



Sustainable Development
Working Group



ARCTIC COUNCIL

Sustainable Development Working Group Work Plan for 2015-2017

The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) will continue to address the human dimension of the Arctic by pursuing initiatives that provide practical knowledge and contribute to building the capacity of indigenous peoples and Arctic communities to respond to the challenges and opportunities in the Arctic region.

Addressing Energy Security in Remote Arctic Communities

Many remote Arctic communities rely on diesel fuel to generate electricity; fuel which is expensive to transport and which generates black carbon that contaminates the environment and harms residents' health. Energy security for residents in remote Arctic communities can be strengthened through increasing the use of renewable energy and improvements to energy efficiency. The SDWG will work on exploring and developing projects which enhance energy security through these measures over the course of the U.S. Chairmanship and beyond. At a minimum, this work will include a U.S.-led project called the Remote Communities Renewable Energy (RCRE) partnership. This project aims to develop a modular system pairing renewable energy technology, such as wind turbines, with diesel generators and energy storage devices to power micro-grid systems in small Arctic communities. Other projects that address energy security in Arctic communities may also be added to this project cluster.

Arctic Energy Summit

The SDWG will support the Arctic Energy Summit (AES), a multi-disciplinary event drawing together industry executives, government agency officials and policy makers, researchers, energy professionals and community leaders to collaborate on and share innovative approaches to Arctic energy issues. The 2015 Summit will address renewable energy, oil and gas exploration and production, remote and rural heat and power, and energy transportation and transmission. As has been done in the past, the AES would produce a summary report and present it to the SDWG at their meeting immediately following the 2015 Summit.

Arctic Adaptation Exchange: Facilitating Adaptation to Climate Change

The Arctic Adaptation Exchange: Facilitating Adaptation to Climate Change initiative will continue to support the online portal, in association with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, focused on adaptation to foster innovative approaches to climate change adaptation and enhance adaptive capacity. To the extent possible, Member States will build on their open data policies to consolidate and facilitate access to their respective climate-related Arctic datasets, and link this data to the Arctic Adaptation Exchange Portal. All Arctic Council working groups are also encouraged to submit links to their various datasets and/or reports related to adaptation.



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Arctic Water Resources Vulnerability Index

In coordination with AMAP, this project will internationalize the University of Alaska-Fairbanks' Arctic Water Resource Vulnerability Index (AWRVI) to provide Arctic communities with a valuable tool to assess the status of their freshwater resources. The expanded assessment will then feed into the Arctic Adaptation Exchange Portal developed by the SDWG during the Canadian chairmanship, allowing local government officials, researchers, and residents to evaluate their communities' freshwater resiliency and address vulnerabilities.

Community Water, Sanitation and Public Health

Capitalizing on the results of the Alaska Water and Sewer Challenge, this project will focus on decentralized water and wastewater treatment, recycling, and usage efficiency. A workshop will be convened to facilitate collaboration between researchers, engineers, manufacturers, vendors and health experts on measures to increase access to and reduce the operating costs of in-home running water and sewer in remote communities, attract investment, improve public health, and spur public-private partnerships. The workshop will also serve as a platform to report on a circumpolar health assessment of existing community systems, water quality and quantity, utilization of traditional water sources, and related health indicators.

Operationalizing One Health in the Arctic

One Health is an interdisciplinary approach to assess health issues at the interface between humans, animals and ecosystems. By the end of the US chairmanship, the SDWG will have taken steps to institutionalize the practice of One Health across the Arctic region, and will have contributed key findings to Arctic Council reports, as well as relevant meetings. 'Hubs' will be designated to serve as Points of Contact (PoCs) for Member States and Permanent Participants. A circumpolar-agreed checklist will be developed to measure progress towards on-the-ground implementation of One Health, inform priority setting, and facilitate non-expert engagement with the initiative.

Suicide Prevention and Resilience

The RISING SUN project (Reducing the Incidence of Suicide in Indigenous Groups – Strengths United through Networks) aims to create a common, science-based system of metrics to track key correlates of mental wellness, interventions, and outcomes across Arctic States. Complementing the mental health work completed under the Canadian chairmanship, the development of common metrics will aid health workers and policy-makers in measuring progress, scaling-up interventions, and identifying challenges by facilitating data sharing and pooling, evaluation, and interpretation across service systems.



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The Economy of the North III

The project will provide an updated overview of the economy, socioeconomic living conditions and environmental issues in the circumpolar Arctic, as impacted by the global economy and climate change. By harmonizing the socioeconomic statistical data across national and regional borders the projects aims to improve the knowledge base for natural resource management and social development.

The Arctic as a Food Producing Region

The food producers in the Arctic area are facing challenges related to harsh climate conditions, climate change, poor and/or costly infrastructure and distance to export markets. They also share the possibilities to frame the special attributes of the food from the Arctic. The aim of the project is to assess the potential for increased production and added value of food from the Arctic, with the overarching objective of improving economic and social conditions in Arctic communities.

EALLU – Arctic Indigenous Youth, Climate Change and Food Culture

The EALLU project will maintain and further develop sustainable and resilient reindeer husbandry in the Arctic in the face of climate change and globalization to work towards a vision of creating a better life for circumpolar reindeer herders. The project will raise awareness of climate change among indigenous youth groups, document and raise awareness of the traditional knowledge of food cultures of Arctic indigenous reindeer herding peoples, and stimulate business development and local value added in Arctic indigenous peoples' regions.

Use Traditional and Local Knowledge

The SDWG will work in collaboration with Working Groups and Task Forces to implement the recommendations developed through the Integrating Traditional and Local Knowledge initiative towards the consistent and practical use of traditional and local knowledge in the work of the Arctic Council.

Assessing, Monitoring and Promoting Arctic Indigenous Languages

The ICC-led work on assessing, monitoring and promoting Arctic indigenous languages will continue during 2015-17 building on the research results of the first phase under the Swedish and Canadian chairmanships as well as the outcomes of the February 2015 Symposium.