

Polar Knowledge Canada

President's transition binder

December 2020

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Internal strategy for indigenous engagement/relations

LEADS: Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO; François Carrier, Executive Director, Programs

Context

POLAR's entire service region is located on Indigenous, Inuit and Métis territories defined by diverse and regionally-specific land claim and self-government agreements, and unsettled land claims. The federal government's commitment that the most important relationship is with Indigenous Peoples, the national mandate for reconciliation, nation-to-nation relationships and co-development, call for POLAR to be a leader in this space within the federal family. Modern land claims come with certain rights to manage and co-manage natural resources and land-use activities that include research. It is imperative that the research POLAR funds and carries out follows appropriate processes and focuses on northern research priorities in order to deliver on POLAR's mandate to advance locally relevant and globally significant knowledge creation. Strong long-term relationships and partnerships with Indigenous governance organizations are necessary for POLAR's success. This is enhanced by our internal collaboration capacity to build and maintain relationships while fostering external engagement with clear direction, decision trees and resulting action.

Current situation

POLAR has made progress in the last year to build relationships, including signing MOUs with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) and hosting a Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS). Despite these successes, there remains opportunity for POLAR to improve its internal coordination and decision-making processes to strengthen how we manage relationships with Indigenous Peoples. There is a compelling need to train all staff to ensure deeper understanding about why relationships with Indigenous peoples matter, what key legal and policy context is at play, and what commitments have been made by leadership. Coordinated internal efforts will result in outward-facing actions and messaging that are consistent and cohesive.

Considerations

POLAR's reputation with our Indigenous partners is contingent on the cohesiveness of our internal strategy, coordination and decision-making. With concise internal strategy and coordination between national and regional initiatives and engagement, POLAR mitigates risk by following through on expected standards of relationships and engagement.

Upcoming decision points

- Recommendations to be forthcoming to the President for specific activities and structures to strengthen internal coordination in order to continue to improve Indigenous engagement and relationships.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 10 days

Attendees: Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO; François Carrier, ED-Programs

Co-development considerations/plans

LEADS: Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, President's Office; François Carrier, Executive Director, Programs; Misha Warbanski, Policy Analyst, KM&E

Context

Co-development between the Government of Canada and Indigenous partners has emerged as the leading governance principle to mobilize shared planning, direction and decision making in nation-to-nation relationships. Increasingly, it has become a principle by which POLAR is striving to reorient our relationships with Indigenous partners. Co-development balances expertise between Indigenous and western knowledge and is considered a core principle of process in reconciliation and collaborative decision making. This context and practice are crucial as POLAR aims to build trusting relationships with Indigenous partners and communities to reach its mandate and serve northerners more effectively.

Current situation

POLAR embarked on two explicit co-development processes resulting in MOUs between POLAR and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), and the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC), both signed in July 2020. Co-development dialogue has been paused while POLAR focuses on identifying mechanisms to support building the capacity of ITK and GTC to undertake the work required for co-development. Dialogue will re-commence once POLAR's new leadership is in place.

Programs has launched internal innovation tables on co-development and northern engagement, with recommendations forthcoming by the end of this calendar year. In March 2020, POLAR hosted a Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) campus to inform planning for a Knowledge Sharing Forum in late 2021-22 (postponed from 2020-21 due to the pandemic), among other activities. These initiatives, as well as ongoing development of an Indigenous advisory mechanism for POLAR, are essential steps forward in POLAR's co-development process and will require coordination and strategic direction from the President's Office (PO).

Considerations

POLAR's relationship with its Indigenous partners is where the agency faces the most risk and the most opportunity. POLAR's social license to operate in the North is contingent on POLAR's leadership, full agency integration of the expected standards of nation-to-nation respect and resulting co-development and delivery. For example, the co-development of an implementation plan for POLAR's S&T Framework with ITK and GTC collaboration is essential to our internal work, and the work the agency funds through

transfer payments, but can only happen with whole-of-agency direction and integration of principles of co-development and knowledge sharing.

Upcoming decision points

- Direct/conduct a thorough internal workplan implementation of the ITK-POLAR MOU to support the co-development table;
- Mandatory all-agency training on co-development inclusive of National Inuit Strategy on Research (NISR);
- Develop a decision tree on “how to” co-develop within different scales or spheres so that all staff, when planning projects and engagements, can identify the basic points along the way where Indigenous partners should be involved, and which organizations are applicable. Distinct approaches to domestic and regional research programs and projects, agency- and GoC-wide work, and international initiatives are needed.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: As soon as possible

Attendees: Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO; François Carrier, ED-Programs; Candice Mouchet, Chief of Staff, PO; Misha Warbanski, Policy Analyst, KM&E

Antarctic engagement

LEAD: Gloria Song, Policy Analyst, Knowledge Management and Engagement (KM&E)

Context

Antarctic research addresses a range of relevant issues for Canada and provides knowledge-sharing opportunities for the Arctic, including sea-level rise, marine protected areas, bioremediation of contaminated soils in cold regions, and cold climate technology. POLAR has a mandate to promote the development and dissemination of knowledge of circumpolar regions including the Antarctic, as established in the [Canadian High Arctic Research Station Act](#) but is not currently resourced to fund and manage a National Antarctic Research Program. Unlike all other G7 nations, Canada is a Non- Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty System. This means that Canada does not have full participation rights at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party Meeting (ATCM). Canada is bound by decisions made at the ATCM but does not have the ability to influence the decision-making process.

Current situation

[Redacted]

Efforts are underway to raise awareness about the importance of Antarctic research to other federal departments and the Canadian public at large.

Considerations

[Redacted]

Upcoming decision points

POLAR will need to indicate by December 31, 2020, whether it would like to request the extension of its Observer status with the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP), in order to have the required time to apply for full membership status. POLAR has prepared an awareness campaign to use social media to promote Canadian Antarctic research. A date will need to be set as to when this campaign should be launched.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: François Carrier, ED-Programs; Jennifer Sokol, Engagement Manager, KM&E; Gloria Song, Policy Analyst, KM&E; Jacqueline Thompson, Junior Analyst, KM&E; Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services; Melissa Bolster, Senior Advisor, Planning & Reporting

MOU communications plan

LEADS: Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO; Candice Mouchet, Chief of Staff, PO; John Bennett, Acting Manager, Communications

Context

POLAR, with our partners at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC), embarked on an intensive co-development processes resulting in two MOUs which detail our shared goals and commitments. This process was an exercise in building relationships, in understanding how co-development can create co-benefit, and in realigning our intentions and expectations with those of our partners. The public announcement of these MOUs will be the first of many critical steps in building POLAR's relationship with Indigenous partners.

