
Canada Feature Film Fund

Low Budget Independent Feature Film Assistance Program English-Language Productions

Guidelines



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1. Low Budget Independent Feature Film Assistance Program

Applicants are encouraged to read these guidelines carefully. This document contains essential information on eligibility criteria and the application process. While compliance with these guidelines is a prerequisite to eligibility for funding, compliance does not guarantee entitlement to Telefilm Canada funds.

Telefilm Canada has full discretion in the application of, or exception to, these guidelines to ensure that its funding is provided to those projects that meet its spirit and intent. In all questions of interpretation of either these guidelines or the spirit and intent of the Program, Telefilm Canada's interpretation shall prevail.

Telefilm Canada reserves the right to make adjustments to the guidelines to reflect the changes of the market evolution. The applicable guidelines for a project will remain in force for the entire life of the project.

Any information concerning and/or relating to any aspect of the funding application, the project, any previously completed project, the applicant and any related party to the applicant, as well as any other individual project and/or personal information, will remain confidential subject to the provisions of the [Access to Information Act](#) and the [Privacy Act](#).

Application forms available on Telefilm Canada's [website](#) contain relevant information and constitute an integral part of these guidelines. Telefilm Canada reserves the right to make adjustments to these guidelines and related application forms as the need arises.

2. Program Objectives

The Low Budget Independent Feature Film Assistance Program (the "Program") is a national, federal government initiative administered by Telefilm Canada. Announced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage in October 2000, this Program encourages greater opportunities for creative renewal and professional development. Although continuing to place emphasis on the box office potential of a film, this program seeks primarily to foster excellence and innovation in independent filmmaking and to ensure that Canada's cultural diversity, linguistic duality and shared values are reflected in film.

The Program supports the independent production and post-production/completion of high quality, original and culturally relevant director-driven low budget feature films from both emerging and established filmmakers. The Program supports films where the director is the driving force behind the proposed project.

In conjunction with the other elements of the Canada Feature Film Fund (CFFF), the Program is an important component of the federal government's Canadian feature film policy entitled: *From Script to Screen: New Policy Directions for Canadian Feature Films* (2000) that has the objective to increase the quality, diversity and accessibility of Canadian feature films.

Linguistic and Regional Diversity

Approximately one-third of the Program's budget will be earmarked in support of French-language projects and approximately two-thirds to assist English-language projects. The allocation will be made according to the original language of the production. Telefilm Canada shall seek to maintain an appropriate balance, so as to encourage projects in both official languages in all regions of Canada.

3. Eligible Applicants

To be considered eligible, an applicant must be a Canadian-owned and controlled corporation in accordance with the [Investment Canada Act](#), with its head office based in Canada.

The individual applicant must be a Canadian citizen in accordance with the [Citizenship Act](#), or a permanent resident of Canada in accordance with the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act](#).

Eligibility for Production and Post-Production/Completion Assistance

To be eligible to apply for production assistance applicants must meet the minimum credit requirements under a) as outlined below.

To be eligible to apply for post-production/completion assistance applicants must meet the minimum credit requirements under a) or b) as outlined below.

While this Program is open to both established and emerging filmmakers, only directors will be considered eligible. Producers are not eligible to this Program.

Applicants may hire and work with a producer, but the director must own and control the creative and editorial rights over the work. Successful applicants will be required to sign an affidavit declaring that they exercise full creative and editorial control over the production.

Students currently enrolled at a school, college or university are not eligible to apply.

All Telefilm Canada programs are accessible to Aboriginal filmmakers and filmmakers from diverse cultural and regional communities of Canada.

If the application is successful, and if the director does not have an incorporated company, the applicant will be requested to incorporate as a Canadian-owned and controlled company as determined pursuant to the [Investment Canada Act](#). Telefilm Canada will accept that the costs of such incorporation be included in the film's budget.

Credit requirements

Telefilm Canada considers the following to be minimum credit requirements to determine eligibility based on the applicant's professional status:

- a) The applicant must have directed and completed:
 - at least two independent short drama, non-student film that have been selected for presentation at a minimum of one of the recognized festivals listed in the Annex; or
 - at least one independent, short drama, non-student films that has won a recognized award listed in the Annex; or
 - one short fiction program or a non-fiction program of at least 30 minutes aired on a CRTC licensed television broadcaster (pay, specialty or conventional broadcaster).
- b) The applicant must have directed one feature film that is complete to at least the rough-cut stage. This can include the project being submitted to the Program.

