



Working Group Common Operating Guidelines

Approved intersessionally during December 2016.

SDWG Annex approved and added during April 2018.

1. Introduction

The Arctic Council (AC) has six Working Groups (WGs):

- Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP);
- Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP);
- Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF);
- Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR);
- Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME);
- Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG).

WGs and their activities are subject to the 1996 Ottawa Declaration establishing the AC, the AC Rules of Procedure (RoP), the AC Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies and other relevant documents of the AC. These Operating Guidelines are to be read and used in conjunction with such documents.

2. Representation

Representation on WGs includes Arctic States, Permanent Participants, and accredited Observers. Articles 39 and 40 of the Rules of Procedure allow WG Chairs to invite experts to participate in individual WG meetings and other events under certain circumstances.

3. WG Chairs and Vice-Chair(s)

The heads of delegation (HoDs) of each WG should select a Chair from an Arctic State to serve for a period of two years. The Arctic State that is chairing the Arctic Council should normally determine and provide the Chair of the SDWG. Each WG should also select one or more Vice-Chairs. WG Chairs should act in a neutral capacity to, *inter alia*, convene and chair WG meetings, coordinate WG activities, oversee the work plans of their WGs, ensure the fulfillment of requirements for reporting to SAOs, and represent the WG at other AC meetings. The Vice-Chair(s) should assist the Chair in his or her duties and should substitute when the Chair is unavailable. Should the Chair position fall vacant, a Vice-Chair will serve as Chair until the selection of a new Chair.

4. Role of WG Secretariats

WG Secretariats report to and take direction from their WG Chairs. The Secretariats' duties are, *inter alia*, to provide administrative support such as drafting meeting reports, circulating official WG communications, distributing materials, coordinating WG activities, providing logistical support, managing the WG website and performing any other administrative duties as assigned by the WG Chair or the WG as a whole. This may also include managing WG Secretariat staff and associated Secretariat and project finances.

5. Meetings

Each WG should determine its respective meeting schedule and be responsible for the organization of its meetings. WGs should meet on average twice per year, in-person or otherwise, preferably well in advance of the SAO meetings to ensure that the WGs can meet their 30-day deadline to submit documents to SAO meetings. WGs should circulate invitations to its meetings, a provisional agenda and related documents at least 30 days ahead of the meeting, with the understanding that adjustments to the provisional agenda may be made up to and at the start of the meeting. Each WG should establish a process for participants to be registered for each of its meetings.

6. Decisions

The RoP¹ govern decision-making by WGs. Decisions taken at WG meetings should be recorded in writing and included in the meeting report.

7. Reporting

Within 14 days of the conclusion of WG meetings, WGs should normally circulate a draft meeting report to Arctic State and Permanent Participant HoDs. Arctic State and Permanent Participant HoDs should normally be given 14 days to provide comments on the draft meeting report. Within 45 days of the conclusion of WG meetings, WGs should submit all final meeting reports and other reporting documents to the Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS) for circulation to SAOs and Permanent Participants and for inclusion in the AC internal document archive. At least 30 days ahead of the spring and fall SAO meetings, WGs should provide to SAOs and Permanent Participant HoD a written update on their activities.

8. Project Tracking

Within 14 days of the conclusion of WG meetings, WGs should normally submit to the ACS any updates to project entries in the Arctic Council Project Tracking Tool (“Amarok”).

9. Ministerial Meetings

Prior to each AC Ministerial Meeting, each WG should produce two items for inclusion in the SAO Report to Ministers: (1) a progress report covering its activities during the concluding AC Chairmanship; and (2) a work plan for the upcoming Chairmanship. Progress report and work plans should follow the guidelines laid out for each particular SAO Report to Ministers, which may vary from Chairmanship to Chairmanship.

10. Cooperation among WGs

WGs should endeavor to cooperate, coordinate and share information with one another.

11. Amendments

SAOs, in consultation with WG Chairs, may amend these Operating Guidelines.

12. Annexes

The Annexes to these Operating Guidelines contain additional understandings relevant to the operations of each individual WG. Notwithstanding paragraph 11, above, each WG may amend its respective Annex, subject to final approval by SAOs.

¹ See RoP Paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 14.

ANNEX 1: AMAP Working Group

1. WG Mandate

AMAP's current mandate is: "to monitor and assess the status of the Arctic region with respect to pollution (e.g., persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, radionuclides, acidification, and petroleum hydrocarbons) and climate change issues by documenting levels and trends, pathways and processes, and effects on ecosystems and humans, and by proposing actions to reduce associated threats for consideration by governments."

The main objectives and priorities for the work of AMAP are documented in the '*AMAP Strategic Plan*' and the prevailing '*AMAP Workplan*', and may be supplemented by new requests from Ministers and SAOs concerning specific work items.