Current situation

Following signing, leadership from both organizations agreed to co-develop communications plans. A communications plan has been developed for the ITK MOU, and requires the actions below before launch. GTC underwent an election shortly after the MOU signing. POLAR will need to connect with GTC to co-develop a release and content.

Considerations

Both co-developed MOUs and the resulting public announcements are an opportunity for POLAR to position itself with key Indigenous partners in a shared goal of co-development, with the intention to

improve our research relationships and synergy. This is an opportunity for the incoming President to publicly share, together with key Indigenous leadership, the vision and mandate for POLAR, via external media and conversations, particularly in the North. Given the time that has lapsed since signing and any announcement, POLAR's new President needs to connect with the leadership at ITK and GTC to ensure shared understanding and messaging regarding each MOU. POLAR's relationship with our Indigenous partners is where POLAR faces the most risk and the most opportunity. This is an opportunity for the new President to work alongside important Indigenous partners to set the stage for a new relationship and new opportunities for POLAR and our partners.

Upcoming decision points

- President to meet with ITK and GTC leadership to affirm shared commitment of MOUs and develop shared messaging
- Embark on a shared media strategy with ITK and GTC

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO; François Carrier, ED-Programs; Candice Mouchet, Chief of Staff, PO; John Bennett, Acting Manager, Communications

Proposed programs organizational structure

LEAD: François Carrier, Executive-Director, Programs

Context

POLAR underwent rapid growth, with many accomplishments and increased visibility in recent years, in Canada and abroad, creating a higher expectation of service and responsiveness. The findings in the May 2019 Workplace Assessment and the October 2019 Organizational Design Discussion and subsequent Science and Technology (S&T)-Knowledge Management and Engagement (KME) Retreat provided insight and suggestions to consider in addressing on-going challenges limiting POLAR's ability to become a major hub at the centre of a network of arctic knowledge creators.

Current situation

With enhanced effectiveness in mind, a new organizational structure has been designed in consultation with the President's Office and Human Resources to achieve delivery of the 2020-2025 S&T Framework. It builds on strengths, fosters enhanced interdisciplinary collaboration and addresses gaps in workflow and decision making. The combination of these enhancements aims to improve intramural research capacity and to ensure more dynamic engagement with research partners and northern communities.

Considerations

One proposed change consists of the distribution of KME expertise across Programs' portfolio. Cambridge Bay and Ottawa KME staff would then be embedded in teams with scientific missions. The change, bringing little to no change to individual staff workload, aims to increase internal collaboration and communication towards addressing the interdisciplinary nature of POLAR's S&T Goals.

Another significant change would be the creation of a Community Wellness team responsible for realizing Goal no. 2 of the S&T Framework. This new team would join the two mission-oriented teams already in place for Goals nos. 1 and 3, under a group entitled Arctic Knowledge Creation. Led by a Director who would act as POLAR's champion for Arctic science, the group aims to improve exchanges with academic and community partners, and to increase speed and comprehensiveness of program delivery and impact.

Lastly, a second group focuses on capitalizing on existing assets and providing a consistent standard of service and safety at the CHARs facilities and in the field. The Research Support Services group would also be concerned with key function-oriented portfolios such as integrated planning, data stewardship and federal engagement, also improving coordination with Corporate Services and the President's Office.

Upcoming decision points

The proposed structure favours a matrix approach to program delivery. A proposed organizational chart has been prepared for the President's consideration. Proposed new positions will require the creation of work descriptions, as well as a classification exercise. Finance has recommended that any significant organization change should be made only at the beginning of a fiscal year given the impacts on financial coding and budget distribution.

Once the HR and financial details are resolved, and once the structure is approved by the President, the revised organizational structure could be deployed with the necessary degree of transparency to Programs staff, paired with details about each role and responsibilities.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: François Carrier, ED-Programs; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs; Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services; Paivi Soucy, Acting HR Manager; Candice Mouchet, Chief of Staff, PO

Research support during COVID-19 pandemic

LEAD: Adam Houben, Science Officer, Strategic Planning, S&T

Context

COVID has limited northern travel and disrupted many research programs that often stem from the South, as well as internationally, for the near future. The CHARS campus is currently closed to the public including visiting researchers for the remainder of 2020. POLAR's current public-facing message is that an update will be announced in January 2021.

Planning to resume POLAR's research support process is needed, with additional concern that the above timeframe will reduce the capacity for both the Research Support Committee (RSC) – POLAR's internal body overseeing visiting researcher applications – and visiting researchers to prepare for any potential field research through to late 2021. Annual research support request deadlines can occur up to one year in advance of the planned field research (see table below).

Past POLAR RSC deadlines	Applicable field period at CHARS campus
23 October 2019	March – October 2020
28 February 2020	July – October 2020
28 August 2020	November 2020 – February 2021

Of relevance, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)'s Polar Continental Shelf Program (PCSP) and POLAR's Northern Science and Training Program (NSTP) are continuing with applications through October to December 2020, respectively, for the 2021 field season. The Nunavut Research Institute (NRI) has also developed research guidelines and is currently issuing research permits, given visitors follow prescribed quarantine and travel directives. There is also the possibility that the Government of Nunavut will reduce the scope of research.

Current situation

The RSC has discussed various capacity and information needs that will be tasked and assessed in coming weeks. These include issues surrounding research and resource prioritization as well as internal capacity; public messaging and communications with stakeholders; and health and safety. The RSC is currently meeting bi-weekly to complete several key tasks that would support visiting researchers under the amended schedule.

The RSC has conducted an outreach week with northern research counterparts and regulatory bodies (e.g. NRI) to assess best practices and help guide planning for research support at the CHARS campus in 2021. Potential visiting researchers as well as POLAR staff require ample time in order to meet the numerous requirements for logistics, permits, and Inuktitut translations, as well as engagement with communities. Ensuring clear communications and plans throughout, developing flexible contingencies, and adapting to external challenges during this pandemic can be achieved by acting well in advance.

Considerations

The RSC is considering multiple scenarios from business-as-usual to reduced capacity for visiting researchers, as well as remote research assistance for visitors prohibited by COVID-19 closures.

Given that several of these organizations are moving forward with their processes, while also providing guidance to researchers to conduct research in the North during the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be prudent for POLAR to identify a clear path forward in a timely manner for the CHARS campus.

The Research Support Committee has also proposed an amended Research Support Request schedule for 2021 (shown below), that has been deemed acceptable by the Director, S&T.

Proposed application period	Applicable field period at CHARS campus
January 4 to February 12 , 2021	February to October 2021
May 14 , 2021	July to October 2021
August 27 , 2021	November 2021 to February 2022

Relevant and interconnected Arctic research organizations in Nunavut are continuing with their annual processes that POLAR can coordinate with. As well, POLAR has external commitments to enable access for international researchers, which will require a proactive approach.

