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# ***Online Communities***

## ***Inside the Mexican Conservation Learning Network***

***Presented by Jeff Kwaterski, Pact  
June 2003***



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# Implementing Partners

- **Pact**
- **The Mexican Conservation Foundation**
- **The Nature Conservancy**





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## Mexican Conservation Learning Network

To improve biodiversity conservation efforts in Mexico through strengthening the performance of conservation organizations and practitioners.



This goal will be achieved through implementing a range of activities and infrastructure that connect people, experiences and information for more continuous learning and innovation within and between organizations.





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# **A Blended Approach to Learning**

- **Organizational Capacity Assessments**
- **Change Management Strategies**
- **Thematic and geographic learning communities**
- **An online information portal supporting document sharing and collaboration**
- **Training and technical assistance**





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# Multiple Learning Communities

- **Wildfire Management**
- **Water Conservation**
- **Natural Protected Areas**
- **Northwest Mexico Conservation Organizations**
- **Mexican Environmental Network Leadership**
- **Sustainable Eco-Tourism**





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# Wildfire Management Community

**20 conservation organizations working nationally on the theme of wildfire management**

**70 individuals registered online at CAMAFU page**

**Working on priority technical and organizational topics**

**Face to face (local) events combined with online exchange**





## Iniciativa Mexicana de Aprendizaje para la Conservación

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### [¡Inscríbete al portal!](#)

La suscripción es gratuita y obtendrás grandes beneficios



prueba.jpg

- Podrás interactuar con colegas conservacionistas
- Difundir tus artículos e información alimentando tú mismo el portal
- Participar en foros, chats y discusiones sobre temas que te interesan
- Acceso a cursos en línea y asesorías gratis o a

### Sobresaliente

- [El Financiamiento del Turismo Sustentable en México](#)
- [Taller Servicios Ambientales 2003](#)
- [Boletín CAMAFU de Junio application/msword](#)
- [Convocatoria para el puesto de Director Ejecutivo del Fondo Golfo de California](#)
- [Necesita ecoturismo del Gobierno 2003-06-09 4:00 pm <http://www.reforma.com/>](#)
- [Proyecto GEO Juvenil México 2003-05-02 7:00 pm](#)

### Explorador

- [Bolsa de Trabajo "verde"](#)
- [Comunidades de Aprendizaje](#)
- [Convocatorias](#)
- [Ecoturismo](#)
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- [Eventos](#)
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### Herramientas



CAMAFU

Comunidad de Aprendizaje de Manejo del Fuego

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abierto Tema

(2 comentarios)

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institución

- ECOSTA Yutu Cuii Tututepec ECOSTA Yutu Cuii
- ENDESU México Espacios Naturales y Desarrollo Sustentable
- GESGIAP Jalpan de Sierra Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda

Secciones

- Acerca de (14)
- Discusiones (2)
- Biblioteca (34)
- Expertos (91)
- Todo(s) (134)

Sobresaliente

- 1. Proceso de la Comunidad de Aprendizaje (CA)
- Gpo. de Inv. en Manejo del Fuego
- 5 Voluntarios de la

Explorador

- Página principal
- Comunidades de Aprendizaje
  - CA AGUA
  - CA Áreas Naturales Protegidas
  - CA Manejo del Fuego
  - 1. Proceso de la Comunidad



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## Purpose

A clearly defined, compelling purpose has sparked the Wildfire Management community to action around collaborative learning and online exchange

- Several years of record-setting wildfire damage
- CAMAFU participants feel the pain of isolation and understand they can't do it alone
- Community participants are relatively homogeneous in organizational / individual objectives





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# Leadership

Valuable to invest in and support leadership development on at least two levels

- Executive Director---He/she creates or hinders enabling conditions within the organization that effect the participation of staff
- Thematic Community Coordinator—Essential to have someone coordinating knowledge sharing, especially in earlier stages of community emergence

Effective leadership at these two levels in combination with leadership from program staff help to create the enabling conditions for community interaction





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## Embedded Online Communities

The experience in Mexico has reinforced the notion that online communities have increased value and life-expectancy when embedded within a community that goes beyond the virtual.

