



Growing Something Like A Phenomenon: – A Civic Engagement Plan To Make Some Shift Happen –

*Tools to Help People Through Crises, Get Voters Engaged,
Hold This Country Together, & Make Change Along The Way*

Shift the Country is a new nonprofit founded in this moment of great disruption to help people help each other through several crises happening at once, to get voters engaged, to hold civil society together in this country while we get through, and to make structural transformation along the way. That's the mission.

We can help Shift the Country toward a more equitable, just, resilient, and sustainable society using the five principles of connection, community, inclusiveness, resilience, and problem-solving.

Our five-part strategy:

- ▶ **Provide Key Civic Engagement Tools:** We recommend a core set of 15 all-purpose civic engagement tools designed for exactly this moment and mission that any individual or group can use for action at any level – with ideas, context, and examples for use;
- ▶ **Help Engage the Majority of Voters:** We help get voters *engaged* to counter the natural tendency of humans to *disengage* due to collective trauma from the worsening coronavirus catastrophe, and from emerging tyranny and nationalistic oligarchy (an engaged, active majority of voters can push back tyranny and oligarchy);
- ▶ **Drive The Narrative + Public Agenda:** We help drive the narrative, and help people advocate for solid opposition agendas/priorities at every level to build consensus for revitalized institutions and a social contract that serve all Americans better than ever before;
- ▶ **Leverage Social Networks To Reach Further:** We leverage social networks plus marketing for greater permeation and reach in both the real world and online – to foster the “viral spread” of action, engagement, activities, problem-solving, stories, messages, and ideas.
- ▶ **Help Build Power Through Greater Alliances:** We build power by helping people build bigger and more coalitions of coalitions, groups, teams, businesses, organizations, nonprofits, institutions, and individuals in greater alliances than ever to help us have more engagement than ever.

The US is in a massive disruption. Americans are fighting for our lives, the lives of the people we love, our safety, and a fair shot at getting through. At every level, elected officials, governments, and institutions are often not helping us survive, stay alive, and thrive as best they could. This country is in a giant pivot.

“We believe that COVID-19 will be one of the biggest economic, political, and cultural turning points of our lifetime, and how we respond will shape our future.” – New Media Ventures website

This civic engagement approach can help people help each other through all of this, help people save lives, help get more voters engaged and voting, help hold this country together... and create something like a phenomenon. A shift to a different future. Shift. We make shift happen.

The US needs action, coalitions, ideas, and empowerment *now*. The Shift the Country framework can help catalyze organic, structural, systemic action and transformation in US communities as we find our way through, together.

Change is coming, whether we drive it or not. We – all of us – can help that change be transformation.

Framework For A Phenomenon

The Shift the Country approach helps people amplify their action, stories, and messages. We can all drive the narrative with tools for creating spectacle, and for deliberately creating tipping points to expand permeation and reach in social networks in both the real world and online. There's more detail in the section at the end on "More To The Story: Fostering Tipping Points / Viral Spread."

The elements in the five-part strategy above combined in both the real world and online activate and amplify feedback loops of social networks to ramp up attention, action, creativity, ideas, messaging, and buzz – and more civic engagement and shift.

These feedback loops build exponential growth, and can be amplified strategically.

We can intentionally create something like a phenomenon – like a virus can turn into an outbreak.

That phenomenon can help people and organizations interest and engage previously disinterested, disengaged, disenfranchised voters to turn out to vote in an election critical to the future of this country.

Coordinated, strategic engagement activity, messaging, and sensation creates virtual and real-world effects that are noticeable and helpful in crises; effects that people talk about with friends, relatives, and connections. It's activity and messaging that highlights lived Democratic values in a crisis; action that serves more Americans, in better ways. The phenomenon can be a beacon of hope, humanity, and strength that motivates voters to turn out, and that inspires more Americans to take action, get invested, and get engaged. Voters helping each other also helps keep more voters alive.

All of this is anchored in a set of 15 basic flexible easy-to-use civic engagement tools that help people take action; to take on structural reform anywhere, organically. These tools can help anyone be a force for civic change locally, regionally, state-wide, among alliances or groups anywhere, in a metro area, in a tribal area, or nationally.

Why Civic Engagement Is Critical

The US has an increasingly disjointed, traumatized populace that is more likely to disengage with their own connections and communities than to engage. Overwhelm and trauma are powerful de-mobilizers.

