

# SEEDS TO SYSTEMS

Building and Nurturing Networks for Lasting Impact

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 POLLINATION Foundation |  BHP Foundation



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the past, present and future generations of Traditional Owners, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities across all the lands, waters and oceans in which we live, work and enjoy.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Ampliseed:**

**A dynamic community of practice**

**A network for knowledge sharing**

**A space to grow confidence and  
strengthen leadership**

# 1.1 OVERVIEW

Ampliseed's journey began as a seed of an idea in 2018. At that time, BHP Foundation was supporting a portfolio of seven Environmental Resilience projects with the aim to test and showcase how conservation could be achieved at a landscape scale in biodiversity significant locations around the world. The purpose of Ampliseed was simple yet powerful: connecting project teams for peer learning together across contexts could strengthen local leadership, accelerate innovation, and achieve lasting outcomes for people and nature.

Through workshops, cross-cultural exchanges, peer-led trainings, and co-created knowledge products, Ampliseed fostered a space where ideas, insights, and relationships could thrive. And over five years, the network evolved into an international learning and leadership community that amplified local insights into global audiences. This report reflects on our collective experience – not just as a portfolio of projects, but as a connected system committed to collaborative impact.

This learning paper details our journey and lessons through reflective storytelling and qualitative evidence. It is organised into thematic sections covering:

- our origin story, membership and theory of change (Section 2),
- the systemic impacts of networked collaboration (Section 3),
- an analysis of key activities and peer learning in action (Section 4),
- challenges and how our adaptive learning design approached them (Section 5); and
- strategic opportunities for scaling

and sustainability (Section 6).

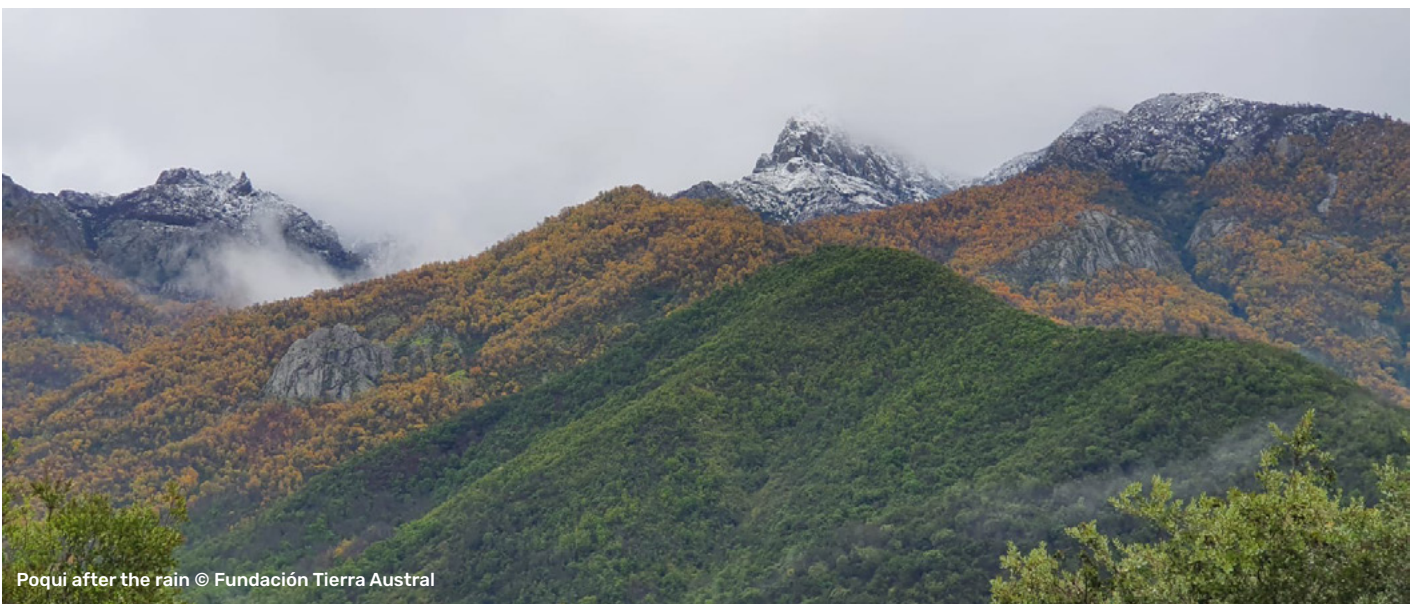
We include member voices, real examples, and practical recommendations throughout. Where relevant, we draw on learning theory (e.g. communities of practice, social learning theory, collective impact) to show why Ampliseed worked and what others can replicate.

For those who like a short synopsis, our higher-order insights are summarised on the next page.



***“All of our work is founded on relationships... Our work is really all about people, how we stay connected, build trust, and learn together while tackling some of the world’s most complex challenges.”***

– Ariadne Gorring, Co-CEO of Pollination Foundation.



Poqui after the rain © Fundación Tierra Austral



# 1.2 KEY LEARNING INSIGHTS FOR FUTURE FUNDERS AND NETWORKS

## Thoughtfully curated peer networks reduce isolation and accelerate knowledge flow

- **What we observed:** A global network reduced isolation for place-based change agents who are often working alone or in small teams. By connecting practitioners across multiple organizations and jurisdictions, members could rapidly share ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and build confidence in their approaches.
- **Why it matters:** This kind of peer support fuels engagement in advancing practices across a sector. It also speeds up the generation and dissemination of knowledge (e.g., new finance models, shared monitoring and evaluation frameworks) that might otherwise remain locked in local silos. Thoughtful peer networking drives wider change by empowering practitioners to actively share, test, and improve their methods. Ultimately, this leads to more effective, coordinated action across the entire sector.
- **Learning:** Proactive investment in network-building is a catalyst for peer learning and accelerates innovation. A “resourced backbone” (facilitation, coordination, etc.) is essential for maintaining connection, drawing out insights and curating collective learning.

## Relationships are infrastructure

- **What we observed:** Ampliseed’s members consistently cited the value of face-to-face relationship-building, especially when rooted in Indigenous protocols and local contexts. Consider it the way we think of roads or broadband: those physical systems move goods and information; relationship-building moves ideas, trust and commitment. This “culture first” approach generated trust more quickly and sustained deeper engagement over time.
- **Why it matters:** In complex fields like environmental resilience, people-centred approaches not only enhance the immediate project outcomes (e.g., through shared training or collaborative research) but also foster a community of mutual support that endures beyond the funding window.
- **Learning:** Meaningful, culturally respectful in-person gatherings work best when paired with inclusive, multilingual online programs to maintain momentum – both elements need to be budgeted and scheduled right from the start.



Ngurrara Rangers © Pollination Foundation

## Communities of practice shine when grounded in shared purpose

- **What we observed:** Despite working in diverse ecosystems and local contexts, Ampliseed members shared a values-driven commitment to long-term environmental resilience, equity, and Indigenous leadership. This allowed members to surface common challenges that transcended individual projects – like long-term financing, community governance, and cross-cultural knowledge systems.
- **Why it matters:** When those insights are shared sector-wide, they create ripple effects. Projects learn from each other’s missteps, adapt effective practices, and collectively shape emerging standards (e.g., “culture first” approaches to conservation).
- **Learning:** Sector-wide gains come from intentional collaboration – ensuring a space for periodic convenings (workshops, virtual forums, immersive exchanges) plus an open channel (e.g., an online portal) for day-to-day knowledge exchange.

## Knowledge becomes powerful as it moves

- **What we observed:** Storytelling, joint strategy sessions, and targeted training supported project teams to try new approaches and tools. Network products (like guides and webinars) also informed others globally. By gathering local projects under a shared banner (e.g., at UN conferences), Ampliseed was able to amplify community-led stories and solutions, showing policymakers the human voice and impact behind conservation data. Members who would otherwise have felt isolated in large global events, or indeed would not otherwise have participated, benefited

from traveling as part the Ampliseed “delegation,” which boosted confidence and visibility. This two-way learning amplifies impact: local practitioners gain awareness of global opportunities, while policymakers learn from on-the-ground innovations.

- **Why it matters:** Authentic, grounded advocacy can drive policy change and funding alignment. Policymakers respond more strongly to diverse voices speaking in unison than to scattered presentations from single projects.
- **Learning:** When appropriate, build advocacy into network design. Provide orientation and logistical support to local practitioners so they can share insights on global stages, influencing system-level decisions with real-world credibility.

## Adaptability is key

- **What we observed:** Ampliseed’s agile approach – annual feedback loops, flexible working groups, and mid-course pivots (especially during COVID-19) – enabled the network to remain valuable as members’ needs evolved.
- **Why it matters:** Without iterative design, learning networks risk becoming stagnant or out of touch with on-ground realities. Adaptation ensures they continue to deliver fresh insights, hosting relevant discussions, and sparking timely innovations.
- **Learning:** Network practitioners should plan periodic “pulse checks” (e.g., short surveys, reflection sessions), and use the feedback to update topics and formats, and encourage members to lead or co-design sessions so the content never drifts from their real challenges.



