

how to guide



EVENTS TOOLKIT FOR TRANSITION INITIATIVES



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About this toolkit

This toolkit aims to help you stage local or regional events themed around transforming your local economy, to engage your local community, businesses and other organisations in REconomy work.

The toolkit shares learning (about what works, and what doesn't), outlines essential tasks, and provides a 'pick and mix' menu of event modules that can be used to form your own unique event. At the end of each section there are links to useful resources, examples and templates.

We want to help you run enjoyable events that achieve the outcomes you want. Good luck!

For more information on the REconomy Project, visit www.reconomy.org If you would like to share your experience of running an event with others involved in the REconomy Project, please get in touch.



Stickers for attendees at the Transition University of St Andrews REconomy event

1. Planning your event

In this section we provide an agenda for the conversations to have with your fellow event-organisers before you get started.

Dreaming

When we're putting together an event, we can tend to get stuck into practicalities straight away. Another approach is to start with some dreaming. Make time to sit down together and create a vision for your event. Imagine what the best possible event would look and feel like, and what it would achieve. You could use questions like:

- What's the impact you want to create on people, organisations, your community?
- What kind of experience do you want people to have? How should they feel when they leave?
- What are underlying principles and values that you want to embed in your event to communicate in ways that are deeper and more powerful than words?
- What approaches to the event could help embody these, for example discussions, art work, practical examples?
- What stories should be told?
- How will you make space for the unexpected, the serendipitous?

What makes a Transition event?

Transition events feel different and special. Event organisers achieve this 'Transition magic' by embedding Transition principles in the way they design, plan, deliver and follow up on events. You can use the table below to help you think through approaches you might take.

<i>Principle</i>	<i>What does that look like?</i>
Transition is grass roots	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess how your event and promotional materials appeal to your target audience, and help them see 'would I fit in' or 'would they accept me'• Showcase a range of success stories and voices, and balance gender in all roles, especially speakers and leaders. Ensure records/films of events reflect this diversity and balance too.• If there's one main speaker then have a panel to answer questions, include local people with a range of expertise• Encourage the main speaker to show that he / she is learning from others, and credit people who have contributed to their presentation
Transition requires us to develop our skills for working together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create the event collaboratively, and try using the four project management phases of dreaming, planning, doing and reflecting / celebrating• Don't let the doing become more important than other phases• Showcase interesting ways of creating effective collaboration during events
Transition works at a local scale and unites us globally	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Honour local history and culture, old ways that worked, people who lived locally and have inspiring stories• Include reference to the global issues which affect and unite us, and to the global response that we are a part of e.g. Transition now in 50 other countries, with unique contexts
Transition is positive and celebratory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include fun, gratitude, appreciation, honouring, to connect people with their hearts – e.g. in the first 'turn to your neighbour to say hello' piece during the opening, ask them to name something they love and care about where they live

<i>Principle</i>	<i>What does that look like?</i>
Transition includes painful news and an opportunity for this to be heard, digested and used positively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is difficult information, make space for feelings and allow for all responses – some people may feel motivated, some may feel fear or grief, and both are appropriate • Include stories of learning from things that weren't successful immediately • Design in opportunities for people to connect from the start – e.g. paired sharing, digestion time following a presentation
Transition is about change and creating 'holding' or comfortable, safe space to explore feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build holding through creating feelings of empowerment (what we've already done as a group, for example), connection, seeing extent of resources available to us (time, people, cake, skills etc. as well as money) and so on • Where you are going to stretch comfort zones, use the frame of Transition being about going outside our comfort zone and into the learning zone - trying something new can be exciting as well as fearful or uncomfortable - but hopefully avoiding the panic zone!
Transition includes the whole of us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance thinking with other kinds of engagement – feelings, movement, art, music • Where appropriate use 'hats' to point to limiting roles (e.g. workplaces tend to require us to think, but not to feel or use other ways of knowing, or to park our own beliefs etc.)
Transition is about walking our talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share personal stories of learning, changing, deepening our connections and experiences, of our caring, wholeness and pain, as well as empowered action • Acknowledge and name tensions, paradoxes and contradictions about living in these times • Reinforce that there is not one right way – there are many paths - if they're heading in the right direction that's OK
Transition is viral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk especially about projects and activities that have happened in many places, or can be replicated easily – not so specific to local skills, culture or circumstances
Transition is an experiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use 'the cheerful disclaimer' (bottom of linked page) • This is also represented by having a range of sources of different knowledge rather than 1-2 experts who know it all • Consider when it's better to ask questions rather than giving or expecting a solution

What is the aim of your event?

This is key. Once you agree what you want to achieve by holding an event, then your event planning will become much easier.

Ask yourselves questions:

- What impact do you want your event to have?
- What do you want to change as a result of holding the event?
- What will be different if the event is successful?

The clearer you can be about this, the more focused your event will be, and the more likely you are to attract relevant people and achieve what you set out to do.

REconomy events to date have focused on one or more of the following aims:

1. Inspire and motivate people to get involved in REconomy projects locally
2. Raise awareness of REconomy ideas and potential activity within the local council
3. Bring together local people and organisations already engaged in REconomy-type work
4. Stimulate interest in, and support and investment for, local Transition Enterprises (Local Entrepreneur Forum)

Let's look at an example of each of these in more detail.

