

OCTOBER 2026

POLLINATION | Foundation

Pollination Foundation

FINAL IMPACT AND LEARNING REPORT **2026**

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the past and present generations of Traditional Owners from the lands on which our contributors are based, and we celebrate the stories, culture and traditions of the Indigenous Peoples across all the lands, waters and oceans in which we live, work and enjoy.



IMAGE CREDIT: ANITEK MEDIA
COVER IMAGE: GREAT BARRIER REEF, AUSTRALIA. IMAGE CREDIT: GEON ADIR

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Introduction



IMAGE CREDIT: MICHAEL EVANS

Note from our co-CEOs





ARIADNE GORRING
Co-CEO

JANE HUTCHINSON
Co-CEO

We've got big news to share! It's a little unexpected but super exciting - this is our final annual report as Pollination Foundation. The following pages are a celebration of what happens when people connect with curiosity, courage, conviction and a shared love for Country.

We're doing what many talk about but rarely do: together with ReefTO Alliance, we have completed a community-led transition that placed the Foundation's platform and resources into the ownership and control of Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners.

Over six years, our small but mighty team worked alongside First Nations leaders, philanthropies, governments, investors and fellow collaborators around the world. We explored new ways to connect people, nature, culture and finance: always with local leaders and place at the centre of the work.

Together, we learnt that relationships are infrastructure. That readiness matters. That markets work best when they support what communities already want to do. That stories can make the new possibilities visible. And that people make the impossible feel possible.

From Ampliseed's leadership exchanges & 'learning while doing' gatherings; the ISFMI two-way science programme; the Marketplace for Nature technical reports; the IP & LC Incubator readiness tools; to launching Indigenous-led ReefTO Alliance – all of this work, the people, the seeds of ideas, the shared experiences - have shaped how we think about this moment.

Weaving our paths together is an expression of the north star that guided us from the start. A vision that centres community at the heart of the solution and a belief that lasting change happens when communities own the institutions, resources and decisions that shape their future.

As we look back over the past six years we do so with immense gratitude. This report captures some of the projects, voices from the people and partnerships that have made our work possible centred around six 'big' lessons:

1. Relationships are the infrastructure to make change possible
2. Readiness is where the magic happens, going slow to go fast.
3. Cadence of market-making: testing, iterating and refining
4. Storytelling is systems work, the inspiration to motivate action
5. People make the impossible feel possible
6. Transitioning with courage, love and conviction is a part of the work

Importantly, it reflects what remains: the relationships which are held between the people doing the work in all corners of our beautiful planet.

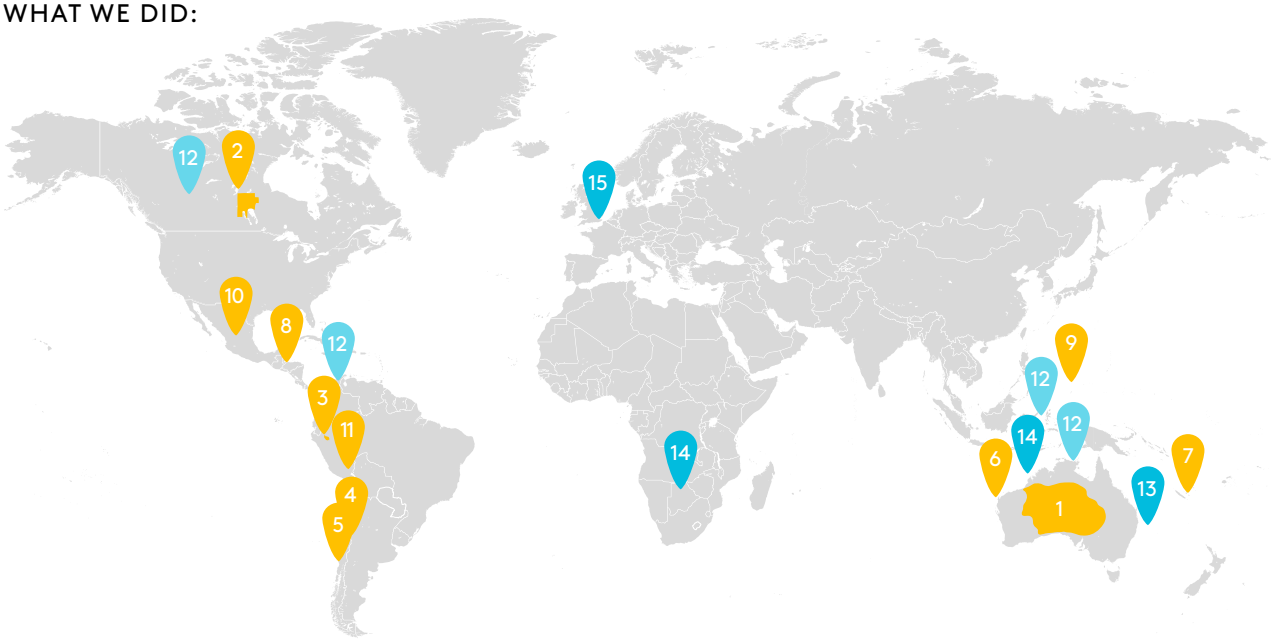
Thank you to all our friends who we've had the joy of walking with. We are incredibly proud of what we built together, and even more excited to step back and watch ReefTO Alliance grow as an Indigenous led organisation deeply connected to place.

Ariadne and Jane
CO-CEOS, POLLINATION FOUNDATION

Snapshot: 6 years at a glance

Pollination Foundation began in 2020 with a simple conviction: community should be at the heart of climate and nature solutions. Over six years, we worked alongside Indigenous Peoples and local communities, conservation practitioners, governments, philanthropy, businesses and investors to connect people and ideas, test new approaches to nature finance, strengthen community-led solutions and share what we learned.

WHAT WE DID:



AMPLISEED

Connecting leading landscape-scale conservation initiatives so knowledge, relationships and community-led models could travel between places.

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

OTHER PROJECT LOCATIONS

12. IP & LC Nature Credit Incubator, Australia, Canada, Colombia and Indonesia
13. Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner Taskforce (ReefTO), Australia
14. International Savanna Fire Management Initiative (ISFMI), Australia, Botswana
15. Nature Valued Project, United Kingdom
16. Marketplace for Nature, Global

How we worked. What carries forward

Our work brought people, knowledge and ideas together.
Its legacy continues through the ideas we sparked and the people leading the work.

HOW WE DID IT

Connected

Built relationships through which learning and opportunities travelled.

Shared knowledge

Turned experience, data and evidence into knowledge people could use.

Explored pathways

Tested what was possible and whether it was right.

Seeded ideas

Gave emerging ideas space and support to develop.

Grew confidence

Strengthened the people, governance and systems behind the work.

Transitioned

Brought our paths together with ReefTO Alliance through a community-led transition.

WHAT WE LEAVE - OUR LEGACY

A$70m mobilised

The majority of which flowed to community-led nature and climate solutions, and led to the launch of two projects into independent organisations.

60+ resources developed

Collaboration tools, case studies, technical reports and practical insights — many co-authored with partners, for others to use and build on.