Ampliseed member field trip to the flooded forest in community-run Tingana Conservation Reserve, Peru, to discuss local enterprise © Bill Salazar



# 2. INTRODUCTION: SEED OF AN IDEA TO A GLOBAL NETWORK

In mid-2018, a seed was planted: the idea that connecting practitioners across disparate geographies could accelerate learning and amplify impact in ways individual siloed projects could not.

# 2.1 INCEPTION

In 2018, the BHP Foundation was funding seven large-scale conservation initiatives through multi-year grants on four continents, all “aiming to change the way conservation at landscape scale is achieved” (Figure 1). These projects ranged from sustaining the world’s largest Indigenous-led conservation network in Australia’s deserts, to empowering First Nations in Canada’s boreal forests, to building climate resilience strategies for coral reefs and communities in the Pacific and Caribbean, creating new protected corridors in Chile, and community-driven rainforest stewardship in Peru. Despite the different ecosystems and country contexts in which each project operated there were many similarities. All shared common aspirations to create innovative governance models, strengthen local leadership and invest in resilient communities, and they faced similar challenges like long term sustainable financing solutions.

BHP Foundation aspired to foster cross project learning across its portfolio of projects. Through these networks, the aim was to maximise impact by bringing together organisations and professionals to learn from each other while also creating a space to understand the important concepts and inherent tensions important to BHP Foundation investments. These include, for example, measurement, learning and evaluation methods and concepts like scaling, sustainability, amplification and advocacy, as well as core capacity building activities such as leadership and cultural connection. A benchmarking study of existing public networks across the environmental resilience space didn’t offer the experience BHP Foundation was searching for. So, it engaged Pollination Foundation to co-design a learning network to connect BHP Foundation partner organisations.

Pollination Foundation offered deep understanding of the focus area of these partnerships and exceptional facilitation skills to ultimately test, establish and grow a network to support partner organisations focused on environmental resilience. The intent was to create a learning model with potential to sustain support past the lifecycle of BHP Foundation’s investment and be scaled to include other practitioners and organizations in the future.

Together the organisations developed a learning and leadership model which was hosted and facilitated by Pollination Foundation with guidance on content from BHP Foundation and its partner organizations.



Reserva Costera Valdiviana, Chile © The Nature Conservancy

## FIGURE 1: WHO IS AMPLISEED - PROJECT TEAMS



### INDIGENOUS DESERT ALLIANCE

**Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA)** facilitates the largest Indigenous-led and culturally connected conservation network on Earth to enable a strong and united voice for desert rangers, to build strong and sustainable ranger teams and to ensure the future health of the Australian desert.



### NATURE UNITED

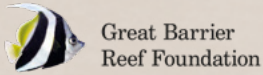
**Forest Conservation in the Boreal** is working with Indigenous Nations in the Canadian boreal to help build a socially, economically and environmentally resilient future for Indigenous communities and for nature.



### CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

**Alto Mayo Project** is supporting Awajun indigenous communities and migrant farmers to become effective stewards of the landscape's natural resources.





## GREAT BARRIER REEF FOUNDATION

**Resilient Reefs Initiative** is partnering with global reef managers and front-line communities in four UNESCO World Heritage sites to design and deliver integrated solutions that build the resilience of coral reefs and the communities that depend on them.



## FUNDACIÓN TIERRA AUSTRAL

**The Boldo to Cantillana Conservation Corridor** project is demonstrating an innovative new model for conservation in Chile by using the country's landmark private lands conservation agreement, the *Derecho Real de Conservación*, to advance the permanent protection of a habitat corridor comprised of Mediterranean habitat, Chile's rarest, least protected and most threatened ecosystem.



## RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

**LandScale** is a global framework and online platform to generate trusted landscape-level insights that can align and incentivise local and global action to deliver sustainability at scale.



## THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

**Valdivian Coastal Reserve** protects one of the largest areas of temperate rainforest in Chile and seeks to promote a model of public-private co-management of protected areas of reference for the implementation of the Nature Law in the country.



**FIGURE 2: MEMBER LOCATIONS**



- |  |   |                            |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Indigenous Desert Alliance, Australia | <b>Resilient Reefs</b>                              | <b>LandScale</b>           |
| <b>2</b> Canada's Boreal Forest                | <b>6</b> Ningaloo Coast, Australia                  | <b>10</b> LandScale Mexico |
| <b>3</b> Alto Mayo Landscape, Peru             | <b>7</b> Lagoons of New Caledonia                   | <b>11</b> LandScale Peru   |
| <b>4</b> Chile Conservation Corridor           | <b>8</b> Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, Belize |                            |
| <b>5</b> Valdivia Coastal Reserve, Chile       | <b>9</b> Rock Islands Southern Lagoon, Palau        |                            |

# 2.2 OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The Ampliseed network was designed around **three key assumptions:**

- **Each project holds part of the puzzle.**  
No single project has all the answers, but together they could learn from each other's experiences, challenges and breakthroughs.
- **Peer learning outperforms top-down training.**  
Practitioners learn best from others facing similar challenges, in a safe, trusting and reciprocal environment. Change spreads through connection: when people are linked through real relationships, knowledge and influence flow more easily, and ideas scale faster.
- **Indigenous stewardship leads to enduring environmental resilience.** Cultural stewardship practices are guided by long-standing knowledge systems, intergenerational responsibility, and deep place-based ethics. A culture-first model prioritises Indigenous governance, values, and ways of knowing as the foundation for environmental decision-making, rather than retrofitting them into externally defined frameworks.

We applied these assumptions through a three-part model:

- 1. Collect and share knowledge:** curate practical insights exchange across the network.
- 2. Embed learnings and amplify:** Facilitate tailored trainings, peer reflection, and share insights to inspire others.
- 3. Weave a connected community of practice:** Build trust, identity, and collaborative culture.

We envisioned that active member engagement – through exchange of ideas, co-created knowledge products, and support – would strengthen leadership and capacity, spawn new solutions, and ultimately contribute to system-level change (Figure 3).

This systems-thinking approach draws on established and global best practices in learning theory<sup>5</sup>: effective collaborative learning networks can produce individual and collective outcomes that ripple out to influence policies, practices, and long-term social-ecological impacts.

Our task was to cultivate the conditions for those outcomes to emerge.

In its first year (2019–2020), Ampliseed operated as a 13-month pilot. We worked closely with the seven project teams to co-design activities, fully expecting to learn and adapt as we went. Early on, two guiding insights emerged from members:

***“the knowledge is in the network”*** and ***“the greatest value comes from face-to-face connection”***.

These insights shaped our approach. Rather than looking externally for subject matter experts, we prioritised peer-to-peer exchanges where Ampliseed members could share their knowledge. Where possible, we convened in person to build trust through personal relationships – acknowledging that in complex, place-based work, strong human connections are the glue that holds partnerships together.

As relationships deepened and collaborative work matured, it became clear that shifting systems required not just on-the-ground innovation but also influence at policy and funding levels. Members recognised that their insights and lived experience held value beyond their local contexts, and that Ampliseed could play a role in amplifying these voices to shape broader narratives, priorities, and decisions.

After the third year of the program, we then added a fourth assumption to our theory:

**4. Collective advocacy increases credibility, voice, and influence in policy and finance.**

And we began integrating advocacy as a new dimension of our work, co-developing strategies to raise visibility, inform policy, and support systemic change aligned with member-led visions.



***“The knowledge is in the network”***  
– Key observation from the first Annual Partners Workshop hosted in March 2020 on Zoom.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. *Communities of Practice* (Wenger, 1988); *Social Learning Theory* (Bandura, 1977); *Collective Impact and Backbone Strategy* (Kania & Kramer, 2011); *The Collaborative Learning Theory of Change* (Research for Development, 2019).

## FIGURE 3: THEORY OF CHANGE

Mapping how Ampliseed's activities lead to our desired outcomes.

	Connected Community of Practice	Adaptive Leaders Drive Change	High-Impact Conservation Projects	Sector Influence & Investment (Advocacy)
BIGGER THAN US GOAL ("our why")	Conservation flourishes through collective leadership; ecosystems and communities thrive			
WHAT FUTURE SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE	Globally linked network fuels collective action	Collective leadership is mainstreamed	Projects deliver measurable gains for nature & people	Financing & policy favour Indigenous-led & community-driven solutions
5 YEAR OUTCOMES	Open knowledge-sharing & cross-project collaborations	Adaptive leadership practices embedded in projects	Sector recognises and supports culture-first approaches	Flow of funding grows to projects & supportive policies informed by Ampliseed insights
3-4 YEAR OUTCOMES	~300 engaged members; active cross-project knowledge and best practice sharing	Leaders apply skills in teams and share insights with each other	Indigenous groups and project partners engage in peer exchanges, sharing knowledge	Ampliseed voices shape sector dialogues & events
1-2 YEAR OUTCOMES	Community of practice launched; relationships built	Members build skills via learning activities	Indigenous-led conservation frameworks identified and shared	Policy briefs & storytelling raise visibility
ACTIVITIES ('what we do')	Partner workshops, working groups & online portal	Training & coaching workshops	Peer exchanges	Advocacy at global events & insights reports
STRATEGY	Cross-pollinate solutions	Grow skills & leadership capacity	Support Indigenous knowledge	Share stories of impact
ASSUMPTIONS	Each project holds part of the puzzle; by learning together, the network builds more effective, adaptable solutions.	Peer learning and supported experimentation build skills and leadership faster than top-down training	Supporting a culture-first model leads to enduring conservation outcomes.	Collective advocacy increases credibility, voice, and influence.

