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Arctic Council communications strategy

(2020)

Preface

Over the past 25 years, the Arctic Council has established itself as the pre-eminent high-level forum of the Arctic region to discuss the protection of the Arctic environment, sustainable development and the wellbeing of Arctic inhabitants. It has provided the Arctic States and Arctic peoples with a platform to come together to address issues of common concern and it has maintained the region as an area of unique international cooperation. Thus, the Arctic Council is well placed to continue to promote the state of the art knowledge produced by the Council's subsidiary bodies.

This communications strategy guides communication and outreach activities within the Arctic Council network until the next biennial review and it replaces the strategy for the period 2018-2020.

Introduction

One of the Arctic Council's primary purposes is to "disseminate information, encourage education, and promote interest in Arctic-related issues" as stated in its founding document, the Ottawa Declaration. This communications strategy will form the basis of communication and outreach activities towards this purpose within the Arctic Council network – including Arctic States, Permanent Participants, subsidiary bodies and affiliated experts.

The strategy explores how the Council can highlight the many ways it contributes to positive outcomes in the Arctic – adding to its relevance and credibility amongst target audiences. In the face of an ever-shifting communications landscape, the strategy will guide the Council towards generating positive narratives on Arctic cooperation, environmental protection, sustainable development, and the well-being of Arctic residents.

Background

The Arctic Council Secretariat plays the key role in establishing the framework for communications and in implementing the communications strategy. Responsibilities include, among others:

- managing and producing the Arctic Council's digital content;
- interacting and managing relationships with members of the media, vetting and forwarding media requests to designated spokespersons within the Arctic Council network and creating press materials;
- supporting the Council's presence at events and conferences;
- managing the Arctic Council's document library, the Open Access Repository;
- expanding the library of photo, audio, and video materials.

Subsidiary bodies of the Arctic Council also conduct a broad range of communications activities and, in some cases, have their own communications strategies. The Arctic Council Secretariat provides strategic advice in implementing the Council’s communications strategy across the Arctic Council network and works closely with the subsidiary bodies to align communication activities. This updated communications strategy for the Arctic Council seeks to deploy the full range of Council resources to take on new communications challenges, in keeping with the “Arctic Council Communications and Outreach Guidelines” (updated 2020) and the parameters set forth by the Senior Arctic Officials.

Mission

The Arctic Council’s communications efforts need to provide accurate, timely, clear, well-coordinated and knowledge-based information on Arctic issues and on the activities of the Arctic Council to inform target audiences and drive support for the Arctic Council and its work.

Goals and objectives

The Arctic Council’s communications need to demonstrate how the Council’s mechanisms enhance international cooperation and foster peace and prosperity in the region. In addition, projects and initiatives – presented individually and within the larger context provided by the Council’s mandate – need to be communicated in a way that shows how they further the understanding of a changing Arctic and contribute to health and well-being of Arctic peoples, sustainable development and environmental protection of the circumpolar region. The main goals and objectives of communication are:

- to strengthen the Arctic Council brand and underline its relevance, thereby reinforcing the view that the Council—via the eight member States and Permanent Participants – is the preeminent international forum for addressing Arctic issues.
- to provide a credible “voice” for the Council on issues where it has achieved consensus and furthered the knowledge-base. Efforts need to position the Council as an opinion leader on and first point of contact for important Arctic issues, as well as giving a public, human face to the Council.
- to highlight how the Arctic Council actively contributes to positive outcomes in the Arctic - notably through the substantive and high-quality work of its subsidiary bodies.
- to illustrate that the Council, its Working Groups, and their projects respond to and address on-going regional priorities and global crises.
- to generate a positive narrative of international cooperation on sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
- to facilitate timely communications efforts and media responses to position the Arctic Council as the leading and authoritative voice of the region.

Core messaging

The Arctic Council brings together people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, joined by the desire to create together a sustainable future for the region. Messages communicated by the Arctic Council and its entities need to reflect common goals and achievements, while also acknowledging distinct voices

within the Council's network. Thus, the Council's core messaging needs to function as a framework within which individual messages can be expressed. Messages should convey distinctive features of the Council as outlined below:

- The Arctic Council is a unique forum for collaboration and the preeminent forum for addressing Arctic issues. Here Arctic States and Indigenous peoples come together to chart a path forward for the region.

