



SAON ROADS Open Partnership Meeting

29th March 2026

Note: AI has been used to generate the document, using the meeting transcription and the prompt *You are an expert meeting-minutes writer. Using the meeting transcript provided between the markers below, produce concise, professional minutes suitable for distribution to attendees and stakeholders. Followed by without bullets*

Facilitators: Sandy Starkweather and Margaret Rudolph.

The session was convened to provide an overview of the ROADS (Roadmap for Arctic Observing and Data Systems) process, introduce the newly developed Practitioner's Handbook, and orient participants—particularly those new to the process—to its purpose and structure within the Arctic Observing Summit. Participants represented a range of experience levels, from those unfamiliar with ROADS to individuals actively engaged in expert and advisory panels.

ROADS was described as a planning process rather than an organization, operating under the umbrella of SAON (Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks). Its purpose is to improve coordination and effectiveness of Arctic observing and data systems through a structured yet adaptive framework. The process supports distributed stewardship by fostering alignment among independently operating initiatives, emphasizing transparency, documentation, and continuous learning. It integrates self-organizing Expert Panels, which address specific observing challenges, with an appointed Advisory Panel that provides guidance and system-level coherence. The process unfolds across multiple phases, from initiation and alignment through to defining requirements and developing implementation strategies. Current pilot efforts span diverse topics including wildfire, permafrost, salmon observing, food security, and sea ice.

A central focus of the session was the introduction of the Practitioner's Handbook, which represents the culmination of several years of collaborative work. A consolidated workbook replaces earlier fragmented documentation tools, allowing users to iteratively update a single document over time. The revised guiding principles emphasize inclusion, equity, societal benefit, building on existing efforts, and iterative progress through an evolving structure.

The session also highlighted how ROADS is embedded within the broader AOS program. Participants were directed to sessions relevant to Expert Panels, Indigenous-led engagement, International Polar Year (IPY5) planning, and data systems, including issues of data sovereignty and inventory development. These sessions were positioned as key opportunities to deepen understanding of ROADS and its applications.

Discussion among participants focused heavily on future directions and challenges. A recurring theme was the need to further define the implementation phase of the ROADS process, which remains less developed compared to earlier stages. Participants emphasized that implementation will likely require different structures and outputs and should be informed by lessons from ongoing pilot efforts.

Concerns were raised regarding the complexity and resource demands of the process. Participants noted that ROADS can be time-intensive and costly, particularly in its full co-production form, and that securing sustained funding remains a challenge. There was interest in exploring ways to make the process more flexible and accessible, allowing groups to engage with selected components rather than the entire framework. At the same time, there was strong agreement that the rigor of the process—especially its emphasis on co-production and societal benefit—should be preserved, as it enhances credibility and supports justification for long-term observing efforts.

The importance of facilitation emerged as a critical factor for success. Participants highlighted the need for dedicated roles to guide groups through the process and to translate between different knowledge systems, such as scientific, policy, and community perspectives. Early-stage facilitation, sometimes described as a “phase zero,” was identified as particularly important but often under-resourced.

Several examples from pilot Expert Panels illustrated both challenges and successes. The wildfire panel’s evolution toward a broader focus on terrain trafficability demonstrated how the process can lead to reframing of key issues through collaborative deliberation. The salmon panel highlighted the complexity of translating between disciplinary languages and the need to produce multiple types of outputs tailored to different audiences. These experiences underscored the importance of flexibility and adaptability within the ROADS framework.

Participants also discussed efforts to streamline documentation and reduce administrative burden. The new handbook and workbook were seen as important steps in this direction, and there was interest in exploring the use of AI tools to assist with documentation and translation across formats. Balancing standardization with usability remains an ongoing challenge.

Overall, the session reflected a sense that ROADS is moving from a prolonged developmental phase toward greater convergence and stability. The Practitioner’s Handbook was recognized as a significant milestone, capturing collective learning while providing a clearer entry point for new participants. At the same time, the process remains adaptive, with ongoing opportunities to refine its structure, improve accessibility, and strengthen its impact.

The session concluded with an invitation for participants to provide feedback on the Handbook, engage in relevant AOS sessions throughout the week, and consider proposing new Expert Panels. Appreciation was expressed to all contributors, particularly those involved in the Expert Panels, for advancing the process through sustained effort and collaboration.

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Appendix 1

List of Participants

(Void)

A list of members of the ROADS Advisory Panel [is found here](#).

Appendix 2 - Agenda – ROADS Advisory Panel

Arctic ROADS Advisory Panel - Open Partnership Meeting

29th March 2026, 12:30-13:30 UTC, 14:30-15:30 CEST, 08:30-09:30 am EDT
Venue: Mogens Zielerstuen, University of Aarhus, Denmark (ASSW)

Meeting link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87546840013> password *learn*

Workspace for agendas and meeting notes:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rm3aGZcGuKaVMagkNNpU8sOEzEChKWns>

1. Welcome (Sandy, 5 min)
2. Introducing the concepts of Arctic ROADS (Sandy, 10 min)
3. Documentation Update from the Advisory Panel (Margaret 10 min):
 - a) What's in the deliberative draft materials?
 - b) Purpose of these tools
 - c) Ways to provide feedback
4. Engaging with ROADS at AOS 2026 (Jan Rene Larsen, 15 min)
 - a) EP sessions
 - b) CPK and Indigenous-led engagement sessions
 - c) Shaping ROADS
 - d) Data and Inventories
5. What is most important for Arctic ROADS in 2026-2027? (Sandy Starkweather, Discussion 20 min)