested. Recipients of this email included both the participants and the non-attendees. This email also outlined the process of the strategic planning and explained why the recipients' participation was crucial for the success of the process. Recipients were also informed that a web address would be emailed to them within two weeks that linked them to http://www.doodle.com, an online meeting scheduling tool. I felt that this time frame would both give people ample time to read the report and form their own opinions about the notes and reports from the first and second sessions, as well as notify them as to how the next session would be scheduled. After a week of this email being out in the world and receiving additional comments, an email was sent to the TTP list serve, including working groups and initiating group members, and, again, outlined the strategic planning process. This second email included a link to the doodle.com calendar meeting scheduling tool with dates that spanned a week and a half, a week in the future from when the email was sent. A week and a half after this email had been sent, there had been very few responses from recipients, after discussions within the initiating group, it was decided to go ahead with what the doodle poll had reported back to us. The third session was scheduled for a Tuesday morning in December, from 9:15 A.M. until 12:15 P.M., at the only available space in Putney that day: the

Putney Fire Department.

After posting information regarding session three of the strategic planning process on iputney.com, emailing reminders to the list serve and previously invited people, and posting the sandwich boards (large, publicly displayed signs that are used to make Transition event-related announcements to the larger community) and flyers five days before the scheduled session, turn-out was still remarkably low. The third session had only four participants: two initiating group members and two working group members. Because of the small turn-out, a discussion was had between the four people present and myself as to how to get more people to attend meetings. The discussions held that morning were, in the end, recognized as meeting the sixth and seventh steps of Bryson's model. The previous topic, and those that followed, was meant to formulate and manage the issues of low attendance, the strategic issues facing the organization, and the review and adaption of the SP process. Instead, an overview and discussion of the invitation and scheduling process for the third session was held. There had been previous instances of issues regarding the email list service utilized by the organization in which a sender believed a message had been successfully sent, only to find later that the message did not, in fact, get through to the recipients. It now appeared that something like this had occurred with the list serve with both of the emails announcing the third session. The emails to the specifically invited working group members, however, did go through. This was known because I had received at least one response from someone unable to attend. Despite the group's desire to use Doodle, or a similar tool, for the planning of the session, our efforts to electronically organize the meeting were wasted. Regardless of the small number of participants, those present opted to go on with the session. One aspect that was revisited was the answers to the opening questions posed to the initiating group during the first session regarding positive memories of past events. We noted that most of the previously mentioned events and projects revolved, in some way, around food and discussed food’s ability to bring people together. After noting the points and suggestions that grew from these discussions, we left the fire house, and I prepared my report for the initiating group, which I both emailed to the initiating group members and presented at the next TTP meeting.

With the delay in conducting the third session, the discussion at the next initiating meeting was focused on both the tools and processes used in the strategic planning process agreed upon earlier. Due to the low level of participation from working groups and community members, it was discussed and decided that a change in tactics was necessary. There were several changes that were discussed and implemented during this meeting. The first change involved holding the meeting in the evening and making the event a potluck because of food’s apparent ability to bring people together. The second change involved using a process that community members were more familiar with so as to make the meetings more appealing to those outside the organization. This process alteration changed the S.W.O.T. to S.O.A.R. analysis to the Open Space Technology methodology for generating project ideas; this methodology is explained in greater detail in Appendix D. To help guide some of the small group conversations towards strategic planning, we invited several people who had participated in the first two strategic planning sessions to attend a potluck followed by and Open Space event. This alteration in the strategies represents stage seven in Bryson's Strategy Change Cycle. The potluck, followed by an Open Space event was largely a success, with a turnout of 28 participants for both the potluck and the discussions which followed. At this event, several things were discussed including new strategies regarding how the organization could communicate with the larger community more effectively and ideas relating to the organization's expansion. The ideas and topics of discussion are located in table 3. The main focus areas were the expansion of communication, agriculture, and community outreach with the overall goal of incorporating more people into the organization and to gain increased community buy in to the organization. The points brought up by community members can be found in Table 3.

*A discussion regarding how to get working group members more involved in the strategic planning process was also had but with few suggestions generated other than inviting them, which had already been done.

This potluck and open space event acted as the back-up to the third session. During this event, participants identified additional organizational strengths and opportunities which were derived from the discussions and were added to the S.W.O.T and S.O.A.R. analysis. This expanded analysis was presented to the initiating group during the fourth session, which is described below, completing step four of Bryson's framework and identifying additional items for step eight of the Strategic Change Model. The capacity building workshops for working group members offered a glimpse of what the initiating group could do differently to better prepare the working groups for taking over leadership roles of the organization. These workshops also played a critical role in laying the foundation for discussions and decisions made during the fourth session. Despite repeated invitations sent to the working groups to attend the fourth session, none attended. As a result of this perceived lack of interest from the working groups, the initiating group went ahead with the fourth strategic planning session. Despite the success of the open space/potluck, the organization still faced the same problem it had in the past of having no one who was willing and able to step up into leadership roles for projects and programs. The initiating group sat down at the following initiating group meeting and decided to move ahead with the unleashing as a way to urge the working groups to become more formally organized. As mentioned above, we tried some capacity building with the new core group after the unleashing, but this produced mixed results. There are at least two causes for this. The first may be contributed to the initiating group maintaining the leadership reins for too long, as indicated in the survey data. The second may be due to a lack of an educational component focused on the structure and leadership transference principals outlined in the literature (see page 8). There are several possible reasons why this educational component failed to materialize, possibly because of a lack of time on the part of the initiating group, or the sense that meetings focused on the organization's structures probably would attract very few community members.

True progress was made during the fourth session. After an overview of the notes derived from the conversations held at the open space/potluck, the S.W.O.T. and S.O.A.R. analyses were presented and finalized. Following the presentation of the lists, a group discussion was held about the next steps, specifically regarding how to build capacity within the working groups. This related to Bryson's eighth step of describing the organization in the future. After an overview of the two analyses, the subject changed to goals for the initiating group and the wider organization as a whole. Through much discussion and contemplation, and after looking over notes from previously conducted sessions, it was concluded that the best way to move forward was to hold a “Great Unleashing” for TTP as described in the Transition Model above. The strongest motivation for taking this step was the increasing expectations for what the initiating group was supposed to be accomplishing with limited support from the working groups. As you can see from the side-by-side analysis below, there were many overlapping qualities that led to this and other conclusions. The S.W.O.T. and S.O.A.R. analysis is located in Table 4, upon closer examination both tools were able to ask critical and detailed questions that the organization needed to answer.

During this meeting, the decision was made to hold the remaining SP sessions within the initiating group only as a means of addressing Bryson's ninth and tenth steps in more detail and focus. These two steps, the development of an implementation process and the reassessment of the SP process, were crucial for the successful completion of the process. The initiating group and I came to this crucial result after much discussion, and a consensus was formed: if the working groups became heavily involved this late in the process, the available time and resources would run out before the process was complete. There were several factors leading up to this decision including the low level of participation from working group members; the resources available for the SP process, particularly time and energy for meetings and for the planning of TTP's Great Unleashing; and having to continuously bring people up to speed about the process and what we had already decided. As the researcher who conducted these meetings, I was not excited about the limited role working group members were playing in the process. The perceived lack of interest shown by the working group members was seen by the initiating group as a green light to continue the process without their input. Though this jeopardized the community involvement within the action research portion of the observational research, it was, in fact, the decision of the group; and, as a member of that group, I was obligated to adhere to their wishes.

The analysis of the S.O.A.R. framework led to creating the goal of holding TTP's Great Unleashing in May of 2012 at an event called “Celebrate Putney.” Looking at the description of the TT Totnes unleashing described in the literature and with the guidance of Tina Clarke, the North East Transition Trainer with Transition U.S., TTP members began envisioning and piecing together their own ideas for TTP's leadership transference and the completion of the Transition Model of development for the initiating group. There were several concerns and apprehensions with moving ahead, mainly revolving around how to prepare the working groups for their new roles and responsibilities and how to develop what TTP came to call the Kernels of Transition, i.e., the things that make Transition what it is and separates the

Transition Movement from other environmentally focused movements, what Hopkins's calls the "Principles of Transition" (Hopkins, 2011 p. 77).

This period was a time of trepidation and apprehension for the initiating group, myself included. The five weeks between sessions offered everyone a chance to ponder the possible outcomes for the organization. To help alleviate these feelings and to help members to better understand what other Initiatives had done in the past, Tina Clarke was invited to an initiating meeting in early February. This meeting acted as the fourth session, and, during it, the initiating group came to a consensus about what goals to set and meet before the Unleashing and what outcomes we wanted to see come from the Unleashing. This meeting and the decisions made finalized Bryson's fourth, seventh, eighth, and ninth steps. At this point, one of the largest worries of the group was that, if working group members were not responsive to the SP sessions, how we could make sure they were ready for new and increased responsibilities? Tina Clarke emphasized the process and explained how it had worked all over the world. She taught us to trust and believe in the process while moving forward. Her insights about how other TTIs had held their unleashing's and the processes and steps they undertook was an enormous help in moving the process ahead and in turning over control of the organization to the working groups.

We wanted to, and did, incorporate many of the ideas generated from the first three sessions and tried to include them into the steps as much as possible in the lead up to the Unleashing. This meeting was also the time in which we set a date of May 5th, 2012, as the day of the Unleashing. Having a set date helped us to keep moving forward with the plan. The basic goals we set for holding a successful Unleashing included: making the transfer of power as transparent as possible, holding capacity building meetings with the new core made up of representatives from the working groups, raising additional funds for the organization through both grants and donations, holding several public meetings to address concerns regarding the hand-off of the organization, having fun, and making the transference of power as smooth as possible. Though not all of these goals were necessarily met in the lead up to the Unleashing, they helped guide the decisions of the initiating group, and I will discuss the outcomes of the Unleashing and the meeting of these goals in more detail in my conclusions and recommendations.

