

ARCTIC MAYORS' FORUM

STRATEGIC REPORT 2023-2027

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Introduction

Our Mission

Formally established in 2019, AMF's Mission is to ensure the participation of mayors and elected community leaders at Arctic governance tables to ensure that the values, goals, and interests of Arctic peoples are voiced and considered. Our common goal is for our citizens to have good lives, lived in sustainably developed and resilient communities. We stand behind the idea that the challenges and opportunities the Arctic faces requires sustained and meaningful engagement with local leaders.

Our mission is achieved by providing a collaborative platform for cooperation and coordination between the members of the Arctic Mayors' Forum and with other national, regional, and international institutions.

Strategic Meeting 2023

Members of the Arctic Mayors' Forum met in October 2023 in Reykjavik to discuss the strategic goals for the Forum throughout its chairships in Norway and Greenland, spanning 2024-2027. The goal for the meeting was to discuss 'what is next' for the Arctic Mayors' Forum, to give all members the opportunity to address issues facing their communities, and to identify commonalities that the Forum should focus on. The discussion was moderated by Jennifer Spence (Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Arctic Initiative) and Gosia Smieszek-Rice (UiT).

We are a Forum for Mayors with common ground, common experience, sharing of knowledge about everyday life in our communities.

from the 2023 Strategic Meeting

Meeting with the Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials

AMF welcomed Morten Høglund, Chair of the Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials to the first part of the meeting. Together we discussed potential collaborations between the Arctic Council (AC) and the Arctic Mayors' Forum (AMF), agreeing that the AMF is a valuable strategic partner for the Arctic Council.

One key area of collaboration identified was Arctic Youth, and the conference that the AC is organising in Tromsø on the margins of Arctic Frontiers 2025. AMF's participation in the planning and execution of this conference would enhance youth engagement and address the concerns of young people living in the Arctic. **Mental health and suicide prevention were highlighted as critical issues**, noting that cooperation with relevant AC working group could leverage the expertise of local municipalities and health authorities. **Additionally, the wildland fire initiative**, co-led by Gwich-in Council International, was identified as another area where AMF could contribute by sharing best practices and local knowledge.

Together we acknowledged the importance of improving communication and information flow between the Arctic Council and local municipalities. We discussed ways to ensure AMF's visibility and relevance around issues like de-population, infrastructure, and social services. There was a strong focus on addressing real, local issues through collaboration, including the cost of education, climate change impacts, ageing populations, and the need for infrastructure improvements. The meeting underscored the potential for AMF to play a crucial role in voicing local concerns to the Arctic Council and in fostering strategic partnerships to tackle these challenges effectively.



Partnerships

Arctic Council

AMF as a 'strategic partner' to the Arctic Council

The Norwegian Chairship priorities note that, "Closer cooperation with Arctic communities, for example through the Arctic Mayors' Forum, will be of crucial importance." The priorities of AMF are closely aligned with the Arctic Council's priorities, specifically those identified under the priority *People in the North*. AMF hopes to further this partnership and strengthen its position as a key player in international cooperation in the Arctic.

Arctic Economic Council

In 2023, the AMF and AEC agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding

Given the aligned goals of the AEC and the AMF, the two organizations have signed a MOU. The purpose of the MOU is to provide a framework for cooperation and to facilitate collaboration between the two organizations.

Arctic Policy Hackathon

AMF is partner in two projects dedicated to uplifting youth

Since 2022, AMF has worked with the Gordon Foundation to organize the annual Arctic Policy Hackathon to bring young people from the Arctic together to address issues facing the region.



Partnerships

Increasing North American Engagement

AMF is growing their membership and partnerships in the North American Arctic

During the 2023 Strategic Meeting, the need to further partnerships with organizations throughout the circumpolar Arctic was discussed.

As of June 2024, AMF secured funding from the Global Arctic Leadership Initiative to pursue this work in the Canadian Arctic.

Developing these partnerships further will remain a priority of AMF.

Arctic Urban Regional Cooperation Project

12 AMF member municipalities are part of the EU AURC Project.

The Arctic Urban Regional Cooperation Project is a two-year EU funded project that unites towns and cities, including 12 AMF members, to develop local action plans. AMF is an associated partner in this project, and the involvement of so many AMF members will benefit all.

Youth Together for Arctic Futures

AMF is a partner on an EU Project focused on Arctic Youth

AMF is part of a six member consortium in the EU funded project dedicated to empowering Arctic youth to influence the policies that affect them. As part of the project, AMF is launching a mentorship program to connect Arctic youth with local leaders in their communities.



Strengths

The Arctic Mayors' Forum brings a **unique set of perspectives to Arctic governance**. AMF is a trusted partner that represents local voices, including Indigenous Peoples.

Mayors are often the first point of political contact for their communities, giving them direct insight into the experiences of people in the Arctic. This unique knowledge of the needs and aspirations of Arctic residents is often absent from broader policy discussions, making the AMF an invaluable resource and stakeholder in all policy conversations related to the Arctic.

AMF provides a formal platform for local knowledge to inform policy on the regional, national, and international level.