1. Inspire and motivate people to get involved in REconomy projects

These events range in scale from Transition Initiatives wanting to start work on REconomy projects to conferences introducing REconomy at a national level. The [REconomy General Event](#) in Paris aimed to get people, ideas, and examples of real enterprises together.

'the event made us realise how much is already happening and how much can be shared in order to multiply these efforts', Corrine, organiser, REconomy General Event, Paris

'there is a mosaic of options and approaches that could well mesh to produce a genuine alternative economy', attendee, [Alternative Economics Seminar](#), Transition Town Buxton

2. Raise awareness of REconomy ideas and potential activity within the local council

Sustaining Dunbar partnered with East Lothian Council to run the [East Lothian Local Economy Workshop](#) exploring:

- What will a local, low-carbon economy look like?
- What opportunities, particularly for local jobs and local wealth creation in East Lothian, will arise from the move to a local, low-carbon economy?
- What measures are needed to ensure that we take full advantage of these opportunities?

'the ideas that participants recorded are now forming the basis for on-going dialogue with East Lothian Council', Philip Revell, organiser, East Lothian Local Economy Workshop

3. Bring together local people and organisations already engaged in REconomy-type work

The [Transition Glastonbury Stakeholder Event](#) set out to:

- 'join up the dots' - share ideas about who is doing what
- identify areas for potential collaboration
- use this as a basis for deciding next steps

'Listening to all the ideas from the various stakeholders, I heard that more than half of the things that I had thought, other people were already doing or intending to do', Nick Osborne, organiser, Transition Glastonbury Stakeholder Event (below).



4. Stimulate interest in, and support and investment for, local Transition Enterprises

The [Transition Town Totnes Local Entrepreneur Forum](#) aims to bring entrepreneurs, investors, and other change makers together to learn from each other, form new relationships, and hopefully, to begin working together on new enterprises.

'Over 130 entrepreneurs and their supporters converged on the Civic Hall for a full day of networking, learning and investing, with five plucky entrepreneurs walking away with pledges of funding, mentoring, labour, legal

and marketing services, massage training, event organising, and even home-cooked meals', Jay Tompt, organiser, Transition Town Totnes Local Entrepreneur Forum

Who do you want to invite?

This will depend on what you want to get out of the event. People who've attended REconomy events have included:

- Local people and organisations already active in REconomy type activities
- Community activists
- Councillors and council officials
- Business people
- Educators
- Chamber of Commerce and similar business associations
- Local college

It is worth thinking about the dynamics of bringing together people from different backgrounds for an event. Think about how the needs of different groups can be met by tailoring the level and style of facilitation, or running separate events for different audiences.

How big do you want your event to be?

This will depend on the event aims, and the geographical area you are targeting. REconomy events have ranged from invite-only only discussions for 10 people (Transition Glastonbury Stakeholder Event) to day-long national conferences attracting over 130 people ([Good Economy Conference, Croatia](#)). A lot of events have worked well with 40 to 50 people.

As a rule of thumb, the larger the number of attendees, the more complex and time-consuming the event will be to organise. In our experience, 30 days of work is not unrealistic to organise a one day national event and about 12 days of work for a half day regional event. Large scale events can be easier and more successful if you have experience of running events and have sufficient time and resources to invest in them.

Do you want to run the event with another organisation?

Some REconomy events have been run in partnership with the local council (Sustaining Dunbar's East Lothian Local Economy Workshop), and like-minded NGOs (REconomy General Event, Paris). Other partners might include a potential funder of REconomy projects, or a local organisation doing REconomy-type work. A good partner can really share the load. However, working with another organisation can be challenging. Make sure you:

- discuss and agree a shared aim for the event;
- are honest with each other about what you want to get out of it; and
- agree who is doing and contributing what at the outset, to help avoid problems later.

How will you cover the cost of the event?

Do you want to charge people to come? Does it feel appropriate for the audience? Will it put some people off? Do you need to charge people to come? Are there costs to organising the event that can't be met in other ways?

If you do charge to cover costs, then you can have different fees for different groups of people. At the Transition University of St Andrews REconomy event, a waged or funded ticket was £10, an unwaged ticket £5, and student volunteers attended for free.

Use the budget checklist below to help you to think through the costs involved in organising an event.

- Venue hire
- Refreshments e.g. tea / coffee / biscuits, lunch
- Speakers fees
- Speakers expenses e.g. travel, accommodation
- Publicity e.g. printing and distributing flyers, paid-for advertising
- Paying someone to help organise the event, if this is not all done by volunteers
- Stationery e.g. paper and printing costs, stickers for name badges, flipcharts and pens, Post-It notes etc.
- Taking good quality photos or videos at the event

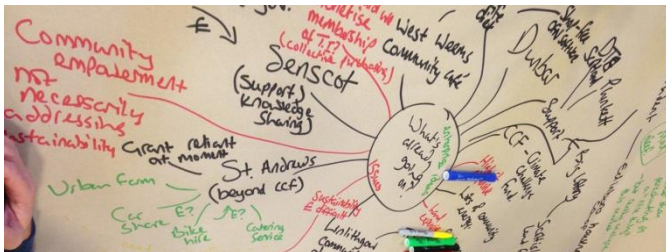
You might consider taking a [gift economy](#) approach to your event, whereby the goods, services and resources required to run the event are gifted by organisers, speakers, contributors and attendees. A great example of a gift economy event is the [three day gathering of Ajudada](#), in Portalegre, Portugal in 2013, which brought together 450 people.

