

# **DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

## **ESSENTIAL INFORMATION GUIDE**

**EFFECTIVE AS OF JULY 7, 2025**

## Table of Contents

General Questions .....	3
Questions Regarding the Prequalified Stream .....	6
Questions Regarding the Selective Streams .....	8
Questions Regarding the Indigenous Stream .....	12

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

### 1. What are the types of funding available under the Development Program?

Funding under the Development Program may be **automatic or selective**, depending on the stream.

- **Automatic:**

The **Prequalified Stream** is an automatic stream, which means that funding is pre-determined and projects and applicants that meet the eligibility criteria automatically qualify for funding.

Access to this stream is determined based on the performance ratio of the eligible companies. A total of **125 eligible companies** can receive funding under this stream.

**Companies who are eligible under the Prequalified Stream will be notified** of their eligibility and of the development funding amount to which they are eligible **ahead of the opening of the program**.

The **pilot Springboard Initiative** provides automatic funding to eligible projects selected from the Production Program to help strengthen their project for a future Production application. Applicants to the Production Program that may benefit from this initiative will be notified individually and invited to apply. Note that applicants can only benefit from this Initiative once for the same project.

- **Selective:**

Funding for projects under the **General Stream**, the **Indigenous Stream** and the **Stream for Black People and People of Colour** is determined through a selective process using advisory committees. All advisory committees evaluate the projects based on the evaluation criteria described in the Guidelines, and score and rank the projects following the evaluation grid available on the program webpage.

---

### 2. Can I apply to different streams?

An applicant benefiting from the Springboard Initiative may make an additional application to another stream provided they are applying to this stream with a different project. In all other cases, an applicant **may only apply to one stream** even if it is eligible to more than one. **Note:** It is not possible to switch streams after an application is submitted.

---

### 3. Do the projects in my portfolio have to be intended for theatrical release?

Yes.

---

### 4. What is considered a theatrical release?

A theatrical release is the exhibition of the film to the paying public at a commercial theatre. The theatrical release date is the day on which a film is entered into the theatrical distribution system for public viewing in one or more theatres and in one or more cities. **Note:** Four-walling is not considered a theatrical release.

---

**5. If my portfolio is funded, what percentage of a project's development budget will Telefilm contribute?**

Subject to the maximum amount of financing your company is eligible for, Telefilm's financial participation can cover up to 100% of the budget of each project included in your portfolio.

---

**6. Does Telefilm fund eligible costs incurred prior to submission of the funding application?**

Yes. Costs incurred since January 1, 2025 are eligible.

---

**7. Is there a standard budget for development which lists which costs are eligible at which phase?**

No. Telefilm has moved away from a standard budget model. The guidelines speak of eligible costs and some parameters for a few of them, but the applicant can tailor applicable costs depending on the state of advancement, creative needs, and particularities of the project.

A final cost report will be required, and Telefilm could question some costs to make sure they meet the program's objectives and spirit and intent. Telefilm reserves the right to decline some costs that are deemed unreasonable or not in line with the program's objectives.

---

**8. Does every project in my development portfolio with Telefilm need to be completed and delivered before I can apply again?**

Applicants having an uncompleted development project under contract with Telefilm may not submit another application for the same project nor include it in a new portfolio submission. However, the entire portfolio does not have to be completed before applying for an additional phase of a previously funded project.

---

**9. What development phase can I apply for under this program?**

You can apply for any phase from first draft through to packaging. Note that a project may only be funded for Development four times, and that the cumulative amount must be repaid on the earlier of the first day of principal photography or the sale/transfer/assignment of the script.

---

**10. I wish to apply for multi-phase funding. Is that possible?**

Yes. However, you must be able to demonstrate that the phases can be completed within the term of your option agreement.

---

**11. If I was unsuccessful in my Development application, may I re-apply with the same project?**

A project that has been unsuccessful **twice** in the Development Program is not eligible to be re-submitted.

It is highly recommended that a project that has been unsuccessful once have substantial updates to the creative

material before being re-submitted.

