The network of pilot centres was created in 2000 at the initiative of the La main à la pâte group at the Académie des Sciences with the support of the Town Interdepartmental Delegation. It brings together teams who, in their town, district or department, have developed original and innovative methods to accompany the reform of science and technology teaching in schools, in particular those located in priority education zones. These centers are active on websites, uploading local resources and developing services similar to those on the La main à la pâte website. They are governed by a common charter. The network of pilot centers is coordinated by the national La main à la pâte team which ensures that experience is capitalized on, resources are shared and that enables exchanges between teachers.

For those interested in developing such a centre, La main à la pâte proposes a "Handbook for setting up and developing a centre for inquiry-based science education (IBSE) at elementary and middle schools" which aim at helping the teams to create or reinforce a local development project.