

UK-Israel Science Days

21–23 March 2023
London, UK

Where to Now?

Brainstorming the future of BIRAX at the 2023 Partner's Forum

In spring 2023, during UK-Israel Science Days, 24 representatives from medical charities, philanthropy, government, and the British Embassy in Israel joined the British Council at the BIRAX Partners' Forum. It was an occasion to discuss pivotal aspects of our programmes and raise focus points for future collaboration.

On the same day, BIRAX grantees, both senior and early career researchers from the UK and Israel, took part in a BIRAX workshop to develop their own recommendations for the future of the programme.



Conclusions from the Partners' Forum and the BIRAX Workshop

Modularity and Flexibility

- Academic mobility programmes should be designed to meet the different needs of their audiences. For example, early career researchers wish to develop their skills, while established researchers wish to make new contacts.
- Seed funding programmes require a modular structure that allows them to add different elements according to the research field (such as Academic Mobility, training, equipment or consumables).
- Selection processes must be designed to be comprehensive and competitive on the one hand but streamlined, responsive and not too cumbersome on the other. This is a challenge, particularly with seed funding.

Removing Barriers for Women

- Barriers to women's participation in our programmes should be identified, and measures to counter them need to be implemented across all components of our programmes.
- Mentorship programmes specifically designed for women can facilitate, encourage, and boost the progression of women academic careers.

Mentoring

- A comprehensive mentoring and training programme can help early career researchers to navigate their first steps as researchers.
- The programme should focus on working in an international and collaborative environment; and on capacity building that includes training in funding proposal submission, presentation, and storytelling skills.

Evidence Based Modeling of New Programme Elements

- The forum identified two new BIRAX's elements that can enhance the programme's impact: incorporating international collaborative seed grants and establishing an early career researchers' mentorship scheme.
- It was emphasized that these two new elements should be modelled based on evidence and best practices. When mapping the industry's experience to develop both elements, the following key topics were recommended for further exploration: effective tools to measure impact of seed grants and mentoring and funding strategies for seed projects whose outcome is difficult to foresee or quantify within the grant period.



Funding Models Suggested by our Grantees

Collaborative Seed Funding

Would enable pilot projects or allow projects to gain proof of concept, as well as building trust in new partnerships and collaborations. It could be particularly helpful for early career researchers.

Micro Grants for BIRAX Community

Would enable grantees to complete specific project areas such as writing an article and should be available to network members (past and current grantees) only.

More Ideas to Consider



Incorporating in BIRAX' calls for proposals a criterion that focuses on customer experience and client-centered methods in our collaborative research programmes.



Finding complementary strengths within the higher education systems in Israel and UK, where academic mobility programmes can be useful, alongside pockets of activity where both countries are active.



Build institutions' capacity to collaborate internationally.



Partners' Forum Participants

Partners

- **Prof. Avi Domb**, Chief Scientist, Israel's Ministry of Science and Technology.
- **Frances Wood**, International Director, UKRI.
- **Sir Trevor Pears** CMG, Executive Chair, the Pears Foundation.
- **Shelley McNicol**, Senior Advisor, Parasol Foundation.
- **Marcus Rees-Roberts**, Executive Director, Haifa University UK
- **Emma Stone**, Research Grants officer, Alzheimer's Research UK.
- **Dr Rachael Barber**, Head of Strategic Partnership Team, Cancer Research UK.
- **Anna Morris**, Assistant Director of Research Strategy and Partnership, Diabetes UK.
- **Dr Carolyn Johnson**, Head of Research Partnerships, JDRF.
- **Claire Levaton**, Head of Department for International Scientific Relations with Western North Europe, Ministry of Science and Technology.
- **Dr Dajana Dzanovic**, Head of Strategic Partnerships, Universities UK. International.
- **Rozanne Gallon**, Director of Operations, Weizmann UK.
- **Samantha Showham**, Development & Events Manager, Weizmann UK.
- **Lydia Beaton**, COO, Race against Dementia.

British Embassy

- **HMA Neil Wigan**
- Future **HMA Simon Walters**
- **Rob Edwards**, Science & Innovation Network Regional Manager Israel & Türkiye
- **Shira Lanir**, Head of Science and Innovation Network, Israel.

British Council

- **Dr Jen Bardsley**, Head Enabling Research & Science
- **Clare Sears**, Deputy Regional Director Wider Europe
- **Alma Gadot Perez**, Country Director, Israel
- **Denis Tkachuk**, Deputy Director, Israel
- **Israella Stein**, Partnerships and Relations Manager, Israel
- **Kate Elders**, Global Partner Engagement Lead



About BIRAX

BIRAX, the Britain Israel Research and Academic Exchange, is an initiative that started in 2012 by the British Council and British Embassy in Israel, in collaboration with the Pears Foundation.

With £12.4 million of invested to date, by over 20 partners, in 26 projects led by British and Israeli researchers, BIRAX tackles some of the world's most challenging conditions and diseases. BIRAX enhances scientific collaboration between the two scientific superpowers and sows the seeds for long-lasting collaborations between researchers, labs and institutions.

BIRAX operations are guided by two principles:

1. Funding Cutting-Edge Collaborative Research: up to £400K for 3 years (British and Israeli. £200K each).
2. Engagement Opportunities: BIRAX develops a network of British and Israeli scientists, and provides them with ample engagement opportunities to attend, including conferences, workshops, academic mobility, social and promotional events, and meetings with fellow colleagues, senior stakeholders and other organisations that support scientific activity and exchange.

All said elements of BIRAX are part of its success and its ability to build long-term relationships between Brits and Israelis in academia. Due to the comprehensive program that BIRAX offers, it is not just a mechanism to transfer funds for research. Rather, it shapes and builds people to people relationships and trust between British and Israelis, that continue to develop and grow even after the research grant ends.

For more information about BIRAX's impact and programme, please watch the following videos and visit our website:

[BIRAX – The people who make it a success. – YouTube](#)

[10+ years of BIRAX – YouTube](#)

[BIRAX-Website](#)

**You are welcome to contact us at:
israelscience@britishcouncil.org**

BIRAX' Coalition of Partners Over the Years

Founding Partners



Government



Philanthropy

Eitan (z"l) and Ariela
Wertheimer

The Wolfson*
Foundation



Charles Wolfson
Charitable Trust

Atkin Charitable
Foundation

The Sheila and Denis
Cohen Charitable Trust



CLORE ISRAEL FOUNDATION
קרן קלור לבריאות ישראל

The Kahn
Foundation (R.A.)

The Barbara and Stanley
Fink Foundation

Medical Charities



Other Stakeholders



And other partners whose policy is to remain anonymous

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