100s of connections

Sparked between people leading the work.

A LASTING TRANSFER

The Foundation's platform and resources transitioned to Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner ownership and control.

CHAPTER 1

Relationships are infrastructure



IMAGE CREDIT: ANITEK MEDIA

Relationships are infrastructure

What if one of the most durable things philanthropy can build is not a project, a report, or even an organisation – but the trust between people who continue to learn from each other long after the funding ends?

Pollination Foundation's ultimate goal was always to play a part in shifting systems: nature finance, Indigenous-led conservation, place-based economies, and the stories decision-makers hear about what is possible. We knew relationships mattered. But over the past six years, we learned that they are not just the warm context wrapped around the work; they are the infrastructure that enables the work to move, grow and thrive.

When we think about building roads and broadband, infrastructure carries goods and information. When supporting systems change, relationships are what carry trust, ideas, courage, practical knowledge, and confidence. Without that connective tissue, even well-resourced initiatives can end up as isolated assets – effective in their own landscape, but unable to influence the wider conditions around them. With relationships, something greater becomes possible. Place-based knowledge can travel: local leaders can step into global conversations with confidence; practitioners can borrow ideas from other contexts, try them at home, and come back more certain that their work is on the right track.

Our global learning and leadership network Ampliseed made this visible. What began as a simple proposition – that landscape-scale environmental resilience projects could learn faster and go further by learning together – grew into a global community connecting Indigenous rangers and community leaders, conservation scientists, executive managers, policy specialists, finance experts, and funders across places as diverse as Australia's deserts, Canada's boreal forests, Peru's Alto Mayo Amazon forest, Chile's conservation corridors, coral reef communities, and tropical landscapes. Over time, it shifted from being an information-sharing forum into a genuine community of practice: a place where members could share not only their polished successes, but half-finished thoughts, dilemmas, uncertainty, and failures.

WHAT DID WE HELP MAKE POSSIBLE?

Strong networks turn connection into collective power. Through Ampliseed, we helped turn a portfolio into a community. Ampliseed members shared tools for monitoring and evaluation, storytelling, conservation finance, scaling, and systems change. They learned from each other's governance models, enterprise approaches, and cultural stewardship practices. They travelled together, walked each other's landscapes, sat together in community spaces, and carried those lessons forward into their own work.

Fund the conditions that make collaboration possible. The in-person exchanges – held in project landscapes ranging from Australia's vast desert landscapes to the flooded forests of Alto Mayo – created a kind of learning that could not be replicated in a webinar: embodied, relational, and grounded in place. Travelling together pushed members out of presentation mode and into something deeper. The experiences built confidence and solidarity, and helped members realise that their local challenges were part of a much larger movement.

This way of working sat at the heart of our theory of change. We believed that connected communities of practice would enable local solutions to travel, that stories grounded in lived experience would shift what funders and policymakers understood, and that stronger networks could build confidence in Indigenous-led and community-led nature-based initiatives. Ampliseed formed alliances across difference, nurtured local-to-global learning, and gave visibility to community-led approaches. Through conservation finance working groups, donor scans, and shared learning on nature markets, we opened new pathways for practitioners to explore how more capital could flow toward local stewardship on better terms.

Local-to-global influence is an impactful relationship strategy. Six years is a short window for systems change, but member feedback showed the pathway already had impact. We heard that local-to-global connections helped projects fundraise domestically by showing how their activities contributed to global commitments. In some cases, they also led to projects and communities being invited into national policy conversations – a glimpse into how place-based work, when given access to a global platform, can influence the wider rules of the game.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Even with the best of intentions, relationships rarely self-organise at scale – they need tending. Ampliseed worked because Pollination Foundation provided a backbone: people holding the rhythm, curating the spaces, translating across time zones and languages, noticing where members' questions overlapped, and designing ways for knowledge to translate and move. This work is mostly invisible, but essential.

The clearest takeaway is that if you want to achieve the many benefits of collaboration, you have to fund the conditions that make collaboration possible. Facilitation, translation, travel, cultural protocols, informal time, follow-up, documentation, and care are not overheads; they are the maintenance costs of relational infrastructure. That relational investment also improves what becomes possible: when people trust each other, they can raise concerns early; credible coalitions can open doors that one project alone cannot; and shared methods – such as monitoring and evaluation, storytelling, and learning design – can be adapted across projects even as they remain grounded in the people, culture, and landscapes they protect.

Perhaps the deepest learning was that the "local to global" pathway is not a communications strategy; it is a relationship strategy. And that's where its power to shift systems is strongest. When practitioners came together at global events, they were not a collection of disconnected case studies. They showed up as a credible coalition, grounded in lived experience and connected by shared values. This helps to shift the story about what conservation is, and who leads it. Conservation is not something delivered to communities from the outside; it's culture-first work, led by communities themselves and carried by people with enduring responsibility to place. When different voices speak in unison, different forms of authority are recognised, and community-led approaches begin to shape the wider rules, narratives and decisions around nature.

WHAT REMAINS AFTER WE TRANSITION?

As the Foundation transitions, Ampliseed's formal network is no longer running. But the relationships it built remain active in people's work. The confidence, tools, stories, shared language, and 'muscle memory' of collaboration didn't disappear when the programme ended. Some of that legacy is tangible – reports, toolkits, case studies, conservation finance resources, communications products. Much of it lives in the connections between people: practitioners who know who to call, who have seen what is possible elsewhere, who can connect with peers across countries and landscapes, and who draw on those relationships as a source of knowledge, solidarity, and influence.

Ampliseed produced many public reports and other tools, including resources on:

- Conservation Communication,
- Scaling & Systems Change, and
- Conservation Financing.

Alongside these resources, in August and September 2025 we also released two reports of particular value to network builders:

- Seeds to Systems: Building and Nurturing Networks for Lasting Impact - a collection of insights from our network management experiences, and a guide to building the strong relationships needed for a network to thrive; and
- Build, Sustain, Evolve - A Network Builder's Toolkit with practical guidance for creating resilient, sustainable and impactful networks, including a decision tree on choosing the right network type, real-world case studies, and step-by-step instructions and checklists.

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Ampliseed

A global learning network spanning Australia, Canada, Peru, Chile, Mexico, Belize, Palau, and New Caledonia.

View all of the resources on the website here.
Learn more about the project here.

Focus

A peer-to-peer learning and leadership network connecting practitioners funded by BHP Foundation working on landscape-scale environmental resilience.

Purpose

To share knowledge, strengthen leadership, build confidence, and amplify Indigenous and community-led approaches.

"All of our work is founded on relationships... Our work is really about people, how we stay connected, build trust and learn together while tackling some of the world's most complex challenges." – Ariadne Gorring, Co-CEO, Pollination Foundation

Sample Achievements

- Hosted more than 30 thematic working group sessions on topics including carbon and biodiversity markets, monitoring and evaluation, Indigenous leadership, community-based enterprise, conservation finance, and strategic communications.
- Enabled in-person field exchanges across four continents, connecting members through landscape immersion.
- Helped members translate local experience into global advocacy, appearing as a unified coalition at international events.
- Produced practical tools, knowledge products, and reports so learning lives beyond the formal programme.



