

Areas of Research Interest (ARI)

What are they?

Why are they?

How can they help you?

Introduction

In this session we will

- Understand the **development of ARIs**
- Establish how **ARIs can be useful to researchers** pre and post funding application stage
- Offer clarity as to **how to engage** with an ARIs

Development of ARIs



*'Ensuring a successful UK research
endeavour'*

BIS/RCUK, 2015

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a801c6fe5274a2e87db7eaa/BIS-15-625-ensuring-a-successful-UK-research-endeavour.pdf> (see p22, 23, 25)

Development of ARIs



"On the Government side, procedures need to be further developed to *capture the full range of governmental research interests* involved, including the natural and social sciences, and the *work on evidence gaps* in relation to public services"

p22, my emphasis, 'Ensuring a successful UK research endeavour' BIS/RCUK, 2015

"Government and other public agencies *want knowledge that is useful* in developing useful *applications, including good policy*. This *may require original research*, but it may also entail the *systematic use of research resources* which have been generated by previous studies, and which *require research skills for their analysis*."

p23, 'Ensuring a successful UK research endeavour' BIS/RCUK, 2015

"Supporting a more systematic *expression of Government's own research needs*:

- There is a need across the *full range of Government Departments* for a more strategic approach in relation to their departmental R&D programmes. This is partly a matter of securing the right levels of resource, but includes *maintaining 'statements of need'*, in terms of the most important research questions confronting the Departments. These will require work across the Government *analytical professions to develop*."

p24, my emphasis, 'Ensuring a successful UK research endeavour' BIS/RCUK, 2015

Development of ARIs



Variable Departmental responses (to 2019)

- Sporadic
- Scope
- Contact/responsiveness

Development of ARIs



https://www.upen.ac.uk/what_we_offer/reports/UPEN_ARI_Report.pdf

Universities Policy Engagement Network Establishes ARI subcommittee (Spring 2019)

- 'State of ARIs'
- Recommendations for Govt (outreach/ communication/funding)
- Recommendations for UPEN (brokerage/comms/impact eval/ARI development)

Development of ARIs



Kathryn Oliver
LSHTM



Annette Boaz
LSHTM

ARI Fellows appointed (Autumn 2019)

- Vallance & Rubin champions (GOS)
- Review development and content of ARIs
- Recommendations for improvement

