

Innovation heavyweights appointed to lead new Advanced Research and Invention Agency

- Ilan Gur, founder and former CEO of innovation non-profit Activate, appointed to head up the Advanced Research and Invention Agency – the UK's new, independent science funding body
- under Dr Gur's leadership as its first CEO, ARIA will have the freedom to identify and fund transformational science and technology at speed with minimal bureaucracy
- Matt Clifford MBE, co-founder and CEO of Entrepreneur First, appointed as ARIA's first Chairman

The Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng has today appointed Ilan Gur as Chief Executive of the UK's new Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA), to set the agency's agenda, direct its initial funding of high-risk programmes, build an exceptional team of Programme Managers and engage the domestic and international R&D sector.

Today also marks the appointment of talent investor and entrepreneur Matt Clifford as ARIA's Chairman, who will support the work of the CEO as he takes post on 15 August, acting as the steward for ARIA's effective governance.

ARIA will enable exceptional scientists and researchers to identify and fund transformational research that leads to new technologies, discoveries, products and services – helping to maintain the UK's position as a global science superpower and attracting top talent to our shores to grow the economy, boost prosperity and develop the breakthroughs of the future.

Dr Gur built his career managing cutting-edge research and innovation for the benefit of society, predominantly in his role as founder and CEO of non-profit organisation Activate, a US-based organisation which empowers scientists and engineers to bring ground-breaking research to market. Activate has supported 142 fellows and catalysed the creation of over 100 science-based start-ups under Mr Gur's expert leadership.

Dr Gur has also established 2 science-based start-ups, and served in the first generation of Programme Directors at ARPA-E, the US Department of Energy's agency for funding breakthrough innovations in energy technology.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

The appointment of Ilan Gur as ARIA's first CEO is a huge victory for the future of the agency, and for the UK. He has a distinguished track record in translating exceptional talent and ideas into commercial success, and his leadership will ensure the funding of high-risk programmes that will continue to push the

boundaries of science and technology.

Under Dr Gur's leadership and with the support of the brilliant Matt Clifford, ARIA will ensure the benefits of research and development will be felt in our society and economy over the course of generations.

By stripping back unnecessary red tape and putting power in the hands of our innovators, the agency has the freedom to drive forward the technologies of tomorrow.

ARIA has taken inspiration from the successful US-based Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), which was instrumental in creating transformational technologies such as the internet and GPS, changing the way people live and work, while increasing productivity and economic growth.

More recently, ARPA's successor, DARPA, was a vital pre-pandemic funder of mRNA vaccines and antibody therapies, leading to critical COVID-19 therapies.

Incoming ARIA CEO, Ilan Gur said:

I believe that ARIA can deliver the promise of a better future, not just for citizens of the United Kingdom but for the world.

The opportunity to serve as ARIA's founding CEO is a great honour and a great responsibility that I will work tirelessly to fulfil.

The government set out plans to create ARIA in February 2021 to fund high-risk, high-reward scientific research, and maintain the UK's position as a science superpower, with the ARIA Act receiving Royal Assent in February 2022. The Agency is expected to be established later this year.

To support the incoming CEO and Chairman, recruitment campaigns have also been launched today to find ARIA's Non-Executive Directors and the agency's first Chief Financial Officer.

Incoming Chairman of ARIA, Matt Clifford MBE, said:

ARIA has the potential to create a new model for accelerating the scientific and technological breakthroughs that the world needs.

I am honoured to have the opportunity to work with Ilan Gur to guide ARIA through its formative years and ensure its success.

The government has committed to increase public investment in R&D to £20 billion in 2024-2025, with total R&D spending reaching 2.4% of GDP by 2027, and ARIA will be an integral and invaluable addition to the UK's flourishing R&D ecosystem.

It will operate with the agility to fund transformational science, with the pace, freedom and flexibility of a tech start-up and the facilities of the established UK science infrastructure, avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy, and experimenting with different funding models.

Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser said:

The arrival of ARIA will further strengthen the UK research and innovation system. I am excited about the appointment of Ilan Gur and Matt Clifford as the founding CEO and Chair. They will provide the expertise and energy required to make it a success and I am very much looking forward to working with them.

ARIA will play a key role in diversifying the ways in which we back talented people and teams working on truly transformative ideas, wherever and whoever they are. Together we can build the dynamic, creative research and innovation system essential for the UK's prosperity.

- Ilan Gur obtained a PhD in Materials Science and Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. He is a Schmidt Futures Innovation Fellow, an advisor to the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation in support of the Moore Inventor Fellowship, and a judge for MIT Technology Review's TR35 award
- Matt Clifford MBE is co-founder and CEO of Entrepreneur First, an international investor in technical talent that has helped to build technological companies worth over \$10 billion. Clifford is also co-founder and non-executive director of Code First Girls, has served as a Council Member at Innovate UK, and is a Trustee of the Kennedy Memorial Trust. Before starting Entrepreneur First, Matt worked at McKinsey & Co and earned degrees from the University of Cambridge and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.