AMPLISEED IN PERU. IMAGE CREDIT: BILL SALAZAR

CHAPTER 2

Going slow to go fast



IMAGE CREDIT: GEON ADIR

Going slow to go fast

What if the most important sign of readiness is not being prepared to enter a market – but being confident enough to decide that the market is not yet ready for you?

When new markets emerge, there is a sense of urgency to move quickly. New standards are announced, early projects take shape, and governments, businesses and funders begin looking for opportunities. It can feel as though those who don't move first will be left behind.

We felt this pressure in our own work with nature markets. In 2023, voluntary biodiversity and nature-credit markets were accelerating: the adoption of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework had sharpened global attention on the urgent need to protect and restore nature, while businesses, governments and investors were beginning to explore new ways of financing that work. With decades of experience in carbon markets we wanted to ensure Indigenous Peoples were at the table to shape these emerging markets, and to benefit from them on their own terms.

Our initial question was therefore: what would Indigenous-led organisations and communities need to be ready to opt into nature markets with confidence? However, as the project rolled out our experiences changed our understanding of the question.

Readiness does not simply mean communities preparing to participate in a market whose assumptions, demand and structures are continuously changing. The market opportunity itself needed to be tested in different locations and policy settings. Likewise, readiness was required across the system – including seed funders, intermediaries, policy makers, buyers and investors. In addition, the expectations on every side needed to be aligned. Through conversations in community, we found that Indigenous leaders were interested in a much broader array of mechanisms to fund nature repair, protection and stewardship: endowment and draw-down funds, bonds, certification schemes, enterprise finance and other models that might better suit their priorities and circumstances.

Through the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Nature Credits Incubator Project our understanding of readiness became less about preparing for entry into a particular market, and more about creating the conditions for informed decision making about whether and how to bring nature finance solutions to life. That meant aligning expectations, building trust, strengthening governance, testing assumptions and understanding risk. Communities need time and information to assess whether an opportunity could serve their priorities.

And readiness does not sit with communities alone. It also means asking whether prospective funders, investors and partners are themselves ready to work with Indigenous governance, share risk and move at the pace of community decision-making.

Sometimes the readiness work enables an initiative to move faster. Sometimes it reveals that the conditions are not yet right, or that another pathway would better serve community priorities. Both should be considered equally valuable outcomes.

Going slow does not guarantee that an initiative will ultimately reach scale. But it creates the conditions for better decisions – the ability to proceed with confidence when an opportunity is right, to adapt when the evidence changes, and to avoid forcing a solution that does not fit.

WHAT DID WE HELP MAKE POSSIBLE?

The IP&LC Nature Credits Incubator Project was established to explore whether emerging nature-credit markets could direct new finance to Indigenous Peoples and local communities while supporting livelihoods and the repair, protection and stewardship of nature.

We worked with Indigenous-led organisations and allies in Australia, Canada, Colombia and Indonesia. The original project design progressed through research, outreach and readiness towards the potential launch of a seven-project incubator, with a target of US$15 million in philanthropic funding and forward-purchase commitments.

The early work revealed strong interest in Indigenous-led nature finance. But it also challenged the central idea that the best pathway was simply to seed a pipeline of projects ready to participate in biodiversity credit markets.

Demand for biodiversity credits remained uncertain. Prospective buyers and funders are waiting for greater clarity about opportunities, business risk, claims and purchasing pathways. Indigenous-led organisations, meanwhile, needed confidence that the time, technical effort and organisational resources required to participate would lead to worthwhile outcomes.

So, we pivoted. Rather than focusing only on how communities could become ready to enter into a biodiversity-credit market, we continued to explore a broader range of nature finance models.

FY26 ACTIVITIES

Nature Finance Exchange

In November 2025, we supported 20 Indigenous leaders and allies from Australia, Canada and Indonesia to participate in a Nature Finance Exchange on Vancouver Island, on the traditional territories of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation.

Participants encountered Indigenous-led funds, bonds, stewardship fees, certification schemes and other models in place. The purpose was not to promote a single solution, but to create space for leaders to learn from each other, ask difficult questions and consider what might translate into their own territories.

Fourteen participants completed a post-exchange survey. All reported forming at least one new relationship, 71 per cent formed several, and 86 per cent said they were likely or very likely to use or adapt a model, tool or process they had encountered. These were immediate, self-reported outcomes; whether they lead to new finance models will take longer to understand.

The Exchange reinforced something we regularly see across our work: our experience repeatedly showed the value of Indigenous leaders learning from other Indigenous leaders. Seeing a model operating in place, and hearing directly about the governance, setbacks and relationships behind it, creates a different kind of confidence from receiving external technical advice.





PARTICIPANTS IN CANADA. IMAGE CREDIT: MATTHEW NEWTON

FY26 ACTIVITIES

Readiness in Tanah Papua

In February 2026, our partners EcoNusa and Kobumi hosted a gathering in Sorong attended by more than 140 people representing over 40 Indigenous-led nature-based enterprises across the region. These enterprises produce food, commodities, handicrafts and tourism experiences while supporting livelihoods and caring for forests, islands and coastal landscapes.

The readiness process began with what these enterprises were already doing. It identified interconnected needs across governance, organisational capability, technology, markets and access to early finance.

The work resulted in a REDD+ screening and finance tool, as well as a concept for a longer-term, embedded technical assistance facility. The immediate outcome was greater clarity about what readiness required. Its value lies in supporting organisations to make informed decisions about where to invest their scarce time, capability and resources before committing to a particular pathway.





IMAGE CREDIT: MATTHEW NEWTON

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Readiness is about decision quality, not market entry. The Incubator project began with a relatively linear hypothesis: research would identify opportunities, outreach would bring partners together, readiness would align them and the work would move towards launch.

In practice, the readiness process changed both the direction of the project and our understanding of the problem. A community or organisation should not be considered "ready" simply because it has developed the governance, data, business case or technical capability expected by investors. Those things may matter, but readiness also requires the authority, information and confidence to ask more fundamental questions: Does this opportunity fit our priorities? Is the potential benefit worth the effort and risk? Are the partners right? Are the conditions right? Is this the best available pathway?

Sometimes the answer will be yes. And sometimes readiness means being able to say no.

Readiness belongs to the whole system. Communities are often told they must become 'investment-ready'. They may be asked to strengthen governance, gather data, develop business cases and build technical capability before finance can flow.

Our experience revealed significant readiness gaps existed elsewhere in the system. Businesses, investors and philanthropies needed clearer purchasing pathways and a better understanding of what credible Indigenous-led opportunities required. Governments and intermediaries needed to understand Indigenous governance and decision-making. Prospective partners needed to be willing to share risk, work at the pace of community processes and engage honestly about their own motivations and constraints.

Readiness is therefore not a one-sided process of preparing communities for capital. It is the work of aligning *all* partners around purpose, authority, risk and benefit.