Do you want to start a conversation with people before they attend?

Some research, or conversations with people planning to attend, can help you tailor the event to get the most out of it.

For instance, if your event is focused on looking at developing local REconomy-type activity, then mapping current activity to see what is already happening will help identify who to invite, and provide context. It can also help you consider what role you might play. Are there gaps you could fill e.g. there is existing work around energy, but no-one looking at food? Is existing activity integrated - or is there a co-ordination role for you?

'I have been asking around to find out who is already doing what in this territory, and found that there are a number of local people and organisations who are already active. But they weren't all in contact with each other or aware of what each other was doing', Nick Osborne, organiser, Transition Glastonbury Stakeholder Event



Map of existing REconomy activity, Transition University of St Andrews REconomy event

If you know who will be attending, you can have a conversation with them before the event (as Transition Network did for their national conference). You could ask questions such as:

- which topics would you like to see on the agenda?
- are there sessions that you can offer to run or that you'd like to participate in?
- what kinds of problems might you bring, or what solutions might you be offering?
- what do you think of the ideas that others are offering for the day?
- who would you most like to hear from?
- what would make the day most useful for you?

How can you create a sense of momentum?

You get more out of an event if it's not just a stand alone 'one-off' activity. Think about what the event can connect to, and what follow-on activities you want attendees to engage with. Is the event part of an overall campaign, or change, you are aiming to make happen?

REconomy events have used a 'call to action' or 'hook' to attract attendees and create a sense of momentum. This could be, for instance:

- opportunities to get involved in existing activities (Transition Town Totnes Local Entrepreneur Forum)
- start new activities
- a political opportunity (Scottish independence referendum, Transition University of St Andrews REconomy event)
- a funding opportunity

Resources

- [Write-ups on REconomy events to date](#)

Top tips for delivering a successful event

- Do make time to explore as a group what you want to achieve by holding an event
- Don't 'bite of more than you can chew'. Match the scale of your event with the experience and resources available to your group

2. Event content

In this section, we have pulled together all the different ‘modules’ that have made up REconomy events to date. For each module we’ve considered where it works well, and some things to avoid. We’ve provided some possible topics for workshops and speakers. We’ve then suggested a number of event templates that you could use to structure your event. The list of options is, of course, not exhaustive. Your choice of approach will be dictated by the type of audience and your specific event aims.

Event modules ‘pick and mix’

REconomy events are diverse, as different events have different aims. We looked at four examples of aims from recent REconomy events in 1. Planning your event, namely:

1. Inspire and motivate people to get involved in REconomy projects locally
2. Raise awareness of REconomy ideas and potential activity within the local council
3. Bring together local people and organisations already engaged in REconomy-type work
4. Stimulate interest in, and support and investment for, local Transition Enterprises




Aim 4. above is specific to a Local Entrepreneur Forum, which already has a well defined set of modules. If you want to run a Local Entrepreneur Forum have a look at the [agenda](#) typically used and a [video](#) about the Local Entrepreneur Forum 2014 in Totnes.





Events with aims 1. to 3. above are typically structured as follows:





A. Introduction	B. Inspiration	C. Participation	D. Wrap up and next steps	E. Post-event social
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A. Introduction

A good welcome (which will take no more than 5 to 10 minutes) sets the scene for the event. Ask someone local who is a good speaker to stand up and welcome everyone, run through ‘housekeeping’ (e.g. where you can find the toilets and fire exits, when and where refreshments are available etc.), and outline the event. Complete the welcome by inviting everyone to turn to their neighbour and say why they are here (unless you are doing module A4 (below) or similar later in the event).

A1: ‘What’s REconomy?’ presentation		
What is it?	A presentation with slides. See the Resources section below for a template set of slides with speaker’s notes.	
How long?	Usually 20 to 30 minutes including questions. Allow 5 minutes after the presentation for people to talk to one or two neighbours before inviting questions, to help the shift from listening to discussion.	
Works well...	...for getting everyone up to speed on Transition and REconomy. REconomy events often attract people new to Transition, so providing some background context is important.	





A2: 'What's REconomy?' presentation + brief introductions from attendees		
What is it?	Presentation as in A1 followed by a short summary from each attendee describing their interests / relevant work they are involved in / what they want to get out of the event etc.	
How long?	About 1 hour (30 minute 'What's REconomy' presentation plus say 10 attendees taking 2 to 3 minutes each)	
Works well...	...for smaller, 'round table' type events	
Beware!	Avoid for large events as it takes too long and people lose focus.	

A3: 'What's REconomy?' presentation + 'speed dating'		
What is it?	Presentation as in A1 followed by 'speed dating'. Attendees pair up and have 3 minutes per 'date'. For best results, provide a topic for the conversation e.g. Why have you come to this event? What do you think are the greatest opportunities for REconomy locally? At the end of the 'date', sound a bell or whistle, and people move on to the next date. You can line the pairs of people up, and ask one line to move up a place to their next 'date', or just ask people to go and find someone they haven't yet talked to. The first approach is quicker, but less 'organic'.	
How long?	About 1 hour (30 minute 'What's REconomy' presentation plus say 10 dates at 3 minutes per date)	
Works well...	...where lots of people don't know each other ...for events focused on helping people to make new connections	
Beware!	Remind attendees to bring business cards or provide a list of contact details for attendees.	





