

## **ESRC/ GO Science Areas of Research Interest (ARI) Fellowships**

### **Summary**

There has long been acknowledgement of the desirability of the UK's outstanding research and policy communities working more closely together to address pressing questions that could be well informed by research for wider public benefit. In order to facilitate this, Government Departments have published Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) to facilitate researchers' engagement with areas identified as priorities. This is a significant opportunity to build research-policy collaborations to better inform policy and ensure that research makes a contribution to improving outcomes for people.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Government Office for Science (GO Science) wish to appoint two Areas of Research Interest (ARI) fellowships, for one year (with potential to extend to two years), starting as soon as feasible from mid October 2019. The aim of these fellowships is to enable genuine co-creation (of projects, analyses and programmes of work) between researchers and those making and informing policy. These two fellows will be the ARI Research Engagement Fellow and ARI Policy Engagement Fellow. The Fellows will work together as a team, and with GO Science (and the Chief Scientific Advisers network) and ESRC, to facilitate researchers and government departments (and relevant stakeholders) working together to develop and take forward research and knowledge exchange that addresses the ARIs.

These fellowships represent a unique opportunity for researchers and policy engagement experts to work at the heart of government at a time of rapid change and investment in the research-policy environment, potentially playing a key role in shaping the future of science capability in government and research-policy engagement in the UK.

#### **1) ARI Research Engagement Fellow**

This role will have core responsibility for identifying and convening research expertise appropriate to address selected ARIs. The fellow will work to enable dialogue with government departments to refine and develop the ARIs. The Research Engagement fellow will work closely with the Policy Engagement Fellow in the development and delivery of work between cross-disciplinary/ sector expert groups of researchers and policy makers to identify and design the research approaches needed to address them.

#### **2) ARI Policy Engagement Fellow**

This role will have core responsibility for proactively engaging with relevant policy makers across government. The fellow will take lead responsibility for the development and delivery of evidence-informed and innovative methods and tools to facilitate interactions between cross-disciplinary/sector expert groups of researchers and policy makers to support refinement of ARIs.

Both roles are open to candidates with a proven track record of excellence in social science research and/or engagement with policy makers, but these two posts are intended to bring distinct and complementary skills to this initiative. We would welcome applications from teams that have worked together before but individuals will be judged on their own merits.

Each appointment is available up to 80% FTE; applicants are invited to outline their time commitment against the aims of each role. Applications will be assessed by a panel of independent academic and policy experts, with advice to the panel on the strategic context and priorities from ESRC and GO Science. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview in the first week of September 2019.

Applications will need to be submitted on the basis of this specification and the associated guidance via our online electronic submission system (Je-S) by 16:00 on 6 August 2019. Applicants should note that these posts are expected to be based at least 4 days a month in London at GO Science, which is part of BEIS (Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy). Applicants will need

to undergo pre-employment checks carried out by BEIS HR for Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) clearance. Applicants are requested to discuss the implications for other commitments with their institution on application if feasible, to enable take-up as soon as possible in October 2019.

## **Background**

The Government Office for Science (GO Science) works in support of the Government Chief Scientific Advisor (GCSA) to ensure government policies and decisions are informed by the best scientific evidence and strategic long-term thinking.

GO Science is leading on science capability across government, with a focus on increasing the use of research in policy decision-making. A core part of this is the development of capability through engagement with research and improving dialogue between academics and government, for which ARIs are a key platform. Many of the ARIs would require social science, alongside wider expertise, to address them, and therefore social science expertise is desirable for these roles as well as a willingness to work with experts in fields beyond social science where appropriate. The appetite for engagement with interdisciplinary social science expertise in government represents a significant opportunity for research-policy collaborations to inform policy development.

