



LESSONS LEARNED IN SUSTAINING COLLABORATIVE ARCTIC RESEARCH TEAMS

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ABOUT ARCUS:

Arctic Research Consortium of the U.S. (ARCUS) is a not-for-profit organization started in 1988 and headquartered in Fairbanks, Alaska. ARCUS facilitates cross-boundary Arctic knowledge, research, communication, and education in the U.S., and with partners across the globe.

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ARCUS' CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATION:

Intersection of several fields:

1. Virtual organizations - How to build geographically-dispersed groups; think through the structure, the process of communications, norms (E.g., Olson, Zimmerman, Boss, 2008)

2. Team science – Research of science teams themselves, including findings like success is dependent on trust, effective leadership, and clear expectations (e.g., Hall, Volgel, Croyle, 2019)

3. Group Dynamics & Psychology - A range of research can be applied – group dynamics, strategy, leadership (e.g., Sutton and Millar, 2011)

4. Strategic planning – Guiding a team through development of shared goals, objectives, and outcomes

5. Project management – Sufficiently support (through paid professional staff) management of the day-to-day aspects of a team project



A FEW WAYS TO PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE:

- Establish clear outcomes and goals – “what would happen if we are wildly successful?”
- Find shared values – each individual brings their own worldviews, but the team agrees on what you are trying to achieve and why, and what values will apply. E.g., consensus might be valued over efficiency
- Team composition – carefully consider whether you have the skills and competencies needed (including interpersonal skills), and explicitly think about diversity and inclusion
- Develop a clear and transparent process for communication and decision-making
- Plan enough resources and time—building trust and collaborations require proper care and feeding—they can’t be done “at the margins” or in spare time
- When collaborating with Indigenous partners or topics of interest to Indigenous communities, follow established guidelines for respectful, ethical, and equitable relationships: <https://www.arcus.org/resources/northern-communities>



TAKE-HOME POINTS:

- Do some reading and learning in these different areas to help inform your work
- Every collaboration and project is different. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, nor an easy “recipe” to follow!
- Let’s get away from the assumption that everyone is in an position to “volunteer” their time on a collaboration
- Bring your authentic self, and connect with each other as real (vulnerable, gifted, flawed) people. Teams are made up of people—not disciplines, focus areas, or organizations.



Contact me at helen@arcus.org if you’d like to talk through any of these topics or are looking for resources or people to connect with. We’d love to chat!

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