A4: 'What's REconomy?' presentation + Skype 'Q&A' session		
What is it?	Presentation as in A1 followed by a question and answer session via Skype with a member of the REconomy Project team	
How long?	About 45 minutes (30 minute 'What's REconomy' presentation plus 15 minute 'Q&A')	
Works well...	...to add further depth to the presentation if people are newer to REconomy as a concept	
Beware!	Technical issues! Test the internet connection speed is sufficient and give yourself plenty of time to set up the technology.	





B. Inspiration




REconomy events are all about inspiration, and there is nothing more powerful than hearing the stories of those who have already started down the REconomy road.

B: Inspiring panel of speakers		
What is it?	Brief presentations and panel discussion with local speakers or partners sharing the story of their Transition Enterprises	
How long?	40 minutes (2, 10 minute presentations, then 20 minutes for questions)	
Works well...	...for generating inspiration and celebrating existing local action	
Beware!	Lots of speakers doing short presentations often overrun. Its harder to do a short presentation than a long one! Brief speakers very carefully regarding timing and focus to make sure the audience gets what they need in the time you have.	

C. Participation

C1: Informal 'open space' type approach		
What is it?	At the end of the presentation stage, suggest topics for small group discussions, for example economic sectors (food, energy, waste etc.) or areas of interest (currency project, starting new enterprises, networking with local businesses etc.). Ask people to raise their hand if they want to talk about something, and groups naturally form.	
How long?	1 hour	
Works well...	...for shaping the event around the needs and interests of attendees.	
Beware!	Can feel a bit disorganised, and may not feel comfortable for people unfamiliar with it. <i>'Decided to do something more structured than open space, to ensure people could all feel comfortable and contribute - this worked well',</i> organiser, National Transition Hub for Latvia's Forum of Community Economics Event	





C2: Developing an action plan		
What is it?	Break into working groups, each of which comes up with a list of potential activities or project ideas. Then all get back together and vote for a small number of the ideas, then re-group to further define each project or activity. Hopefully someone in the group will volunteer to lead it moving forward.	
How long?	1 to 1.5 hours	
Works well...	...for getting ideas and commitment for action driven by those in the room.	
Beware!	Might not come up with new ideas. Good to help stimulate this to happen rather than re-hashing old ideas.	





C3: Pre-defined small group discussions		
What is it?	Pre-define a set of topics and all the groups do the same ones, or let them choose their interest area (and it doesn't matter if they get duplicated).	
How long?	Up to 1 hour	
Works well...	...where you know your audience less well and feel you need to provide structure for group discussions ...you want people to discuss and work on specific topics	

'At least one working group with a very diverse collection of participants (and their level of awareness, understanding) got stuck in discussions about the definition without reaching the project idea generation stage', organiser, National Transition Hub for Latvia's Forum of Community Economics Event







REconomy General Event, Paris

C4: World cafe		
What is it?	4 or 5 themed tables are set-up with a topic leader per table. The topic leaders could be your speakers, or other people with relevant knowledge. People can visit three tables of their choice to discuss, debate and learn about the table topic. A scribe stays at each table throughout to take notes and then report back. Could include an 'about REconomy' table for those who want to go into more depth on this.	
How long?	1 hour (20 minutes per table, visits to 3 tables). Allow extra time if you want to share brief feedback from each table with the whole group.	
Works well...	...where you know your audience less well and feel you need to provide structure for group discussions ...you want people to discuss and work on specific topics	
Beware!	No more than 8 people at each table for a productive discussion otherwise tables become too crowded Allow a minimum of 20 minutes per table Needs enough people to hold each table/conversation and skills to facilitate <i>'Three twenty-minute sessions allowed everyone to proceed to several tables, and the room buzzed happily from all the animated conversations taking place',</i> Corrine, organiser, REconomy General Event, Paris	





C5: Formal presentations		
What is it?	Formal presentations with or without slides	
How long?	Flexible, but ensure each presentation including questions is no longer than 30 minutes. If you have more than one or two speakers, limit their time to 10 minutes each, else the audience will disengage.	
Works well...	...when you want to share lots of information in some detail on a small number of topics ...your audience might feel less comfortable with a participatory style ...you have a high profile speaker that everyone will want to hear	
Beware!	Too many long presentations (or even short ones) and people can switch off and disengage. Mix this in with some more participatory activities. Only use good, tried and tested speakers in this slot. Poor speakers drain energy from the room.	

D. Wrap up and next steps

Make sure that you close the event well, and cleanly, otherwise people tend to drift away and there is no sense of conclusion. Remember to thank everyone who has helped make the event happen. Always end on time.

D: Wrap up and next steps		
What is it?	Event organiser summarises the main points from the session, reiterates any commitments those in the room have made, and sets out next steps. Thank those that need thanking.	
How long?	15 minutes	
Works well...	...for reiterating next steps / what you want people to do next ...reminding people to complete any event feedback activities you've organised	
Beware!	Energy levels may be low, people may be starting to get ready to leave. Keep it short, punchy and action-orientated.	