### Definitions:

**Adaptive Leadership:** a leadership approach that mobilises people to tackle complex challenges by continuously learning and adjusting in dynamic context.

**Community of Practice:** a group of people who share a common concern, and improve their practice through regular interaction, trust-building and knowledge exchange

**Culture-First Model:** an approach to conservation that centres Indigenous cultural values, knowledge systems, and governance, ensuring solutions are grounded in community priorities and stewardship practices.

**Peer Exchange:** Structured opportunities for practitioners to learn from each other's experiences and solutions

## 2.3 EVOLUTION

Following the successful 18 month pilot we were ready to go! However, 2020 had other plans, with the COVID-19 pandemic halting travel and our best laid plans for in-person gatherings were cancelled.

But Ampliseed’s adaptive spirit kicked in. We rapidly stood up virtual working groups, webinars and an online member portal to keep knowledge flowing across the network. We held training sessions within the first months of the pandemic supporting people in the shift to virtual connection, and received feedback from our members that this positioned them ahead of the curve in the shift to remote working. Those difficult months proved the resilience and flexibility of our community – and, looking for a silver lining, the shift to virtual formats actually widened participation at times (for instance, allowing more team members to join remote sessions than could have travelled). As conditions improved, we resumed in-person gatherings, more convinced than ever of their value.

Across five years, Ampliseed combined virtual connectivity peppered with regular face-to-face immersions, creating a rhythm that balanced global reach and local depth. We grew from a more transactional information sharing network connecting seven core projects with less than 40 members in 2019 to a leadership and learning community of 157 active members in 2024, including an expanding circle of “friends” and other knowledge holders.

Ampliseed’s membership spanned Indigenous rangers and community leaders, conservation scientists and executive managers, policy and finance experts – each contributing unique knowledge.

***“The Projects [we] are working on are looking at systemic change, launching intergenerational change, disrupting systems...we are not doing business as usual”*** as one project director put it.

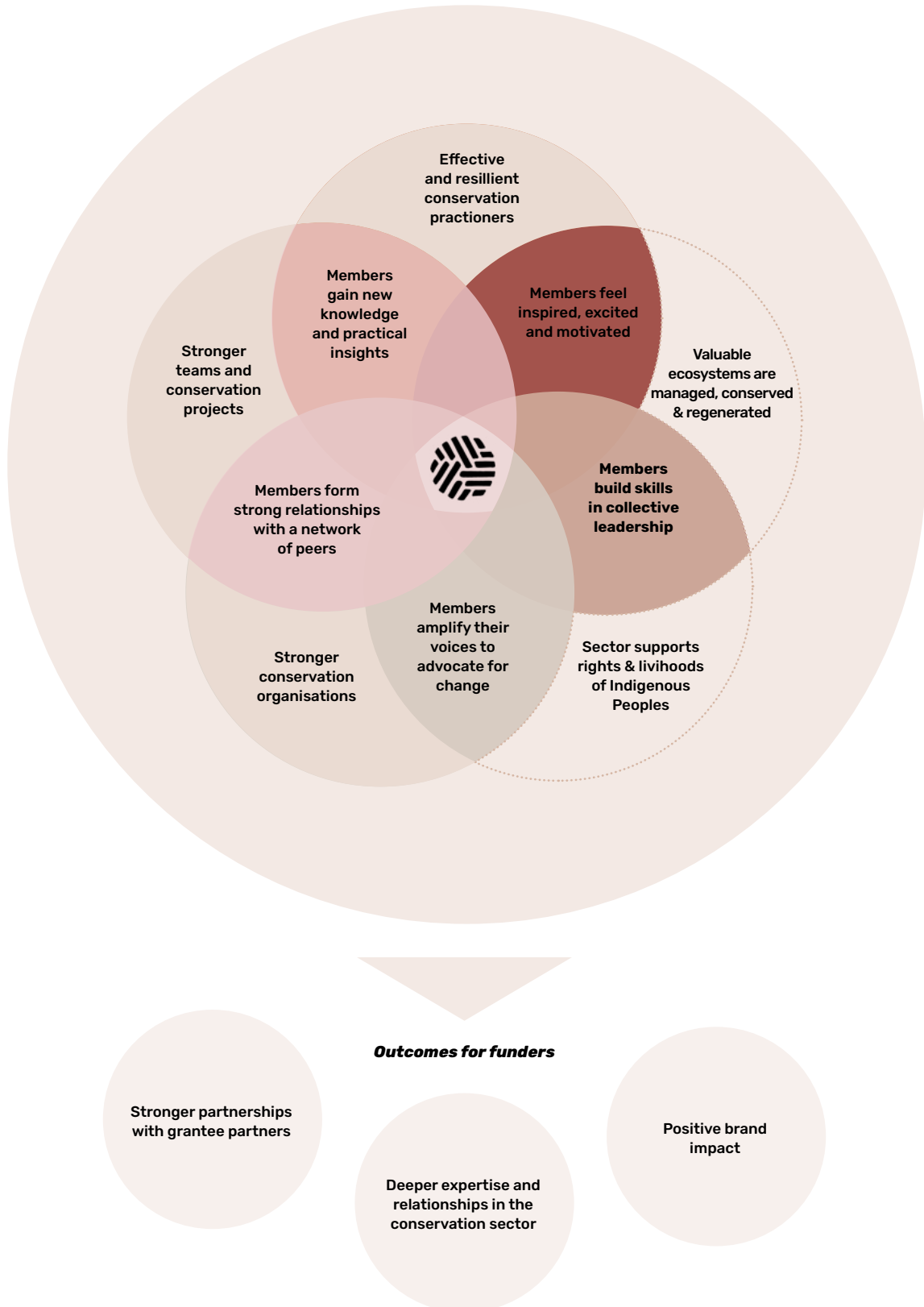
Ampliseed became the connective tissue linking these change-makers, enabling them to ***“think outside the box”*** together.

Links to reports and papers with more detailed information are available in Appendix A.



## FIGURE 4: IMPACT MODEL

How Ampliseed's activities drive measurable, system-wide change.



### Legend:



**Connected Community of Practice**



**Impact on member projects and organisations**



**Broader impact**

# 3. SYSTEMIC CHANGE THROUGH CONNECTION

A sense of collective purpose that transcends individual project experiences.

# 3.1 EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS


At its heart, Ampliseed is about people. The most tangible impact of the network has been on its members as individual leaders and professionals. By regularly engaging with peers facing similar challenges, members gained confidence, skills, and broadened perspectives.

In survey after survey (we conducted more than 10), participants affirmed that Ampliseed helped them **connect, reflect, and adapt** their work: for example, over 90% of members in 2020 said the network helped connect them with peers, and almost 70% said it helped them reflect on and adapt learnings in their own context. One member explained that even when new knowledge wasn't applied immediately, ***"the example sits in my memory and makes for better project delivery and management...it's been such a rich experience."***

This kind of latent capacity building – ideas in the back of one's mind ready to deploy when the moment is right – is a hallmark of communities of practice. Members build confidence as adaptive leaders who can transfer insights across contexts.

Through shared experiences (be it traveling together in the field or brainstorming in late-night Zoom calls), we forged bonds across teams and organisations. Members often spoke of a feeling of camaraderie. As one participant put it, *"Ampliseed membership gives the feeling of being part of a 'team' of different conservation initiatives, which is fundamental to build trust and open opportunities for learning and working together."* This psychological safety and solidarity enabled more open sharing of failures and honest lessons, further accelerating learning.

The significance of investing in human connections cannot be overstated. In complex systems, relationships are channels for resource flows – including information, influence, and emotional support.

 ***"It's easy to feel isolated in our work, but this exchange connected us to a larger movement...that connection is invaluable."***  
– Member reflection during the 2022 exchange at Uluru, Australia.

## COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A **network** is a group of people or organisations connected by a shared interest or purpose, who mainly exchange information, ideas, and/or resources.

Over time, as relationships deepen and members begin to collaborate around shared challenges or areas of expertise, a network can evolve into a **community of practice**, where people not only share information but also actively learn together, develop new knowledge, solve problems, and improve their skills through ongoing interaction and collaboration.