Incredibly important academic input to evolve ARIs supported by GCSA

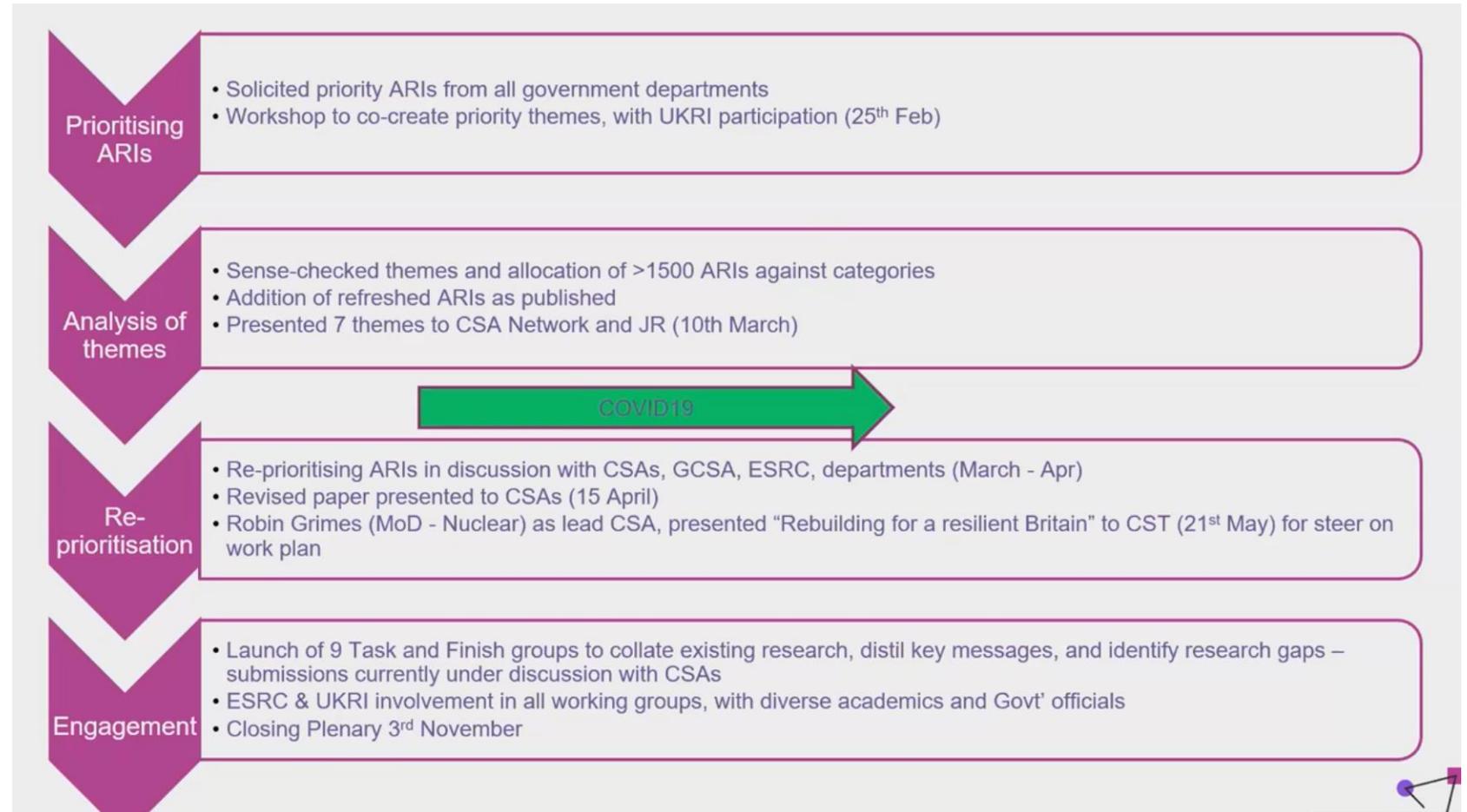
Development of ARIs



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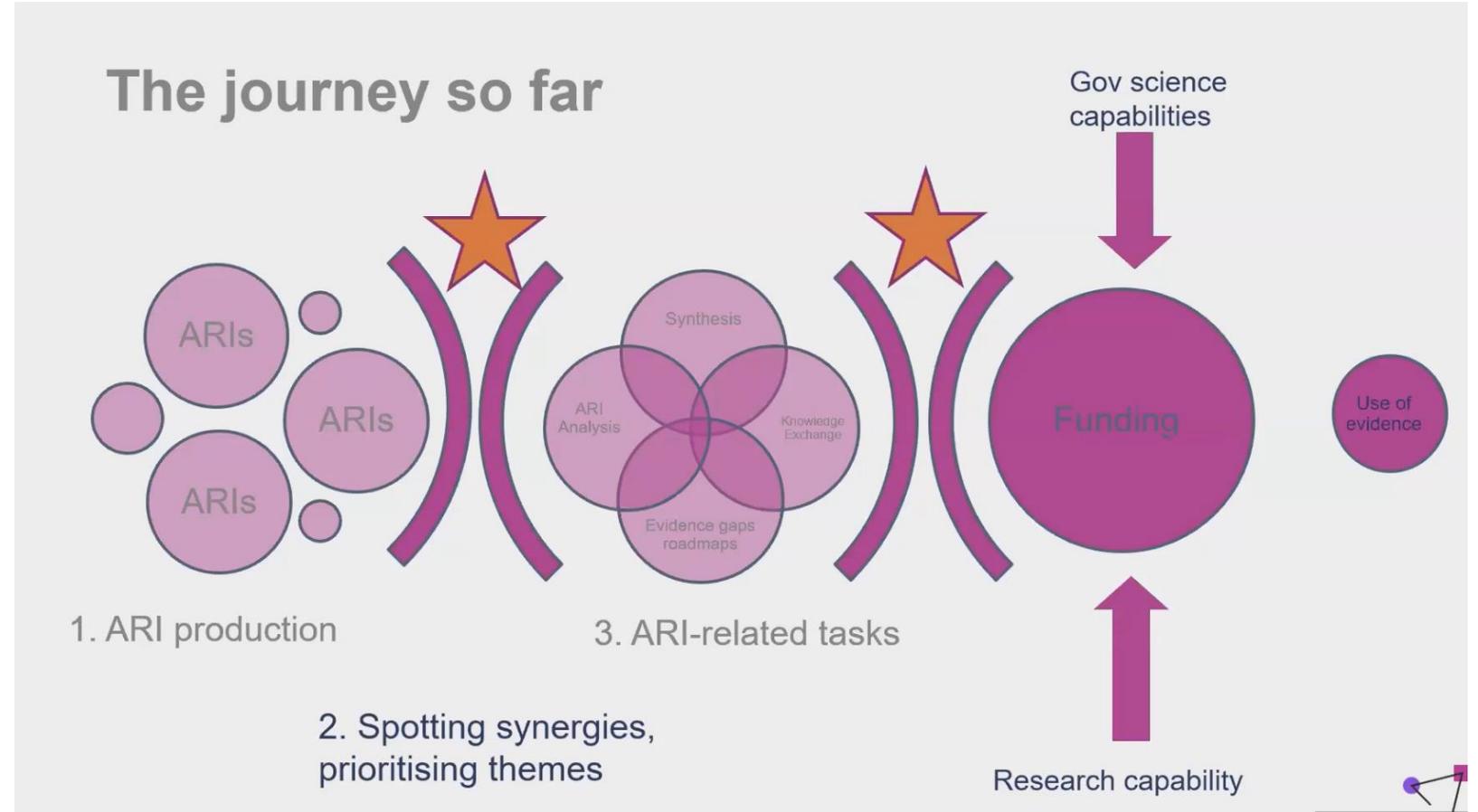
Development of ARIs



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Development of ARIs



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Development of ARIs

Universities Policy Engagement Network & GOS ARI Fellows

Rebuilding a Resilient Britain ARIs

The Rebuilding a Resilient Britain programme was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, to address aspect of Britain's recovery from the pandemic over the medium-to long-term.

ESRC/ARI Fellows Professor Annette Boaz and Dr Kathryn Oliver, funded by ESRC and working with the Government Office for Science ARI team and with government departmental Chief Scientific Advisers, identified a set of topics and themes based on existing departmental ARIs that should be addressed as a priority. These ARIs were divided into 9 themes, which were addressed by 9 Working Groups consisting of researchers, funding bodies and policy makers.

Each Working Group produced a report, identifying existing evidence, gaps in the evidence base, and key messages around the ARIs (note that the reports are the views of the working group members and are not indicative of government policy). These are linked below.

The reports have been made available online as a resource for academics, policy makers and funders interested in what the groups collated on what is already known; and where the current research gaps seem to be on 9 topics of cross cutting interesting to government departments.

ARIs were identified by UPEN members as a key area of focus for the network in 2019. In the Rebuilding a Resilient Britain programme of work, UPEN were actively engaged in the identification of expertise.