Capacity and readiness are not the same thing. Capacity building asks what capabilities an organisation may need. Readiness asks a wider question: whether it should pursue a particular opportunity at all, with whom and under what conditions.

Finance should support what communities already want to achieve. Communities should not have to reshape their priorities around the latest financial instrument simply because capital might be available for it.

A readiness process should therefore strengthen choice, not narrow it.

WHAT REMAINS AFTER WE TRANSITION?

The most visible public legacy of this work is a set of practical resources.

The *Marketplace for Nature website* houses maps of emerging initiatives, market research, case studies, a searchable resource library and practical readiness tools designed to support organisations to explore opportunities and assess potential partnerships.

The *Voluntary Biodiversity Credit Markets Report 2026*, developed with bloomlabs, provides evidence about the market conditions organisations are navigating. In the survey that informed the report, 95 per cent of sellers identified finding sufficient buyers – rather than generating credits – as a central challenge.

Relationships also remain between Indigenous leaders who shared models, compared experiences and have begun exploring what might be adapted in their own territories. Through these conversations a co-design framework (see page 17) emerged. It became a tool we used with partners to guide strategy and action planning.

Together, we hope these resources support Indigenous-led organisations to assess whether an opportunity is *ready for them*, and whether it can help to achieve what they have already decided matters.

Partnership co-design framework

The process of partnering is as important as the outcome. This framework developed during the IP&LC Nature Credit Incubator Project remains as a planning tool to support the work of partnership co-design to happen with clarity.



Align

Connect with values-aligned partners

Build a shared vision

Co-design the partnership model



Explore

Workshops & convenings

Peer-to-peer learning activities

Place-based research

Thought leadership



Create

Project co-design

Demonstration sites

Technology tools & nature project methods

Governance, financing and business models



Lead

Place-based scaling models

Global knowledge exchanges

Scaling Indigenous governed initiatives

Policy development & advocacy

Weave

Peer to peer learning, strengthening leadership & amplifying voices through storytelling

FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

Five principles guide how partners work together.



Led by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who make the decisions.



Project design is grounded in community priorities and aspirations



Partnerships based on respect, transparency and reciprocity.



Working at the speed of trust, not taking any shortcuts.



Showing up with curiosity and open minds – because great questions change the world!

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

IP&LC Nature Credits Incubator

Australia, Canada, Colombia and Indonesia.

View readiness toolkit here.
View all of the resources on our website here.

Purpose

To support Indigenous Peoples and local communities to explore nature-credit and broader nature-finance opportunities on their own terms and at their own pace.

"This project ended up being all about readiness. What we found was that IP & LCs are ready to lead and that philanthropies, investors, governments and corporates are on the journey to building the capability to partner well."
– Jane Hutchinson, Co-CEO, Pollination Foundation

Sample Achievements

- The Marketplace for Nature Readiness Toolkit.
- Hosted a nature finance exchange for 20 Indigenous leaders and allies.
- Readiness work with Indigenous-led enterprises in Tanah Papua.
- Produced 8 innovative nature financing case studies and additional practical readiness resources.



IMAGE CREDIT: MATTHEW NEWTON

CHAPTER 3

Making markets requires catalytic finance



IMAGE CREDIT: WAYNE QUILLIAM

Making markets requires catalytic finance

What if the hardest part of making a market is building what the market can't finance itself?

Markets do not appear fully formed. Before capital can flow responsibly, someone has to finance the work of testing ideas, building relationships, strengthening governance, collecting evidence, navigating policy and creating capable institutions. Much of that work is essential to market development, but difficult for the market itself to pay for.

Our experience has been that emerging nature markets are built through connected investments in community authority, data and evidence, institutions, policy frameworks and demand. These elements don't develop neatly, or in an orderly sequence – what matters more is knowing when to proceed, when to pause, and when an initiative is ready for a different kind of support.

This is where philanthropy and development funds are most catalytic. They can support work that is essential but difficult to monetise: listening and co-design; establishing whether an idea is genuinely rooted in local community priorities; developing governance and benefit-sharing arrangements; convening stakeholders and practitioners; testing assumptions; influencing policy; and documenting lessons for others. This is not merely a prelude to the 'real' investment – it is an essential part of the infrastructure that makes responsible market development possible.

The cadence then dances around community-led learning and demonstration, institution-building, policy design and, where appropriate, revenue-generating activity. It is rarely linear. A pilot may reveal that the method is sound, but the policy pathway needs to be bolstered. A workshop may show that a proposed market model conflicts with community priorities. An emerging organisation may need more time because governance and core systems are not yet strong enough. Good market-making therefore requires staged commitments, explicit decision points and the discipline not to force scale before the conditions for durable impact are in place.

WHAT DID WE HELP MAKE POSSIBLE?

Pollination Foundation provided a home for several early-stage initiatives that were seeds of ideas too strongly oriented to public benefit to fit a conventional commercial mandate. We often referred to this work as akin to "a house of teenagers" – full of growing ideas and ambition, testing independence and getting ready to launch out on their own. Our contribution was not to fund activities directly, but to navigate and help reduce the risks that commonly prevent promising ideas from progressing: fragmented relationships, unclear governance, untested methods, and insufficient organisational infrastructure. Our position within the wider Pollination business ecosystem gave access to legal, policy, finance and market expertise as project needs changed.

The International Savanna Fire Management Initiative (ISFMI) is a leading example of this staged approach. ISFMI built on Indigenous fire management in northern Australia, where traditional knowledge has been combined with scientific measurement and verification to reduce emissions, care for Country, support biodiversity and create livelihoods. Australian Government funding first supported an investigation of the method's international potential and later a place-based demonstration in Botswana. As well as testing how the scientific method could be adapted, the pilot brought communities, Indigenous fire practitioners, scientists, governments and supporting organisations together to explore whether the approach could be adapted responsibly in a different cultural, social, ecological and policy context.

We hosted ISFMI during a formative period, providing governance and back-office support, alongside legal and policy advice. This was a bounded but important role within a wider partnership. It allowed the team to focus on proof of concept, in-country relationships and the conditions required for scale without having to build every corporate system at once. In 2022, after securing finance for expansion, ISFMI transitioned into an independent Australian registered charity. It now works across multiple regions with Indigenous Peoples, local communities, governments, researchers and delivery partners to revitalise Indigenous fire knowledge and develop the methods, policy pathways and financing needed to sustain community-led fire management.

We came to see workshops and exchanges for this project as part of the infrastructure of market development: they enabled knowledge-holders and decision-makers to examine the same problem together; surfaced risks around rights, consent, carbon accounting, benefit-sharing and long-term ownership; and distinguished what knowledge could be shared across contexts and what needed to remain place-specific.

The Foundation also supported the emergence of a Women in Fire initiative from the broader ISFMI network. Through a serendipity of moments, women engaged in the Botswana pilot questioned the absence of women participating in an Australian fire-exchange delegation. Around the same time, in the aftermath of the 2021 California wildfires, a US donor reached out, keen to connect Indigenous women working in fire. Pollination Foundation wove those threads together through a series of cross-country conversations connecting women working with fire in Australia, Botswana, Mexico and California.