2. WG Chair

The AMAP WG Chair and Vice-Chair(s) shall serve for a period of two years. For both positions, the term can be extended for a further period of two years if so decided by the AMAP Heads of Delegation.

3. Executive Secretary

With the approval of the Chair, the Executive Secretary shall promote coordination of AMAP monitoring, research and assessment activities with those of other relevant international organizations.

4. AMAP Board

The AMAP WG Board is composed of the AMAP Chair, Vice-Chair(s) and the Executive Secretary. The AMAP Chair, working through the AMAP Board, shall:

- Promote initiatives and formulate proposals for the effective functioning of the WG and achievement of its goal;
- Oversee the WG activities between the sessions;
- Carry out particular duties entrusted to it by the WG;
- Give final approval to documents for external publication;
- Ensure appropriate co-operation with organizations involved in relevant monitoring and assessment activities.

The AMAP Board normally conducts its business through teleconference calls arranged as and when necessary.

5. WG Activities

AMAP activities are conducted in accordance with the AMAP work-plan which is periodically updated and approved by SAOs/Ministers. Work items added to the AMAP work-plan are evaluated in terms of, inter alia, their relevance with respect to AMAP's strategic objectives, international processes that AMAP has been directed to support (e.g. the Stockholm Convention, Minamata Convention, work under the UNFCCC/IPPC, etc.), and priorities established by the Arctic Council. In assigning activities to the AMAP work plan, account is taken of continuity and sustainability, definition of scope and objectives in relation to available resources, inclusion of traditional and local knowledge where applicable, timelines, deliverables and communication and outreach, and relevant connections with activities under other bodies (Arctic Council groups and external organizations).



The guiding principles for the operation of AMAP (e.g., the monitoring strategy, the assessment expert groups, data QA/QC, etc.) are described in the AMAP Strategic Framework document. This is approved by the SAOs and is updated when necessary to reflect the decisions of the Arctic Council Ministers.

The AMAP WG may convene workshops and conferences as it may deem necessary for the performance of tasks which it shall determine.

6. Invited Experts

Subject to the agreement of AMAP Heads of Delegations (HoDs), the AMAP Chair may invite any person or organization that can contribute expertise and is able to contribute to AMAP's work to participate in specific meetings. These persons or organizations do not have observer status.

7. Other

The AMAP Secretariat regularly receives requests for assistance from other parties, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, institutes, scientists, and others. In handling such requests, the AMAP WG has directed the Secretariat to adopt an appropriately flexible and cooperative attitude where requests do not impose a significant workload on the Secretariat. This would include requests concerning provision of information that has previously been approved for general distribution by the WG. Any major requests or requests that might interfere with the ability of the Secretariat to carry out its main task of supporting the AMAP program and the AMAP WG should be referred to the AMAP WG/Board for their consideration.

ANNEX 2: CAFF Working Group

1. WG Mandate

CAFF's mandate is to address the conservation of Arctic biodiversity, and to communicate its findings to the governments and residents of the Arctic, helping to promote practices which ensure the sustainability of the Arctic's living resources. A summary of the broad objectives and actions of CAFF include:

- A. to collaborate for more effective sustainable utilization and conservation including assessments, monitoring, research, and data management;
- B. to cooperate to further conservation efforts for Arctic flora and fauna, their diversity and their habitats;
- C. to protect the Arctic ecosystems from human-caused threats;
- D. to seek to develop more effective laws, regulations and practices for flora, fauna and habitat management, utilization and conservation;
- E. to work in cooperation with the indigenous peoples of the Arctic;
- F. to consult and cooperate with appropriate international organizations and seek to develop other forms of cooperation, and
- G. to regularly compile and disseminate information on Arctic biodiversity.

CAFF's work is governed by a range of strategic action plans, e.g. the Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2013-21. In some situations to support its work CAFF develops Resolutions of Cooperation (RoC) to guide the development of partnerships with key organizations. A list of those organizations that CAFF has developed RoCs with can be found here: <http://caff.is/resolutions-of-cooperation>.

2. Project Management

Each CAFF activity has a lead country(s) or/and Permanent Participant(s) and has a steering committee. Any proposed new activity is required to complete the project proposal template (below) before it can be considered for inclusion on the CAFF Work Plan. CAFF has a range of expert groups who focus on specific issues. Protocols followed by CAFF include:

Document Distribution and Review by Board

- Project leads are responsible for reviewing and ensuring that documents are in an appropriate final draft form before they are sent to CAFF Board.
- Documents will be distributed to the Board at least 30 days prior to meetings, and further ahead where possible.
- When a document is sent back to the Board for a subsequent review, a CAFF Board member may request that two versions will be circulated: 1) a track-changes mode that identifies edits; and 2) a clean version with edits accepted, providing a final easy to read version. The file names will reflect this. If possible, and where appropriate, a table describing how comments were addressed will also be included.
- Deadlines for providing comments should be respected. If a State/PP is unable to meet a deadline but intends to provide comments, the CAFF Executive Secretary should be informed in writing within the date by which comments will be provided.