E. Post-event social

E: Post-event social		
What is it?	Continue the conversation at the event venue over refreshments, or at a local cafe or pub	
How long?	As long as you like!	
Works well...	...for shorter events where people still have more conversations to have ...where you want people to build new connections	
Beware!	A clique heading off together and new faces feeling excluded	

Topics for discussions, workshops and speakers

Ideas for discussion topics for small groups (C3) or world cafe (C4)

Choose discussion topics that are aligned with, and help achieve, the aims of the event.

- What's not included in the traditional view of the economy? What benefits could the economy bring besides jobs? What / whose values should it reflect?
- What will a local, low-carbon economy look like here? How might it be different from what we have today? What might be its defining characteristics? What purpose will it serve?
- What already exists locally – what do we have to build on?
- What opportunities, particularly for local jobs and local wealth creation, will arise from the move to this local, low-carbon economy? (Are there specific sectors worth focusing on? How do we know these opportunities exist?)
- What enablers are needed to ensure that we take full advantage of these opportunities? (E.g. investment, support, re-skilling, land use change/reform, financial transformation etc.)
- Are you interested to help shape this economic transformation? If so, what's your interest area and what are your contact details?

Ideas for topics for world cafe (C4) or speakers (B/C5)

REconomy enterprise themes:

- Food e.g. bakery, microbrewery
- Transport e.g. car clubs
- Energy e.g. community energy generation, energy efficiency
- Housing e.g. self-build and co-housing
- Fabrication and recycling
- Health
- Arts
- Finance e.g. LETs scheme, local currency, local investors

These sessions could be approached in two ways. An ‘inspiration’ session includes speakers sharing the story of their enterprises (as in module B). In a ‘how to’ session the emphasis is on speakers breaking down the steps they have taken for others keen to start similar enterprises (as in modules C4 or C5).

Template event structures

To formulate an event select one option from module A, followed by option B, one or more options from module C, then finish the formal proceedings with module D. Think about offering the opportunity to continue the conversation informally after the main event - module E. Step back and look at the flow of the event modules, and check there is a logical, seamless, engaging journey through the event that makes sense.

One hour REconomy workshop, possibly as part of another event

A. Introduction	B. Inspiration	C. Participation	D. Wrap up and next steps
A1 (20 mins version)	B		
A4			
A1 (20 mins version)		C3 (30 mins version)	D (10 mins)

This final suggestion here can be tight for time, so you need to keep it focused. It works well if you sell it as an invitation to find out more about REconomy.

Half day event (3.5 hours)

A. Introduction	B. Inspiration	C. Participation	D. Wrap up and next steps	E. Post-event social
Any option	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any option except C5 tea break any option C other than the one used earlier 	D	Optional

Full day event

A. Introduction	B. Inspiration	C. Participation	D. Wrap up and next steps	E. Post-event social
Any option	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any option except C5 tea break any option C other than the one used earlier lunch any option C 	Programme additional time for this as a full day event will have covered much more ground	Optional

Resources

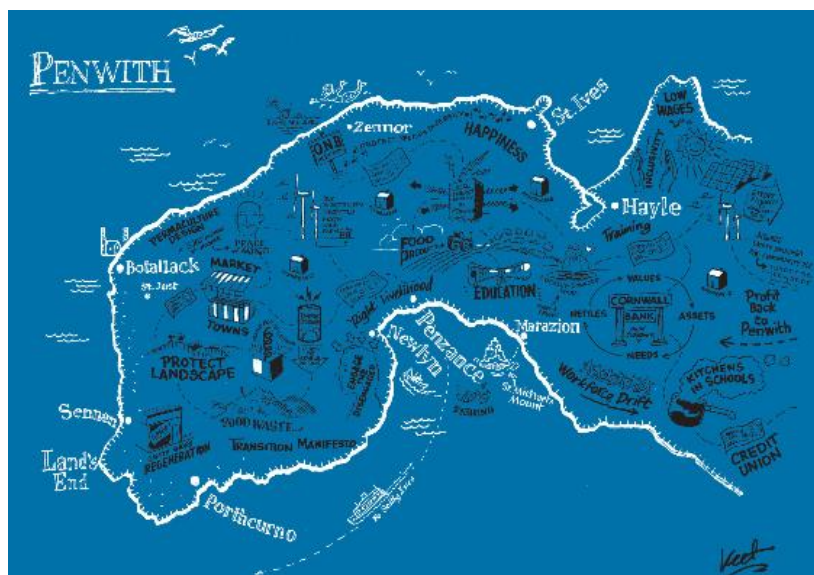
- [Write-ups on REconomy events to date](#)
- [‘Introduction to REconomy’ – Powerpoint presentation](#)
- [Video of ‘Introduction to REconomy’ presentation at Transition Penwith REconomy Event](#)
- [Video of ‘Introduction to REconomy’ presentation at Transition University St Andrews REconomy Event](#)
- [Transition guide to running an open space event](#)
- [Video of speakers sharing the stories of their Transition Enterprises at the RE-thinking the Economic Future of Penwith event in Cornwall](#)
- Transition Town Totnes is developing a handbook and training to help groups benefit from their experience of running a Local Entrepreneur Forum. Contact jay@transitiontowntotnes.org for details.

