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Direction of Senior Arctic Officials Requested

The SDWG is seeking guidance from SAOs on:

- The level and type of support the SDWG should provide to advance the Arctic Council’s work related to COVID-19.
- Working Group contributions to the 2021 Arctic Council Ministerial and the Arctic Council’s 25th Anniversary.

Advancing SDWG’s 2019-2023 Work Plan

The SDWG held its last Executive and Plenary meetings in January and February 2021. These meetings were held online due to continuing travel restrictions as result of COVID-19. The plenary meeting included 104 participants with all Arctic States and Permanent Participant organizations represented, nine (9) Observer States, three (3) Observer IGOs, seven (7) Observer NGOs and the European Union.

SDWG projects were uniformly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel delays, impacts on local communities, and altered communications all affected project activities, timelines, and deliverables. While some projects were able to complete objectives and conclude deliverables through alternate and virtual means, others were forced to postpone activities and shift timelines.

Ministerial Deliverables

The SDWG will present deliverables from nine (9) SDWG endorsed projects and two (2) activities tasked by SAOs at the May 2021 Arctic Council Ministerial. Details about these deliverables and their current status are outlined below. Five (5) of these projects will conclude this spring and four (4) projects will continue as part of the SDWG’s 2021-2023 work plan.

Project/ Activities	Status
Arctic Children: Preschool and School Education	<p>This project is an assessment of best practices in free pre-school education for children from Indigenous minorities of the Arctic and Subarctic regions. It was endorsed as part of the 2017-2019 work plan and it received support to continue. The project leads are currently developing a project proposal to be discussed with co-leads and project partners.</p> <p>Planning of the follow-on project has been delayed. The new phase of the project is now expected to be introduced during the 2021-2023 work period.</p>
Deliverables:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2020, “Arctic Talents. Arctic 2020” conference held in Kaluga Region, Russia. • September 1, 2020, opening event of the International Arctic School in Yakutsk. 	

Gender Equality in the Arctic (GEA) III	<p>GEA was initially introduced in SDWG’s 2013-2015 work plan. GEA III is part of the Icelandic Chairmanship Program and is a follow-on project that was endorsed by the SDWG in February 2019. This project will produce a pan-Arctic report on gender and diversity in the Arctic and publish a digital quarterly newsletter about the status of GEA III and highlight gender-related topics in the Arctic. The Editorial Committee for the GEA report has been established and a youth advisory council has been created. Most authors have been confirmed. The GEA team has also launched a website, newsletter and is planning gender-related sessions at several conferences.</p> <p>Work has been delayed; however, the report is on track to be presented at the May 2021 Ministerial. The report was submitted to SDWG for review on 2 February 2021. It is expected to be submitted to SAO for consideration in early March.</p>
Deliverable: Gender Equality in the Arctic III Report	
One Arctic – One Health	<p>This project focuses on exchanging information, assessments and innovations that can support public health systems and health service delivery (including clean energy sources/systems) - with particular emphasis on projects that reduce death and disability from environmental risk factors, suicide, and high-burden infectious and chronic diseases. One Health was initially introduced in the 2015-2017 work plan.</p> <p>Project plans and the timelines for activities and deliverables has been impacted by the pandemic. This project will be extended to continue as part of the 2021-2023 work plan</p>
<p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2019, Understanding and Responding to Global Health Security Risks from Microbial Threats in the Arctic workshop • November 2020, virtual One Arctic, One Health knowledge sharing activity - <i>Association between Mental Health, National Identity, and Preservation of Native Culture</i> • April 2021, circumpolar virtual conference – <i>One Health, One Future</i> – hosted by the University of Alaska Fairbanks, United States 	
Local 2 Global	<p>This project facilitates international collaboration and connections between circumpolar communities working to prevent suicide and support the mental well-being of Arctic youth and communities, including Arctic Indigenous Peoples who have the highest rates of suicide in the Arctic. This project was endorsed by the SDWG in September 2019 and is a follow-on project to series of SDWG mental health and suicide prevention projects that began in 2009 (Hope and Resilience, Sharing Hope, Rising Sun, CREATEs). This project includes digital storytelling workshops, a knowledge exchange study tour, a circumpolar adverse childhood experiences research initiative and a Local 2 Global Circumpolar Forum.</p> <p>Project plans and the timelines for activities and deliverables has been impacted by the pandemic. Project leads have transitioned certain activities online. This project was endorsed for a 4-year period and will continue as part of the 2021-2023 work plan.</p>
<p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter 2021, Adverse childhood experiences workshop (virtual) • Winter 2021, Knowledge sharing activity (virtual) 	
Solid Waste Management in Small Arctic Communities	<p>This project is a collaborative effort between the SDWG and ACAP. It was endorsed intersessionally by the SDWG in August 2020 and will be considered for PSI approval in November 2020. A project scoping workshop took place in Alaska in February 2020. The SDWG component of the project will involve the development and launch of a web-based community solid waste assessment tool.</p> <p>This project is on-track to launch the community solid waste assessment tool as part of the 2019-2021 work plan. The project will continue as part of the 2021-2023 work plan.</p>
Deliverable: Online community solid waste management assessment tool	