---

**12. What is the “packaging” phase of a project?**

The packaging stage involves the inclusion of market elements, for example the commitment of a director and a distributor (depending on the production budget level envisioned), attaching a casting agent and/or cast, the development of a business and financing plan as well as a preliminary theatrical marketing plan, including target audience(s), commercial potential and a preliminary theatrical release strategy. Subsequent drafts of a screenplay may also be included in this phase.

---

**13. Am I required to have a director and a distributor attached to my project in order to apply for the packaging phase?**

A commitment from a director is mandatory (as evidenced by a director’s agreement) with the exception of packaging applications submitted to the Springboard Initiative.

A commitment from a distributor is not required but having one attached would be considered in the evaluation of the application.

---

**14. A member of the key creative personnel of my project is not a Canadian Citizen or a Permanent Resident, is it eligible?**

No. All members of the key creative personnel must be permanent residents or Canadian citizens.

---

**15. What minimum rights does my company need for the project(s) included in my portfolio application?**

The film(s) must be under the financial and creative control of the applicant, who must hold for at least 24 months all the exclusive rights and options necessary for the adaptation of the original work or concept (if applicable) and for the full and complete worldwide exploitation of the script and production (appropriate exceptions for projects structured as audiovisual treaty coproductions).

---

**16. Is it mandatory to have a story consultant or a script editor?**

No. However, Telefilm encourages teams to collaborate with a story consultant or a script editor who is independent from the applicant. Further, a story consultant or a script editor independent from the producer may be a condition to Telefilm’s funding.

---

**17. I am an emerging producer. Should I have a more experienced producer attached to my project?**

Telefilm encourages applicants to have a producer or producing team that can move the project through the development phases. The track record score takes into consideration the prior experience of the producer(s) in relation to the scale of the project.

---

**18. If the story consultant or script editor of a project is also the producer or an employee of the applicant, will their fee be considered as an eligible cost?**

No. To be considered as an eligible cost, the story consultant or script editor must be independent from the applicant. They cannot be the producer, a related party to the producer or an employee of the applicant.

---

## **QUESTIONS REGARDING THE PREQUALIFIED STREAM**

**19. I want to review my production company's filmography and performance ratio prior to the opening of the program to make sure it is accurate. How do I do that?**

Applicants are responsible for reviewing their company's information and filmography on [Dialogue](#) and ensuring that the information is current and accurate at all times. This is the information that Telefilm relies on to determine a project's and company's performance ratio, as well as companies' eligibility to the Prequalified Stream, and the amount of funding to which they may be eligible, if applicable.

If there are discrepancies in a company's filmography on [Dialogue](#), a designated representative for the company should inform Telefilm's team as soon as such discrepancy is discovered.

Requests for adjustments, corrections or revisions made after April 1, 2025, will not be taken into account in the determination of eligibility to the Prequalified Stream for fiscal 2025-2026.

---

**20. My project was funded by Telefilm under the Talent to Watch Program, and I do not see it in my company's filmography on Dialogue, or the information is not accurate. How do I update it?**

If you have produced a project that was funded under the Talent to Watch Program and released in theatres between January 1, 2019 and December 31, 2024, but never had the chance to report the gross sales to Telefilm, a designated representative for your company should reach out to Margaret Paul ([Margaret.paul@telefilm.ca](mailto:Margaret.paul@telefilm.ca)) in order to fill out Gross Sales Report for next year.

Requests for adjustments, corrections or revisions made after April 1, 2025, will not be taken into account in the determination of eligibility to the Prequalified Stream for fiscal 2025-2026.

---

**21. How do I add a film that was produced without Telefilm funding to my filmography in Dialogue?**

Only films financed by Telefilm under the Production Program, the Theatrical Documentary Program, or the Talent to Watch Program can be added to the filmography in [Dialogue](#).

---

**22. How are the Prequalified Stream tiers and amounts determined for each company?**

Access to the Prequalified Stream for eligible production companies is based on their performance ratio which, in turn, is based on its portfolio of eligible Telefilm-supported films.