Women in Fire also showed that the most valuable outcomes of catalytic support are not always those anticipated at the outset. By listening to what was missing – and creating space for women to connect – the work sparked new conversations and strengthened leadership opportunities that sat alongside, rather than beneath, the initiative's market-oriented pathway.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Fund the work the market cannot yet fund. Philanthropy has the most catalytic potential when it backs community-led ideas before their investibility is clear. Its value should not be limited to preparing initiatives for market: even where an idea does not progress to a commercial model, support can strengthen community capability, establish relationships, flow knowledge and improve local decision-making – all of which create lasting value in their own right. The aim should not be to guarantee that every pilot becomes a market financed project or a standalone organisation. Some ideas should change direction or stop, and this still generates valuable lessons. A useful grant therefore produces evidence, relationships and options: it helps to clarify what has been proven, what remains uncertain, who is accountable for the next phase and which form of capital – grant, government finance, earned revenue, corporate partnership, investment or a blend – might be fit for purpose if the work is to expand.

Fund the conditions, not just the transaction. In our experience, it's important for funders to support the enabling system, not only a project. A technically credible method will not scale if community rights are unclear, government support and approval are unresolved, monitoring is unaffordable, local institutions lack capacity, buyers are unsure or benefit-sharing is unresolved. Market development requires progress across several connected workstreams: community governance and consent; science and monitoring, reporting and verification; policy and regulatory recognition; capable delivery institutions; and credible sources of long-term revenue. Funding one workstream while assuming the others will follow can create stranded pilots rather than durable market pathways.

Build institutions alongside markets. A technically credible model still needs an organisation capable of holding its mission, relationships and accountabilities over time. A spin-out is not automatically evidence of success, and independence should not be pursued for its own sake. Where a new entity is the right structure, funders need to recognise the full cost of transition: legal structure, governance, operational infrastructure, financial systems, intellectual property, safeguarding, fundraising and core team. ISFMI reinforced that responsible independence arises from a sustained transfer of capability and accountabilities, supported by readiness indicators rather than a date.

WHAT REMAINS AFTER WE TRANSITION?

What remains is not a single market model, but a set of initiatives, organisations and relationships that grow and evolve without the Foundation. ISFMI is one example: an early-stage initiative was given the time, organisational support and flexibility to test its approach, establish the partnerships needed for growth and launch as an independent organisation operating across multiple countries.

The Foundation doesn't claim the outcomes of this wider movement as its own; they belong to the Indigenous knowledge-holders, communities, governments, researchers, practitioners and funders who built it together. Our contribution was to support one part of the cadence at a critical time. The wider legacy lies in what our support helped to develop: communities and practitioners connected through exchanges and workshops; locally grounded knowledge carried into policy, science and market conversations; governance and institutional arrangements strengthened; and practical evidence generated about what it takes to translate an idea into a durable model.

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

ISFMI

Africa, the Americas and Asia-Pacific, building from Indigenous fire management experience in northern Australia.

View all of the resources on the website here.
Learn more about the project, including videos here.

Focus

Revitalising Indigenous fire knowledge and adapting emissions-reduction fire management approaches for savanna landscapes.

Purpose

To support sustainable, community-led fire management that benefits people, nature, climate and livelihoods.

Sample Achievements

- Hosted ISFMI during a formative period, provided governance and back-office support, connected legal and policy expertise, and supported transition to independence.
- Supported ISFMI's transition out of the Foundation in 2022, following the securing of Green Climate Fund finance to expand work across Botswana, Belize, Guatemala, Mozambique and Zambia.



RANGER RAY NADJAMERREK WEST ARNHEM LAND, AUSTRALIA. IMAGE CREDIT: ISFMI



ISFMI CULTURAL FIRE EXCHANGE, BOTSWANA. IMAGE CREDIT: DEVON JENKIN

CHAPTER 4

Storytelling is systems work



IMAGE CREDIT: GEON ADIR

Storytelling is systems work

Can a story change a system?

Systems don't run on policies, institutions and capital flows alone. Before deciding what is even possible, a shared understanding of what's credible, what's worth investing in, and whose knowledge is listened to aligns in the background. Money won't flow toward a model nobody can see, understand, or trust.

A strong narrative can deliver real impact: it can cut through uncertainty, give diverse perspectives a shared language, and open a path from a local leader's lived experience to funds, policy or practice change. But storytelling only starts to influence systems when it's grounded in credible evidence, shaped by the people whose knowledge it carries, and shared in a form people can understand and use. A beautifully told story that leads nowhere is an output. A story that changes what people can see, discuss or decide – that's catalytic.

Across projects like Ampliseed, the Marketplace for Nature, and our nature markets report series, our job was never just to produce great content (although we hope we did that too). We wanted to build a chain – from experience, to evidence, to use. We listened closely, spotted patterns, and tested them. We used our reports to give those ideas language, so people could see, understand and use the learning to inform local decisions. Essentially, lived experience provided the mechanism, the meaning, the consequences. Data helped us check whether what we were noticing was a one-off or part of something bigger.

But systems change is hard to measure. We can confidently point to the assets, language and learning pathways we built together. What we can't claim is that any single publication caused a specific funding opportunity or policy decision. This is one of the persistent frustrations of working in the NGO space: the outcomes we're trying to move – new markets taking shape, funders shifting where their money goes – rarely happen quickly, and they almost never happen because of one action. A shift in policy might trace back to a report we wrote, but also to three other organisations saying something similar, a change in political leadership, a natural disaster, a scandal that made the issue urgent, and years of relationship-building nobody is tracking. Systems change is cumulative and collective by nature. It doesn't leave a clean paper trail back to a single publication, no matter how good that publication was.

The temptation, faced with that difficulty, is to either overclaim – drawing a straighter line from report to outcome than the evidence supports – or to underinvest, on the logic that if impact can't be cleanly attributed, it's not worth funding. Both are mistakes. Systems change is slow, diffuse and multi-causal – and it still needs sustained investment in narrative and evidence work, because that work is one of the mechanisms through which change actually happens.

Waiting for airtight attribution before funding this kind of work means never funding it at all, because the attribution will never be airtight. What we can do instead is be rigorous about the parts of the chain we can trace – the relationships formed, the language adopted, the evidence used, and the doors opened – and honest about the parts we can't, rather than pretending either that the work doesn't matter or that we can prove exactly how much it mattered.

WHAT DID WE HELP MAKE POSSIBLE?

Ampliseed members generated and generously shared a steady stream of field intelligence and practical insights from their work. Across more than 30 thematic sessions, peer-learning forums, and field exchanges, members consolidated practical knowledge on scaling, conservation finance, monitoring, governance, communications and policy influence that they tested on the ground. Together, we turned that learning into annual reports, bilingual publications, case studies, interviews, podcasts, webinars and hands-on tools. Our Story-Powered Data training and Inspiring Stories series helped members tell their stories in the ways that fit their own cultures and audiences best – oral history, drawing, radio, visual reports, participatory video.