As I've mentioned above, the results portion of S.O.A.R. acted as a blue print for the course of action needed to be taken in order to achieve the end goal of the SP process, of making the organization more sustainable and resilient. At the initiating group's next meeting, we laid out the plan for the Unleashing and the steps needed for it to succeed. In wanting to be as transparent as possible in this endeavor, TTP sent out its End of Year report to the list serve and posted several hard copies around the community. In this report, we stressed the importance of the working groups, volunteers, interns, and community members for making TTP successful and began disseminating information related to the formation of the new TTP core. To add additional depth, this report also contained the explicit organizational chart for TTP. In addition to this report, the organization made public calls for increased participation in the working groups in gearing up for the change in leadership and provided a brief explanation of how the process would work see appendix E for this report.

The process for garnering participation in the newly created core is one outlined in the literature as “radical democracy” (Hopkins, 2004). In this case, each of the working groups votes to elect a single representative for the new core; all of these representatives collectively make up the core. The initiating, or steering group, identified eight working groups that had sufficient membership to warrant representation on the core. The requirement, in this case, was to have at least four dedicated members in the working group for the group to be able to elect a representative to the new core before the Unleashing.

The introduction to the plan, and the outlining of the process, was only the first of many steps. The second step was to identify the scope of the celebration and to determine the resources and time needed for it to succeed. The details for the Unleashing, regarding how and what the organization wanted to present about the hand-over of leadership, took about two weeks to fully plan. The events was scheduled to last from 3 to 11pm and was to include dinner, speakers, an open space event led by Tina Clarke, a recognition ceremony for the working groups, and live music. The initiating group estimated the costs of such an event in the $1,100 range and began seeking funding from a variety of sources.

While trying to fund the actual event, TTP was also looking to fund the capacity building portion of the leadership transfer of the organization. The New England Grassroots Environmental Fund (NEGEF) has awarded TTP grants in the past and, with a few phone calls, it was determined that yes, the organization could apply for a grant that would cover both the costs of the celebration and the necessary capacity building for the working groups. The discussion of when funds would become available was not held right away, as the deadline for applications was two weeks away. Unfortunately, this came to be something we would regret. The original grant application requested $3,000 which would have been split into $1,200 for the Celebrate Putney event and $1,800 to hire a short term fundraiser that would train TTP members in methods of fundraising. After several discussions with NEGEF, it was determined that the first portion of the grant application would have to be rewritten because the workshops, for which we were asking for funding, were to take place before the funds could officially be made available to the organization. TTP then rewrote the first part of the grant application to pay for the Transition Training offered by Tina Clarke and Transition U.S. for the capacity building of the new core members after the organization's Unleashing.

This raised the complicated issue of how to fund the Celebrate Putney event, something the initiating group took on with much determination and fortitude. However, due to the great generosity of community members and local businesses, TTP was able to raise the funds needed for the event in less than two weeks.

By this time it was early March and time was running out for the capacity building workshops for the working group members. The initiating group began to piece together the way in which we could most effectively bring the working group representatives up to speed in time for the Unleashing. What resulted was the creation of several tools including more easily readable charts and instructions for the different organizational processes and procedures, such as what types of publicity TTP was doing for different types of events, as well as finalizing the Kernels of Transition and the process to train the working groups.

By mid-March, the initiating group's members had contacted and spoken to working groups and explained the election process for the new core group, what some of the basic responsibilities of core members would be, and by when they should have their representatives elected. The initiating group decided that elections should be held during the first week of April in order to give the new core members ample time to get caught up before the Unleashing, this time frame, unfortunately, lead to more problems. The initiating group found that several working groups had no apparent desire to hold an election and, in some cases, people attempted to directly appoint themselves or others to the newly created core. This was something the initiating group tried to prevent from the start of the process, and these road blocks ended up delaying the election of representatives from some of the working groups by two weeks as they reconvened and held actual votes.

It was now midway through April, and the initiating group was spending every waking hour working on the upcoming Unleashing. With the self-imposed deadline approaching, it was expressed to the newly elected representatives that the capacity building and training would take place after the Celebrate Putney event. This would finalize and complete the first nine of Bryson's ten-step Strategic Change Cycle as well as complete the SP process that I had begun with TTP. During the entire planning of the Unleashing, TTP was conscious of the fact that, with new leadership taking over, we, as an initiating group, did not want to create many long-term obligations for the newly formed core. In respect to this, the initiating group only planned events and committed to support events through the first two weeks of June. One of these events was a fundraiser for the TTP general operating expense fund, for which tickets were sold to attend a presentation by Chris Martenson, author of *Small Mart Revolution*, and the founder Peak Prosperity. (http://www.peakprosperity.com/about) This was done to give the new leadership a cushion for the organization and to relieve some of the stress and responsibilities new leadership groups often face. Other than normally scheduled events, such as re-skilling workshops and presentations, the only other commitment made by the initiating group was to host the June 8th community supper which we and the newly formed core helped to organize flawlessly.

The capacity building workshops were transformed into the initiating group and the newly formed core holding two, two and a half hour long meetings together. These were both meant to be an introduction to the processes that had served the initiating group for the previous three years so well, and also to put special emphasis on what we came to call the "Kernels of Transition". The values of Transition, as wells as an overview of what the initiating group meetings looked like, i.e., agendas, go-arounds, level of flexibility, and a sense of camaraderie, were discussed in great detail during the first meeting, and all but two representatives of the working groups, who were later caught up via email, were present. The second meeting was attended by the newly elected core, and, as was their preference, was held over lunch on a weekday and lasted an hour and a half. This meeting got off to a very quick start and led by the new core. The main focus of this meeting being about the basics and day-to-day running of the organization, and, despite the minutes of the first meeting being sent out via email, there was some confusion on the part of those members who had missed the first meeting. Fortunately, all confusion and misunderstanding was quickly resolved. The initiating group had decided, by group consensus that all members would all step down and no longer be involved directly with running the organization. This was done for several reasons. First, with some murmurings in the community about the initiating group, they didn't want to seem to be trying to hold on to control. Second, the initiating group wanted to create a sense of buy-in and ownership between the core and the TTP organization, allowing them to make it what they and the community wanted. And third, the initiating group, or members of it, had been involved with running the organization from its conception three years prior to this and wanted to work with more focus in areas that met their specific interests. That is to say that the initiating group members would still be active within TTP but would be focused on specific areas and projects instead of on the running of the organization. Members of the initiating group would be available for consultations about issues facing the organization only by request of the new core. This transference of leadership of the organization completed the tenth step in Bryson's framework and allowed TTP to complete the development model outlined by the literature of the Movement. This hands-off approach did have some consequences for the new core which will be discussed in much more detail in the conclusions and recommendations sections.

Though the SP process initially agreed upon by the initiating group had to be altered part way through the process, it makes this experience no less valuable both for me and for the Movement as a whole. The strategies used in the presentation of the process could and should have been more explicit from the beginning, such as an increase in the methods of contact for working group members. The capacity building piece to the transference of leadership of the organization is something that the literature in the Movement should address more directly. The literature could also offer tools and ideas for a more lateral distribution of responsibilities. This is depicted by the Transition Model but is not explained in great depth as to strategies for achieving positive outcomes in this transformational process for individual Initiatives around the world. The principals of permaculture as outlined above play an important part in the Movement's resilience, sustainability, and adaptability to changing circumstances the globe, and, more specifically, in the states of New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Maine as described in the survey data below.

Survey Data and Analysis

The surveying process that was used was designed to mirror Robson's description of conducting focus group interviews. However, instead of verbally recording the sessions and transcribing them later, a paper survey with a set list of questions was distributed to each of the twenty six participants from six Initiatives. Though the number of participants from each Initiative varied, the scope of the questions asked remained the same, and the survey produced some very interesting data which is described below. All of the survey sessions held and reported were held face-to-face after email correspondence with the organizations involved, with the exception of the Initiative from Maine whom, per their request, completed the survey by U.S. mail. Out of twenty officially listed Initiatives that existed in the New England region at the time of the survey, only six consented to be surveyed and fully participated in the process. Three other organizations responded to my request but declined to participate or failed to follow up on subsequent communications.

One of the major difficulties in contacting these different Initiatives was the lack of up to date contact information on the Transition U.S. website. There were several instances in which an organization listed on the website had no presence on the internet, and several cases lacked any contact or incorrect contact information. In several cases emails to organizations and their core members simply went without response, which is why I opted to focus the sample for the survey regionally and looked at only a small number of organizations within a small geographic area of the United States. The time of year for the conducting of the surveys also played a role in the response rate, as many Initiatives were in the process of kicking off their summer programs and projects in May and June, just as TTP did.

The survey, as stated above, was divided into two sections. The first focused on the background information of the organizations being studied and Transition Initiative members' participation. The second looked specifically at the use of visioning and strategic planning tools within these Initiatives. Amongst the completed surveys there was a wide range of answers for both sections. However, when viewed collectively, a very distinct picture began to appear. Three additional questions were also asked of responding organizations: how many working groups were established, how many members were in the core or initiating group, and how many projects the Initiative was currently involved in. The reason for keeping these questions off of the formal survey were that these were questions that not all participants had to answer, and so these questions acted as additional markers within the data. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B as mentioned above. The individual analysis of each of the survey questions is located below. All of the participating organizations answered these questions with the exception of one initiative. All of the initiatives cores or initiating groups had between five and eight members with some members more active than others. The number of projects varied from group to group with some initiatives having upwards of twelve ongoing projects and programs while others had as few as four. The number of working groups was similar to that of the number of projects. The length of time the initiatives had been active was not always indicative of a large number of organized working groups. The number of these working groups per initiative varied between the initiating group acting as the only working group to initiatives which had upwards of ten working groups.

The first question on the survey regarded how participating members of Transition Initiatives first learned of the Movement. This was meant as a general indicator as to the methods that have worked for outreach in the Movement up to this point. The exact wording of the question was, “How did you first learn of Transition Towns?” Possible responses can be found in Appendix B.

Out of the twenty six respondents, fifteen, or 58%, indicated that they had heard about the Transition Movement through word of mouth; the remaining eleven responses selected “other,” with write-in responses ranging from public postings, trainings, churches, and newspapers.

