United States – Israel
Binational Science Foundation

Writing a Competitive BSF Proposal

Regular Research Grants and NSF–BSF Joint Programs

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About the BSF

The U.S.–Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF) supports outstanding collaborative research between Israeli and American scientists.

Established in 1972, BSF funds coordinated binational projects in basic science.

What BSF Funds

- Basic research across scientific fields
- Innovative, original research projects
- Joint research by Israeli and U.S. investigators

Key Features

- Active research in both countries
- Funding through non-profit institutions
- One coordinated binational project

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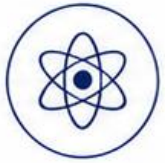
Research Areas for 2026

Regular Research Grants

18/11/2026



Physical and Exact Sciences

- Chemistry
- Computer Sciences
- Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences
- Energy Research
- Environmental Research
- Materials Research
- Mathematical Sciences
- Physics

Social Sciences

- Economics
- Sociology and Anthropology
- Psychology (excluding Psychobiology)

Check the sub-area and evaluation panel before submission.

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BSF Funding Tracks

Main programs and opportunities

Regular Research Grants

- Main BSF program
- Joint basic research by Israeli and U.S. PIs
- Typically 2–4 years

Start-up Grants

- For junior investigators
- Up to 10 years from PhD/MD
- Two-year project

NSF–BSF Joint Programs

- Scientific proposal submitted to NSF
- NSF reviews the proposal
- BSF funds the Israeli side

Rahamimoff Travel Grants

- For PhD students
- Short research visits between Israel and the U.S.
- $6,000 per grant

Special Programs

- Climate Solutions
- Quantum cooperation
- NEH–BSF Humanities

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Start-up Grant

BSF funding track for junior investigators

1. Who can apply?

- For junior investigators
- No more than 10 years since completion of the PhD/MD
- Up to two junior PIs may apply together: one Israeli and one American

2. Project structure

- Typical application: a junior PI together with a senior PI
- A senior PI may participate but will not be funded
- Applicants may apply with or without a senior scientist

3. Duration and funding

- 2-year project
- Fixed budget: $90,000
- If both the Israeli and American PIs are junior investigators, each is eligible to receive $90,000

A funded start-up grantee cannot submit a second start-up application.
Resubmission of an unfunded start-up application is allowed if the 10-year limit still holds.

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Regular Research Grant

The core BSF funding program

Joint Collaboration

Supports joint research by Israeli and U.S. scientists as equal partners.

Duration

Typically 2–4 years

Funding

Up to $300,000 per grant (including 15% overhead)

Supports Basic Research

All fields of basic science are eligible.

Administered by

Non-profit academic and research institutions

Why Collaboration Matters

BSF funds one coordinated research project conducted together by Israeli and U.S. investigators.

Focused Research Areas

Proposals must align with well-defined BSF scientific areas. Interdisciplinary research outside these areas is not supported.

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Evaluation Criteria

How BSF proposals are assessed

Scientific & Technological Merit

- Originality
- Importance
- Novelty, Uniqueness

Strength of Cooperative Arrangements

Anticipated Scientific and Socio-economic Benefits

Suitability of PIs, Equipment, Facilities

PIs' Track Records

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What is the Focus of a BSF Grant Proposal?

Two core dimensions

1. Excellent Science + Essential Collaboration

- Excellent, innovative, cutting-edge science
- High feasibility
- Strong collaboration between Israeli and U.S. PIs
- Each PI must be essential: one PI cannot achieve the project goals without the other

Collaboration may include:

- Interdependent joint research activities across different labs
- Shared facilities, materials, equipment, and services
- Exchange of personnel

"Perhaps, sir might like a half portion of Work Package 1, followed by Work Package 3 with a side order of extra deliverables?"

The 'à la carte' *research proposal*

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What is the Focus of a BSF Grant Proposal?

Two core dimensions

Galileo's 'heliocentricity' grant proposal is assigned to the wrong review panel. Again.

2. Research Field Fit

- BSF supports specific research fields, which change by odd vs. even calendar years
- Submit in the field that best matches the team's expertise and track record
- If unsure about fit, contact the foundation and send an abstract for guidance
- BSF may move a proposal to a different panel if it is a better fit, and will notify the researchers

Odd calendar years	Even calendar years
• Biomedical	• Exact & Physical Sciences
• Engineering	• Atmospheric, Ocean & Earth Sciences
• Life Sciences	• Chemistry
• Medicine	• Computer Sciences
• Psychobiology	• Energy Research
	• Environmental Research
	• Materials Research
	• Mathematical Sciences
	• Physics
	• Economics
	• Psychology (except Psychobiology)
	• Sociology

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Proposal Structure

Core uploaded files in the BSF application

1. Abstract

- Full project title, application number, names and affiliations of the PIs
- Up to 250 words
- Informative for scientists in the same or related fields
- Should state the project's potential contribution

ⓘ If funded, may become public.

2. Research Plan

1. Scientific/technological background
2. Objectives and significance
3. Methodology and plan of operation, including the roles of the Israeli and U.S. PIs
4. Risk analysis and alternative paths (when relevant)
5. Available U.S. and Israeli resources, including personnel and equipment

ⓘ Max 15 pages.

