

Terms of Reference for A-OK Science Steering Committee and Science Lead

Background

The Alaska Arctic Observatory and Knowledge Hub (A-OK) was established to build capacity in sharing information from community-based observations on cryosphere change conducted by northern Alaska communities. A Knowledge Hub that provides tools and observational data of relevance to communities in the context of a changing seasonal cycle and offers community members to share insights and observations supports the communication and information-sharing goals of A-OK.

Vision (to be refined by Steering Committee)

- Coastal communities in Arctic Alaska rely on A-OK for recording, sharing and archiving of community-based observations of a changing cryosphere, in particular as relevant to community health and sustainability and activities on the water and the land
- Sharing of community observations, scientific data and other tools and stories empowers communities to continue their use of Arctic Alaska waters and lands, and the animals and plants they harbor, with safe travel and subsistence activities
- A-OK serves as a forum to bring together local experts and researchers for communication and exchange of aspects of the seasonal cycle of snow and ice in all its forms and how this matters to the people in Alaska's Arctic
- Through A-OK, community members are empowered and supported to conduct scientific measurements that relate to community concerns

Mission

The mission of A-OK is to provide northern Alaska coastal communities with the tools, resources and scientific and administrative support to share their expertise through community-based observations and the joint development of a knowledge resource on cryosphere change. The focus on observing activities and knowledge sharing will emphasize changes in the seasonal cycle as it affects community activities, and natural resources that are important to indigenous coastal communities in northern Alaska.

A-OK Steering Committee

Membership: Membership in the ASC will include representatives from North Slope indigenous communities with expertise in observing cryosphere change, researchers from the University of Alaska Fairbanks who can provide supporting scientific expertise or have collaborated with indigenous experts and members with a strong background and understanding of the current landscape of relevant research and cryosphere observations.

Membership on the committee will be for a three year term, renewable up to two times for an additional three years each. The ASC will be led by co-chairs with a staggered three year term, based on a majority vote of committee membership. The committee membership will reflect a balance between Arctic Alaska community representatives and university researchers.

Meetings: Members of the ASC will meet in person at least once a year. During the early implementation phase of A-OK (Year 1) ASC members will have scheduled teleconferences with the science lead once a month. After the initial implementation phase this meeting interval may be increased up to once every 3 months if deemed adequate by the ASC.

Role: The A-OK Steering Committee (ASC) will be responsible for ensuring that A-OK remains true to its mission and vision and is consistent in its approach that focuses on meeting the interests of indigenous communities in coastal northern Alaska.

The ASC will provide guidance to the science lead on the development of key goals and the implementation strategies for the community-based observations that will form the core set of observing activities for A-OK.

The ASC will act as a conduit to help disseminate information to represented indigenous communities on the activities and direction of A-OK. Members of the ACS would also assist in obtaining feedback from represented communities on the science plan before the science lead commences full implementation.

The ASC will assist the science lead in implementation of the science plan. Individual members may focus on only a few specific components of the science plan to assist with implementation.

The ASC will assist and provide recommendations for building partnerships with relevant observation-based research activities and may assist the science lead in establishing relationships with other community-based observing networks throughout the development and expansion of A-OK.

The ASC will conduct annual reviews of the progress and activities led by the science lead and include annual reviews of the current and upcoming annual budget.

The ASC will provide feedback to the science lead on the content and structure of the Knowledge Hub during the development and assessment phases. Some members of the ASC may be directly involved in the design and curation of content for the Knowledge Hub, and may assist in the early testing of its functionality for community use in coordination with the science lead, technical support staff and outreach coordinator.

Role of the A-OK Science Lead

The science lead will work closely with the A-OK Steering Committee to ensure that the development of A-OK includes a suite of observations that are highly relevant to the issues and areas of concern to Northern Alaska communities.

The science lead will be primarily responsible for carrying out the implementation of the A-OK science plan following the approval of the ASC. Annual reviews to assess how well community observations are meeting the expectations and information needs of northern coastal communities will be used to help the science lead expand, or change ongoing community observations as needed.

The science lead will leverage existing funding to obtain additional funds to support the growth and development of the community-observing component of A-OK. The science lead will also build partnerships with other community-based observing networks throughout Alaska, and the Arctic and will seek to improve opportunities to integrate A-OK observations with other long-term monitoring and research projects. Data will only be shared if supported by the community, or if prior decisions were made with community consensus to share some or all data publicly.

The science lead will work with support staff at the University of Alaska Fairbanks to ensure that communities have continuous access to available resources to support observations of the changing cryosphere. This will include monitoring the budget for salary support for community-based observers, ensuring that any required training is provided, and coordinating any maintenance costs or questions for community deployed instruments that are part of A-OK.

The science lead will work with the ASC to provide guidance on the development of content and the structure of the Knowledge Hub component of A-OK. The science lead will provide the Knowledge Hub technical team with relevant data or synthesis data products to host on the knowledge Hub.

The science lead will work with the Outreach coordinator and the ASC to ensure that A-OK and the Knowledge Hub are best aligned to meet the needs of communities and overcome any barriers in technology that may affect the ability to provide communication and outreach to communities.