Civic engagement will be increasingly critical as collective, widespread pandemic shock and overwhelm push many into a natural trauma response to freeze and disengage. The trauma response will be a challenge to overcome as the disaster intensifies, as fear increases, as resources are spread thinner, and as other natural trauma responses toward fight or flight occur. There will be widespread cascading effects from interruptions to interdependent systems; and as previously stable systems destabilize or devolve – anything from schools to local governments to supply chains to infrastructure. The Trump Administration will likely continue to worsen the trauma through its deliberately obstructive response; exacerbating the disaster in ways that will harm or kill more and more people. The increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the Trump Administration and its push toward a nationalistic oligarchy all serve to divide Americans and to scare people into further disengagement. All of this will further exacerbate both the widespread trauma and the inclination to disengage. Disempowerment spreads as the series of shocks persists.

Civic engagement can be a powerful way to help with these crises. Human stress biomarkers are lower when we as humans feel like we're working together, versus feeling that we're on our own.

Visible, inspired, collective civic engagement activity can empower Americans to help pull each other forward through crisis, to vote, to hold democracy together, and to make transformation.

Civic engagement tools can help us get through these crises with connection, community, inclusiveness, resilience, and problem-solving – all things that can help us navigate the coronavirus crisis. The Shift the Country five-part strategy can help organizations build on existing approaches to mobilizing volunteers for voter engagement – and expand those activities to include our 15 civic engagement tools.

This five-part strategy can help get disenchanted, inactive voters engaged; to pull in voters who may be overwhelmed; to solve urgent problems together; to tell voters’ stories; to advocate for the needs of the city, county, or state to candidates/incumbents running for office; or to bring attention to how government is serving or failing voters and how it could shift. The Shift the Country approach can help bring hope, inspiration, vision, teamwork, strength, and solidarity.

15 Tools for Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is the heart of the work here. This initiative is about facilitating and catalyzing structural transformation at scale in the US to help shift the country toward a more equitable, just, and sustainable society. Americans need to do different things than the paths that brought us here. We – all of us – need to engage and empower a more diverse array of Americans to get involved in the power and decision structures that make up our institutions and our government. These civic engagement tools can be a vehicle for people and organizations to help make that happen.

Shift the Country offers a set of 15 flexible civic engagement tools that can be adapted or combined in an array of ways.

These tools are summarized below. Fully developed tools and related content, videos, and examples will be published on the website and social media as funding comes in for this new initiative.

15 ALL-PURPOSE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Hold Community Conversations	<i>Primary tool.</i> Virtual or real-world forums for urgent, emerging, systemic, or longer-term issues for problem-solving; planning; vision; improving/transforming government; economic recovery; etc. Forums can help clarify, define, or update community priorities, values, stakes, and goals in crisis and for the future. Single events or a series on any wicked problem area or other topic.
Grow Connection	Connection and relationships are critical for engagement. Community, groups, and alliances are keys to building power and require connection skills. Poor communication/connection can damage engagement action. This tool is about the basics of fostering connection and doing it well for engagement and teamwork: authenticity, vulnerability, openness, presence, empathy, listening, respect, etc.; and finding shared clarity and focus on mission, priorities, and execution.
Foster Teams & Groups	A tool with the basics of how to create, expand, and facilitate new or existing groups/teams for community crisis, disruption, and transformation action and problem-solving. For any structural work: local/regional emergency mutual aid, driving agendas, advocating for justice, etc.
Build Power with Coalitions & Partnerships	Building, leveraging, and amplifying partnerships/alliances is key to growing power, movement-building, and making change. This tool is to help groups, individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, etc. to identify shared goals, values, and stakes to work together on; a process for buy-in; and how to leverage each organization’s or individual’s assets and complement each others’ strengths. Basics and examples of partnership- and coalition-building at any level. How to do coordination calls, communication, amplifying, marketing, joint events, logistics, etc.