- Online communities used as part of a larger learning network. Online space complements and extends other spaces.
- Embrace opportunities to use the online community as a space for pre and post face-to-face event exchange
- Don't underestimate the impact of actions that take place offline to enhance an online community





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# Mapping and Assessment

## Resource Mapping

Taking an inventory of the community's resources has proven very useful. Unearth detailed information about the expertise present, where it is located and how to connect with it. Mapping allows people to more easily search for knowledge resources and to value them. Valuation leads to greater investment.

## Capacity Assessment

Provides a framework to initiate and guide the learning process. The creation of shared performance indicators helps create community standards and enable benchmarking. It helps give purpose, depth and rigor to the community.





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## Social Infrastructure

The cultivation of social infrastructure— relationships, group culture, shared-vocabulary, trust, etc.—has been essential to the advances made towards realizing an online community

- Interaction creates the “community,” otherwise just a web site or a workshop
- Focus exclusively on the technical infrastructure is not sufficient
- Work on cultivating trust and the valuation of community expertise and interaction
- Experience has shown people are more inclined to invest in sharing knowledge if they are going to see each other again (each event builds on the past)





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## Community Interaction

Each online community has different dynamics. Explore multiple channels that will enable people to connect with each other in a valuable, contextually-appropriate way.

- Monthly e-bulletin with editor comments and highlights
- Auto-generated email notice to alert community subscribers to new content
- Occasional use of web conference (chat) and discussion forum
- Face-to-face events scheduled (every four months)
- Ongoing individual contributions to community resources online (decentralized)
- Off-line conversations and collaboration





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# Training

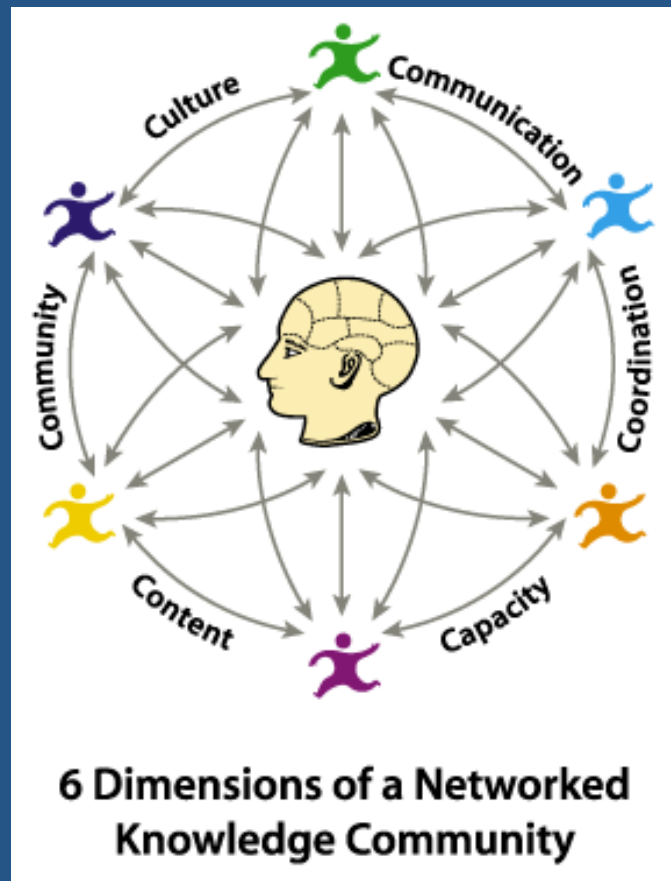
Investment in training has improved participation and exchange within the online community of CAMAFU

- Training on portal use at every face-to-face workshop and organizational visit (low-cost with high-impact)
- CD-Rom (high-cost with modest impact)
- Online help guides (low-cost and good impact)



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# A Multi-Dimensional Approach





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## Further Information

Visit the web site of the Mexican Conservation Learning Network at [www.imacmexico.org](http://www.imacmexico.org)

Visit the Impact Alliance web site at [www.impactalliance.org](http://www.impactalliance.org)

- select the Online Communities menu option to see what service Pact offers
- check the Knowledge Management folder within the Resource Center for articles

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