Development of ARIs

Parliamentary ARI Fellows

- Goes **beyond** Nurse Review recommendations. 2017-19 Liaison Committee recommendation. Longer call, supplement Inquiry calls, survey format
- 2020-2024 **8 ARIs by 6 UK Parliament Select Committee & 6 ARIs by 4 Senedd Select Committee** delivered
- UK Parliament and Senedd (Scottish Parliament in discussion)



Rob Davies
UCL



Nicky Buckley
Cambridge



Development of ARIs



Government
Office for Science

Universities Policy Engagement Network ARI Subcommittee, 2020-2024

- Engagement with GOS facilitated **CSA ARI Network**
- Shape **ARI interface** with academics
- x4 Departmental '**soft launches**' for ARIs to Knowledge Brokers

Development of ARIs



<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-oxUo1w3XoONA-LvcwOtT4Ce3ECLhutt/view>

Universities Policy Engagement Network ARI Subcommittee, 2023

- Aims to support **brokerage & comms**
- 'Synthesis of a synthesis'
- Highly **labour intensive** (instantly out of date)

Development of ARIs

Enter the ARI Database...

Where can research make a difference?

Search, browse or analyse Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) from UK governmental bodies, to see how your research could help solve problems and inform government policy.

Try 'renewable energy'

Search

or

View all ARIs



Kathryn Oliver
LSHTM



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<https://ari.org.uk/>

Development of ARIs



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Enter the ARI Database...

- Near real time updates
- Key word search across all ARI (Departmental & ALB)
- Summaries of relevant research to avoid duplication
- Clear contact information

A step change in ARI accessibility & utility

Utility for researchers

Where can research make a difference?

Search, browse or analyse [Areas of Research Interest \(ARIs\)](#) from UK governmental bodies, to see how your research could help solve problems and inform government policy.

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Pre-funding application

- Identify govt interest in your subject matter
- Engage with relevant policymakers (civil servants)
- Letters of Support

Post award

- Tensioning findings/recommendations with govt evidence needs
- Policy roundtable
- Rationale to engage