Upcoming decision points

Approve the revised Terms of Reference of the Research Support Committee in order to be an effective body during the COVID-19 pandemic. The revised TOR is expected to be available by the end of January 2021.

Approve updated public COVID-19 messages via POLAR's website and social media pages. The message will be prepared by POLAR's Research and Engagement Restart Task Force.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: François Carrier, ED-Programs; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs; Adam Houben, Strategic Planning, S&T; Ann Balasubramaniam, Northern Engagement, KM&E

Budget

LEAD: Suzie Beaudoin, Finance Manager & Deputy CFO

Context

Parliament approves POLAR's personnel, operations & maintenance (O&M) and transfer payment funding under a single Vote 1 authority. POLAR also receives statutory appropriations for payments to the Employee Benefit Plan. Historically, POLAR has been in a surplus position at the end of the fiscal year and has carried forward a portion of that surplus for use in the following year.

Beginning this year, POLAR has authority to respend, either in the current or a future year, the rent it receives from employees occupying Crown-owned housing in Cambridge Bay.

The [*Canadian High Arctic Research Station Act*](#) requires the Board of Directors to approve POLAR's annual budget.

Current situation

In 2020-21, it is estimated that POLAR will receive approximately \$31.2M in total funding through the Main Estimates (\$29.5M voted and \$1.7M statutory). Because of COVID, this full amount was not approved by Parliament in June as is usually the case but it is expected POLAR will have its full Main Estimates supply in December. In September, POLAR received its 2019-20 operating carry forward in the amount of \$1.3M.

Given the impacts on the delivery of its transfer payment programs as a result of COVID-related restrictions, POLAR requested in July that \$4.42M of its current year transfer payment funding be reprofiled meaning that this amount would effectively be removed from POLAR's current year reference levels and distributed over the next three years when it is assumed project activity will have resumed. In mid-November, POLAR was advised by Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) that its request was denied.

The executive team meets monthly to review updated expenditures, commitments, forecasts and the status of procurement activities. As of October 31, POLAR was tracking to finish the year in surplus with respect to personnel and O&M funding. That surplus will increase to the extent that late-year transfer payment investment opportunities cannot be identified for the transfer payment funding that was intended to be reprofiled into future years.

Considerations

The Board of Directors has expressed its expectation that POLAR improve its budget management practices in order to reduce the surpluses it has experienced historically. While POLAR has taken steps to this end, the impacts of COVID have made it particularly difficult this year to accurately forecast costs and many of the activities on which POLAR normally spends are not happening this year.

The use of operating carry-forwards mitigates the risk POLAR is facing regarding uncertainty of the operating costs of the CHARS campus.

POLAR is expecting to receive the TBS call letter launching the 2021-22 Main Estimates process in the first week of December and will be required to submit shortly thereafter the proposed distribution of its 2021-22 funding envelope of \$31.5M across high-level expense categories. To that end, managers have been directed to submit their preliminary forecasts for the new fiscal year.

Upcoming decision points

To be determined

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services and CFO Suzie Beaudoin, Manager, Finance and DCFO

Options for executive director recruitment

LEAD: Candice Mouchet, Chief of Staff, PO

Context

Two EX-02 positions report directly to the President: the Executive Director, Corporate Services & CFO and the Executive Director, Programs. The incumbent of the former retired effective December 10, 2020, and the incumbent of the latter, who is currently with POLAR under an Interchange Agreement, is returning to his home organization when the agreement ends January 19, 2020.

Current situation

Multiple options are available to replace the retired Executive Director, Corporate Services & CFO including:

- Canvassing the ongoing interest and availability of candidates who qualified in the staffing process in 2019 that resulted in the appointment of the incumbent;
- Identifying potential “good fit” candidates from the recently completed omnibus EX-02 competition led by the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG); and
- Initiating a new POLAR staffing process

POLAR does not currently have a pool of qualified candidates for the Executive Director, Programs position and is not aware of any existing pools in other departments that could be leveraged to staff this position. As such, it is expected POLAR will have to initiate a staffing process to identify a successor.

To ensure sound oversight of the management of corporate functions while the way forward is determined, the Director, Facilities Management (EX-01) is currently acting as the Executive Director, Corporate Services & CFO. The Manager, Facilities Management is, in turn, acting in the Director's role.

Considerations

To provide additional support while options to recruit a new Executive Director, Corporate Services & CFO are evaluated, a senior retired federal government CFO has been retained under a short-term “as and when required” contract. Some potential resources that could provide comparable support to the Program functions as its leadership transitions have been identified for consideration.

The Treasury Board [Policy on Financial Management](#) prescribes requirements with respect to the qualifications and appointments of CFOs. OCG has been advised of the departure of the incumbent CFO and the short-term acting appointment of an interim replacement.

The Executive Director, Programs position is located in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Historically, recruitment for executive positions in Cambridge Bay has proven challenging given the remote location and certain limitations on staffing options imposed by virtue of POLAR's separate agency status.

To the extent new staffing processes are launched for either of the EX-02 positions, consideration could be given to partnering with other departments who have similar requirements in order to achieve efficiencies.

Upcoming decision points

To be determined

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 10 days

Attendees: Candice Mouchet, Chief of Staff, PO; Päivi Soucy, Acting Manager, HR

2020-21 Work Plan

Lead: Melissa Bolster, Senior Advisor, Planning and Reporting

Context

POLAR has a statutory requirement under subsection 17(2) of the [Canadian High Arctic Research Station Act](#) to provide its Board of Directors with annual work plans for approval.

POLAR provides periodic updates to the Board on progress against approved work plans. In addition, POLAR provides a year-end report to the Board by end of the first quarter of the following fiscal year.

Current situation

POLAR has completed an update to the 2020-21 Work Plan as of November 6, 2020.

Considerations

Pandemic restrictions significantly impacted POLAR's planned work in 2020-21 and are expected to continue to impact POLAR's work in 2021-22.

POLAR uses its annual work plans and the year-end report to inform the development of its parliamentary reports, including the Departmental Plan and the Departmental Results Report.

Ideally, the work plan should be updated quarterly. Given the unusual circumstances this fiscal year, the plan has been updated in June and November.

Upcoming decision points

In accordance with established timelines, POLAR will provide a final update to the 2020-21 Work Plan to the Board of Directors at the end of the fourth quarter (March 2021).

Depending on the timing of the first meeting of the Board following the new appointments, another update to the plan prior to the final one in March may be appropriate.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: Melissa Bolster, Senior Advisor Planning and Reporting, Renée McCarter, Acting Executive Director, Corporate Services and François Carrier, Executive Director Program.

