

Community Plaza, three spaces for life education and work

Introduction

As of the political change that occurred in the country due to the presidential elections of the year 2000, the attention to Mexicans abroad changed, specially upon acknowledging that Mexicans in the United States contribute with their work both to development and social wellbeing of that country as well as of this one, and they are an important source of income. Mexico has expressed its interest in that Mexican workers may live in a legal way, with all their rights, and has began a negotiation process with the United States, the subject of immigration being relevant in the bilateral agenda. The main goal of the Mexican government is focused in making everything possible to guarantee the dignity, protection and defense of human rights, including civil and labor, of the Mexican community in the United States.

Education, work formation, access to information and communication are some of the most efficient ways to increase development opportunities of Mexicans abroad.

The National Education Council for Life and Work (CONEVyT), in collaboration with the associated institutions such as the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA), the Latin American institute of Education Communication (ILCE), the Normalization and Certification of Labor Competency Council (CONOCER), the Colegio de Bachilleres (COLBACH) (middle high education and education at a distance) the Public Education Secretariat (SEP) with secondary school at a distance, and the General Management of Education Television (DGTVE), The Foreign Relation Secretariat (SRE) through the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME), have joined efforts to promote diversified educational actions; access to information and communication supported by the technology through the Community Plaza in the United States, a Project which will incorporate the use of new information and communication technologies applied to education and formation.

The positive effects will be shown in the quality of life of Mexicans and their families, since the more prepared they are, more opportunities they will have to participate and understand their new environment,

understand their obligations and defend their rights. Likewise, a greater education for parents will mean a better and greater willingness of their children to study.

This material has been prepared to make the operation and functioning of the Community Plaza in the United States possible. It contains:

- The definition of Community Plaza, its goals and characteristics.
- The guidelines and procedures to continue installing and operating a Community Plaza in the United States.
- Information on infrastructure, technical requirements, the necessary connections and physical spaces.
- The general and specific rules regarding the operation of different programs.
- The costs that represent the installation and opening according to the programs.
- The specific procedures of the accreditation and certification rules in the USA.

1. e- México Community Plaza Abroad

1.1. What is a Community Plaza?

It is an adequate space which integrates educational resources and actions for life and work, mainly aimed towards youth and adults, where one or more advisors guide the persons to use the education resources (videos, computer, educational site, satellite television, on line courses, digital library, internet access, among others).

Here, Mexican and Hispanic youth and adults and their families living in the United States have access to educational and formation opportunities for working, with the use of three educational spaces. The use of the facilities and services of the Community Plaza are mostly free; the sessions and schedules vary according to the rules of organization or the institution that collaborates to install the Space, so that the learners may study with a more flexible schedule.

The Plaza meets its purpose when it becomes a place where people get together to share ideas, experiences, knowledge and to be in contact with the new information and communication technologies, strengthen education, culture and values of the community, and this is why the participating institutions and groups must provide programs and resources that benefit and respond to the education or information requirements of their community.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Community Plaza abroad are:

- To extend the opportunities of education, information and communication.
- To get that every person leads their own learning process, under the principle: learn to learn.
- Recognize education as a life long process.
- Respond to the persons' needs, interests and study pace.
- Integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to learn to use the computer, Internet, interactive compact discs as educational resources.

- Facilitate the integration with virtual communities; groups of people and organizations are supported by their acquired knowledge.
- To make possible the participation of the community to provide, generate and share information and knowledge, to create their own web pages, educational and formation programs according to their needs.
- To pass and certify different educational modules.
- To generate educational and formation actions as required by the community.

1.3 Structure of the Community Plaza

Meeting points with learning, communication and information

Meeting Point

The meeting point between youth and adults that participate in direct advisory sessions, with the support of printed and digital materials, as well as of an advisor which guides in acquiring knowledge and developing the necessary skills for life and work.

Learning activities based on interaction are carried out: they integrate as a group, they identify themselves based on a common goal and tasks, and they are more confident to keep on learning.

