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**FOREST
LEADERS** *for*
**INTEGRATED
LANDSCAPE
MANAGEMENT**

Building Governance for Integrated Landscape Management

Experiences of coordination and territorial action
in Latin American Model Forests



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Executive summary

The growing complexity of environmental, social, and economic challenges—such as climate change, biodiversity loss, water and food insecurity, and conflicts over land use—has made clear the need for integrated, collaborative approaches to landscape management. Within this context, **integrated landscape management** (ILM) has emerged as an approach that promotes participatory governance, multi-stakeholder coordination, and the building of agreements aimed at the sustainable development of territories. **Model Forests** (MFs), given their collaborative and territorial nature, represent one of the most significant practical expressions of this approach in Latin America.

This study systematizes the lessons learned and reflections that emerged from the implementation of seed projects developed under the **Forest Leaders for ILM** program, led by EcoAgriculture Partners. The program's purpose was to strengthen the capacities of Model Forest leaders to apply ILM within their territorial contexts, through a strategy that combined technical training, a community of practice, seed funding, and technical accompaniment over the course of two years.

This research consists of an exploratory, qualitative systematization of experiences, focused on the seed projects implemented by the Model Forests participating in the *Forest Leaders for ILM* program. The analysis drew on information from the proposals and results reports of these projects, as well as on interviews with Model Forest leaders and records generated throughout the program. The information was organized and analyzed using, as a conceptual framework, the five elements and expected outputs of the *Practical Guide for Integrated Landscape Management*, making it possible to identify progress, limitations, strategies implemented, and lessons that emerged from the practical experience of applying ILM in the participating territories.

The results show that the seed projects were especially effective in activating and strengthening territorial governance processes. In most cases, they helped broaden stakeholder participation, strengthen trust-based relationships, create spaces for dialogue, and advance the construction of shared understanding and joint planning. They also made it possible to identify and connect previously disconnected stakeholders, strengthening mutual recognition and territorial collaboration.

However, the study also reveals a gap between the capacity for coordination and the capacity for implementation. Although the territories achieved significant progress in building governance, difficulties persisted around financial sustainability, the coordinated implementation of actions, systematic monitoring and learning, and the consolidation of operational governance structures beyond spaces for dialogue.

Among the main lessons identified, ILM stands out as a progressive, non-linear, long-term process that requires building on pre-existing territorial dynamics and continuously strengthening relationships among stakeholders. The study also shows that seed funding can generate significant impact when combined with technical accompaniment, mentoring, and spaces for collective learning. The integration of training, practical implementation, and peer exchange facilitated deeper and more sustained learning processes, strengthening capacities and reducing the territorial isolation of participants.

The study concludes that the program's main contribution lies not only in the actions carried out in each territory, but in generating enabling conditions to strengthen governance processes and move toward more coordinated and sustainable forms of territorial management. In this regard, the study highlights the importance of promoting comprehensive, long-term interventions that recognize governance and capacity building as fundamental components for the sustainability of natural resources. It also recommends moving toward more flexible financing mechanisms adapted to territorial timeframes, incorporating indicators that recognize not only tangible results but also progress in coordination, capacities, and governance.

Keywords:

integrated landscape management

Model Forest

territorial governance

multi-stakeholder governance

seed funding

sustainable development

capacity building

Introduction

Experience over many years has shown that major challenges such as environmental, social, and economic crises; biodiversity loss; water and food insecurity; health risks; and climate change (IPBES, 2024) cannot be addressed from a single perspective. Faced with this reality, **collaboration among diverse stakeholders** becomes a key factor in confronting these challenges.



Integrated landscape management (ILM) is an approach that promotes participatory governance at the landscape scale. Its conceptual framework rests on five guiding elements that establish a logical, adaptive sequence of stages, each culminating in a result, in order to advance and ensure effective, long-term landscape management (EcoAgriculture Partners, 2022; 1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People, 2021). Implementing ILM requires understanding the social, environmental, economic, cultural, and political characteristics and dynamics of a landscape.

Model Forests (MFs) are processes that intrinsically promote ILM and represent one of the main practical expressions of this approach. Created in Canada in the 1990s, MFs promote participatory governance and multisectoral collaboration to address conflicts and opportunities related to the sustainable use of forest and natural resources within a given landscape (IMFN, 2024).

As social processes, they face challenges related to the effective participation and commitment of landscape stakeholders, which threaten the long-term sustainability of participatory governance (Rojas et al., 2019). These challenges are relevant considerations for ILM and call for defining strategies grounded in both theoretical and practical aspects.

This raises questions about the knowledge and types of resources that landscapes need in order to apply ILM. The following exploratory, qualitative study sought to gather insights from the experience of the Model Forests linked to the *Forest Leaders for ILM* program (the program) led by EcoAgriculture Partners, focused on the lessons and strategies that emerge from the practical implementation of the elements and results of the ILM approach within the framework of the aforementioned program.

The program's purpose was to strengthen the capacities of MF leaders to implement ILM in their own contexts, and its strategy during the first two years was based on four key activities: a training course on ILM, the fostering of a community of practice as a space for exchange among leaders and with other specialists, the provision of a seed grant for implementing ILM practices in the MFs, and mentoring or guided accompaniment for that implementation.

The knowledge generated through this process is documented in this study, which seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. What are the **lessons learned** from this process of implementing ILM through the seed projects?
- b. What **recommendations** can be made to improve the capacities of MFs and other landscape initiatives to practice ILM?

Theoretical Framework

The **landscape approach** is distinguished as an integrative, iterative, and ongoing process of negotiation, decision-making, and reassessment (Sayer et al., 2013), one that addresses the interests of diverse stakeholders within a given landscape, making it possible to reconcile natural resource conservation with socioeconomic development (EcoAgriculture Partners, 2022). In this context, a **landscape** is understood as a socio-ecological system made up of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems—whether natural or altered by human activity—that are interconnected and shaped by a range of ecological, historical, economic, and sociocultural processes and dynamics.



2.1. Integrated management at the landscape scale

In practice, landscape approaches promote participatory governance through decision-making processes that bring together multiple stakeholders, from local communities and other civil society actors to government agencies, all of whom come together to manage the landscape's resources over a long-term horizon (Sayer et al., 2013).

Since it first emerged, the landscape approach has been seen as a framework designed to address the growing and complex environmental, economic, social, and political challenges that often exceed the limitations of conventional management (Adeyanju et al., 2021). Unlike sectoral approaches, landscape-scale solutions are more inclusive, equitable, and representative in orientation, making it possible to generate broader and more diverse results across more sectors, such as sustainable agriculture, conservation, economic diversification, community infrastructure, and livelihoods, among others (Estrada et al., 2024). For this reason, they are considered to hold great potential for contributing to balance in territories where land-use activities—such as agriculture, livestock farming, mining, and other forms of production—come into conflict with environmental conservation and biodiversity objectives (Adeyanju et al., 2021).

Many models and initiatives have adopted the landscape approach to put this conceptual framework into practice, such as the ecosystem approach, biosphere reserves, integrated watershed management, biological corridors, Model Forests, and integrated landscape management (ILM) (Estrada et al., 2024). The latter refers to the way of managing the landscape with the aim of achieving its sustainability and resilience, through collaboration among diverse stakeholders who come together and exercise participatory governance through a landscape partnership (EcoAgriculture Partners, 2022). Studies conducted between 2012 and 2019 show that ILM can mitigate climate change, strengthen resilience, improve livelihoods, and contribute to the integrated fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (1000L, 2021).

2.2. Capacity building for ILM

On the path to implementing integrated management actions, landscape partnerships face significant challenges. According to Sayer et al. (2013), a survey of practitioners involved in applying landscape approaches found that governance problems and limited institutional capacity are perceived as the most widespread. In this sense, the success or failure of the process will depend on the quality of stakeholder participation, the degree to which their concerns are taken into account, and the investment made in building trust and establishing a shared vision, as well as their capacity to develop a participatory theory of change and a shared understanding of the landscape's objectives and the actions that will be taken to achieve them, which, in turn, will help establish synergies and strengthen bonds of trust (Reed et al., 2019).

Achieving inclusive, equitable participation that guarantees the fair distribution of the benefits of the various projects, achieving long-term sustainability by effectively shifting management leadership to local grassroots actors, and balancing the objectives and power relations among stakeholders are among the common challenges to exercising participatory governance (Adeyanju et al., 2021).

At times, participatory processes involving multiple stakeholders remain active only for the duration of specific projects. However, the success of these processes depends on their functioning regularly and being sustained over time. They involve high transaction costs, which also fall, to a large extent, on local actors. In this sense, participation will be effective and sustainable only if the long-term rewards are perceived as outweighing both the immediate gains and the associated costs, whether financial or other forms of investment and commitment (Reed et al., 2019). The lack of adequate financing makes it difficult for landscape partnerships to maximize, expand, and sustain their impact, and studies indicate that doing so requires specialized capacities, ongoing investment, and a considerable amount of time (Zinngrebe et al., 2020).

Addressing these difficulties requires building capacities for integrated management among the multiple stakeholders, fostering the growth of a critical mass of local leaders from the various sectors represented in the landscape, who should be equipped to negotiate competing interests, facilitate consensus on the landscape's vision and priorities, mediate power imbalances, secure sustainable financing for coordination and implementation, monitor processes, strengthen local governance and bonds of trust among stakeholders, and navigate incompatible policies, among other tasks (Estrada et al., 2024).



2.3. Model Forests and participatory landscape management

Like ILM, Model Forests (MFs) are a landscape management model based on an alliance among diverse stakeholders who work together to promote sustainable development across an extensive landscape that includes forests, farms, protected areas, rivers, and communities. It rests on six principles that balance social, economic, and environmental needs with long-term sustainability (IMFN, 2024).

In practice, this approach requires stakeholders to define a vision of sustainability suited to their context, establish shared objectives and a plan to achieve them, design a participatory and representative governance structure to manage the landscape, and collaborate in implementing it. This process fosters trust, transparency, and innovation (IMFN, 2024).

On their path toward building sustainable landscapes, Latin American MFs have generated impacts in natural resource conservation and management, the shift toward sustainable productive practices, gender equity and inclusion, the strengthening of synergies and bonds of trust among stakeholders, and influence on public policy, among others (Rojas et al., 2019), contributing to 11 of the 17 SDGs (Ruiz Guevara et al., 2021).

Despite this, their governance structures—also referred to as boards, dialogue tables, multisectoral roundtables, advisory councils, and the like—struggle to sustain effective, long-term performance. Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) MFs face several challenges daily that are similar to those confronting other landscape partnerships worldwide. Ensuring the representativeness and effective participation of stakeholders, sustaining long-term commitment, and strengthening local leadership are among the relevant internal governance challenges (Rojas et al., 2019).

At the same time, there are external challenges that are harder to control. Frequent changes in government are one such challenge, as they put the continuity of governance platforms at risk when local foundations are not firmly established; so too do conflicts among key landscape stakeholders, which generate an atmosphere of distrust and hinder the participation of all parties. Despite the many innovative strategies for financing participation in order to sustain governance structures, investing regularly in participation remains a difficulty that limits the effective performance of MFs (Rojas et al., 2019).

Methodology

This study is framed as an exploratory, qualitative **systematization of experiences**, given that little information exists addressing the type of knowledge it seeks to obtain.



