



International Network
for Governmental
Science Advice

INGSA North America: a chapter focused on science advice for cities

Organized by the Office of the President of the International Network for Governmental Science Advice (INGSA) and Chief Scientist of Québec, in the margin of the City Summit of the Americas

25 April 2023, 13:00 to 15:30
Hyatt Place Denver Downtown, 440 14th Street
Denver, Colorado

Moderators

Virginie Auger, Principal Advisor INGSA and International Affairs, Office of the Chief Scientist of Québec and President of INGSA

Simon Barnabé, Municipal Research Chair for sustainable cities, University of Québec in Trois-Rivières and Chief Scientist for Victoriaville

François William Croteau, CEO - Urban Resilience and Innovation Institute and former Mayor of Borough Rosemont La Petite-Patrie – Montréal

Summary

The workshop provided for a forum to continue the discussion, from a city representative perspective, on the development of an upcoming INGSA North American chapter focused on cities. Participants shared their thoughts and visions on the orientation of a pilot project that would assess the status of the scientific advice at the city level in North America as well as the aspiration of cities in terms of development of such capacity. The pilot project will provide the relevance or not of the need for the development of a North American INGSA chapter focused on cities; and identify gaps that could be bridged by such network.

The first section of the workshop, under the leadership of Mr. Barnabé, consisted of a discussion on the topic(s) that the pilot project should be focalizing on. Participants highlighted the fact that even within a city, there are different realities (socio-economic, geography, diversity, etc.) that should be considered in the choosing of the topic(s) to ensure inclusion and representativity. They welcomed the possibility of having more than one topic assessed in the pilot project to encompass the situation where cities could have or lack access to science advice on certain topics from legacy and/or proximity of academic or research institutions. Participants also mentioned that the topics selected should provide for the assessment of transdisciplinary, transversality and inclusivity of science advice, when applicable (with a specific mention for human rights).

On the selection of the topics, participants mentioned: waste management, movement of population, green spaces (trees), building material(s) (concrete and the way forward: alternative or eco-friendly production), as well as water management. They recommended that the pilot project observes consequences and impacts on cities, and especially its citizens, of having or not access to science advice as well as making or not data-informed decisions. They added that the project should assess the sustainability of the decisions and were interested in collecting post-facto information, which could be useful when developing cities next steps and action plans.

Participants recommended that the partnering for the research component of the pilot project should include a variety of academic institutions and not limit the cooperation with universities. They also stressed the idea of having geographic as well as thematic (city and research world understanding) representativity in the core team, encourage the on-site

assessment with a possibility to develop a mobility framework throughout North America, which would encourage participation and reduce bias in the assessment. Finally, it was mentioned that there could be benefits (provide access, produce data and financial support) to include private companies in this pilot project.

The second part of the workshop was under the leadership of Mr. Croteau. Participants were asked to reflect on the selection of partners that should be included in the pilot project and how to balance the selection of cities to ensure a representative assessment without diluting the information. Participants highlighted that the pilot project should not expect to cover all areas, topics and realities of North America and that expectations should be managed in the concept of the project.

One element highlighted was the need to include a variation of opportunities and realities in the city selection including size, budget, geographical position, population, language, presence academic or research institutions, access to data, etc. Participants recommended consultations with cities political and civil servants' representatives as well as with relevant stakeholders, including local institutions, NGOs and to the extent possible, the population. Participants encouraged the use of existing organizations of cities (C40 Cities, US Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, etc.) as vessels for communication and engagement.

When discussing on promoting involvement in the pilot project, participants recommended that national and subnational authorities should be involved, to provide for a political leadership and to create a positive momentum. Participants recommended that the pilot project should include an incentive to contribute (mobility scheme, financial support, etc.) and that a pilot project ambassador could be named.

Many elements were highlighted by participants which were relevant to both sections of the workshop. Namely, the need for the pilot project to assess and include information on the method used in decision making (bottoms up or top down) and the level of utilization of data (collect, analysis and management) in the cities selected. They also mentioned the need to assess the level of public and private consultation of cities in decision making and the impact on communities.

Participants were overall very interested in following up on the development of an INGSA North American Chapter and the gaps it could help to address. They also mentioned that such network could encourage continuity from and for cities in science advice that is not always possible following changes of political leadership.

Next steps

The office of the President of INGSA will develop the concept note for a pilot project that will take into consideration the recommendations of the different discussions. This concept note will serve as a reference for stakeholders to contribute to this upcoming pilot project.