The following questions, two through four, all had to do with the length of time involved with each of the three separate stages of an Initiative's formation – from mulling group, initiating group, and finally the core / Unleashing group. Question two asked, “How long have you been a member of the initiating group/core?” Since I was only interviewing officially recognized Initiatives, I felt it important to begin with the latest stage of development of the organization and gauge people’s level of participation within the other forming stages of the organization backwards. The answer space for this question was in the following format: Number of Years:____ Months: _____. The breakdown of the answers provided for this question are broken down into the averages of answers provided by the Initiatives interviewed can be found in table 5.

The average time a core or initiating group member held his or her position in these groups was calculated from the listed averages and resulted in 18.72 months, or, just over two years. These answers, and the associated averages, I believe, are misleading when the data is more closely examined. Several of the averages of Initiatives, despite having members who have remained in the same position for several years, beyond that which is outlined in the literature, are weighed down by one or two recently joined members.

The third and fourth questions “Were you part of the mulling group?” and, “Were you part of the initiating / unleashing group?” These two questions asked about time involved with the specific groups in terms of months and allowed for an examination of the evolution of membership. These two questions all offered the same answer format located in Appendix B The results from question three, “Were you part of the mulling group?,” can be found in table 6.

The average time a group spent in the mulling phase, deciding whether or not the ideas of the Movement would work in their community, was 7.2 months. Of the members of the initiating groups interviewed, 53% were also members of the mulling groups with the remaining 47% being new to the initiating or core groups. This 53% of initiating members being part of the mulling process challenges what is outlined by Hopkins in the literature on page 79 of *The Transition Companion.* (2011).

Question four, “Were you part of the initiating / unleashing group?” produced similar answers as the third question with the exception of the increase in time spent as a member of the group. The answers to the fourth question looked very similar to the answers of the second. The average time an individual spent on each of these initiating and unleashing groups can be found in Table 7.

These averages, when taken together, produce an average time a person spent as a member of an initiating group or Unleashing group of 25.3 months. However, there were initiating groups that took much longer than this to fully complete the Transition Model of development. As in the case four of the six initiatives interviewed a majority of those had been active for at least two full years in the early development of the organization, something again contradictory to the literature. Despite being frowned upon, these findings clearly indicate that there is a disconnect between what is being preached in *The Transition Companion* and what is actually being practiced on the ground throughout the Movement when it comes to the length of time needed in launching a successful initiative.

Questions five and six examined the decision making process utilized by the different Initiatives and examined what tools or processes they, as a group, use to reach decisions. The fifth question read, “In what ways are decisions made within the core of your Transition Initiative?” I asked this to determine if these Initiatives had embraced the Transition Model and Methodology. The answer selections for this question are included in Appendix B.

Results from question five indicated that 27% of respondents, belonged to organizations that decided everything by consensus, while 63% indicated that most, not all, decisions were made by consensus. One respondent selecting “other” and listed specific things the core decided by consensus and things that were decided by individuals or working groups. The interesting thing to note in these results is that only within two of the participating Initiatives did all participants answer with the same response. The remaining four initiatives answered this question in almost an identical split between answer choices A and B. This leads to the conclusion that, though groups try to practice consensus-based decision making, in the real world this does not always work and occasionally something has to be decided right then right there without the input of all involved.

Number six compiled information regarding what types of tools and processes surveyed Initiatives used in their decision making processes and was presented in an open-ended format. This open-ended format provided a space for participants to list specific tools and processes used in making decisions within their Initiative. The end result of this question was more convoluted then that, though. The individual lists generated by each initiative interviewed are in Table 8:

There are two items of note worthiness in the group of responses to this question. The first has to do with the five types of communication methods listed: explicit group Nouns, non-violent communication, world cafe, the use of a talking piece, way of council, and dot voting. Though all are a means of communicating, these tools do work differently. For further explanation of the tools and processes listed here and elsewhere please see page 72. The other item of notice is the repetitive emphases on discussions as a means of forming consensus which were mentioned, in one way or another, by five of the six participating organizations.

The next three questions, seven through nine, complete the first portion of the survey by examining the working relationship between the core members and the working groups. Question seven inquired as to the functionality of working groups, specifically relating to input and support from the core group. The seventh question itself read, “How well would you describe how well the working groups function?” The three possible answers were “high,” “moderately,” and “low,” with specific descriptions of each level, and appear in Appendix B. Responses to this question indicated that 16% felt that their associated working groups had a high capacity level for organizing events and projects, while, again, the majority, 80%, felt that their working groups were slightly less capable of functioning and needed some support from the core group. There was one outlier that selected a low level of functionality, but this appears to be an abnormality within the data. This finding, that the majority of working groups needed some support from the core group, was confirmed in the data provided by participants in their answers to the follow-up question.

Question eight asked, “How often is the core engaged with the working groups in planning events and projects?” That is to mean whether or not specific members of the core are more directly involved with pushing projects forward or if the working groups have the capacity to run projects on their own. Answer selections for this question are in appendix B. Of the organizations participating, answers indicated their own level of interaction and direction of their respective working groups. Each organization selected a majority of different answer selections. For instance, group one met on average weekly with their working groups, group two all selected answer “other” and stated that the core was the working group of the organization, and group six all chose that they meet with their working groups every other week. While no organization particularly stands out from this data, it is not a coincidence that all of the groups meet with their working groups, if they exist, at least once a month.

The final question of the first section, question nine, examined the level of concentration of responsibility for the organization. This question asked, “How concentrated within the core are the responsibilities for your Transition Town projects?” Three possible answers were provided and are in Appendix B:

The surveyed sample of this portion of the research answered in the following manner: 28% said that the responsibilities were very concentrated in only one or two members; a large majority, 72% said the responsibilities were moderately concentrated in four to six core members; a single outlier, again, said that concentration of responsibilities was low, with core members making decisions but working groups handling projects. This high to moderate level of responsibility concentrated in such few members of the organization should also be an indicator to the Movement's leadership that there is something that the literature is failing to meet and overcome.

The findings of the first section of the survey were both surprising and, in some ways, under whelming. While I saw very little direct oversight of the working groups during my time with TTP, the groups were, in some aspects, wholly dependent on the initiating group for publicity and logistical support. I had hoped that other TTIs had overcome this hurdle and found a way to truly develop their working groups into fully capable groups in their own right, but it appears that this is a problem that exists not only in Putney but in other Transition Towns in the region. The length of time some participants of this study have been involved with their own organizations was also noted earlier. As can be seen in the results from question two, twelve of the twenty six survey respondents have been involved in leadership roles within their TTIs for over two years which is far longer than what is suggested by Hopkins. This truly identifies the capacity of working groups and the mentoring of leaders within the organization as a place where major improvements can and should be made.

The second portion of the survey, as mentioned above, was aimed to gather information about the specific tools, processes, and outcomes of TTIs strategic planning sessions; questions ten through fourteen were focused on gathering background data about the individual Initiatives visioning and strategic planning processes and began the second half of the survey. All remaining questions on the survey, except questions thirteen and nineteen, were open ended as explained in the findings of each of the questions. Question ten was very straight forward and asked for the number of visioning or SP sessions that each organization had held. This proved more complicated a question than it seemed because, as the data shows, several Initiatives did not hold formal sessions but were strategically planning for the organization as they went along. Other organizations listed a specific number of meetings that had occurred throughout the life of the organization. Others still simply said “too many to count," making finding an average impossible, and thus, rendering an actual analysis of data from question ten inconclusive. Question eleven inquired about the use of an outside facilitator for any of these sessions. The results showed that half of the Initiatives surveyed had used an outside facilitator for at least one of their SP or visioning sessions. These outside facilitators varied from Naresh Giangrande, who helped found the Movement, to Tina Clarke, the previously mentioned Transition U.S. Trainer, to interns working for Initiatives. A more in-depth analysis of this data will be included with the analysis of question nineteen.

Question twelve examined at what point during the life of the organization these sessions were held and asked participants to list, generally, when these events were held. With the multitudes of sessions all participating Initiatives have held, it is safe to say that these organizations have held these events/SP sessions throughout the course of the running of their organizations. The provided answers indicated that generally at least one of these visioning or SP sessions was held early in the life of the organization and happened, usually, within the following six to twelve months of the initiatives' founding. The irregularity of the responses may indicate another area for improvement within the Transition Model, however more data needs to be collected for this conclusion to be worth a mandate from the Transition Network. Question thirteen followed up with asking who was invited to or involved in these sessions and asked that the grid for question thirteen be completed. A sample of the chart can be found in appendix B:

The ambiguous nature of the data collected in question ten, not having the exact number of SP sessions held by each organization, created additional difficulties in analyzing this question. However, the answers provided can be analyzed in their most rudimentary form. The answers provided by participants appears in Table 11.

If the first two answer categories are grouped together, choice A and B, then a majority of 59.24% emerges as an indicator that over half of the SP and visioning sessions conducted only included the initiating group or members of the working groups. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that at least half of all visioning and SP sessions conducted by these organizations was an internal process with little input from outside sources. More on the results from this and previous questions will be presented below in my final conclusion of the survey.

The next group of questions, fourteen through eighteen, all look at the specific tools and processes used in strategic planning and visioning sessions held by the different Initiatives involved in the survey and were all open ended. Question fourteen asked each Initiative to list the tools they used as a group or individuals during their sessions. The lists created by this question act as a means of creating a best practices list for other organizations within the Transition Movement. However, it quickly became evident that, in some cases, these organizations themselves needed such a list. The compiled lists are in Table 14 below.

As you can see from these compiled lists, many are repetitive, yet unique tools emerge. There are eight specific tools mentioned collectively by the sample: guided meditation, back casting, mind mapping, stacking, S.W.O.T., S.O.A.R., Open Space Technology, and way of council. Each of these was listed only one time. Brainstorming, however, was mentioned by three separate groups as a tool that had been utilized. Three of the groups involved used their organization's mission, goals, and values as tools in their process, and four listed small discussions as a tool used.

