



ACS Biennial Work Plan for 2016 and 2017

Submitted by the Director of the Arctic Council Secretariat

Whitehorse SAO meeting, March 2015

The draft work plan for the Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS) for the period 2016 – 2017 is submitted to the Senior Arctic Officials for consideration and approval at the SAO meeting in Whitehorse Canada in March 2015 in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Arctic Council Secretariat. Full implementation of this work plan as detailed below is subject to approval of the associated budget, which is planned for consideration at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in Iqaluit, Canada in April 2015.

1. Introduction

This biennial work plan for the standing Arctic Council Secretariat (ACS) for the calendar years 2016 and 2017 is the second biennial work plan for the ACS. It covers the United States' chairmanship of the Arctic Council during the entirety of 2016 and through the spring of 2017, as well as the beginning of Finland's chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2017, and runs through the end of that calendar year.

The work plan builds in broad terms upon the ACS Terms of Reference and upon the Communications Implementation Plan for the Arctic Council Secretariat as approved by Senior Arctic Officials in March of 2014. In large measure, the work plan reflects a continuation of the routines, practices and tasks that were identified in the first biennial work plan or decided later in coordination with the Arctic Council chairmanship and/or the Senior Arctic Officials. Furthermore, the work plan reflects other tasks likely to be undertaken by the ACS at the request of the Chairmanship or the SAOs, subject to the availability of the necessary resources.

Apart from the individual issues and tasks listed in the work plan, the ACS will draw upon its experience and knowledge of past practices in the Arctic Council to advise the Chairmanship and other members of the Arctic Council, as appropriate, on all relevant issues with respect to the Council's ongoing work.

2. Secretariat Support of the Arctic Council

The ACS will provide secretariat support for the Arctic Council and, in particular, for the Chairmanships of the United States and of Finland, in accordance with the ACS Terms of Reference and as further detailed in this work plan. The work of the ACS will be undertaken as appropriate in cooperation with, and under the direction of, the SAO Chair. The support from the ACS can be broadly divided into four categories as follows.

- General support to the chairmanship, SAOs, PPs and other Arctic Council stakeholders
- Administrative continuity and capacity
- Communications and outreach
- Russian language services

2a. General support to the Chairmanship and the Arctic Council

The ACS will:

- Attend SAO meetings and Ministerial meetings; provide support for logistical and practical preparations including, *inter alia*, registration of participants and hosting of meeting web sites; assist with preparation and publishing of agendas and meeting documents; take minutes from meetings and prepare meeting reports.
- Manage the Arctic Council Chair email account and assist the SAO Chair in daily correspondence; receive correspondence to the Arctic Council and distribute it as appropriate; draft responses for the SAO Chair's consideration; coordinate with Arctic States, Permanent Participants, Working Groups, Task Forces and others as appropriate.
- Provide support as requested, as appropriate, and as resources permit during Working Group, Task Force and expert group meetings.

- Coordinate, collect and consolidate input to reports and other documents from SAOs, Permanent Participants, Working Groups, Task Forces, expert groups, other Arctic Council subsidiary bodies, and accredited Observers.
- Ensure distribution of reports and other documents as needed to SAOs, Permanent Participants, Working Groups, Task Forces, expert groups, other Arctic Council subsidiary bodies, and accredited Observers.
- Support Observers, in accordance with the Observer Manual, including relating to entities applying for Observer status.
- Undertake other tasks as requested by the Chairmanship or the SAOs, subject to the availability of the necessary resources.

2b. Administrative continuity

To help ensure the smooth functioning of the Arctic Council, the ACS will do the following.

- Maintain and update distribution lists, contacts and focal points, and make updated lists available to the Arctic Council subsidiary bodies. In addition, distribute emails as appropriate on behalf of SAOs and/or Permanent Participants to relevant recipients via the Arctic Council Secretariat email account.
- Maintain and further develop relevant Arctic Council archives and ensure that important documentation is kept in a safe and appropriate manner.
- Support the Chairmanship in its working processes and keep track of formal deadlines of the Arctic Council as appropriate.
- During the lead-up to the Finnish Chairmanship (2017-2019), work with Finnish representatives to prepare.