4. Eligible Projects

To be considered eligible, a project must meet all of the following basic criteria. It must:

- Be director-driven. The Canadian director must own and control the creative and editorial rights over the work. Contracts with other funding sources must not require the director to give up such control;
- Be a dramatic theatrical feature film over 75 minutes duration;
- Be eligible for certification as a Canadian production pursuant to the criteria of the Canadian Audio-visual Certification Office (CAVCO), or satisfy the definition of a Canadian program as set out by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC); AND Achieve a minimum of 8 out of 10 Canadian content points using the CAVCO scale, unless the project is an official treaty co-production;
- Not contain any elements of gratuitous violence or serious or gratuitous sexual exploitation, and must not be obscene, indecent or pornographic within the meaning of the criminal code, or libellous or any other way unlawful;
- Be completed on digital video, 16mm or 35mm;
- Have a total production budget of no less than \$250,000 and no more than \$1,250,000.

5. Non-Eligible Projects

The following types of projects are not eligible:

- Projects done on contract for, or produced by, a government agency;
- Production produced primarily for industrial, corporate or institutional purposes;
- Advertising;
- Student projects;
- Pilots for television;
- Projects using film as a tool to record or document existing artworks;
- Documentary or non-drama projects;
- Conventional forms of television entertainment, such as movies-of-the-week and news reports;
- Projects deemed to be direct-to-video movies; and
- Post-production or completion projects which require technical, but not creative or editorial work, such as blow-ups, transfer to another format or subtitling.

Please contact Telefilm Canada before submitting your application if you have any questions about the eligibility of your project. Comments regarding project eligibility should not be interpreted by the applicant as acceptance of the application. Eligibility of a project to the Program will only be determined upon receipt of an application. Telefilm Canada's decisions with respect to eligibility of applicants and their projects will be final.

6. Nature and Terms of Participation

Financial Participation

Financial assistance is available for:

- Production, and/or
- Post-production/completion. All post-production/completion requests must be submitted to Telefilm Canada prior to final cut.

Assistance is provided in the form of a repayable non-interest bearing advance. Assistance will not exceed 65% of the total project budget, up to a maximum of \$200,000 per project.

Telefilm Canada will expect a production budget to be based on industry norms and market rates.

The project's financial structure must identify other sources of financing, confirmed and pending, such as other agencies, broadcasters, distributors, etc. In addition to outlining the financial structure of the project, the applicant will be required to submit commitment letters, deferral and investment agreements, and all other relevant material, if the project is selected.

Eligible projects seeking production financing do not need to have a distribution agreement with a Canadian distributor. However, Telefilm Canada encourages applicants to seek out distribution deals with broadcast pre-sales with Canadian distributors and/or Canadian broadcasters.

Reimbursement

Telefilm Canada will recoup its full advance by receiving 10% of the revenues received by the applicant from the exploitation of the film in the marketplace. After the full reimbursement, Telefilm Canada's participation will be reduced to 5% of such revenue.

Preservation Requirements

The budget (for either production or post-production/completion requests) must include the following preservation material for the Library and Archives of Canada:

- One broadcast quality video master, in digital betacam or beta SP format;
- One ½" VHS copy and/or one DVD copy;
- Optional: one 35mm print – unwaxed, on cores, without added cue marks, leaders intact.

A copy of the receipt issued by the Library and Archives of Canada must be included in the applicant's submission to Telefilm Canada of the final cost report for the project.

7. Evaluation of Applications

Evaluation Method

This Program seeks to support films of a high quality that demonstrate innovative and original creative elements. In addition to the basic elements of the application, the applicant will also need to present a convincing vision for their project, in terms of its overall creative direction, financing and audience potential.

Priority will be given to projects with the highest proportion of Canadian creative elements.

With regard to applications seeking post production/completion financing, priority will be given to eligible projects that have a letter from a Canadian theatrical distributor; Canadian broadcaster, major festival, or other recognized means of exhibition.

The evaluation of all projects will be conducted by Telefilm Canada in its regional offices and by using the recommendation of external readers who are sensitive to independent filmmaking.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated on both their creative merit and financial feasibility, according to the following criteria:

a) Creative Elements

For production requests:

- Quality and level of achievement of script and production plans for production requests;
- Originality of the project;
- Director's vision and intentions for the film;
- Track record of the director, screenwriter, production team and cast.

