**Bridging the Gap – Areas of Research Interest topic guide – funder interview**

This project aims to better understand how Areas of Research Interest are developed, shaped and implemented. To do this, we (the ESRC-Government Office for Science Areas of Research Interest Fellows) are talking with officials and analysts across government departments, and with academics and researchers involved in ARI processes, as well as other relevant stakeholders. We are facilitating the prioritisation of ARIs, and working with departments to facilitate academic engagement with ARIs, aiming to produce actions to address identified research needs. We are now seeking to learn and reflect on the prioritisation and engagement activities we have worked with you on, which include research prioritisation exercises, workshops, and working groups as part of the Rebuilding a Resilient Britain Programme.

1. Can you start by describing your current role?
2. Before we talk about the work we have been engaged in, can I start by asking you to tell me a bit about your previous experience of academic and policy engagement (probe for involvement with individuals/ orgs, positive/ negative experiences)
3. What activities do you and your organisation undertake to support academic/policy engagement?
4. When you do this work, can you tell me a bit about what you are hoping this engagement will achieve (probe for goals, underlying assumptions)
5. What do you see as the role of research funders in supporting evidence use?
6. Do you see any disadvantages to academics in engaging with policy?
7. How big/ small a part of your role do you consider supporting engagement to be?
8. To what extent do you feel well equipped and supported to do the work you do (probe for institutional support, skills etc.)
9. Turning to the Rebuilding a Resilient Britain working groups, how did this experience compare to any previous engagement activities you have been involved in?
10. We were trying to improve diversity in terms of academic engagement (geography, gender, ethnicity, career stage) – do you have any thoughts on the challenges of improving diversity in academic engagement with policy
11. To what extent did you feel the groups offered opportunities for interdisciplinary conversations to take place?
12. Do you feel there are many opportunities to discuss policy challenges from an interdisciplinary perspective?
13. How do you think academic-policy engagement work could be better supported in future (probe for time, funding, institutional/ managerial support?)