2021-22 Work Plan and the 2021-22 Departmental Plan

LEAD: Melissa Bolster, Senior Advisor, Planning and Reporting

Context

Under the Treasury Board [Policy on Results](#), the Minister of Northern Affairs must provide Parliament with annual Departmental Plans, and subsequent Departmental Results Reports. These plans and reports form part of the Estimates Cycle, and the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) provides guidance to departments on their development. POLAR posts these plans and reports on its [website](#).

Current situation

Internally, POLAR has initiated the planning process for 2021-22. Concurrently, TBS has launched the 2021-22 Departmental Plan exercise.

Considerations

The 2021-22 Departmental Plan must be approved by the Minister and submitted to TBS by January 22, 2021.

POLAR seeks to have the more detailed Board-approved work plan in place before the start of that fiscal year to guide operations and decision making.

The new President and Board members will need time to familiarize themselves with POLAR's operations to ensure they have the information they need to review and approve the 2021-22 Work Plan. The Minister's 2021-22 Departmental Plan will provide high-level guidance to POLAR's President and Board members in the finalization of the 2021-22 Work Plan.

The 2021-22 Work Plan will need to incorporate lessons learned from operations during the pandemic and identify measures to mitigate against ongoing or new pandemic-related restrictions.

Upcoming decision point

- 2021-22 Minister's Message to Minister's Office for review (December 14, 2020)
- 2021-22 Departmental Plan to Minister's Office for signature (January 4, 2021)
- 2021-22 Work Plan approved by Board of Directors (March 2021)

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: Melissa Bolster, Senior Advisor, Planning and Reporting; Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services

2020-2023 Competitive Funding Process (CFP)

LEAD: Alex Lamontagne, Manager, Grants and Contributions Unit (GCU)

Context

POLAR's Competitive Funding Process (CFP) 2020-2023 was launched in February 2019. Preliminary screening yielded 84 applications advancing for review by Multi-Stakeholder Review Committees (MSRC). Such committees are to be composed entirely of Indigenous and community/local leadership to ensure that community research priorities are reflected in the funding recommendations and to support Indigenous governance in research decision-making.

POLAR originally planned to simultaneously convene two separate MSRC tables – one for the Northwest Territories and Yukon (NWT-YT), and one for Inuit Nunangat (IN) with applications assigned to the appropriate table according to the project's geographic region(s) of research and its focus.

While POLAR was able to confirm membership for the NWT-YT table, it encountered challenges establishing the appropriate membership for the IN table. In order to not delay the review of the NWT- YT projects, the decision was made to conduct two distinct MSRC processes.

The NWT-YT MSRC was held in January 2020 and a total of 12 projects were deemed relevant and were prioritized to be funded under the available budget allocation for the NWT-YT region. Although delayed by the onset of COVID, funding agreements have been signed with all 12 NWT-YT recipients. Eight projects were able to begin activities in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, while the four remaining projects deferred the project start date to April 1, 2021.

Current situation

Although agreements would not commence this fiscal year, POLAR is actively working with its key partners to convene the IN MSRC as soon as possible in order that agreements can be in place for as early in the new fiscal year as possible.

Considerations

Given the ongoing delays in establishing the IN MSRC, coupled with the COVID-related restrictions impacting potential recipients, in July 2020, with the Board's approval, POLAR requested (through a Treasury Board Secretariat-led Annual Reference Level Update exercise) that a portion of its funding originally earmarked for agreements this fiscal year be redistributed over the next three years in order to preserve the multi-year funding envelope available for northern research. In mid-November POLAR was advised that this request was denied. Considering this recent development, POLAR is currently exploring if there are other opportunities for transfer payment investment this fiscal year. To the extent such opportunities are not identified, the funding that was not allowed to be reprofiled is expected to lapse at year end.

The critical path for organizing the IN MSRC has been shared with the partners with whom POLAR is working on this initiative as the timing of the new agreements will be determined by the timing of the MSRC.

Recommendations arising from an MSRC must be presented to POLAR's Board of Directors for approval before POLAR enters into agreements.

Upcoming decision points

To be determined.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services; Alex Lamontagne, Manager, GCU; Natalie Groleau, GCU

Third Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM3)

LEAD: Gloria Song, Policy Analyst, Knowledge Management and Engagement

Context

The Arctic Science Ministerial is a high-level meeting of Science Ministers from Arctic and non-Arctic countries to advance international Arctic research efforts. The involvement of countries with an interest in the Arctic, Indigenous participants, and international organizations for Arctic research shows a broad recognition at the government level of the urgent response and action needed to develop and strengthen Arctic research cooperation and collaboration.

Polar Knowledge Canada (POLAR) leads the overall coordination of Canada's participation in the event, with supporting guidance from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED). POLAR engages widely with territorial, provincial, Indigenous, and federal partners to inform Canada's position with respect to providing input on ASM3 matters. POLAR's Minister, the Honourable Daniel Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs, will attend the third Arctic Science Ministerial on behalf of Canada, along with two Canadian delegates to be identified.

The third Arctic Science Ministerial will take place May 8-9, 2021, in Tokyo, Japan, alongside the Arctic Circle Japan forum to be held May 7-10.

Current situation

Through engagement with Canadian partners, POLAR has provided initial input to ASM3 organizers on Canada's Arctic research infrastructure and international collaboration.

POLAR is currently awaiting the release of the draft Joint Statement of Ministers to be signed by the ASM3 Organizers. Organizers have suggested a modified timeline to allow for countries to participate in three rounds of editing and review, although this timeline has been delayed. Once POLAR has received the draft, it will be circulated to Canadian partners for their input on any changes to be suggested to the draft Statement, along with POLAR's own analysis.

Currently, the ASM3 remains an in-person event. The delegation size for each country will consist of the Minister, two delegates, and two additional embassy representative(s) or security detail. Due to COVID-19, a reduced delegation size, a hybrid ministerial, or an online-only ministerial may be necessary. ASM3 organizers will reassess the COVID-19 situation in early 2021 and provide the safest options for participation.

POLAR has also represented Canada in discussions to establish an Arctic Science Funders Forum, an initiative that resulted out of the second Arctic Science Ministerial. It is anticipated that these discussions will resume soon.

Considerations

POLAR should ensure regular meaningful engagement with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) on this file, as ITK has previously provided feedback on how to improve POLAR's approach to developing Canadian content for past Arctic Science Ministerial events, and published a public statement expressing their disappointment with respect to the first Arctic Science Ministerial in 2016.

Due to COVID-19, Canadian partners' capacity for engagement and response on this file may be limited. POLAR should make efforts to streamline input required from Canadian partners as appropriate, while ensuring regular communication.