3.1. Methodological approach and sample selection

The methodology used was based on the systematization of experiences, understood as a process of individual and collective reflection that produces knowledge in the form of lessons learned, based on the ordering, understanding, and critical interpretation of a lived experience or a practice carried out (Jara, 2018). In addition, reflexive thematic analysis was used, which consists of identifying, organizing, analyzing in detail, and reporting patterns or themes based on a careful reading and re-reading of the information gathered, with the aim of drawing conclusions that allow for an adequate understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon under study (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The target population was a selection of Model Forests from the Latin American Model Forest Network (LAMFN), a collective that currently brings together 32 landscapes. The selected sample was made up of the leaders of the 15 MFs that took part in the Forest Leaders for ILM program. These MFs are spread across 10 countries in the region, are home to nearly 4 million people, and represent approximately 32 million hectares of forest landscape (Figure 1).



3.2. The *Forest Leaders for ILM* program and the seed projects

The *Forest Leaders for ILM* program was an initiative aimed at building capacities in integrated landscape management in Latin American Model Forests, through an approach that combined theoretical training, practical implementation, technical accompaniment, and spaces for peer exchange.

Within this framework, the seed projects were the program's main practical component, designed so that the Model Forests could apply, in their own territories, what they had learned during the training process. They were implemented between September 2024 and December 2025, across two cycles lasting 5 and 6 months respectively, each supported by a grant of US\$5,000. Project implementation was accompanied by a one-on-one mentoring system and spaces for peer exchange, which made it possible to adjust the proposals, improve their feasibility, and reinforce the practical application of the ILM approach.

The first cycle was carried out by all 15 participating MFs, and the projects implemented focused mainly on strengthening landscape governance, including activities such as mapping and convening stakeholders, participatory workshops to build shared understanding, the construction of shared visions, the visibility of concrete joint actions, and the development of communication strategies. The methodologies used included workshops, multi-stakeholder meetings, field visits, and other participatory spaces aimed at activating or strengthening processes of territorial coordination.

A second cycle of seed projects, carried out by 11 MFs, sought to build on and deepen the processes already underway, with a growing emphasis on structuring and formalizing governance platforms, building visions, and developing strategic planning. Across both cycles combined, more than 200 in-person activities were carried out, directly involving more than 4,000 participants in the territories.

3.3. Design and application of interviews and archival review

The main instrument used to gather information was the semi-structured interview, applied at the end of each seed-project cycle to the leaders of the Model Forests participating in the program. It consisted of open- and closed-ended questions designed to gather information on participants' specific experiences, perceptions, and knowledge regarding the ILM implementation process during the execution of their projects, as well as the program's contribution (training course, exchange of experiences, mentoring) to the achievements of this process. A total of 26 interviews were conducted across both cycles, held virtually via the Zoom platform. Before each interview began, participants were informed of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the ethical use of the data, and their consent was requested for recording.

In addition, a review was conducted of the key records generated by the program, in order to triangulate that information with what emerged from the interviews. The seed-project proposals and their final implementation reports were the two types of secondary sources used to gather information for this study. The surveys and testimonials collected as part of the program's implementation were also reviewed.

3.4. Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim with the help of the Zoom platform's transcription tool, and their content, together with information drawn from the reports and proposals, was organized into codes and themes assigned according to the objectives of the systematization, producing coding matrices built in Excel, one for each seed-project cycle. The data was then analyzed to identify common trends and patterns across the MFs, from which the lessons learned from the process were drawn.



Figure 2: The 5 elements of ILM
Source: 1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People

The *Practical Guide for Integrated Landscape Management* (ILM), developed by the 1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People initiative, describes this approach as an iterative process made up of five interrelated elements: *landscape partnership*, *shared understanding*, *vision and planning*, *taking action*, and *learning and impact*. These elements do not follow a strictly linear sequence; rather, they develop progressively and dynamically, feeding back into one another over time. Figure 2 presents the so-called “ILM wheel,” which visually synthesizes these elements and their interrelationship within the landscape management process.

For the purposes of this study, the definitions of the ILM elements set out in the aforementioned guide were adopted: the *landscape partnership* refers to the process through which diverse, representative landscape stakeholders organize and collaborate to jointly manage the territory within a strong, lasting coalition; *shared understanding* refers to the joint construction of interests, perceptions, and knowledge of the landscape's current state and trends; *vision and planning* involves defining shared objectives and strategies that guide collective action, including a plan for carrying it out and financing it; *taking action* relates to the coordinated implementation of initiatives, their communication to all stakeholders, and the follow-up on agreements; and *learning and impact* involves evaluating results and generating lessons that make it possible to adjust and improve the process.

For the comparative analysis of progress in implementing the ILM practices developed by the Model Forests in the seed projects, this framework was used, selecting the five elements and some of their outputs. The criteria for selecting which outputs to measure were based on the experience of the program's facilitation team and the researcher, who used these elements as an operational reference throughout the training and implementation process, ensuring consistency between the conceptual framework and its application in the territories.

Based on this, a matrix was built to assess these results on a scale of 4 progress levels (incipient, low, medium, and high), according to the evidence of the state of each one, at each defined moment of the program: the initial moment (before the program began), the interim moment (at the end of the first cycle), and the final moment (at the end of the second cycle).

The progress levels were defined based on the evidence observed for each result, taking into account the degree of development, formalization, and sustainability of the processes in the territories. Table 1 describes the assessment criteria for these levels.

Table 1: Criteria for assessing ILM progress levels

Progress Level	Description
Incipient	The result is absent, at a very early stage, or outdated.
Low	The result shows initial progress, with a few specific actions carried out that do not yet show consistency over time.
Medium	The result shows clear development, with sustained actions, some coordination among stakeholders, and evidence of structured progress.
High	The result is advanced, with evidence of having been sustained over time, and a good level of coordination and institutionalization.

This scale was applied consistently across both cycles of the program, making it possible to compare the evolution of the Model Forests at the different moments of the process. The matrix used, with the elements and results whose status was assessed, is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Matrix of progress levels of the Model Forests during the implementation of the seed projects

ILM Element	ILM Result	Description	Moment	Progress level *			
				I	L	M	H
Landscape partnership 	Identification and convening	Diverse landscape stakeholders were identified and invited to take part in a multisectoral roundtable that reflects the territorial and sectoral diversity of the landscape.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
	Relationship-building and participation	The convened, interested stakeholders interact with some regularity, taking part in spaces for dialogue, coordination, and joint decision-making.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
	Formalization of the alliance	An alliance exists with a defined governance structure, with roles, coordination mechanisms, and clear rules that guide decision-making and the functioning of the multi-stakeholder platform. This alliance is sustained over time.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
Shared Understanding 	Understanding of the landscape	Landscape stakeholders have developed a shared understanding of the territory's main dynamics, challenges, and opportunities.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
Vision and Planning 	Shared vision	Landscape stakeholders have defined a shared vision that guides the long-term development of the territory, taking into account generational objectives and landscape sustainability.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
	Strategic plan	Landscape stakeholders have developed a strategic plan that defines objectives, expected results, targets, and indicators to guide the landscape management process over the medium and long term, and to achieve the landscape's shared vision.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
	Action plan	A short-term action plan is in place that reflects agreed-upon priorities, with defined activities, responsible parties, a timeline, and, where applicable, cost estimates.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
	Financing	A resource-mobilization strategy has been developed that identifies sources of financing and mechanisms to sustain the management and implementation of the landscape's actions.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
Taking Action 	Implementation and monitoring of actions	Coordinated actions defined in the action plan are being implemented, with systematic follow-up.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
	Communication	A communication strategy has been developed that strengthens coordination among stakeholders and establishes a shared narrative for the landscape.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
	Investment portfolio	A portfolio of landscape initiatives or projects has been developed, together with mechanisms for mobilizing the resources needed for their implementation.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
Impact and Learning 	Impact indicators	Monitoring mechanisms have been defined and used to track progress on the landscape's actions, including the use of indicators or other forms of recording and analyzing information.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				
	Systematic learning	Landscape stakeholders reflect on the process's progress and challenges, generating lessons that make it possible to adjust actions, strengthen governance, and guide decision-making.	Initial				
			Interim				
			Final				

* Number of Model Forests I: incipient L: low M: medium H: high

Results and discussion

A comparative analysis of the initial situation and the results and progress from the first and second cycles of seed projects shows a progressive, though not uniform, evolution in the practice of **integrated landscape management (ILM)** among the **15 participating Model Forests (MFs)**.



4.1. Progress in ILM practice across the Model Forests

In general terms, progress is concentrated in the two initial elements of the ILM process, particularly in the formation and dynamization of *landscape partnerships*, as well as in building *shared understanding*. Partial progress is also observed in the *vision and planning* element, focused more on long-term strategy than on operational planning, while the elements associated with *taking action* and *learning and impact* in the process show more limited or incipient progress.

4.1.1. Evolution of ILM progress across the Model Forests

Before the program began, most Model Forests were at incipient or low levels across all the elements defined by the ILM approach. Although MFs have been practicing the landscape approach for a number of years (some longer than others, depending on when each initiative was created), in most cases the multi-stakeholder platforms were not functioning actively, were not very representative of the diversity of stakeholders, were limited to smaller scales than the landscape scale, or did not explicitly meet the basic criteria of the ILM approach.

As the first cycle of seed projects unfolded, a first significant advance was observed. Many Model Forests managed to move from incipient levels to low or medium levels, mainly in the elements of *landscape partnership* and *shared understanding*. This translated into the incorporation of new stakeholders, the creation or reactivation of spaces for dialogue, the renewal of alliances, and conceptual alignment around ILM and around understanding the territory's challenges and opportunities. This moment marks a significant shift in which multi-stakeholder platforms begin, or begin again, to take shape and move toward more coordinated management of the territory.

In the second cycle, the process becomes somewhat more differentiated and no longer advances as uniformly, with greater diversity observed in progress levels. Some Model Forests manage to structure and establish their processes, advancing toward medium or high levels, strengthening their alliance coordination mechanisms and the planning of joint landscape actions. Others, by contrast, remain at low or medium levels, either because they are in the process of being reactivated or because the conditions that enable progress require more time to become established.

In general terms, two trends could be identified. On one hand, a significant group of Model Forests advanced toward medium levels, particularly with regard to the identification and convening of stakeholders and their relationship-building and participation (9 and 8 of 15 MFs, respectively) and shared understanding of the territory (7 of 15 MFs).

However, this progress did not always translate into the formation of structured multi-stakeholder platforms. Only 3 of 15 MFs managed to take further steps toward high levels, establishing more structured governance processes. Nonetheless, the common pattern in most cases was to remain at incipient or low levels in more operational aspects, such as the planned implementation of coordinated actions, financing, or systematic monitoring, where 12, 14, and 15 MFs, respectively, remained at these levels.

This evolution of the process shows that progress in ILM does not depend solely on having structures or plans in place, but on stakeholders' capacity to work together consistently, translate agreements into concrete actions, and learn from their own practice.

Likewise, when comparing the two cycles of the program, the first cycle was found to be more oriented toward activating (or reactivating) the processes—connecting stakeholders, opening spaces for dialogue, and building a shared understanding of the territory—while the second cycle made it possible, in some cases, to give greater structure to the social foundation of governance, carry through on strategic planning processes, and strengthen the renewed space for dialogue opened in the first cycle.

In this sense, rather than linear progress, what emerges is a set of differentiated trajectories, in which each Model Forest evolves according to its own starting point, capacities, and context. This diversity of paths is analyzed in greater detail in section 4.1.4.

4.1.2. Progress by ILM element

Analyzing progress by element of integrated landscape management makes it possible to see how progress is distributed across the process's five elements and their respective results, revealing differences in the pace and levels reached by the Model Forests.

In this regard, the greatest progress is concentrated in the elements associated with building the process's relational foundation (*landscape partnership, shared understanding*), while those linked to operational planning, structured implementation, and the systematic monitoring of impacts and lessons show greater lags.

