

Breakout Group 12 - Funding and Mission Agencies

There are approximately 36 approved and (partially) funded IPY projects that propose to establish some type of observing capability. There are also many existing (funded) observational activities and networks in the Arctic. These existing activities fall into two main groups: 1) “operational” activities conducted or supported by a government agency to achieve a defined purpose; and 2) proposal- or mission-driven projects of limited duration designed to increase understanding or achieve scientific or technologic innovation.

A key question to be answered by the SAON process is “How can existing observing activities be better integrated and organized to achieve a sustained set of Arctic Observing Networks that provide information of value to society?”

In this breakout session, this and related questions were discussed, first from the perspective of the research community, and then from the perspective of the operational community.

Research Community

Notes from Egerton discussion

1. Security of what infrastructure exists now should be a high priority, coupled with an evaluation to recertify the continuing need for that infrastructure.
2. A cradle-to-grave attitude is needed, a single structure for calling/reviewing proposals rather than a fragmented process. A coordination body is needed for this.
3. A strong science and implementation plan with an observing component is a good basis for implementing SAON.
4. Long-term records are essential to answer today’s science questions. Funding agencies need to change their thinking about this.

Relationship b/w EU & Russia

- Both are involved INFRAPOLAR most heavily
- Ice coring coordination
- Strong contacts in USA; currently working on relationship with Russia

200 M Euro estimated money in initial SAON initiative over and above IPY (just the European component); additional funding over and above institutional funding

Sustained funding/infrastructure is key issue since this will be expensive especially to maintain infrastructure (i.e. Environment Canada spends millions just to ‘keep the heat on’) and is daunting for governments to then put more money into research

The huge investment so far is not secure:

- 1) Need a political commitment to infrastructure
- 2) Then can build a science/research structure

SAON representatives to go back to their respective governments and ask for funding commitments

Recertification of what we have now to see if that is what we still need (may need to sacrifice some for the whole)

In Canada:

- Funds seekers are asked what are you observing and where?
- Need a document to bring to say these are what is needed
- Lack of something solid for presenting to funding agencies/government leaders
- Discussion of top down vs. bottom up initiative to obtain funding
- Northern dimension is now added to Canada's foreign policy

Discussion of peer review model (missed notes since I was running an errand for one of the session chairs)

Large investments: critical to coordinate

- When are we going to get time to do the science?!
- Agencies need to do more coordination so as to allow researchers to do their research

Cradle to grave attitude for process rather than piecemeal funding

Fractured commitment to funding experienced with IPY; need someone/agency to ensure funders come online at the same time

Also an issue of infrastructure; ships and research stations need to be there for use

Suggestion of a tax to fund the solution (i.e. tobacco taxes)

- Need to search out new funding sources like resource extraction companies
- Tax is a percent value (?) tax as opposed to royalty tax
- Tax would be small considering what is taken out of the north

Suggestion: separate research from monitoring

- Research funding organizations do not have a mandate to fund monitoring or long term observation
- SAON should be recommending a funding mechanism for monitoring

Present to the Arctic Council the amount of monies going into research as well as into monitoring so as to show the difference; monitoring is underfunded but contributes profoundly to research

Objection to suggestion to separate research from monitoring

- Create a scientific program to combine the two; monitoring is the basis for all data modeling and assessment for research

Observing could be involved in the research process, but research funded by agencies like NSERC have support for only five years; there are a few organizations who fund research long term but they are not straight forward or easily obtained

****Priority Point****

Terminology:

- Long term
- Monitoring
 - o Value was not clear before

Now philosophy is changing (paradigm shift) of researchers, funding agencies since science results are not based on long term observation, especially now with the global environment situation

- Long term funding is crucial
- SAON to develop new philosophy

Health and education:

- Should look at other domains for funding; look outside of hard science for opportunities
- Learn lessons from other systems (space agency example, etc.)

Role to engage IKSU & WMO?

- Value in engaging them to look at their 'lessons learned'
- Talk to economists of national gov'ts

How to continue the engagement and dialogue with granting agencies?

Wait until a report is printed and then wait for Helsinki?