These are the kind of cross-boundary linkages that simply would not happen without a network facilitator curating the space. One workshop reflection noted that ***"inter-project connections wouldn't happen without a facilitator... this role is needed to weave lasting relationships."***

It's a powerful insight: **active network facilitation is the catalyst that transforms a collection of projects into a true community of practice.**

Beyond professional connections, there's a deeply personal side to Ampliseed's impact. Working in remote, challenging contexts, many conservation practitioners can feel isolated or under immense pressure. Being a member of a network like Ampliseed offers moral support and inspiration. Knowing that ***"we're all working towards the same goal - protecting our planet"***<sup>6</sup> gave people renewed energy and resilience. The motivational spark from seeing each other's dedication – and realising ***"the joy of working with [local] communities is the same across projects, despite differences in scale"***<sup>7</sup> the personal connections and lived experience stories keeps burnout at bay and optimism alive.

This is consistent with social learning theory, which suggests that observation, imitation, and modelling are most effective in trusted environments (Bandura, 1977). Ampliseed's success in this area underscores the principle that **relationships are infrastructure.**

<sup>6</sup> Member reflection, 2024 Partners' Workshop and Exchange, Peru.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## 3.2 BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

As members learned and grew more connected, their parent organisations benefited. Concrete examples include:

- **Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E):** Teams applied social network analysis tools, shared indicators, and “Most Significant Change” story techniques learned through the M&E Working group, which improved project management and accountability back to funders and communities.
- **Sustainable Finance Models:** Multiple projects began exploring carbon credit and impact investment opportunities after peer learning sessions and expert trainings. By collectively scanning for innovative financing, projects identified potential new revenue streams and partnerships enhanced their financial sustainability.
- **Indigenous Governance:** Ideas about power-sharing, co-management, and Indigenous-led monitoring were shared from Australia to Canada to Peru. This cross-pollination helped projects adopt more inclusive and equitable governance approaches, ultimately strengthening community ownership and long-term success<sup>8</sup>.
- **Communications & Advocacy:** Members shifted from “evidence-first” reporting to “story-first” framing, influenced by the Story-Powered Data training and storytelling showcases. One member remarked that they “refocused... reflections on community rather than economics” when telling their story, which attracted new allies to their project.

Across such examples, we see a pattern: practical solutions and insights spread through the network and were integrated into diverse local contexts. By facilitating cross-project borrowing, Ampliseed created what members described as “*collective efficiency*”: avoiding duplication, shortening learning curves, and raising the quality of work.

This aligns with Wenger’s theory of communities of practice, where knowledge becomes embedded through repeated exposure and social reinforcement. The slow accretion of these marginal gains can tilt a project from good to great.



*“Even if I don’t apply the knowledge straight away, it sits in my memory...makes for better project management.”*  
– Member reflection in the 2021 Annual Learning Report.

Moreover, by connecting project teams, Ampliseed facilitated opportunities for joint initiatives that members recognised would have been difficult for any organisation to pursue alone. For example, in 2021 leaders from the 10 Deserts Project, Chile Corridor, and BHP Foundation co-presented lessons at a private lands conservation conference, shaping emerging policy. Members were subsequently invited back as independent experts and keynote speakers. In 2022, all seven projects came together as a united delegation to the UN’s Biodiversity COP15 – an effort that was only possible through the network’s coordination.

Participants reported that in several cases this allowed them to forge direct channels with national policy-makers that led to involvement in shaping new legislation, and in at least one case re-engineering funding proposals to demonstrate alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework helped to secure a new grant.

These collective efforts extended each project’s reach and voice beyond their individual scope. The **shared identity** as Ampliseed members encouraged an attitude of “we’re all in this together”, prompting resource sharing. There were cases of one project lending staff time or expertise to another through these network connections (for instance, an M&E specialist from one partner organisation advised another project pro bono). **This inter-project solidarity represents a systemic shift from competition for funding (a common dynamic in the NGO world) to collaboration for impact** – a cultural change that funders greatly value.

<sup>8</sup> 2024 Partners’ Workshop and Exchange, Peru.

## 3.3 EMERGING FIELD-LEVEL INFLUENCE

Zooming out further, Ampliseed's networked collaboration has begun to influence the wider field of conservation and development practice. While five years is a short timeframe to fully realise systems-level outcomes, we can see early signs of broader impact:

- **Practice recognition:** By elevating member stories to global platforms, Ampliseed helped demonstrate the effectiveness of Indigenous- and community-led approaches to large audiences. Our side event at COP15 in 2022, "*Culture First: putting culture at the front of conservation,*" was covered in media and highlighted how centring Indigenous values leads to enduring ecosystems resilience. The collective of local voices and place based stories contributed to a narrative shift in the conservation sector, validating what members have long known - that supporting Indigenous peoples and local communities (IP & LCs) is essential for biodiversity outcomes. The network's consistent messaging and case studies showing successful community enterprises, co-management, and cross-cultural governance are influencing peers and policymakers to adopt similar approaches. In essence, Ampliseed is seeding "global public good" knowledge products and awareness that extend beyond the initial projects.
- **Policy impact:** On a policy level, the joint presence of our members at global events brought grassroots knowledge directly to decision-makers. For example, at COP15, Ampliseed members interacted with delegates and participated in discussions around implementing the new Global Biodiversity Framework to better secure Indigenous land rights and funding. On their return home, several projects reported their experience at this event had opened up new avenues to access national funding as they were able to demonstrate links between local action and global impact. This kind of influence is hard to measure, but it underscores how Ampliseed became a platform for advocacy amplifying local lessons into systemic change conversations.
- **Model replication:** Funders and NGOs began asking how to replicate Ampliseed's approach. As BHP Foundation sought to embed similar practices across their portfolio, elements of Ampliseed have since been applied in water resilience networks and other BHP Foundation initiatives. Another organisation reported taking the lessons from our *Scaling and Systems Change* training series and sharing them throughout their international programs. This is an example of scaling out the approach: the practices incubated within Ampliseed were adopted by global organisations in other areas of their work, potentially benefiting dozens more projects.

The learning here is that strategic collaboration creates ripple effects. When multiple respected projects present a unified voice – and share openly about what works and what doesn't – their collective influence grows.

But what did we actually do to catalyse these outcomes? In the next section, we open up Ampliseed's playbook of activities – workshops, exchanges, working groups, trainings – and distil the strategic insights and lessons from each. These 'learning-in-action' stories turn the intangible impacts outlined above into concrete, replicable practices. Every lesson captured here is reflected in the Ampliseed Toolkit, where you'll find more detail on how to implement these approaches with ready-to-use checklists and templates.

# 4. PEER LEARNING IN ACTION

A tapestry of activities, carefully  
designed and continually refined.

# 4.1 IN-PERSON GATHERINGS

## 4.1.1 APPROACH

Ampliseed’s face-to-face convenings – Annual Partner Workshops for the full network and focused Field Exchanges for smaller cross-project cohorts – were consistently rated as the most valued by members. These in-person events were the engine room for peer learning, trust-building, and collective action. The two formats share a common DNA: co-design with members, immersive site visits, a deliberate blend of structure and spontaneity, and a priority on centring Indigenous knowledge and local context.

Partner workshops were about convening and connecting project teams as a community of practice, and the immersive field exchange programs were about diving deep in smaller, cross-project cohorts with a focus on Indigenous knowledge exchange..

Format	Who & When	Core Features
<b>Partner Workshops</b>	Open to all members, held once a year. (*Virtual 2020-2022 due to Covid, in-person otherwise.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-5 day programmes</li> <li>• Co-designed agenda</li> <li>• Peer-led sessions, ‘failfest’ dinner, facilitated dialogues</li> <li>• Place-based learning &amp; field trips</li> </ul>
<b>Field Exchanges</b>	6-12 participants from 2-4 projects Co-organised with host organisation Held to coincide with other events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-day learning journeys hosted by a member project</li> <li>• Hands-on exposure to Indigenous frameworks &amp; local practices</li> <li>• Facilitated reflection sessions</li> </ul>



Dimension	Outcomes
<b>Knowledge &amp; Skills</b>	Share hands-on techniques and practical project tools (e.g. community fire management and enterprise models), monitoring & evaluation tools, governance templates.
<b>Networks &amp; Trust</b>	Long van rides, canopy climbs, and coffee tastings forged bonds that later deepened cross project learning and peer mentoring.
<b>Leadership Growth</b>	Emerging leaders facilitated sessions or served as hosts, uplifting confidence and visibility.
<b>Systems Perspective</b>	Seeing similar challenges across vastly different contexts reframed “local problems” as systemic patterns ripe for collective influence and advocacy.
<b>Lasting Impact</b>	Alumni describe exchanges as “turning points”; ideas harvested often resurface months later in project adaptations or new collaborations.

## 4.1.2 CHALLENGES

Running international peer exchanges is rewarding but not without challenges.

