



# Polar Knowledge Canada

## ***International Engagement Framework***

*January 2025*

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## Revision History

Version	Date	Summary of changes made
V 0.0	September 2019	Draft IEP concept paper
V 1.0	September 2023	Draft for discussion with Board of Directors
V 2.0	June 2024	Draft for federal family and internal review
V 3.0	January 2025	Draft incorporating new Arctic Foreign Policy

## Approval Table

Name and Title	Version#	Date	Signature
Approved at PMC, 26 February 2025	3.0	26.02.2025	



## 1. Purpose and Audience

This ***International Engagement Framework*** guides Polar Knowledge Canada (POLAR) in developing and implementing its strategic commitments by connecting Canadian polar research and policy objectives with the means to achieve them. This framework is intended to assist POLAR in identifying and supporting international partnerships and representation required to advance purpose-driven circumpolar research and engagement, by:

- Advancing Canadian interests, priorities, and objectives in the circumpolar regions;
- Implementing key goals of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (2019), primarily excellence in science, knowledge, and research that supports shared Arctic leadership and decision-making;
- Facilitating alignment with partners and transparency in engagement;
- Aligning capacity and resources to strengthen Canada's leadership through science diplomacy on circumpolar affairs, including initiatives detailed in Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy (2024);
- Strengthening relationships with domestic and international Indigenous organisations and public governments engaged in advancing polar research and policy.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for international engagement at POLAR lies with the President and CEO, and is coordinated by the Chief Scientist and Vice President (Research) on behalf of the entire organization.

## 3. Context

Polar Knowledge Canada is Canada's polar science agency headquartered at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. The Canadian High Arctic Station Act (2015) identifies four primary objectives to direct POLAR's activities:

- advance knowledge of the Canadian Arctic in order to improve economic opportunities, environmental stewardship and the quality of life of its residents and all other Canadians;
- promote the development and dissemination of knowledge of the other circumpolar regions, including the Antarctic;
- strengthen Canada's leadership on Arctic issues; and
- establish a hub for scientific research in the Canadian Arctic, the Canadian High Arctic Research Station.



In 2020, the POLAR Board of Directors approved a Strategic Plan and a 5-year Science and Technology Framework 2020-2025 (S&T Framework). The *Strategic Plan* is a high-level guidance and decision-making document to help POLAR align its resources and objectives with its long-term vision - *a sustainable future guided by knowledge and collaboration*. To achieve this vision, POLAR supports and delivers collaborative and interdisciplinary science primarily driven by the priorities of northern and Indigenous Canadians.

The Canadian High Arctic Research Station provides a unique hub for Arctic science and research with capabilities essential to the delivery of POLAR's mission and vision. POLAR's *S&T Framework* helps achieve this vision through the pursuit of three broad research goals:

- 1) improving knowledge of the dynamic northern terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems in the context of rapid change;
- 2) increasing understanding of the connections between northern community wellness and environmental health; and
- 3) advancing sustainable energy, technology, and infrastructure solutions for the unique environmental, social, and cultural conditions in the North.

POLAR collaborates with Indigenous organisations and their national and international representatives to ensure that scientific research involving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit reflects their distinct priorities, and that respect for Indigenous governance and Indigenous knowledge is incorporated into our policies, programs, services, and initiatives, including research supported by POLAR. Co-development to advance shared objectives is at the heart of Canada's approach to shared Arctic leadership and POLAR's mandate delivery.

POLAR's mandate highlights the relevance of international research cooperation and science diplomacy for addressing global challenges. As Canada's circumpolar science agency, POLAR is well-placed to advance Canada's Arctic and Antarctic interests. Enhancing Canada's international polar science engagement requires substantial coordination at the domestic level to ensure federal, provincial and territorial, and Indigenous priorities are adequately represented. It also requires an understanding of the shared priorities and capacity of international Arctic and Antarctic research communities, and an ability to align research activities across circumpolar regions.

Canada is committed to strengthening the rules-based international order in the circumpolar Arctic and Antarctic, and the enduring value of circumpolar cooperation to advance common social, environmental, and economic priorities with the shared leadership of Arctic, Northern, and Indigenous peoples. These commitments are all the more important as Canada and the world face uncertainties related to renewed geopolitical competition and impacts of accelerating climate change. These realities focus and influence our work in Arctic and northern Canada, and across all circumpolar regions.



## 4. Values and Principles

Respect, knowledge, collaboration and integrity are core values guiding POLAR's day-to-day activities and long-term organizational pursuits. These values inform the key practices identified in POLAR's *S&T Framework*, including co-development, collaboration, capacity-building, community involvement, knowledge mobilisation, and data stewardship. These practices are equally relevant to POLAR's international engagement and relationships.