3. References

- Relevant bibliography of the research plan
- May be used by BSF to identify potential reviewers

4. Broader Impacts Statement

- Full project title, application number, names and affiliations of the PIs
- About 250 words or less
- Address broader impact and importance
- Social and/or economic and/or scientific value

5. Short Abstract in Lay Terms

- Lay title, names and affiliations of the PIs, application number
- Short lay description of the project
- Explain the reasoning, significance, and potential impact
- Understandable to non-experts

ⓘ Used by BSF only if funded; not sent to reviewers or science advisors.

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Three Summaries, Three Audiences

Scientific Abstract — 250 words maximum

- For scientists in the same or related fields
- Problem, gap, aim, approach, novelty and contribution

Broader Impacts Statement — approximately 250 words

- Scientific, social and/or economic value

Lay Abstract

- Written for non-experts
- Used only if the project is funded
- Not sent for scientific review

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Preparing the Scientific Background

What do we already know? (~5 pages)

1. Begin with a compelling overview

- Open with 1–2 paragraphs that establish the rationale of the project
- Emphasize the novelty and significance of the research program
- State the topic, why it is influential, and how the research design will address it

2. Build an integrative scientific background

- Synthesize the literature rather than listing studies one by one
- Present the existing knowledge as a coherent scientific narrative
- Cite your own relevant work to establish your position within the field

3. Make the gap explicit

- Highlight the gaps in the current literature that the proposal will fill
- Show why the unresolved gap makes the project timely and necessary
- Use the background to lead directly into the proposed research

Rationale. | Integration. | Gap.

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Objectives

What do you want to do? (~0.5–1.5 pages)

Objectives are the WHAT — not the HOW.

1. Main Aim

- State the main overarching aim of the project
- The aim must be basic science
- Frame the central scientific question clearly

2. Specific Objectives

- Define focused objectives that stem from the main aim
- Objectives should be smaller and more specific in scope
- Achieving the objectives should lead to the main aim
- State what you want to discover, test, or explain
- Do not describe the methods here

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SIGNIFICANCE

Explain why your research matters.

Persuade not only why it is important,
but also **why it deserves to be funded.**

WRITING TIPS

- Clearly explain why your research is important.
- Connect your research to advancing scientific knowledge and understanding.
- Describe how your research will benefit society or address an important need.
- Emphasize the novelty and originality of your research.
- Explain why your research is timely—why it needs to be done now.

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METHODOLOGY

Explain **how** the research will be conducted
to address the research question(s) and test the hypothesis(es).

THREE ESSENTIAL STEPS – APPLICABLE TO ALL DISCIPLINES:

1. **RESEARCH DESIGN** — overall strategy, approach, and rationale
2. **DATA COLLECTION** — sources, instruments, procedures, and sampling
3. **DATA ANALYSIS** — methods, tools, and approach for interpreting the data

Every methodological choice must be **clearly explained and well rationalized.**

WRITING TIPS

- Describe the approach and overall strategy and **explain the rationale** behind them.
- Detail the data sources, instruments, procedures, and sampling strategy, with **justification**.
- Explain the methods and analytical tools you will use and **why they are appropriate** for your data and objectives.
- Ensure that all methodological choices are coherent, feasible, and **aligned with the research objectives**.

COLLABORATION & WORK DISTRIBUTION

A strong proposal clearly defines how the partnership adds value and how each side contributes.

CLARIFY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Specify who will do what, and how responsibilities are divided between the U.S. and Israeli teams.

U.S. TEAM	ISRAELI TEAM

TASKS & LEADERSHIP

Define specific tasks, expertise, and leadership responsibilities.

RESOURCES & CAPABILITIES

Describe the unique resources, data, or capabilities each side brings.

TIME & INVOLVEMENT

Clarify the time commitment and level of involvement of key personnel.

INTEGRATE COLLABORATION INTO THE METHODOLOGY

Show how the partnership is embedded in the research plan and contributes to project success.

JOINT APPROACH

Explain how both teams collaborate throughout the project (e.g., study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation).

DATA & RESOURCE SHARING

Describe how data, materials, and tools will be shared and managed between the sites.

COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION

Outline regular communication, decision-making processes, and conflict resolution mechanisms.

ADDED VALUE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Articulate how combining complementary strengths enhances the quality, feasibility, and impact of the research.

A well-defined partnership is more than a collaboration—it is a strategic alliance that strengthens the science and increases the likelihood of success.

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PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Present **key early findings** that demonstrate feasibility, relevance, and the potential impact of the proposed research.

KEY FINDINGS
Summarize the main preliminary results and what they indicate.

ALIGNMENT WITH OBJECTIVES
Explain how the results align with the research objectives and hypotheses.

FEASIBILITY & PROGRESS
Highlight what has been achieved so far and how it supports the project's feasibility.

IMPLICATIONS & NEXT STEPS
Discuss the implications of these findings and the planned next steps.