This space has work tables, chairs, blackboard and the resources to support learning: books, magazines, posters and a great number of printed and digital materials.

Computer Space

A meeting point with computers, Internet and/or with a local network on the educational site of CONEVyT, where we find information, materials, courses, exercises, access to several digital libraries, information regarding the different institutions to study and to train themselves for work and Internet sites which contribute to help children solve their school work.

With the support of advisors, people develop the skills to:

- Learn how to use computers
- Have their own e-mail, an important resource for communicating with the community living in the United States and with their original communities.

The Community Plaza is a place that, with the guidance of advisors and through learning how to use the services offered and the resources that it has, promotes that people carry themselves with a strategy from one room to the other, in order to study supported by different media and with different points of view, and therefore making learning more enriching.

1.4. Who is it aimed for?

- Spanish speaking youth and adults of 15 years of age or more, living in the United States and Canada
- Adult education advisors
- Teachers
- Professionals
- Parents and their children
- Workers

1.5 Where can a Community Plaza be established?

- Community organizations and centers
- Schools from school districts or educational centers
- Companies
- Correctional Centers
- Work centers
- Community colleges
- Social organizations
- Libraries
- Hometown associations
- Churches
- Universities International Programs Office

1.6 What services are included in a Community Plaza?

Experience shows that each collaborating community, organism or institution defines their work programs and the services with which it will begin, that is, a “Custom made Community Plaza”. It can begin with one specific service and then slowly integrate others.

1.7 Legal Framework

Once a group, organization or institution has decided to install adapt or install a Community Plaza, an agreement must be executed containing a work program based on this legal framework, where it is established that the project “E- México Community Plaza in the United States” is the Agreement executed between Mexico and the United States in 1990 and Exhibit VI that in number 5 specifies that the Public Education Secretariat in the United Mexican States and the Education Department of the United States will make their best efforts to “continue supporting the exchange of experiences and materials, as well as the use of technology applied in the areas of basic education, bilingual education, education for immigrants and professional development of teachers, giving special attention to the cooperation in education at a distance and to increase communication between schools of both countries through the use of computing networks”.

In the case of Community Plazas in Canada, the legal framework is backed up by the “Cultural Agreement between the Mexican and the Canadian Government”, which was executed in Mexico City, Federal District, on January 25 1976, and whose term is of five years, and will be extended for renewal by operation of law.

We also have the Decree of Creation and Organic Statute of the INEA; a Coordination Agreement between INEA and the Foreign Relations Secretariat to promote Adult Education (1990) and an Addendum to the Coordination Agreement for these institutions. (2001).

2. Procedure to install a new Community Plaza in the USA and Canada

2.1 Specific Information regarding the Community Plaza

It means that the person interested in installing or letting others know what a Community Plaza is, shall acquire and have the information regarding the characteristics, objectives and services that allow us to look for the collaboration, evaluate where and with what we may install and open a Community Plaza.

To know the functioning and the results of some Community Plazas in nearby places. You can consult in the CONEVyT Site where the addresses of the Plazas in operation are located.

In order for a Community Plaza to have positive results, it is important to install it in the proper place, which is accessible to people, with computers and preferably internet service. It can begin with a program (literacy and/or primary secondary) and slowly integrate other programs such as English, computers, GED, among others, the above according to the needs of the community that is being assisted.

Therefore, **for a Community Plaza to work it does not need huge facilities or it has to begin with all the programs.**

2.2 An efficient negotiation

It consists in the exchange of information, resources and ideas which allow identifying the benefit that the involved parties will get, with the win-win principle. It is made with persons and institutions which are possible sponsors of the infrastructure and services component, interested in supporting educational and formation processes.

2.2.1. General Recommendation for obtaining human, material and economic resources.

To organize and manage a Community Plaza represents a great compromise. The success of the different services offered there depends on the organization of all infrastructure and administration components. Always look for what brings us together and separates us.

The installation of a Community Plaza always begins with the design and construction of a Project where the objectives are sufficiently clear, the procedures, the results obtained the contribution from the

possible sponsors and the different activities that will give rise to the formal beginning of the services.