The following sections analyze this progress in detail for each of the ILM elements. To do so, stacked bar charts are used to show the distribution of Model Forests by progress level at three moments of the program (initial, interim, and final). Each bar represents a moment, while the colored segments indicate the number of Model Forests at each progress level. The change in the color composition of the bars makes it possible to observe the gradual shift from incipient and low levels toward medium and high levels. The tables, in turn, complement this reading by providing the absolute values underlying the trends observed in the charts.

LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

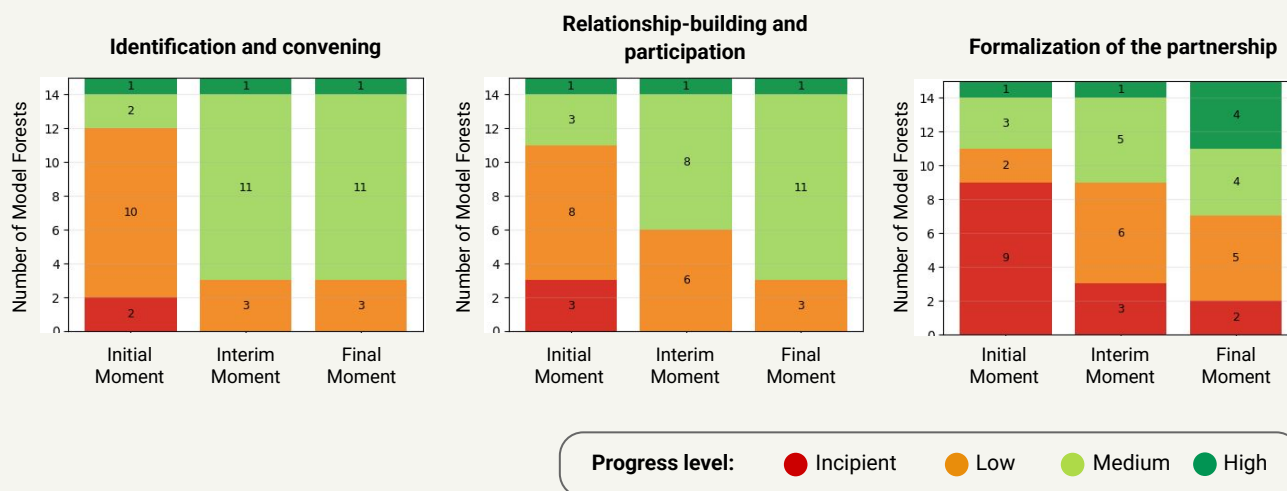
The *landscape partnership* was the ILM element where the most significant changes were observed, associated with three of its ILM results. Table 3 and Figure 3 present the evolution of progress levels in the results associated with the landscape partnership, making it possible to see the changes across the three recorded moments.



Table 3: Number of Model Forests by progress level in results for the element *landscape partnership*

ILM Result	Description	Moment	Progress level (No. of Model Forests)			
			Incipient	Low	Medium	High
Identification and convening	Diverse landscape stakeholders were identified and invited to take part in a multisectoral roundtable that reflects the territorial and sectoral diversity of the landscape.	Initial	2	10	2	1
		Interim	0	3	11	1
		Final	0	3	11	1
Relationship-building and participation	The convened, interested stakeholders interact with some regularity, taking part in spaces for dialogue, coordination, and joint decision-making.	Initial	3	8	3	1
		Interim	0	6	8	1
		Final	0	3	11	1
Formalization of the partnership	An alliance exists with a defined governance structure, with roles, coordination mechanisms, and clear rules that guide decision-making and the functioning of the multi-stakeholder platform. This alliance is sustained over time.	Initial	9	2	3	1
		Interim	3	6	5	1
		Final	2	5	4	4

Figure 3: Evolution of progress levels in results for *landscape partnership*



With regard to the identification and convening of stakeholders, at the outset, 12 of 15 (80%) Model Forests were at incipient or low progress levels, characterized mainly by outdated stakeholder mapping and low turnout, which translated into limited effective participation in the governance space. After the first cycle (interim moment), this trend reversed, and that 80% moved toward medium and high levels, with new stakeholders brought to the table and greater representation of the territory's diversity. This same trend held through the end of cycle 2.

As for the relationships among stakeholders within governance spaces, the initial situation shows that only 4 of the 15 MFs maintained a dynamic process of coordination and decision-making, while in the remaining cases this process was inactive or existed only for a very small number of the MF's promoting stakeholders. By the end of cycle 2, at least 12 MFs had activated dialogue and coordination within a shared space aimed at landscape management.

The third result analyzed was the formalization of the landscape partnership—that is, whether this space for dialogue, coordination, and decision-making is structured, legitimate, and sustained by an operating mechanism and rules that guide stakeholder dynamics. Here, progress was more gradual, and although several MFs moved from incipient progress levels to medium levels, a significant proportion remain at a low level of progress, with rules, roles, or mechanisms still being developed. In one Model Forest that had a broad social base but faced difficulties with coordination and planning, it was observed that the proposed multi-stakeholder platform model had not yet been fully implemented, and no roles, rules, or clear decision-making mechanism were evident.

Despite this gradual progress, it should be noted that, at the start of the program, only 1 Model Forest had a multi-stakeholder platform at a high level of achievement, whereas by the end of the second cycle, 4 Model Forests had reached this level. Taken together, this element shows that the seed projects were highly effective in activating collective action, although they showed slower progress in consolidating formal, sustainable governance structures. This result does not necessarily reflect low effectiveness on the part of the program; rather, it can be explained by the relatively short implementation period, the starting point of many Model Forests, which were still in early or reactivation stages, and the differing paces at which processes evolve in each territory. Even so, at this stage of the landscape partnership development, the main challenge is sustaining momentum and commitment.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

This element also showed significant changes following the implementation of the seed projects, which are presented in Table 4 and Figure 4.



Table 4:

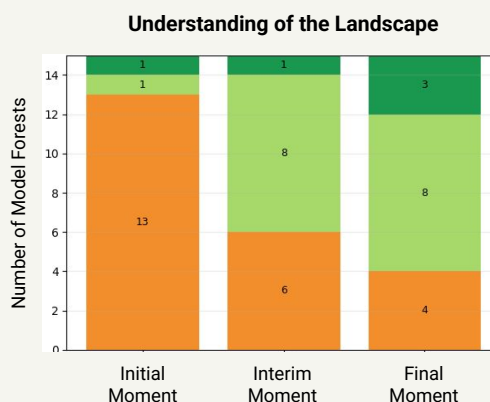
Number of Model Forests by progress level in results for the element *shared understanding*

ILM Result	Description	Moment	Progress level (No. of Model Forests)			
			Incipient	Low	Medium	High
Understanding of the landscape	Landscape stakeholders have developed a shared understanding of the territory's main dynamics, challenges, and opportunities.	Initial	0	13	1	1
		Interim	0	6	8	1
		Final	0	4	8	3

Figure 4: Evolution of progress levels in results for *Shared Understanding*

Progress level:

● Incipient ● Low ● Medium ● High



In the initial situation, understanding of the landscape's state, challenges, and opportunities was largely at an incipient stage. In this regard, 13 of the 15 MFs had landscape diagnostics that had been prepared long before, developed by a limited number of stakeholders, or that were not widely known among stakeholders.

Starting with the first cycle, a shift toward more developed levels of landscape understanding is observed, driven by participatory diagnostic processes and the identification and assessment of challenges and opportunities. In several cases, this process made it possible not only to update information but also to align stakeholders' perceptions.

For example, in one of the Model Forests, the participatory diagnostic made it possible to identify environmental, social, and economic strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats as part of a collective exercise carried out by stakeholders from the three watersheds that took part in the call to the dialogue space.

In another territory, a similar process made it possible to identify the landscape's resources, recognizing their historical trajectory while also revealing different ways of understanding what a Model Forest entails.

This last point is key, since progress in understanding does not necessarily mean homogeneity. In several territories, the process brought conceptual differences or differing expectations among stakeholders to light. In other cases, it meant recognizing that the limitations were not purely technical, but also related to coordination. In one Model Forest, for instance, it was noted that *"many of the solutions were in the stakeholders' hands, but they had not been made visible or connected to one another,"* which reinforces the role of *shared understanding* as a foundation for collective action.

In the second cycle, progress was more incremental, consolidating processes already underway. By the end of this period, 11 MFs (73%) had reached medium and high levels on this result, while 3 MFs (27%) remained behind, confirming that strengthening shared understanding is a progressive, cumulative process closely tied to sustained interaction among stakeholders.

VISION AND PLANNING

This element shows significant progress, though with greater variation across territories. This is shown in Table 5 and Figure 5.



Table 5:

Number of Model Forests by progress level in results for the element *vision and planning*

ILM Result	Description	Moment	Progress level (No. of Model Forests)			
			Incipient	Low	Medium	High
Shared vision	Landscape stakeholders have defined a shared vision that guides the long-term development of the territory, taking into account generational objectives and landscape sustainability.	Initial	7	3	3	2
		Interim	4	4	4	3
		Final	1	2	7	5
Strategic plan	Landscape stakeholders have developed a strategic plan that defines objectives, expected results, targets, and indicators to guide the landscape management process over the medium and long term, and to achieve the landscape's shared vision.	Initial	6	6	1	2
		Interim	5	5	2	3
		Final	1	7	3	4
Action plan	A short-term action plan is in place that reflects agreed-upon priorities, with defined activities, responsible parties, a timeline, and, where applicable, cost estimates.	Initial	14	1	0	0
		Interim	5	5	4	1
		Final	5	2	7	1
Financing	A resource-mobilization strategy has been developed that identifies sources of financing and mechanisms to sustain the management and implementation of the landscape's actions.	Initial	2	12	1	0
		Interim	2	12	1	0
		Final	2	12	1	0

In the case of the *shared vision*, before the seed projects, 10 MFs (67%) were at an incipient or low stage; that is, some had never worked on building a vision for the landscape or, if they had done so at some point, that vision had become outdated or had lost legitimacy. Only 5 MFs (37%) had structured visions validated by most stakeholders. By the end of the second cycle, this situation had improved moderately: 12 MFs (80%) reached medium or high levels of achievement, and only 3 (20%) remained at the initial levels. In several territories, significant changes are evident, moving from having no vision at all to building a shared vision and a strategic plan as milestones of mutual understanding among stakeholders and of their intention to work together. In one of the Model Forests, the process involved reviewing and updating pre-existing visions through new platforms or stakeholder assemblies, fostering reflective discussions and the construction of a renewed vision. In both cases, this step was completed in the second cycle, suggesting that its development requires cumulative processes.

The **strategic plan** followed a similar trajectory, with MFs at medium or high progress levels rising from 3 (20%) in the initial situation to 7 (47%) in cycle 2. However, 8 of 15 (53%) still remain at incipient or low levels, reflecting only a partial establishment of this ILM result. That said, the main difficulty does not lie in formulating the plan, but in translating it into operational instruments that can be effectively implemented in practice.