**Local partner empowerment.** One early lesson was designing exchanges that truly empower participants rather than feeling directed from the top-down. In the pilot exchange (2019), the Pollination Foundation co-ordination team designed and facilitated the entire program. By 2022, we had adapted – local partner organisations like the Indigenous Desert Alliance co-designed and led parts of the exchange program, with Ampliseed support focusing on coordination and logistics.

**Precision planning, real-time agility.** Ampliseed handles travel advice, lodging, visa, risk assessment, and briefings for exchange trips, ensuring that logistical hurdles (which can be significant in remote areas) do not fall on participants. This behind-the-scenes support has been key to overcoming practical barriers and enabling diverse participation. In essence, Ampliseed’s approach to challenges has been adaptive and member-centred. As one report noted, the Ampliseed team learned to “be flexible by adapting and responding to feedback while continuing to maintain structure and program continuity”. This meant listening to member needs (for pacing, provision of translation, etc.), adjusting plans on the fly, and sitting comfortably in ambiguity.



### PARTNER CONVENINGS

Ampliseed’s cross-project exchanges and collaborative partner workshops have been crucibles of learning and trust-building. They taught us the importance of immersive, well-facilitated, and member-driven convenings in cultivating a strong community of practice. These gatherings set the stage for more targeted strategy shares and thematic deep-dives that followed.



### 4.1.3 INSIGHTS AND LESSONS

Exchange participants consistently reported transformative personal and professional benefits. Stepping outside of their day-to-day context leads to **“leaps in cultural competency,”** combining personal growth with professional breakthroughs and broader perspectives on conservation challenges. Several participants noted that meeting peers in person enabled **“real conversations that just weren’t possible in a remote format”**, fostering trust and understanding across different projects. These collaborative workshops yielded rich lessons in how to foster collaboration and align strategy:

- **Face-to-face matters:** Members consistently said the most meaningful relationships and insights emerged during “time together traveling in vehicles, sharing meals and walking” which led to “rich conversation, knowledge sharing and enduring connections”. Participants left in person events feeling part of a global community of practice and “something bigger”, with relationships that continued to deepen through follow-up collaborations. These sensory, human experiences create stronger cognitive and emotional anchors for learning. This insight is not new, but we underscore it: budget and plan for in-person convenings when possible, especially at critical trust-building phases.
- **Structured agenda + unstructured time = value.** The best learning happened when workshops balanced co-designed structure with space for organic conversation. Our workshops typically started with field immersion (to ground everyone in a shared experience) and then moved to structured and co-designed topical sessions. The takeaway: design for emergence. Have clear objectives for knowledge exchange, but don’t over-script – allow members’ curiosity and relationships to guide where discussions go.
- **Empowering voices and leadership:** Workshops served as a leadership development arena for many participants. Project staff who might not normally present on a global stage got to facilitate sessions or share their expertise among international peers, boosting their confidence. This peer affirmation can be especially meaningful for Indigenous and local community representatives, who sometimes feel their knowledge isn’t valued in mainstream forums. However, as one participant noted, “Indigenous peoples are expected to have all the solutions [and be successful entrepreneurs], while no other communities have to meet such high expectations” – a critique that reminds us to be careful to support Indigenous members without overburdening them.
- **Safe spaces unlock honesty:** A subtle but powerful lesson from member feedback is the importance of safe spaces to share honestly. The willingness of partner organisations to openly share failures or challenges indicates a high level of trust. This culture didn’t happen automatically; it was cultivated by continually listening to members and responding to feedback about what environment people needed to feel comfortable.



#### CROSS-PROJECT EXCHANGES

Immersion builds empathy and reframes perspectives: There is simply no substitute for walking in someone else’s shoes (or across their landscape) to understand their context.

# FIELD EXCHANGES

## CASE STUDY: IMMERSING IN CULTURAL LANDSCAPES, AUSTRALIA

### Uluru, Australia – November 2022

In November 2022, Ampliseed members from four project teams (Australia, Chile, Canada, Palau) travelled to Uluru and the surrounding desert lands of Central Australia for an exchange in the living cultural landscape of the Australian outback, hosted by the Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA). Participants met on the red sands of Uluru, where 375 Indigenous rangers from across Australia had convened for the annual IDA Rangers Conference. Amid this enormous gathering, Ampliseed's visiting members were invited to present and join field excursions, immediately dissolving formal boundaries. As one participant noted, *"navigating through the vibrant landscapes of the Northern Territory together unearthed a wealth of life-enriching experiences, seamlessly blending professional development with personal growth"*.

After the conference, the real immersion began. The exchange group embarked on a three-day expedition through the traditional lands of the Pitjantjatjara, Luritja, and Arrernte peoples, travelling overland from Yulara to Alice Springs. Indigenous ranger guides led them along ancient tracks, explaining the significance of the places and demonstrating "right way" fire management – small-scale controlled burns set with drip torches to reduce wildfire risk. Participants witnessed how cultural burning is not about carbon or funding (many burns are done with minimal resources), but about *"reconnecting people with their country, maintaining cultural practices, and ensuring the health of the land"*.

Throughout the journey, **knowledge flowed in all directions**. The visiting members experienced the importance of patience, listening, and humility in a landscape where Indigenous knowledge is paramount. Local hosts, in turn, were eager to hear about the visitors' projects, finding common ground in challenges like sustaining youth engagement and managing climate impacts. This exchange underscored that while contexts differ, the foundations of resilient landscapes are shared – community leadership, intergenerational knowledge sharing, and trust. As the exchange wrapped up, one participant reflected, ***"It's easy to feel isolated in our work, but this exchange connected us to a larger movement. We're all working towards the same goal – protecting our planet – and that connection is invaluable."***

The Australia exchange is an example of how immersive, place-based learning can *"transcend professional boundaries,"* inspiring and recharging participants as it builds international connections.



Field trip with BHPF to the 10 Deserts Project @ Pollination Foundation



## CASE STUDY: EXPLORING COMMUNITY-BASED ENTERPRISE, PERU

### Alto Mayo, Peru – May 2024

In May 2024, Pollination Foundation facilitated an exchange in Alto Mayo, Peru, a biodiversity-rich region where Indigenous communities are pioneering new livelihood models. Co-hosted by Conservation International Peru and local Indigenous organisations, the exchange included Ampliseed members from Canada and Australia alongside technical experts from South America and Awajún leaders to focus on **community-based enterprise and nature markets**. The Alto Mayo landscape provided a living classroom on balancing economic needs with conservation. Participants visited rainforest communities to see initiatives like women-led medicinal plant gardens, vanilla and cacao agroforestry, and ecotourism in action. One highlight was the *Tajimat Pujut* project, which integrates traditional land stewardship with income generation. Exchange participants walked through vanilla plots under the forest canopy and met growers' cooperatives, directly experiencing how valuing cultural knowledge can unlock sustainable livelihoods.

The Peru exchange also delved into **governance and finance innovations** that underpin these enterprises. Through workshops, the group examined how carbon credits and biodiversity funding might be practically leveraged by Indigenous communities as a way to flow more finance to local stewardship activities. This experience built on discussions from Ampliseed's Carbon & Biodiversity Markets working group. The Alto Mayo context, with an active REDD+ forest carbon project, offered valuable lessons.

Local leaders shared about their experiences: the importance of clear land tenure, the challenge of ensuring community consent and benefit-sharing, and the need to keep culture at the centre of any market solution. The **"Culture First"** principle was emphasised throughout. As one Awajún elder put it, *"for any carbon project to succeed, it must reflect the priorities and cultural heritage of the community"*. This reinforced a key systemic insight – effective innovation springs from local values, not external top-down agendas.

The exchange in Peru was not just technical but deeply personal. Traveling together in the Amazon, participants forged bonds through shared adventure – long bus rides, hikes to remote villages, and navigating a river trip through a flooded forest. These moments built empathy and solidarity across continents. By the end of the Peru exchange, a strong sense of common purpose had emerged. Participants left with practical ideas (from establishing Indigenous-governed funds to pursuing new partnerships seeded during the trip), and equally importantly, with a renewed belief that communities can drive enterprise solutions that heal people and planet. Alto Mayo's lesson was clear: **empowering Indigenous leadership in enterprise** – supporting "good living" initiatives on their terms – is a resilient model worthy of replication.



Amanda from Nature United at the Nuwas Forest (women's forest) Peru where we discussed ecotourism and sustainable enterprise © Bill Salazar

# 4.2 THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

Running in parallel to the annual workshops and exchanges, Ampliseed facilitated multiple thematic working groups and training modules to sustain ongoing learning on priority topics identified as cross-cutting through monthly project catch-ups. We used these to maintain a cadence of knowledge-sharing that kept the network activated from month-to-month, especially during the long stretches when we couldn't meet in person.

## 4.2.1 APPROACH

Ampliseed hosted online working groups focused on key topics, including:

- Carbon & Biodiversity Markets
- Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)
- Indigenous Leadership & Empowerment
- Community-Based Enterprise
- Team Support & Training
- Strategic Communications

Groups met regularly to share tools, dilemmas, and guest insights. Meeting cadences changed depending on member priorities and availability.