Top tips for delivering a successful event

- Do bring some Transition 'magic' to the event. Make space for fun and laughter, and to create beauty and visual impact. Could someone draw or paint the conversations you are having? Don't forget to take care of bodies as well as minds. You might use movement, breaks, music, or something unexpected.
- Do let the event 'breathe'. Less is more, don't try to cram too much in.
- Always leave some contingency time to allow for sessions over running or any unforeseen events
- After a talk, give people time to talk to a neighbour or two with a question like 'What comes up for you hearing that talk?' Some people take longer to come up with questions, and this approach gives them time to discuss and think about what they might want to ask.

In hindsight, while the presentations were excellent, we tried to squeeze a bit too much in and it was too much for people to digest all at once', Philip Revell, organiser, East Lothian Local Economy Workshop

- Do get people talking to each other as much as possible - provide time and space for this in your agenda
- Do aim for a good balance of male and female speakers and workshop leaders
- Don't use a speaker you (or someone whose view you trust) haven't heard speak before
- Do some preparation to make sure question and answers sessions are fruitful. Provide people with Post-It notes to note down questions during presentations, and have a couple of questions prepared to start the ball rolling if needs be.
- Do specifically ask attendees what they would like next (events or seminars on specific topics, working groups to take forward new ideas, research) and what they would like to be involved with or help make happen.



Capturing the conversations at the RE-thinking the Economic Future of Penwith event in Cornwall

3. Publicity

In this section, we look at how you can use publicity effectively to ensure that your event is well-attended by the right people, and achieves the impact you want.

Your approach to publicising the event will, of course, depend on the scale of the event and who you want to attend. You can mix and match from the ideas below to suit your needs.

Offering the right event

We've looked at agreeing a clear aim for your event, and at identifying the people you want to attend. Clarity on the event aim will give you a clear invitation to make to the people you want to be there. Keep in mind that what excites your group might not be the thing that will attract others. Put yourself in the shoes of the people you want to attend.

- What are their needs (and how could your event help meet them)?
- What is in it for them?
- Why should they prioritise coming to your event over other things in their lives?

Answering these questions before you start publicising the event will help you make your invitation in the most appealing way.

Before the event

Planning to get the information out there

Agreeing a publicity plan is key to ensuring everyone knows what needs to be done, and sharing out tasks effectively. Create the publicity plan in a file which everyone can access (e.g. a shared Google Doc), so that everyone can see and refer to it.

At the planning stage, find out if people in the group have relevant publicity contacts - and use them.

Publicity materials

The event aims you have agreed, and the people that you want to reach will shape your publicity materials. These could include a flyer (printed and electronic versions) for circulating or posting on social media, a press release (for local newspapers, radio stations and listings sites), and a paragraph summarising the event programme for your website or to include in the newsletters of other organisations. Draw on any similar materials you have produced in the past to save time.



You can use existing materials to provide ready-made content for your online publicity. These might include:

- blogs by speakers or facilitators;
- YouTube videos about similar previous events; or
- materials relevant to the event themes.

You can use these materials to post information about the same event multiple times, but with a different video each time.

Particularly for larger events and nearer to the event date, a pack for attendees including information on the agenda, speakers, venue, transport options etc. is helpful. This can also act as a prompt for people to invite friends and colleagues once they have the programme in front of them.

Key questions to ask when publicising an event

How can I reach people new to Transition or REconomy?

How do you reach beyond people you already know, and who already know you? You could research local organisations that attract the relevant people, or pick the brains of contacts at the local council or your funders. Depending on the relationship, these people may advocate for the event and invite people on your behalf.

We have printed these lovely posters and leaflets, where should we put them?

Create a manageable list of places to display information. This will keep you focused on distributing the material to the most relevant places for the event. Think beyond the usual places you put out posters and flyers. Are there places that are particularly relevant to the event?

Will other organisations put our event in their newsletter, or promote it through their e-mail lists?

Generally yes, if you ask well enough in advance and can provide a short piece of text about the event. If you are working with a partner or have promises for including the event in other organisation's newsletters then make sure the relevant deadlines are in your publicity plan.

What's the best way to use [social media](#) to publicise an event?

Using social media helps to reach wider or new audiences. Think of it as an extension of your website or email publicity. If your organisation doesn't use social media already, an event could be a great time to get going with Facebook or Twitter. However, social media can be very time consuming. Don't enter into it lightly, and start with manageable expectations for the event.

The first step is to post the event on your social media accounts, and to ask other organisations to post the event on their accounts.

Facebook is good for promoting events as there is a specific post option for events. These get widely shared and can be 'boosted' - paying (from about £25) for wider exposure to a specific geographical location or to those following relevant themes. However, even without a 'boost', many budding community events organisers say that Facebook plays a significant role in getting people to notice an event is being publicised, and in conjunction with other marketing can really help recruitment. Because of the events option on the page and the viral nature of Facebook events it is also very useful for events organised quickly e.g. in response to a local or even global campaign or crisis.

Don't forget your hashtag (#). If you are a Twitter user then you can use a hashtag for the event e.g. #REconomy2015. You can use hashtags to connect to issues that might link with other discussions e.g. #Economy #ClimateChange. You can also link your Tweets with any event partners by including them in the Tweet e.g. @REconomyProject. Lastly, your region may have its own 'Twitter Hour' where you can promote an event to local residents and businesses by adding a specific hashtag at a certain time of the week. e.g. #DevonHour (between 8pm and 9pm on Wednesdays).