During the drafting of the Joint Statement of Ministers for the second Arctic Science Ministerial in 2018, significant time was spent negotiating the use of the term "Indigenous knowledge" in the statement, as different countries held different positions. POLAR led these negotiations for Canada. As such, if similar issues arise during ASM3, POLAR should anticipate the potential need to negotiate on the Joint Statement of Ministers while advancing Canada's position.

POLAR will also need to regularly brief the Minister's Office on this significant file.

Upcoming decision points

When the draft Joint Statement of Ministers is released, and comments from Canadian partners have been integrated, the President's Office will review the proposed changes that will reflect Canada's position. The Minister's Office will need to be engaged with respect to the draft Joint Statement.

POLAR will also need to begin initial discussions for recommendations to Minister Vandal on the two Canadian delegates to accompany the Minister to the third Arctic Science Ministerial. In the past, POLAR's President has accompanied the Minister to the first and second Ministerials, as one of the delegates.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 30 days

Attendees: François Carrier, ED-Programs; Jennifer Sokol, Engagement Manager, KM&E; Gloria Song, Policy Analyst, KM&E; Jacqueline Thompson, Junior Analyst, KM&E; Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO

Inuit-Canada Joint Table on Clean Growth and Climate Change

LEADS: François Carrier, Executive Director, Programs; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs; Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO

Context

The third meeting of the Inuit-Canada Table on Clean Growth and Climate Change took place on November 4 and 5, 2020. The two 2-hour meetings offered an opportunity to review "national and regional Inuit climate change priorities and the Government of Canada's climate-related mandate, to outline areas of alignment and next steps". The meetings were co-chaired by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and Environment and Climate Change Canada. Polar Knowledge Canada participated in two breakout groups, Food Security and Infrastructure/Energy, areas intersecting with two of our three S&T Framework goals.

Current situation

The breakout sessions with Inuit land claims organizations made clear that there is a need for more research, federal funding coordination and knowledge creation collaboration in each of the three participating regions (Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik). Areas such as food security, housing and alternative energy sources are but a few examples where continued research would mitigate the risks to communities impacted by climate change. Regions continue to call on the federal government to collaborate to recognize the intersection of social and health impacts of food security and housing in a climate crisis when designing programs and funding. There is, however, a shortage of human and financial resources at the regional level to provide adequate support to research and monitoring activities (e.g. permafrost studies, social wellness, etc.).

Considerations

Several priorities of ITK's National Inuit Climate Change Strategy also intersect with their National Strategy on Inuit Research. These priorities should be reflected in POLAR's S&T Implementation Plan to be co-developed with ITK as a priority outcome of the MOU between POLAR and ITK.

By way of forthcoming funding opportunities that could address research priorities in Inuit Nunangat, Polar Knowledge Canada can actively promote the UK-Canada Arctic Science Funding Program that will be launched in early FY 2021-2022. In addition, POLAR is exploring options for increased capacity- building funds, and other responsive options.

Upcoming decision points

- Ensure the co-development of the S&T Implementation Plan with ITK addresses the relevant research-related challenges stemming from this Table.

- Prepare for the Table's next meeting in Spring 2021, with a focus on initiatives that can be of relevance in the near term, such as the promotion of the UK-Canada Program.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 30 days

Attendees: François Carrier, ED-Programs; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs; Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO

Overview of key scientific partner organizations

LEAD: Adam Houben, Science Officer, Strategic Planning, S&T

Context

POLAR's mandate is to advance science and knowledge in POLAR regions. Across the circumpolar regions, and in particularly the Canadian Arctic, there are sparse populations amid logistically challenging landscapes. In order to better understand this rapidly changing environment for both northern and Indigenous communities, as well as global implications to climate change, POLAR needs to collaborate with many stakeholders to fully understand and maximize the complex networks of resources and information available and needed.

Current situation

POLAR is a key point of contact for polar scientific issues, as well as a leading advocate for Indigenous engagement, often being sought out federally and internationally to provide its perspective. At times, POLAR plays a leadership role in coordinating federal input and participation in key polar science initiatives, such as the Arctic Science Ministerial. POLAR is also the national lead on several international organizations such as the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and the Arctic Council initiative, Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON).

Additionally, the CHARS campus is becoming a noted facility and the surrounding Environmental Research Area (ERA), a key region to reduce known environmental data gaps on both national and circumpolar landscape scales and is a participant in domestic and international Arctic research infrastructure networks that aim to coordinate resources and enhance access. Individually, POLAR's researchers are involved with several programs integrating temporal and spatial datasets from regional to international scales.

Considerations

POLAR's broad mandate and limited capacity inherently necessitates a brokerage role in numerous, beneficial polar associations, with the general objective of better coordinating and leveraging knowledge and resources. However, POLAR programs must also be selective of optimal associations that best align with the goals of the S&T Framework, while minimizing the strain on capacity limitations.

Upcoming decision points

- In Q3, allocate funding to support the SAON Secretariat on behalf of the Canadian National Committee
- In Q4, renew the Memorandum of Understanding with NASA for five years of The Arctic-Boreal Vulnerability Experiment (ABOVE) mission

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 30 days

Attendees: Adam Houben, Strategic Planning, S&T; Gloria Song, International Engagement, KM&E; François Carrier, ED-Programs; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs

Partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada

LEADS: Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs; Emma Arseneault, Analyst, Federal Engagement, KM&E

Context

In January 2020, POLAR hosted Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) representatives at the CHARS campus and prepared an advisory report to inform work towards DFO's new Arctic Region, specifically relating to services, program delivery and engagement in the Canadian North and Arctic. This meeting highlighted substantial collaboration potential between POLAR and DFO in Arctic research. In May 2020, DFO expressed an interest in having the position of the Science Director for the new Arctic region stationed at the CHARS Campus with a target start date of April 2021.

Partnering with DFO presents opportunities for POLAR to enhance marine research expertise and capabilities at the CHARS campus. Additionally, strategic collaboration with another federal department will strengthen POLAR's role as a facilitator and enable greater coordination of Arctic research activities within the federal government.

