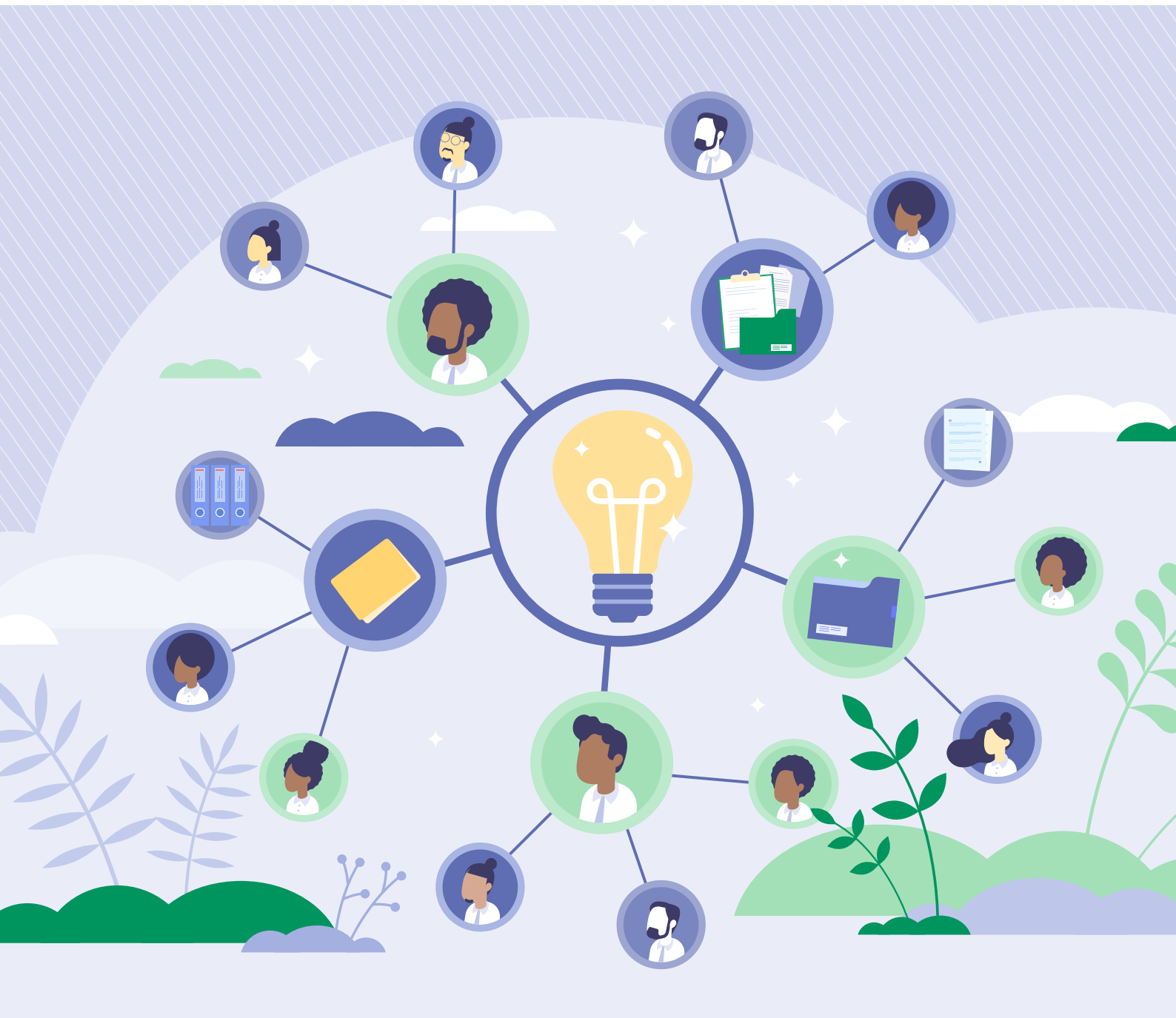


# CAPE Resource Navigator



April 2025



## Introducing CAPE toolkits

**CAPE toolkits are designed for knowledge mobilisers who are seeking to kickstart or increase engagement between universities and policymakers. They are practice-based, easy-to-digest, and intended as a starting-off point for people to adapt to their own work and contexts.**

Between 2020-2024, CAPE delivered, tested, and evaluated different ways of facilitating engagement between academics and policy professionals. This has included training programmes to help policymakers understand academic evidence; knowledge exchange events such as roundtables and workshops; seed funding to support collaborative projects between academics and policy partners; and Policy Fellowships to place academics in policy organisations and for policymakers to visit universities to discuss their pressing policy questions with experts.