Leverage Federalism by Acting at Every Level	Federalism is the US model of government where power is distributed between all levels of government. This tool helps people and groups act at every level, gets into the structures of government and what to look for, and how to help strengthen local or state power when federal or any governmental power is ineffective, not functional, or dangerous.
Involve Business	Businesses and corporations can be partners for transformation, or obstructers of it. Businesses can be pillars of the community, and can champion public health and other civic action. They can also actively damage public health, health, the environment, community resources, and trust. This tool gets into various options for partnering with and/or pressuring small businesses to large corporations for the kinds of civic change we need – whether through community engagement, partnership, problem-solving, innovation, entrepreneurialism, sustainable development, boycotts, social media pressure, or responsible/conscientious business practices/standards.
Tell the Stories	Americans can leverage research indicating the power of empathy generated through storytelling and vulnerability to connect with others for engagement, action, and voting. This tool gets into approaches, examples, and best practices. Storytelling ties to connection, driving the narrative, and creating tipping points. It builds solidarity and strength in the face of overwhelm and disengagement, and can help amplify underrepresented Americans’ voices and stories on emerging issues that need attention.
Create Spectacle & Drive the Narrative	Spectacle creates attention and helps drive and focus public agendas from the local to national level. There are ways to raise a fuss, create a spectacle, and call attention to needs and issues. Attention and pressure on needs can help drive transformative public action, and to drive government focus and action from the local to the national level. Agendas can tie to funding, laws, policies, paradigms, stakes, values, public health action, etc. Other tools can help drive the agenda: community conversations, coalition-building, storytelling, etc.
Create Tipping Points & Expand Reach	Tipping points help create phenomena; from real-world word-of-mouth social networks in towns/cities to viral online sensations that create local or national buzz. Leveraging social networks online and in the real world in deliberate ways to create tipping points can spread ideas, action, and engagement farther than action alone or marketing alone can.
Foster Helpful Information Spread	People, teams, and initiatives can: 1) Pressure civic, business, and other institutions to lead on public health and other crisis-related messages that can save lives, reduce spread, reduce healthcare impacts, etc. 2) Build media literacy, discern truth, vet/verify crisis-related news/information, identify reliable information sources, and fight disinformation.
Embrace Humanity & Build Community Resilience	“E pluribus unum: out of many, one.” We are stronger and more secure as a nation and in each community when we embrace humanity, have faith in humanity, and build resilient communities. There are basics of community resilience and coalition-building that we can use across whole communities for civic engagement, public health action, disaster resilience, economic resilience and justice, government transformation, community conversations, and driving agendas.
Foster Neighborhood Resilience	The basics of facilitating or starting connection, coordination, logistics, safety, and technology for approaches to helping neighbors look after and communicate with each other. This tool is applied connection, community, resilience, inclusiveness, and problem-solving for where people live.

Prioritize & Triage Action

Effective prioritization and coordination to move resources to areas with the greatest vulnerabilities or critical needs across institutions, structures, systems, sectors, coalitions, and organizations can help hold civil society together. This tool helps prioritize civic engagement activity/action as we navigate extended and evolving chaos/disruptions/crises. People, groups, and coalitions can triage or prioritize civic action for helping people help each other, for holding together vulnerable institutions, and for making transformation as multiple crises evolve – as there are economic shifts, as budgets change at every level, as laws are passed, as codes and mandates change, through system interruptions and cascading effects, and through human suffering and loss. This tool helps with system level thinking for action prioritization through cause, effect, interdependencies; and for alignment with shared objectives, goals, and strategy.

Find Your Lane & Get Engaged

Tool to help people navigate the overwhelm of disruption to determine what unique thing they can do or bring to the world to make a difference. Assess sphere of influence, situation, risk, and resources (assets, talents, capabilities, skills, etc.). Approaches to help people find practical, doable civic engagement work that resonates for them. Help people/groups shift into action.

Be Effective In Crises

The basics of making shift happen in the midst of unfolding chaos using the flexible and scalable principles of project management and incident management. This tool gets into objectives; strategy vs. tactics; navigating information overwhelm by assessing situation, resources, and risk; planning, executing, and updating plans to incorporate new information; not panicking; persisting.

Tools for Any Individual, Organization, or Coalition

These 15 tools are designed for anyone, any group, or any alliance to use in an unlimited number of ways. Organizations looking for new ways to engage with voters in an election year with a pandemic can find viable options here that can also help local communities. These tools can also help engage a majority of voters – which we need to push back on emerging tyranny and nationalistic oligarchy.

Organizations can leverage relational, distributed, and virtual/digital organizing to activate, facilitate, host, encourage, and lead civic engagement activities and to share action and progress.