Throughout these discussions, members also collectively tackled the challenge of **financing innovation** – the need to sustain conservation and community outcomes beyond philanthropic funding. This led to practical actions, including targeted training and the co-creation of the Conservation Financing Strategies report which showcased multiple different financing case studies. Ampliseed also facilitated connections with innovative funders and partner organisations, guided by a global donor and investor scan we prepared for members that focused on Indigenous rights and nature-based solutions.

 **WORKING GROUPS**

Working groups create a structured way to harvest collective intelligence. They accelerate learning on complex topics and build mini communities of practice that cut across geography and organisation.

## 4.2.2 CHALLENGES

- **Time and Bandwidth.** Even with strong interest, members often struggled to attend regular sessions. “Real work” obligations meant some couldn't show up consistently. We addressed this by inviting members to join the topics they most needed, recording sessions, and keeping sessions highly relevant.
- **Translating Knowledge to Action.** Great ideas surfaced in calls, but needed structured follow-up to ensure they were adapted locally. Simple post-event mechanisms (shared notes, group chats) improved real-world uptake.

## 4.2.3 INSIGHTS AND LESSONS

Over five years of hosting more than 30 thematic working group sessions, several key takeaways emerged regarding member engagement and the outcomes of these efforts.

- **Relevance drives participation.** The most active groups focused on topics members were actively grappling with, like finance (how to participate in nature markets) and monitoring and evaluation. This reinforces that continuous listening (via surveys, feedback loops) is essential to keep the network's offerings aligned with what members find valuable.
- **Small groups, big impact.** The working groups demonstrated that small, focused gatherings can yield outsized benefits. Members reported that these groups helped build relationships and trust, and they became incubators for ideas that later scaled up to the whole network (the finance and storytelling trainings both originated from working group insights).

**Peer exchange works best when grounded in real examples.** Members valued case-based discussions over theory. Integrating leadership development also empowered members to **“not only acquire knowledge but also to apply it with the confidence and influence necessary to create systemic change.”**

# 4.3 TARGETED TRAINING

## 4.3.1 APPROACH

In response to skills identified as gaps by network members, Ampliseed developed training series on.

- Conservation Financing
- Story-Powered Data
- Scaling & Systems Change
- Strategic Communications.

Trainings were designed as multi-session virtual workshops that combined subject-matter expert input with peer-to-peer learning, and each contributed to the network’s capacity.

## 4.3.2 CHALLENGES

- **Language and Inclusion.** Operating mainly in English initially sidelined some Spanish-speaking members. Budgeting for bilingual materials, interpretation, and small-group time ensures equitable participation.
- **Upholding Cultural Protocols Across Contexts.** Respectful engagement demanded sensitivity to local practices – this can be time-consuming but is essential for authentic partnerships. Activities are richer and more context-appropriate when project teams shape agendas, rather than external experts.

## 4.3.3 INSIGHTS AND LESSONS

- **Demand for training is high.** Members consistently asked for more training and often shared content with wider teams.
- **Peer learning enhances formal training.** Members consistently noted that hearing each other’s experiences was as valuable as the expert content. Targeted trainings were pivotal in embedding capacity in the network, equipping members to continue driving change independent of Ampliseed’s support.
- **Storytelling is a gateway skill.** Learning to frame messages with emotion and clarity boosted members’ confidence in fundraising, advocacy, and community reporting.



### LINKS TO LEARNING INSIGHTS & RESOURCES

From Noise to Narrative: Tools, Techniques and Insights for Conservation Communication in a Digital World (2024). [https://pollinationgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Amp\\_Comms-Report-081124-Fa.pdf](https://pollinationgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Amp_Comms-Report-081124-Fa.pdf)

Empowering Indigenous Women’s Voices in Project Design and Governance (2024). <https://pollinationgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Indigenous-Womens-Case-Studies-Oct-2024.pdf>

Scaling and Systems Change: Fundamentals, Insights and Case Study Reviews (2023). <https://pollinationgroup.com/global-perspectives/scaling-systems-change/>

Conservation Financing Strategies: Key Lessons and Case Studies (2022). <https://pollinationgroup.com/global-perspectives/conservation-financing-strategies/>

- **Actionable knowledge products build a legacy.** A tangible outcome of Ampliseed’s member engagement has been the creation of toolkits, reports, and case studies that captured lessons learned. These products serve a dual purpose: consolidating knowledge for members, and amplifying that knowledge to external audiences and future initiatives. Knowledge capture can multiply the impact of a time-bound program.

# 4.4 STORYTELLING AND STORYLAB

Stories have a unique way of sparking empathy and imagination and conveying complex information in a memorable way—qualities that data alone can't fully capture. Recognising this power, Ampliseed placed storytelling at the heart of the network, championing narrative approaches that are already flourishing within many communities.

## 4.4.1 APPROACH

- **Storytelling as a tool for change.** From training programs like Story-Powered Data to learning about art-as-reporting from the Indigenous NPY Women's Council, Ampliseed leaned into the knowledge that storytelling was already part of many of our members' cultural fabric. This came through in the Story-Powered Data training and was reinforced by sharing examples of creative storytelling already happening within projects. For instance, during the 2019 exchange, members learned how the Indigenous NPY Women's Council in Australia had painted a large artwork as a "visual report" to convey outcomes of a government-funded project – an alternative form of storytelling that resonated deeply with community members. Ampliseed captured some of these in our Inspiring Stories webinar series, where presenters shared unique storytelling practices like using augmented reality for Indigenous stories, and raising awareness through community radio segments. The takeaway is that storytelling is already embedded in cultural practice, and by recognising and elevating these methods, projects can engage stakeholders in more meaningful ways.
- **Introducing StoryLab.** Building on this, we conceived the idea of StoryLab as a dedicated initiative to systematically harvest and share stories of change from across the network. In 2022, discussions in working groups and the evaluation recommended exploring this in more depth. The Communications working group and other Ampliseed members worked with user experience experts from Academy Xi to determine their needs, and we determined that a solution would need to address both the use case for communities (i.e. ownership and control of their own stories), as well as benefits for grant makers (i.e. decolonising grant reporting), as well as other parties looking to engage with communities and their stories (e.g. journalists, policy makers). Early pilots with a video storytelling tool called Folktale showed how authentic narratives, captured on mobile devices in the field, could breathe life into traditional reporting.

## 4.4.2 CHALLENGES

- **Time and capacity.** Time constraints emerged as the most significant barrier to innovative solutions like StoryLab, limiting the ability of field staff to learn and consistently utilise the tool alongside existing duties. The competing priorities of communications staff, reliance on intermediaries, and pre-existing reporting methods further restricted widespread adoption.
- **Aligning with project timelines.** Some of the most meaningful stories emerged spontaneously in the field. Yet project phases or reporting schedules did not always align with these moments, resulting in missed opportunities to capture impactful stories.

## 4.4.3 INSIGHTS AND LESSONS

- **Celebrate cultural practices.** Storytelling practices are already woven into local traditions – like paintings, dance and oral histories. Recognising and elevating these practices can strengthen relationships and deepen community ownership.
- **Actively create spaces for sharing.** Platforms like StoryLab and Inspiring Stories webinars allow members to exchange ideas, highlight innovative and important practices, and keep the storytelling spark alive. Informal opportunities like a photo-sharing week motivated members to share personal stories and build stronger cross-project connections.



### PROTECT PRIVACY & ENSURE CONSENT

Before recording, photographing, or sharing any story, obtain clear, written consent\* that honours local cultural protocols and national regulations. Build platform guidelines that spell out data security measures, consent-use limits and the right to withdraw at any time. Ensure that community members decide how their narratives travel.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Free, Prior and Informed Consent tools are helpful, e.g. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/publications/2016/10/free-prior-and-informed-consent-an-indigenous-peoples-right-and-a-good-practice-for-local-communities-fao/>

# 4.5 INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

Indigenous leadership was a central pillar of Ampliseed’s philosophy. From the outset, many projects in the network had a strong Indigenous Peoples focus (supporting First Nations in Canada, Aboriginal rangers in Australia, Indigenous communities in Peru, and Traditional Owners in the Pacific). Ampliseed contributed by creating space for these Indigenous leaders to connect with and learn from each other, and ensuring the network itself modelled a rights-based, inclusive approach.

## 4.5.1 APPROACH

- **Elevating “Culture First”.** At the UN COP15 Biodiversity Conference in 2022, Ampliseed members hosted a side event titled “Culture First: how does support and funding that puts culture at the front of conservation create enduring outcomes?” This theme – drawn directly from network experiences – highlights that projects grounded in Indigenous cultural values tend to be more sustainable and effective. This guiding principle informed everything from project design advice to how the network itself operated (acknowledging country at meetings, etc.).
- **Indigenous Leadership & Empowerment Working Group.** Indigenous-focused working groups identified existing frameworks and tools, and directly contributed to publication of a report and several case studies on supporting Indigenous women leaders. The report included case studies from Ampliseed members and recognised that within many projects, Indigenous women face systemic barriers to participation and support. We developed our Exchange program with an Indigenous focus, deliberately ensuring leadership roles were held by Indigenous partner organisations to showcase the skills and perspectives of those most connected to the land.

