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Arctic Urban & Regional Cooperation

FAQ Frequently Asked Questions for Applicants

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Arctic Urban & Regional Cooperation (AURC)

1. General Questions: What is it? How does it work? ...

Questions	Answers
<p>1.1 What is the AURC programme, and who finances it?</p>	<p>The AURC is a new international cooperation programme that will support cities/towns/local authorities to exchange knowledge and experiences through peer-to-peer learning and collaboration on thematic priorities that include circular economy, gender equality and social inclusion, sustainable tourism, youth participation, food production/security, nature-based solutions, creating attractive liveable cities and sustainable mobility and transport (see full list in the Annex).</p> <p>The AURC continues the trajectory of leadership from the European Union (EU) - with programmes such as the International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) programme, URBACT, Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) programme, New European Bauhaus - supporting decentralised international urban and regional cooperation in the fields of sustainable urban development and innovation in key partner countries.</p> <p>The AURC is part of a wider new EU project “Support to EU Arctic Policy” funded by the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), working in close cooperation with Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG Mare) and the European External Action Service (EEAS).</p> <p>The programme will contribute to the objectives of the EU Green Deal, the New Urban Agenda, the Agenda 2030 (SDGs), the Urban Agenda for the EU, and the policy objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy through city-to-city diplomacy and collaborative regional efforts to address common sustainable development challenges.</p>
<p>1.2 How does it work?</p>	<p>Successful applicants will be invited to collaborate in thematic clusters with partners cities/towns/local authorities located in <i>Sweden, Finland, Norway, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Canada and the USA (Alaska)</i> which are tackling similar sustainable development and innovation challenges. Participating cities/towns/local authorities will become part of a wider community of peers and stakeholders engaging in the following ways:</p> <p>⇒ <u>THEMATIC CLUSTERS (MULTILATERAL COOPERATION):</u> Representatives working in relevant areas in your city/town/local authority will be invited to participate in a range of virtual and in-person thematic and networking events, as well as technical sessions on specific topics. Through this international Arctic network, participating cities/towns/local authorities and key stakeholders will meet together with peers working on the similar sustainable development priorities and challenges.</p> <p>⇒ <u>BILATERAL COOPERATION:</u> Participating cities/towns/local authorities that wish to develop a more intensive cooperation with a partner will be supported through the programme to develop one-to-one cooperation through on-line and in-person learning exchanges and knowledge sharing.</p> <p>The AURC programme will assign a dedicated expert to support and facilitate the cooperation process for the clusters, including the creation of the cooperation action plan (see more info in 1.6)</p>

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<p>1.3 How long is the cooperation intended to last?</p>	<p>The cooperation programme will last for at least <u>12 months</u>. Participating cities/towns/local authorities are encouraged to continue their cooperation beyond this time, such that they commit appropriate resources to continue a rewarding cooperation into the future.</p>
<p>1.4 When does the programme start?</p>	<p>Indicatively, the programme activities will start from late October 2023.</p>
<p>1.5 How broad or narrow are the cooperation topic(s) expected to be?</p>	<p>The cooperation areas are pre-defined by the programme in <u>Thematic Cluster Priorities and related sub-themes</u> (see Annex 1). Applicants must select their preferred thematic priorities and subthemes in the application. Activities for participants will be matched – <i>as much as possible</i> – according to these chosen preferences and interests. Once the programme is underway, cities/towns/local authorities will receive support from the AURC expert team to further refine their specific topics according to their relevant needs, strengths, and interests.</p>
<p>1.6 What are the expected outcomes from our participation in the programme?</p>	<p>Participating cities/towns/local authorities are expected to be able to show concrete progress - resulting directly from the knowledge shared through bilateral and multilateral cooperation - on the priority themes and sub-themes of the programme.</p> <p>The specific focus and roadmap of the cooperation will be set out in a Arctic - Cooperation Action Plan (A-CAP) which is an iterative planning tool. The A-CAP will be developed jointly by collaborating cities/towns/local authorities over the course of cooperation and will include challenges, specific objectives and activities to be developed during that period as well as activities that may be carried out beyond the duration of the AURC programme.</p> <p>Participating cities/towns/local authorities will also be expected to gather lessons learned and case studies that can be successfully scaled and implemented.</p>
<p>1.7 When is the Arctic Cooperation Action Plan expected to be drafted and implemented?</p>	<p>With the support of the AURC programme experts, the A-CAP will be completed in phases throughout the programme. The final version of the A-CAP is to be completed one month before the closing of the programme and may include activities planned after the AURC formally finishes.</p>
<p>1.8 Is it possible that we will work in a one-to-one and/or small cluster?</p>	<p>Yes. If there are participating cities/towns/local authorities which are working on similar challenges, they will have the opportunity to form a small cluster or one-to-one pairing to collaborate and share best practices and knowledge (see Section 1.2).</p>