The installation Project shall be our permanent action guide and we must make the actions that allow covering each phase before going to the next one.

The planning of a Community Plaza is very important to guarantee its good performance.

The challenges shall be anticipated, in order to avoid them being an obstacle in the installation process.

It is very helpful in this planning stage to visit Community Plazas which already have results for support. Everyone that wants to start a negotiation shall have their objectives, procedures and results very clear.

2.2.2. Activities to be considered for a successful negotiation

First group of activities

Preparing to negotiate

- A successful negotiation is that where both parties consider they have obtained a profit. Therefore it is important: to be clear in what our offer is in terms of services, resources and acknowledgements; to know exactly what we require from the people we are negotiating with. If we are able to express specifically what we are offering in exchange of what we want, we will avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings. It is recommended to elaborate a small table where our negotiation expectations are shown, detailing both questions, for example:

Negotiation Components		
Plaza Requirements	Possible Sponsor	Benefits for Sponsor
Get a permit to operate in the facilities of the George Washington school.	School District XXI or director Joan Johnson.	The parents that benefit from the services will be more efficient in supporting their children in their studies and the final efficiency of the school will be benefited.
Contar con 10 equipos de cómputo.	Mr. George Smith	We will include workers from your company as service users and will give them English and computer lessons.

- We must prepare a document in a brief and specific presentation where the Community Plaza and its benefits are explained.
- Convince with example.

Under no circumstance fail to comply with what is promised, otherwise we can cause not only the abandonment of that sponsor but of the links to which said person or institution may recommend us in a negative way.

To have the sufficient basic information regarding the characteristics and interests of the possible sponsor, especially what it expects to obtain in exchange of their support. To have this information will clarify us in what our profit will be; what can we really offer to what the sponsor requires from us; and to carefully choose the information which will be useful for each speaker and avoid being or distracting him to the point that it does not understand the information of our interest, specially that it understands.

Important issues to mention to sponsor:

- **What is a Community Plaza?**

Characteristics and Infrastructure.

The services it offers, for whom and the benefit required.

The need to install a Community Plaza in the community

Characteristics and amount of persons benefited by the Community Plaza through the education services at a literacy, primary or secondary levels.

The benefits obtained by the community and the institution that provides the support.

- Supports granted by the Mexican government to install Community Plazas.
 - Printed modules.
 - Virtual MEVyT
 - Modules available in internet and in PDF and HTML format
 - Official accreditation and certification of studies.
 - Formation for advisors, trainers and responsible of the Community Plaza.
 - Link with institutions.
- Educational services of INEA in support for:
 - Obtaining the GED to learn English as a second language for High School.
 - Formal analysis of complementation and coverage of profiles between school grades and the development of both countries.
- Procedure for installing and functioning.
 - Necessary human, material and economic resources.
 - Formation of work teams.
 - Definition of fees.
 - Cost estimation according to the available resources
- Results of Community Plazas in other U.S. cities.
- Specific relation of the necessary human, material and economic resources for which support is wanted.

Second group of activities

Identifying support.

- Make a list of possible candidates considering: Interest, intention and socio economic scope of the candidates that provide us their support.

- The kind of needs that each of them may help us meet.
- Choose the ideal candidates according to the kind of necessity that we want to cover and make an appointment with them. We shall estimate the possibility of gathering them in the same session or of making independent appointments as convenient.

Third group of activities

Negotiation

- Presenting the Project to the candidate or candidates.

Using the document made in the first activity, the following order is suggested, although they may adapt according to conditions, circumstances and necessities present.

Explain what a Community Plaza is, its objectives, services offered and the resources required for its functioning.

- Why a Community Plaza.
- Procedure for its installation and functioning.
- Presentation of the results of achievements of other Community Plazas.
- Human resources, material and economic relation need and for which supports are required.

Recommendations:

At the interview, it is of utmost important that the person making the presentation:

- Has sufficient information about the Project, especially to clarify any doubts.
- Expresses in a clear and simple way the project's goals and objectives.
- Stresses the benefits that the community and the candidate will get in making this project.