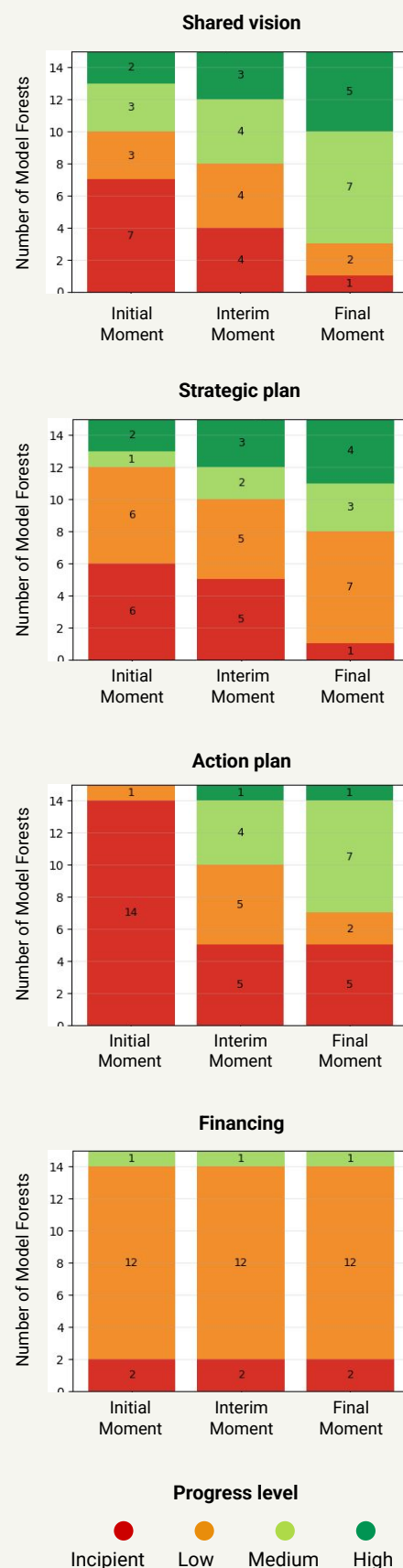
An example of this can be seen in one of the Model Forests that, despite managing to finalize a strategic plan during this process, identified as a challenge *“the mismatch between the MF’s strategic ambition and its actual capacity to operate and exert influence.”* This reflection is grounded in previous lessons associated with drafting plans that proved difficult to implement.

The most critical result within this element is the short-term **action plan**, which in every case started from an incipient or low level. Although the first cycle drove processes to identify and prioritize actions, by the end of the second cycle many MFs remain at the same progress level. It is important to clarify that this does not mean the organizations linked to the MF are not carrying out sustainability actions in the territory, only that these do not necessarily respond to a joint agenda coordinated across the short, medium, and long term.

This is reflected in some territories where, despite not having consolidated strategic or operational planning, by the end of the second cycle stakeholders had mapped out concrete actions to be carried out collectively, such as capacity-building activities, local dialogue and reflection events, or seminars and conferences. This shows that progress is occurring more in the identification of initiatives than in their formal, sustained structuring over time.

As for **financing**, no significant changes were observed. With the exception of one MF, the remaining 14 stay at incipient or low levels, depending mainly on one-off funding opportunities secured by some of their member organizations rather than on landscape-level financial strategies, which limits the sustainability of these processes.

Figure 5: Evolution of progress levels in results for the *Vision and Planning*



TAKING ACTION

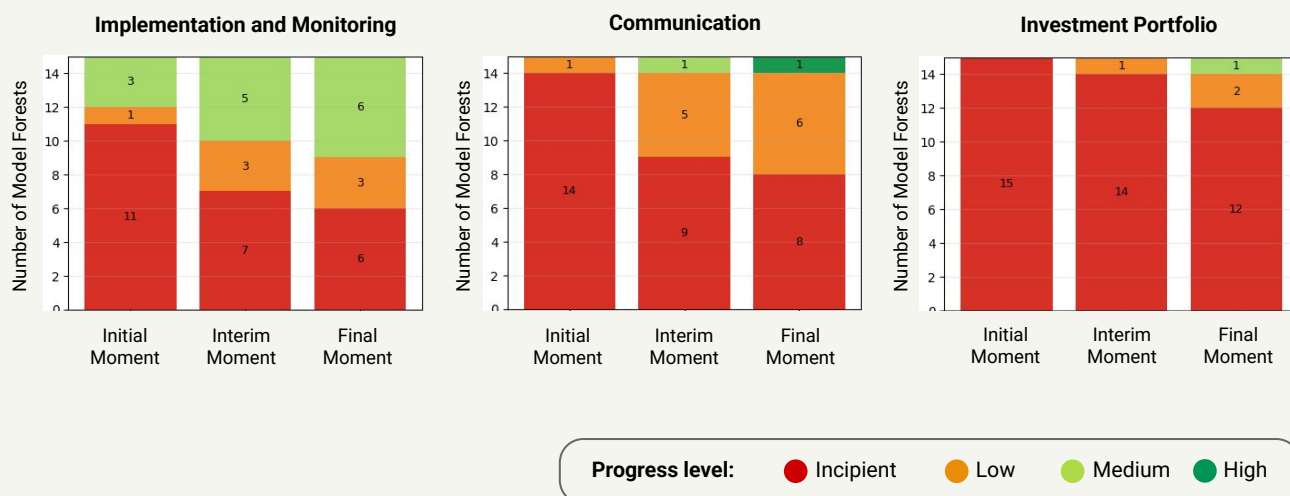
The results for this element, with the exception of one Model Forest, show limited progress reaching only a medium level at best, summarized in Table 6 and Figure 6.



Table 6: Number of Model Forests by progress level in results for the element *taking action*

ILM Result	Description	Moment	Progress level (No. of Model Forests)			
			Incipient	Low	Medium	High
Implementation and monitoring of actions	Coordinated actions defined in the action plan are being implemented, with systematic follow-up.	Initial	11	1	3	0
		Interim	7	3	5	0
		Final	6	3	6	0
Communication	A communication strategy has been developed that strengthens coordination among stakeholders and establishes a shared narrative for the landscape.	Initial	14	1	0	0
		Interim	9	5	1	0
		Final	8	6	0	1
Investment portfolio	A portfolio of landscape initiatives or projects has been developed, together with mechanisms for mobilizing the resources needed for their implementation.	Initial	15	0	0	0
		Interim	14	1	0	0
		Final	12	2	1	0

Figure 6: Evolution of progress levels in results for *taking action*



In the initial situation, only 3 of the 15 MFs (20%) were at a medium or high level of achievement on the result of implementing and monitoring actions. As noted earlier, the organizations that make up the MFs carry out a range of actions in the territory, but these do not necessarily respond to a prioritization or plan agreed upon among stakeholders, nor to a landscape-level logic, which explains the incipient nature of this result.

Even so, by the end of the second cycle, this figure rose to 6 (40%), showing an improvement that is nonetheless insufficient to generalize structured implementation processes. This progress is linked to the processes of prioritizing challenges and actions driven during cycle 1, which promoted the implementation and follow-up of coordinated actions. Nonetheless, these processes have not yet reached high levels of achievement, since their momentum does not stem from sustained strategic coordination.

With regard to communication, the pattern was more uniform, though also more critical. In the initial situation, all MFs were at an incipient stage, meaning that none of them had a communication strategy. This does not rule out the existence of one-off communication efforts tied to specific projects, but it does reveal the absence of a strategic framework. By the end of cycle 2, at least one MF (7%) managed to advance to a high level, developing a participatory communication strategy along with actions aligned to it. Another 6 MFs (40%) made slight progress toward a low level of achievement, through the development of elements such as logos, graphic style guides, and audiovisual materials aimed at strengthening the MF's identity in its communication efforts.

The investment portfolio, for its part, showed almost no progress, with 14 MFs (93%) remaining at an incipient or low stage. However, one territory showed more significant progress, advancing all the way to a medium level. Building on the action plan formulated in the first cycle, this MF managed to structure a portfolio of projects and investment during the second cycle.

LEARNING AND IMPACT

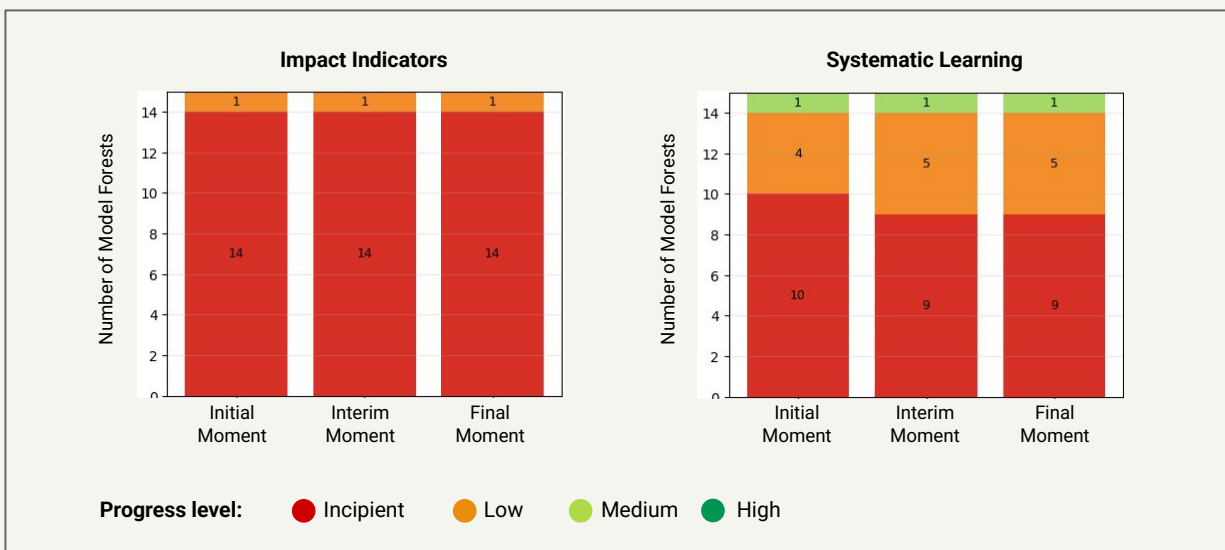
This element shows the lowest level of development and practically no evolution throughout the process. In nearly all Model Forests, impact monitoring and evaluation systems remain at an incipient stage, with no defined indicators or systematic follow-up mechanisms (Table 7 and Figure 7).



Table 7: Number of Model Forests by progress level in results for the element *learning and impact*

ILM Result	Description	Moment	Progress level (No. of Model Forests)			
			Incipient	Low	Medium	High
Impact indicators	Monitoring mechanisms have been defined and used to track progress on the landscape's actions, including the use of indicators or other forms of recording and analyzing information.	Initial	14	1	0	0
		Interim	14	1	0	0
		Final	14	1	0	0
Systematic learning	Landscape stakeholders reflect on the process's progress and challenges, generating lessons that make it possible to adjust actions, strengthen governance, and guide decision-making.	Initial	10	4	1	0
		Interim	9	5	1	0
		Final	9	5	1	0

Figure 7: Evolution of progress levels in results for *learning and impact*



Systematic learning, although present in several cases, remains at incipient or low levels, occurring mainly through organic, unstructured mechanisms, without formal systematization processes that would allow it to be scaled up. As reported in several territories, “*reflections and lessons learned have not been systematized*,” although in some cases it is acknowledged that this happens implicitly within meeting spaces.

Summary of progress by ILM element

Taken together, the results show a consistent pattern across the Model Forests: the greatest progress is concentrated in relational aspects—linked to activating stakeholders, strengthening relationships, and building shared understanding—and in laying the groundwork for integrated landscape management; while the more operational components—such as planning, implementation, financing, and monitoring—show more limited development.

In particular, progress in the relational dimension has helped lay the foundations for more coordinated governance, a necessary condition for implementing the ILM approach. However, as the process moves toward more operational dimensions, progress levels tend to decline. This reflects a gap between territories' capacity to organize and reach agreements, and their capacity to sustain those agreements over time through structured mechanisms.