Current situation

The Executive Director of Programs will meet with senior DFO staff in late November 2020 to discuss and solidify key elements of a co-location agreement. Following this meeting, Programs will draft the co-location agreement with support from Corporate Services, based on templates and guidance provided by Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Considerations

- At present, custodianship of the CHARS campus remains with Crown-Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and, therefore, any agreement with DFO will be limited to office space for the Science Director.
- Other federal departments may need to be engaged to review POLAR's co-location agreement with DFO, including Public Services and Procurement Canada and Justice Canada.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 30 days

Attendees: François Carrier, ED-Programs; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs; Emma Arsenault, Analyst, Federal Engagement, KM&E; Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services

United Kingdom - Canada arctic research cooperation program

LEADS: François Carrier, Executive Director, Programs; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs

Context

The United Kingdom Research and Innovation, the National Research Council of Canada, Polar Knowledge Canada, le Fonds de recherche du Québec and Parks Canada will mobilize funds and other forms of contributions towards Arctic research that addresses pressing scientific challenges through a multidisciplinary competitive program. The Program will focus on two broad areas of research:

- Understanding dynamic Arctic ecosystems in the context of rapid change, including ecosystem and cryosphere research at local, regional and global scales for better models and predictions, and the impacts of changing marine and terrestrial environments on ecosystems and people.
- Understanding the impacts of climate change on communities, infrastructure, transportation and safety, leading to the development, with local communities, of innovative, practical and ethical mitigation and adaptation tools and technological solutions.

The total amount of funding available for this Call for Proposals is £8,000,000 from the UKRI and approximately \$15,000,000 from the Canadian partners. The Call documents are under development. The aim is to launch the Call in early FY 2021-2022, with funding to be released over FYs 2022-2025.

Current situation

A Program Steering Committee has been established with the mandate of defining thematic areas, sharing of G&Cs conditions of each participating organization, piecing together the Call documents, establishing a process for administering the Call, from reviewing proposals to disbursing funds to

recipients. A “Mechanics Working Group” is responsible for ensuring that the overall Program's goals and objectives are aligned with terms and conditions of each participating funding partner.

Considerations

Polar Knowledge Canada's contribution will consist of a combination of funding (up to a maximum of \$1,000,000 per year, over three years, starting in 2022-2023) and the provision of access to research infrastructure and other assets available in Cambridge Bay.

Upcoming decision points

- By the end of 2020-2021, confirm the level of funding towards this Program with respect to other G&C budget priorities and anticipated needs. Develop POLAR's own Call documents and proceed to a final review the overall Program funding guide and associated documentation.
- In 2021-2022, evaluate all POLAR proposals through a Multi-Stakeholder Review Committee (MSRC) process.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 30 days

Attendees: François Carrier, ED-Programs; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs; Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services; Alex Lamontagne, Manager, GCU; Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Senior Advisor, PO

Participation at domestic and international fora and events

LEAD: Jennifer Sokol, Engagement Manager, Knowledge Management and Engagement

Context

Direct participation and strategic support of domestic and international fora, symposia and events are key ways in which POLAR advances knowledge and maintains connections with research and community partners. Additionally, by participating in these events POLAR can advance its S&T research goals by disseminating knowledge and showcasing Canadian research expertise, promoting Northern research priorities and fostering further Indigenous participation in research. These events are also valuable for maintaining participation in key research networks and promotion of its own activities.

Current situation

POLAR is planning to attend the following upcoming events (November 1st, 2020 to March 31st, 2021):

- Canadian Science Policy Virtual Conference, November 16-20, 2020; POLAR staff attending.
- ArcticNet's International Arctic Change Virtual Conference, December 5-10, 2020; POLAR staff to attend and co-chair sessions, event sponsorship, and presentation of POLAR's 2020 Northern Science Award.
- Arctic Futures International Virtual Symposium, November 30-December 2, 2020; POLAR staff to attend.
- Arctic Frontiers International Virtual Meeting, February 1-4, 2021; POLAR staff to attend.
- Arctic Science Summit Week Virtual Conference and Annual Meeting of the International Arctic Science Committee Working Groups, March 20-25, 2021; POLAR staff to attend, and coordinate the participation of the Canadian representatives.

Considerations

POLAR's ability to participate in national and international events in 2020 has been affected by the global pandemic. Participation is largely virtual which has been a cost savings, but inhibited ability to network and promote agency activity.

Upcoming decision points

- Approve registration fees to conferences in 2021 to enable participation of staff and other Canadian representatives.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 30 days

Attendees: François Carrier, ED-Programs; Jennifer Sokol, Engagement Manager, KM&E; Ann Balasubramaniam, Policy Analyst, KM&E; Misha Warbanski, Policy Analyst, KM&E

Status of CHARS campus completion, custodial transfer, facilities management contract

LEADS: Renée McCarter, Acting Executive Director, Corporate Services; Chris Chisholm, Acting Director, Facilities Management

Context

The construction of the CHARS campus, managed by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), is nearing completion. While most of the campus is operational, icing issues with the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system

have delayed the full acceptance of the laboratory spaces. These issues appear to have been addressed; however, once substantial completion is granted, PSPC will undertake a re-commissioning of critical systems to ensure the facility will perform optimally in the demanding Arctic environment.

In 2018, a working group recommended that POLAR accept custody transfer of CHARS from CIRNAC until September 2020, based on the expectation that construction would have been completed by then and a history of operating costs at full occupancy would be established. With the delays in substantial completion, these operating costs are not yet known (see brief on Report on Reference Levels). Following substantial completion and the re-commissioning of critical systems, CIRNAC's intent is to transfer custody of CHARS to POLAR, as the responsible agency for operating the facility. This transfer would occur through an Order-in-Council (OIC), requiring a Treasury Board Submission.

POLAR is working with PSPC to prepare a long-term contract for facility management services for the CHARS campus, to replace the current contract expiring in September 2021. This new contract is expected to be of a duration of up to 11 years. Only suppliers registered on the Inuit Firm Registry were eligible to submit a proposal for this requirement.

Current situation

PSPC has indicated that it will accept substantial completion of the CHARS campus in the coming weeks. Beyond the issues with the HVAC system, there is additional construction work that needs to be completed to address deficiencies and to complete outstanding work. Some seasonal work remains and will not be completed this fiscal year due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions. It is expected that construction work will continue into fiscal year 2021-22.

Given the extent of the outstanding issues related to the completion of the construction, it is unlikely the custodial transfer will happen during FY 2020-21.

The procurement process for the provision of facilities management services for the CHARS campus is currently at the bid evaluation stage and remains on track for a contract award in the first quarter of next fiscal year.

Considerations

The most recent CHARS Senior Project Advisory Committee (SPAC) meeting, co-chaired by CIRNAC's ADM of Northern Affairs and POLAR's (former) President, was held on June 19, 2020, and included discussions on outstanding construction work, funding requirements and briefly, custodial transfer.

While CIRNAC's and PSPC's expectation is that POLAR will assume custodianship of the CHARS campus in FY 2021-22, POLAR has raised concerns with the risks with respect to custodianship and Board members have stated their expectation that the Board would be consulted before a decision on custodial transfer is ultimately made.