- Nominating someone to take responsibility for SAON in IPY
- Don't have to wait until Helsinki to speak; it takes awhile to get things rolling
- Huge body of monitoring has been built over century, it is a huge investment; get emphasis away from IPY and even out funding
- To not let funding fade away: important to keep up momentum – to implement things now is key

Operational Community

To open this discussion the co-Chair presented a few statements from various sources that might serve as launching points for the discussion:

1. US AON report - Long-term, coordinated, international resources and efforts will be required
2. Ocean-Sea Ice report from Stockholm – “international top-down integration at the level of operational and funding agencies.... is needed”

3. Again from Ocean-Sea Ice group – “an international body will be required to coordinate the various national programs and ensure intercompatibility, open access, and widespread distribution of data”
4. Terrestrial group from Stockholm – “the concept of flagship observatories could be proposed as a joint international responsibility”
5. Norway and Sweden stressed the need for better coordination at the national level
6. Iceland stressed the value of integration of observing systems, and of a common data portal

The group agreed that the idea of a coordinated and sustained set of observing networks would be very worthwhile. To make this happen, there needs to be a clear and consistent vision so that the coordinated set of networks can build on opportunities when they occur. 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 linkage between research and monitoring has to exist so that the sustained networks keep pace with new knowledge and changing needs.

There was general agreement that improving communication and increasing coordination were essential objectives. Coordination could be accomplished through a central coordinating body, through use of distributed or nested coordination, or some combination. 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 discussed options for how coordination might be accomplished. High-level governmental Memoranda of Understanding were seen as difficult to do, but perhaps worthwhile. Use of existing international bodies was considered by many to be a feasible approach. Bodies such as the Arctic Council, WMO, IOC and UNEP were mentioned as possible “parents” for coordinated observing activities. Another approach discussed was to formalize and sustain the “steering committees” formed to lead many of the IPY observing projects. As a parallel to the existing International Group of Funding Agencies (IGFA), an International Group of Polar Funding Agencies might be established to provide a type of coordination.

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

In addition to one or more “parent body(ies)”, there was recognition that a Secretariat function would be required to maintain communication and stimulate action. It was again stressed that existing groups should be engaged if at all possible, rather than creating something new. But it was recognized that there could be a “capacity problem” in having one group trying to work with so many issues and observing networks.

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 noted that the Arctic is not a foreign place, but simply one region of the world, and there are a number of existing organizations dealing with oceans, lands, etc. Putting Arctic observing on the agendas of regular meetings of these existing organizations, i.e. WMO, IOC, ICES, was seen as a useful way of holding discussions among the agencies. The creation of an “engagement strategy” for the agencies was suggested as a near-term action.

The group discussed the concept of a “data portal” as a key activity that would enable communication and eventually coordination. There was a comment that coordinating the data availability might be the only useful thing that could be done. There was discussion of the need for data standards so that data from diverse sources could be easily integrated. There were views that the Secretariat might be the proper body to undertake the data portal function, with each nation designating some sort of lead agency to feed information to the portal.

How could gov'ts/agencies organize themselves to improve coordination for Arctic observing

- Work w/existing organizations rather than create a new group
- MOU's at minister level wouldn't work; too much effort
- Could transform structures for IPY to continue after IPY
- Volunteering organization:
 - o Pushing coordination effort
 - o Secretariat responsibilities: some organizations vary the responsibility between countries (i.e. a country assumes responsibility for secretariat every two years)
- Strengthen work w/in Arctic Council, arctic countries have committed themselves to monitoring and assessment as well as the environment
- Lessons learned – monitoring AMAP needs to liaise with researchers

- SAON needs to be open to everyone regardless of membership
- Perhaps Arctic Council needs to change ‘the way we do business’

- Secretariats – countries worried about supporting it
- IASK – strong connection on science & monitoring with Arctic Council
- Capacity problem to coordinate so many issues under one group

Enhance AMAP

- National mission agency has lots of money
- Model for other agencies
 - o Do like other agencies and save money

- Need harmonizing b/w countries; need person to do this work
 - Better foster communication
 - Integrate research into planning & operationalization networks
 - Research design question
 - 1) Justified existence
 - 2) Leverage
- (i.e.) water chemistry \$30 000 per station, we are leveraging _____ money