This pattern suggests that the program has been particularly effective in driving changes in relational dynamics and in understanding of the ILM approach and of landscape dynamics. However, consolidating ILM as an operational, sustainable practice requires longer processes, as well as specific tools aimed at strengthening sustained coordinated relationships, implementation, financing, and learning.

As evidenced in some cases, even in contexts where an active multi-stakeholder platform exists, challenges persist in sustaining its momentum and translating coordination into sustained action, confirming that the existence of structures alone does not guarantee the functionality of the process.



4.1.3. Strategies that were key to implementing ILM

Although the initial ILM situation and context differed across each Model Forest, the experience revealed at least three common strategies that guided the implementation of the approach in the territories. These strategies do not form a rigid sequence, but rather a practical path that teams adapted to their own conditions, combining the activation of stakeholders, the creation of spaces for encounter, and the progressive building of agreements and actions.

Activating the landscape's stakeholder network

In most cases, the first step was to identify the territory's stakeholders, reach out to them, and generate (or reactivate) their interest in taking part in the process. Although stakeholder mapping was a widely used tool, its value lay not only in the result itself, but in the outreach process it involved.

As one participating leader emphasized: *"it's not just about doing the mapping and the analysis [...] we also have to think about how to involve each party."* In this sense, teams did not limit themselves to identifying stakeholders, but developed active mechanisms for engaging them.

In practice, this involved: prioritizing stakeholders with whom some connection already existed, to make it easier to get the process started; taking a personalized approach rather than relying on distant, formal invitations; seeking out allies who could serve as a bridge to reach less accessible stakeholders; and making use of existing spaces (events, networks, local meetings) to spread the word about ILM and the invitation to join the coordination roundtable.

One particularly important element was active listening during these initial outreach efforts. This process made it possible to recognize stakeholders' interests, needs, and motivations, and to adjust the approach accordingly. As one MF's process captured regarding community stakeholders, *"they (the communities) have a lot of ideas for improving the territory, which they want to share, and they are willing to bring in partners to help make them a reality,"* revealing the potential for coordination that already exists in the territory.

This initial work not only made it possible to identify key stakeholders, but also laid the groundwork for their involvement, reinforcing the importance of understanding the territory before moving into more operational stages.

Fostering encounter and horizontal dialogue

Once initial interest had been generated, teams promoted spaces where diverse stakeholders could come together, mainly through participatory workshops, assemblies, and collective work sessions. These spaces were essential for building relationships, exchanging perspectives, and beginning to identify shared interests.

A central element in these processes was the care taken to preserve horizontal dialogue, especially given the diversity of stakeholders involved. As reflected in one of the cases, the approach made it possible to move toward spaces where decisions “*would be better consulted on, assessed, and monitored,*” fostering a greater sense of ownership among participants.

In practice, these spaces proved more effective when: participatory methodologies were used that allowed all stakeholders to take part; they were organized around concrete questions (problems, needs, contributions based on each party's own capacities, joint solutions); both differences and common ground were acknowledged; and they had clear objectives and a decision-making orientation. In this sense, some processes revealed that “*dialogue alone is not enough, it also has to be strategic,*” highlighting the importance of steering these spaces toward concrete agreements and actions.

These gatherings also made it possible to reveal the potential for collaboration that existed within the territory. As one MF leader recounted, after exploring what each stakeholder needed and what they could contribute, “*we realized that all the needs could be met with what we already had. The problem was that each local committee was working on its own.*”

In this sense, the value of these spaces lay not only in the exchange of information, but in the opportunity to build a foundation of trust and shared responsibility, in which stakeholders began to see themselves as part of a collective process.

Aligning visions, priorities, and first actions

In parallel with these gatherings, teams made progress in building a shared understanding of the territory and identifying joint actions. This process did not unfold sequentially, but was woven into the spaces for dialogue, which made it possible to link reflection with action from an early stage.

In practice, this involved the use of tools such as participatory diagnostics, SWOT analysis, and prioritization exercises, which helped organize the conversation and move toward concrete agreements. These spaces also made it easier to identify possible alliances and define initial actions.

As some of the participating leaders noted, working on these elements from the outset “*helped a lot in understanding why it's important to look at integrated landscape management*” and to “*identify some actions that bring them together to work at the Model Forest level.*”

A key aspect of this strategy was the decision to move toward concrete actions even when planning processes were not yet fully structured. This made it possible to generate early results that reinforced stakeholders' motivation and validated the collaborative approach.

In several cases, these first actions arose directly from the agreements built within participatory spaces. For example, partnerships decided to launch regular training sessions or turn ideas into project proposals, showing that it was possible to move from reflection to action even with limited resources.

Taken together, the application of these three strategies made it possible to create the minimum conditions needed to advance the implementation of integrated landscape management in the territories. In cases where these processes achieved greater continuity and coordination, it was possible to consolidate more structured multi-stakeholder platforms, with clear definitions of their members, roles, and ways of operating. These advances also made it easier to build shared visions and, in some cases, to develop strategic landscape plans.

However, this level of progress was not achieved uniformly. In several Model Forests, the process remained at intermediate stages, where partnerships managed to become active and generate agreements but still face challenges in translating this into more formalized mechanisms. This reinforces the idea that these strategies, together with time and the particularities of each context, form a necessary—though not sufficient—foundation for advancing toward higher levels of ILM implementation.



4.1.4. Typology of Model Forest progress trajectories

The comparative analysis of the participating Model Forests shows that, beyond their territorial differences, ILM processes tend to cluster into a relatively consistent set of trajectories, determined by their starting point and by how they evolved during the implementation of the seed projects.

Based on the systematized information—including the characterization of the initial situation, the progress observed across the five ILM elements, and the results achieved by the end of the second cycle—three broad types of trajectory were identified: initial activation, reactivation, and structured processes, although there was internal variation within each group (Table 8). Trajectories are defined mainly by the initial conditions of the processes and their patterns of evolution, rather than by their final results, which vary within each type.

Table 8: Types of trajectories observed by Model Forest

Type of trajectory	Description	No. of MFs*
Initial activation	Processes that start from initial conditions where governance is absent or still forming. They make progress in building relationships and shared understanding and, in some cases, planning. Their trajectory was characterized by more visible progress in the relational and cognitive dimensions, with a variable transition toward planning and sustainability.	5
Reactivation	Processes that start from previous governance experiences that had lost momentum, and that evolve toward rebuilding relationships, re-engaging stakeholders, and reconfiguring structures. Their trajectory combines relatively fast progress in activation and governance with a still-variable transition toward planning and sustainability.	5
Structured processes	Processes that start from already established and sustained governance structures and that evolve in different directions: strengthening, functional adjustment, or weakening. Their trajectory is not centered on creating structures, but on their capacity to remain dynamic, representative, and operational, facing tensions related to implementation, stakeholder turnover, and long-term sustainability.	4
Undetermined	Processes without sufficient evidence to characterize a clear trajectory, which limits the ability to analyze their evolution.	1

* Number of Model Forests

Initial activation trajectories: from fragmentation to building the foundations of governance

A first group made up of 5 Model Forests followed this type of trajectory, characterized by incipient or nonexistent initial conditions of landscape governance, or by processes still in formation. These were Model Forests that, regardless of their year of joining LAMFN, had not developed any clear governance structure, or had only an incipient one limited to a small promoting team. These cases were characterized by the absence of multi-stakeholder platforms, low or sporadic coordination among stakeholders, and, in several cases, knowledge of the ILM approach concentrated in very few people. A range of speeds and depths of progress can be observed within this group.

On one hand, two Model Forests show accelerated progress trajectories, achieving significant progress in a relatively short period in forming and structuring the landscape partnerships, developing shared understanding, and planning activities. In these cases, progress across the different ILM elements occurred in a relatively balanced way, including the consolidation of the governance space and the development of instruments such as strategic plans and the start of building a project portfolio.

By contrast, two other territories show more limited or incipient progress, focused mainly on strengthening relationships, building recognition among stakeholders, and opening spaces for dialogue, without yet structuring functional multi-stakeholder platforms or systematic planning processes. In these cases, progress is concentrated in the first ILM elements (*landscape partnership* and *shared understanding*), without a clear translation into coordinated action.

Finally, the remaining Model Forest could be considered an intermediate case, showing relevant progress in developing *shared understanding* and *action planning*—for example, through participatory processes such as SWOT analysis and vision-building—but with lags in structuring the partnership, which limits the capacity to sustain this progress over time.

Taken together, these trajectories suggest that initial activation processes tend to follow a sequence in which cognitive and relational changes precede institutional structuring. At the same time, they show how a relatively brief intervention, such as the seed projects, can generate initial progress in ILM dimensions that, in some territories, had not previously been addressed, particularly in activating stakeholders, building shared understanding, and establishing a logic of coordinated work. Nonetheless, consolidating governance and its sustainability requires longer timeframes than those of the intervention cycles.

Reactivation trajectories: rebuilding governance on previous experience

A second group corresponds to reactivation processes, that is, territories where prior governance experience existed under the Model Forest approach (landscape approach) but had, for various reasons, lost momentum or continuity. In these cases, the starting point is the existence of an institutional and social memory of the process, which significantly shapes the trajectory observed.

At least 3 of the 5 MFs of this type showed progressive reactivation trajectories, in which stakeholders were relatively quickly re-engaged, spaces for dialogue were rebuilt, and progress was made toward structuring the alliance and landscape planning. In certain cases, this process was made easier by linking up with pre-existing territorial structures (such as watershed councils or biological corridor committees), which helped accelerate the alliance's functionality and broaden coordination to the landscape scale.

Another territory showed particularly significant progress in strengthening the alliance, territorial identity, and social cohesion, while planning processes advanced more gradually. This shows that the different ILM elements do not necessarily evolve at the same pace, and that in some contexts rebuilding the relational fabric is a prior step that takes more time before more structured planning processes can be sustained.

Finally, one of the MFs showed partial reactivation, where although progress was made in planning and understanding—for example, through participatory exercises such as SWOT analysis and vision updating—consolidating the partnership remains a major challenge, revealing gaps between planning and effective governance.

These trajectories show that reactivation does not simply mean picking up previous processes again, but rebuilding conditions of trust, shared meaning, and functionality, which can be made easier—though are not guaranteed—by accumulated experience.



Structured processes: between consolidation and sustainability challenges

A third group corresponds to Model Forests that already had relatively consolidated governance structures at the start of this process. In these cases, the progress observed is not centered on creating new structures, but on strengthening, adjusting, or functionally revitalizing them.

One of the MFs showed a trajectory of strengthening, making progress in formalizing its governance, improving its operational capacities, and developing strategic instruments such as short-term plans and project portfolios.

Another territory showed a functional process, though facing challenges related to renewing commitments, energizing participation, and improving the implementation of existing plans.

By contrast, in a third MF, despite having formal governance structures in place, signs of declining momentum and reduced participation were observed, along with the need to renew both internal relationships and the shared meaning of the Model Forest concept and approach.

Finally, the last territory showed a structured process with limitations in the breadth of participation and representativeness, where progress occurs selectively (for example, in specific networks such as the women's network), but has not yet translated into governance that is fully inclusive and coordinated across the entire landscape—remaining instead centered on a small group of stakeholders.

Taken together, these cases show that the existence of formal structures does not, on its own, guarantee the functionality of governance, and that these processes require ongoing mechanisms for renewal, adaptation, and broadening the stakeholder base.

Undetermined trajectories

Finally, one of the Model Forests does not present sufficient evidence to characterize a clear trajectory, highlighting the importance of having consistent information and follow-up mechanisms that allow for analyzing the evolution of landscape management processes.