Question fifteen inquired about where these sessions were held and was open ended. The lists provided by the surveyed Initiatives were slightly varied but did have some similarities, mainly that they all used both public and private spaces to hold their sessions. The most common answer was private homes with more publicly accessible venues, such as schools and churches, coming in a close second. These answers make perfect sense when paired with the answers from the previous question. Private homes were used for core/initiating group-only sessions while public venues were utilized to accommodate the larger community being involved in open sessions.

Question sixteen asked what, if any, evaluation and monitoring tools were used during these sessions. As with other aspects of running an organization, the literature in and about the Movement makes little reference to monitoring and evaluation, other than it is important and organizations should do it. It was found that many surveyed organizations did not use any formal monitoring and evaluation tools for these sessions. The list created can be found in Table 9.

The varied answers were separated into four categories – formal evaluation, energy generated by an idea or project, discussions, and note taking – and are listed in order of frequency used; this data can be found in table 10. The types of formal evaluation mentioned by the respondents include group evaluations, general consensus, surveys among the group members, and dot voting. The next listed tool, mentioned again by four initiatives, is seeing the energy an idea or project generates from the group. This is specifically listed in the literature as a means of monitoring and evaluation early in the life of an Initiative; however, beyond getting projects and concepts started, there is little use for this without more formal evaluations and data being collected which is also necessary for many grant applications which help fund some of these organizations. Discussions were also listed four times, and, much like the previously listed energy-generated evaluation tool, outside of decision making and consensus forming, simply discussing something does not mean it has been evaluated properly. Note taking was also mentioned, though less frequently, being listed only twice, and falls in the same category as the discussions: useful but not entirely practical as a means of monitoring and evaluation. It is seen as a positive that two-thirds of the organizations surveyed have some form of evaluation and monitoring system in use.

The seventeenth question asked about the outcomes of these SP sessions, specifically what types of projects, procedures, or future plans of the organization, and, like the other questions, created some great lists. The complete list created is located in Table 12.

The outcomes of the Initiatives SP sessions are all positive and have some strong similarities. All six organizations made reference to having more focused and specific targets for their Initiatives. Three of the organizations formed new working groups, expanding their membership and presence within their communities, while the others made mention of new projects coming out of their sessions. An additional two listed specific events that were held as a result of their sessions. These responses, in addition to the division of responses described below in table 13, will help to form the overall findings of the second portion of the survey.

Question eighteen inquired as to how these Initiatives followed up on these outcomes, something that, in my experience, doesn't always happen. The generated list was short but not without merit and is labeled as Table 14. Of the methods of follow up the respondents listed, two categories became evident. These two common themes were an active pursuit of increasing community participation and communication and a focus on organizational development. The way in which the data above was organized into these two categories appears as such:

Increasing community participation and communication	Increased digital, and word of mouth communication, increased out reach for core members, increase community participation, outreach, and collected attendees information
Organizational development	Steering Committee formed and stared meeting regularly and planning events, working to establish more community supported projects, transformed our monitoring and evaluation process, acting on feedback received in the community, and working groups reporting to the steering

	committee, asset mapping form at events

These two broad categories generated by the six participating organizations clearly show that, despite their specific tools or processes, they can successfully identify organizational strengths and needs. Though there was a long list of responses given, six of the twenty six individuals surveyed did not list any answer at all. This 26% non-response rate is somewhat troubling as these were spread out between three separate organizations, bringing a certain level of doubt into whether or not these organizations are completing the aforementioned follow-through to their respective SP sessions.

Lastly, question nineteen asked participants, “How would you rate, on a scale of one to five, how successful you feel your visioning / Strategic planning sessions were for your organization? One being least productive while five being the greatest of successes.” This question was asked as a method of discovering how confident participants were in the methods used. I have tried to use the previous answers given by the respondents from each Initiative to index each Initiative's capacity for conducting successful SP sessions. This data is represented as Table 15.

When taken collectively on the five point scale, of the twenty-three people whom answered the question, 64% felt that their organization's SP and visioning sessions had a positive impact on them and their organizations, while only 36% felt that their SP sessions were not helpful towards the development and success of their organizations and rated their sessions as a three (Neutral) or two. More in-depth data needs to be collected as to why these individuals felt the process was less than beneficial for their organizations. Of the organizations who utilized an outside facilitator, as indicated in the responses to question eight, their groups’ responses averaged a three or higher indicating that an outside facilitator did not impede their success and in many cases improved it.

Conclusion of the survey results:

Overall, the survey conducted reached all but one of the New England states and included six of the seventeen Initiatives originally identified. At the time of writing, there are now currently twenty-three officially recognized TTIs throughout the New England region. Garnering support and cooperation from the different groups surveyed varied widely, from ignoring communication requests or not being able to identify proper channels of communication to enthusiastic support and open eagerness to participate. From the groups originally identified, and those which responded, the regional response rate was 35.3%, which may have been increased through more direct support from either the Transition Network or Transition U.S. Of the six identified groups, they collectively had forty-three core members, varying between five and twelve per Initiative. Of the core members who completed surveys, twenty six out of the forty-three associated with these organizations, the response rate was 60.4% per individual Initiative.

The inability for many respondents to fully answer some of the more specific Transition Model aspects is worrisome, as was the general lack of knowledge regarding tools and processes, with the exception of a small number of responding organizations. As I will explain further in my conclusions below, this confirms what I observed during my time with TTP, that there is a major capacity building piece that is missing from the Transition Model. The size of each community whose Transition Initiative agreed to meet with me varied in some measure, from a village of 2,591 to an entire county with a population of 40,184, represents the wide range of communities beginning their own TTIs and those interviewed. The average population of the TTIs that were surveyed for this research was 21,394 people. There is no available data as to the average populations of communities across the New England region which makes further analysis of the populations of TTIs in this study difficult.

Though this is a fledgling movement, and the Transition U.S. trainer Tina Clarke was very accessible, there is a larger role for the Transition Network other than simply keeping track of what organizations are doing around the world and producing short news updates. The Transition Network could and should be more active in building the capacity of individual town Initiatives. Evidence for this assertion is the long periods of time that Initiatives take to Unleash, with Transition Town Totnes being rare exception by Unleashing within their first year, rather than the rule of thumb of one and a half years that is stated in the literature. The average of just over two years for all initiating and core members surveyed also shows the difficulty Initiatives are having in finding community members who are willing to step up into more leadership type roles within their organizations. Providing a more detailed list of tools, strategies, and processes for Initiatives to use besides what is mentioned in the existing literature would be very beneficial to the global network of Initiatives. A network-wide capacity building piece available for free to individual Initiatives would have helped the scenario faced by TTP, and other Initiatives, as the organization was preparing for and after its Unleashing in the transference of administrative knowledge and ability in preparing the working groups for doing publicity, facilitating, scheduling and other tasks in running an initiative.

The overall answer that the majority of decisions are made by consensus, as covered in question five, is a sign that some, if not all, of the values of the original Initiative have continued to be practiced. This is reinforced by the outcomes and follow-ups offered later in the data. This first portion of the survey confirms my earlier observations of TTP, that, though Initiatives understand the ideas and concepts of the Transition Model, more is needed to help mentor leadership and capacity within the working groups. This is indicated in the concentration of responsibilities for projects falling to, on average, four to six people, shown in the results of question nine. The first half of the survey shed new light on what is working for the Movement, i.e., consensus building, getting grassroots projects off the ground, and community outreach. It also identified areas where improvements could be made, such as leadership mentoring, presentation of the organizational structure of TTIs, and increased access and use of tools by TTIs to further their organizational goals and projects.

The second portion of the survey, as described above, shows that many of the TTIs surveyed came away with a positive response to their own visioning and SP sessions, even if they did not use specific tools, frameworks, or processes. This shows the ingenuity and imagination of grassroots organizations in moving their ideas and projects forward, regardless of resources available. As mentioned in the literature review above, one of the main goals of this research, and this paper, is to make these tools, frameworks, and processes more accessible for members of this important movement as it spans the globe. The monitoring and evaluation processes in which different organizations engaged are also areas where major improvements could be made. Despite the prolific nature in which these Initiatives are springing up, the detailed evaluation and monitoring of projects and overall organizations, needed for larger grant awards, remains absent to a large extent. It is worth pausing and musing here about what could be, if this specific area of capacity was more widely spread throughout the Movement, the larger number of communities and citizens that could be reached, the number of lives improved. The research completed here is only a small sample of the wealth of data that could be collected from these Initiatives and the Movement as a whole. The individual short comings of the survey and its questions are overcome by the data generated by the other two types of data collected as indicated above in the methodology according to Jick (1979, p. 603).

Recommendations and Conclusions

The triangulation method, as described by Jick (1979, p. 608) and utilized in this research, produce an accurate picture of the Transition Movement in the states of New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Maine. This research paints a picture of many small organizations that, while being connected to a broader network, are left to develop on their own with little outside support for actually running their organizations. Everyone involved is doing their absolute best at improving their community and discussions are beginning to bring these regional Initiatives together for more impactful events and projects. There were several key findings of this research including: whether Initiatives are utilizing the framework in the literature in their decision making processes, how stable the Initiatives' leadership groups are, and the development level and capacities of working groups in the New England area. This research is the first of its kind in examining the functionality of TTIs in the New England region of the United States and is the first study of multiple Transition Town Initiatives. My findings have implications both within and outside the Movement through its in-depth examination of grassroots and community self-organized groups.

The three areas that this research focuses on – personal observations, the literature of the Movement and strategic planning, and the survey conducted with six independent TTIs – produced findings which I feel are critical for the Movement to address as it moves forward. The order in which these findings and recommendations will be presented is the same as they were covered above: literature, personal observations, and the results of the survey.

However, all three overlap in one way or another.