2. Costs & Funding

Questions	Answers
<p>2.1 What costs are covered by the programme?</p>	<p>The programme covers travel costs for several (up to six) in-person activities (e.g. international events, learning exchanges). The travel costs that are covered by the programme are: round-trip economy class flights, visa application costs, arrival and departure transfers at destination (when needed, and only if public transport is not available), accommodation, and meals. These costs will align with and not exceed the standard reimbursement rates set by the EU.</p>

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2.2	How many people will be sponsored to participate in the in-person activities?	This depends on the activity. It is expected that a <u>minimum of one and maximum of three delegates</u> from each city/town/local authority will be financed to attend relevant programmatic activities.
2.3	Is my city/town/local authority expected to pay any direct costs?	No. However, your city/town/local authority must commit to providing human resources (e.g., time from staff members as required) to support the cooperation process, or in-kind contributions (e.g., offering a meeting space free of charge). Also, host cities may cover some hospitality costs such as local transport, coffee breaks, and/or welcome dinner.
2.4	Is there any funding provided to implement pilot projects?	No. The AURC programme will not provide funding for the implementation of pilot projects. However, the programme experts will make every effort to map and recommend alternative financing sources, including EU funded initiatives, and opportunities outside of AURC.
2.5	Can the programme cover staff costs people involved in the programme activities?	No. Only the travel costs and the time of dedicated experts are provided by the programme.

3. Eligibility Requirements & Call Procedures

Questions	Answers
3.1 Who is eligible to apply? How many cities/towns/local authorities will participate?	A small cohort of cities/towns/local authorities – located in Sweden, Finland, Norway, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Canada and the USA (Alaska) – <u>have been directly invited to apply</u> to the programme. It is expected that up to 15 cities/towns/local authorities will be accepted to participate.
3.2 When will the invitation to apply be sent?	Invitations to apply will be sent out to a pre-selected list of cities/towns/local authorities and the deadline to receive the completed application is <u>29th September 2023.</u> Applicants will be notified if they have been selected (or not selected) within in one month of application deadline.
3.3 What profile and experience should our main contact/coordinator from have?	The main contact/coordinator should be able to act as a delegate and lead/make decisions regarding the day-to-day activities of the AURC programme. The designated person needs to be fluent in English. Your team needs to have at least one person who can participate in international events in English.

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ANNEX 1: THEMATIC CLUSTER PRIORITIES & CROSS-CUTTING OVERALL CHALLENGES

CORE THEMATIC CLUSTER PRIORITIES:

1. A Socially Sustainable Arctic:

This cluster will focus on addressing the human dimension of sustainable development through sharing knowledge and best practices on policies, projects, actions and pilots to improve local socio-economic and living conditions for the inhabitants of the Arctic - e.g. *health and mental wellness; increasing food security, access to affordable housing, promotion of culture, active civil society; traditional and local knowledge; lifelong learning; attracting people to live in the north; creating attractive liveable cities and regions.*

2. Sustainable Inclusive Economic Development in the Arctic:

This cluster will focus on sharing knowledge and best practices on policies, projects, actions and pilots to promote sustainable and inclusive circular economy measures that can be directly taken up by locally to deliver tangible results. For example, local and regional authorities can work with the private sector to promote and incentivize circularity. Economic development strategies in the north should respect the traditional livelihoods and values of the Indigenous People and Communities whose industries such as food production, creative industries, and tourism development make an important contribution the local economy.¹

3. A Green Transition for the Arctic:

In the framework of the EU Green Deal, this cluster will focus on sharing knowledge and best practices on policies, projects, actions and pilots to promote a green transition in the Arctic. This could include prioritising measures for a sustainable and attractive local environment for residents; influencing the energy consumption and CO2 emissions of local population and industry; climate change adaptation and resilience, managing pollution and waste, development of green infrastructure, clean technology and green services including. eco-tourism; eco-friendly architecture and construction.

CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES:

- [Towards Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in the Arctic](#)

Sustainable development is not possible without gender equality and meaningful social inclusion of youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and marginalized groups. This cluster will focus on sharing knowledge, best practices, policies and action towards a more gender equal and socially inclusive Arctic – e.g. *links between gender, Indigenous Peoples, youth in entrepreneurship and labour market for the creation of local economic development strategies, gender equality and social inclusion in planning local infrastructure, ensuring women’s’ full participation in leadership and decision-making, climate change and its implications for gender equality and social inclusion.*

- [Digitalisation Agenda](#)

Focussing on the priorities of the EU digital policy - e.g. *digitally skilled population and workforce, secure and sustainable digital infrastructure, the digital transformation of businesses and the digitalisation of public services.*

¹<https://www.oecd.org/regional/regionaldevelopment/Policy-Workshop-European-Arctic-June-2018.pdf>