ESRC and GO Science wish to support two fellowships to capitalise on the development of the ARIs to drive forward the potential for collaborative dialogue between researchers and policy makers in UK government to help further improve outcomes for public benefit. These fellowships are intended to refine and develop ARI questions, clarify next steps needed to take forward research and knowledge exchange (either by government or other stakeholders) and help inform the ways in which ARIs are developed going forward. These fellowships represent an exciting opportunity for the fellows to play a key role in the development of policy-research engagement around the ARIs and in enhancing the use of research in policy making for public benefit.

An additional member of staff from GO Science will work full time alongside the fellows, with senior support, supporting the Fellows to engage across government, develop deliberative practices and provide additional communications/ administrative support for these roles.

## **Person Specifications**

### **1) ARI Research Engagement Fellow**

This role will have primary responsibility for identifying and convening *research expertise* appropriate to addressing the ARIs and enable dialogue with government departments to refine and develop the ARIs. The fellow will work closely with the Policy Engagement Fellow in the development and delivery of deliberative dialogue between cross-disciplinary/sector expert groups of researchers and policy makers to identify the research approaches needed to address them.

Funding of up to £100,000 fEC (full economic costing) can be requested over the duration of the award to cover the fellow's time and costs associated with delivering the engagement activities. Applicants may request funding from ESRC for up to 80% FEC.

The fellow will be expected to:

*Convene research expertise to engage with policy*

- 1) Work closely with GO Science to review, prioritise and select departmental and cross-cutting questions and themes within the ARIs to establish cross-governmental value for the fellowship period.

- 2) For the selected ARIs lead in the identification of appropriate cross-disciplinary research (topic and methodological) expertise, bridging disciplinary boundaries within and beyond social sciences.
- 3) Lead proactive outreach to engage research organisations, research networks/ centres and learned societies to identify and engage research expertise on priority questions/ themes.
- 4) Work closely with the Policy Engagement Fellow and GO Science to convene research-policy expert groups to address the agreed priority questions/ themes.
- 5) Provide intellectual support, fresh thinking and challenge to the expert groups in refining the priority questions/ themes and developing recommendations for next steps to address them.
- 6) Work closely with the ARI Policy Engagement Fellow in the development and delivery of evidence-based and innovative approaches, methods and tools for cross-disciplinary/sector dialogue between policy makers and researchers to facilitate:
  - a. Refinement of priority questions/ themes and proactively lead the group towards identification of the research approaches needed to address them.
  - b. Engagement of government departments, GO Science and ESRC in the development of recommendations for the use/ synthesis of existing evidence (or partial/ relevant evidence), as well as to shape research (to be commissioned/ conducted by departments or through UKRI/ ESRC) calls for funding to ensure that they are useful/ deliverable.

This role is not intended to provide analytical support or consultancy to address the questions/ themes under discussion. However, the Fellow may choose to provide policy briefings that signpost the existing research and policy developments/ context that underpins and addresses/ partially addresses the questions/ themes to inform and evidence their recommendations of next steps.

#### *Identifying opportunities for sustained dialogue with researchers around the ARIs*

- Through engagement activities, identify opportunities for sustained engagement with policy makers within the existing research environment (alongside the Policy Engagement Fellow), including key influencers, gateway organisations and networks for building connections and capability, and opportunities to work in partnership during the fellowship and beyond.
- Recommend a strategic focus for where ESRC and GO Science may be able to contribute most in stimulating research-policy engagement with departments over the longer term. This should aim to inform how to:
  - Stimulate lasting arrangements to facilitate connections between multi-disciplinary research expertise and departments, sensitive to the needs of different departments, - and how such arrangements could potentially enable iterative development of ARIs *prior to*, as well as post, publication.
  - Partner to build capability for interdisciplinary policy-research engagement within the social sciences.
  - Address issues of equality and diversity of voices in the policy-making process

The successful candidate will need to demonstrate:

#### **Essential**

- 1) A track record in social science research: A wide understanding of, and excellent track record in, the social sciences for example through leading a major collaborative research initiative or group, and/or leadership of a breadth of research projects and teams across a range of issues and methods. Exceptional candidates will also be able to demonstrate experience of leadership and collaboration in an interdisciplinary environment within and beyond the social sciences.
- 2) Experience and track record in policy engagement, for example through co-production of research design and delivery, or fulfilling a relevant strategic advisory role in government

over a sustained period. Exceptional candidates will also be able to demonstrate experience of cross-sector experience, working in both research and policy environments.