Google+ is becoming more popular with events organisers. You can quickly develop communities around interest areas or projects which enables you to publicise upcoming events directly to people who want to hear about them. Contacts on Google+ are organised into 'Circles' which allows individuals to share information about events with appropriate groups, either by interest or relationship. Events can be planned using Hangouts (similar to Skype) and Drive (a document editing and sharing platform), which are associated tools from Google.



It is important to remember that social media is a rapidly developing set of platforms. The principle of networking and sharing is common to Twitter, Facebook and Google+ as it is to numerous other current and evolving social media tools. The best way to learn what works for you is to try a number of platforms and assess what you get back in return for your investment in time e.g. number of participants recruited, lower print costs with less leaflets needed etc. Use social media training when you can, as just because social media is a freely available service, it doesn't mean you can't learn new ways of using it more effectively from an expert.

How will we know if our publicity is working?

Knowing if you are on track with your event publicity enables you to focus more energy if things are going too slowly, or to scale up your plans if the event really takes off.

You might assess the impact of your publicity by the number of bookings for the event, or the level of enquiries received, or visits to the relevant page on your website. Setting some meaningful targets as part of your publicity plan will help you review progress, for instance, 'to confirm our hall booking we need X number of places booked, so we need Y number of bookings or Z number of enquiries by 1 January to feel confident.'

Make sure reviewing your activities and how they are doing is in your publicity plan and on the agenda for any planning meetings.

After the event

Publicity doesn't end on the day of the event.

Capturing momentum

Following the event, you have a window of opportunity to capitalise on the momentum you have created. Do you want to ask people to do something specific in follow up e.g. respond to a local council consultation, review and comment on a piece of work you are doing? Do you want to invite people to other, related events or bring a small working group together to take specific ideas forward? Have these follow up 'asks' ready to go before the event. That way, you can 'trail' them at the event so people know what is coming, and follow up promptly whilst the event is fresh in people's minds.

Think about the best way to keep in touch with people after the event. This could be by email, via a survey, or through a Facebook Group or Twitter List to help keep a connection with the group which attended the event.

Sharing the event more widely

There are ways to share what came out of the event with a wider audience without a huge amount of work. Following up the event with e.g. videos taken at the event, or blogs about the event will enable people who didn't attend to engage with the event and your organisation or project.

At Sustaining Dunbar's East Lothian Local Economy Workshop, participants were encouraged to record their thoughts on three key questions onto Post-it notes. These were later collated to form the event 'proceedings', and posted online with the agenda and slides from presentations.

Resources

- [Events page on Transition Town Totnes website](#)
- [Post-event write up for Transition Buxton's Alternative Economics Seminar event](#)
- [Publicity poster for Transition University of St Andrews' REconomy Workshop](#)
- [Template publicity plan](#)
- [Event website for Sustaining Dunbar's East Lothian Local Economy Workshop](#)
- [Transition Town Totnes's Local Entrepreneur Forum press release](#)
- [Information pack for attendees at Transition University of St Andrews' REconomy Workshop](#)

Top tips for delivering a successful event

- Do plan out your publicity as early as possible, creating a timeline so you don't miss deadlines for printing, newspapers etc.
- Don't over commit your time on publicity - decide the priorities based on the audience you want to attend, start there, and do what you can.

4. Practicalities

In this section, we share some of what we've learned around choosing great speakers, selecting the right venue and refreshments, and making sure you have everything you need on the day.

Venue

REconomy events have been held in a variety of venues, from community halls to council meeting rooms to venues with a focus on hosting sustainability events.

The usual rules apply for a successful event.

- Is it in a location that is central and easy to get to?
- Is the space the right size? Does it have disabled access?
- Is there good natural light?
- Is there access to a kitchen and toilets? Are there enough chairs, tables, a projector screen?

The quality and size of venue will determine how much it will cost. Getting space for free is always a bonus, but make sure that the space on offer will really work for the event. Always make sure you have seen the space in person before you book it.

The space you choose shapes the 'mood' and 'tone' of the event. An inspiring space can help create inspiring conversations. You don't always have lots of choice of venue, but you can always 'dress' a space with e.g. bunting, flowers or wall displays to create a little 'Transition magic'. You could provide poetry books for people to browse if they need a break. If you want to incorporate something more movement based - such as yoga, stretching or games - then you need to make sure its appropriate for your audience, and there is space to do this safely and within the flow of the programme of the day.

Refreshments



What you offer people to eat and drink is a great way of demonstrating Transition and REconomy values in action. At the REconomy General Event in Paris, attendees contributed to a 'potluck' aperitif. At the Transition Glastonbury Stakeholder Event, people enjoyed a locally sourced buffet. At the Transition University of St Andrews REconomy Workshop, students from the university vegetarian society organised lunch. If you are working on a shoe-string, asking people to bring food or cakes to share works well. If you have a local REconomy enterprise e.g. a bakery, you could commission them to provide refreshments as well as speaking about their work.

Formal tea and coffee and lunch breaks provide a dual function of refuelling and enabling people to get to know each other. For longer events, having drinks and snacks available throughout the event helps keep energy levels up.