## 4.5.2 CHALLENGES

- **Cultural safety.** For non-Indigenous organisations engaging with Indigenous Peoples, creating culturally safe environments – spaces where Indigenous protocols, traditions, and knowledge systems are respected without judgment – is a key lesson. Cultural safety goes beyond well-intentioned gestures; it requires ongoing learning, open communication, and a willingness to adapt. Clear guidance, shared expectations, and consistent listening are essential to ensuring Indigenous Peoples to bring their full voice to the table.

## 4.5.3 INSIGHTS AND LESSONS

- **Champion local leadership in global arenas.** Again and again, members observed that when culture led the way, initiatives were more resilient. Collectively taking these insights to venues like COP15 offered compelling perspectives that shaped policy conversations with Indigenous members of our delegation participating in high-level dialogues, and opened doors to broader collaboration.



# 4.6 COLLECTIVE ADVOCACY

Including advocacy as a network function assists grassroots solutions to shape top-level policies. This approach positions local knowledge as vital to international decision-making. One of the most significant learnings of our five-year journey was how powerful a unified voice of practitioners can be, and the importance of translating on-ground experience into messages that influence policy and public narratives

## 4.6.1 APPROACH

- **Evolving from Learning to Advocacy.** Initially focused on peer exchange, Ampliseed members later recognized their collective power to influence funders and policymakers. By speaking as a network at forums like the UN Biodiversity COP15, local successes became global examples.
- **Increased Visibility.** New public channels for Ampliseed (websites, social media, podcasts) helped broadcast member stories globally. This not only boosted members' confidence but also opened doors to new funding and partnership opportunities.

## 4.6.2 CHALLENGES

- **Limited Experience in Global Policy.** Many local practitioners were new to international meetings and there was potential to find it overwhelming. Coordinated guidance (logistics, policy briefs, on-ground support) was important before and during events.
- **Resource Constraints.** International advocacy takes time and funding for travel, event preparation, translation, etc. A small facilitation team had to balance these demands with the broader network's needs.

## 4.6.3 INSIGHTS AND LESSONS

- **Support Local to Global Connections.** When local champions bring real-world stories to global platforms, authenticity resonates. Training and logistical coordination empower them to step confidently into advocacy roles.
- **Use the Network's Collective Credibility.** Showing up as a unified group from diverse regions adds gravitas to policy messages – leaders listen differently to a broad, cross-cultural coalition than to a single project.

A key learning here is that credibility and place-based experience can be channelled into influence. Because Ampliseed's member's advocacy was grounded in real experiences and diverse voices, it carried an authenticity that pure policy NGOs might lack. Our members were living the issues, lending authority to their advocacy. The strategic opportunity to continue this collective advocacy is significant – even outside the formal program, this coalition of like-minded leaders can continue to champion the principles they honed together: culture first, community-led change, and collaboration across borders to tackle our planet's challenges.



Ampliseed COP15 Delegation © Natalia Mroz



# 5. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Resilience lies in the capacity to adapt.

# 5.1 NETWORKING CHALLENGES

Over the five-year program, Ampliseed encountered several notable challenges that tested the resilience and adaptability of the network. Some were anticipated (like how to keep a geographically dispersed group engaged), while others were unprecedented (the COVID-19 pandemic). Understanding these challenges provides context for the solutions Ampliseed developed and the lessons learned.

- **Sustaining member engagement:** Members were busy professionals in different parts of the world, juggling demanding roles. Time zone clashes, digital fatigue, and varying levels of organizational support affected participation. A particular challenge noted was that the benefit one gains from the network is proportional to one's ability to participate, so those who were stretched thin could fall into a cycle of less engagement and thus less benefit.
- **Governance ambiguity:** As a collaborative initiative spanning BHP Foundation (as funder), Pollination Foundation (as facilitator and implementer), and the member Projects (as co-creators and contributors), the network's distributed leadership was a strength but also a source of confusion. While the co-design ethos created a strong sense of shared ownership, clearer articulation of "who decides what" could have helped reduce confusion and increased transparency around strategy setting and accountability.
- **Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic:** The pandemic upended plans for in-person workshops and exchanges, which were initially intended to be the foundation of trust-building. It required a fast pivot to digital, and creative solutions to digital fatigue.
- **Language and cultural inclusion:** With both English and Spanish-speaking members, and a wide range of cultural practices, equitable participation required active attention. Early activities were mostly in English, which limited engagement for some. Without careful facilitation, a conversation could inadvertently sideline knowledge.
- **Information usefulness vs overload:** Members valued knowledge sharing but often found it hard to keep up. The risk was that useful content could be lost amid volume, or that overwhelmed members might disengage. If the network had stayed static (discussing the same issues in the same way), engagement would naturally drop.
- **Resource constraints:** As Ampliseed expanded its scope (e.g. into advocacy and external storytelling), the small coordination team faced competing priorities and finite resources. There were trade-offs in what could be done (for example, providing one-on-one support to each project vs. organising network-wide events) and sometimes good ideas could not be pursued due to capacity.
- **Documenting impact:** Capturing and demonstrating the impact of a learning and leadership network is challenging; traditional metrics (number of meetings, number of participants) don't fully tell the story. However, demonstrating more profound outcomes (like improved project results due to Ampliseed) is inherently subjective and difficult to attribute. This was flagged in both formal Ampliseed evaluations, which recommended using qualitative measures of member perceptions and stories of change.

# 5.2 ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

Confronted with the above challenges, Ampliseed employed a suite of adaptive strategies to ensure the network not only survived but thrived. These solutions were often iterative – tried, adjusted, and refined based on what worked – and they offer valuable lessons for managing a global learning network under dynamic conditions.

- **Flexible, member-centred engagement:** We made all activities opt-in, provided asynchronous access to recordings, and varied session times. Members could engage how and when it suited them, reducing pressure and making space for different capacities.
- **Digital innovation during Covid-19:** We rapidly launched virtual working groups, trainings, and a newsletter. The digital pivot showed that learning could continue even during disruption. Further recognising the human need for connection, we launched the “Inspiring Stories” webinar series that was explicitly about sharing personal journeys and ideas, not just work updates. This helped maintain a social fabric.
- **Language inclusion:** Ampliseed hired a Spanish-speaking program officer, translated portal content and reports, and added simultaneous interpretation in key sessions. This significantly improved inclusivity and Spanish-speaking member engagement.
- **Timezone management:** No one can change geography, but Ampliseed rotated meeting times to spread the inconvenience. We also duplicated sessions at different times when possible (for instance, offering two options for a training webinar – one convenient for the Americas, one for Asia-Pacific). Meeting summaries were posted for those who couldn’t attend. Essentially, the solution was a “design for everyone” mindset – ensuring no region was consistently disadvantaged and providing multiple pathways to engage with content.
- **Feedback loops and prioritisation:** Annual surveys, real-time polls, and informal conversations shaped the network’s development. We treated the network itself as a learning organism and evolved its structure based on evidence and feedback. When our advocacy and social media ambitions began to stretch our capacity, we paused some external-facing initiatives and refocused on core member value.



Dessert rain © Pollination Foundation

# 6. CONCLUSION

Seedlings of change, forests of the future.



Morro de Calzada, Moyobamba, Peru © Bill Salazar

# 6.1 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

Looking ahead, several strategic opportunities emerge from Ampliseed's experiences, offering guidance for future efforts to amplify impact:

- **Leveraging the Ampliseed model in new contexts:**

The Ampliseed approach – a curated, co-designed network of practitioners – has benefited members in myriad ways from personal and professional development, new technical capabilities, access to new funding, international exposure, and building new relationships. There is opportunity to replicate or adapt this model for other groups or thematic areas. For example, other funders might create similar networks among their grantees, using Ampliseed as a template for how to facilitate cross-project learning and create a community of practice. Within the environmental realm, Ampliseed's members themselves see value in continuing the network (even informally) and possibly expanding it. Broadening membership to include a wider range of partner organisations could bring in fresh ideas and allies. By opening the network to additional organisations and stakeholders, the community of practice could evolve into a community of influence, spreading the culture and lessons of Ampliseed more widely.

- **Deepening impact through focused initiatives:**

With the strong base of relationships and knowledge, targeted initiatives can be launched to tackle specific systemic barriers. One concrete opportunity is hosting more culturally safe exchange with Indigenous partner organisations – essentially continuing the exchanges with an even more ambitious scope. Another is the development of an Ampliseed Leadership Program that unites diverse participants (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) in a structured leadership journey. This could institutionalise the leadership capacity building that was happening organically, and prepare a new generation of changemakers who carry forward the network's ethos.