- 3) A commitment to ethical principles for engagement to support an environment that engenders open, transparent decision-making and independent and credible advice.
- 4) Experience in proactively creating, maintaining and promoting a strong network of connections across research and policy contexts.
- 5) Outstanding communication skills, suitable for engagement with research sector stakeholders and across government. Exceptional candidates will also have excellent facilitation and negotiation skills, able to maintain clarity and conviction, surface tensions and misunderstandings, and secure agreement within cross-sector and cross-disciplinary contexts.
- 6) Strong project management experience.

### **Desirable**

- 7) Understanding of the ESRC and GO Science's mission, the vision for UKRI and the broader funding and policy landscape.
- 8) An understanding of the structural challenges and barriers to building policy-engagement capability and an awareness of the key stakeholders with an interest in developing research-policy engagement capability. Exceptional candidate will also have experience of collaborative working and developing partnerships with policy making organisations.
- 9) An understanding of the challenges and opportunities for social science leadership of interdisciplinary dialogue in a policy context.

## 2) ARI Policy Engagement Fellow

This role will have primary responsibility for proactively *engaging with relevant policy makers* across government and take lead responsibility for the development and delivery of evidence-informed and innovative methods and tools to facilitate deliberative dialogue between cross-disciplinary/sector expert groups of researchers and policy makers to support refinement of ARIs and proactively lead the groups towards consensus on recommendations.

Funding of up to £100,000 fEC (full economic costing) per post can be requested over the duration of the award to cover the fellow's time and costs associated with delivering the engagement activities. Applicants may request funding from ESRC for up to 80% FEC.

The fellow will be expected to:

*Convene policy expertise to engage with researchers*

- Work closely with GO Science to prioritise departmental and cross-cutting ARI questions and themes to enable cross-governmental value.
- Provide leadership in the identification of appropriate policy expertise across government and work closely with the ARI Research Engagement Fellow and GO Science to convene research-policy expert groups to address the agreed priority questions/ themes.
- Lead engagement with GO Science, ESRC, heads of policy profession, initiatives and networks and arms-length and professional bodies to identify and engage policy expertise on priority questions/ themes.
- Lead the development of evidence-based and innovative approaches, methods and tools for cross-disciplinary/sector deliberative dialogue between policy makers and researchers to facilitate:
  - Refinement of priority questions/ themes and proactively lead the group towards identification of the policy context and drivers behind ARIs and the research approaches needed to address them.
  - Engagement of departments, Go Science and ESRC in the development of recommendations for the use/ synthesis of existing evidence (or partial/ relevant evidence), as well as to shape research (to be commissioned/ conducted by departments or through UKRI/ ESRC) calls for funding to ensure that they are useful/ deliverable.

This role is not intended to provide analytical support or consultancy to address the questions/ themes under discussion. However, the Fellow may choose to provide policy briefings that signpost the existing research and policy developments/ context that underpins and addresses/ partially addresses the questions/ themes to inform and evidence their recommendations of next steps.

*Developing capability for research-policy engagement*

- Lead the design of an approach to rapidly assessing/ building the skills/ awareness (eg of research methods/ policy processes/ context) of the researchers and policy leads attending expert groups to maximise the potential outcomes from expert group discussions.
- Developing effective practice for research-policy engagement,
- Reflection on lessons learned that could inform practical guidance, tools and tips for use by UKRI and policy makers to facilitate research-policy engagement and present them to Go Science and ESRC staff.
- Provide advice to ESRC and Go Science on how to best build capability amongst its staff to facilitate research-policy engagement and develop principles to guide ethical engagement.