The point of this was to build a learning loop: practitioners generate insight, knowledge products make the patterns visible, and the network carries those patterns back into practice. Members told us that shared framing helped some projects situate their place-based work within global commitments, and step into funding and policy conversations with more confidence. Project-level learning became a resource for the whole field – while communities kept control over how their knowledge was represented and where it went.

The Marketplace for Nature brought the same approach to market design. Back in 2021, biodiversity credit activity was scattered and hard to make sense of. Over 18 months, the Foundation convened an informal Biodiversity Credits Working Group, mapped the organisations and initiatives involved, scanned for barriers, ran dialogues and co-design sprints, researched market models, and talked to more than 60 corporate and finance representatives. The "farmers market" metaphor gave this abstract market something to hold onto – an image of exchange rooted in place, relationship and community. A global online map followed in 2022, and that grew into a readiness toolkit and curated resource library for Indigenous Peoples, local communities and their allies that launched in 2026.

The same body of work continues to contribute to market making. The Marketplace for Nature database, together with data shared by bloomlabs, identified 123 active organisations and initiatives to participate in our 2026 survey of organisations working in nature markets and received responses from 52 market actors. The resulting Voluntary Biodiversity Credit Markets Report shows where catalytic support is still needed: ranging from buyer conversion and claims guidance to procurement pathways, Indigenous data governance and long-term stewardship finance.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Don't pit lived experience against data. Lived experience isn't colour added to make a technical report more relatable – it's evidence in its own right. And data isn't truth on its own – it's a tool for finding patterns. Data shows scale, trend, contradiction. Lived experience explains mechanism, meaning, consequence, and the history and power dynamics behind the numbers. And being honest about uncertainty makes work more credible, not less.

Start from the decision, not the publication. Before choosing the communication tool - a report, film, map or event - ask: who needs to understand what? What decision might they take because of it? Whose authority needs to be in the room? What evidence would actually make this credible to them? Narrative is a coordinating force when community leaders, funders, investors, technical experts and policymakers can all recognise the same challenge, and see a real role for themselves in solving it. They don't need to share the same motivations (and often they won't). What they need is enough shared language and insight to act together.

Publishing is the halfway point, not the finish line. Getting a story to actually do something requires listening and consent, synthesis, translation, accessible production, distribution through trusted relationships, feedback, updates, and ongoing care. The real unit of investment is the whole learning loop – including fair compensation for contributors, cultural protocols, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, data governance, the right to withdraw, and a considered plan for upkeep.

WHAT REMAINS AFTER WE TRANSITION?

The Foundation leaves behind a suite of public assets: Ampliseed's reports and tools, the Marketplace for Nature map and resource library, the voluntary biodiversity credit market report series, and practical methods for weaving lived experience together with data. These assets make it easier for others to find, understand and apply what we've learned.

Together, these assets make emerging practice easier to see, question and build on. But like any infrastructure, knowledge needs stewardship. Maps go out of date. Resource libraries need tending. Datasets need governance. Stories need ongoing consent from the people who told them. Long-term value depends on someone taking responsibility for stewarding it – stable access, a plan for updates, and permission for partners to adapt the work as needs change.

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Marketplace for Nature

Global, online; developed from Australia and mapping initiatives worldwide.

View website here.
Learn more about the project, including videos here.

Focus

A public map, readiness toolkit and curated resource library covering active and emerging nature credit projects, standards, registries and practical guidance.

Purpose

To reduce research and sense-making costs, connect buyers and sellers, and support informed, equitable and community-led decisions by Indigenous Peoples, local communities and their allies.

Sample Achievements

- Convened the Biodiversity Credits Working Group, mapped the field, scanned barriers, ran dialogues and co-design sprints, researched models, and interviewed more than 60 corporate and finance representatives.
- First published a global online map in 2022; evolved it into an online readiness toolkit and curated resource library supporting informed, community-led participation in 2026.
- Published the 2026 state of the nature market report.

Resources

- Voluntary Biodiversity Credit Markets Report 2026
- Marketplace for Nature website



IMAGE CREDIT: SIRVAN

CHAPTER 5

Strong foundations: People make the impossible possible



IMAGE CREDIT: TERRANCE EMERSON

CHAPTER 5

Strong foundations: People make the impossible possible

What does it take for a small team to carry work that spans countries, cultures, communities, finance, policy and systems change?

The visible parts of work for an organisation like ours are usually the most compelling stories: Indigenous leaders sharing their knowledge on global stages, practitioners exchanging ideas across landscapes, new initiatives taking shape, and evidence and stories beginning to influence how people understood nature finance.

These are the things that appear in reports, photographs, and presentations. But behind every one of them was another layer of work that was much less visible.

There were relationships to build and maintain, contracts to negotiate, risks to manage, budgets to monitor, travel to coordinate, policies to write, meetings to prepare, decisions to document and countless problems to solve. There were moments when our team needed to move quickly, and others when we needed to pause, listen and reconsider.

This final report gives us an opportunity to recognise that work and the people who did it.

Pollination Foundation was launched in 2020 within a start-up company, with limited funding and at the beginning of a global pandemic. What we had was experienced leaders and practitioners, access to Pollination's expertise, systems and networks, and a strong conviction that people should be at the heart of climate and nature solutions.

What we did not yet have was a fully formed operating model for the work that followed.

As the Foundation developed, our projects increasingly crossed countries, cultures and sectors. We worked at the intersection of Indigenous leadership, climate and nature, finance, policy, organisational development and systems change. The complexity of the work grew much faster than the size of the team.

That meant our people mattered enormously.

Team members brought expertise in Indigenous engagement, programme design, governance, finance, communications, risk management, executive coordination, corporate systems and network building. But the Foundation depended on more than specialist knowledge. It relied on people who were curious, adaptable and comfortable working in situations where there was no established pathway or obvious answer.

The visibility of an international exchange might primarily be a group of people, having conversations and learning together over several days. Behind it could sit months of coordination: working with partners, identifying participants, preparing materials, arranging travel, managing budgets and responding to the inevitable problems that emerge when people and organisations are brought together across countries.

A report or case study might end as a polished publication. Behind it were conversations, research, drafting, editing, checking, coordination and the care required to represent partners' experience accurately and respectfully.

Much of this work never becomes an output in its own right. But without it, the outputs do not happen.

WHAT DID WE HELP MAKE POSSIBLE?

Our strong team allowed the Foundation to hold work that did not always fit neatly within a conventional project model. We could incubate emerging ideas, convene organisations who held different forms of expertise, support initiatives while their direction was still evolving, and adapt when assumptions changed.

As our portfolio became more complex, the team built the foundations needed to support that work responsibly. We progressively strengthened strategy and operations, finance, executive support, risk and organisational governance. Some of these functions had initially been provided through our sole member Pollination; over time, we developed more dedicated capacity within the Foundation.

This was not a linear journey from informal to bureaucratic. We progressed as we needed to create enough clarity and stability for a small team to remain agile in the face of complexity.

Hosting ReefTO made the importance of this particularly clear. Supporting an emerging organisation to build and grow a strong team, develop independent financial systems, legal arrangements, data stewardship and administrative capacity shone a light on our systems. This became part of the Foundation's own readiness journey: building enough dedicated capability to be a strong and resilient hosting partner without losing the agility of a small team.