Using the Tools

These 15 tools are flexible, and can be adapted and combined in a huge array of options for online or for real-world (with public health precautions) action and events. Tools can be used in local communities, regionally, in interest groups, in coalitions, for campaigns, for advocacy, for problem-solving, for navigating coronavirus where you live, for statewide action, for national action, or for anything that fits. The tools build on and leverage connection, community, resilience, and problem-solving in a time of multiple crises; they are meant to be adaptable.

Funding will help us fully develop, publish, and promote the tools. As each tool is published and as funding allows, Shift the Country will do webinars, Facebook Lives, videos, podcasts, and social media discussion to talk about the tools, to get into deeper discussions or content about them, and to highlight their use. This framework is a structure to help people take action in various ways. As the Shift the Country organization grows, we will help with more specifics, direction, ideas, and examples.

Civic engagement work can go better when it anchors to existing engagement work, action, advocacy, or organizations if they already exist for the work you are seeking to get more involved with. *In other words, it's helpful to figure out if someone's already been doing the work for years before charging into any given area.* A good situation assessment can help to figure out the landscape to assess what kind of gaps exist, what the known challenges are for addressing those gaps, where new organizations may be needed, if coalition-building or partnerships might help, and so on.

The 15 civic engagement tools above can be adapted or combined for use with the 10 structural change areas outlined below, or used for structural areas, topics, or sub-topics not on these lists.

These tools can be catalyzers for conversations and action that charts paths to a more just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient future in the long term, with transformations in social systems, infrastructure, energy, economy, culture, politics, and government.

For the short term, these tools can help us solve problems, find ways through, and help each other survive.

Voter Engagement

Every single tool can include a voter registration or voter encouragement (if that's a word) aspect. People/organizations using the civic engagement tools may develop a standard approach for this. For example, opening or closing events by talking about voter registration, ways to vote safely, registering voters, pointing to info on voting, talking about why it matters, highlighting what's at stake, etc. Shift the Country will also put out a set of recommendations for voter engagement/encouragement when using the tools.

Structural Action Areas

The Shift the Country framework is designed to address the basic structural aspects of American society that are likely to be the greatest challenges during the pandemic, as tyranny emerges in the US, as the Republican party enables nationalistic oligarchy, through the 2020 election, and through possible chaos during the transition of the presidential administration.

The 10 structural areas below are the basic / general structural change areas for reference and use with the 15 civic engagement tools. Shift the Country will put out more information and ideas for how these can be used, and examples of work that's already underway as funding comes in to help us do that.

A huge key to the structural areas is that in almost every larger community or regional area of the US, there is likely already work already underway either in government or in the nonprofit sector or private sector or in all three in each of these areas. Identifying what's already in place and where there are gaps is critical to engagement.

Civil society obviously doesn't boil down to ten areas. There's more stuff going on in the country. These ten are meant as a start; as anchor points to get going. Every one of these structural areas is enormous all on its own – and likely every one of these areas will be critical in the US as we go through 2020 and 2021.

10 STRUCTURAL AREAS – FOR ACTION & CHANGE

Coronavirus Response & Public Health	Short- and long-term information, action, and ideas related to the COVID-19 crisis and related public health and other response or non-response at any level. This is not about replacing public health systems and institutions, but rather tools/options to help them work better, to increase funding/staffing, to extend reach and effectiveness, and to advocate for strategy and planning.
Election Access, Safety, & Security	Information to help people/teams take urgent election at any level as needed for a range of issues – voter enfranchisement, voter suppression, on-site paper ballots, poll site safety & access, cybersecurity, vastly increasing mail-in voting or absentee voter ballot access, election process change education, voter registration, etc. Info includes ways to tie in with existing work.