Based on these values and practices, POLAR has adopted the following principles to inform our prioritisation of international engagement to best support mandate delivery:

- Relevance to Northerners and all Canadians;
- Alignment with POLAR's mandate and Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework and Arctic Foreign Policy;
- Respect for Indigenous knowledge and governance;
- Utilization of the Canadian High Arctic Research Station to facilitate inclusive, multi-disciplinary knowledge production and mobilization;
- Contributions to science diplomacy, knowledge-sharing and partnership in the circumpolar regions, including the Antarctic.

## 5. Approach and Indicators

POLAR's greatest opportunity to strengthen Canada's leadership in circumpolar regions is through building and sustaining high-trust inter-agency and external relationships, both domestically and internationally. Alignment, coordination, and cooperation across the whole-of-government is crucial to maximise benefit with limited resources and to align with Canada's policy priorities. Deliberate prioritisation of domestic relationships with distinct First Nations, Métis, and Inuit organisations and their national and international representative organisations, and with territorial and provincial governments, and relevant academic institutions, provides an essential foundation for POLAR's international engagement.

Through an approach of science diplomacy, international science relationships, alliances, exchange, and collaboration, POLAR acts to advance global and domestic innovations that address local to global societal challenges, and develop evidence-based recommendations to support Canada's international policy objectives. This approach also reinforces and supports international scientific program cooperation which is necessary to understand complex global polar ecosystem interactions. Science diplomacy also acts as a model and basis for beneficial international relations. POLAR will work with Global Affairs Canada, the Office of the Arctic Ambassador, and other departments, agencies, and organizations to strengthen Canada's leadership within international diplomatic channels.

Key indicators of POLAR's international engagement activities include:

- The diversity and impact of research activities hosted at CHARS;



- Supporting the establishment of international research collaborations leading to joint publications, student mobility and participation in international research networks;
- Active participation by Canadian experts in circumpolar research and policy initiatives;
- Support for Canadian Indigenous organizations, researchers and youth to be involved in international polar research and exchanges.

## 6. Partnerships

Securing partnerships, project-specific collaborations, and funding opportunities will ultimately shape POLAR's international activities. In undertaking these activities POLAR will consider:

- **Alignment** with Canada's domestic and foreign policy objectives, primarily through the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, Arctic Foreign Policy, and aligned with POLAR's *S&T Framework* and workplans;
- **Shared values** and principles for circumpolar research held by POLAR and prospective partners;
- **Knowledge** of the circumpolar region and decision-makers that partners will support through cooperation;
- **Capabilities** to resource work with expertise, finance, and relationships;
- **Outcomes** parties will commit to delivering together.
- **Opportunities** to promote science diplomacy.

### a) Government of Canada

In September 2019, Canada released the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* which provides overarching direction to the Government of Canada's priorities, activities, and investments in the Arctic to 2030 and beyond.

*Global Affairs Canada* (GAC) is responsible for coordinating and leading the international aspects of Canada's Arctic and polar engagement, most recently articulated in the 2024 Arctic Foreign Policy. This work is mainly carried out by Canada's Arctic Ambassador, the Nordic and Polar Relations Division, and by Canadian embassies around the world. Canada is an active member of the Arctic Council, the main international forum for Arctic cooperation.

*Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada* (CIRNAC), *Environment and Climate Change Canada* (ECCC), the *Department of Fisheries and Oceans* (DFO), the *Office of the Chief Science Advisor* (OCSA) and other federal departments and agencies provide crucial contributions to Canada's leadership in circumpolar affairs and international science committees, including leadership of Canada's representation at Arctic Council Working Groups. POLAR will continue to work with other federal agencies and departments to support bi-lateral and multilateral relations with Arctic states and citizens in pursuit of our shared priorities.



**b) Indigenous Partners**

Relationships with Arctic and Northern Indigenous partners are at the heart of POLAR's service to Canada and the world. Crown-Indigenous constitutional relationships define the foundational obligations and responsibilities we articulate in these relationships and are integral to the Canadian constitutional framework for POLAR's mandate. POLAR's relationships with Indigenous organisations are therefore essential to mandate delivery, and form the basis for engagement with regional, national, and international representative organisations. POLAR applies a distinctions-based approach to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit relationships. These values are reflected in POLAR's current bilateral agreements with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Gwitch'in Tribal Council (GTC).