At the end of the interview it is very important:

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- To establish agreements and commitments to make simple activities and in short terms.
- Give follow up to comply with agreements and commitments established.
- Once you have the support, proceed to implement a Community Plaza. Report the advances and achievements to who or whom supported the project.

2.3. Equipment purchase and use

The sponsor institution or institutions provide the necessary equipment to install the Plaza. At least 10 computers are suggested, with internet access, a server, a television, a VCR, if possible a DVD, tables, chairs and a blackboard or board.

2.4. Definition of programs and education services

The offer of services and programs in each Community Plaza shall be defined according to the needs of the population.

2.5. Link with the Mexican Consulate and Institutions

The corresponding Mexican Consulate is the link between the Mexican government institutions and the operating organizations. The Coordinator of the IME will facilitate communication between all the participants, to follow up of the correct functioning of the Community Plaza so that it grants the services for what it was installed and at all times promote the educational actions offered in the Community Plazas with the persons that go to the consulate to request a service.

Likewise, the institutions of the Mexican government may establish and negotiate actions in collaboration with the organizations and institutions abroad, without forgetting that the corresponding consulate shall be informed at all times.

2.6. Diffusion of Programs and Educational Services.

At the same time that the advisors and the team responsible for the space are linked, the programs and services offered at the Community Plaza shall be diffused, in order to know what kind of lessons are the most required by the local population.

2.7. Connection and selection of the person responsible for the Plaza and the advisors

The institution that opens a Plaza shall name a person responsible; have at least one advisor for the educational programs given, if possible, with a computing specialist.

The institutions shall be in charge of all gratifications and payment of fees of the work team.

2.8. Formation of the person responsible and the advisors

The person responsible for the Community Plaza and the advisors shall seek regional and national notifications of the advisor formation, advisor trainers, persons in charge and managers' Seminars-Workshop, with dates and locations to be carried out during the year in the United States.

After receiving the corresponding formation, the participants get a certificate issued by the INEA. These advisors/teachers may train others to open new Community Plazas and Education Groups.

The advisor formation process is necessary for students of Community Plazas to obtain certificates with official validity in Mexico, after having attended and passed the corresponding level.

2.9. Obtaining SASACE access code

The procedure to obtain the SASACE access code, through which the registration of the student and advisors will be possible, the printing and grading of tests, student registration and report cards is the following:

1. The Community Plaza, through the “General Data card of the Community Plaza” shall grant the necessary organization information to make possible the organization registration in the system, the above is carried out with the support of the corresponding Mexican Consulate.
2. After the registration of the Community Plaza in the system, the International Programs Office shall request to the Accreditation and Systems Direction the corresponding access code.
3. Once that the Accreditation and Systems Direction grants the requested access code and that it is provided to the International Programs Office, this may be provided by mail to the corresponding operation unit, whether directly with copy to the corresponding Consulate or through it.

2.10. Attention

There are two ways to assist youth and adults in the Community Plaza:

Free: The persons study the modules on their own, they use the resources of the plaza and furthermore the tests for the Community Plaza are presented, with the help of an advisor to decide if they are prepared.

In an education group: Persons use the spaces and resources of the plaza in the schedules established in agreement by the institution, the students and the advisors.

2.11. Follow-up, evaluation and updating

The person responsible for the Community Plaza is in charge of giving follow up and evaluating periodically the way in which the objectives are being met, and if the actions taken have covered what has been planned to grade the results obtained, detect challenges and establish measures to guide the activities.

If necessary, to ask for advice and support through email according to the corresponding coordinator.

3 Responsible for the Community Plaza

The Person Responsible for the Community Plaza is of vital importance for the proper development of education services. It shall achieve the integration and harmony of each and every one of the administrative, education and technical processes that occur in the Community Plaza.