Food Systems, Security, & Resilience	Short term access to food for survival, and resilience for food systems in crisis. Longer term transformation to more regional, diversified, healthy food/agricultural systems and distribution with shorter supply chains, increased resilience, and increased efficiency and sustainability.
Housing Security & Access	Short-term access and safety of housing and temporary housing for emergency public health measures to mitigate virus spread. Longer term work to transform housing approaches and paradigms to better facilitate community and connection, stability, equity, access, affordability.
Education Structure, Safety, & Access	Short-term access and safety for educational systems & related interdependencies. Longer term transformation of educational systems to increase access and equity, and to update educational systems to better fit the world, the economy, and the populations they serve.
Medical, Health, & Mental Health	Short- and long-term action and advocacy for medical, health, mental health, healthcare, institutions, systems, facilities, policies, ethics, laws, and insurance. Short-term action may include helping institutions such as hospitals remain functional and financially stable during outbreaks, to have PPE or other equipment for COVID-19, and provisions/housing/food/etc. for staff. Long-term action across the sector would be more transformative.
Law Enforcement, Immigration, & Justice	Short- and long-term engagement to transform policing, justice systems, and immigration paradigms and to shift funding/resources to better facilitate community health, prosperity, and well-being. Action can anchor to existing recommendations, work, frameworks, resources, groups, and coalitions where they exist at any level.
Economic Equity & Resilience	Short-term pressure for business/corporate responsibility at every level on issues tied to the multiple crises. Short-term advocacy for emergency economic stabilization at all levels in egalitarian ways that better serve all. Transform the economy and supply chains over the longer term to more sustainable, resilient, and regional production/distribution approaches that better serve communities in a world with increasing disruption. Catalyze prosperity; facilitate investment that fosters economic resilience, economic justice, the transformation of community landscapes, place-making, entrepreneurialism, innovation, creativity, and problem-solving.
Climate, Energy, & Environment	Electrify the country and shift the economy with more sustainable, climate-friendly energy infrastructure. Advocate for policies, codes, and financial investment that can catalyze massive infrastructure /energy transformation to mitigate climate change, increase infrastructure resilience, energy resilience, disaster resilience, and economic resilience. Shorten supply chains, shift food and other production to more regionalized/localized systems, increase sustainability.
Infrastructure Functionality & Resilience	Short-term vulnerability analysis and action to mitigate pandemic infrastructure and energy disruption due to outbreaks. Advocate for investment and action at every level to catalyze infrastructure and energy transformation to address changing risk landscape, to mitigate climate change, and to increase resilience and sustainability.

A Structural Framework Built For The Risk We Face

Americans need a structural strategy and clear intention to hold civil society together through these many crises. In the midst of chaos with a catastrophic pandemic and multiple crises in the US, systems and government are failing Americans at every level.

These crises lay bare issues at the core of who we are as a country: the functionality of our institutions, how our social contracts work, who government serves, how government operates, and how well government is working at every level to help (or not help) all of its citizens stay alive, to flourish, and to thrive. These crises underscore inequities in the systems, injustice, systemic disparities and racism, and massive wealth and power imbalances. Systems that are supposed to serve every American are not working well for most Americans. They have been eroded, are dysfunctional,

have been corrupted, are not being used, have been underfunded, have been shut down, have been deregulated, have been privatized, or were created with bias and favoritism in the first place.

In terms of coronavirus, there are indications from the 1918-1919 pandemic that communities better able to flatten the curve and have less massive system impacts locally were better able to recover their economies and rebuild their communities on the other side. Civic engagement can help us amplify and expand public health actions to help.

Research indicates that societies fighting emerging tyrants recover from the tyrant's damage better once that authoritarian has been removed *if the institutions and civil society are held intact* through the duration when the authoritarian is in power.

A solid opposition agenda that includes institutional transformation planned to better serve all parties in the social contract can help defeat the tyrant, as a perception of a failed social contract is often how an emerging tyrant gets a foothold. The tyrant offers only a spiral of fear, anger, and abyss. Widespread real-world civic engagement work such as that outlined below and the agendas and action it drives can serve to counter what is on offer from the tyrant, which is only more anger, more fear, and less solutions that serve the greater society.

An engaged and overwhelming majority is also key to countering a trend toward nationalistic oligarchy that many in the Republican party appear to be encouraging and espousing. This trend also relies on disengagement and disempowerment, as well as actively fomenting divisiveness through the nationalism aspect. The Shift the Country framework for massive, large-scale civic engagement combined with other strategies to help solidify the majority can help counter the nationalistic oligarchical push as well.

The US faces the challenge of active election interference and other scaled disinformation efforts from hostile foreign adversaries such as Russia. These ongoing threats are well documented in public Congressional hearings from US national security personnel. Russian intentions to sow discord and divisiveness in order to weaken the US and its civil society are well established; operations are reportedly ongoing. Russia's goals to confuse US citizenry are also clear: they don't want Americans to be able to discern truth.