The performance ratio is ultimately used to rank the companies and determine which ones are eligible to the Prequalified Stream. A total of **125 companies have access to the Prequalified Stream**. Depending on their ranking, companies may be in tiers A, B or C:

- **Tier A consists of 25 companies each eligible for a prequalified amount of \$100,000:**
  - ✓ **8 French-language companies** with the highest performance ratio; and
  - ✓ **17 English-language companies** with the highest performance ratio.
- **Tiers B and C include a further 100 companies** cumulatively:
  - ✓ **One third (34)** are French-language companies; and
  - ✓ **Two thirds (66)** are English-language companies.
    - *In order to ensure regional representation from across the country, the English-language companies in tiers B and C are selected based on their performance as well as on regional rankings. The four regions considered are: Atlantic; Quebec (English language); Ontario and Nunavut; and Western, Northwest Territories and Yukon.*
- **The top 50 performers compose tier B**, with access to a prequalified amount of **\$60,000** per company.
- **The next 50 companies make up tier C**, which provides access to a prequalified amount of **\$35,000**.

For more information on performance ratio calculation, please refer to the **Summary of Calculation of Performance Ratio and Access to the Prequalified Stream** available on the program's [webpage](#).

Companies eligible to the Prequalified Stream will receive a note in Dialogue before the program's opening date advising them of their eligibility to that stream and the amount to which they are eligible.

If an applicant does not meet the criteria set for the Prequalified Stream, they may be eligible under another stream of the program (See the Guidelines for complete eligibility criteria).

---

## 23. How does Telefilm determine the language of a company?

To determine a company's language, Telefilm uses the weighted sum of the Canadian shares of eligible films' production budgets. A company whose majority of production expenses were incurred on French-language projects will be considered a French-language company, and vice versa if the majority of expenses were incurred on English-language projects.

---

## 24. How is the performance ratio calculated for my company and for the projects it has produced?

For more information on performance ratio calculation, please refer to the **Summary of Calculation of Performance Ratio and Access to the Prequalified Stream** available on the program's [webpage](#).

---

## 25. What is the minimum performance ratio required in order to be eligible to the Prequalified Stream?

The minimum performance ratio required in order to be eligible to the Prequalified Stream may vary by region and by linguistic market. Minimum performance ratio requirements are available on the program's [webpage](#).

---

**26. If my company is eligible to the Prequalified Stream, how many projects may I include in my portfolio and what is the maximum funding per project?**

The **minimum** funding per project is **\$15,000**. The **maximum** is the **total eligible amount per portfolio**, which is determined by the tier to which the applicant is prequalified and can be **up to 100% of the project's budget** for the development phase.

For example, the maximum funding to which an applicant who is prequalified for tier B funding is \$60,000 and such funding can be used towards and up to 3 projects. The applicant could choose to only include 1 project in its portfolio and request the total \$60,000 for such project, as long as the project's budget for the development phase is equal to or greater than \$60,000.

---

**27. If I am eligible to the Prequalified Stream in Tier A or B, can I submit a mix of French and English-language projects?**

Yes, applications under the Prequalified Stream may contain a mix of French and English-language projects.

---

## **QUESTIONS REGARDING THE SELECTIVE STREAMS**

### **(General Stream, Indigenous Stream & Stream for Black People and People of Colour)**

**28. What are the terms of funding under the Selective Streams?**

Telefilm's **minimum** participation in individual projects under the **General Stream**, the **Indigenous Stream**, and the **Stream for Black People and People of Colour** is **\$15,000** and the **maximum** participation is **\$35,000**.

Each applicant **may submit only one project** to these streams, and each applicant may apply to only one of these streams.

---

**29. How does Telefilm determine if an applicant is a Canadian-controlled corporation?**

Telefilm uses the parameters of the *Investment Canada Act* for the purposes of determining the Canadian control of applicants.

Please note that, a permanent resident within the meaning of subsection 2 (1) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* who has been ordinarily resident in Canada for more than one year after the time at which they first became eligible to apply for Canadian citizenship is not considered "Canadian" under the *Investment Canada Act*.