Alongside this, we have been developing open access resources to share our learning. Using our on-the-ground experience, we have created practical resources—ranging from templates and toolkits to blogs and case studies—that address key challenges for academic-policy engagement.

CAPE's resources have been developed collaboratively with our policy partners and using practice-based experience. Our toolkits and guides are designed to be flexible so they can be adapted to meet the specific needs of different organisational contexts. These resources are intended as an entry point into addressing common challenges in academic-policy engagement and to inspire new and deeper forms of engagement. We encourage practice-based feedback on all CAPE resources, to improve their efficacy and to ensure that future resources respond to the needs of those who work in academic-policy engagement.

### Choose your toolkit

This Resource Navigator compiles CAPE's resources, and, in addition to prompting questions and practical templates, it includes further reading, such as case studies to provide real-life examples of undertaking academic-policy engagement.

To help navigate our resources and identify those most relevant, this guide includes details on resource type, intended audience, application, and complexity level.

If you are interested in exploring further any of these resources or would like guidance and support in their application, please contact [Sarah Chaytor](#), or [Olivia Stevenson](#) at UCL Public Policy.



## Are you...

### ...interested in improving the use of research evidence in policy processes?

The **Engaging with Evidence toolkit**, **Rapid Evidence Assessments guide** and **Areas of Research Interest: A Practical Guide** can help.



Engaging with  
Evidence toolkit



Rapid Evidence  
Assessments guide



Areas of Research Interest:  
A Practical Guide

### ...developing projects where partners collaborate from the get-go?

Our **Project Scope Template** is a great starting point.

For collaborative projects at regional level (with local authorities and Mayoral combined authorities), our **Co-Production in Regional Academic-Policy Engagement** guide outlines best practices for knowledge exchange.

For co-developing policy fellowships, our **Research to Policy Fellowships: Six Pillars for Optimising Success** toolkit can aid you in identifying the best practices.



Project Scope Template



Co-Production in Regional  
Academic-Policy Engagement



Research to Policy Fellowships:  
Six Pillars for Optimising Success

### ...involved in helping create connections between academic and policymaking organisations?

The **Hosting Policy Fellows guide** and the **Awarding Funding for Collaborative Academic-Policy Projects** toolkit walk you through how to establish fellowship programmes, collaboration funds and other mechanisms within a university or research institution. To help universities develop more effective models, methods, and measures of success in policy engagement, our guide **Growing a university policy engagement function** can be helpful.



Hosting Policy Fellows guide



Awarding Funding for Collaborative  
Academic-Policy Projects



Growing a university policy  
engagement function

### ...setting up contracts for academic placements or fellowships in policy organisations?

Check out our **CAPE Policy Fellowships Contracts Guidance Note**.



CAPE Policy Fellowships  
Contracts Guidance Note



## Engaging with Evidence Toolkit

### ↓ Download Now

**What is it?** A toolkit on how to use, synthesise, scrutinise, and engage with evidence and expertise for policy development to support evidence-informed policymaking.

**Who is it for?** People who work in government (national, regional, or local), public institutions, and third sector looking to develop evidence use and uptake in policy development.

**How to use it?** Divided into seven modules for flexible use, based on priorities and time constraints. The average time per module is approximately three hours. We recommend using this with ongoing policy issues/topics of concern and with the help of a facilitator.

**What you need to use it?** Requires limited to no prior knowledge of academic-policy engagement; suitable for those in policy who want to use research evidence and engage with academic experts.

**When to use it?** At the initial stages of policy development, when you are seeking to make use of evidence to inform the process.



#### Further reading:

**What works to promote research-policy engagement?** A review of research policy engagement activities from organisations world-wide.

**Evidence: from engagement to impact** describes insights from the Policy Knowledge Brokerage Forum of civil servants across government, convened by CAPE.





## Areas of Research Interest: A Practical Guide

### [Download Now](#)

**What is it?** A guide for the development of an Area of Research Interest (ARI), which sets out the key stages involved in the process, showing successful examples of it.

**Who is it for?** Policy organisations that wish to develop Areas of Research Interest to identify their evidence needs and to support engagement with researchers.

**How to use it?** This guide simplifies the ARI process, helping developers navigate the steps required to take an ARI from ambition to action, while complementing existing government guidance. The guide is intended to be adapted to your own context and needs.

**What you need to use it?** No prior knowledge is required, but it is important to spend time defining or clarifying research priorities to make full use of this guide.

**When to use it?** When initiating the process of determining an ARI to identify your organisation's policy needs.



#### Further reading:

**The 'evidence mosaic': helping parliamentary committees understand complex issues through Areas of Research Interest** discusses how the use of ARIs has encouraged diversity in evidence.