Increasing and well-funded domestic misinformation and propaganda efforts in both the public and private sectors further complicate the US risk landscape; put Americans' health and safety at risk; and foment further civic divisiveness and corresponding instability as well as COVID-19 disease spread. An increase in corruption and a decrease in ethical behavior in the current administration of the US government combined with a slow and deliberate erosion of truth and government institutions further weakens US standing, capabilities, capacity, and security.

The money, power, and influence at play in the US in 2020 is daunting and overwhelming.

The power of an actively engaged citizenry can be more daunting and more overwhelming.

The power of civic outrage about systemic racism in May, June, and July of 2020 is already having wide-reaching impacts. The Shift the Country five-part strategy can help make of the transformation happen that is urgently needed.

Americans can create an outbreak of civic engagement nationwide that is powerful enough to help stabilize this country while we navigate this chaos, to help get more voters voting, to help people help each other through, and to help us transform it to serve us better as we get through this.

We *are* stronger together. This framework helps us be stronger, more resilient, more empowered, and more likely to survive.

More To The Story: Urgency & Risk

The US is in a set of simultaneous crises, with no national strategy or leadership actively addressing any of those crises effectively. The US is in a turning point; a pivotal moment.

It's an election year in the most important US election in modern times. The election itself is vulnerable in an array of ways. Results of the election will massively affect the future of this country, national security, and the stability of the republic itself.

The US has no national strategy (or international strategy that we are participating in) including science and public health measures to get ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal government has largely abdicated responsibility for and actively obstructed the response to coronavirus. The US has state, local, and tribal governments making uncoordinated decisions that are literally all over the map; many of which are also counterproductive. There is a poor understanding of science in the general population. There is confused and contradictory public health messaging making that worse. There is misinformation and disinformation about the virus, government, and other things that threaten our health, our sense of community, our country, our election, and our national security. There is an increasingly aggressive segment of the population empowered by the president who refuse to follow public health measures designed to keep people alive, and who are willing to endanger themselves and others; a segment advocating for increased intolerance and inequality. The US has corresponding economic damage that will be much worse than it would have been if we were handling the pandemic better. The country will experience increasing cascading effects across sectors of our society and economy as interruptions occur in highly complex, interdependent systems.

The country has widespread civic outrage over systemic racism and inequality, and increasing advocacy for more equitable and just governments at every level that better serve everyone; for governments that invest in people and communities to help everyone have a better chance to flourish and thrive.

There is a US president who is an aspiring authoritarian; pushing the ethics, norms, and laws of what is acceptable in a democracy, and actively causing harm to the people and country he is meant to serve.

In the midst of this chaos, many people are in a position to fight for a different path for this country, and for our US communities. Our country and our communities are what's at stake. Our people. Our ability to mitigate climate change in real ways as a nation and as a planet is also at stake. The United States could lead deep transformation worldwide to mitigate the effects of climate change – but only with new US leadership. Deep transformation in the US now can help us get there. This work here helps us do that kind of deep transformation.

Americans need to throw everything we've got at all of it – at every level.

We – all of us – can spread a massive outbreak of civic engagement. This is a framework to catalyze that. We can help people and organizations get involved if they haven't been before, with tools for more structural action. People are looking for something they can do; something more than voting. This initiative is designed for exactly that.

More To The Story: Fostering Tipping Points / Viral Spread

Anyone can intentionally create tipping points of civic engagement activity and related narratives and buzz by using methodology to do so intentionally both online and in the real world. Fomenting tipping points to increase permeation, saturation, and reach in social networks can help engage and inspire more voters and action than standard marketing and activist organizing.

A tipping point is when something reaches critical mass in any social network, and “goes viral” – ideas, memes, activities, action, stories, hope, solidarity, etc. It’s based in epidemiology; it’s how diseases move through social networks. Tipping points can happen in the real world or online, and at any scale: in small towns, in neighborhoods, in metro areas, in activist networks, through any other networks, through social media platforms, in regions, or nationwide.