The trajectories observed show that ILM implementation does not follow a linear path, but instead responds to initial conditions, existing capacities, and specific territorial dynamics. Rather than a single model, what emerges is a set of transition patterns, in which the seed projects act as catalysts that accelerate already existing processes or open up new possibilities for coordination, with differentiated results depending on the context.

While the analysis of trajectories makes it possible to identify differentiated patterns of evolution among the Model Forests, it also suggests that these processes do not respond solely to their initial conditions, but are shaped by a set of factors that facilitate or limit their development.

Since these factors require more detailed analysis, they are addressed in general terms in subsection 4.1.5, which takes a closer look at the conditions that have contributed—to a greater or lesser extent—to the progress observed in ILM processes.

4.1.5. Factors that facilitated progress in ILM

Beyond the strategies implemented, the processes carried out in the Model Forests during the implementation of the seed projects make it possible to identify a set of factors that favored progress in integrated landscape management in the territories. These factors, mainly endogenous in nature, help explain the conditions under which progress was achieved, regardless of the level each MF reached.

Strengthened understanding of the ILM approach

One of the most significant factors was the strengthened understanding of the ILM approach among MF leaders and local promoting teams. This understanding did not necessarily exist at the start of the program, but was progressively strengthened through the training course, the spaces for exchange, and the accompaniment carried out alongside the implementation of the seed projects.

This greater understanding helped guide initial decisions, define starting points, and give meaning to the actions carried out in the territory. As captured in one testimonial, this understanding *“was very important for knowing where to start, how to involve people, but also where to stop.”* This clarity helped participants better understand ILM priorities in their territories and put forward seed-project proposals that were better suited to each MF's needs, making the processes more viable and context-appropriate.

Active leadership

Another factor identified was the presence of active leadership in the territory, with individuals who took on the responsibility of convening, coordinating, and committing to sustaining the processes over time. This leadership played an important role in activating and sustaining the momentum of multi-stakeholder spaces. Moreover, throughout the seed projects, these leaders did not limit themselves to coordinating activities, but played an active role in mediating among stakeholders, building trust, and following up on agreements.

Capacity to adapt to the territorial context

Finally, teams' capacity to adapt to the conditions of the territory was found to be an important element. This involved adjusting expectations, redefining priorities, and moving forward based on the capacities available, which made it possible to sustain the processes even in complex or changing contexts. As reflected in one of the cases, the process made it possible to move toward *“more grounded, deliberate planning—referring to planning done years earlier—being honest about what can actually be done from the platform.”*

Taken together, these factors show that progress in ILM depends on a set of conditions that support its implementation, linked both to stakeholders' capacities and to the dynamics of the territory. These conditions help create an enabling environment for these processes, although their presence alone does not guarantee higher levels of progress.

Legitimacy and territorial recognition

In addition to leaders' active role, in several cases their ability to convene stakeholders—and the response this drew—was tied to their legitimacy within the territory. MF leaders are not merely stakeholders with initiative; they are people and/or organizations already recognized by other stakeholders, whether for their track record, their prior work, or their ties to other existing processes in the territory. This legitimacy made it easier to reach out to both new and long-standing stakeholders, generated greater willingness to participate, and helped build trust, making it easier to establish spaces for dialogue and, later, spaces for coordination and decision-making.

In this sense, as reflected in one of the cases, *“human relationships sustain the platform more than formal structures do,”* reinforcing the role of familiarity and trust in convening stakeholders.

Prior relationships among stakeholders

Another element that supported progress was the existence of prior relationships among stakeholders, which in some territories made it easier to get coordination processes off the ground. In these cases, the strategies implemented built on existing ties or spaces for dialogue, making it possible to move more smoothly toward generating dialogue and collaboration.

Building trust

Along these lines, building trust among stakeholders emerges as a cross-cutting factor. Sustained interaction, follow-through on commitments, and the generation of concrete results all helped strengthen this trust, making participation and involvement in collective processes easier.

Making concrete short-term results visible

The ability to generate concrete short-term actions was also identified as a relevant factor, helping to sustain stakeholders' interest and give practical meaning to spaces for dialogue. Although these actions were, in many cases, one-off or small in scale, they made it possible to demonstrate the value of collaboration and reinforce motivation to continue working together. In this sense, as one MF leader noted, *“talk alone isn't enough today—it has to be backed up by action,”* highlighting the importance of generating visible results in order to sustain participation.

4.2. Changes in capacities and relational dynamics in the territories

Beyond the progress made in implementing ILM, the data collected point to transformations in stakeholders' capacities and in the way they relate to and act within the territory. Although many of these changes are intangible in nature, the testimonials and processes analyzed show that they form an important foundation for the sustainability of governance processes beyond the program's implementation period.

Strengthened capacities for ILM

One of the most consistent changes was the strengthening of MF leaders' and their teams' capacities to understand and apply the ILM approach in their territories. Participants not only deepened their conceptual understanding of the approach, but also developed a greater capacity to translate it into concrete actions. As one leader noted, understanding ILM *“was very important for knowing where to start, how to involve people, but also where to stop.”*

This learning took place progressively and practically, combining the theoretical training from the ILM course with the implementation of the seed projects. Through this process, leaders acquired tools for mapping and engaging stakeholders, facilitating spaces for dialogue, building agreements, and participatory planning, among others.

Moreover, this knowledge was not limited to the MF teams, but also began to spread to other stakeholders in the territory. In several cases, a shift was observed in how stakeholders understand their role in the landscape, moving from a view centered on state responsibility toward a greater awareness of shared responsibility.

As reflected in one of the testimonials, stakeholders *“stopped seeing the government as the only one responsible (...) and began to see themselves as agents of change capable of mobilizing resources and, together with others, building a shared vision for the territory.”*



Transformation of relational dynamics and strengthened collaboration

Another significant change can be seen in the way stakeholders in the territory interact with one another. The seed projects facilitated the creation or reactivation of spaces where stakeholders who had not previously been connected could come together, strengthening ties and generating new dynamics of collaboration.

In several cases, these spaces brought together stakeholders from different sectors—communities, local governments, academia, grassroots organizations, and the private sector—under more horizontal conditions, fostering dialogue and building trust. As one leader emphasized, these spaces *“not only enabled dialogue and mutual listening, but also generated a renewed sense of commitment and shared responsibility among stakeholders.”*

The process also made it possible to reveal complementarities among stakeholders who had previously worked in isolation. In the words of one leader, *“we realized that all the needs could be met with what we already had (...) the problem was that each committee was working on its own.”* This kind of learning helped strengthen collaboration and lay the groundwork for more coordinated collective action.

In addition, a shift toward more horizontal and participatory forms of interaction was observed. In some territories, governance spaces began to be perceived as more inclusive settings, where stakeholders could voice their opinions and take part in decision-making.

Changes in how the territory and collective action are conceived

The processes carried out also generated transformations in how stakeholders perceive the territory and their role within it. In several cases, a shift was observed from a sectoral logic toward a more integrated view of the landscape, in which environmental, social, and productive challenges are understood as interdependent.

This shift was reflected in the construction of shared visions for the territory, as well as in the strengthening of identity around the Model Forest as a space for coordination. The processes of dialogue and planning made it possible to align perspectives and generate a sense of common purpose, which helps consolidate a culture of collaborative work.

As noted in one of the testimonials, the process made it possible to *“plant a sense of collective awareness and a new way of conceiving landscape management,”* shifting away from a logic of individual interests toward a vision of mutual benefit.

Likewise, in some cases territorial identity and sense of belonging were reinforced, through processes of collective reflection on the Model Forest's past, present, and future, as well as through the use of communication tools that helped make these processes visible.

Enabling conditions for environmental action and financial sustainability

Although the seed projects focused mainly on relational, social, and governance aspects, they also created important conditions for advancing landscape environmental management and resource mobilization.

In several Model Forests, participatory processes made it possible to build a shared understanding of the territory's main environmental challenges—such as water scarcity, forest degradation, or wildfires—and to prioritize actions to address them. This shared diagnostic represents an important foundation for future action.

Likewise, in some cases progress was made in formulating action plans and identifying concrete initiatives, opening up opportunities to secure financing and implement interventions in the territory. Although biophysical results were not part of this systematization, these processes lay the groundwork for future improvements in the management of the landscape's natural resources.

On the other hand, seed funding played a catalytic role by making it possible to activate processes that would not normally have access to resources. Beyond the funding itself, its value lay in having made it possible to convene stakeholders, carry out key activities, and get governance structures up and running. In several cases, this support made it possible to move from ideas to action, showing that relatively small investments can generate significant momentum in the territories.

4.3. Specific contribution of the *Forest Leaders for ILM program*

Beyond the changes observed in the landscapes, it is important to recognize the contribution of the *Forest Leaders for ILM program* itself, through its various support components. The program's comprehensive design—which combined training, financing, technical accompaniment, and the fostering of a community of practice—acted as an accelerator for these processes, providing leaders with knowledge, tools, support networks, and resources that would have been difficult to obtain on their own.

According to the surveys and testimonials gathered, participants' overall perception of the program was highly positive. Its comprehensive design was especially valued, as it succeeded in offering a coherent, well-rounded training experience. In the words of one participant, *“all the components were important, and you couldn't say one mattered more than the others. The program was well focused, and every activity was an important pillar in getting to the practical stage through the seed project.”* This shows that the different components did not operate in isolation, but reinforced one another, generating synergies that made it easier to apply ILM in the territories.

ILM training course

The integrated landscape management training course served as the program's foundational learning component. For many participants, who had no prior specific training in landscape management, this space, as one leader emphasized, *“was essential for gaining the conceptual foundation and practical tools we can apply directly in our Model Forests.”*

The course also made it possible to systematize and put a name to many of the actions teams had already been carrying out empirically, in some cases for several years. However, in many instances, these practices lacked a clearly structured methodology or path. In this sense, it fostered a more organized understanding of ILM, making it possible to recognize that *“everything we’ve been working on for years, we now know is called integrated landscape management, and we understand it with much greater clarity.”* This conceptual ownership helped align prior practices with a more coherent, explicit approach.

Beyond technical learning, the course prompted critical reflection on the state of governance in the territories. Through the proposed assignments and discussions, participants identified weaknesses and gaps in their processes, while also being motivated to act. *“When we were asked to reflect on the current state of governance (...) it was a difficult moment, because it made us recognize the weaknesses that existed. But it also pushed us to act,”* one participant recounted. This process strengthened not only capacities, but also attitudes and commitments.

In several cases, the course directly contributed to defining strategic priorities, which later guided the design of the seed projects. *“Understanding the Model Forest’s ILM priorities was key, (...) the steps we needed to take were very clear,”* one leader noted, showing the direct link between training and action.

Mentoring

The mentoring provided throughout the program played a key role as a space for personalized accompaniment for local teams. Through regular sessions, the EcoAgriculture Partners team supported leaders in clarifying doubts, organizing ideas, and, above all, translating ILM concepts into concrete, actionable strategies within the context of their seed projects. For several participants, these sessions were decisive, especially in the early stages, providing direction and coherence to the processes.

As one leader noted, *“we had a ton of ideas and lacked the clarity to pin them down. That meeting was essential because a lot of things became clear (...) It opened our minds and we said: ‘you’re right, let’s go this other way.’”* This kind of accompaniment made it possible to adjust approaches, prioritize actions and, in some cases, redirect projects toward more viable strategies, such as making use of already existing governance structures.

Beyond resolving operational matters, mentoring helped consolidate understanding of the landscape approach and its application in practice. As another participant noted, *"the exchange and the mentoring were essential for (...) putting the concept into practice in the project,"* showing its role as a bridge between theory and action.