The Foundation's co-CEO model was another expression of this approach. Our work brought together forms of knowledge and relationships that no single leader could reasonably hold alone. Shared leadership allowed complementary experience and perspectives to sit together at the centre of the organisation, broadened the information considered in decisions and created greater capacity to maintain relationships across countries and sectors.

However, it also relied on deep trust, a shared sense of purpose, clear accountability and a willingness to treat disagreement as useful information rather than an obstacle to overcome. This model is not always the fastest path to a decision, and it isn't right for every organisation. But we found that the investment it required in early discussions forced greater clarity and reduced rework. Done well, shared power can produce stronger stewardship and more durable decisions.

Ambitious work is rarely made possible by vision alone. It depends on capable people, shared values, and relationships grounded in trust. These foundations are often invisible from the outside, but they are what allow people to do difficult things and, together, make the impossible feel possible.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Invest in the work beneath the work. Governance, finance, risk, administration systems and organisational care are often labelled overheads, as though they draw resources away from impact. Our experience was the opposite. These were the foundations that allowed us to use our resources responsibly, support partners well, and pursue ambitious goals without placing an unsustainable burden on individuals.

Capabilities can be developed gradually. A young organisation may not need every function in-house from day one. But it does need to recognise that these functions are real work, understand when growing complexity requires additional capacity, and invest before their absence becomes a constraint. Borrowing infrastructure can help a startup organisation, but as it matures it needs to plan for building dedicated capability.

Culture is built through repeated practice. Organisational culture grows through how decisions are made, how uncertainty is discussed, how mistakes are handled, whose expertise is respected, and whether people feel trusted to take responsibility. A high-functioning team is not created through an organisational chart; it needs people who understand and believe in the purpose of the work.

Technology expands capacity; people provide judgement. Artificial intelligence is already accelerating research, synthesis, administration and communication. But speed and capability do not remove the need for human judgement. Technology cannot build reciprocal relationships, decide whose knowledge should carry authority, nor determine whose interests a decision should serve. Even more concerningly, it may deepen already entrenched inequity by relying on past behaviour to suggest future pathways. In work grounded in culture, community and contested systems, the values, leadership, discernment and trusted relationships maintained by humans become even more important.

WHAT REMAINS AFTER WE TRANSITION?

As the Foundation transitions, its strongest foundations do not sit only in policies, systems or organisational structures: they remain in our people. They live in habits of listening, shared leadership and collective responsibility.

A mature organisation is not necessarily one that preserves itself indefinitely. It is one strong enough to recognise when its purpose requires change, responsible enough to prepare for that change, and confident enough to transfer leadership rather than hold onto it.

People snapshot

The talent, creativity and trust between our small team is what gets us out of bed every day.



Ariadne Gorring

CO-CEO

Together, we had complementary skills and trusted each other to navigate complexity, because of that the decisions we made were stronger.



Jane Hutchinson

CO-CEO

Being a co-CEO is more joyful and energising because the responsibility is shared.



Ami Kadota

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

I've come to see behind-the-scenes work as part of what holds an organisation together: anticipating needs, joining the dots, and creating the space for people, relationships and meaningful work to thrive.



Brydy McDonnell

MANAGER OF STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS

Our settings are only useful if people can carry them because a framework no-one can sustain only pulls focus from the impact we're here to deliver.



Kirsty Galloway McLean

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Strong partnerships can turn shared ambition into practical action and impacts - realised through honest conversations, and a willingness to learn and adapt together.



Lauren Austin

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

So much of our success has come through storytelling. The stories with the most power are told from the heart, and they are as authentic as they are complex and data-driven.



Ria Sivaraman

PEOPLE AND CULTURE MANAGER

Culture takes shape in everyday decisions: whose voice is heard, whose work is recognised and how people are supported.



Samim Hoshmand

ASSOCIATE

A people-first culture becomes real when colleagues feel a sense of belonging that gives us the confidence to bring our experience and ideas to the work.



Suzie Amundsen

FINANCE MANAGER

Being a good partner means understanding the true cost of the work and making budgets, payments and reporting systems that work for the people delivering it.

CHAPTER 6

Transitioning well is part of the work



IMAGE CREDIT: WIRESTOCK

Transitioning well is part of the work

What if the final measure of a successful organisation is not how long it survives, but whether it knows when – and how – to let go?

Stretching more than 2,300 kilometres along Australia's east coast, the Great Barrier Reef is one of the world's great natural systems. For more than 65,000 years, its Traditional Owners have cared for its islands, reefs, coasts and waters.

ReefTO grew from a long-held ambition to strengthen the role of Traditional Owners in how their Sea Country is governed and managed. Its vision is a more inclusive, coordinated approach shaped by Traditional Owner priorities across climate, land and coast, Sea Country, knowledge systems, partnerships and investment.

ReefTO builds on three decades of work by Traditional Owner leaders working towards stronger collective governance for the Great Barrier Reef. Our role was to host the ReefTO project as reef leaders explored with community governance options for a Sea Country alliance.

Beginning with a Traditional Owner Steering Group in 2023, we worked with them and government partners to establish the ReefTO Taskforce and Coordination Unit. Pollination Foundation provided the organisational home – auspicing the funds, employing the team and providing corporate governance, finance and systems support – while ReefTO engaged with community to design the future operating model.

That approach enabled ReefTO to concentrate on the work only it could do: listening to Reef Traditional Owners, building relationships across an enormous and diverse Sea Country, and determining what stronger collective leadership could look like.

By 2025, ReefTO had appointed a seven-member Taskforce of experienced Reef Traditional Owner leaders, built a growing multidisciplinary Coordination Unit and convened more than 160 Reef Traditional Owners at the Sea Country Forum – the first gathering of its kind in 26 years. From the Forum came strong support to establish the Alliance and take immediate action on four priorities from the Traditional Owner Implementation Plan.

In the months that followed, ReefTO undertook an extensive engagement process with Traditional Owner groups across the Great Barrier Reef, building on the momentum of the Forum. Through regional conversations, governance discussions and ongoing engagement, Traditional Owners helped shape the Alliance's membership and governance model, ensuring it reflected their aspirations, cultural authority and collective priorities. This work laid the foundations for an independent, Traditional Owner-owned and controlled organisation, built by Reef Traditional Owners, for Reef Traditional Owners.

Following months of careful planning, ReefTO Alliance launched on 30 September 2026.

Now, ReefTO is ready for its next chapter.

And so are we.

From the Foundation's earliest years, we intended ultimately to transition to Indigenous governance. We planned for and expected that to happen by 2030. But ReefTO created the opportunity to bring that ambition forward by transferring the Foundation's platform and resources into the ownership and control of Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners.

That decision may sound straightforward when written as a strategy. Living through it was not. Transitioning an organisation sparks unexpected responses, that no transition plan can fully anticipate. We had invested years of energy, care and identity in building Pollination Foundation. That meant alongside our carefully constructed transition plan we all needed to make space for our emotional responses to letting go - easy to say but hard to do!