2c. Communications and outreach

The ACS will undertake the following:

- Maintain and develop the Arctic Council website and the Arctic Council-branded social media accounts.
- Facilitate information-sharing and timely responses to questions about the Arctic Council.
- Relate to external stakeholders at the request of the Chairmanship or SAOs (see section 5 for more details).

2d. Russian language services

The ACS will provide Russian language services, including the following.

- Translate the main documents for Arctic Council Ministerial meetings and SAO meetings (e.g., agendas, meeting reports, key reports and report summaries) into Russian.
- Translate website content into Russian on the main Arctic Council website.
- As appropriate, and as resources permit, translate Arctic Council communication and outreach materials, or other documents or materials.
- Subject to approval by the Director, provide language assistance, including interpretation, to the Working Groups, Task Forces and other subsidiary bodies.
- Develop an English-Russian glossary of terms used in the work of the Arctic Council.
- Provide other Russian language-related support as instructed by the Director.

3. Overview and coordination of Arctic Council activities

The ACS will endeavor to provide a comprehensive overview of Arctic Council activities, including specific reporting on particular elements of interests, as directed by the Chairmanship or by SAOs. Where appropriate and where desired, the ACS will also assist the Chairmanship in monitoring cross-cutting projects. Tasks associated with this element of the ACS's work may include the following.

- Coordinate with the Chairmanship to continue to develop and improve the comprehensiveness and usability of the Tracking Tool, a database of all ongoing Arctic Council projects. The Tracking Tool should serve to help Arctic Council members, as well as Observers and the general public, to better appreciate the breadth and diversity of the Arctic Council's work, as well as to track progress and coordinate cross-cutting efforts.
- As directed by SAOs, continue to maintain and update the information contained in the project costing database and work to improve its usability. In the long term, work towards the creation of a unified database merging the Tracking Tool and the project costing database.
- As directed by SAOs, continue to develop a database of Arctic Council decisions since the Council's founding in 1996. In the long term, consider whether it is feasible to link this database of decisions with the Tracking Tool and with the project costing database.
- With assistance from the Member States, Permanent Participants, Working Groups and Task Forces, work to identify good opportunities to schedule Working Group and Task Force meetings close to one another to facilitate participation.

4. Secretariat functions for ACAP, EPPR and support to other subsidiary bodies

4a. Secretariat functions for ACAP and EPPR

The ACS will act as Executive Secretary for the Emergency, Preparedness, Prevention and Response Working Group (EPPR) and the Arctic Contaminants Action Program Working Group (ACAP). The main goal of the ACS is to ensure continuity, avoid duplication and make the work of EPPR and ACAP even more effective. This work will be carried out in close cooperation with the Chairs of ACAP and EPPR and will include the following tasks.

- Maintain the Working Groups' calendars and provide notification of deadlines, including requesting and distributing meeting documents prior to the Working Group meetings.
- Work with the Working Group Chairs to develop meeting agendas and prepare all pre- and post-meeting reports to Ministers/SAOs.
- Maintain Working Group e-mail lists and websites, including the password-protected areas. Develop website content in cooperation with the Working Group Chair(s), with the majority of the content being produced by the Chair(s) and members of the Working Group.
- In cooperation with the host country, assist in making meeting arrangements and manage meeting registrations.
- Represent EPPR and ACAP at Executive Secretary meetings.
- Promote the accomplishments of EPPR and ACAP.

4b. Support to Other Subsidiary Bodies

The ACS will provide administrative and secretariat support to the Arctic Council Task Forces, expert groups and other subsidiary bodies, as requested and as resources permit. Such support may, at the discretion of the ACS Director and relevant Chair(s), include the duties listed above in Section 4a. In addition, by request and as resources allow, the ACS may undertake the following tasks.

- Translate meeting documents, materials and deliverables from and into Russian.
- Provide simultaneous and consecutive interpretation at meetings.

5. Communication and Outreach Activities

Under the direction of and in close cooperation with the Chairmanship, the ACS will coordinate the overall outreach and communications under the Arctic Council brand. Building upon the approved Communications Strategy for the Arctic Council and on the Communications Implementation Plan for the Arctic Council Secretariat, which was approved at the Yellowknife SAO meeting in March 2014, the ACS will carry out the following tasks.