Of the two main manuals for the Movement, Hopkins' *The Transition Handbook* (2008) is cited much more frequently in this research than his later book, *The Transition Companion* (2011), because the earlier book proved to be a much better resource. Though second book is touted as the nuts and bolts of the Transition Movement, it provides very little practical explanation as to how Initiatives are accomplishing their projects and, instead, simply gives a general overview of successful projects and Initiatives from around the globe. The other literature examined for this research, specifically what has already been written about the Movement, consists mostly of case studies of individual Initiatives or projects with some authors examining the broader applicability of the Transition Model to more urban and globalized settings. None, other than this, have examined whether or not the Model is working for Initiatives that are trying to follow it. The anecdotal evidence provided by the Movement suggests that, since there are so many successful Initiatives, it must be working flawlessly, and those Initiatives that fail were established in communities that weren't ready for the Movement. This "evidence" is, at best, weak and, at worst, goes without addressing some of the issues raised here. I fear that this mentality threatens the sustainability of the Movement as a whole.

The only tool specifically explained and described fully in *The Transition Companion* is Open Space Technology, which works well for large groups of people who do not necessarily know each other, and is aimed towards generating project and programming ideas (Hopkins, 2011). Other tools and resources such as Way of Council, S.O.A.R., and Consensus Decision Making are available and should be embraced more by the umbrella organization, the Transition Town Network. Currently there is very little direction and encouragement for TTIs to utilize formal tools, processes, and frameworks other than those directly tied to the

Movement's literature, a full list of tools and references can be found nelow. There is great potential for the capacity of these grassroots organizations to develop and grow if more detailed explanations of tools and resources are made available to them.

The strategic planning processes and guides that I examined had many similarities and steps, and all had the same outcome in mind: preparing the organization to move forward into the future in a position of strength rather than reaction and tepidness. Despite the lack of specific SP tools and processes, the TTIs examined in this research, with the exception of a few outliers, all had very positive results with their SP and visioning sessions. However, the Movement can and should do a much better job at preparing Initiatives for long term organizational planning other than, “Picture a green future 15 to 20 years from now. Okay, go make that a reality.” There are many more ingredients and steps in making a grassroots organization have that kind of longevity and is akin to trying to bake a cake before you have added all of the necessary ingredients.

The results of my participatory action research, in which I conducted SP sessions with TTP and applied Bryson's Strategic Change Cycle (2005) to a dynamic grassroots organization within the Transition movement, were mixed. Though not all of the goals set at the beginning of this exercise were met, the research aided in my own depth of understanding of the processes that must take place in order for successful SP sessions to occur. Much like Bryson's own diagram of his model, TTP strategic planning sessions took many twists and turns, showing the flexibility and diversity represented in the Transition Movement. Though larger community input was not able to be fully incorporated, having the guidance and experience of the initiating group's knowledge of the Putney community made up for some of these deficiencies by having a combined 30+ years of experiences living with in the community.

In the end, TTP's initiating group held two training meetings with the newly elected core members who represented each of the working groups that had elected a representative by the time of the Celebrate Putney event, the Initiative’s Unleashing party. The preparation for these meetings, as I noted earlier, was hectic and, in some regards, inadequate for the task ahead of the new core. As a perfect representation of this load of tasks and materials was a twelve page document on how to publicize different events. By the end of June 2012, the newly elected core decided to go on hiatus for the summer and let the normally running summer projects – the Putney Farmers' Market, the community gardens, the green bike project, and other ongoing working group projects – go on as usual. However, they planed to reconvene in the fall when more people expect to have more time to devote to the Initiative and have become more active recently.

This hiatus was most likely caused by the unpreparedness of the initiating group to hand over control of the organization and the lack of capacity and understanding within the collective working groups. Because of the rush to unleash the organization because of both internal and external influences, and looking at the end results of the survey regarding the length of time some mulling and initiating members remained in leadership positions, it is clear that a capacity building piece is missing within the movement. There is training available, at a cost, for initiating group members and others, as well as the ability to hire one of the U.S. Transition trainers to come visit Initiatives who have specific questions or needs. However, with the grassroots nature of the Movement, the costs associated with these trainings and consultations are sometimes prohibitive. An example of this is the necessity of TTP's initiating group to apply for a grant to fund the newly elected core members official Transition Training sessions. Though funding was available for this aspect of capacity building, with the pause in active leadership, the organization, because of the timing of events, may suffer yet unknown consequences.

It was not until the TTP initiating group started to prepare for the transfer that they fully realized the amount of work that they accomplished and did on a weekly and bi-weekly basis. The continuation of such services and publicity for the organization, I suspect, is a major component into why some members stay in leadership positions for so long. They fear what will happen after new people come into leadership roles, and, with a preliminary examination of the limited information provided by my observations of TTP, this is exactly why some members stay on in specific roles for so long as backed up by the survey data.

The survey of six of the seventeen officially recognized Transition Towns that existed at the beginning of this research shows many interesting details regarding how individual Initiatives actually function, regardless of what the literature suggests. Aside from the rare case study of an individual Initiative, what I have presented here has not been documented elsewhere. One of the most dramatic findings of the survey was the prevalence of long term leadership. Many of the mulling group members in the surveyed Initiatives stayed on longer than desired or recommended, neglecting the literature's advice of finding new people for the initiating groups after the mulling group has made a decision in the affirmative to begin an Initiative.

The above is just one of four major findings within the survey data. The remaining three were that of the necessity to broaden the initial group of stakeholders within beginning initiatives, the need to expand the SP process beyond the initiating/core and working groups, and a need for a more centralized, organized, and accessible way of keeping in contact with individual TTIs.

The need for new TTIs to expand the group of stakeholders in the beginning is evident from the length of time members of mulling, initiating, and, in some cases, core groups spend in leadership positions. If the organization begins with a larger group of invested parties, there are instantly more resources and connections within the community that can be utilized and engaged in while trying to increase the resilience and sustainability of said community. By the time the mulling group, and later the initiating group, is formed, the people in the community who have the free time and the desire to pursue the goals of the Movement are already involved, making the formation of a viable and functional core nearly impossible. Thus there is clearly a need to increase the size of the group of initial stake holders. This increase in stakeholders will increase the pool of available and capable people to fulfill leadership positions so that they could take on the leadership roles on a rotating basis, or more simply put, taking turns at the helm.

Another need identified within the survey was the necessity of TTIs to expand their visioning and SP sessions to include participation from the community at large. When attempting to create a vision of the community 15 to 20 years in the future, not only do you need the input and consent of the town elders, you also need consent of the younger generations, allowing them to identify with the future vision of the town and including their vision as a place they would want to live. This, according to the data to date, has not been conducted with much success. The anecdotal evidence presented by the movement; that if you scare people and give them a positive goal afterwards should motivate them to action as has been exemplified by Transition Town Totnes, may only be of antidotal evidence of what happens when community members begin on the path of creating their own Initiative. These additional eyes looking at the scope of problems and issues that may be facing the community concerned could have a dramatic impact on not only the discussion but the working decisions made in regards to how to confront these issues.

As mentioned above, a much clearer explanation of tools, processes, and methods utilized by the Movement would be of great benefit to Initiatives throughout the world. Also mentioned above is that the only two fully explained methods of SP and/or visioning in the literature have to do with thinking about what the community wants and desires and asking the community at large for project ideas without any commitment by the community to participate in or make a reality of the idealized project. This will indirectly and directly impact the ways in which working groups develop and expand to incorporate additional tasks and administrative roles that, in many cases, can only be transferred through trainings. My personal observations, the survey results relating to length of time involved, and the answers received to question nine of the survey regarding the concentration of responsibilities confirm that this aspect is missing in the Movement. There is a major cost-free capacity building component that is missing from the Transition Town Movement.

The difficulty in which I personally had in contacting TTIs within New England was particularly troubling. Many TTIs had no internet presence other than a listing with a phone number and or address on transitionnetwork.org, the official website of the Transition Movement many of which were no longer up to date. There may be security concerns among the leaders of Initiatives; however, this makes formal communication within the Movement extremely difficult. Of the seventeen originally identified TTIs in New England, only eight had valid email addresses available in their contact information on the website, and, of the remaining nine, only four listed other means of communication. This, inevitably, led to a lack of participation by some these groups due to their inaccessibility, illustrating the need for a more central and more easily accessible network of communication among TTIs.

The deficiencies and strengths of these initiatives identified within the survey, my personal observations, and a review of the literature, show that there is much room for improvement within the tools and frameworks incorporated within the Transition Movement.

The tools and frameworks identified by the TTIs surveyed can be found in in the tables below and are the extent to which TTIs identified include in their modus operandi per the survey. These tools can and should, I believe, be more utilized and publicized within the Movement. As the first researcher who has examined any group of TTIs, I can positively say that the tools and resources identified and provided within this document can be of great and meaningful use to Transition Towns throughout the world.

Communication Tools and Processes Recommended for the Transition Movement

The facilitation tools and processes identified by the individual initiatives who participated varied widely in the application and use of such tools. The specifically listed tools and others are examined below as a resource for Transition Town initiatives no matter their stage of organization. The list of tools listed by initiatives comes from question fifteen of the survey portion of my research; the other tools and processes listed are from a variety of sources and stay true to the principals of the movement. A thorough understanding of the values of the movement and it's prescribed facilitation tools and processes will be discussed first followed by an examination of tools identified by initiatives from the survey and lastly, my own recommendations to broaden the scope of facilitation tools and processes available to the movement.

These are combined with the principles of Transition include positive visioning, helping people access good information and trusting them to make good decisions, inclusion and openness, enabling sharing and networking, building resilience, inner and outer transition, self-organizing, and decision making at the appropriate level (Hopkins 2011). With a model based on permaculture principles, and a positively focused framework for getting started and organized in anyone's community, it is not difficult to see why the movements’ spread has been so prolific.

Within the guidelines of the Transition Movement regarding how initiatives are supposed to be organized, there are several steps and stages involved in the process that boarder on strategic planning but fail to make explicit how the idea of a plan can get from beginning to end as already mentioned above.