Mentoring also served as a space to strengthen the conceptual foundation of MF teams, giving them greater confidence to keep driving these processes forward on the ground. In the words of one leader, *"everything became a lot clearer for the team (...) and afterward they were able to pass it on to the rest, because they could explain it better."*

Taken together, mentoring not only provided technical clarity, but also strengthened teams' capacities and confidence, leaving them better prepared to sustain ILM implementation in their territories.

Community of practice

The community of practice served as a cross-cutting component of the program, creating a horizontal learning environment based on the exchange of experiences. This approach allowed participants to take on the roles of both learner and facilitator at the same time, fostering active, ongoing interaction among the Model Forests.

Through these exchanges, leaders found that many of the challenges they faced were shared. This facilitated collective learning and made it possible to draw inspiration from other territories' experiences. As one participant put it, *"in the end, almost all of us face the same situations, but seeing how others have solved them gives you much more clarity."* This recognition helped enrich decision-making and broaden the range of possible actions.

The exchange also generated a strong sense of community and mutual support. For many participants, it was meaningful to realize they were not alone in facing the challenges of landscape management. *"Learning about the stories and realities of the other Model Forests was a great source of strength (...) knowing we're not the only ones facing certain challenges,"* they noted. This accompaniment helped sustain motivation and reduce the sense of isolation.

In several cases, shared experiences acted as triggers for change. *"Learning how other Model Forests work gave me ideas for what projects to pursue in the future,"* one participant commented. Concrete examples even influenced strategic decisions, as in the case of one MF, which inspired reflection on how to adapt governance models to contexts with lower participation.

Participants recognized this component as indispensable within the program. *"I don't think any activity in the program could be cut. The exchanges were very important,"* one of them affirmed. Taken together, the community of practice not only strengthened capacities, but also built a support network capable of outlasting the program itself.

Seed projects

The seed projects were widely recognized as the component that made it possible to translate ideas into concrete actions. In many cases, the Model Forests had already identified needs and priorities but lacked the resources needed to address them. The funding provided by the program made it possible to activate these processes.

“Receiving these funds was the turning point (...) before that, everything was up in the air. With the funds, we were able to make it happen,” one leader noted, reflecting the immediate impact of this support. In several territories, the fund made it possible to mobilize stakeholders, carry out key activities, and advance governance processes that were at early or stalled stages.

In some cases, the funding was integrated into already existing processes, strengthening their scope and coherence. *“This fund was exactly what we needed,”* one participant recalled, showing that the support arrived at an opportune moment to sustain strategic initiatives.

Although the implementation period was relatively short, participants agree that the projects planted the seeds of longer-term processes. *“We planted a seed; now we have to water it and nourish it. We need to keep it going,”* one leader reflected, underscoring the need to sustain what had been started.

Finally, the seed fund helped fill a structural gap, since funding specifically aimed at strengthening landscape governance is uncommon. In this sense, the program was valued as an initiative that responded to a concrete need, demonstrating the potential of this type of investment to energize territorial processes.



4.4. Challenges for the sustainability of ILM in the Model Forests

The progress observed in the Model Forests shows that implementing ILM requires not only activating governance processes, but also confronting a set of structural challenges related to the long-term sustainability of collective action.

Although the *Forest Leaders for ILM* program made it possible to achieve significant progress in coordinating stakeholders, strengthening shared understanding, and driving planning and coordination processes, it also revealed persistent gaps that limit the consolidation of these processes. These gaps are not solely the result of specific implementation difficulties, but reflect challenges inherent to the complex, multi-stakeholder, and progressive nature of ILM.

One of the main challenges identified relates to deepening and broadening **multi-stakeholder participation**. Although progress can be seen in convening, engaging, and coordinating stakeholders, gaps persist in the inclusion of certain key groups, such as Indigenous communities, private-sector actors, or strategic public entities. In addition, in some cases, direct coordination and decision-making remains concentrated within a small core of stakeholders, which limits the representativeness and legitimacy of governance spaces.

Challenges related to the functionality of **governance** spaces were also identified. Many Model Forests managed to create or strengthen multi-stakeholder platforms; however, these spaces did not always evolve into structures capable of sustaining clear decision-making processes, defined roles, or permanent coordination mechanisms. As observed across the different trajectories, the shift from dialogue to coordinated, sustained action remains one of the main challenges for consolidating ILM.

In the area of **planning**, another persistent challenge is translating visions and plans into sustained, coordinated actions. Although several Model Forests made progress in building shared visions and designing strategic plans, implementation remains uneven. In many cases, plans have not yet been translated into clear operational agendas, with defined responsibilities, resources, and follow-up mechanisms. This shows that planning, while necessary, does not on its own guarantee sustained collective action.

Closely related to this, the mobilization of **financial and technical resources** to sustain governance and implementation emerges as a critical challenge. Although the seed projects acted as important catalysts, in most cases there are no clear landscape financing strategies in place that would make it possible to sustain governance spaces, continue prioritized actions, and strengthen organizational capacities over the medium and long term.

Although the organizations that make up the Model Forests do access sources of financing or coordinate projects, in most cases resource management remains incipient or dependent on one-off opportunities that arise in the territories. This creates tensions between the expectations built up during the process and the Model Forests' actual capacity to sustain them. Likewise, maintaining the momentum generated by the seed projects requires additional efforts related to continuity and diversification of leadership, stakeholder motivation, and the availability of organizational capacities and resources to follow up on the agreements and agendas that have been built.

Another relevant aspect is the incorporation of mechanisms for **monitoring, evaluation, and learning** within these processes. Most Model Forests still lack consolidated follow-up systems that would allow them to measure progress, generate evidence, learn from experience, and continuously adjust strategies. This limitation affects not only the capacity to strengthen processes internally, but also the ability to demonstrate results and mobilize new support and financing.

More specifically, challenges linked to **sociocultural factors** in each context were also identified. In some territories, patterns of participation tied to immediate incentives persist, making it harder to consolidate governance processes based on medium- and long-term commitments. Likewise, the diversity of interests among stakeholders—particularly where tensions exist between productive and environmental agendas—continues to pose a challenge for building sustainable agreements.

Finally, a cross-cutting challenge is consolidating **leadership** that is distributed and sustainable over time. Although the processes analyzed show the importance of active, legitimate leadership, they also reveal the need to avoid dependence on a small number of people or organizations. The sustainability of ILM requires strengthening capacities across a broader base of stakeholders, fostering shared responsibility and the continuity of these processes beyond individual leaders.

In general terms, these challenges show that the sustainability of ILM does not depend solely on having activated spaces for dialogue, built visions, or formulated plans. Consolidating it requires simultaneous progress across **multiple dimensions**—governance, action, financing, learning, inclusion—which does not happen automatically or in a linear way. Progress in certain ILM elements does not guarantee balanced consolidation of the process overall, especially when the more operational dimensions advance more slowly than the relational and coordination aspects.

In this sense, rather than isolated shortcomings, the challenges identified should be understood as inherent to implementing integrated management approaches in complex territories. The processes analyzed represent important turning points, but their sustainability will depend on the territories' capacity to keep governance active, broaden participation, translate planning into action, mobilize resources, and sustain follow-up and learning mechanisms over time.

Key lessons learned

The analysis of the processes carried out by the Model Forests made it possible to identify a set of key lessons for implementing ILM, which emerge both from direct experience in the territories and from the accompaniment provided by the *Forest Leaders for ILM* program, and which reflect common patterns observed across diverse contexts.



5.1. Lessons from the practical implementation of ILM

ILM implementation is not a linear process, but rather an adaptive, non-uniform one

The experience of the Model Forests shows that ILM implementation does not follow a linear sequence of stages, but rather dynamic, adaptive processes that respond to the particular circumstances of each landscape.

In several territories, progress did not occur progressively or evenly across the ILM elements, but instead responded to specific opportunities, capacities, and decisions within each context. This is reflected, for example, in cases where planning advanced without governance being structured, or where relationships among stakeholders were strengthened without immediately translating into coordinated actions.

This lesson highlights that ILM must be understood as a flexible process that requires constant adaptation and cannot be approached as a rigid sequence of steps.

Landscape governance is built progressively, through trust and shared action

One of the most consistent lessons is that landscape governance is not established immediately, but is built progressively, through the generation of trust among stakeholders and sustained interaction over time. In every case, the processes began with spaces for encounter and dialogue that gradually evolved into more structured forms of coordination.

Experience shows that trust is not a starting point but an outcome of the process—although its prior existence can make things easier—one that is strengthened through following through on commitments, transparency in decision-making, and the generation of concrete results. In this sense, building trust does not happen spontaneously; it is a fundamental component of landscape governance and needs to be fostered intentionally and consistently.

Relationships among stakeholders and understanding of the approach need to be continuously reinforced

Another key lesson is that both relationships among stakeholders and understanding of the ILM approach are not static conditions, but need to be continuously cultivated and reinforced. In several cases, it became clear that spaces for dialogue, established trust, and conceptual clarity can weaken if they are not sustained over time through ongoing interaction, follow-up on agreements, and learning processes. Likewise, bringing in new stakeholders requires re-explaining, adapting, and rebuilding shared understanding of the ILM approach.

This lesson shows that implementing ILM involves not only activating processes, but also sustaining them, which calls for ongoing efforts in facilitation, communication, coordination, and capacity building.

Multi-stakeholder dialogue is necessary, but requires intentionality to translate into action

Although establishing spaces for dialogue was a key step in every territory, the evidence shows that dialogue alone does not guarantee progress in landscape management. These spaces need to be steered toward decision-making, defining agreements, and implementing concrete actions. In this sense, experience shows that dialogue must be strategic, with clear objectives, appropriate methodologies, and an explicit orientation toward sustained collective action.

ILM processes do not start from scratch: they are built on pre-existing histories and dynamics

Another relevant lesson is that ILM processes develop on territorial foundations that already exist, even when these are not formalized as governance platforms. In several cases, the most effective strategies were those that recognized and built on existing structures, relationships, or initiatives, rather than attempting to create entirely new processes.

This means that implementing ILM requires a careful reading of the context, one that makes it possible to identify existing assets and build on them.

Participatory planning is a key step, but it does not guarantee action

Building shared visions and strategic plans was an important achievement in several Model Forests. However, experience shows that planning alone does not ensure the implementation of collective actions. In many cases, gaps persist between what was planned and what was carried out, linked to limitations in resources, operational capacities, or coordination mechanisms.

This lesson highlights the need to pair planning processes with clear strategies for ongoing coordination, implementation, follow-up, and resource mobilization.



Early results, even small ones, are key to sustaining these processes

Generating concrete short-term actions—even small-scale ones—proved to be an important factor in sustaining stakeholders' interest and commitment. These results make it possible to demonstrate the value of collaboration and reinforce confidence in the process. In this sense, experience suggests that making visible progress, even when it does not resolve structural problems, can be key to sustaining collective momentum, particularly in the early stages.

Representation and diversity among stakeholders remain a structural challenge

Despite progress in coordinating stakeholders, experience shows that achieving broad, representative participation remains a challenge. In several cases, active governance is concentrated among a small group of stakeholders, while others—such as Indigenous communities, private-sector actors, or certain public entities—remain less involved or participate only sporadically.

This lesson highlights the importance of designing differentiated strategies to broaden participation and strengthen the legitimacy of these processes.