**Beyond the usual suspects: diversifying engagement with Parliamentary select committees** details the support of CAPE Fellow Rob Davies in the creation of ARIs in parliamentary select committees.

**Developing Areas of Research Interest through CAPE**, a video talking about the value of ARIs and the difference they have made in increasing the diversity of researchers that policy organisations engage with.



## Rapid Evidence Assessments: a guide for commissioners, funders, and policymakers

### ↓ Download Now

**What is it?** A guide to support policy organisations to commission a rapid evidence assessment, a pragmatic to understand the available evidence on a policy issue.

**Who is it for?** Commissioners, funders, policymakers, and knowledge mobilisers interested in commissioning rapid evidence assessments.

**How to use it?** As a reference guide on how to approach the review commissioning process.

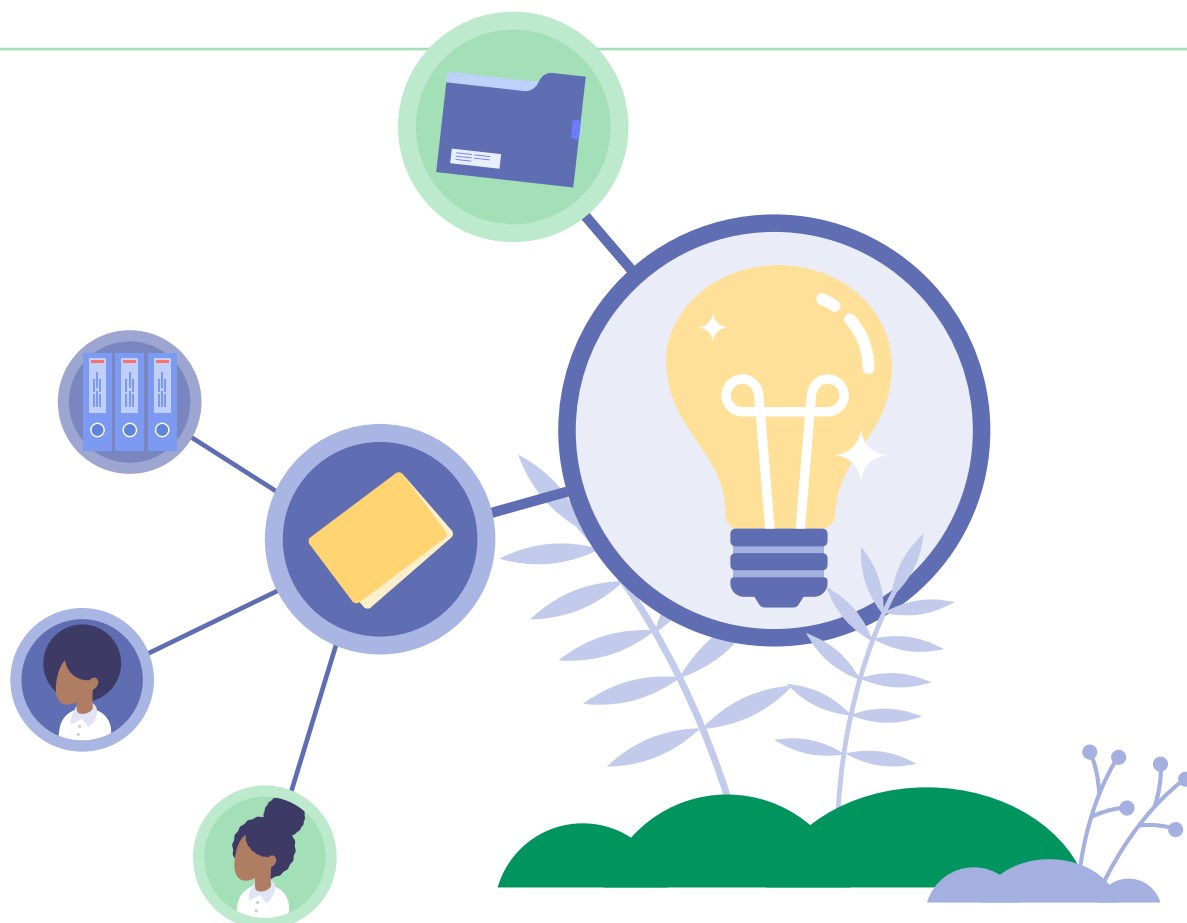
**What you need to use it?** No prior knowledge required, suitable for commissioning reviews in any policy area and organisation.