Messages should reflect:

- that the Council's projects, research, and agreements are all products of collaboration among the eight Arctic States and six Indigenous peoples' organizations with Permanent Participants status, with the active support of the scientific community and traditional knowledge holders.
 - that the Arctic Council is a unique forum in which Indigenous peoples actively contribute to decision making and development in the region.
 - the stewardship role the Arctic States and the Permanent Participants play for the region, underlining that the Arctic is well-governed under the legislation of the eight Arctic States and the international law, including customary international law as reflected in United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- The Arctic Council is the place where Arctic States and inhabitants address sustainable development and wellbeing in the region, as well as the impacts of climate change in a responsible, constructive way that safeguards the environment and the interests of Arctic inhabitants.

Messages should reflect that:

- the diverse regions and peoples of the Arctic are bound together by a common desire to protect the environment, sustain healthy, vibrant communities, and maintain peace and cooperation in the region.
 - the Arctic Council's mandates for sustainable development and environmental protection go hand-in-hand and must be achieved together.
 - the Arctic Council promotes the resilience of Arctic communities and landscapes through its support for, and acknowledgment of, the cultures, values, and interests of Arctic Indigenous peoples.
- Through dedicated Working Groups, Task Forces, and other bodies, the Arctic Council conducts a wide range of studies and programs aimed at developing the knowledge and solutions needed to address the unique questions facing a changing Arctic and inform decision and policy making. Many of these efforts are supported by the engagement and expertise of the Council's Observers.

Messages should reflect that:

- the Arctic is undergoing rapid change that affects people and environments beyond the polar region, and the Arctic States, Indigenous peoples, the Council's Observers and Working Groups engaging the scientific community are working together through the Arctic Council to better understand and adapt to that change.
- the Council develops knowledge and networks that empower the inhabitants of the Arctic to take action to improve their quality of life.
- the Council produces the most comprehensive circumpolar assessments and reports of issues and trends that impact the Arctic environment and Arctic inhabitants.
- the Council's reports and assessments have placed Arctic issues on the global agenda and fed into international agreements and conventions.
- the Council and its subsidiary bodies are well placed and established to react promptly on emerging issues of concern to the Arctic by activating its broad network of experts.

Target audiences

The Arctic Council's communications and outreach efforts need to be tailored towards various target audiences and their specific needs, interests. In addition, these efforts need to recognize an audience's previous knowledge and language capacities. To provide targeted audiences with meaningful and relevant information, key messaging needs to be adjusted accordingly and communication channels have to be chosen based on the audience's preferences.

- **Inhabitants, including Indigenous peoples, of the Arctic and the Arctic States** are the ones most impacted by and most likely to benefit from the activities of the Council. Raising awareness of the Council's work also among those living in the Arctic States but outside the Arctic region can help to generate support for allocating greater resources to Arctic issues.
- **The Arctic Council network.** Regular communication aims to keep all delegates informed about ongoing and upcoming activities across the network and serves as a means to highlight specific projects, introduce key experts and knowledge-holders, and report on events.
- **Policymakers in the Arctic States and Observer States** engaged with the Arctic (locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally) benefit from a fuller awareness of the Council's knowledge generation, latest findings, and policy recommendations.
- **Arctic-focused NGOs, IPOs, and IGOs** – both Arctic Council Observers and others – play a significant role in shaping opinion about the Arctic and the issues that it faces. Maintaining an ongoing dialogue between the Arctic Council and those organizations enhances our ability – and opportunities – to amplify messaging on issues of common concern, including the environmental impacts on the Arctic from global activities.
- **The Arctic scientific and research community** researching issues in and related to the Arctic. Outreach to this group can help ensure that all of those whose work could benefit from a greater awareness of Arctic Council initiatives – or could potentially enrich those initiatives – will have the opportunity to interact directly with the Council.
- **Business sectors with interest in the Arctic** (e.g., resource development, energy, environment, shipping, tourism, and others). Outreach to business representatives and the network of the Arctic Economic Council can help establish and maintain a dialogue with them on opportunities for sustainable development in the Arctic and the unique responsibilities that accompany it.

- **Youth, including students, from the Arctic and from Arctic States.** Youth engagement is an important aspect of strengthening the Arctic Council. Informing and engaging youth across the circumpolar region helps build awareness of the Council's work and creates a sense of shared community on issues of common concern and interest to young people living in the Arctic.
- **Media representatives and the general public.** Keeping media representatives informed on the achievements of the Arctic Council will increase the understanding of the general public of the changes taking place in the Arctic and their consequences.