The successful candidate will need to demonstrate:

### **Essential**

- An excellent track record in bringing researchers and policy stakeholders together, for example through facilitating policy co-production of research design and delivery or evidence-informed collaborative strategy/ policy development in a central government or similar organisation. Exceptional candidates will also be able to demonstrate experience of cross-sector working in both research and policy environments.
- An excellent knowledge of, and considerable experience of development and delivery of approaches to facilitate dialogue and lead conversations/ activities towards a clear, agreed way forward with a realistic plan for implementation.
- A commitment to ethical principles for engagement to support an environment that engenders open, transparent decision-making and independent and credible advice.
- Experience in proactively creating, maintaining and promoting a strong network of connections across research and policy. Exceptional candidates will have established links with key influencers and networks in research-policy engagement on which they can build.
- Outstanding communication skills, suitable for engagement with research sector stakeholders and across government
- Exceptional facilitation and negotiation skills, able to maintain clarity and conviction, surface tensions and misunderstandings, and secure agreement within cross-sector and cross-disciplinary contexts.
- Strong project management experience.

### **Desirable**

- A strong understanding of the potential benefits of, and differing sensitivities and needs in, bringing research and policy expertise together to develop research collaboratively.
- An understanding of the structural challenges and barriers to building policy-engagement capability and an awareness of the key stakeholders with an interest in developing research-policy capability in the social sciences. Exceptional candidates will have experience of developing and delivering collaborative working and developing partnerships between research organisations and policy makers.
- An understanding of the challenges and opportunities for social science leadership of interdisciplinary dialogue in a policy context.
- Understanding of the ESRC and GO Science's mission, the vision for UKRI and the broader funding and policy landscape

### **Reporting requirements/working arrangements**

It is expected that the fellow will be based at least 4 days a month in London at Government Office for Science (which is part of the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy), working closely with GO Science and the other ARI Fellow, and will maintain close contact with the ESRC staff overseeing this programme of work. In addition to the regular contact with GO Science, the Fellows will be expected to meet with ESRC staff (usually in London) in person or via teleconference at least once a month to discuss progress and future plans. Although primary contact with the ESRC will be via the Head of Policy and Practice Impact, there may also be the need to develop links with specialist staff within ESRC and relevant colleagues in other research councils and UKRI.

The Fellows will be expected to establish a series of workshops during the fellowship which are likely to be held in London to maximise policy engagement in Whitehall. We would welcome innovative proposals as to the scale and nature of this series of workshops. Applicants should cost in the region of 6 to 8 workshops and include a showcasing event. Attendees will be agreed with GO Science and the ESRC. GO Science will provide secretariat support for activities planned.

## Eligibility

Both Fellows must be employed at a UK research organisation eligible for ESRC funding for the duration of the fellowship (but the Policy Engagement Fellow need not be employed as an academic member of staff). For further details please see the eligibility requirements in the Research Funding Guide (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/>). Applicants will need to undergo pre-employment checks carried out by BEIS HR for Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) clearance.

## Further enquiries

Enquiries relating to ESRC research funding rules and proposal procedures should be addressed to:

- ESRC Policy and Practice Impact
  - [ESRCPolicyImpact@esrc.ukri.org](mailto:ESRCPolicyImpact@esrc.ukri.org)

Enquiries relating to technical aspects of the Je-S form should be addressed to:

- Je-S helpdesk  
Email: [jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 01793 444164  
Monday to Thursday 08:30 to 17:00, Fridays 8:30-16:30 (UK time, excluding public and other holidays)

Enquiries related to the role may be addressed to:

- Jacqui Karn, Head of Policy and Practice Impact, ESRC
  - [ESRCPolicyImpact@esrc.ukri.org](mailto:ESRCPolicyImpact@esrc.ukri.org)
- Giulia Cuccato, Head of CSA Network support, science advice and engagement, Government Office for Science
  - [Giulia.Cuccato@go-science.gov.uk](mailto:Giulia.Cuccato@go-science.gov.uk)