Speakers

Getting the right people to speak about the right things can be easier said than done, but is key to a successful event. Speakers who overrun, try to cram 50 slides into a 15 minute presentation, or who simply read dense text from slides are to be avoided! If there is someone you really want to contribute, but who is not a great speaker, could you get their input in another way? This could be as part of a discussion panel, or 'in conversation' with the person chairing the event.

Finding speakers

The best way to find speakers is by recommendation. Don't invite anyone to speak unless you (or someone whose judgement you trust) have heard them speak before.

Briefing speakers

Provide each speaker with a short written brief setting out what you want them to speak about, how long you want them to speak for, how long you have provided for them to answer questions, and how you want them to present (speaking only, speaking with slides). If you would like speakers to use slides, you could provide guidelines on what sort of slides (images with a few key points rather than lots of dense text work best), and how many (a maximum of one slide per minute of presentation is a useful rule of thumb). Make it clear that you will be stopping speakers after their allotted time whether or not they have concluded their presentation.

Things you might need on the day

The following checklist includes suggestions for things that you might need on the day of your event.

- name badges - pre-prepared, or stickers and a chunky pen so attendees can write their own
- a list of people attending - you can compile this in advance if people are pre-booking, or if not, provide a sign up sheet for people to fill out when they arrive, to be circulated after the event
- copies of the event agenda
- collecting feedback - e.g. feedback forms
- IT equipment - e.g. projector, laptop, extension leads (there are never enough of these!)
- stationery - flipchart paper and pens, Post-It notes, paper for people to write notes on, pens, blu tack / pins / sellotape to put flipcharts up on the wall
- decorations - bunting, flowers, posters
- refreshments and things to serve them on and with - crockery, cutlery, napkins

'To improve on our event, it would have been nice to provide a list of the enterprises present, including their website and contact information', Corrine, organiser, REconomy General Event, Paris

Insurance and risk assessments

Don't forget to check if you need any insurance to cover your event, and that you have done a risk assessment. The Health and Safety Executive has a useful [Getting Started](#) guide to event safety.

Top tips for delivering a successful event

- Do leave plenty of time to set up your venue and test equipment. It always takes longer than you think.
- Do have a team assigned to clearing up the venue after the event. It's much quicker than setting up, but can be hard work with just a few people at the end of a busy event.
- Do assign someone in your organising team to keep an eye on people's comfort on the day. Is the room getting too warm / cold / stuffy? Have the urns been topped up ready for tea and coffee? Are people

overdue a 'comfort' break?

5. Reflection and celebration

In this section we explore how you can reflect on, and learn from your event, and the importance of celebrating success.

Reflection

We strongly suggest that you ask attendees what they thought of the event, and whether they got what they wanted from it. You can use this feedback to inform future events you run, and to share with funders. You can gather feedback on practicalities (venue, catering, organisation), on content (presentations, workshops, activities) or on the impact of the event (have attendees been inspired, learned something new etc.)

There are all sorts of ways of getting people to tell you what they thought. Traditional feedback forms (used at the Transition Buxton Alternative Economy Seminar) are good for getting feedback on lots of questions. Don't let people leave the room without filling theirs in.



'Penne for your thoughts' in action

'Penne for your thoughts' (used at the University of St Andrews REconomy Workshop) works best if you only have a couple of questions you want to ask. For each answer to the question, provide an upturned plastic flower pot labelled with the answer. Each person posts a piece of dry pasta (penne shaped works best) through the drainage hole in the flower pot that matches their answer to the question. You then count up the number of pieces of pasta in each pot. Have the pots by the exit door so that people do this as they leave.

The University of St Andrews REconomy Workshop also used a 'feedback wall' - pieces of flipchart paper with key questions written on them. This can be left up throughout the event. You have to keep reminding people to make time to do this during the event as it may otherwise get forgotten - allocate this role to one of your team.

Make some time soon after the event to sit down and reflect on how it went. What worked well? What might you do differently next time? If you asked for feedback from people who came, look at this and see what it is telling you. Crucially, write down your thoughts, so that you can refer to them next time you put on an event.

Celebrating success

And don't forget to celebrate! It takes a huge amount of work to put on an event. Make time to recognise and thank yourself and others around you, and celebrate a job well done.

Resources

- [Feedback form used at Transition Buxton's Alternative Economy Seminar](#)

Top tips for delivering a successful event

- Do highlight during the event that you want to collect feedback, and why, to maximise participation
- Do have someone at the door gently encouraging people to provide feedback before they leave

6. Write ups of previous REconomy events

In this section you can learn more about the experiences of others who have run REconomy events.

- [Write-ups on REconomy events to date \(UK events, and REconomy General Event, Paris\)](#)
- [Write-up on National Transition Hub for Latvia's Forum of Community Economics Event](#)
- [Write-up on Rieconomy Event, Italy](#)
- [Write-up on Good Economy Conference, Croatia](#)
- Write ups [one](#) and [two](#) on first REconomy event in Belgium

REconomy Project

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Thank you

This toolkit is based on the experiences of Transition Initiatives in the UK and Transition Hubs across Europe who have held REconomy events. Thanks are due to all of the event organisers who have written up their stories to share with others, and who have kindly shared their event resources.



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