

# Pacific Invasives Learning Network



WORLDWIDE LEARNING NETWORK

The Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) is a regional capacity building network with the objective of reducing the impact of invasive species on biodiversity and sustainable development.

The PILN mission is “to empower effective invasive species management through a participant-driven network that meets priority needs, rapidly shares skills and resources, provides links to technical expertise, increases information exchange, and accelerates on-the-ground action.”

## **The PILN recipe**

PILN...

- Is a partnership of 11 agencies
- Has a full-time network coordinator
- Works with 14 multi-agency multi-sector country teams: American Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Kiribati, Kosrae, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Pohnpei, Samoa and Yap
- Is participant driven

## **What's different about PILN?**

- *Enables multi-sectoral action at a range of levels*
- *Helps people identify their priorities—the battles they can win—and supports what they want to do*
- *Simple and very cost-effective*
- *Action oriented*
- *Recognises and supports the growing body of expertise within the Pacific*
- *Catalyses action by fostering and sustaining enthusiasm*



## **PILN as a model**

- ⇒ The most important lesson learned from the pilot-programme is that the model works as a capacity building mechanism, and works very well.
- ⇒ Multi-sector participant teams were found to be an excellent means of addressing invasive species issues, which are cross cutting in nature.
- ⇒ The intangible benefits of network participation are huge and should not be underestimated.
- ⇒ A proactive full-time coordinator is important to build and establish the network.
- ⇒ Communication and facilitation are two of the principal activities of the coordinator—creating awareness of successful projects, showing teams how to follow and supporting them through the process.
- ⇒ The governance mechanism of the partnership should be defined when the network is established, and partner representatives identified at the appropriate decision making and technical level.
- ⇒ Participants should be expected to provide matching funds for network activities.
- ⇒ Invasive species are cross cutting and the established multi-sector teams can therefore be used to build capacity in related issues such as climate change, waste management, etc.

## **Start-up**

- Recruit the members of founding teams on the basis of personal commitment and interest, not the technical merits of their projects.
- An effective network has to be marketed, and institutionalizing the network early on in its establishment is vital.
- Baseline data and evaluation criteria need to be defined early on, so that the right questions can be asked from the start.
- Selecting a logo design is a very good way of creating a feeling of involvement and ownership by network members.

## **Financial sustainability**

- Building a network requires a full-time coordinator, with secured core funding.
- Mainstream the network once it is established to ensure sustainability of the coordination post.
- Providing full funding for members to participate in meetings, workshops, etc. is not desirable, always ask for matching funds.
- Be opportunistic in seeking expert exchange possibilities to make the best use of limited funding. Effective expert exchanges can be quite simple.



## **PILN Partner & Team Engagement**

- The Partners are a valuable resource to the network. Their involvement has to be carefully shepherded to maximize the limited time they are able to dedicate to PILN activities.
- The enthusiasm of Partners and members at the launch of the network needs to be maintained by early evidence of concrete actions and forward progress.
- It is important to create a feeling of ownership of the network by the members as early as possible.
- The presence of “champions” makes a critical difference to the success of PILN teams.
- Personal meetings are essential between coordinator and teams in order to understand the issues and specific capacity building needs for the team.
- Putting a group of people around a table does not make them a team, this has to be actively worked at.
- The strategic action planning process provided the “glue” for network engagement.
- Workshops, meetings and training events are part of a process of capacity building and require good preparation and subsequent follow-up to be effective.
- Celebrate achievements and let the participants drive the network.

### **Was it worth it?**

Yes! Requests to join the network have been received from other countries, and current participant satisfaction with network performance is very high.

### **Where next?**

Funding is being sought to launch PILN throughout the Pacific region, to serve all 22 countries, states and territories.

### **The PILN Partners**

The Nature Conservancy; Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; Secretariat of the Pacific Community; Conservation International; US Forest Service; National Park of American Samoa; Palau Office of Environmental Response and Coordination; IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group; University of the South Pacific; Pacific Invasives Initiative; BirdLife International.



[www.sprep.org/piln](http://www.sprep.org/piln)

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