5.2. Lessons from the design and implementation of the program

Combining training, practice, and accompaniment enhances learning

One of the program's main lessons is that capacity building is more effective when it combines different components in a coordinated way. The integration of theoretical training, practical implementation (through the seed projects), and technical accompaniment allowed participants not only to gain knowledge, but also to apply and adapt it to their own contexts. This approach fostered deeper, more sustained learning processes over time.

Peer learning strengthens capacities and reduces territorial isolation

The exchange among Model Forests, developed as part of the established community of practice, was one of the most highly valued elements of the program and represents a key lesson. The opportunity to share experiences, challenges, and solutions helped enrich territorial processes, broaden participants' perspectives, and strengthen capacities through peer learning.

This exchange also helped reduce the sense of isolation and strengthen a sense of belonging to a network, which is especially relevant in contexts where these processes tend to unfold in distant territories facing complex challenges. Likewise, mutual recognition among similar experiences generated motivation and renewed the commitment of many stakeholders, by showing that other territories face comparable challenges and continue to make progress in implementing ILM.

Seed funding can generate significant change when it is well targeted

Experience shows that relatively small investments can generate significant impact when aimed at activating governance processes. The seed fund made it possible to launch key actions, convene stakeholders, and energize processes that would otherwise have remained dormant for a longer period.

However, these results were not due solely to the availability of resources, but also to the methodological accompaniment provided by the program. The parallel training, mentoring, and spaces for exchange made it possible to steer the use of funds more strategically, strengthening territories' capacity to identify priorities, structure proposals, and focus actions on ILM processes.

This lesson highlights the potential of flexible financing instruments tailored to territories' needs, especially when combined with capacity-building processes and technical accompaniment.

Accompaniment and mentoring help translate ideas into viable processes

The accompaniment process, especially during the formulation and implementation stage of the seed projects, was key in helping teams ground their ideas, adjust expectations, and build more viable proposals.

This support helped improve the quality of the processes and strengthen teams' capacity to make informed decisions.

Continuity of learning is key to sustaining these processes

Finally, experience shows that capacity building is not a one-off event, but an ongoing process. The regularity (monthly sessions over two consecutive years) of the training and exchange spaces helped maintain focus on ILM and reinforce learning over time.

This lesson highlights the importance of designing training and accompaniment processes that extend beyond one-off interventions, favoring the consolidation of capacities over the long term.

Recommendations

The findings from the analysis of this experience show that the Model Forests, for the most part, achieved more significant progress in activating **governance processes**, particularly in strengthening relationships and coordinating stakeholders, building **shared understanding**—which forms the basis for subsequent steps—and, to a lesser extent, **planning**. However, gaps persist that hinder their consolidation, especially in coordinated implementation, financing, and systematic monitoring and learning.



The recommendations presented here aim to guide the transition from processes still being activated toward sustainable, operational ILM processes, with guidance differentiated according to the stakeholders involved.

6.1. To participating Model Forests

One aspect that requires priority attention is structuring and consolidating landscape governance beyond dialogue. Although the Model Forests have managed to activate multi-stakeholder coordination spaces, the next step is to strengthen them as effective, functional governance platforms. This means moving toward defining clear operating rules, defined roles and responsibilities among stakeholders, and decision-making mechanisms that make it possible to sustain coordination over time. The existence of spaces for encounter alone does not guarantee governance; governance requires minimum structures that guide collective action.

Closely related to this, it is necessary to strengthen the transition from planning to sustained, coordinated action. One of the main challenges identified is the gap between building visions and plans and their effective implementation. To address this, it is recommended to move toward clear, coordinated, operational joint agendas, with prioritized actions, defined responsible parties, timelines, and follow-up mechanisms that make it possible to progressively carry out the decisions made in governance spaces.

It is also essential to strengthen the long-term sustainability of these processes. This means developing strategies that make it possible to sustain both coordinated actions and governance spaces, integrating financing, participation, and local capacities. In particular, it becomes key to make progress in identifying and mobilizing resources, as well as in broadening the base of stakeholders involved, so that these processes do not depend on individual efforts or one-off external opportunities that arise in the territory.

Finally, it is recommended to invest continuously in the sustainability of relationships, trust, and shared understanding. Experience shows that these elements, far from being static, can weaken if they are not sustained over time. In this sense, it is important to maintain permanent spaces for interaction and coordination, communication, and follow-up on agreements, even beyond specific projects. It also becomes necessary to incorporate mechanisms that continuously reinforce the meaning and significance of the Model Forest and the ILM approach, promoting conceptual ownership and the building of a shared language among stakeholders. This not only supports the coherence of the process, but also facilitates the incorporation of new participants and the continuity of actions.

6.2. To landscape initiatives and other Model Forests

Building on the recommendations in the previous section, for other initiatives seeking to implement the landscape approach, a central lesson is recognizing that these processes are progressive and adaptive. The experience of the Model Forests shows that ILM does not follow a linear sequence, but rather evolves according to each territory's capacities, opportunities, and dynamics. In this sense, it is recommended to design flexible strategies that can be adjusted to changing contexts, avoiding expectations of immediate or uniform results.

It is also recommended to build on existing processes and relationships in the territory, rather than trying to establish entirely new structures. The experiences that showed the clearest progress were those that managed to connect with prior initiatives, strengthening existing ties and drawing on the social capital built up over time. This makes it possible to move forward with greater legitimacy and efficiency.

Another key aspect is prioritizing the building of trust and shared understanding from the earliest stages, recognizing them not only as enabling conditions, but as fundamental objectives of landscape governance processes. Landscape governance requires stakeholders to share a vision and understand their role within the process, which means investing time in dialogue, listening, and building agreements before moving toward more formal structures. In this sense, strengthening trust among stakeholders must be approached as an intentional, sustained process, not as an automatic outcome of interaction.

Finally, it is recommended to generate concrete results in the early stages, even if these are small in scale. These results make it possible to demonstrate the value of collaboration, strengthen trust among stakeholders, and sustain interest in the process, laying the groundwork for more structural progress over time.



6.3. To organizations that promote the landscape approach

Organizations that promote the landscape approach can strengthen their impact by designing comprehensive interventions that combine training, practice, and accompaniment. The experience of the *Forest Leaders for ILM* program shows that these three components, when brought together, significantly enhance stakeholders' capacity to understand and apply the approach in their territories. In particular, the training strengthened conceptual understanding of ILM; the seed projects offered concrete opportunities to apply this learning in real-world contexts; and technical accompaniment and spaces for exchange facilitated reflection, the adjustment of strategies, and the resolution of challenges during implementation. This combination helped make the processes more context-appropriate, viable, and sustainable.

It is also recommended to recognize landscape governance as a result in its own right, and not merely as a means to achieve other objectives. Coordination processes, trust building, and the establishment of partnerships require time and resources, and should therefore be considered a core part of intervention strategies and of the design of projects aimed at ecosystem and landscape conservation and development.

Another key element is promoting spaces for peer learning. The exchange of experiences among territories proved highly effective in strengthening capacities, broadening perspectives, and reducing stakeholders' sense of isolation. In this sense, it is recommended to incorporate communities of practice as a structural component of programs.

Finally, it is essential to develop financing mechanisms suited to the nature of ILM. This means designing flexible instruments that make it possible to sustain governance processes over time rather than only promoting short-term projects, recognizing the progressive, adaptive nature of these processes.

6.4. To Model Forest networks and other territorial and landscape networks

Networks play a strategic role in strengthening territorial processes. In this sense, it is recommended that they strengthen their role in coordination and accompaniment, facilitating spaces for exchange, providing technical assistance, and promoting collective learning among their members. Networks can also play a key role in reinforcing the essence of ILM and landscape governance, promoting a shared understanding of the approach and preventing territorial processes from being limited solely to the execution of isolated projects.

Networks can also help strengthen the systematization and circulation of lessons learned, promoting mechanisms to document and share experiences across territories. This not only supports continuous improvement, but also helps position the ILM approach at different levels.

Along these lines, it is also recommended to promote positioning the landscape approach within national and regional agendas, facilitating coordination with other stakeholders and the mobilization of resources needed to sustain and scale up these processes. It is likewise key to promote its incorporation into public policy, planning instruments, and territorial strategies, so that ILM can become established as a long-term approach rather than merely an initiative tied to specific projects.

6.5. To funders and strategic allies

Finally, for funders and strategic allies, it is recommended to recognize that strengthening ILM and territorial governance is an enabling condition for driving long-term sustainability and development processes. The progress observed shows that multi-stakeholder coordination, trust building, and capacity strengthening are fundamental elements for sustaining collective action and generating broader territorial transformations.

In this sense, it is necessary to adapt financing mechanisms to the progressive, long-term nature of these processes. Governance, coordination, and trust-building processes are not consolidated within short cycles, which calls for more flexible arrangements that can accommodate different territorial paces, incorporate capacity-building and governance-strengthening activities, and consider indicators suited to relational processes and gradual transformation.

It is also recommended to build greater flexibility into financing mechanisms, so that territories can adapt to their own dynamics and adjust their strategies based on learning and changing conditions.

Finally, it is important to broaden the understanding of expected results, incorporating not only traditional indicators but also results related to capacity building, governance, and stakeholder coordination, which are fundamental to the sustainability of landscape processes.

Conclusion

Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that the **seed projects** were an effective tool for activating governance processes and strengthening coordination among stakeholders in the territories. In most cases, they helped energize spaces for dialogue, broaden participation, and advance the construction of shared understanding and strategic planning, laying the groundwork for integrated landscape management.



This progress was concentrated mainly in the relational sphere, revealing a gap between the capacity for coordination and the capacity for implementation, particularly in areas such as financing, operational planning, and monitoring and learning systems.

It can also be concluded that the sustainability of integrated landscape management requires a long-term approach that combines capacity building, the progressive consolidation of governance, and the availability of resources. The experience analyzed here confirms that ILM is a complex, non-linear process that requires simultaneously addressing multiple dimensions, recognizing both the technical aspects and the social processes that sustain collective action. In this sense, the program's main contribution lies not in resolving the landscape's challenges, but in creating enabling conditions so that territories can address them in a more coordinated way and sustain that effort over time.

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EcoAgriculture Partners

EcoAgriculture Partners (EcoAg) is a global nonprofit organization that drives collaborative action so that people and nature can thrive. EcoAg supports local leaders, communities, governments, businesses, and funders in imagining, designing, and implementing landscape approaches that strengthen climate resilience, reinforce food systems, and sustain ecosystems and livelihoods. For more than 20 years, EcoAg has worked in Africa, the Americas, and Asia to strengthen leadership, foster inclusive governance, mobilize catalytic financing, and build strategic alliances that amplify impact.

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Latin American Model Forest Network

The Latin American Model Forest Network (LAMFN) is a voluntary alliance of 32 Model Forest territories in 14 countries across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain, covering more than 38 million hectares. It promotes sustainable, inclusive development through participatory, landscape-scale governance, strengthening collaboration, knowledge exchange, and local capacities as part of the International Model Forest Network (IMFN).

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International Model Forest Network

The International Model Forest Network (IMFN) is a voluntary global community that promotes the sustainable management of forest landscapes through a partnership-based Model Forest approach. Model Forests bring together diverse actors—such as communities, governments, academia, and the private sector. The network fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and practical solutions to address environmental, social, and economic challenges at the landscape level.

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1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People

1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People (1000L) is a coalition of organizations united by a shared mission: to drive local efforts within landscapes to sustain and restore ecosystems, strengthen rural prosperity, tackle climate change, and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. 1000L is building the infrastructure needed to help landscape partnerships connect and collaborate with one another, strengthen their capacities and leadership, access data and digital tools to achieve greater impact, and mobilize financing to scale up investment in landscapes.

Visit landscapes.global



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