Thematic workshops

- Nesting idea: integration & coordination to be part of SAON 'song'
- Take advantage of expertise, infrastructure, information
- A way to deal with funding coordination
- What infrastructure needs to be in place?
 - In-kind offers of expertise

Helsinki:

- Open access?
- Action items
 - Recommendations to be brought to Helsinki
 - Answers may not be arrived at

Coordinating Body:

- 1) Articulate different functions to do
 - 2) Decide single coordinating body or divide function b/w countries
- Long list of stuff to do, group these items
 - Do this now before Helsinki & bring to Arctic Council

Implementation of Recommendations

- GEOSS work plan?
 - Put pressure on GEOSS to get work done
 - GEOSS as place to carry out recommendation
- Nested concept:
 - 1) Functions of coordinating body – what needs to be coordinated, need to know?
 - 2) What are the core initiatives, bring this to the funding bodies
- Can't be a laundry list, needs to be prioritized
- Neutral (independent body) as coordinating body
- Countries interested in getting involved at the thematic areas (i.e. water, biodiversity)
- Struggling how to incorporate research in monitoring process
- Government involved, so it is challenge

UNEP:

- Environment Watch, working on
- Arctic may be seen as a region and there are possibilities there
- Coordinating: do? What?
- Set up a group to decide what they will do and what to coordinate

- Need to build on what we are currently doing
- Facilitating communication for current and future
- Could implement 'gateway' very soon

- No 'it' to coordinate except for data and gateway

- SAON:
 - finding gaps in existing networks
 - GEOSS work plan to put additional pressure on gov'ts/funding

Pan-Arctic research

- Polar Standards Body so as to have universal standards for better information exchange

IKFER

- Not focused on Polar but could do an international polar funding body
- Engage northern funders for infrastructure and research needs
- GEOSS has enough on their plate; would dilute SAON
- WMO very bureaucratic; may not wish to go through these bodies

- Arctic not a foreign place; world has a whole suite of existing organizations, agencies dealing with other oceans, lands, etc. so use those
- Role of Arctic Council (political body) to identify bodies to focus on arctic areas so that arctic becomes part of existing global networks
- Arctic data b/w institutions needn't be a problem transferring

SAON:

- Do this to get more money
- Need a product to give arctic council to sell and they can fund
- Need to convince ourselves of our vision, be faithful to it and build opportunities when they come up

- Product greater than the sum of his parts (need vision to 'sell' products)

- Avoid creating another level of bureaucracy and coordination; nothing gets done & need to use money effectively

- IASK logical home?
 - o New structure for coordinating arctic funding

- Gateway to data
 - o If we go that way, what are the observing activities: what, where, when and who?
 - o Each nation, some sort of lead agency
 - o Different levels of activity feeding into one activity
 - o Gateway responsibility of secretariat

We already have 1-25 arctic portals funded by different agencies but have a common portal or gateway

Secretariat function for data

- Use existing infrastructure
- Put resources into one centre and have coordinated data portal

Arctic and Antarctic forgotten in discussions of environment, need to keep it on the map

- Good role for arctic council

Arctic council doesn't cover every country, needs to have other countries who want arctic research involved

Value of or need for a forum to discuss activities and plans...

- Gov't agencies coming together (i.e. another workshop post Helsinki to discuss coordination of tasks?)
- Goal of this has to happen w/in nations as well as b/w nations
- WMO (188 countries) could use this body to build on quickly and do something
- Other groups meet 3x/yr to discuss things
 - o People networking; exchange of information, contacts to go to b/w meetings
 - o These people then generate meetings w/in national level
- Organization closest to polar research and funding to take a role
- Opportunity in July to discuss w/SAON

USA status of Arctic Observing

- Interagency Aon effort
 - o Model for other countries to adopt
 - o Everybody knows what everyone else is doing
- Promote/inform agencies many times over time
- Series of celebrations on success of IPY

- Instead of a single fora, take different opportunities
- Political climate is ripe

- Engagement strategy is absolutely required b/w now and Helsinki
- Recommendations to Arctic Council
 - 1) What do you want?
 - 2) How much does it cost?

** need to have action items to actualize!!!**