Purpose of the grant—to establish and operate the “Budget Watch” project as a joint project between the New Israel Fund, the Berl Katznelson Foundation, IRAC, and Peace Now.

**Recommendation**: $105,000

IRAC - $35,000

The Berl Katznelson Foundation - $35,000

Peace Now - $35,000

**Background**

The 13 years since the protests of 2011 have seen positive changes with regard to access to information about the state budget by members of Knesset and the wider public. Despite this, the state budget is not yet transparent and visible to the public in such a way that facilitates public and political discussion of budget priorities.

This situation is manifested in various ways: information regarding budget execution is only published in retrospect; inefficiency and duplication in budgetary regulations that fund activities and sometimes even certain beneficiaries more than once—and the use of these inefficiencies and duplications to mask controversial budgetary measures and make it harder to verify how budgets are being used.

These issues also negatively impact the ability of politicians, journalists, and civil society organizations to influence the budget agenda, and to organize and block sectoral budgetary policy effectively and in real time. To address this issue, the New Israel Fund (NIF) has initiated the “Budget Watch” project, which will be a joint venture between NIF (via the Shatil Center for Policy Change), the Berl Katznelson Foundation, IRAC, and Peace Now.

**Project Goal**

The goal of the project is to develop the ability to gather data about the state budget and to analyze its significance. This will be achieved through real-time monitoring of budgetary decisions in specific areas: education, religion and state, and government investments in settlements in the Occupied Territories. The data and analysis will be used as a basis for developing policy initiatives, public-facing activities, and legal measures—all with the aim of influencing budgetary policy in the above areas.

**Workplan**

The Shatil Center for Policy Change will be responsible for gathering data on the budget. Shatil will assign a member of staff for this purpose, whose responsibilities will include:

* Monitoring the agenda of the Knesset Finance Committee.
* Developing relationships with relevant officials in the civil service.
* Ongoing monitoring of Knesset and government debates with implications for the budget.
* Forming a project steering committee (this will include a representative from each of the organizations and will meet weekly). A WhatsApp group for members of the steering committee will also be created for day-to-day work.

Each of the partner organizations will be responsible for analyzing budget data in their own areas of work (the Berl Katznelson Foundation—education; IRAC—religion and state; Peace Now—government funding of settlements in the Occupied Territories). On the basis of this analysis, each organization will work to influence budgetary policy (whether by blocking negative budgetary measures or advancing positive budgetary measures) via the following:

* Public-facing work in the media and via the organizations’ digital media.
* Coordinated political work via briefings for relevant Members of Knesset, both in response to immediate needs relating to urgent issues and by establishing working relationships in broader budgetary contexts.
* Professional work with professional staff in government ministries.
* Legal work to oppose discriminatory budget allocation.

Each of the partner organizations will assign a member of staff to the project.

The Shatil Center for Policy Change will support and advise the partner organizations. A Shatil staff member will coordinate a project steering committee in which relevant staff from the partner organizations will participate. At this stage, the project is planned as a one-year pilot, and next steps will be decided on the basis of its success.

**Metrics**

Outcomes:

* Success in advancing budget allocations that foster equality (e.g., allocations to the Reform and Conservative movements or for the development of ultra-Orthodox schools that teach core curricula subjects) or success in blocking budget allocations that harm equality and/or promote policies that NIF deems negative (e.g. blocking settlement expansion budgets).
* The development of ongoing relationships around budget-related issues with Members of Knesset involved in advancing equality and democratic values.
* Media coverage of the budget data and analyses produced as part of the project.
* The development of a long-term, effective work model.

Outputs

* Briefings for Members of Knesset that present budget data and analyses concerning the various project areas.
* Public-facing work—mainly via social networks—regarding the budget data and analyses for the various project areas.
* Legal work—filing petitions against budget decisions that negatively impact the principle of equality.
* Regular meetings of the project’s steering group.

Each partner organization will assign its own permanent staff to the project. In addition, to facilitate effective working, each of the partner organizations is applying to NIF for a grant of $35,000, as follows:

**Peace Now**

Promoting work on social networks (25% of a post over one year) - $8,000

Producing two videos - $16,000

Promoting funding on social networks - $1,000

Filing a petition against government funding for illegal outposts - $10,000

**Berl Katznelson Foundation**

Employing a new member of staff in a half-time post. This post will be responsible for gathering and analyzing data, and producing analysis and policy papers - $35,000.

In addition, the Berl Katznelson Foundation will employ an intern who will work with Shatil to develop a methodology for monitoring and analyzing the state budget. The Foundation will allocate work hours for various staff members to produce an analysis of the education budget, a briefing for politicians, and to undertake public-facing work. Further, an intern within the organization will coordinate with Shatil to develop a methodology for monitoring and analyzing the state budget.

**IRAC**

A lawyer (30% of a post) who will be responsible for managing project-related work - $15,000.

Public campaigns - $10,000.

Videos and social media promotions - $10,000.

IRAC will raise an additional $35,000 for the project as a condition for the awarding of matching funds. The additional funds raised will be used to partially finance relevant posts (a legal department manager, a spokesperson, and a social media manager).