

Breakout Group on Funding Agencies and Coordination

Purpose

1. To provide a perspective from national government agencies and intergovernmental organizations on the implementation of the SAON process and consideration how it should be coordinated and implemented in the most effective and appropriate way. The session should take into account the outcome of the discussions in Edmonton and point to concrete ways forward to approach the issues of structuring, resourcing and enabling sustained Arctic observations.
2. To make specific suggestions on wording of “recommendations and immediate actions” in the final SAON report and provide a forum for representatives of governmental and intergovernmental agencies to express their opinions on the potential response to addressing these proposals.

Summary of discussions at “agencies” breakout at the Edmonton Workshop

Thoughts on the SAON concept

The need for both the observations and the coordination was not challenged by any attendee.

The group agreed that the existence of a coordinated and sustained set of observing networks would be very worthwhile.

Long-term records are essential to answer many of today’s science questions. Funding agencies need to recognize this in making their funding decisions.

There needs to be a clear and consistent vision so that the coordinated set of networks can build on opportunities when they occur.

The observing efforts should not be separate from research, but rather take advantage of relevant research, and involve the research community as much as possible in undertaking the observing activities. A linkage between research and monitoring has to exist so that the sustained networks keep pace with new knowledge and changing needs.

The group was clear that actions were important, not more bureaucracy. There was a strong view that existing bodies and structures should be fully used, and that no new coordinating groups should be formed unless there is no alternative.

The group was very clear that whatever approach is taken to coordination, all countries and agencies must have the opportunity to participate.

Thoughts on functional aspects of the SAON concept

The SAON concept should be implemented through an existing “parent body or bodies”, with a Secretariat function established to maintain communication and stimulate action.

A strong science and implementation plan with an observing component is a good basis for implementing the SAON concept. This plan should strongly link into national plans and priorities as well as provide an opportunity for transnational approaches.

There should be products available from the coordinated activities that are greater than the sum of the parts. For example pan-Arctic products that build on, but are different from national-level products.

There needs to be a set of core activities rather than a long list of things that could be done. A first draft of the “core set” should be presented to the funding agencies as soon as practicable.

The expected functions of a Secretariat need to be defined so that countries will be more comfortable about supporting it. Both a centralized and a distributed model for the Secretariat should be considered.

There was discussion of the need for a forum or other arrangement among government agencies on an international basis to review current activities and plans, and seek means of more coordinated approaches to funding, spatial and temporal distribution of effort, support of observing platforms, and other related issues.

The group discussed the concept of a “data portal”, including associated “data standards”, as a key activity that would enable communication and eventually coordination.

The group discussed specific actions that could be taken, but there was no attempt to generate a set of consensus recommendations

Questions to stimulate group discussion

1. The draft recommendations identify the requirement for a coordinating/secretariat function linked to SAON. What would you perceive to be the most appropriate organizations and existing structures that could take on this role? The draft recommendations identify the Arctic Council (AC) and the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) to lead further development of the SAON concept. Would your agency support this recommendation? Are there other groups that should have a leadership role? What would be the deciding factors that your agency would look for in supporting such a coordinating structure?

2. Is your agency prepared to support the SAON evolution in terms of organizational financing and long term integration of existing efforts? Under what conditions? In what way?

3. Would your agency be prepared to endorse and support a short list of “immediate actions”, such as those listed below?

- a. Development of first draft plan for implementation of SAON concept
- b. Plan and conduct a technical workshop on “data portal” and data management
- c. Plan and conduct workshops focused on specific types of observing activities (building block approach)
- d. Plan an initial forum among national and multi-national agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders to discuss and resolve issues such as:

- i. Mechanisms for financing long-term sustainable observations (monitoring) in the Arctic region and how these link into and strengthen national and regional research and political priorities.
 - ii. Administrative mechanisms for the linkage of observatories, such as agreements between operators, common approaches to science priority setting, and common data collection standards and observing protocols.
 - iii. The networking of an interconnected system of governmental owner/operated observatories is one important outcome of the SAON Process, What concrete instruments can agencies use to work together to reach agreement on enhanced coordination between these physical facilities? (Eg; MOU on facilities coordination, INFRAPOLAR) What level and mechanism of financing is required to ensure that a pan-arctic observing platform is maintained as an internationally connected facility?
 - iv. There is a need for effectively integrating the stakeholder agencies/bodies into the decision-making. This requires evolution of the original 'initiating group into an 'integrating group' with additional important stakeholders such as inter-governmental UN system bodies, space agencies etc. How should this linkage and decision making between stakeholder bodies be achieved?

4. Under whose authority or auspices should the activities in "3" above be organized? Who should be responsible for organizing and funding these activities?