Preliminary results should clearly demonstrate **momentum, feasibility,** and the potential for **high-impact scientific contributions.**

WRITING TIPS

- Present only the most **relevant and impactful** preliminary results.
- Use **visuals** (e.g., graphs, tables) to clearly illustrate key findings.
- Keep the focus on **what the results mean**—not just what was done.
- Clearly connect the results to the **value** and **potential impact** of the research.

RISK ANALYSIS

Identify potential risks that could affect the success of the project and outline strategies to mitigate them.

IDENTIFY KEY RISKS

List the main risks that could impact the project, including technical, operational, financial, and regulatory risks.

ASSESS LIKELIHOOD & IMPACT

Evaluate the probability and potential impact of each risk on the project's timeline, budget, and outcomes.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Describe the strategies and actions in place to prevent, reduce, or manage each identified risk.

MONITORING & CONTINGENCY PLANS

Explain how risks will be monitored throughout the project and outline contingency plans if risks materialize.

WRITING TIPS

- Be **transparent and realistic** about potential risks.
- Focus on the **most significant risks** and how you will address them.
- Show that your team has **thought ahead** and is prepared to act.
- Link risk management to the overall **feasibility** and **success** of the project.

A proactive approach to risk management strengthens the project's feasibility and increases the likelihood of achieving meaningful, sustainable results.

AVAILABLE U.S. & ISRAELI RESOURCES

Demonstrate feasibility by describing the personnel, infrastructure, and access available to both teams.

PERSONNEL & EXPERTISE

Describe all personnel relevant to the project in both countries and their contribution to the research.

EQUIPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Present the facilities, instruments, laboratories, and research infrastructure available for the project.

MATERIALS, DATA & ACCESS

Include access to datasets, field sites, archives, samples, or other materials needed for the study.

DATA STORAGE & SHARING

When relevant, explain how data will be stored, managed, and shared between the Israeli and U.S. teams.

LANGUAGE & FIELD CAPACITY

Mention language proficiency or other field-specific capacities when they are essential for carrying out the research.

WRITING TIPS

- Cover resources in **both countries**, not only in one lab.
- Emphasize **accessibility** and **availability** of personnel, equipment, and materials.
- Show how each resource **supports** feasibility and the proposed methodology.
- Address **data storing** and **sharing** arrangements when applicable.

This section should demonstrate feasibility, PI suitability, and the practical capacity to complete the project.

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BSF: RESUBMISSIONS

BSF welcomes resubmissions of previously submitted proposals. A strong revision that **addresses prior feedback** significantly improves your chances of success.

RESUBMISSION WINDOW

A proposal may be resubmitted **only in a future cycle** in which the same program topic is open again.

EXCELLENT NOT FUNDED

Proposals that received an "Excellent Not Funded" rating are eligible to be submitted **a third time**.

TIPS FOR A STRONG RESUBMISSION

- Carefully read the summary statement and all reviewer comments.
- Revise and strengthen—don't simply restate the original proposal.
- Use the response file to explain how you addressed each comment.
- Highlight any changes in the proposal and explain why they improve the project.
- Ensure the revised proposal aligns with the program's goals and criteria.

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BSF-NSF: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

A **joint funding opportunity** between the U.S.-Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF) and the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) to advance frontier research and strengthen international scientific collaboration.

THE PROCESS

1 — U.S. PI submits to NSF

Includes the Israeli collaborator and joint research plan.

2 — NSF reviews the proposal

Scientific evaluation is carried out through NSF.

3 — NSF makes the funding decision

The final decision is made by NSF.

4 — BSF funds the Israeli side

BSF provides funding to the Israeli partner institution.

KEY POINTS

- The Israeli partner's role must be clearly explained.
- Both investigators should be full partners.
- Support high-quality, peer-reviewed binational research.

You may submit the same research proposal to both BSF and BSF-NSF (tailored to each program's budget requirements).

If both are funded, the regular BSF grant must be **withdrawn**.

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BSF-NSF: TOPICS & SUBMISSION WINDOWS

BSF and BSF-NSF support a wide range of research across all fields of science and engineering.

Opportunities are available **year-round**—some with specific deadlines, and some with continuous submission.

EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH AREAS

- Physics & Astronomy
- Computer Science & Engineering
- Life Sciences & Biomedicine
- Engineering & Materials
- Earth & Environmental Sciences
- Cognitive Science & Psychology
- Mathematics & Statistics
- And many more...

TIP: A great opportunity to submit your research proposal **outside** of the busy fall season and get your work the attention it deserves.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

CONTINUOUS SUBMISSION

Many programs accept proposals throughout the year.

SPECIFIC DEADLINES

Some programs have a few submission windows during the year.

PLAN AHEAD

Check program-specific guidelines for details and deadlines.

You can submit the same proposal to both BSF and BSF-NSF (tailored to each program's budget requirements).

If both projects are funded, you will be asked to **withdraw from the BSF award.**

Whether you're submitting to BSF alone or to BSF-NSF, this is your chance to **make an impact—any time of year.**

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"Spare a dollar for some lab consumables, buddy?"

Good Luck!

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