CAFF Board may agree to approve a report/action by silent approval.

CAFF Board meetings

- If requested by a Board member, the CAFF Chair will convene a teleconference approximately 60 days prior to each Board meeting to discuss the agenda for the upcoming meeting.
- If requested by a Board member, the wording for the decision for each item will be agreed upon at the end of the agenda item. At the end of the meeting, the Chair will review all decisions.
- A CAFF executive meeting may be held prior to each Board meeting to discuss key issues or projects that require specific direction, strategic priorities or negotiated policy-related recommendations.

Project template:

Elements Required in Proposals for CAFF Activities (document limited to seven pages or less)

1. Title: A concise, one sentence description of the project.
2. Lead(s): Identify the CAFF Board leads.
3. Rationale: A summary of how the project relates to CAFF program priorities.
4. Objectives: A statement of what is to be achieved.
5. Study Area: Briefly describe the geographic focus of the proposed project.
6. Project Design: Describe the proposed project including the scope, methods, and other information to ensure that the proposed project is fully understood.
7. Relevance to Indigenous Peoples: Describe, [where relevant] how the proposed project relates Peoples: to the traditional and cultural needs, values, and practices of indigenous peoples within the project's scope.
8. Traditional and Local Knowledge (TLK): Will the use of TLK lead to better project outcomes (yes or no)? If yes, explain how TLK will be used in the project (please describe in 2-3 lines) If no, provide an explanation why TLK is not applicable or feasible for this project (please describe in 2-3 lines).
9. Other Related Projects: If appropriate, briefly describe the relationship to related on-going efforts by other organizations and how the present project would add to or complement those efforts.
10. Schedule: Indicate the dates for beginning and completing each phase of the project and the project's duration.
11. Anticipated Outputs: Identify the expected results and/or products.
12. Application of Results: Describe how the results will assist CAFF to fulfil its mandate.
13. Literature Cited: As appropriate.
14. Personnel: Briefly describe the role of the person(s) involved in the project.
15. Partners: Identify any cooperating agencies or organizations.
16. Budget: Indicate: (1) the resources that the proponent has committed to the project; (2) the resources that other agencies have committed to the project; and/or (3) the resources that are required to complete the project. Resources should be denominated in U.S. dollars.

ANNEX 3: PAME Working Group

1. WG Mandate

The Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group was established by the Arctic Council Ministers in Nuuk, Greenland in September 1993. PAME provides a unique forum for collaboration on a wide range of activities directed towards protection of the Arctic marine environment. PAME's mandate is to address policy and other measures related to the protection of the Arctic marine and coastal environment from both land and sea-based activities. These measures include coordinated strategic plans as well as developing programs, assessments and guidelines, intended to complement or supplement efforts and existing arrangements for the conservation and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment.

2. WG Chair and Vice-Chair

The PAME WG Chair and Vice-Chair shall serve for a period of two years. For both positions, the term can be extended if so decided by the PAME Heads of Delegation (HoDs).

3. Executive Secretary

The Executive Secretary promotes the activities and outputs of PAME, and assists project leads with coordination of project implementation, amongst other duties.

4. Project Development and Management

Development of new projects is based on ministerial mandates and the prioritization of ongoing activities. All new projects being proposed for the *PAME Work Plan* need to have confirmed lead(s), consistent with the Arctic Council Rules of Procedure, and a project work plan. A project plan is developed and annexed to the *PAME Work Plan*, per approval of the PAME HoDs.

PAME project leads are responsible for advancing the project in accordance with the project's work plan and timeline. Expert groups and/or expert workshops are used in an effort to advance the work of its projects in a targeted manner.

Below is an outline of the main components which should be filled out for all new/proposed PAME projects.

Project Title and Project Summary

- Include 2-3 short and precise paragraphs which summarize the project in a language suitable for possible public release/information on the PAME homepage.

Key Objective(s)

- Develop key objectives and keep in mind the PAME mandate and priorities, e.g. the implementation of the *Arctic Council's Arctic Marine Strategic Plan (2015-2025)* and the nature of the product or outcome (ultimate approval/welcome/note progress).

Scope

- The coverage and context of the project, relevance to other PAME activities and/or other Arctic Council projects/working groups' activities.

