Background

During the SAON Frascati workshop in 2017, Lars-Otto Reiersen (Executive Secretary of AMAP), had outlined the current funding arrangement for the SAON Secretariat: Since 2011, the Norwegian government had funded a full-time position through the annual contribution to the AMAP Secretariat. In 2017, the support had been reduced, and he saw a risk that it would disappear. The workshop decided to establish a task force that should identity possibilities for the funding of the Secretariat. These should be short term as well as long term.

Members of the task force are Allen Pope, Larry D. Hinzman, Nicole Biebow, Sandy Starkweather, Will Ambrose, and Yuji Kodama. The task force has met four times in the autumn 2017.

The 2018 budget for the Secretariat is found in Appendix 1. A description of the Secretariat assignments can be found in Appendix 2. A text on the benefits of SAON can be found in Appendix 3.

SAON Secretariat Task Force

The Task Force has had four meetings through autumn 2017. The discussion has focused on these funding sources:

* The Chairmanship should write to member countries and organisations, asking them to pay an annual contribution. There should be different letters; some for countries, other would be to organisations and NGOs. The model could involve a graduation so that large countries pay 10 k€, while small pay 5 k€. Contact to some countries has already been established.
* Applications to funding agencies. The basis for such applications should be the strategic plan, and should involve some concrete deliverables as an outcome of e.g. a three year task. Examples from the Committee’s work plan could be inventories, gap analyses, etc. The issue for institutions like NSF would be that the money would have to be administered by a national institution that could spend the money on travel and meeting support, but only on salaries to a minor extent.
* Consider the mechanism of a rotating grant, where a country hosts the secretariat for say 5 years.

Concern has been raised about the practicalities related to transferring a contribution to the AMAP Secretariat. The AMAP Secretariat is a legal entity and can consequently make legally binding agreement. This would usually involve signing a MoU, establishing a partnership agreement or similar. It has been proposed that a contribution to the SAON Secretariat could be paid through an increased contribution to the IASC Secretariat (where formalities are already in place), earmarking the increased contribution as a contribution to the SAON Secretariat.

SAON Executive Recommendations

* Chairmanship to write to countries and organisations, asking them to provide a (graduated) annual contribution to the SAON Secretariat
* Establish a dialogue with Committee chairs, identifying projects that could be supported by grants from funding organisations. Such projects should have a basis in the strategic plan, have a fixed duration and a product outcome.

Appendix 1. SAON Secretariat budget for 2018

Expenses:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Amount (k€) | Comment |
| Salary, social security, office | 120 | The cost of a full-time staff member at the AMAP Secretariat is estimated as 1.2 mio NOK / 120 k€ |
| Travel | 20 | The Secretary attends meetings of the Board and Committees and represents SAON at various other meetings. In some cases, the Secretariat has also covered travelling expenses for indigenous participation and Committee chairs’ attendance in relevant meetings, etc. |
| Meeting expenses | 5 | The Secretariat covers the expenses associated with the meetings of the Board and Committees. The costs are meeting rooms, catering, internet connections, etc. |
| Total | 145 |  |

Income:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Amount (k€) |
| Member fee | 55 |
| Contribution from Norway (expected) | 90 |
| Total | 145 |

Appendix 2. SAON Secretariat assignments for 2018

Support the SAON institutions: Board, Committees (2), and Executive. This involves arranging and participating in the meetings and drafting the meeting papers and minutes.

Organising SAON web site, newsletter and brochure.

Organise reporting to SAON ‘parents’, mainly AMAP and Arctic Council.

Support SAON chairmanship (preparation of presentations for meetings).

Participate in and represent SAON at different fora like Arctic Circle, Arctic Observing Summit, and WMO meetings (EC-PHORS, GCW, IPET-OSDE).

Represent SAON in the Arctic Observing Summit Executive Committee (*ex-officio*).

Maintain and update SAON inventories on observational capacity.

Appendix 3: Benefits of SAON

# SAON is a facilitator and coordinator

SAON facilitates, coordinates, and advocates for coordinated international pan-Arctic observations and mobilizes the support needed to sustain them.

Addressing the goals of SAON requires the expertise and cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders and knowledge systems. With the Arctic Council as one of the parents, the eight Arctic States (Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and USA) are born members of SAON. This inherently means that SAON maintains strong connections to national level priorities and activities of its member countries. Effective implementation of the SAON, however, requires partnerships. Such partnerships include collaborations with policy-makers at all levels, Arctic Indigenous Peoples organizations, non-Arctic states, academia, civil society and the private sector, as well as engagement from other multilateral/international groups.

One of the main themes at the 2016 Arctic Science Ministerial was Strengthening and Integrating Arctic Observations and Data Sharing**.** The ministers committed to the “shared development of a science-driven, integrated Arctic-observing system” and saw “a critical role for the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) initiative”.