<https://ari.org.uk/>

Utility for researchers

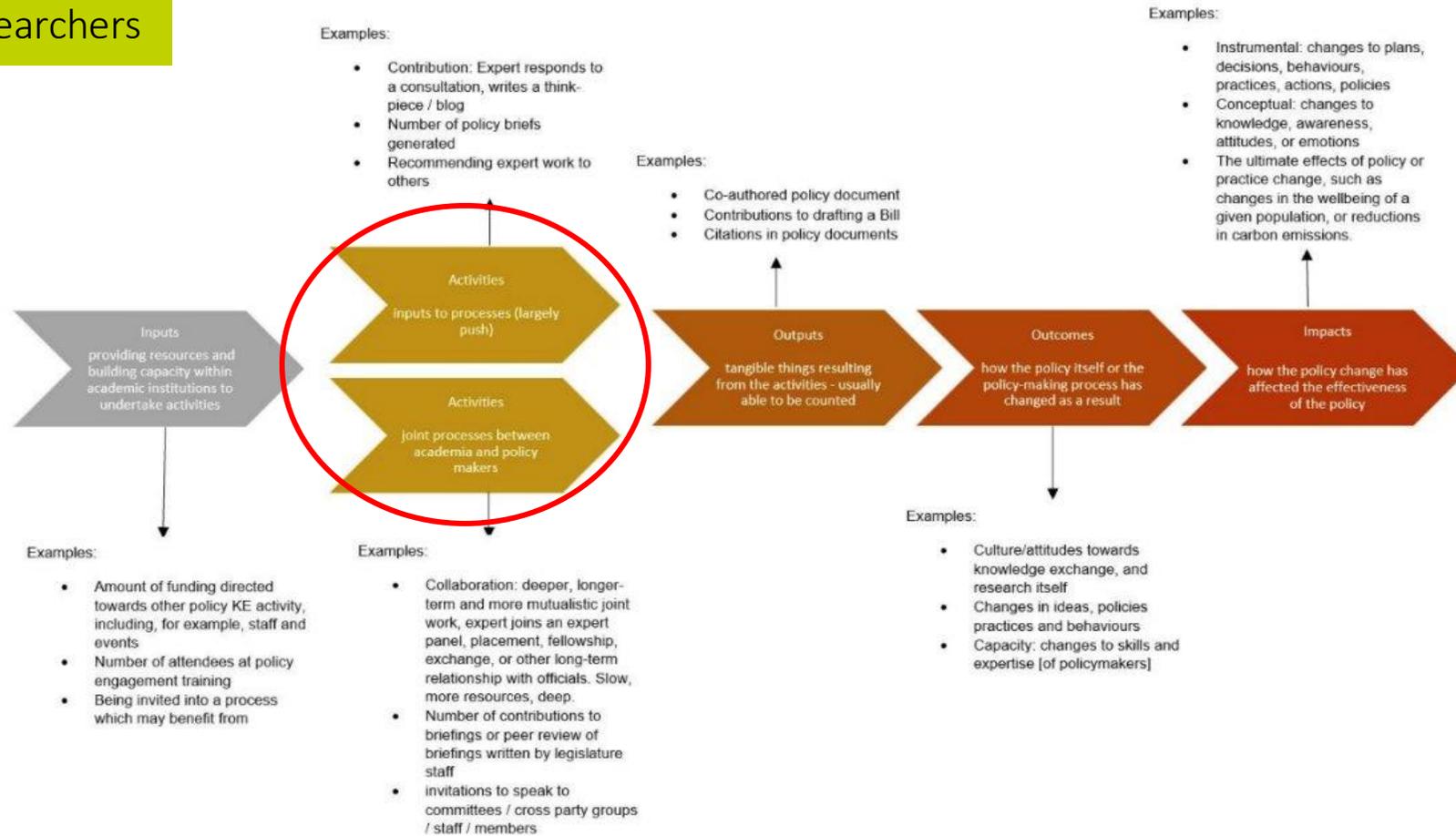


Figure 38 – Research England draft logic model of examples comprising potential HEP policy engagement pathways



Engaging with Govt

Where can research make a difference?

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<https://ari.org.uk/>

Policy activities

Academics and external organisations working together to co-produce research evidence that addresses an ARI in the form of a **policy brief, executive summaries, slidedeck and presentation**

Evaluation of past and current interventions around an ARI;

Carry out a survey or conduct interviews to gain **qualitative insights on an ARI**;

Policy roundtables, or evidence seminars (to facilitate knowledge exchange and co-develop ideas) which answer an ARI

Practitioner meetings and/or **workshops** based on an ARI;

Activities to **cultivate and enhance relationships between academic and non-academic users/stakeholders** (e.g. network building/consolidating) in relation to a specific ARI;

Co-design of research-led tools, resources, or toolkits across a range of multimedia (e.g., building websites or data repositories, creating and disseminating videos) linked to an ARI.

Stakeholder analysis related to a specific ARI;

Further resources

Oliver & Boaz are at the forefront of this work. PPS thoroughly recommend following their [Transforming Evidence](#) group.



['Transforming evidence for policy and practice: creating space for new conversations'](#) Oliver & Boaz, 2021, Nature

['The hard labour of connecting research to policy during COVID-19'](#) Oliver & Boaz, 2021, LSE Impact Blog

['Areas of research interest: joining the dots between government and research at last?'](#) 2022 Oliver, Boaz, Cuccatto, 2022, F1000 Research

['How well do the UK government's 'Areas of Research Interest' work as boundary objects to facilitate research use in policymaking?'](#) Oliver & Boaz, 2023, Policy Press

[Enter the dragon: Senedd committees Areas of Research Interest pilot project](#), Davies, 2022, CAPE Blog

[Beyond the usual suspects: diversifying engagement with Parliamentary select committees](#)

Davies, 2021, CAPE Blog

Next steps

New Things Fund call 'NTF x ARI'

Open until Thursday 29th February 2024 (11.59 pm)

More information and applications [here](#)

Contact PPS to **discuss your application**

or ARIs more generally

publicpolicy@soton.ac.uk

Questions?