5a. Website management

- Upgrade as appropriate the technical framework and structure of the websites hosted on the ACS server in order to ensure maximum user-friendliness, compatibility and stability and monitor website statistics and make changes as necessary to encourage increased visitor traffic to the site(s).
- Further expand the quantity and diversity of material available on the Arctic Council website by working closely with the Chairmanship, SAOs, and Working Groups. In addition, the ACS will make efforts to highlight content from other sources (e.g., social media, external news sources, videos, photos, archive documents etc.).
- Improve the archive section of the Arctic Council website in order to provide easier access to both public and password-protected documents. Establish connections between the internal ACS archiving software and the website to minimize effort and avoid duplication.
- Create password-protected sections of the Arctic Council website for meetings and other needs as requested by the Chairmanship and the SAOs.
- Continue to assist Arctic Council entities with website design, hosting and management as outlined in the ACS work plan for 2013-2015.

5b. Internal communications and coordination of the Communications & Outreach group

- Expand monitoring of national and international media, reduce the man-hours devoted to such work, and provide regular (daily, weekly or monthly) updates to SAOs and PPs.
- Create and distribute periodic overviews of (1) national and international media attention, (2) statistics from the Arctic Council's social media channels, and (3) statistics from the Arctic Council website to SAOs, PPs, Working Groups and accredited Observers, as well as to all representatives within the Communications and Outreach group.
- For ACS-hosted websites (e.g., EPPR, ACAP and the Open Access archive), and as resources allow, create and distribute periodic overview of website statistics to relevant stakeholders.

- Coordinate meetings of the Communications & Outreach Group as described in the Communications Strategy for the Arctic Council, including both periodic “come-as-you-can” group calls and purpose-specific calls leading up to major meetings.

5c. Social media and other content formats

- In close cooperation with the Chairmanship, continue to manage the Arctic Council Facebook and Twitter accounts. Provide suggestions on content and potential expansion of such channels where such opportunities exist. Explore opportunities for collaboration with other social media accounts within the Arctic Council network.
- Cooperate with the Chairmanship, with other Arctic Council entities and, where necessary, with external contractors to plan and produce or acquire multimedia content (video, audio, images) for use by Arctic Council entities.

5d. Working with external media

- In close cooperation with the Chairmanship, continue to serve as a first point of contact for Arctic Council media inquiries and facilitate timely communication between the media and Arctic Council representatives who can respond to questions.
- Develop interviews, statements, opinion pieces and/or any other forms of Arctic Council content for proactive placement in media outlets that reach the Arctic Council’s target audiences as identified in the Communications Strategy for the Arctic Council and the Communications Implementation Plan for the Arctic Council Secretariat.
- Strengthen relationships with key partners in international and national media.

5e. Representations of the Arctic Council

- Continue to welcome guests (e.g., state delegations, students, academics, journalists or others) who ask to visit the ACS offices in Tromsø. Upon request, provide basic briefings on the current priorities of the Arctic Council, its structure and functioning, its history, and the work of the ACS in particular.
- Attend selected key non-Arctic Council conferences and events as time, resources and budget permit, and in coordination with the Chairmanship. Use these events as opportunities to distribute informational materials about the Council and its work, and to make person-to-person connections with individuals in many of the target groups identified in the Communications Strategy for the Arctic Council.
- Continue to work to create products (e.g., professionally laid-out and printed versions of Declarations, or Arctic Council pins) appropriate for distribution to participants and the public at meetings, conferences and other events.

6. Administrative functions

Since the establishment of the ACS, its administrative functions have been continuously tested, reviewed and improved. This development will continue in the 2016-2017 period, although all basic administrative systems are in place and functioning well. As of February 2015, the size of the ACS staff is a good fit for the suite of tasks currently required of the Secretariat.

2017 will mark the end of the Arctic Council Secretariat's first four years in existence. During 2017, five employee contracts will expire (between February and September), as will several contracts with suppliers. This underlying fact will determine many of the internal administrative activities of the ACS during the work plan period. In addition, the potential relocation of the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat to Tromsø could lead to new responsibilities for the ACS and would imply an increase in ACS staff. Otherwise, there are no planned additions to the ACS staff during the work plan period, unless necessitated by the assignment of additional tasks to the ACS by SAOs.

6a. Staff recruitment, assessment, development and welfare

Developing and strengthening the human resources of the ACS will remain a high priority. Should SAOs decide to integrate the IPS with the ACS, it will certainly have an impact on the scope of this field of work during 2016 and 2017, but without altering the general aims of ACS in this area. During 2016-2017, the ACS will undertake the following tasks.