Zero Arctic: Concepts for Carbon Neutral Arctic Construction Based on Tradition	<p>This project was approved as part of the SDWG’s 2017-2019 work plan. It focuses on developing regional concepts for Arctic building construction that are carbon neutral over their full life cycle. The project uses both scientific life cycle assessment and energy simulation methods as well as learning from and applying traditional knowledge of sustainable construction.</p> <p>The Zero Arctic Report was endorsed by the SDWG at its October 2020 plenary meeting.</p>
Deliverable: Zero Arctic Report	
Arctic Renewable Energy Atlas (AREA) Website	<p>The AREA project is an online tool designed to enhance knowledge of the best practices and local adaptation actions on Arctic renewable energy and energy efficiency. The project was initiated in as part of the 2015-17 work plan.</p> <p>The AREA website was launched in May 2020.</p>
Deliverable: Online tools for Arctic communities interested in renewable energy (https://arcticrenewableenergy.org)	
Economy of the North (ECONOR) IV	<p>The ECONOR projects draw together and harmonize socio-economic statistical data across national and regional borders. Previous reports were released in 2006, 2008 and 2015. ECONOR IV was endorsed intersessionally by the SDWG in April 2020.</p> <p>Work has been delayed; however, the report is on track to be presented at the May 2021 Ministerial. The report is expected to be submitted to SDWG for review on 15 February 2021. It is expected to be submitted to SAO for consideration in March.</p>
Deliverable: Economy of the North IV Report	
Blue Bioeconomy in the Arctic	<p>This project forms part of the Icelandic Chairmanship Program and the SDWG 2019-2021 work plan. It was endorsed by the SDWG in September 2019. This project maps key opportunities for enhancing and further developing the Arctic blue bioeconomy with a focus on balancing economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The project is collecting success stories and describing best practices, as well as identifying obstacles that could hamper progress. The PAME working group is involved with the project and linkages with the AEC’s Blue Economy Working Group have also been made.</p> <p>The Blue Bioeconomy in the Arctic Region Report was endorsed by the SDWG at its February 2021 plenary meeting. Some small final comments may be received, and the report will be updated to align with the new Arctic Council branding. It is expected to be submitted to SAO for consideration in February.</p>
Deliverable: Blue Bioeconomy in the Arctic Region Report	
COVID-19 in the Arctic	<p>With SDWG and its expert groups, AHHEG and SECEG, have been active in preparing preliminary analysis and advice for SAOs to inform the Arctic Council’s work related to COVID-19 in the Arctic. In addition, SDWG is identifying opportunities to integrate issues related to COVID-19 into its existing work and considering the development of 3 projects with a specific focus on COVID-19 and pandemics in the Arctic.</p> <p>The COVID-19 in the Briefing Document was delivered to SAOs in June 2020. Further work related to COVID-19 is being considered by the SDWG for the 2021-2023 work period. The SDWG has proposed options to SAOs for the level and type of support that the SDWG could provide to advance the Arctic Council’s COVID-19 work.</p>
Deliverable: COVID-19 in the Arctic Briefing Document to Senior Arctic Officials	

Arctic Resilience Forum 2020	<p>In line with the recommendations of the Arctic Resilience Action Framework, the Icelandic Chairmanship hosted the second Arctic Resilience Forum, which was co-organized by the SDWG and the Harvard Kennedy School’s Arctic Initiative. The 2020 Forum included 10 thematic webinars on a broad range of issues.</p> <p>Nine of the session summaries that form part of the Summary Report were endorsed at the SDWG plenary meeting in February 2021. A workshop to discuss lessons learned, identify themes and plan next steps with event organizers and speakers was held on 22 January. The final sections of the Summary Report were submitted to SDWG for review on 4 February 2021. It is expected to be submitted to SAO for consideration in early March.</p>
<p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 thematic webinars between September and December 2020 • Arctic Resilience Forum 2020 Summary Report 	

