

BSF Call for Proposals in a Joint NSF-BSF Program with the Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) – Rules of Life Track

The U.S.-Israel Science Binational Foundation (BSF) is accepting applications in a joint funding track: Rules of Life (RoL) in the Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF).

The Terms of this program are as follows:

1. This NSF-BSF program is not a “special” program with the NSF setting aside money for potential grants. Rather, it is an integral part of the regular NSF programs in this discipline, with no “special” funds. Clear understanding of it by the U.S. partner is essential before embarking on proposal writing.
2. Synopsis of Program:

The Rules of Life track seeks to support integrative research and training that aims to identify the underlying general principles that operate across hierarchical levels of living systems, from molecules to organisms to ecosystems, and that explain emergent properties, e.g., robustness, adaptability. Discovery of fundamental principles through integrative research and enabling infrastructure will advance understanding and further predictive capability of how key properties of living systems emerge from the interaction of genomes, phenotypes, and environment. Research activities under Rules of Life should lead to new understanding of how higher-order structures and functions result from the interactions of heterogeneous biological components, as shaped by genomic, developmental, environmental and evolutionary processes.

Proposals submitted to the Rules of Life (RoL) track must integrate research activities across multiple levels of biological organization, and thereby span funding programs beyond a single division in the Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO). It is expected that RoL proposals will bring together diverse teams of scientists to create novel framings and solutions for conceptual problems in biology.

Although all the three divisions in the Biological Sciences Directorate (IOS; MCB; DEB) fund proposals in this track, submission can be made only



through IOS and MCB. However, since proposal topic must be cross divisional, this should not present a problem.

A full description of the program can be found in the IOS solicitation on the NSF website. <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2018/nsf18586/nsf18586.htm> Or in the MCB solicitation on the NSF website.

<https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2018/nsf18585/nsf18585.htm>

It is strongly advised for all potentials applicants (including Israelis) to read the document carefully:

3. Applications must be written jointly by an Israeli and a U.S. scientist from a U.S. research institution.
4. The NSF accepts applications only from U.S. scientist and submission to the NSF should be made by the U.S. PI alone (the Israeli does not appear as a formal co-PI on the application). However, in the collaborative applications, the role of the Israeli partner(s) must be described. **Furthermore, it should be clearly explained why the contribution of the Israeli PI to the research project is important/essential.**
5. If awarded a grant, the Israeli scientist will receive a grant from the BSF, while the US scientist will receive a grant from the NSF.
6. The size of the BSF grant to the Israeli is expected to be up to \$80,000/year for experimental programs and up to \$55,000/year for theoretical or computer based research, **subject to the availability of funds.** If more than a single Israeli group is involved in the research, the budget may be increased by up to 50%.
7. BSF will follow the decision by the U.S. funding agency regarding the length of the project.
8. The program is open for submission throughout the year.
9. We have put together a presentation with tips for Israeli scientists who wish to submit to the NSF-BSF. You can download the presentation [here](#).

Eligibility:

1. All inquiries regarding the eligibility of the research topic must be made by the U.S. PIs to the program directors at NSF. BSF will not respond to any query regarding topic eligibility.
2. All regulations regarding eligibility of the BSF (for the Israeli PI) or the NSF (for the U.S. PI) will apply to this program.

3. Each Israeli scientist is allowed to submit up to two applications/year, if at least one of them is **to any of the NSF-BSF programs that have no deadline.**
4. Israelis with active grants are allowed to submit an additional application to any of the **NSF-BSF programs with no deadline** (they don't have to wait for the last year of their grant before submitting).
5. It is allowed to submit both to an NSF-BSF program and the regular BSF program, including similar applications. In the event that both applications are awarded grants, they will be funded, unless the research applications are mostly similar, in which case only the NSF-BSF program will be funded.
6. In case of similar NSF-BSF and regular BSF applications, in which the NSF evaluation was not completed by the time the regular BSF awards are made, the BSF will defer its decision regarding a possible grant to this application, until the NSF-BSF awards are announced.

Evaluation:

1. Proposals will be evaluated by the NSF, using its [criteria](#). The BSF will create a small screening panel to quickly examine the role of the Israelis in the applications, and ascertain that it is meaningful, and that they have the knowhow and facilities to perform their part in the research. This panel will also advise the BSF regarding the budget requests, but will not evaluate the scientific merit of the applications. However, Israelis may possibly take part in the NSF evaluation process as panel members and/or external reviewers.
2. BSF is likely to fund any Israeli whose partner in this program is funded by the NSF, subject to the eligibility constraints, availability of funds, and advice of the screening panel.
3. NSF uses a conventional peer review system with expert panels and ad-hoc (external) reviews for full proposals. However, unlike the practice in Israel, panel members serve in an advisory capacity, and final decisions lie with the program directors and their management. These post-panel officials may introduce additional considerations, such as whether the research topic already has support from the US government, whether support from other NSF programs may be sought, etc.
4. Israeli applicants are advised that they should pay particular attention to the NSF evaluation criteria, http://nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/, which may include issues such as broad impact, data management, etc. That are either missing in BSF/ISF applications, or have a greatly different meaning



(particularly the term ‘broad impact’). **Failure to appropriately refer to such topics by the U.S. partner may be detrimental to the proposal, and has been also known to result in early rejection.**

Submission:

The proposals will be submitted to the program twice.

The U.S. scientist (only) will submit to the NSF using its regulations (http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg) and submission system (<https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/>). **The US PI submission to the NSF MUST include the BIOGRAPHY (in the NSF format) and BUDGET (in the BSF format) of the Israeli partner as part of the auxiliary material.**

The Israeli scientist (only) will submit to the BSF, also providing the US scientist information, according to its regulations and submission system: <http://www.bsf.org.il/ElectronicSubmission/GatewayFormsAndGuidelines.aspx?PageId=7&innerTextID=0%20>

Please note that the BSF has tried to simplify the submission for the Israeli, and it only includes the PDF that was produced by the NSF system, with some additional administrative data.

Timetable:

Full proposals are accepted throughout the year. Israeli PIs must submit their proposal to the BSF within 7 days after the U.S. PIs submit to the NSF.

Applicants are requested to acquaint themselves with the BSF regulation for this NSF-BSF program before they submit applications. The forms and regulations can be downloaded from the BSF website (www.bsf.org.il) under ‘Guidelines and Forms’.



Questions regarding the applicability of the proposed research for this program should be directed by the US partner to the program officer at the NSF.

Other questions regarding this special NSF-BSF program can be discussed with the BSF management by mail or phone (972-2-5828239): Dr. Rachel (Heni) Haring (heni@bsf.org.il ext. 110) or Ms. Yael Dressler (yael@bsf.org.il ext. 103). Questions regarding the online application system should be directed to Ms. Orli Rozencwajg (orli@bsf.org.il ext. 109).