It requires grit to build. It requires courage to let go.

WHAT DID WE HELP MAKE POSSIBLE?

Across our six years, Pollination Foundation repeatedly played the role of incubator: nurturing seeds of ideas, testing and iterating, structuring, attracting funds and, when the time was right, transitioning to independent structures.

Our experience with the International Savanna Fire Management Initiative (ISFMI) taught us to think about independence early. When ReefTO arrived, we deliberately spent time designing its hosting arrangements with organisational independence in mind. That required a great deal of work largely invisible from outside: agreeing roles and decision rights; strengthening governance, financial and people systems; establishing appropriate arrangements for data and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property; and holding legal and financial responsibility for funding agreements while ReefTO grew its organisational capability.

None of these activities are the reason ReefTO exists, but they helped build the conditions in which ReefTO could grow and thrive.

By 2025, approximately A$20 million had been contracted through the partnership. More important than the funding itself was what it represented: ReefTO now had strong Traditional Owner leadership, substantial resources and a stable organisational platform from which to pursue its long-term vision.

As ReefTO's ambition and responsibilities grew, the infrastructure it needed looked increasingly like the infrastructure the Foundation had spent six years building. Rather than create a second organisation alongside it, we saw an opportunity to transfer the platform itself.

That opportunity brought together everything we had learned – relationships made the conversation possible; readiness shaped its timing; strong organisational foundations made transition possible; and Indigenous leadership gave it purpose.

The result was a community-led transition, completed with the launch of ReefTO Alliance on 30 September 2026: not the Foundation preserving itself under a new name, but an organisational platform and resources transitioning into the ownership and control of Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners accelerating their long held vision.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Build for the mission, not the institution. Organisations can easily treat their continuation as evidence of success. But an institution is a vehicle, not the destination. Our purpose was always to create conditions in which people and nature could thrive with communities at the heart. When ReefTO offered a stronger way to advance that purpose, preserving the Foundation made no sense.

Design for independence before you need it. Our earlier experience transitioning ISFMI shaped how we hosted ReefTO. From the beginning, systems and governance were developed with eventual transfer in mind. Legal structures, policies, intellectual property, data, funding agreements, employment arrangements and decision rights can look like background administration until the day an organisation needs to stand on its own. Then they become the foundations of independence.

Readiness applies to organisations too. Much of this report has explored what it means for communities, markets and partnerships to become ready. Our final readiness journey was our own. ReefTO needed leadership, organisational maturity and clarity about its future; the Foundation needed transferable systems, trusted partnerships, and confidence that letting go was the right thing to do.

Transition is different from exit. Funders and host organisations often speak about an "exit strategy". That language can make departure itself the objective. Responsible transition asks a different question: what needs to be transferred so the work continues with strong foundations?

That means transferring more than contracts and assets. Relationships, knowledge and decision-making authority need to move too. Staff and partners need clarity; funding needs continuity; data, intellectual property and brand need deliberate decisions. And support has to continue long enough to enable success without becoming a way of retaining control.

Letting go is emotional as well as technical. You can design a careful transition plan and still be surprised by what it feels like to enact it. Organisations hold memories, friendships, identity and years of collective effort. People have built careers and invested pieces of their hearts in the projects. A decision that makes perfect strategic sense can therefore create uncertainty and sadness alongside pride and excitement. A good transition makes room for the emotional responses that make us human without allowing them to determine the outcome.

We needed to keep sight of the vision, bring people with us, acknowledge what was ending without allowing that to eclipse what was beginning, and ultimately let go of control.

WHAT REMAINS AFTER WE TRANSITION?

The process of transitioning from Pollination Foundation to ReefTO Alliance required close and careful work. It was important to us as a team to respect the relationships, knowledge and initiatives we created and to plan for how they would be stewarded into the future.

What we realised is the relationships built across Indigenous organisations, funders, governments, businesses, practitioners and communities continue with the people who built them. Knowledge lives on in reports, tools, organisations and networks. Initiatives we helped incubate continue independently. And the Foundation's platform and resources now support ReefTO Alliance under Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owner ownership and control.

ReefTO Alliance is not simply inheriting Pollination Foundation's work. Nor should it. Its future will be shaped by Reef Traditional Owners and by the enormous task ahead: strengthening collective leadership across 2,300 kilometres of Great Barrier Reef Sea Country.

The community-led transition placed the Foundation's platform and resources into the ownership and control of Great Barrier Reef Traditional Owners. ReefTO Alliance launched on 30 September 2026 with a strong organisational foundation from which to advocate for and steward Sea Country.

Bringing our paths together reflected our belief that lasting change happens when communities own the institutions, resources and decisions that shape their future.

We are immensely proud of the Foundation we created.

We are even more excited to see what ReefTO Alliance grows into from here.

> "The transition represents a significant investment in self-determination, cultural authority and the stewardship of the Great Barrier Reef."
>
> UNCLE SHAYNE BLACKMAN,
> REEFTO ALLIANCE INTERIM CO-CHAIR

> "We're incredibly grateful for our partnership with Pollination Foundation. They have done what many organisations talk about, but few actually do: transfer power and resources into community control."
>
> YODIE BATZKE,
> REEFTO ALLIANCE INTERIM CO-CHAIR

The transition in ownership and control relates solely to the not-for-profit Pollination Foundation. The Foundation is legally and operationally separate from Pollination Group.



IMAGE CREDIT: WAYNE QUILLIAM

ReefTO Alliance

Australia

View website here.
Learn more about the project, including videos here.

Purpose

Traditional Owner-led governance, management and investment for Sea Country within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Sample Achievements

- Established a 7-member Taskforce of experienced Reef Traditional Owner leaders.
- Built a multidisciplinary Coordination Unit to support delivery and regional engagement.
- Over 160 Reef TOs brought together at the 2025 Sea Country Forum, the first gathering of its kind in 26 years.
- A$20 million contracted through Pollination Foundation for this once-in-a-generation Sea Country opportunity.

WATCH

- Sea Country Forum Highlights, Cairns, 2025



IMAGE CREDIT: NEW DREAM PRODUCTIONS



Thank you.

Special thanks to our community partners who motivated and inspired us to do what many people talk about but rarely do, transfer power and resources into community control.

Thank you to our funding partners, BHP Foundation, Good Energies, Commonwealth Government of Australia through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Wedgetail, Elsie Cameron Foundation, Quadrature Climate Foundation, and the State Government of Queensland through the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation for their generosity and trust.

Thank you to our former board members: Martijn Wilder, Rob Grant, Janine Mohamed, Amanda Young, John Morton, Lisa Millar, Judy Slatyer, Megan Flynn, Nolan Hunter and Michaela Jade who shared their knowledge generously and coached us to navigate through ambiguity, complexity and ultimately our transition.

Thank you to Pollination, who as our sole member shared networks, skills and expertise when we needed them.

Thank you to all our friends and supporters, your trust, generosity and willingness to learn alongside us made our work joyful.

IMAGE CREDIT: MUJI

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For further information please visit
pollinationfoundation.org

DISCLAIMER

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