- **Institutionalising knowledge and tools:** Ampliseed has compiled a toolkit based on its five-year learnings – essentially “open-sourcing” the methods. This includes guidance for practitioners on how to run exchanges, working groups, and virtual engagement, drawing on what worked (and what didn't) in Ampliseed. Likewise, continuing to aggregate technical knowledge (like the Conservation Financing report) into easily accessible formats extends the impact.
- **Maintaining the momentum and community:** Strategically, even though the formal five-year program supported by BHP Foundation is concluding, the relationships don't have to end. There is an opportunity to maintain light-touch continuity. For example, the WhatsApp groups continue to be a valuable asset, providing a live channel for mutual support that can persist. Small efforts can sustain the social capital so that it can be re-mobilised when opportunities arise.



## 6.2 REFLECTIONS

Reflecting on Ampliseed’s five-year journey, a clear theme emerges: **the power of connection and learning in driving change**. What started as an experiment – bringing together disparate projects under a learning network – has matured into a cohesive community of practice that has woven relationships across continents and diverse sectors. Members repeatedly noted that the network gave them a sense of “unity” and belonging to a larger movement, reinforcing that while their landscapes and contexts differ, their challenges and goals are often shared. It reduced the isolation that ambitious projects often feel and instead created a solidarity – a feeling that “we are all in this together,” innovating and problem-solving collectively. One profound reflection is how critical trust and relationships are for systemic impact. Technical knowledge exchange alone would not have achieved what Ampliseed did. It was the trust – built through face-to-face exchanges, and through honest conversations in workshops – that unlocked deeper collaboration. When participants say an experience was “transformative” and resulted in a “big leap in cultural competency”, it underlines that investing in relationships is not a soft add-on but a strategic necessity for change-making networks.

Ampliseed’s story affirms that **change moves at the speed of trust**. Another key reflection is on the value of “learning while doing”. Ampliseed didn’t limit itself to abstract knowledge; it actively encouraged members to apply insights and then bring back results to the group. This iterative learning-by-doing approach meant the network was always evolving and grounded in action. It also meant that failures were not seen as embarrassments but as learning fodder. That reflects a mature learning culture that emerged – one where members felt safe to share not just successes but challenges, knowing the network community would help make sense of them. This kind of culture is hard to quantify but was palpable in Ampliseed’s later years.

Both Ampliseed evaluations concluded the network was international best practice (Appendix B), and members leveraged it to complement their technical work with leadership and advocacy. The fact that several Ampliseed initiatives (like the conservation finance and scaling reports) have been taken up beyond the network indicates a ripple effect. It shows that a well-designed peer network can generate insights with influence far outside its immediate circle – a timely lesson as more funders and sectors consider network-based approaches to complex problems.

Finally, a heartening reflection is how much individual growth happened. Behind the talk of projects and strategies are people whose personal and professional trajectories have been altered. As one member put it in a reflection, ***“I’m so grateful to be part of this dynamic learning community... the stream of small stories and local insights combined with common challenges and big wins sparked new thinking and broadened our perspective of what is possible.”*** That broadened perspective – of what is possible – might be the most significant outcome of all. It’s a mindset shift that will stay with participants as they continue their work beyond Ampliseed, seeding change in ever-widening circles.

# 6.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ampliseed Learning Network was a collective endeavour made possible by the dedication, insight, and generosity of many. We wish to extend our sincere gratitude to the BHP Foundation, whose vision and financial support launched and sustained this five-year journey. In particular, we thank Melinda Macleod, former BHP Foundation Environmental Resilience Program Director, for her steadfast championing of “learning while doing” and for believing in the power of a networked approach. Our deep appreciation goes to the Pollination Foundation team who facilitated Ampliseed with passion and skill – they embodied the spirit of co-design and kept the community woven together through every challenge. Crucially, we thank the members of Ampliseed: the project teams and their partner organisations from across the globe. Indigenous Desert Alliance – 10 Deserts Project, Great Barrier Reef Foundation – Resilient Reefs, Nature United – Canadian Boreal, Conservation International Peru – Alto Mayo, Fundación Tierra Austral – Chile Bolfo Cantillana, Rainforest Alliance – LandScale, The Nature Conservancy – Valdivian Reserve – and the many local community organisations intertwined with these projects – your participation and openness made this network what it is. The knowledge contributed by all members – from sharing data and reports to wisdom gained over years on the ground – was the lifeblood of Ampliseed. We also acknowledge the invited experts and ‘friends of the network’ who lent their expertise pro bono. Organisations such as Pollination Advisory, EcoAdvisors, and many others enriched our discussions on financing, policy, and more.

To the facilitators and organisers of exchanges and workshops – the unsung heroes handling logistics, translation, behind-the-scenes details, and the never-ending search for a good coffee – we also offer thanks. Finally, a heartfelt thank you to the communities who hosted Ampliseed visits. The Traditional Owners and community members in the Central Desert of Australia, in Alto Mayo’s Awajún villages, and elsewhere welcomed us onto their lands and into their lives. The lessons learned on Country, often around a fire or over a shared meal, will not be forgotten. They have left an imprint on all of us and have shaped the narrative of what Ampliseed stands for.



***Together, we learn, share and amplify  
– because alone, we only get so far,  
by working together we become  
extraordinary.  
– Ampliseed’s ethos***



IDA Cross-Project Exchange 2023 © Ampliseed



Morro de Calzada, Moyobamba, Peru © Bill Salazar

# APPENDIX



# APPENDIX A: AMPLISEED REPORTS

[Ampliseed Annual Learning Report: Year 5 \(2024\)](#)

[Ampliseed Annual Learning Report: Year 4 \(2023\)](#)

[Ampliseed Annual Learning Report: Year 3 \(2022\)](#)

[Knowledge Network Annual Report: Year 2 \(2021\)](#)

[Knowledge Network Pilot Report \(2020\)](#)

[A Global Knowledge Sharing Network \(2019\)](#)

# APPENDIX B

## INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

To understand how Ampliseed’s design and results measure up internationally, our experience was regularly mapped against widely recognised best-practice principles for networks and communities of practice – both internally as drawn from frameworks such as Collective Impact, Wenger-Trayner’s communities-of-practice guidelines, and the World Bank toolkit, and externally through two independent evaluations (2021 and 2024) that concluded Ampliseed meets or exceeds most of these standards. These ongoing reflective processes also revealed where we had to adapt – most notably in finding the right balance between member-driven leadership and a backbone team that keeps coordination humming.

### Where evaluators judged Ampliseed to meet international best practice standards

Principle	Examples	Literature <sup>9</sup>
<b>Clear shared purpose and value proposition</b>	Members co-created and review the governance / enterprise / Indigenous leadership agenda that anchors network activities.	“A compelling domain of interest is the first design decision” – Wenger-Trayner
<b>Trust-building and safe spaces</b>	Members were willing to share failures as well as successes; in person gatherings built personal relationships that extended outside of the network.	“Cultivating relationships and psychological safety is the art of [community of practice] facilitation” – USAID
<b>Multi-modal knowledge exchange</b>	A blend of in person workshops and exchanges, collaborative working groups, invited experts, informal WhatsApp chats, and asynchronous recordings.	“Blend [...] face-to-face, synchronous and asynchronous channels” – World Bank Community of Practice Toolkit
<b>Equity and inclusion</b>	Indigenous lens and leadership of working groups and in person exchange activities	Equity must be “prominent throughout governance, planning, and evaluation” –Collective Impact Forum
<b>Continuous learning and adaptive management</b>	Two independent evaluations, publishing annual outcome harvesting and lessons learned, and real-time adaptive network design	In line with Wenger’s “assess the value created” and World Bank’s “community metrics-impact loop”.

### A common network challenge: Balancing backbone support and distributed leadership

Many frameworks list distributed leadership as a hallmark of strong networks, yet the same literature also stresses the need for a backbone support organisation or orchestrator to keep a complex coalition moving (i.e. dedicated staff who plan, manage and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, monitoring and evaluation)<sup>10</sup>. We attempted to move towards distributed leadership, but few projects had capacity to shoulder the load of extra coordination. Members preferred to follow a curation model where the core team distilled member-generated ideas into shared agendas, managed logistics, and produced synthesis reports.

<sup>9</sup> Wenger-Trayner, E. & B. Cultivating Communities of Practice (2015), [Introduction to communities of practice – wenger-trayner](#); World Bank Group WBG Community of Practice Toolkit (2021), [Documents](#); Collective Impact Forum Collective Impact Principles of Practice (2016) [Collective Impact Principles of Practice](#) - Collective Impact Forum; USAID / TOPS / CORE Group / Food Security & Nutrition Network Supporting Communities of Practice (2013), [Supporting Communities of Practice \(2013\)](#) [Supporting Communities of Practice: A TOPS Quick Guide to Linking Development Practitioners | CORE Group: Working Together in Health for Mothers, Children and Communities](#)

<sup>10</sup> Wegner, Holsgens & Bitencourt *Orchestrating collaborative networks for social innovation: orchestrators’ roles in socially innovative initiatives* (2023). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0040162523004717>



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