**When to use it?** When you're faced with a policy decision and need to gather evidence fast.



#### Further reading:

**Quick, but not dirty – Can rapid evidence reviews reliably inform policy?** A blog post on the London School of Economics Impact Blog on the topic of rapid evidence assessment.



\* Source: Government Social Research Service, 2014



## Hosting Policy Fellows: a guide for Higher Education Institutions

### Download Now

**What is it?** A guide for universities to create a fellowship programme for policy professionals to discuss policy questions with academics.

**Who is it for?** Universities that want to invite policy professionals to meet academics at their institution as part of a formalised Policy Fellow programme transition from ad-hoc policy fellowships to a structured programme

**How to use it?** As a step-by-step process with templates for programme administration. The guide can be adapted to meet the needs of individual university systems.

**What you need to use it?** No prior knowledge required. Resource for hosting policy fellows and staff capacity to support the administration of the programme is required. The resource provides an overview of hosting policy fellows.

**When to use it?** To understand what capability, resources, and motivation to deliver a policy fellowships programme and consider how it could work in specific contexts.



**Further reading:** For a list of case studies of CAPE Policy Fellowships, see:

**Spending 12 months embedded in the academic world: reflections from CAPE Policy Fellow Roshnee Patel**

**Reflection: CAPE Fellowship to Support Digital Skills in Nottingham**

**Six months at the heart of science in Government – reflections from a knowledge mobiliser**

**Developments in participative democracy: Reflections by Newham Council Policy Fellow Darren Sharpe**



## Awarding Funding for Collaborative Academic-Policy Projects

### ↓ Download Now

**What is it?** A toolkit to enhance understanding of the value of collaborative projects in academic-policy engagement and how to set up a funding stream to administer collaborative awards.

**Who is it for?** Anyone who administers or facilitates the award of policy engagement funding at universities or research organisations and who may be considering implementing a collaborative funding scheme. Additionally, it may be useful to those considering applying for funding and seeking insights into developing a strong proposal.

**How to use it?** Divided into four sections, the first two sections explore the mutual benefits of developing collaborative projects for academics and policy professionals, and how to put together a strong proposal. The last two sections provide practical advice and templates for setting up funding calls and schemes.

**What you need to use it?** No prior knowledge required. Time and team capacity are necessary to set up the funding call and support the administration of the funding scheme.

**When to use it?** It can be used for the development of collaborative projects and when establishing new funding streams.



#### Further reading:

**Improving Employment Conditions in Islington: Tackling Work-Based Harms and Promoting Unionisation** reports on a collaborative project funded by the CAPE Policy Challenge Fund.

**Applying for co-production funding in academic policy engagement: lessons from the CAPE Collaboration Fund** recounts CAPE's experiences with its Collaboration Fund.

For a list of case studies based on the projects funded by CAPE, see:

**Analysing and reporting on police custody record data to support Ministry of Justice decision-making**

**Insights into the co-production process in understanding the role of modular homes in addressing homelessness**

**Toward wellbeing-based government: formalising a 'Roundtable' methodology.**





## Growing a university policy engagement function: Towards better models, methods, and measures of success

### Download Now

**What is it?** This report outlines the considerations for growing or expanding a policy engagement function at a university to support increased engagement between academics and policy organisations.

**Who is it for?** Any university leader, academic, funder or professional services staff seeking to set up a new policy engagement centre or expand an existing one.

**How to use it?** A range of options for academic-policy engagement is provided, supported by case studies, to help universities develop a more strategic, long-term approach to engagement.

**What you need to use it?** No prior knowledge is necessary; however, time for planning and institutional buy-in is essential for applying the advice and methods noted in this report.

**When to use it?** At the beginning of a planning process for a policy engagement centre, when considering models of structure, leadership, funding, and methods of engagement including its measurement.



#### Further reading:

**Enhancing regional policy-research collaboration in London and beyond** describes the UCL-based policy research centres and their involvement in policy engagement.

**Strengthening academic policy engagement in West Yorkshire** explores how universities have mobilised their research findings and capabilities for policy engagement in West Yorkshire.

**The Art of the Possible: Catalysts, Collaborations and Capabilities in Academic-Policy Engagement**, CAPE's final report, has a case study on "Building institutional capacity at Northumbria University".



## Developing partnerships & projects between universities and policy partners: a project scope template

### ↓ Download Now

**What is it?** A template for those wanting to co-produce and co-develop projects and partnerships between academia and policy and for planning more strategic academic policy engagement. Includes a [blank copy](#) of the partnership and project scope template to work through.

**Who is it for?** Knowledge mobilisers, academics, project managers, partnership or network managers, policy analysts, evidence leads, communications leads, and any others interested in developing and undertaking collaborative academic-policy engagement projects.