Domestic relationships provide an important foundation for POLAR's engagement with international partners, particularly where this engagement involves Indigenous lands, water, wildlife, and communities. For instance, POLAR's domestic and international engagement involving Inuit homelands in Canada is guided by Canada's *Inuit Nunangat Policy* (INP), including its guidance on research consistent with the *National Inuit Strategy on Research* (NISR). POLAR will adopt an informed approach in the development of distinctions-based international partnerships including First Nations, Métis, Inuit organizations.

As POLAR increases its international engagement, direct working relationships with Arctic Council Permanent Participants representing the interests of Indigenous peoples in Canada in circumpolar affairs will receive greater attention. Regular engagement with the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and ICC-Canada, Gwitch'in Council International (GCI), and Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), in appropriate coordination with Indigenous treaty organisations and their regional and national representatives, will be of particular benefit in POLAR's pursuit of our shared commitments to ethical engagement and support for Indigenous governance in research, particularly where it involves international relationships.

**c) Public Governments and Institutions**

Canada's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* provides the foundation for cooperation between the Government of Canada and its Arctic and Northern partners, including provincial and territorial governments and their public institutions. It also provides important mechanisms for shared Arctic leadership. These include the ANPF All Partners Working Group, convened by CIRNAC with membership including federal departments and agencies, Indigenous treaty organisations, and provincial/territorial governments; and the Arctic Cooperation Advisory Committee, convened by Global Affairs Canada with membership including provincial/territorial governments and the three Arctic Council Permanent Participants with a presence in Canada. These mechanisms are essential expressions of Canada's shared Arctic leadership approach, and provide an important opportunity for POLAR to engage multiple partners, including provincial and territorial governments, as part of a shared agenda and approach to Canada's Arctic leadership.



POLAR's direct relationships with territorial governments and public institutions, including research institutes, co-management boards, and hamlet or community council offices, are vital for its service to northerners and all Canadians, and its support for Canadian and international circumpolar science and research. In particular, relationships with public government departments and institutes responsible for scientific licensing and archeological and wildlife research permitting in Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut and with similar Inuit authorities in Nunatsiavut and Nunavik are crucial to POLAR's role supporting the domestic and international research collaborations in these regions of POLAR's mandate area. More broadly, public governments offer important leadership in agenda setting, financing, and regulating research in their regions of Arctic and Northern Canada, and are important partners in POLAR's support for circumpolar scientific cooperation.

#### **d) International Partners**

POLAR has established and will continue to maintain strong relationships with Arctic and non-Arctic states and partners, and with parties to the Antarctic Treaty, to discuss and advance priorities of mutual interest. POLAR will prioritize cooperation with those whose values and scientific interests align with Canada's national interests and the priorities of Canada's Arctic and Northern peoples, and with POLAR's mandate and International Engagement Framework. As a foundation, POLAR has several formal agreements to promote scientific activities in the circumpolar regions, with states including Argentina, Finland, France, Iceland, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Other agreements are anticipated as new opportunities for collaboration are identified.

These bilateral science, technology, and innovation agreements strengthen cooperation and provide a platform for Canadian government, industry, and academia to advance their priorities in support of Canadian prosperity. They help identify and develop opportunities that can contribute to both growth and competitiveness, and helps to expand support to organizations that link Canadian citizens and companies to scientific and innovation hubs.

POLAR delivers several important functions as the responsible national lead and supporting agency in Arctic and Antarctic fora (POLAR's Antarctic leadership is detailed in the subsequent section). In the Arctic, POLAR is responsible for leading Canada's participation in the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), the Forum of Arctic Research Operators (FARO) and the Arctic Science Funders Forum (ASFF). Further, POLAR supports activities led by the University of the Arctic (UArctic) and Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON). POLAR also contributes to Canada's participation in the Arctic Council and its working groups, in coordination with other federal departments and agencies and the Arctic Cooperation Advisory Committee. This includes POLAR's responsibility as the competent national authority for the *Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation* established through the Arctic Council, with Global Affairs Canada as the point of contact for requests specifically related to marine scientific research. POLAR's



engagement with these international organisations is an important part of Canada's leadership on Arctic issues.

**e) Antarctic Organizations**

Canada recognizes the Antarctic Treaty System as the key multilateral mechanism for decisions on the regulation and management of Antarctica. In October 2021, Canada submitted an application for Consultative Party status in the Antarctic Treaty System. POLAR supports Global Affairs Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada in Canada's engagement in the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings. POLAR is responsible for leading the development and implementation of a Canadian Antarctic Research Program (CARP), which will support Canadian Antarctic research community as well as enhance Canada's standing as a contributing Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party partner.