- Respond to the possible need to recruit many new staff members during 2017, as many staff members' contracts will expire between February and September of that year. If mutual agreement is reached, some or all staff members may stay on with the ACS for another four-year period, reducing this element of the ACS's work.
- Conduct recruitment processes as needed in the fall of 2016 and spring/summer of 2017. As needed, develop work descriptions and announcements, review applications, conduct interviews, check references, negotiate contracts and arrange relocation of new employees to Tromsø. Depending on the number of new recruitments, this could be a major undertaking for the ACS in this period.
- Continue its ongoing dialogue with host country authorities in terms of accommodating the distinct needs of international staff members and making the transition for new staff members to Tromsø as smooth as possible.
- Work with Member States to explore the possibility of secondments to the ACS. Secondments to the ACS have thus far proven to be beneficial; the ACS will work to accommodate future such arrangements where appropriate and as resources permit.
- Perform annual appraisal conversations with all staff members, using the template developed for this purpose, to get a clear sense of how each employee is thriving and performing. Determine from the results of the appraisal conversations what kind of training would benefit each employee in the performance of his or her duties.
- Arrange training, presentations and other development events to obtain external professional input on certain working areas (e.g., communications or cross-cultural understanding) and strengthen cohesion between ACS employees.

6b. Suppliers and agreements

The ACS will perform a review of existing contracts, including services such as accounting/payroll and IT-support, to determine if existing arrangements are adequate or if the ACS should consider other options. If the review of suppliers indicates that the ACS should change one or several suppliers, then some transition costs may apply.

6c. Rent and premises

As of January 2015, initial plans for new premises for the ACS offices are delayed, and there is uncertainty as to when Fram II (a new building, intended to be the future location of the ACS offices)

will be ready. Fram II is unlikely to be completed during the work plan period of 2016-2017. As of this writing, the ACS is renting offices at the Fram Centre through the Norwegian Polar Institute. Depending on the final decision on the construction of the Fram II, the issue of housing for the ACS offices may have to be raised either before or during the work plan period.

6d. Budget for 2016-2017

The ACS has prepared a draft budget for 2016 and 2017 which is associated with this Work Plan. Due to the many uncertainties mentioned above regarding key considerations such as recruitment and office space, it may become necessary for practical reasons to revisit the budget during the 2016-2017 period. In that case, additional work will be necessary to assess and make any necessary adjustments.

7. Archiving

The ACS will continue to implement the archiving work as outlined in the Policy on ACS Records Management, the Guidelines for the Disposition of ACS Records, the Guidelines for the Release of ACS Records, the Guidelines for Access to ACS Records, and the Integrated Records Management Tool documents, all of which have been approved by SAOs. The internal ACS archive, which consists of records (for example, administrative documents and internal correspondence) held by the ACS, will be maintained and updated, with guidance sought from SAOs as necessary. Priority will be placed on sourcing all historical Arctic Council documents in order to complete the collection of these documents by the end of 2016 and to sort them systematically. A more robust and accessible photography archive will also be developed.

8. Open Access repository development

The ACS will maintain the Open Access repository and work to ensure that it includes all significant Arctic Council products, including, but not limited to, Working Group publications and reports from subsidiary bodies. When possible and appropriate, work will be done to link the Open Access repository with other portals, archives, and databases to increase document distribution.

9. 20th Anniversary of the Arctic Council

The Arctic Council will mark its 20th anniversary on 19 September 2016. The ACS will support and assist the US Chairmanship in marking the anniversary in an appropriate manner. The ACS will coordinate with the US Chairmanship and support the Host Country, the Government of Norway, to stage an event in Tromsø to celebrate the 20 year anniversary at a convenient time in 2016.

10. Biennial Work Plan, Budgets and Reporting

The ACS will:

- Prepare a work plan for the period 2018-2019 for submission to SAOs prior to the 10th Ministerial Meeting, expected to take place in the United States in 2017.
- Prepare a budget for the period 2018-2019 for submission to SAOs and consideration by Ministers at the 10th Ministerial Meeting, expected to take place in the United States in 2017.

- Report on ACS operations and activities at each meeting of Senior Arctic Officials.