**How to use it?** To be completed collaboratively by academic and policy partners. The development process can take several iterations to ensure ideas meet the needs of all involved.

**What you need to use it?** The scoping template is aimed at all levels of experience.

**When to use it?** At the start of a collaborative project and throughout to serve as a guide for the whole process.



#### Further reading:

**Quid pro quo? Why academics meet with policy professionals** summarises a survey about what academics get out of these meetings with policy professionals and what can be done to foster more meaningful interactions and deeper relationships between Policy Fellows and researchers.

**Collaboratively and at scale: lending CAPE's experience to the challenge of describing knowledge mobilisation** reflects the key findings of CAPE's experience of collaborative knowledge mobilisation, what is it, what does it do, and why is it worth investing in.

For a list of relevant case studies, see:

**Improving outcomes for children who have experienced adversity through including their voices in policy engagement.**

**Exploring barriers and developing solutions to encourage active travel in Ardwick, Greater Manchester.**

**Embedding health in local urban design guides and codes.**

**Anthropology By Children (ABC) and Islington Council: a CAPE fellowship collaboration case study.**



## Co-production in Regional Academic-Policy Engagement: Developing Optimal Conditions

### Download Now

**What is it?** A guide explaining some key principles of co-production and exploring how to plan for co-production in regional academic-policy engagement.

**Who is it for?** Knowledge mobilisers in universities, academics and those working in the regional academic-policy engagement space.

**How to use it?** As a reference tool, explaining key principles of co-production and necessary conditions for effective practices. All parties should have a copy to support integration into their working practice.

**What you need to use it?** Some prior knowledge required. It is especially suited to academic-policy engagement where there is already in-house know-how for projects involved in policy engagement.

**When to use it?** When aiming to further develop academic-policy engagement into co-production and addressing complex policy challenges at the regional level.



#### Further reading:

**Academic Advisers in Local and Regional Authorities: CAPE Insights Report** is a report based on the Local/Regional Authority Academic Adviser (LRAAA) network exploration of the nature and value of 'Chief Scientific Adviser-type' (CSA) roles for local and regional authorities.

**Building a National Agenda for Regional Academic-Policy Engagement** lays out the findings of a 'deep dive' discussion convened by CAPE which explored insights from existing regional academic-policy engagement initiatives.



## Research to Policy Fellowships: Six Pillars for Optimising Success

### ↓ Download Now

**What is it?** A toolkit intended to improve understanding of how to develop and deliver successful policy fellowships for researchers entering policy organisations as part of wider academic-policy engagement efforts.

**Who is it for?** People who support mobility between academia and policy (particularly by facilitating policy fellowships), host organisations, and the policy fellows themselves.

**How to use it?** Organised around six values-based pillars. Each pillar provides: an explanation of its significance; practical suggestions for implementation; necessary skills to support it; and an illustrative case study.

**What you need to use it?** No prior knowledge required. This resource is a guide on how to approach policy fellowships.

**When to use it?** It can be used at any stage of a fellowship, although it will be particularly relevant at the planning stage.



#### Further reading:

**A typology and discussion of interactions between CAPE academic policy engagement mechanisms** discusses CAPE academic policy engagement mechanisms, including policy fellowships.

**Why collaboration is critical in academic-policy engagement** reflects on the significance of collaborations, particularly those attained through fellowships.



## CAPE Policy Fellowships Contracts Guidance Note

### ↓ Download Now

**What is it?** A guide to support setting up contracts between universities and policy organisations for policy fellowships, outlining the contract process and common sticking points.

**Who is it for?** University staff who are involved in setting up contracts for academics to be placed in external policy organisations.

**How to use it?** As a tool to understand contract negotiation for placing academics into policy organisations and to highlight key procedural issues, before you start planning a fellowship.

**What you need to use it?** Staff who support contract administration of fellowships, some knowledge of your university infrastructure and contracts processes.

**When to use it?** When considering fellowships for academics within policy organisations and needing to consider the resources that will be used.

## About CAPE

Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE) was a £10 million project funded by Research England and University partners. CAPE was a consortium of five university partners (UCL and the Universities of Cambridge, Manchester, Nottingham and Northumbria) alongside partners from the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST), Government Office for Science (GO-Science), Nesta, and the Transforming Evidence Hub, aimed to enhance the use of evidence in public policy. It explored what works in diverse institutional, geographical and policy contexts, while fostering greater collaboration between universities and improving diversity in engagements.

The CAPE project ran between 2020 and 2024. For more information we have summarised the project's achievements, insights and conclusions in our end of project report, [The Art of the Possible: Catalysts, Collaborations and Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement](#).