Considering the nature of this commitment and the principles of organization in the Community Plaza, it is necessary that the person responsible has the following Profile

- Be an adult.
- Have superior level or finished secondary education.
- Speak, read and write in Spanish.
- Be sensitive to the Community needs.
- Be convinced of the benefits of education and willing to share his/her knowledge.
- Have the following attitudes: be responsible, on time, respectful and honest with persons.
- Have the skills to manage resources and processes, organize, coordinate and build work programs considering activities, resources, time and products.
- Have the minimum knowledge regarding basic adult education and on line education.
- Have the basic elements to manage resources for the Community Plaza.

Also, as a result of the initial information and the updating courses, it is important that it gradually obtains the skills and knowledge to:

- Effectively operate all the technical resources of the Community Plaza (Internet browsing, computers, software, tape recorder, television and DVD among others).

- Guide people and advisors on:
 1. The objectives, structure and characteristics of the education programs offered.
 2. Learning evaluation and education process.
 3. Education, communication and information resources that the Community Plaza has.
 4. The methodology to advice the different educational process.
 5. The registration, inscription, accreditation and certification for each of the programs offered.
 6. The objectives, characteristics and organization of the Community Plazas.
 7. The use of resources (Printed modules, Virtual MEVyT, on line Education, CONEVyT and other educational sites.)

It is important to point out that at no time the person responsible for the Plaza, the work equipment that supports it or the advisors, have any work relation with the Mexican Consulate or with the institutions that offer education programs: CONEVyT, INEA, Public Education Secretariat, or any other institution or entity incorporated to the program.

3.1. Activities of the person in charge of the Community Plaza

- Attend and participate in its formation and updating.
- Make a monthly program for the use of resources, needs and services of the Community Plaza.
- Build the annual program for the functioning of the Plaza.
- Promote and diffuse the services of the Community Plaza.
- Register the participants.
- Administer the resources of the Plaza.
- Knowledge of the number of students assisted.
- Identify the programs and subjects that will be studied.
- Guide advisors and/or students on the use of the resources of the Community Plaza.
- Make sure that the computer equipment, Internet and other inputs are working properly.
- Carry out follow up and evaluation meetings with advisors and students.

4 Formation: Procedure, guidelines and strategies

To make the Regional Seminars-Workshops in the United States and Canada makes it possible to gather a greater number of participants in one or several states, consulates, organizations and institutions that correspond to one or several consular districts. This strategy besides enriching the formation process, favors resource saving.

4.1. Procedures and guidelines

1. The organization or institution will request the information of locations and dates regarding the Seminar-Workshop for the formation of the work team of the Community Plaza to the corresponding Mexican Consulate.
2. Once the location and date are decided, the organization or institution will send the participants registration format of each of the persons attending the Seminar-Workshop to the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME for its abbreviation in Spanish) in the Foreign Affairs Secretariat and to the Corresponding Consulate.
3. Other institutions have other formation strategies and in these cases it is possible that the Consulate, through the IME, is the one responsible for linking the Mexican institution or institutions to the requesting organizations abroad.
4. At the end of each Seminary-Workshop, participants shall receive a certificate where it is stated that they participated in said training.
5. After the Seminar-Workshop, follow-up shall be made by phone or e mail to solve any doubts that arise.

4.2 Formation Strategies

- **Operative**
 - **Regional**
 - **According to profile and requirement**
 - **Informative**

- **Initial**
- **Evaluation, follow up and updating**

- **Technical-Pedagogical**
 - **Presence**
 - **Diversified**
 - **Seminar-Workshop based on efficient participation**
 - **Methodology for adult education processes**

- **Learning Resources**
 - **Printed**
 - **MEVyT Virtual**
 - **CONEVyT web site**
 - **Test page SASACE**

4.2.1. Operative Strategy

Telephone and personal expenses in general.

Regional

Organized by: SRE- IME, CONEVyT and INEA, Base Consulate and guest Consulates.

Number of events: Approximately 10 per year in strategic locations and according to the annual program.

Duration: one or two days as the case may be.

Aimed for: Directives, educational authorities, entrepreneurs, project leaders and/or volunteers of several organizations, companies, School Districts, responsible for the IME, operators and managers of educational services. One or more consulates, organizations and/or states (according to the regional geographic division).