Hopkins details things that need to be discussed from the beginning, such as how the group members will interact with one another, how the group will be organized, and how decisions will be made, yet never offers any clear method for the dissolving of the steering committee other than that sub-groups should elect new representatives. Hopkin's main tool for communicating in larger groups of people involves Open Space Technology, which is explained in greater detail in *The Transition Companion.*

The specific question on the survey that helped guide this question was number fifteen asked each Initiative to list the tools they used as a group or individuals during their sessions. The lists created by this question were to act as a means of creating a best practices list for other organizations within the Transition Movement. However, it quickly became evident that, in some cases, these organizations themselves needed such a list. The compiled lists included:

Initiative's Group Code	Tools
1	Brain storming, identified existing local efforts, book group discussions, topical discussions, guided meditation, inspirational videos, back casting, consensus building
2	Storytelling, mind mapping, sharing ideas as the evolve, drawing, writing, open discussions, books, white board, based visioning off of ideals and values
3	Small group discussions
4	Brain storming, stacking, envisioning the future, mission statement talks, agendas, heart and soul work

5	SOAR, open discussions, defining goals, Open Space Technology, way of council consulted outside experts
6	Brainstorming

As you can see from these compiled lists, many are repetitive, yet unique tools emerge. There were seven specific tools mentioned collectively by the sample: guided meditation, back casting, mind mapping, stacking, S.O.A.R., Open Space Technology, and way of council. Each of these was listed only one time. Brainstorming, however, was mentioned by three separate groups as a tool that had been utilized. Three of the groups involved used their organization's mission, goals, and values as tools in their process, and four listed small discussions as a tool used.

In closer examination of these tools and processes we find a variety of methods for reaching a decision. The tools listed in the survey results will be discussed below in order from easiest of use to the more complicated and complex systems. The specific order in which the survey answers will be examined are mind mapping, dot voting, Way of Council, and S.O.A.R.

Another commonly listed process was mind mapping, or brainstorming. This is the simplest of tools to use and can be used to collect input from a large group of people. These mind maps...

> "... were popularized by author and consultant, Tony Buzan. They use a two-dimensional structure, instead of the list format conventionally used to take notes. Mind Maps are more compact than conventional notes, often taking up one side of paper. This helps you to make associations easily. If you find out more information after you have drawn a Mind Map, then you can easily

integrate it with little disruption." ("Mind maps® a," 2012)

This was by far the most commonly listed tool used by initiatives. There are many other resources available for this specific process on the internet. The next tool listed as a means used for making decisions and finding common areas of interest is with the dot voting system.

Dot voting was mentioned by one organization as to how they judge input from members and works in a similar fashion to Fist to Five, which is discussed below. Participants discuss ideas and proposals for the organization and list them, participants and are then given five stickers and are asked to place them in the categories they feel most important, or in areas they themselves would be interested in working on. A more detailed description can be found at http://indabanetwork.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/dotvoting.pdf ("Dot Voting," 2011).

Keeping track of speaking order in large meetings can sometimes be difficult, to help with this issue, facilitators have developed "Stacking". This is a method for keeping track of people who want to speak on a specific issue or topic at a meeting. This is usually done in order of raising hands, however there are other more democratic methods for choosing speaking order – See the Occupy Wall Street version at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCwhlZtHhWs. This process usually involves a facilitator and one or two "stackers" that keep track of those whom want to speak and their order.

Another means of controlling who speaks and when, is the Way of Council method. The Way of Council is a traditional Native American tool used for open and in depth conversations usually focused on a single topic or theme. Participants usually pass around a "talking piece" some object that identifies the holder as the person whom has the right to speak. This is method is most effective in groups of five to fifteen people. ("Council," 2012)

The last and most in depth process identified by an initiative participating the survey is that of S.O.A.R. or Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results which involves a nine step process for facilitating a shared vision of the organization by all stakeholders. These nine steps include:

Step 1- Identify stakeholders who will participate, and determine the format and frequency of meetings (One large summit? A series of shorter meetings?). Participants should represent all levels of the organization and all functional areas.

Step 2- Create an interview questionnaire or guide for gathering information about strengths, perspectives, and aspirations of employees and key stakeholders.

Step 3- Engage employees and other stakeholders—including clients, vendors, and partners, if appropriate—to discover the conditions that created the organization's greatest successes. Ask powerful, positive questions to generate images of possibility and potential.

Step 4- Threats, weaknesses, or problems should not be ignored, but rather should be reframed. Discussion should focus on "what we want" rather than "what we don't want."

Step 5- Summarize the organization's positive core, which is its total of unique strengths, resources, capabilities, and assets.

Step 6- Identify aspirations and desired results that create a compelling vision of the future using the best of the past and that also inspire and challenge the status quo.

Step 7- Decide which opportunities have the most potential.

Step 8- Write goal statements for each of these strategic opportunities and identify measures that will help track the organization's success.

Step 9- Plan actions and implement the plan for each identified goal.

S.O.A.R.: Building strengths based strategy by Jacqueline Stavros, is a process I discovered it during the last semester of my on-campus phase while writing a report on *The Transition Handbook,* and implemented with Transition Town Putney with great success. This tool, as opposed to looking at an organization or entity's negative traits as others do, uses appreciative inquiry to target the organization's strengths, and how to best maximize those strengths and positive areas while focusing more resources towards their "opportunities" or "weaknesses" in the S.W.O.T. tool. This appreciative inquiry approach dove-tails with the Transition Movement's value of positive visioning in an exemplary fashion and, I believe, should be utilized more by the Movement.

The tools and processes identified as being used within the Transition movement all focus on decision making and open communication. Detailed below are additional systems, tools and resources I have identified are complimentary to the movement and could be used by initiatives as a means of achieving their goals. These recommended tools and processes are again ordered from basic to complex and include: Fist 2 Five, World Cafe, Facilitation tools and tips, Facilitation packet from Seeds of Change, and Consensus Decision-Making. These recommendations are a compilation of resources that can be found and used free of charge from the internet.

The first of these recommended tools is the Fist of Five, this tools can be used for judging the level of agreement before formally making a decision. The process includes the following...

> *"To use this technique the Team Leader restates a decision the group may make and asks everyone to show their level of support. Each person responds by showing a fist or a number of fingers that corresponds to their opinion" (Fletcher, 2002).*
>
> Fist
>
> A no vote - a way to block consensus. I need to talk more on the proposal and require changes for it to pass.
>
> 1 Finger
>
> I still need to discuss certain issues and suggest changes that should be made.
>
> 2 Fingers
>
> I am more comfortable with the proposal but would like to discuss some minor issues.
>
> 3 Fingers
>
> I'm not in total agreement but feel comfortable to let this decision or a proposal pass without further discussion.
>
> 4 Fingers
>
> I think it's a good idea/decision and will work for it.
>
> 5 Fingers
>
> It's a great idea and I will be one of the leaders in implementing it.

> “If anyone holds up fewer than three fingers, they should be given the opportunity to state their objections and the team should address their concerns. Teams continue the Fist-to-Five process until they achieve consensus (a minimum of three fingers or higher) or determine they must move on to the next issue.)” (Fletcher, 2002)

For larger groups exploring topics usually with a common theme is World Cafe. This process is a meeting tool used to garner input from a large number of people in the form of small group discussions.

> In a World Café, four people sit at a café-style table or in a small conversation cluster to explore a question or issue that matters to their community or organization. Other participants seated at nearby tables or in conversation clusters explore similar questions at the same time. As they talk, participants are encouraged to write down key ideas on large cards or to sketch them out on paper tablecloths that are there for that purpose. After an initial round of conversation in these small groups, lasting perhaps 20 to 30 minutes, participants are invited to change tables. When participants travel, they carry key ideas and insights from their previous conversation into the newly formed group. In addition, one “table host” stays at each table to share with new arrivals the key images, insights, and questions that emerged from the prior dialogue at that table. This process is repeated for two or three rounds and is followed by all participants participating in a whole-group conversation and contributing to a gathering or “harvesting” of the actionable ideas and recommendations that have emerged ("A world café," 2007).

Facilitation tools and tips is a web page provided by http://learningforsustainability.net and offers a large index of tips, advice and tools for facilitators. Aside from offering a monthly news letter, they also offer articles and tools from a variety of other sources making it somewhat of a clearing house for facilitators and their tips and tools.

Seeds of Change, a non-profit in the U.K. have compiled a list of tools and methods that have been useful for them in the facilitation of meetings and groups on a variety of issues and topics in the past. These tools and methods dovetail nicely with the final recommended document.

The final resource that I feel would be very beneficial for individual initiatives and the movement as a whole is *Consensus Decision-Making: A Guide for Cooperative Organizations,* by Jason Diceman. This forty page document goes into great detail as to the roles and procedures that have helped other organizations in the consensus based decision making process. From note taking at meetings to following up on consensus decided issues, this paper is a wealth of information too much to detail here. (Diceman, 2004)

All of these tools, both mentioned by the survey responses and those recommended are means of communicating with one another in an open, honest, and heartfelt fashion, all in line with the values of the movement as mentioned above. By incorporating more of these tools and methods into their tool boxes I feel Transition town Initiatives can communicate and reach more members of their communities, while staying true to the movement's past.

Works Cited

Allen, W. (2012). *Facilitation tools and techniques*. Retrieved from http://learningforsustainability.net/tools/facilitation.php

Allison, M., & Kaye, J. (2005). *Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations*. (2nd ed.). Hoboken N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.

Bolman, L., & Deal, T. (2008). *Reframing organizations: artistry, choice, and leadership*. (4th ed.). San Fransico: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Bryson, J. (2004). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations*. (3rd ed.). San Fransico: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Council. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.ojaifoundation.org/Council

Diceman, J. (2004). *Consensus decision-making: A guide for co-operative organizations*. Informally published manuscript, Retrieved from http://files.uniteddiversity.com/Decision_Making_and_Democracy/Consensus/Consensus_Decision-Making.pdf

Dot voting. (2011). Retrieved from http://indabanetwork.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/dotvoting.pdf

Facilitation tools for meetings and workshops. (2010). Retrieved from http://seedsforchange.org.uk/free/tools.pdf

Fletcher, A. (2002). *FireStarter Youth Power Curriculum: Participant Guidebook*. Olympia, WA: Freechild Project Retrieved from http://freechild.org/Firestarter/Fist2Five.htm
Mind maps® a powerful approach to note-taking. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newISS_01.htm

Forecasting and Social Change, *65*, 3-22. Retrieved from http://en.laprospective.fr/dyn/anglais/articles/art_of_scenarios.pdf

Godet, M. (2000). The art of scenarios and strategic planning: Tools and pitfalls. *Technological*

Hopkins, R. (2011). *The transition companion*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company.