A new strategy for SAON was approved in January 2018. It describes SAON’s vision, mission, guiding principle and goals, and outlines the manner in which the goals will be achieved[[1]](#footnote-1).

# Achievements

### A roadmap to a well-integrated Arctic Observing System

The *IDA Science and Technology Policy Institute (STPI)* and SAON published the *International Arctic Observations Assessment Framework*[[2]](#footnote-2), defining 12 Social Benefit Areas (SBAs) that rely on Arctic observations. The Framework will provide the foundation and justification for future international efforts to assess the value of Arctic observations and to structure a pan-Arctic observing system.

One of the 12 SBAs is *Weather and Climate*, and this is the theme for a project under the Finland Chairmanship of the Arctic Council 2017-19[[3]](#footnote-3). It will identify existing services and observation data sources needed to support this SBA through a so-called *value tree analysis*. National experts involved in the project have been nominated through SAON. Input to the project includes EU-PolarNet’s *Inventories of observational/monitoring and modelling programmes*, which is based on input from, among other, SAON.

In addition to the mentioned EU-PolarNet inventory, SAON develops and maintains these inventories:

* SAON data access point, harvesting and testing data from a series of contributing repositories[[4]](#footnote-4)
* SAON Project directory[[5]](#footnote-5)
* The Atlas of *Community-Based Monitoring & Indigenous Knowledge in a Changing Arctic[[6]](#footnote-6)* was initiated as a task of SAON.

### Free and ethically open access to all Arctic observational data

The *Polar Data Forum (PDF)*[[7]](#footnote-7) focuses on improving how people and systems can share data in a meaningful way. The goal is to move towards open and connected systems based on a culture of trust and acknowledgement of data production and use. The Arctic Data Committee (ADC) of SAON arranged the PDF in cooperation with partners in 2013 and 2015.

Data and system interoperability has been identified as one of the primary goals and challenges of interest to the broader polar and global community, and this was the topic of the ADC co-organised *Polar Connections Interoperability Workshop* in 2016.

ADC was a member of the group that responded to the *Open Geospatial Consortium*’s *Request for Information on Arctic Spatial Data*[[8]](#footnote-8) in 2016.

In 2017 ADC and partners produced the document *Polar Data and Platform Interoperability Resource Requirements*. It outlines financial, technical, and human resources needed to move towards a new model for polar data management.

ADC contributed to EU-PolarNet’s report *Data management recommendations for polar research data systems and infrastructures in Europe* in 2017.

In May 2018, ADC will co-organise the *Polar Data Planning Summit[[9]](#footnote-9).* The focus of the Summit will be to generate detailed plans on how best to mobilise existing and soon-to-be initiated funded activities to develop a particular international data sharing case study or scenario.

Ongoing projects of the Arctic Data Committee include:

* Establishing a map of the arctic data management “ecosystem”. This will be both a concept map indicating projects, services and relationships as well as a geographic map indicating location.
* The *Vocabularies and Semantics Working Group* is a joint expert group of ADC, the *Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee* (IARPC) and the *Standing Committee on Antarctic Data Management* (SCADM). It coordinates vocabularies and semantics development activities across the polar information community[[10]](#footnote-10)

# Arctic Observing Summit (AOS)

AOS is a high-level, biennial summit that aims to provide community-driven, science-based guidance for the design, implementation, coordination and sustained long-term (decades) operation of an international network of Arctic observing systems.

The AOS provides a platform to address urgent and broadly recognized needs of Arctic observing across all components of the Arctic system, including the human component. It fosters international communication and the widespread coordination of long-term observations aimed at improving understanding and responding to system-scale Arctic change. The AOS is an international forum for optimizing resource allocation through coordination and exchange among all involved or interested in long-term observing activities, while minimizing duplication and gaps.

The theme of the 2018 AOS is ‘The Business Case for a pan-Arctic Observing System’. It is organised in cooperation between the International Study of Arctic Change (ISAC) and SAON. AOS is SAON’s outreach event.

1. https://www.arcticobserving.org/strategy [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **https://www.arcticobserving.org/news/268-international-arctic-observations-assessment-framework-released** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.amap.no/documents/download/2906 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://saon.met.no/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://projects.amap.no/directory/saon/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. http://www.arcticcbm.org/index.html [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. http://www.polar-data-forum.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://arcticdc.org/images/download/Polar-Community-OGC-ASDP-RFI-Response.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://arcticdc.org/meetings/conferences/polar-data-planning-summit [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. https://arcticdc.org/activities/core-projects/vocabularies-and-semantics-wg [↑](#footnote-ref-10)