Upcoming decision points

Consideration should be given to holding additional SPAC meetings as the project advances.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 30 days

Attendees: Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services; Chris Chisholm, Acting Director, Facilities Management

Knowledge Sharing Forum (early 2022)

LEADS: Lynda Orman, Northern Engagement Team Lead, KM&E, Programs; Ann Balasubramaniam, Policy Analyst, KM&E

Context

Polar Knowledge Canada (POLAR)'s mandate as established under the [*Canadian High Arctic Research Station Act*](#), is to support locally relevant and globally significant knowledge creation. Through northern and Indigenous engagement, partnerships and collaboration, and an in-house research program, POLAR aims to create and synthesize knowledge to inform decision-making, for the benefit of northern communities and all Canadians.

In March 2020, a program to co-develop a Knowledge Sharing Forum was initiated to showcase POLAR's collaborative and interdisciplinary science that is purpose-driven by the needs of northern communities and that addresses significant Arctic research issues through science, technology and Indigenous knowledge. As a first step, POLAR hosted a Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) campus in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, to co-develop a broader Knowledge Sharing Forum.

Planned for 2022, the Knowledge Sharing Forum will bring together Indigenous knowledge holders, researchers and decision makers from across Canada's North to discuss new knowledge within thematic sessions selected by Northerners while featuring results from POLAR's 2015-2019 Science and Technology Program. The forum will provide a unique opportunity to build relationships, increase coordination, collaboration and synergy among participants, and inspire ideas for future knowledge creation and mobilization.

Current situation

Due to the current global pandemic, and after careful deliberation, POLAR made the decision to defer the planned Knowledge Sharing Forum to 2022, to be held part in-person and part virtually, at the CHARS campus in Cambridge Bay. To continue momentum towards delivery, a collaborative assessment project is in the process of being launched to create a set of summary reports derived from technical reports

authored by subject matter experts in both science and Indigenous knowledge. These knowledge products will focus on the following five priority themes that were co-developed at the March 2020 Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop:

- Caribou population abundance and migration; and caribou predator-prey dynamics
- Arctic char and other fish population dynamics
- Whale populations and marine ecosystem biodiversity
- Climate change research and monitoring
- Environmental change – snow, ice, precipitation.

The resulting technical reports will be published in POLAR's annual on-line publication, [*Polar Knowledge: Aqhaliat Report*](#). Summary reports will be translated into local languages and provided to delegates in advance of the Knowledge Sharing Forum to enable their full participation.

Considerations

The Collaborative Assessment workshops and reports are set to proceed in 2020-2021.

Upcoming decision points

A costing proposal for the Knowledge Sharing Forum is being prepared for fiscal year 2021-2022 that will ensure a pan-northern scope and the participation of approximately 55 participants at CHARS.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 60 days

Attendees: Lynda Orman, Northern Engagement Team Lead, KM&E; Ann Balasubramaniam, Policy Analyst, KM&E

CHARS laboratories

LEAD: Martin Léger, Laboratory Manager, Science & Technology (S&T)

Context

The development of laboratory documents and standard operating protocols is a legislative requirement under the Canada Labour Code Part II and needs to be completed as part of commissioning and readiness of CHARS laboratories. This will permit laboratory workspace to be utilized by researchers and ensure due diligence and accountability aspects for Polar Knowledge Canada (POLAR) are addressed.

Current situation

The laboratory space remains closed off due to an issue with the air exchange system in the Main Research Building. Engineers have developed a solution and tests have been conducted over the past two

winters. POLAR is waiting for the Engineer's report, which is a crucial component for the substantial completion of a fully functional facility.

In addition, a "holding tank" for the operation of the necropsy laboratory is required to render this laboratory fully operational in relation to biocontainment. The "holding tank" serves two purposes: 1) collect by-products from the wash-down of the autopsy area, and 2) decontaminate biological wastes prior to transfer into the septic tank for eventual release into the environment.

To date, the focus has been on writing laboratory documents and standard operating protocols. The volume of work lies in the fact that, by design, each laboratory serves a specific purpose and must meet all applicable legislative requirements. Priority was assigned to documents with a high Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) content, to meet our due diligence and safety-first approach. This work is being performed by the Laboratory Manager, with help provided by Bronson Consulting Group.

A draft "Master" document covering operational topics that are common to all laboratories is about to be submitted for review by experienced professional peers prior to final approval. Other documents related to the management of hazardous substances have also been developed in parallel.

Once all documents with a high OHS content are finalized, the focus will be on drafting documents that address topics that are specific to each laboratory. Priority will be given to those laboratories for which POLAR has received a higher demand for use of space.

Considerations

In light of legislative requirements, volume of work involved, and POLAR's limited capacity, S&T is considering contracting the services of "external experts" to complete the writing of Hazard Prevention Programs (HPP) for both Laboratories and Field Operations. The work also requires the development of a Task Hazard Analysis and Safe Work Procedures for these two areas of operations.

Upcoming decision points

Writing and Review of Laboratory Documents

- The possibility of seeking volunteers (scientists who are currently employed and/or retired) to write and review laboratory documentation is being explored.
- These volunteers would bring experience and knowledge in diverse fields of expertise, allowing the completion of documents within a shorter period.

Succession Planning

- Interchange Canada Agreement for Martin Léger is scheduled to end on August 6, 2021. An extension of the agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada is intended.
- S&T is considering a service contract to further advance the development of critical laboratory documents and standard protocols.

- The launch of a staffing process to recruit an experienced laboratory assistant has been proposed in order to support the Laboratory Manager for daily laboratory operations.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: At the beginning of 2021, combined with a visit of lab facilities (if public health restrictions permit).

Attendees: Martin Léger, Laboratory Manager, S&T; Alain Leclair, S&T Director, Programs; Monique Punt, Professional Engineer, Bronson Consulting Group

Delegation of financial authority

LEAD: Suzie Beaudoin, Manager Finance & Deputy CFO

Context

As required under Treasury Board's *Directive on Delegation of Spending and Financial Authorities*, the authority to enact various financial transactions is governed by a formal delegation instrument approved by the Minister. The instrument is supplemented by the Supporting Notes to the Chart which provide the details of any restrictions, limitations, or thresholds on the exercise of any authority referred to in the Chart. The Minister has approved the President's authority to update the Supporting Notes to the Chart as required.

Current situation

POLAR's current delegation instrument was approved by the Minister in February 2020 following a comprehensive review. Among the changes made to the instrument at that time included aligning it with the current organizational structure and the then-new Delegation of HR Authorities instrument.

Although certain authorities are retained exclusively by the President, most financial authorities have been delegated downward to respect the principle of aligning authority with budgetary accountability. The authority delegated to any position may not be exercised by the incumbent until authorized by the manager of that position. That authorization is made by way of the manager signing a Specimen Signature Card (SSC) for the incumbent. Currently at POLAR, at the managers' prerogative, the delegations available in the instrument have not been fully enacted in some cases.