---

**30. I produced a project that premiered at a festival that is not included in the list of Qualifying Festivals for the stream I wish to apply for. Will Telefilm take this into consideration when assessing the project's eligibility?**

No, unless your project is intended to be **produced and completed in French** and you are in one of the following situations:



- a) Your application is submitted to the **Indigenous Stream** or the **Stream for Black People and People of Colour OR**
- b) Your application is submitted to the **General Stream AND** your company is **majority owned and controlled by either Indigenous persons, Black persons and/or People of color, or members of an Official Language Minority Community.**

Please fill in the **Declaration Form Regarding Previous Production Experience** available on the program's [webpage](#) and submit with the rest of the required documents at the time of application.

---

### 31. What should be included in the Pitch Document?

The Pitch Document is a document included with the creative materials that will be evaluated. The document should be 5-10 pages (including visuals). Every Pitch Document will be different but should include (but is not limited to) the following:

- ✓ Logline – max. 100 words. Describe your film in one sentence.
- ✓ Synopsis – max. 750 words. Provide a brief plot summary/synopsis of your film's storyline in 750 words or less.
- ✓ Writer's or Director's Vision – max. 500 words. Describe the intent and artistic approach to the project, which may include thoughts on themes and characters, origin of story, visual and aural style, tone, genre and mood. We welcome insight into your process and your connection to the material. You may use images and photos to convey your vision.
- ✓ Visual materials, if available. If you have visual materials that illustrate the creative vision, look, and characters, such as a lookbook or project/pitch deck, you may upload a PDF.
- ✓ Track Record. This should include key creative team information, such as previous work (max 300 words each) for the applicant: producer(s), screenwriter(s), director(s) (if attached). It is also helpful to highlight any mentors, and key cast or crew attached to the project submitted, if applicable.
- ✓ Producer Summary - max 750 words. Describe the status of the project, initiatives undertaken to advance it, and ongoing creative and strategic perspectives to move it into production. This is also an opportunity to highlight how this project will benefit from development funding. Describe:
  - Who are the audiences for your film?
  - What are the comparable titles for your film?
  - What will you do to connect with your audiences?

---

### 32. What is a Community Engagement Plan and what should be in it?

A Community Engagement Plan is required for all projects. It is an opportunity for filmmakers to talk about their working process and demonstrate meaningful engagement with all areas of impact of their project.

Telefilm wants to see that the team has considered the potential impact of their production and that they have a plan to work in ways that are collaborative and respectful of impacted communities. The plan is where applicants highlight their approach and may also be an opportunity to discuss the identity and lived experiences of the key creative team where it is relevant to the project. It also helps to address questions that advisory committee members may have about the team's approach to the content and its potential impacts.

Good intentions don't always mean there is no impact. To be intentionally aware of the impact is to minimize harm, challenge stereotypes and uplift underrepresented groups. Teams are expected to be responsible for the impact of their work and to consider:

- how the film is made and the process behind it;
- how the film impacts and is received by those with relevant lived experience; and

- how the film impacts society and societal views broadly.

The process for accurate cultural depictions and authentic storytelling may include collaboration with those with the relevant lived experience at all stages of the project while recognizing that no one can speak on behalf of an entire culture or underrepresented group. True engagement is more than a checkbox or tokenizing a single person or experience and requires thoughtful collaboration. To minimize barriers that show up in representation and collaboration, it's important to also know and consider historical injustice and current social barriers that underrepresented groups experience. For more information on Authentic Storytelling, please visit Telefilm's [webpage](#).

Appropriate engagement will depend on the content of the film, the knowledge of the team, and the territories and communities being represented on-screen, as well as territories where the film is shooting. All phases of a project present an opportunity for engagement. Applicants may outline plans including, but not limited to:

- ✓ Research practices;
- ✓ How sensitive content is treated in the script and how it will be handled while filming;
- ✓ Engaging appropriate and specialized expertise, including (but not limited to): hiring advisors, on-set counsellors, local crew and crew-hiring organizations, cultural knowledge keepers, etc.;
- ✓ Engaging appropriately with local communities, organizations, and/or businesses;
- ✓ Involving community members in their creative team and entering into written agreements when appropriate; and
- ✓ Compensating all roles, including trainees, appropriately.

The details of the plan will depend entirely on the specific needs of the project, the communities involved, and what the filmmakers deem is appropriate for their project.