Other SDWG 2019-2021 Projects

During the 2019-2021 work period, SDWG has endorsed and continued work on six (6) additional projects. Three (3) of these projects (EALLU, ARENA, and AFIC) were planned to conclude at the end of this work period, but they have now been extended due to delays caused by the pandemic. The other projects were always planned to be part of the SDWG 2021-2023 work plan.

Project	Status
Arctic Indigenous Youth, Food Knowledge and Arctic Change (EALLU) Phase II	<p>This project was endorsed by the SDWG at its September 2019 meeting. It is a follow-on project to the EALLIN Reindeer Herding Youth Project and EALLU I. The goal of this phase of the project is to maintain and further develop a sustainable and resilient reindeer husbandry in the Arctic in face of climate change and globalisation, working towards a vision of creating a better life for circumpolar reindeer herders. In particular, the project focuses on youth involvement and engagement, seminars and place-based workshops, local capacity building, summer/ winter schools, networking, as well as co-production of project outputs by youth themselves.</p> <p>This project has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be extended to form part of the SDWG 2021-2023 Work Plan.</p>
Digitalization of Linguistic and Cultural Heritage of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic	<p>This project was endorsed at the October 2020 meeting. It is focused on preserving and developing Indigenous languages, traditional knowledge and cultures of the Arctic Indigenous peoples. The project will use modern digital technologies, creation of a GIS map and Arctic Indigenous peoples’ knowledge database on a multilingual portal, www.arctic-megapedia.com. The <i>Project</i> will provide access to information, promote better understanding and facilitate adaptation to Arctic changes based on the knowledge and resources of affected communities and peoples.</p> <p>This project is on track and will form part of the SDWG 2021-2023 Work Plan.</p>
Arctic Demography Index	<p>This project was endorsed at the October 2020 meeting. It aims to provide both data and recent trends on demography situation in the Arctic by developing an Arctic Demography Index that integrates natural (natural increase and decrease) and mechanical (education, labour, snowbird and sunshine) demography parameters in five Arctic States (Russian Federation, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Canada). This project will also conduct case studies in these countries of tensions between Indigenous peoples and business, and how these tensions are managed.</p> <p>This project is on track and will form part of the SDWG 2021-2023 Work Plan.</p>

Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy II (ARENA II)	<p>This follow on project was endorsed by the SDWG in September 2019. It continues the work initiated under the 2017-2019 work plan. ARENA II aims to build knowledge and capacities for the development and integration of sustainable energy solutions for remote Arctic communities. Over the past year, we focused on recruitment, curriculum development, and planning.</p> <p>This project has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be extended to form part of the SDWG 2021-2023 Work Plan.</p>
Arctic Hydrogen Energy Application and Demonstration (AHEAD)	<p>This project was endorsed by the SDWG in June 2020. It involves the design, construction and development of a year-round International Arctic Station (Snowflake Station) based on fully-autonomous hydrogen energy testing and demonstrating bold solutions for life and work in the Arctic.</p> <p>This project is on track and will form part of the SDWG 2021-2023 Work Plan.</p>
Arctic Food Innovation Cluster (AFIC)	<p>This project was endorsed by the SDWG in February 2019 as part of the 2019-2021 work plan. This project aims to facilitate the development of a focused approach to food production and regional economic development; respond to global challenges of food production while seeking to define the Arctic’s role and contribution to the changing climate and issues of food security locally and around the world. Links are also being made with SDWG’s EALLU and Blue Bioeconomy in the Arctic projects. This project is behind schedule due to issues with securing funding from co-leads and partners. The project may need to shift to a country-specific rather than a pan-Arctic approach.</p> <p>This project has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be extended to form part of the SDWG 2021-2023 Work Plan.</p>
Sustainable Development Goals in the Arctic: The Nexus Between Water, Energy, and Food (WEF)	<p>This project was endorsed by the SDWG in October 2020. This project will examine the nexus between Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 - Ending hunger and achieving Food security for all; SDG 6 – Ensuring the availability and sustainable management of Water and sanitation for all; and SDG 7 - Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern Energy for all. It is the first WEF nexus study to be conducted in the Arctic.</p> <p>This project is on track and will form part of the SDWG 2021-2023 Work Plan.</p>

Preparing SDWG Work Plan 2021-2023

SDWG currently has ten (10) endorsed projects included in its 2021-2023 work plan. Discussions are ongoing about additional projects that may be included in the work plan, including projects related to gender, COVID-19, education, living conditions, Arctic resilience, finance, and energy issues.