Considerations

Employees are required to complete mandatory training as a condition of receiving delegated authority.

Someone formally acting in a position to which authority has been delegated may exercise the authorities associated with the position provided a duly authorized SSC is in place. In order that an SSC be issued, the individual must have completed mandatory training. The sole exception to this is for the President, for whom the mandatory training requirement does not apply.

The President's SSC requires the Minister's approval, as does the SSC of any employee who will act for the President. The Executive Director Corporate Services & CFO, who retired December 9, 2020, was the sole employee with an SSC authorized by the Minister.

The President may revoke any delegation of authority if the exercise of that authority has been done without the required probity or due diligence.

Upcoming decision points

To be determined.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 15 days

Attendees: Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services & CFO; Suzie Beaudoin, Manager, Finance and DCFO

Inuit Employment Plan

LEAD: Päivi Soucy, Acting Human Resources Manager

Context

In 2005, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) filed a \$1 billion lawsuit against the federal government for failing to implement the Nunavut Agreement including Article 23 – Inuit Employment within Government. In 2015, NTI and the federal government settled the lawsuit out of court, which included a requirement to develop and implement Inuit Employment Plans.

The objective of Article 23 is to increase Inuit participation in government employment in the Nunavut Settlement Area to a representative level. This requirement includes federal, territorial and municipal governments. The current Article 23 objective is for Inuit government employees to represent 85% of all government employees in all occupational groupings and levels in Nunavut, from entry-level positions to the most senior-level positions.

Current situation

On August 16, 2019, POLAR released its Inuit Employment Plan, with the short-term goal of increasing Inuit representation in all POLAR positions in Cambridge Bay to 42% by 2023. As of March 31, 2020, Inuit employees represented 39% of the total workforce in Cambridge Bay, an increase from 27% representation reported in June 2019.

POLAR is in the final stages of hiring an Article 23 Implementation Advisor, who will be responsible for the coordination, planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and employment activities as prescribed by Article 23 and POLAR's Inuit Employment Plan.

Considerations

The lack of community infrastructure across Nunavut, including Cambridge Bay, impacts the ability of POLAR to increase Inuit employment levels. Community infrastructure deficits include housing, access to post-secondary education, and childcare.

The inaugural incumbent of the Article 23 Implementation Advisor position, who reported to the Manager, Human Resources, is currently on education leave funded by Pilimmaksaivik, the Federal Centre of Excellence for Inuit Employment in Nunavut. Under the terms of the funding agreement, this individual will return to POLAR when his MBA program ends in early 2021, to assume a manager's position in Cambridge Bay. Prior to initiating the staffing process to replace the Article 23 Implementation Advisor, the decision had been taken that the position would migrate from HR to Planning and Reporting (PR) and that, for this specific file, the Manager of PR would have a direct functional reporting relationship to the President.

Upcoming decision points

To be determined.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 60 days

Attendees: Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services; Päivi Soucy, Acting Human Resources Manager; Melissa Bolster, Senior Advisor, Planning and Reporting

POLAR housing

LEADS: Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services; Chris Chisholm, Acting Director, Facilities Management

Context

To carry out its mandate and responsibilities, POLAR offers government housing to employees at its Headquarters in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, in accordance with the National Joint Council's Isolated Post and Government Housing Directive. POLAR leases these units, and its current housing inventory includes twenty-one units ranging from one-bedroom to three-bedroom units. The annual lease cost for POLAR's housing inventory is \$891,000, and annual utilities costs are approximately \$285,000.

Current situation

As of November 9, 2020, fifteen housing units are occupied, and six units are vacant, four of which have been set aside for new or returning employees. Current planned staffing significantly exceeds the number of housing units available in POLAR's inventory.

A new competitive process is being initiated to acquire up to eight additional housing units, subject to availability in Cambridge Bay, to ensure that the inventory continues to meet POLAR's needs based on planned staffing activities. The estimated cost for these new units is \$450,000 annually, including utilities. It is expected that these new units will be leased during the second quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2021-22.

To manage the distribution of housing on a priority basis in the interim, all proposed appointments that include housing are submitted to Senior Management Committee for decision prior to a letter of offer being issued. Where housing is not immediately available, telework as a temporary measure is leveraged.

POLAR is also reviewing housing options, including the possibility of developing a housing allowance as a potential alternative to providing government housing for Cambridge Bay employees. Options will be developed during FY 2021-22 following consultations with Central Agencies. This activity is identified in POLAR's 2020-21 Work Plan.

Considerations

POLAR's housing inventory needs to be aligned with Human Resources plans and available operating funds.

Upcoming decision points

To be determined.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 60 days

Attendees: Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services; Chris Chisholm, Acting Director, Facilities Management

Report to the Treasury Board on reference levels

LEAD: Melissa Bolster, Senior Advisor, Planning and Reporting

Context

In an April 2015 decision, the Treasury Board, as a condition of funding, required POLAR to return to it no later than March 31, 2018, with a report to validate ongoing funding requirements for the implementation of POLAR's programming and the ongoing operations of the CHARS campus. That deadline anticipated that, by that date, the construction of the campus would have been completed and that the facility would have been operating at full capacity for some time. Due to delays however, the construction of the CHARS campus is not yet complete, and there are significant portions of the campus that POLAR is not yet able to operate.

Current situation

Earlier this year, Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) recommended to POLAR that, given the construction delays, the Minister of Northern Affairs request a formal extension to the deadline by which to submit the report.

In October 2020, POLAR submitted a Briefing Note, developed with the assistance of TBS, to the Minister of Northern Affairs recommending that he request, via a letter to the Treasury Board, to extend the deadline for the Report on Reference Levels to November 2023.

Considerations

As a result of the construction delays, POLAR is not operating the campus at full capacity and therefore does not yet have a reliable baseline of the cost to operate it.

On October 27, 2020, POLAR provided the Minister's office with a briefing on this matter following its receipt of the Briefing Note. At this briefing, POLAR characterized the request the Minister is recommended to make as a "housekeeping item." The Minister's office indicated its concurrence with this characterization. POLAR awaits the Minister's response to its Briefing Note.

The construction of the campus is the responsibility of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs with project management support from Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Upcoming decision points

- If the Minister recommends, and Treasury Board accepts the Minister's recommendation, a Report on Reference Levels will be due to the Treasury Board by the end of November 2023.
- Should the Minister or Treasury Board choose not to proceed in the manner recommended, POLAR will work with the Minister's office and TBS on an alternate way forward.

Proposed briefing strategy

Timing: First 90 days

Attendees: Melissa Bolster, Senior Advisor, Planning & Reporting; Renée McCarter, Acting ED-Corporate Services