Filmmaking teams are encouraged to consult resources like [On-Screen protocols & Pathways: A Media Production Guide](#) for guidance on working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities as well as [Being Seen: Directives for Creating Authentic and Inclusive Content](#).

For projects submitted to the Indigenous Stream and/or having Indigenous content, applicants are encouraged to add information about the Indigenous identities of the team as described in question 40 below.

For further information, applicants may contact their Feature Film Executive, the Lead, Indigenous Initiatives, the Lead, Inclusion Initiatives or the Inclusion Initiatives Advisor.

### **33. What information should I include in the sustainability plan? Will it be considered in the evaluation of my application?**

A Sustainability Plan is an optional document at application stage for development but will be required for applicants selected for all production funding programs prior to principal photography. **The easy-to-use required Sustainability Plan template** is available on Telefilm's **The template, with prompts and suggestions, will** facilitate planning, as well as help inform Telefilm's tracking of current sustainable practices.

The Sustainability Plan template, which complements the [updated production budget](#) model, is designed to encourage production teams to think about their production's environmental impacts, raise awareness of challenges and solutions, and help implement responsible practices. Submitted Sustainability Plans do not factor into a project's assessment.

For optimal planning and team onboarding, it is recommended that the sustainability plan template be completed **at least 3 to 6 weeks before production starts**. Tools and resources can be found on Telefilm's [Environmental Sustainability web page](#).

---

### **34. How will projects be evaluated once they are submitted to the Selective Streams?**

Advisory committees will evaluate the projects based on the evaluation criteria outlined in the program guidelines and submit their recommendations to Telefilm. Each advisory committee will use the evaluation grid available on the program's [webpage](#) to score and rank eligible projects.

The factors that Telefilm will consider in evaluating submitted projects under each of the selective streams are:

#### **Creative Elements**

- ✓ the creative quality and originality of the synopsis and the treatment or script, as applicable, and whether it has the potential to be a film that will achieve its creative intentions;
- ✓ the strength and creative vision in the pitch document;
- ✓ the cinematic potential of the project;
- ✓ the viability of the development plan as described in the pitch document;
- ✓ the aspects of the creative elements that speak to Canadian experiences and audiences;
- ✓ the level, quality, and nature of the engagement described within the Community Engagement Plan;
- ✓ whether or not the creative materials are creating or perpetuating harm, stereotypes, or false assumptions;
- ✓ for projects at the packaging phase, the director and market interest attached.

#### **Track Record of the Key Creative Personnel (i.e., screenwriter(s), producer(s) and, for the packaging phase, director(s))**

- ✓ the relevant experience and level expertise of the Key Creative Personnel (i.e., screenwriter(s), producer(s) and, for the packaging phase, director(s)), relative to the scope of the project and their capacity to execute and deliver the creative vision for the project;
- ✓ the past performance of the previous projects of the producer(s), screenwriter(s) and, for the packaging phase, director(s)) in terms of critical acclaim, audience engagement, visibility, etc.

#### **Cultural Impact and Audience Reach Potential**

- ✓ the team's understanding of, and projected engagement with, the intended audience(s);
- ✓ whether the project speaks to a Canadian or international audience and/or an underrepresented audience;
- ✓ the project's potential to distinguish itself in the current Canadian feature film landscape;
- ✓ for projects dealing with the experiences of underrepresented communities, the project's potential to reach and speak to these communities;
- ✓ the project's potential for cultural resonance, either within or outside conventional avenues for recognition (e.g., critical reviews, film festival acclaim, adding to representation in content, generating new perspectives and cultural conversations, etc.).

#### **Diversity of Voices**

The decision-making process takes into consideration Telefilm's objective to foster a diversity of voices in the industry to ensure that Telefilm funds a balanced portfolio of productions reflecting a variety of genres, budgets and company sizes, regions across the country, and different viewpoints.

As part of fostering diversity of voices, Telefilm may prioritize projects whose key creatives (i.e., screenwriter(s), producer(s) and, for the packaging phase, director(s)) are members of communities supported through its Inclusion Initiatives:

- Indigenous;
- Black people;
- People of Colour;
- 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals;
- Gender-diverse identities and expressions;
- Persons with disabilities;
- Members of Official Language Minority Communities.