The SDWG has initiated work to develop a strategic work plan that is guided by the *SDWG Strategic Framework 2017* and informed by specific focus areas, including:

- Russian Chairmanship Priorities,
- Human Health and COVID-19,
- United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals,
- Decade of Indigenous Languages, and
- SDWG Governance.

These focus areas will also inform the development and endorsement of SDWG project proposals and other activities undertaken by the Working Group and its expert groups.

SDWG Expert Groups

SDWG is supported by two expert groups – the Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG) and the Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG). For the duration of the Icelandic Chairmanship, the chairs of these two expert groups are Eydís Kristín Sveinbjarnardóttir, Dean School of Health Sciences and associate professor at the University of Akureyri, and Embla Eir Oddsdóttir, Director of the Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network, respectively. **The SDWG Expert Groups have been central to the SDWG work related to COVID-19 in the Arctic. Their timely mobilization of experts and knowledge holders to contribute to this work demonstrate the important role that these expert groups can play to support the work of the SDWG and the Arctic Council.**

Both expert groups are reviewing their terms of references and guidelines for engagement with the SDWG.

Collaboration and Partnerships

The SDWG continues to seek opportunities for collaboration and partnership with other Arctic Council working groups, task forces and other institutions. The SDWG welcomes the involvement of Observer states and organizations in its projects and meetings. Current work includes:

- Youth engagement, including a new SDWG-IASSA-IASC Fellowship and the development of an SDWG Youth Engagement Strategy led by the ICC
- SDWG participation in preparing the PAME Marine Litter Regional Action Plan
- SDWG participation in planning the next PAME-led Ecosystem Approach Workshop
- Working with other Arctic Council working groups to develop and confirm joint projects and initiatives for the 2021-2023 work period.

Events and Activities

The SDWG continues to look for opportunities to share information and receive input regarding its work. Recent events include:

- November 2020, virtual One Arctic, One Health knowledge sharing activity - *Association between Mental Health, National Identity, and Preservation of Native Culture* – by invitation only.
- Arctic Resilience Forum 2020
- Arctic Frontiers 2021

Upcoming events include:

- March-April 2021, Adverse childhood experiences workshop (virtual) – by invitation only.
- March 2021, Knowledge sharing activity (virtual) – by invitation only.
- April 2021, circumpolar virtual conference – *One Health, One Future (virtual)* - https://uaf.edu/onehealth/events/2021_conference/

Communications and Administration

The SDWG continues to place a strong priority on enhanced communications. Over the next 4 months, this will include efforts to profile work done during the 2019-2021 work period. At the SDWG plenary meeting in February 2021, Canada confirmed that a call for proposals has been released to Canadian organization to host the new permanent SDWG secretariat. The Russian Federation has also confirmed that it will provide secretariat support to the two SDWG Expert Groups (AHHEG & SECEG).

Web: www.sdwg.org

Twitter: @SDWG_Chair and @SDWGsecretariat

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Overview

The goal of the sustainable development program of the Arctic Council is to propose and adopt steps to be taken by the Arctic States to advance sustainable development in the Arctic, including opportunities to protect and enhance the environment, and the economies, cultures and health of indigenous communities and of other inhabitants of the Arctic, as well as to improve the environmental, economic and social conditions of Arctic communities as a whole. (Arctic Council Terms of Reference for the Sustainable Development Program, September 1998)

The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) was established in 1998. In 2017, SDWG adopted a [strategic framework](#) that articulates a vision, guiding principles and identifies twelve (12) priorities areas. This framework, along with the Arctic Council Chairmanship Program and the direction provided by Arctic Council Ministers and Senior Arctic Officials, guides the SDWG work plans that are established biennially. The SDWG's [2019-2021 Work Plan](#) was endorsed at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting on 7 May 2019 in Rovaniemi, Finland.