As Canada's adhering body to the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) and the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP), POLAR contributes to scientific dialogues and priority setting in the Antarctic, as well as more logistical and operational discussions leading to successful, safe and collaborative research on the continent and in the Southern Ocean. As POLAR continues developing Canada's Antarctic research program, it will identify Canada's Antarctic research priorities and key international partnerships to guide its activities and resource allocation. Advancing this work will require close collaboration with other federal departments and agencies to help leverage Canada's strengths to deliver on Canadian Antarctic priorities, as well as guidance and support from the Canadian Committee on Antarctic Research (CCAR), an advisory body convened by and supported by POLAR.

In the Antarctic Treaty System, Canada's federal department and agency leaders are POLAR, Global Affairs Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada. These three federal departments and agencies, along with several others including Canadian Space Agency, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Natural Resources Canada, participate in an interdepartmental subcommittee on the Antarctic (led by POLAR), which is dedicated to supporting the pursuit of specific federal policy and science objectives as well as logistical considerations in Antarctica.

POLAR is positioned to increase Canadian access to Antarctic research infrastructure by leveraging the use of the Canadian High Arctic Research Station by international partners who are also engaged in Antarctic research and science. This approach will simultaneously allow POLAR to advance its northern and Arctic research priorities, as articulated in partnership with provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners, through enhanced international research capacity in Arctic Canada and support Canadian contributions to Antarctic science.



## 7. Engagement

Canadian participation in and contributions to polar research and policy development is distributed across numerous government departments and academic institutions. The following list is indicative, though not exclusive, of the engagement opportunities POLAR continues to prioritise as providing high return on investment for supporting priority relationships, shared interests, and POLAR's mandate.

### **Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS)**

Polar Knowledge Canada's headquarters at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, is an international hub for scientific research in the Canadian Arctic, providing valued research support for international researchers. Applications for research support are open to researchers from across Canada and around the world.

### **Arctic Council**

Canada acknowledges the enduring value of the Arctic Council for circumpolar cooperation, and is engaged with like-minded Arctic states, including Finland, Iceland, the Kingdom of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the United States, and a smaller set of projects that include the participation of the Russian Federation. POLAR has been involved in a number of Arctic Council activities, including by representing Canada on the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SOAN) Board, the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP), and the Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA). In coordination with other Canadian government departments and agencies, POLAR anticipates continued leadership and collaboration throughout the successive Arctic Council chairships of Norway (2023-25), Denmark (2025-27), Sweden (2027-29), and Canada (2029-31) this decade.

### **Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM)**

POLAR coordinates Canada's support for the *2017 Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation*, including Canada's participation in the Arctic Science Ministerial process and representing Canada at the [Arctic Science Funders Forum](#).

### **International Arctic Science Committee (IASC)**

POLAR coordinates and supports Canadian representation on IASC Council and Working Groups, and participates in Arctic Science Summit Week and other IASC initiatives, including Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) and the International Conference on Arctic Research Planning (ICARP).

### **University of the Arctic (UArctic)**

POLAR is a member of UArctic, and helps to coordinate student and scholarly exchanges among Canadian and international members.



### **Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR)**

POLAR supports effective Canadian representation within the Antarctic scientific community and promotes Canadian Antarctic research priorities and interests.

### **Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP)**

POLAR participates in coordinating and leveraging activities related to polar research infrastructure, technology and practices needed to advance internationally shared scientific objectives.

### **Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM)**

POLAR supports Canada in making positive contributions to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party meetings and facilitates bilateral research partnerships with Antarctic Treaty members.

### **International Conferences**

When appropriate, POLAR supports representation of Canadian research and policy interests at various international conferences and meetings, in coordination with Global Affairs Canada and other agencies, including the annual Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW), Arctic Circle Assembly (Reykjavik, Iceland), Arctic Frontiers (Tromso, Norway) and Arctic Encounter (Anchorage, Alaska), and others.

## **8. Looking Ahead**

The circumpolar regions are globally significant and geopolitically, culturally, economically and biophysically interconnected. POLAR's mandate prioritises international engagement across its primary objectives, prioritising knowledge that improves economic opportunities, environmental stewardship, and quality of life of the Arctic's residents and all Canadians, sharing knowledge of the circumpolar regions including the Arctic and Antarctic, strengthening Canada's leadership on Arctic issues, and providing a hub for locally relevant, globally significant, and purpose-driven research in the Canadian Arctic.

POLAR's International Engagement Framework supports decision-making by identifying POLAR's policy context, values, principles, and approach to partnership and international engagement. This approach is grounded in Canada's *2019 Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* and *2024 Arctic Foreign Policy*, including collaboration with federal, provincial/territorial, and Indigenous partners. In this sense, at its heart, POLAR's approach to international engagement is an expression of shared Arctic leadership, scientific diplomacy, and a deliberate extension of Canada's global engagement.



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