List of Tasks/Activities:

- Describe the conceptual framework and provide step-by-step detail;
- Identify themes and/or other issues;
- Planned conferences/workshops/project meetings;
- Note inclusion/involvement/contribution by Permanent Participants (as per Arctic Council checklist on this topic); i.e., describe, (where relevant) how the proposed project relates to Indigenous Peoples to the traditional and cultural needs, values, and practices of Indigenous Peoples within the project's scope;
- Describe the role of Traditional and Local Knowledge (TLK) (as per Arctic Council checklist on this topic): Will the use of TLK lead to better project outcomes (yes or no)? If yes, explain how TLK will be used in the project (please describe in 2-3 lines). If no, provide an explanation why TLK is not applicable or feasible for this project (please describe in 2-3 lines).
- Describe synergies and collaboration with activities of the other Arctic Council working groups and/or other partners and stakeholders;
- Outline plans for consultations and/or communicating the project findings and results; think of users and benefits as well. Name the interest group, or type of reports, websites, etc.

Timeline and Major Milestones

- Include a timeline that defines the proposed completion of all activities included in the project. List any milestones and/or critical decision points and plans for conferences and/or project specific meetings outside the biannual PAME Meetings.

Budget

- Include financial considerations and a working budget for the required resources per project activity.

Main outcomes

- Include interim products e.g. products of the milestones, if any and the final product.

Project Team Structure/Lead Countries

- Include names, titles and contact information.

For larger projects – provide an outline of the project management and advisory structure and proposed roles.

ANNEX 4: Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)

1. WG Mandate

The SDWG is mandated to propose and adopt steps to be taken by the Arctic States to advance sustainable development in the Arctic. This includes pursuing opportunities to protect and enhance the environment and the economies, culture 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. Building self-sufficient, resilient, and healthy Arctic communities for present and future generations, while protecting the environment and means of subsistence and creating conditions for the preservation and development of cultural traditions, will continue to be a primary goal of the SDWG. The SDWG focuses on initiatives that provide practical knowledge and contribute to capacity building of indigenous peoples and Arctic communities to respond to local, regional and global challenges and opportunities. The SDWG strives to be a leading force for sustainable development in the Arctic. Through its regional leadership, it contributes to global sustainable development efforts such as the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts such as the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015).

The main objectives and priorities for the work of SDWG are outlined in the *SDWG Strategic Framework*, the prevailing *SDWG Workplan*, and related documents. These documents may be supplemented by new requests from Ministers and SAOs concerning specific work items.

2. WG Chair and Vice-Chairs (2)

In addition to the specification of the SDWG Chair contained in Article 3 of these Common Operating Guidelines (COG), the SDWG shall have two Vice-Chairs (2). One Vice-Chair shall represent either the incoming or the out-going Arctic State Chairmanship. A second Vice-Chair shall be selected to represent the Permanent Participants. The Chair and the Vice-Chairs shall each serve terms of two years. Their terms shall normally begin after the Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council that follows their election.

3. Executive Secretary

In addition to the specification in Article 4 of the COG, the core duties of the SDWG Executive Secretary shall be as outlined in the SDWG's *2014 Core Duties of the Executive Secretary* document.

4. Guiding Principles in WG Activities

In accordance with its Guiding Principles, the Sustainable Development Working Group encourages the advancement of projects that demonstrate significant opportunities for a direct positive impact on Indigenous and local communities in the Arctic, both through the engagement of Permanent Participant organizations and more broadly. The SDWG seeks to create an inclusive environment for both Indigenous and local knowledge and to encourage the continued significant engagement of all Permanent Participants within the Working Group's activities, which to date has been a unique feature and strength of the SDWG.



5. Expert Groups

In the areas of human health and social, economic and cultural issues, the SDWG has currently established the Arctic Human Health (AHHEG) and Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Groups (SECEG) respectively to

provide guidance on circumpolar issues, help identify priorities and gaps in knowledge in these areas and create greater collaboration and synergies between SDWG and its stakeholders. The expert groups are comprised of selected representatives from each Arctic Member State and Permanent Participant with no restrictions on the number of specialists who may observe and be called on to provide the Expert Group with technical expertise.

6. Project Development & Management

The SDWG reviews and selects initiatives that advance the broad strategic priorities outlined in the 'SDWG Strategic Framework'. Within the SDWG, Arctic Council Member States and Permanent Participants may propose new initiatives at meetings of the SDWG or intersessionally by using the [SDWG Project Proposal Template](#). A minimum of two States must co-lead all SDWG initiatives. Project leads are responsible for regularly informing the SDWG about an initiative's progress through reports at SDWG meetings, communication with the SDWG Chair and Executive Secretary, and other appropriate means. Project leads are further responsible for developing public outreach messaging in accordance with the SDWG *Communications Strategy*.

7. Other

In-person SDWG Working Group meetings are to be held in Arctic States and, when possible, in Northern communities.