Gender parity will continue to be a priority across all programs. Prioritization also considers the intersectionality of identities as a way to better reflect a large spectrum of lived experiences.

---

### **35. How will Indigenous projects be evaluated?**

The Indigenous projects will be assessed based on the evaluation criteria described above. In addition, the objectives of narrative sovereignty outlined in the *On-Screen Pathways and Protocols: A Media Production Guide* will be a factor in the consideration of all Indigenous projects and content.

In its assessment, the advisory committee will consider the overall portfolio of projects to strive for a diversity of voices reflected in the choices. This takes into account gender parity, regional balance, a balance of Indigenous nations to be reflected, official languages, Indigenous languages, and budget levels.

---

### **36. Who evaluates the applications in the Selective Streams?**

Advisory committees composed of internal and/or external members will evaluate the projects based on the above evaluation criteria and make a recommendation to Telefilm.

Internal advisory committee representatives are members of the Project Financing and Business Affairs teams at Telefilm including National and Regional Feature Film Executives, Content Analysts and Investment Analysts located in Telefilm's offices across the country.

Where advisory committees include external members, such members will be film industry experts with the necessary expertise and experience to be able to assess the strength and quality of the applications according to the evaluation criteria.

In all cases, the advisory committees for the Stream for Black People and People of Colour and the Indigenous Stream will include members who belong to each of these groups and will reflect regional diversity and gender parity.

There may be different advisory committees based on language and region.

---

## **QUESTIONS REGARDING THE INDIGENOUS STREAM**

**37. I am an Indigenous filmmaker and want to apply for funding for my project. Is there someone I can reach out to with my questions?**

Telefilm has a [webpage](#) dedicated to Indigenous initiatives which includes information about Telefilm's commitment to supporting Indigenous filmmakers, as well as the Indigenous funding available, the application and decision-making processes, and links to helpful guides and tools.

The Lead, Indigenous Initiatives is your liaison with Telefilm and is available to discuss your application strategy and other issues.

**Note:** The application materials must be submitted exclusively in one language, either in English or French.

---

**38. What does Telefilm consider in its review of “creative, financial and distribution control” of projects submitted to the Indigenous Stream of the program?**

In its review, Telefilm will consider elements such as the decision-making authority and creative control as documented in coproduction agreements, budget remuneration, revenue sharing, performance ratio sharing, chain of title, etc. Telefilm recognizes that every project is different, and control may manifest in different ways depending on the Indigenous team members' expertise and roles. The intent is to support companies that are controlled by Indigenous people who are meaningfully involved in all relevant decision-making related to the creative, financial and distribution elements of the project.

---

**39. How will Indigenous projects be evaluated?**

Indigenous projects will be assessed by an advisory committee comprised of internal and external Indigenous industry experts who will make recommendations to Telefilm. In its assessment, the advisory committee will take into account Telefilm's objective to foster a diversity of voices, ensuring Telefilm funds a balanced portfolio of productions reflecting a variety of genres, budget and company sizes, regions across the country, and different viewpoints as well as a balance of Indigenous nations and Indigenous languages.

All projects will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria set out in Telefilm's Development Program's guidelines. The objectives of narrative sovereignty outlined in the On-Screen Pathways and Protocols: A Media Production Guide will also be a factor in the consideration of all Indigenous projects and content, including projects submitted to the General Stream.

---

**40. How is Telefilm assessing Indigenous identity?**

All members of the key creative team of each project submitted under the Program will be asked to complete a self-identification questionnaire at application submission.

Indigenous creatives should know and be able to articulate their relation and connection to their Indigenous identity. The applicant may want to include a short introduction of the key creative personnel and their identities in the Community Engagement Plan. We do not expect private information about the key creative team members to be provided that might cause them harm. Furthermore, all personal information must be provided only with prior consent of the individuals concerned.

Telefilm reserves the right to request additional information.

If you have questions, please contact the Lead, Indigenous Initiatives.

