

Follow-up action to the Second Arctic Science Ministerial

Working Group on the Forum of Arctic Science Funders: *Recommendations*

1. Introduction

The organisers of the Second Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM2) established a Working Group (WG) to explore the possible call of a Forum of Arctic Science Funders in response to the following recommendation of the Joint Statement of Ministers, signed at the Second Arctic Science Ministerial:

The implementation of the new and enhanced collaborative activities described above should benefit from dedicated multi-lateral discussions to facilitate the co-operation between national and transnational science funding programmes. We therefore recommend exploring the possible call of a forum of Arctic science funders to discuss strategies for supporting the research that is necessary to achieve the goals agreed at this Ministerial meeting.

The members of the WG are:

- Representatives of the Arctic science funding programmes of the governments which participated in the ASM2,
- Representatives of the six Arctic Indigenous Peoples Organisations which participated in the ASM2,
- Representatives of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC)¹.

Following three teleconferences of the WG held over the year 2019 and a workshop - hosted by the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Reykjavik on 11th October 2019 - the WG has produced a set of written recommendations for the possible implementation of the Funders Forum.

The recommendations will be brought to the attention of the participants in the Second and Third Arctic Science Ministerial meetings.

¹ IASC was founded in 1990 by representatives of the eight Arctic States. Since then, IASC has evolved into the leading international science organisation of the North, and its membership today includes 23 countries involved in Arctic research. IASC's core mission is to encourage and facilitate cooperation throughout the Arctic research community. In light of its broad mission and membership (of which many national adhering bodies are Funders or in cooperation closely with them), IASC is well positioned to support the activities of the Working Group.

2. Recommendations for the possible establishment of a Forum of Arctic Science Funders

The outcome of the explorations of the WG is as follows.

The implementation of new and enhanced collaborative scientific activities in the Arctic can indeed benefit from dedicated multi-lateral discussion and a Funders Forum appears to be a valuable instrument.

Therefore the Working Group recommends to establish a Forum of Arctic Science Funders to encourage international scientific cooperation and research funding beyond national opportunities. The Forum can potentially complete the ideal triangle having on the two other vertexes the policy makers and the scientific communities.

It is recommended that the Forum should at first aim at facilitating a "soft" coordination with information concerning e.g. priorities and activities. Secondly, it could develop into a gateway for information about national and international calls for Arctic research projects. To be successful it must fulfill its tasks in an efficient way without creating additional burden for the involved funders organisations.

Specific Recommendations

2.1 Sharing of information about funding opportunities

The Forum should be developed to play a relevant role in the communication of the funding opportunities by the parties involved in Arctic research (being Arctic and/or non-Arctic countries). Frequently, information about the funding possibilities by the parties is hardly reachable, not being a citizen from that country.

It is recommended to develop a public webpage to share information, possibly complemented by a bi-annual newsletter. For further added value the webpage should include actual and up to date information on funding opportunities specific on Arctic subjects, broad subjects also including the Arctic, and on bilateral to multilateral scientific cooperation programmes.

IASC is considered to be the perfect candidate to host such a webpage. It is however of critical importance that the members of the Forum will provide regularly updated information on the respective funding opportunities.

2.2 Coordination of existing funding and future actions

The Forum should:

- facilitate and broker potential future ASM initiatives and the development of bilateral and multilateral research actions by combining research funding programmes and calls, in accordance with the values and objectives outlined in the Joint Statement of Ministers from the Second Arctic Science Ministerial.
- serve as a venue for making each other aware of priorities, activities, and opportunities, thereby catalysing synergies and extra leverage on national funding. It also may help adapting and optimising calls (timing, priorities, requisites, etc.) from the parties prioritising international perspective.
- provide a venue for decision-makers who control funding to come together to consider “big ideas” (e.g. MOSAiC), be forward-leaning, and overcome obstacles to get things done.

The Forum could also be a vehicle for advancing existing activities to the next level of implementation or from research to operations.

2.3 Engagement of Northerners and Indigenous peoples

The participation in the Forum of representatives of Arctic Indigenous Peoples’ organisations is strongly encouraged. Their role should however reflect that, to a large extent, they do not act as Arctic science funders. Their role should be advisory and consultative. Moreover, the Forum should take into consideration Indigenous Peoples’ science funding priorities and communicate funding opportunities in ways that are appropriate and relevant for Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

2.4 Involvement of private funders

Once the Forum will have reached an appropriate level of maturity, it should consider developing strategies to engage with private companies and foundations.

2.5 Data governance and Data access

This Working Group notes that, at present, there are other international organisations dealing with the issues of data governance and data access both at regional (Arctic Data Committee under SAON) and global (e.g. Group on Earth Observations) level. For this reason, the Forum should limit its activity in this context by mainly encouraging and advocating for an open and timely access to fully inter-operable data.

2.6 Configuration of the Forum and interactions with existing bodies

In its initial phase, the Forum should rely on the logistic support of IASC. Governments interested in joining the Forum, should consider appointing a representative from a relevant national funding agency in the corresponding IASC delegation.

It is recommended to organise a pre-meeting of the Forum during the coming Arctic Science Summit Week (Akureyri, Iceland - 27 March - 2 April 2020) to discuss possible links to the Third Arctic Science Ministerial and to start drafting the Terms of Reference of the Forum.

At this early stage, the Working Group does not recommend the creation of a secretariat to support the functioning of the Forum. For the time being, the Forum should rely on voluntary contributions from its members. It should attempt to fulfill its task in an efficient way without creating additional burden for the involved funders organisations. For this reason the Working Group recommends to have a rotating chair of the Forum with the host country (or countries) of the upcoming ASM as the chair.

In order not to constrain its actions, the Forum should consider having part of the work done in Executive Session without the presence of the non-funders.

In the future the Forum could aim at having a light administrative structure similar to the one of the Forum of Arctic Research Operator (FARO - <http://faro-arctic.org/science-platforms-and-infrastructures/>).

Disclaimer: the Recommendations presented in this document do not imply any formal or legally binding commitment.