For post-production/completion requests:

- Quality and level of achievement of the production to date
- Originality of the project;
- Director's vision and intentions for the film;
- Track record of the director, screenwriter, production team and cast;
- Distribution, broadcast, festival, and other pertinent exhibition arrangements.

b) Financial Elements

- Production budget in relation to scope of project;
- Post-production budget in relation to ability to complete the production successfully;
- Viability of financial structure.

8. Terms and Conditions of Telefilm Canada's Financial Support

When financing from other sources is necessary to undertake the project, Telefilm Canada will release its funds only upon receipt and approval of documentation confirming the additional financing and in accordance with an agreed cash flow.

Applicants who are unable to begin the proposed activities within the fiscal year (ending March 31) in which a positive decision letter has been issued must notify Telefilm Canada. Funding must be used during the fiscal year in which it was obtained.

Successful applicants agree to carry out the activities described in their application and contract. Any and all changes to the proposed project must be brought to the attention of Telefilm Canada for consideration and approval before they are carried out.

9. How to Apply

Application forms and all supporting material must be sent to the Telefilm Canada office in your region to the attention of Low Budget Independent Feature Film Assistance Program Coordinator. Application forms and coordinates for the regional offices are available on Telefilm Canada's [web site](#).

All material submitted with the application form will be retained by Telefilm Canada.

Originals should not be submitted. Telefilm Canada is not responsible for the loss or damage, whatever the cause, of support material.

Limitations

Applicants may only submit one application per year. Unsuccessful projects in a particular year may be resubmitted the following year only if there have been significant and substantial changes to the script or if major new elements (e.g. principal cast) have been incorporated. All re-submissions must be accompanied by a full explanation of those changes.

Applicants who have received production assistance for a particular project may not subsequently re-apply for post-production/completion assistance for that same project. As such, applicants applying for production assistance must include post-production/completion costs as part of their production budget.

Application Deadlines

a) Western, Ontario and Nunavut, and Atlantic Regions

For applicants applying to Telefilm Canada's Western, Ontario and Nunavut, or Atlantic regional offices there is no application deadline. Applications will be reviewed on a first come first serve basis.

Telefilm Canada currently receives applications for financing that exceeds its available resources. As such, Telefilm Canada cannot guarantee the availability of funds for the duration of the fiscal year.

b) Quebec

Applicants from Quebec who apply at Telefilm Canada's Quebec regional office must visit Telefilm Canada's [web site](#) for the specific application deadline. Please note that there is only one application deadline per year.

Completeness of Application

It is the applicant's responsibility to include all the material that gives evidence of their eligibility as applicants as well as their project's eligibility. Applicants must submit all requested application material. Telefilm Canada reserves the right to request any additional information or documents it may deem necessary to assess the application.

Applicants are encouraged to apply well in advance of the deadline in order that Telefilm Canada may have the opportunity to advise of any deficiencies in the application package and have them addressed before the deadline date.

Notification of Decisions

Applicants will receive written notification of the results of their application. Every effort is made to advise applicants of results with the least possible delay. Telefilm Canada's standard of service target for production decisions is 10 weeks following the receipt of a complete application.

If the project is selected Telefilm Canada will issue a decision letter outlining the key terms and conditions of financing, the signing of which shall be subject to the completion of any other financing arrangements and outstanding conditions.

Annex: Recognized Festivals and Awards

Telefilm Canada may make adjustments to this list from time to time as required, without notice.

International Festivals

Anecy International Animated Film Festival
Aspen Short Festival
Berlin International Film Festival
Cannes Film Festival
Chicago International Film Festival
Hiroshima International Animation
Festival du court métrage de Tampere
Festival international du court métrage de Clermont Ferrand
Karlovy Vary International Film Festival
London Film Festival
Locarno International Film Festival
Melbourne International Film Festival
Oberhausen International Short Film Festival
Palm Springs International Film Festival of Short Films
San Francisco International Film Festival
Sundance Film Festival
Sydney Film Festival
Turin International Film Festival of Young Cinema
Venice International Film Festival
Zagreb World Festival of Animated Films

Canadian Festivals

Atlantic Film Festival
Banff Television Festival
Festival du cinéma international en Abitibi-Témiscamingue
Montreal World Film Festival
Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and New Media
Regard sur le court au Saguenay
Ottawa International Animation Festival
Les Rendez-vous de cinéma québécois
Toronto International Film Festival
CFC Worldwide Short Film Festival
Vancouver International Film Festival
Yorkton Short Film Showcase

Canadian Awards

Prix Gémeaux
Gemini Awards
Genie Awards
Prix Jutra