Hopkins, R. (2008). *The transition handbook*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green

Publishing Company.

Jick, T. (1979). Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triangulation in action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *24*, 602-611.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research*. (2nd ed.). Madden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Schratz, M., & Walker, R. (1995). *Research as social change; new opportunities for qualitative research*. (1st ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Selener, D. (1997). *Participatory action research and social change*. (1st ed.). Cornell Participatory Action Research Network.

Stavros, J., & Hinrichs, G. (2009). *The thin book of soar; building stengths-based strategies*. (1st ed.). Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing.

Taking stack. (2012, June 07). Retrieved from http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Taking_Stack_(Meeting_Facilitation_Technique)

A world café hosting guide. (2007). Retrieved from http://www.empowermentinstitute.net/lcd/lcd_files/World_Cafe_Hosting_Guide.pdf

Appendixes will be inserted here…can't get the scanned pdf's to convert to .doc form

Appendix A – Bryson's ABC's of strategic planning

Appendix B Research Survey

Research Survey

Group Code _______________ Survey Number ______________ Date _______________

Section 1. Relevant Background

This section of the survey addresses your perceptions of the Transition Town Movement and gathers information about your organizations group processes.

Instructions: Please circle the choice that best describes your experience with your transition town or fill in your own answer in the space provided.

1. How did you first learn of Transition Towns?

A	Word of Mouth
B	The Internet
C	*The Transition Handbook*
D	Another Grassroots Organization (If so, which organization?
E	Other _____________________

2. How long have you been a member of the core team?

	Number of Years:_____________ Months: _______________

3. Were you part of the "mulling" group? If yes, for how long?

A	Yes, Length of time with the group (in months) ________________
B	No

4. Were you a member of the "initiating or unleashing" group?If yes, for how long?

A	Yes, Length of time with the group (in months) ________________
B	No

5. In what ways are decisions made within the core of your Transition initiative?

A	Everything is decided by consensus
B	Most things are consensus, unless there is not enough time, in which case someone steps up and makes a decision
C	Few things are consensus and decisions are driven by a small number of individuals
D	Other: __________________________

6. What tools or processes do you use to reach decisions? (open ended)

	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ __________________________________

7. How would you describe how well the working groups function?

A	High: The working groups are self functioning and need little input from the core
B	Moderate: The working groups meet and have ideas but still need core members for logistic and other support
C	Low: Working groups are formed but do not take on the roles the core desires

8. How often does the core engage with the working groups in planning events and projects?

A	2-3 Times a week
B	Once a week
C	Bi-weekly
D	Monthly
E	Quarterly
F	Other: ____________________

9. How concentrated within the core are the responsibilities for your Transition Town's projects?

A	Very Concentrated – 1 to 2 Core members are very active in all aspects of the organization
B	Moderately Concentrated – 4 to 6 Core members are engaged in working with the most of the projects
C	Low – Core members are needed to make organizational level decisions but the majority of projects are handled by the working groups

Section 2: Visioning / Strategic Planning Section

Instructions: This section contains questions about your Transition Town's visioning / strategic planning processes. Please answer the follow questions to the best of your ability and as completely as possible. Your answers will be analyzed for frequency of terms used.

10. Was there an outside facilitator for these sessions?

A	Yes: If so Who:
B	No

11. When were these visioning / strategic planning sessions held in the life of your Transition Town?

12. **Who was involved in your visioning process? What were their roles?**

A	Core members only	Roles :
B	Core members and working groups	
C	Core members, working groups, and community members	
D	Other	

13. **What sort of visioning tools did you use as an individual or group?**

14. **Where did you hold this / these session(s)?**

15. **How did you measure / evaluate this / these session(s)?**

16. **What were the outcomes of your visioning / strategic planning sessions?**

	____ ____

17. How did you follow up on these outcomes?

	____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

18. How would you rate on a scale of 1 to 5, how successful do you feel your sessions were for your organization? 1 being least productive, 5 being the greatest of successes

1	2	3	4	5

Thank you and your organization very much for participating in taking this survey. The final draft will become available by July, 2012 and made accessible to you then. If you have any questions please contact me at richard.burbridge@mail.sit.edu.

Warm Regards,

Richard Burbridge, researcher

Appendix C Bryson's Diagram

Appendix D – Open Space Technology description

Appendix E – TTP End of year report

Tables

Table 1.

Data Collection Method	Strength	Weakness	Weakness countered by
Literature Review	Comprehensiveness	Difficult to gauge real world results	Personal Observations
Personal Observations and Action based Research	Real world application	Subjective to the researcher	Survey data
Survey	Wide range of inputs	Small sample size	Literature review

Table 2

Abbreviated	Moderate	Extensive
• Consensus among board and staff on mission, future strategies, list of long term and short term priorities • Guidance to staff on developing detailed annual operating plans	• Consensus among board and staff on mission, future strategies, list of long term and short term priorities • Articulation of program and management/operating goals and objectives • Greater understanding of the organization's environmental • Guidance to staff on developing detailed annual operating plans	• Consensus among board and staff on mission, future strategies, list of long term and short term priorities • Articulation of program and management/operating goals and objectives • Greater understanding of the organization's environmental • Guidance to staff on developing detailed annual operating plans

Table 3

Area of Focus	Youth Involvement	Agriculture	Broadening TTP's socio-economic reach	Long-term organizational planning and methods of communication*
Existing organizations – Possible partners	PTO, cooking classes, wilderness Programs school gardens,	Putney Farmers' Market, school Gardens, community gardens	Putney Family Services, Windham County Housing Trust, other NGOs in the area	TTP initiating group, working groups
New ideas / projects	Affordable housing, jobs, affordable child care, under 35 party, playground / public park	Community orchards, seed library, agro-forests, apple apprenticeships	Renters association, food stamps / whole sale CSA for low income community	Print based communication, communication committee, more diffused and in-depth

			members	organizational communication, a more lateral structure, workshops on capacity building for working groups

Table 4

S.W.O.T.	S.O.A.R.	Analysis	Desired outcomes
Strengths: Non-prescriptive, willingness to try new things, welcoming community, interns, good grant writing skills, collaborations, networking	**Strengths:** Non-prescriptive, willingness to try new things, welcoming community, interns, good grant writing skills, collaborations, networking, tight knit community, positive viewpoints	Very similar in both frameworks	I.D. What the organization is good at, and make sure we are not reinventing the wheel
Weaknesses: Tensions associated with control issues, inter/intra group conflicts not being addressed, missing opportunities for messaging, tapping the same people over and over, # of projects VS. available time, financial instability	**Opportunities:** Have working groups take on more responsibility for their topic specific events, mentoring, capacity building, fundraising, bring in mediators for conflict resolution	S.O.A.R. being the more action oriented and result focused starts to become apparent here. The positive attitude this framework was a major contributor to the integration of this tool	Here we identified areas for improvement and opportunities for those improvements
Opportunities: Support voices from within the community, creating new partnerships, creating ownership, educational piece, obtaining additional grant $ for current projects, build on past successes,	**Aspirations:** Increase the transparency and permeability of the initiating group / core, decentralize TTP's flow of communications, increase the capacity of the working groups, opening up the process of running	In focusing on areas of improvements, and how the organization can move ahead, a list of hopeful end results / goals were taken from these and incorporated below in what the organization hoped would materialize as	In this phase, we started to gather some general ideas of goals and outcomes form the analysis

round table meetings	TTP, expand funding opportunities, make the organizational chart explicit	the results below depict.	
<u>Threats:</u> Limited financial support, burn out, tapping the same people, peoples conception/perceived alienation, time investment, missed communication, lack of transparency on the initiating groups part	**<u>Results:</u>** Hold capacity building workshops with working group members, more publicly open meetings, begin planning and preparing TTP's unleashing for the Celebrate Putney event, obtain additional organizational funding prior to the handover of control	The action oriented process of S.O.A.R. presents the results as a future oriented reality that the organization wanted to create.	These results acted as bench marks on the organization's path to handing over leadership to the working groups. Not all of these things were accomplished before the turn over of control, however the list here represented a path to improvement.