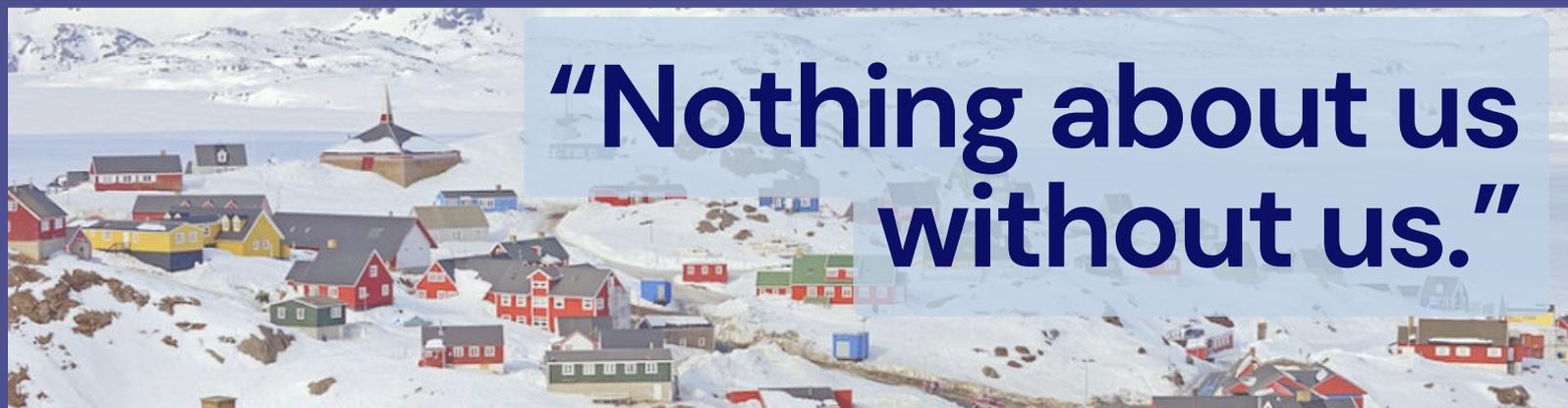
The Forum's access to a diverse wealth of local knowledge positions it to provide "made in the Arctic" solutions, offering unique and innovative insights and feedback to policymakers and researchers.

The Arctic Mayors' Forum fosters international collaboration by connecting mayors from across the Arctic region.

During the Strategic Meeting mayors unanimously recognized the profound opportunities AMF has created for them to connect. They emphasized the significance of building connections and sharing experiences, noting that these interactions are incredibly meaningful.

Collaboration fosters community resilience.

The unique value of AMF lies in the knowledge held by its network of local leaders. The opportunity to share this knowledge with one another is what makes AMF effective. By fostering connections and facilitating dialogues among individuals with local expertise, AMF helps generate the solutions that Arctic communities need.



“Nothing about us without us.”

Challenges and Actions

CHALLENGE	DETAILS	ACTIONS
Stable funding for AMF Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The AMF Secretariat has funding until the end of 2024. Stable, longterm funding is necessary to continue at the current rate of engagement.• Stable funding is needed to expand capacity, ensure continuity and build strengthened Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ExCo members are investigating funding options from national authorities and other potential funders.• GALI project funding will help expand capacity in the Canadian Arctic.• NAPA project funding will help foster cooperation with the AC and NCM.
Representing Diversity within the Arctic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is critical in AMFs work to recognize, and to help other people understand, the diversity that exists within the Arctic.• There are many different 'Arctics' and the same issues, like housing, pose different challenges to different communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AMF is focused on recruiting diverse communities within the Arctic.• AMF is identifying common priorities amongst members, like health and well-being, even if each municipality faces specific challenges.
External Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It has been a challenge to demonstrate to external partners and the general public what AMF does, and what makes it unique and important.• It is especially hard to reach a global audience, particularly outside of the European Arctic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AMF launched a new website• AMF launched an Instagram and LinkedIn.• AMF has attended and participated in Arctic events outside the European Arctic, incl. Arctic Encounter Symposium in Alaska.

Strategic Goals

1 Growing our Membership

Since 2022, AMF has grown from 13 to 19 municipalities, but the more representation and collaboration, the more impactful AMF will become. AMF wants to continue to grow its membership, specifically in small and Indigenous communities.

PLAN: It will take time and resources to build trust and relationships, and to demonstrate the merit of being an AMF member to potential new members.

2 Build the Secretariat

For AMF to continue to develop at the rate it has, it is clear that the secretariat needs more resources in order to meet the demands, and reach its potential.

PLAN: Secure enough stable funding for the AMF Secretariat that it can grow, and continue to meet the demand of its growing membership.

3 Expand our Influence

For the AMF to continue growing, it must expand its reach to share its unique expertise, local insights, and implementation opportunities. Effective communication with the general public, as well as among our members and other stakeholders, particularly partners like the Arctic Council, is essential for AMF to fulfill its mission.

PLAN: The AMF has already started enhancing its online presence and will focus on increasing engagement with the Arctic Council and other key partners.

4 Delegate

To meet these goals AMF must leverage the skills and knowledge that exist within the organization, and its membership.

PLAN: Setting up a system to appropriately delegate tasks amongst the AMF members, representatives in the Executive Committee, the expert group, and the Secretariat to achieve these strategic goals.

The AMF Secretariat would like to thank all those who participated in the 2023 Strategic Meeting, as well as the AMF chair, moderators and members for their continued trust and support.

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Thanks also to the members of the Secretariat

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