Anyone can create tipping points by bringing these three elements together:

- ▶ **Context:** We address *context* by speaking to the moment: like a once-in-a-century out-of-control pandemic, government deliberately failing the people it is meant to serve, injustice, inequality, threats to life and health, emerging tyranny, brazen corruption, etc.
- ▶ **Stickiness:** Stickiness, or resonance, is the level of contagion or infectiousness. It’s the ability to stick, be carried, and be transmitted; like the resonance of a meme, idea, story, or activity. It’s about how much people want to share it, when it’s content (not an actual virus). When creating content, stickiness can be tested by measuring the reach of organic spread of varying content types.
- ▶ **Super Spreaders in Social Networks:** *Super spreaders, connectors, spanners, or bridgers* are those people who cross many social networks in the real-world or online, and/or who have significant influence (online or in-real-life), or a high number of online followers. They cross networks and bring ideas (or viruses, in the case of epidemiology) with them as they go. The sociological work that addresses the power of this phenomenon (the strength of weak ties) is one of the most highly-cited sociological references in active use.

We can add to tipping point activity by leveraging and growing partnerships, alliances, and networks. As coalition-building and related synergy increases, feedback loops among active coalition groups will amplify spread and reach.

Strategic organizing can ramp up tipping points. Organizations can use and expand relational and distributed organizing to further grow tipping points, and to expand their influence and reach. Digital and virtual organizing activity can encourage, promote, facilitate, demonstrate, schedule, and/or lead the use of the civic engagement activities and action. It can help highlight and amplify civic engagement action and progress. It can share and amplify earned media attention. It can lead online action to amplify narratives, activity, or messaging itself to help build and grow tipping points and expand movements, power-building, and real-world shift.

Finally, we can use digital marketing to promote the Shift the Country civic engagement tools, and to “boost” or otherwise promote or amplify online activity, news, and buzz related to all of this shift. Marketing can be targeted to particularly challenged areas, such as key geographic and demographic areas facing great challenges. Marketing can prioritize civic engagement tools for promotion that may be able to help in a particular moment, or that may be gaining traction or attention with a certain audience or in a given region. Digital marketing can also promote civic engagement activity itself – scheduled events, stories of success, the effects of civic engagement action in peoples’ communities and lives to help create buzz and foster tipping points, while also spreading inspiration, solidarity, more action, and support for Democratic values. Digital marketing can use marketing targeting strategies and tools; and test content for stickiness, organic shares, reach, and effectiveness. The Shift the Country digital marketing capacity and reach will be a variable directly influenced by available funding. As funding increases past our baseline operational costs, we can ramp up our digital marketing work that can serve to amplify and grow tipping points. As that marketing work expands, feedback loops can kick in and create the kind of exponential growth that helps create larger-scale spread phenomena.

Making Shift Happen

Shift the Country is a newly formed left-leaning 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization created to promote social welfare. Contributions are not deductible for federal income tax purposes as charitable contributions.

Shift the Country has fundraisers, with more coming! The organization is brand-new and awaiting an IRS number for official banking, so we have some interim action underway to get operations up and running:

- ▶ GoFundMe – seed fund: *(coming soon)*
- ▶ Facebook – short term: <https://www.facebook.com/donate/1588974311274158/>
- ▶ GoFundMe Charity – *(coming soon)*
- ▶ Patreon – *(coming soon, with a Discord integration)*
- ▶ Contribution checks can be mailed to: *Shift the Country, PO Box 1093, Ames, IA 50014.*

We'll grow this urgent nonprofit work as funding allows. The Shift the Country framework can help catalyze organic, structural, systemic action and transformation in US communities.

The more funding we can get, the more change we can catalyze.

We – Americans – can help build coalitions. We can help each other survive a deadly pandemic. We can help the US hold a successful and fair election. We can help hold this country together during the pandemic and a potentially tumultuous presidential administration transition. We can help institutions help us survive, while we also work on transforming them to serve all Americans in more equitable, just, and sustainable ways. We can help shift this country so that we can partner with other countries for a global transformation to address the urgency that is climate change.

People are already fighting for each other; fighting for this country; fighting for public health action to save lives. They are working to help keep other people alive in hospitals and nursing homes; to keep grocery stores and other critical services operating; to help feed people; to help reform police departments and spending in communities everywhere.

We – together – can do even more. *It's going to take millions of us doing all the things.* We're bringing more of the things. Together we can help organize, catalyze, and amplify action and transformation at a scale never before seen in this country.

Shift the Country can help you and anyone else take it to the next level. We're here to make serious shift happen. We're here to help us all survive, stay alive, and thrive. There are ways. We find them together.

Community: [Discord](#) *(server setup coming soon)*
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ShiftTheCountry/>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ShiftTheCountry>
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