Communications tools and channels

The Council's communications can take different forms, including articles, newsletters, interviews, videos, images, and events. Some of the main tools and channels for the Council's outreach are:

- **Arctic Council website** (www.arctic-council.org). An organization's website is like a shop window, serving as the first point-of-contact and placing the organization's offerings on display. The Arctic Council Secretariat maintains, updates and manages the website, drawing upon content co-developed with members of the Council, its subsidiary bodies and affiliated experts. The Arctic Council website serves as a conduit to Working Group websites, to the Council's other digital media presences, and to the Council's Open Access Repository.
- **Digital media networks** amplify messaging and reach key audiences – notably opinion leaders, journalists, and youth. Effective use of these networks requires sustained investment and ongoing, real-time interaction. The Arctic Council Secretariat manages the Arctic Council's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts, while the Working Groups' secretariats manage their own dedicated social media accounts.
- **News media** such as television, radio, print and web remain important sources of information for many people, capable of drawing a wide audience on a regular basis. Media representatives should continue to be a primary focus of our outreach and communications efforts. They regularly receive news releases issued by the Council and its subsidiary bodies.
- The Council's **monthly newsletter** serves as a regular update about ongoing and upcoming activities of the Council. It provides up-to-date information right into the inbox of key target audiences and links to in-depth reporting about current topics.
- **The Open Access Repository** contains all Council documents that are recent, significant, and publicly available. The Repository also connects Council publications with university libraries and research databases worldwide, making Council publications available more broadly.
- **Events.** Arctic-related events and symposia provide a natural platform for the Council's many experts. Seeking out appropriate opportunities to provide Arctic Council representatives principal speaking opportunities at these events both positions the Council as a credible voice on Arctic issues and provides an opportunity for Council representatives to shape the discussions that take place. Events that draw large numbers of Arctic-focused journalists also provide an opportunity to organize effective media availabilities for Arctic Council communicators.
- **Multimedia.** Multimedia material, such as photos, videos, infographics, can help to attract many of the Council's target audiences. In addition, all modern media outlets rely on these materials

to tell their stories; providing them with quality Arctic Council materials increases the likelihood that our activities will receive coverage.

- **Arctic Council Spokespeople.** The Council's communications efforts rely on the Senior Arctic Officials, Permanent Participants, Working Groups and affiliated scientists and experts as channels to communicate through. The Arctic Council's communications depend on the availability and willingness of spokespeople to serve as a reputable and authoritative source.
- **Internal coordination.** Communicators within the Arctic Council Secretariat, the Chairmanship, Arctic States, Permanent Participants, and the Council's subsidiary bodies maintain an active exchange of information and best practices through regular participation in the Arctic Council's communications and outreach group.

Resources

The Arctic Council can rely on a wide range of resources as the basis of its messaging. Core documents include assessments, reports and summaries developed by the Council's subsidiary bodies. The Arctic Council network also brings together experts on a wide range of topics, who can speak on current issues.

The Arctic Council Secretariat manages an extensive multimedia archive, including historic and present day (audio) visual material. In addition, the Secretariat continues to build an extensive library of high-quality photographs highlighting the Council's work and will focus on producing video material in-house as resources allow. Where possible, the Council should look for cost-effective ways to work with partners and vendors to obtain professional-quality visuals and audio illustrating the diversity of the Arctic and the Council's work.

Furthermore, the Arctic Council Secretariat uses tools for monitoring and managing news and digital media outlets. The ACS communications team monitors international news outlets through the media monitoring tool Meltwater, which also offers a database of journalists for targeted media briefings. Digital media content is managed through Hootsuite, a digital media dashboard.

Evaluation

The Council's communications and outreach activities can be evaluated quantitatively and /or qualitatively.

Quantitative indicators include website view counts, number of followers, reach and influence on digital media networks, number of downloads of reports and visibility in traditional media. The Arctic Council Secretariat tracks the monthly performance for its digital media network, the Arctic Council website and the OAR and produces quarterly and event related reports which are sent out to the Council's communications and outreach group.

A **qualitative assessment** would measure the impact of the Council's messages, as well as the familiarity with the Council and its work. Such an evaluation could be carried out by way of a survey and/or opinion poll, ideally conducted by a professional communications agency. The Arctic Council currently has no budget for such evaluations; in the future, should funds become available, the Council should include a professional evaluation in its communications strategies.



As the Arctic Council evolves, so too does the communications landscape in which it operates. The Council will account for this by conducting a biennial review of this strategy to ensure it remains well-adapted to the prevailing communications environment. The Senior Arctic Officials may choose to call for a more comprehensive reassessment every four years.

APPENDIX

- [Style Guide](#)
- [Brand Book](#)
- Communications and Outreach Guidelines [to be approved and uploaded to the OAR]