Table 5 – average number of months an individual spent with an initiating group

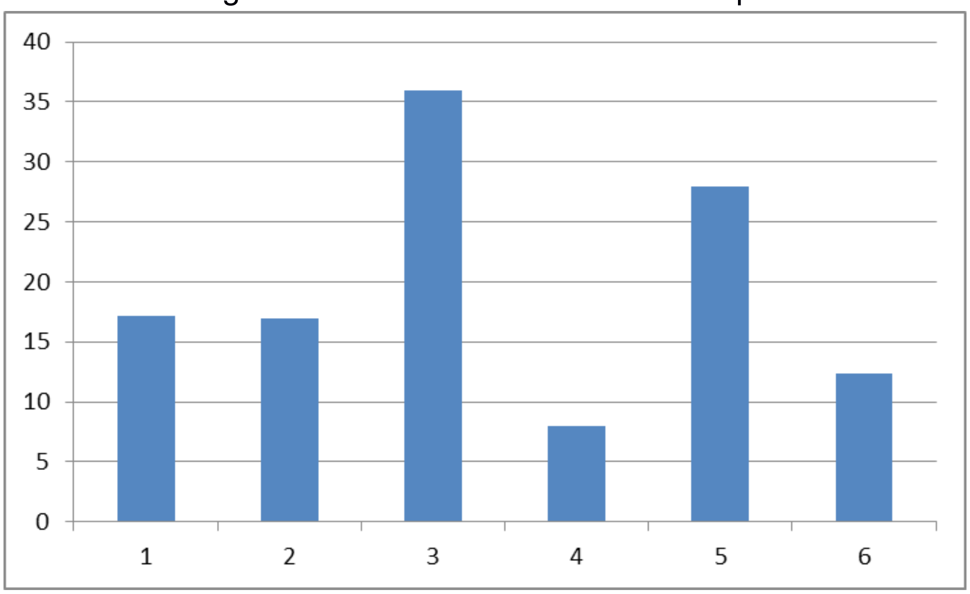
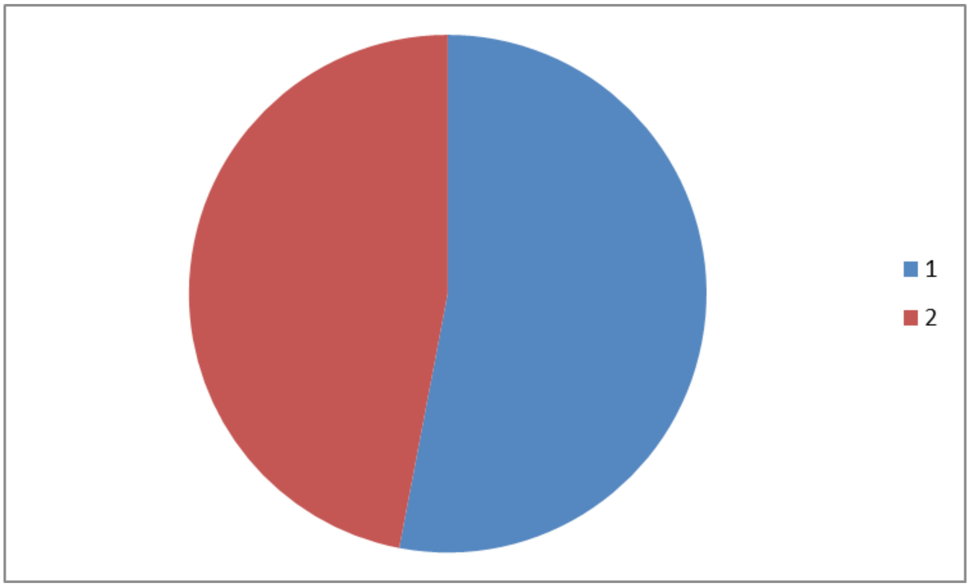


Table 6 – Individuals who carried over from mulling group to initiating group out of the entire sample



53% carried over from their mulling group
46% were new to the initiating group

Individual participation in mulling groups time in months by initiative interviewed

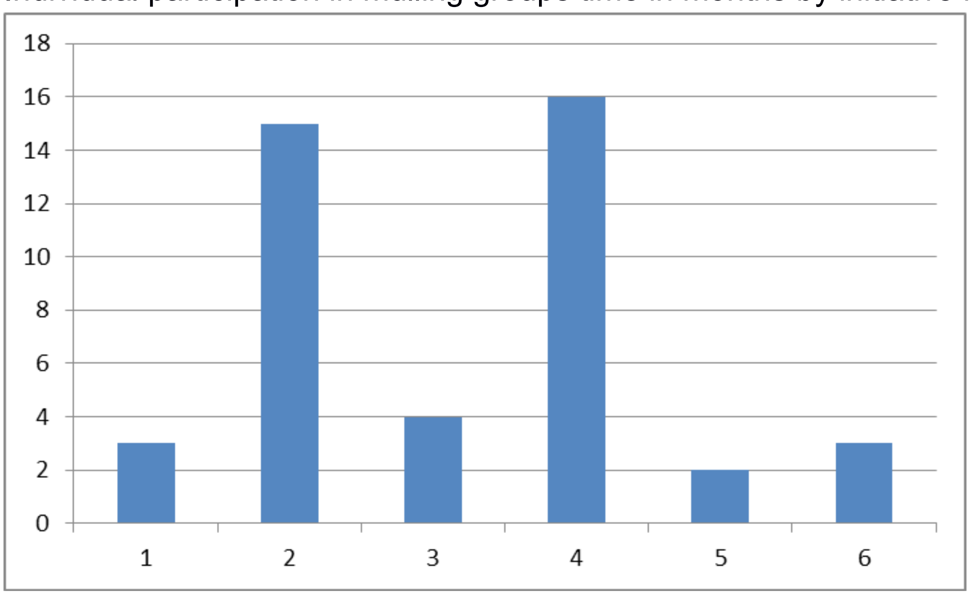


Table 7 – Average length of time an individual spent with a mulling group in months

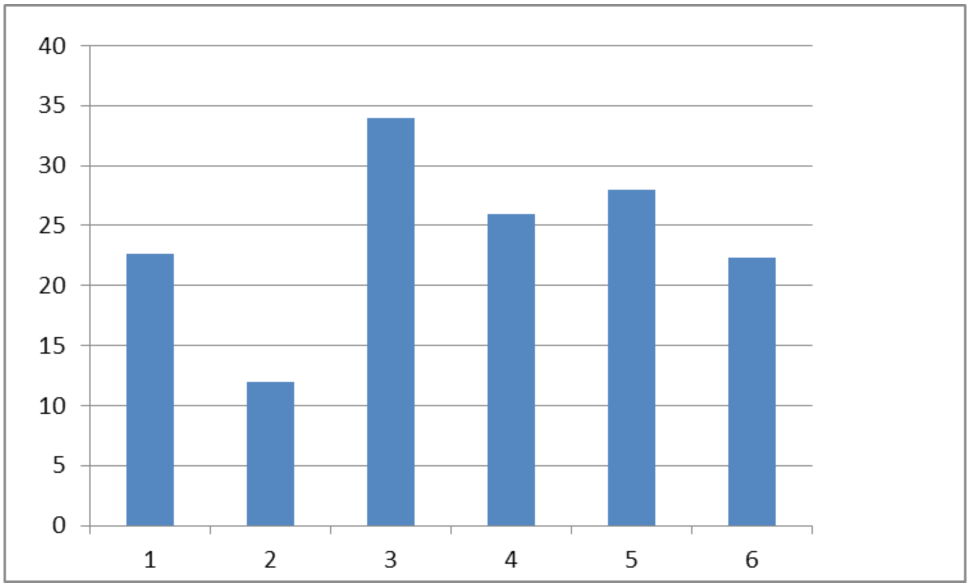


Table 8

Initiative's Group Code	Tools	Processes
1	meetings, email, clear agendas, explicit group nouns, non-violent communication	Go around discussions, Group discussion, assess agreement, next steps, moments of silence, participatory facilitation, checking for consensus
2	Mind mapping, white board,	Round table discussions, walks through nature, drawing / art
3	Open space technology	Open discussions within the steering committee
4	Brain storming, agendas, envisioning the future	Mission statement talks, heart and soul work
5	world cafe, way of council, talking piece, envisioning the future, meetings	Open conversations, listening to feed back from the community
6	Dot voting and small focus groups	Discuss and decide

Table 9

Group Code	Answers Provided
1	By how much energy an idea generated, verbal reflections at our next meeting, evaluation at end of meeting, group evaluation, taking minutes, follow-up in future regular meetings

2	Success of the organization, physical progress of projects, general consensus, reflection periods
3	Saw what gained momentum and lasted
4	Reported out, discussions, surveys among the group
5	Notes, minutes, reports, intentions
6	Dot voting, conversations, Follow through on agreed upon projects, passion, interest of members

Table 10

Category	Number of times listed
Some kind of formal evaluation	4
Energy generated by an idea or project	4
Discussions	4
Notes being taken	2

Table 11

	Group Code	Number of Participants	Core/Initiating group members only	Core and working groups	Core members, working groups, community members	Other	No Answer Given
	1	6	4				2
	2	5	1	2	1	1	
	3	3	1		2		
	4	1	1				
	5	2	1		1		
	6	6		6			
% of Answers			29.62%	29.62%	17.39%	4.34%	8.70%

Table 12

Group Code	Answers Provided
1	Created a wish list, acknowledged existing organizations, focused projects to be complementary / gap filling, greater focus on the upcoming year, what we wanted to achieve, generated enthusiasm, neighborhood asset mapping project
2	Successful Non-profit, many forest gardens, Implemented plans created during the sessions, 25 acres of land at Mowry Gardens, and 3 local schools
3	Various working groups and community initiatives, consensus on a direction for activities,
4	More complete idea on where we want the organization to go, improved communication with community members and outside groups
5	Increased number of projects, reflection focused on the organization, working groups, forums, grants,

	the Unleashing, Office etc...
6	Working groups, specific events, moving towards a division of task creation through initiating focus groups

Table 13

Group Code	Answers Provided
1	Increased digital, and word of mouth communication, increased out reach for core members, Increased participation by core members, taking on increases in responsibilities, more emphases on note taking, single action line for agenda items, more regularly scheduled meetings
2	Field trips, festivals, fundraising, outreach, gained encouragement from past successes, looking to increase community participation, lots of hard work, working to establish more community supported projects
3	Steering Committee formed and stared meeting regularly and planning events
4	Keeping in mind the visioning sessions at our meetings
5	transformed our monitoring and evaluation process, acting on feedback received in the community, discussions leading to action
6	Working groups reporting to the steering committee, asset mapping form at events, collected attendees information, meeting updates, informal get together

Table 14

Initiative's Group Code	Tools
1	Brain storming, identified existing local efforts, book group discussions, topical discussions, guided meditation, inspirational videos, back casting, consensus building
2	Storytelling, mind mapping, sharing ideas as the evolve, drawing, writing, open discussions, books, white board, based visioning off of ideals and values
3	Small group discussions
4	Brain storming, stacking, envisioning the future, mission statement talks, agendas, heart and soul work
5	SWOT, SOAR, open discussions, defining goals, Open Space Technology, way of council consulted outside experts
6	Brainstorming

Table 15

Group Code	# of Participants	Scale					
		1	2	3	4	5	No Answer
1	6			3	2		1
2	5				2	3	
3	3		1	1	1		
4	1					1	
5	5		1		1		
6	6			2	4		
Totals			2	6	10	4	1
% of responses given			12%	24%	44%	20%	4%