Formation Kind: Informative, Initial and Evaluation and Follow Up.
Characteristics: Present Seminar–Workshop with the support of technology, made by the Mexican Government team.

Form of Work: The team of trainers and the participants shall use alternatively several educational resources: computer (resources of the CONEVyT, MEVyT Virtual web site) and printed material.

Profiles: Advisors, Managers and person in charge of the Community Plaza, and Advisor Trainers.

Contributions:

The INEA, during the event, shall cover the lodging and food expenses of the trainers' equipment that will be in charge of leading the group work, and the teaching materials necessary for the formation.

The corresponding Consulate shall send the Invitation and the format for the registration of participants.

Each **Community Plaza, organization, school district, university, etc.** shall cover the expenses of its participants: lodging, food, transportation, from their original location to the venue and from the venue to their original location.

Each participant shall cover their personal expenses such as taxis and phone calls.

The base Consulate will be in charge of the event logistics, of obtaining spaces to develop the event, computer equipment with Internet and projectors, badges for the participants and support material (flipchart, markets, white pages, pencils).

The invited Consulates will send the registration and the list of participants both to the base Consulate as well as to the IME and the INEA.

Local - Case Studies

Organized by: Consulates, juvenile detention center, entities, companies and institutions.

Venue: As defined by the organization or institution.

Aimed for: Advisors, Managers and persons responsible for Community Plazas and Advisor Trainers.

Requirement: minimum of 10 persons of a same company, organization, school district or several school districts or of different consulates or adjacent states, etc. In the case of Correctional Centers, the amount of persons that will take the Seminar-Workshop will depend of the Center.

Given by: The Regional Coordinator of the International Programs Office and in its case, of the Direction of Accreditations and Systems and/or of the Academic Direction.

In the case of additional support requested, the requesting organization shall cover the transportation, food and lodging expenses.

INEA contribution:

- Trainer advice
- Guidance to on line courses
- Training materials
- Issuance of certificates

4.3. Technical-pedagogical strategy

1. Based on learning of processes and methods: in problem solving through the application and use of available education resources: informatics, audio visual, printed and present.
2. Based on:
 - Several learning rhythms, experience and degrees of responsibility of the participants of the program.
 - Use of the Seminar-Workshop concept (study, research, consult, interpret before the formation sessions).
 - Construction of Agendas and work dynamics according to the requirements and the proper ones for those responsible of the Community Plaza, advisor trainer and advisors.
 - Make the participant responsible of their own learning experience.
 - Efficient participation to reach objectives.

4.4. Methodological strategy

The procedure for the development of any subject in the educational adult process is integrated by five learning moments mentioned in exhibit 1 of this file.

Obtaining information, application, evaluation, reflection and learning proof may be approached through different orders according to the complexity of the objective and of the subject to be developed. That is, it can begin with the evaluation to know how much knowledge there is on the subject and next acquire the information.

Infrastructure, equipment, furniture and costs of the Community Plaza

The infrastructure is everything that physically allows us to create the Plazas and implement the services of basic and superior education and complementary programs according to the needs of the community.

1. Minimum services and basic equipment for the installation and operation of a Community Plaza.

- **Basic Services:** Upon choosing a space to be adapted as a Community Plaza, it is necessary to verify that it at least has drinking water, electric power and air conditioning.
- **Equipment:** It refers to the necessary equipment for the functioning of the three spaces: network computers with internet, basic furniture to organize the materials and equipment that youth and adults will be using.
- **Improvement of infrastructure on Plazas:** During the service consolidation process of the Plaza, it will be necessary to program activities that enrich and extend the services. Said actions shall be carried out according to the educational demands for the community, the programs and services offered and the specific conditions of the Plaza.
- **Implement emerging action:** It may be the case that the planned activities cannot be carried out, due to failure in the

equipment, in the facilities or in the educational materials, among others; therefore, it is convenient to foresee action strategies to cover these contingencies and provide the services to the users.