

Guidelines

Talent to Watch Program

Funding of First Feature Films
from Emerging Filmmakers

APPLICABLE AS OF MARCH 17, 2026
Ce document est également disponible en français

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Program Summary

The *Talent to Watch Program – Funding of First Feature Films from Emerging Filmmakers* (the “**Program**”) aims to support a diverse array of emerging filmmakers¹. The intended outcome of this Program is to discover and develop the next generation of Canadian filmmakers, and to allow them to establish their voice and sensibility through a first feature.

These guidelines provide direction regarding the Program’s targeted objectives, eligibility and evaluation criteria, and the terms and conditions of funding by Telefilm.

Program Intent and Objectives

The guiding principles of the Program are to increase audience access to the works of new Canadian talent, and to invest in:

- feature films that will speak to Canadian and international audiences, and that will bring both cultural impact and audience engagement. Telefilm seeks to fund films that will build and contribute to our Canadian cultural legacy.
- teams with a strong sensibility and perspective who will bring original voices and approaches and will advance cinematic expression.
- emerging teams to support them in advancing their artistic career.
- greater equity and representation in storytelling, that reflects gender parity and diversity from various communities including Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, Gender-diverse identities and expressions, as well as People with Disabilities from all regions of the country².
- creative teams from Official Language Minority Communities and those situated outside the main production centers of Toronto and Montreal.
- Indigenous content that is produced by filmmakers who are Indigenous and/or have engaged in meaningful research, collaboration, and cooperation with Indigenous communities impacted by their projects.
- creative teams who are from underrepresented communities and/or who have engaged in meaningful research, collaboration, and cooperation with the communities impacted by their projects.
- content creation that helps advance sustainable production practices, and that encourages environmental responsibility.

Resources within the Canada Feature Film Fund are allocated on a linguistic basis which maintains approximately one-third of funding for French-language projects.

Part of the funds allocated to this Program may come from Telefilm’s Talent Fund and comply with the terms of the envelope established for this Fund. Visit the Talent Fund [website](#) for more details.

¹ Emerging filmmakers are producers, directors and writers.

² Telefilm acknowledges that terminology is subject to change and evolving language will be part of the ongoing and inclusive dialogue with the industry.

1 Program Overview

Emerging filmmakers submit their funding application directly to Telefilm via one of the following streams:

- **Industry Partner Stream:** emerging filmmakers who have a recommendation from one of the Designated Partners indicated on the [Program's webpage](#) can apply via this stream.

Filmmakers need to apply to their Designated Partner to get a recommendation before applying to Telefilm. The Designated Partner will choose which projects to recommend to Telefilm and provide a recommendation letter to team to include in their funding application to Telefilm. Each Designated Partner may recommend a project under the following components: the **Main component**, the **Indigenous component** and the **Official Language Minority Community (OLMC) component**.

The list of Designated Partners is available on the [Program's webpage](#). These partners all have a strong connection to emerging talent and include recognized training institutions with a film training program, film cooperatives and film festivals with talent incubators.

- **Filmmaker Apply-Direct Stream:** Emerging filmmakers can apply directly to Telefilm without having a recommendation from a Designated Partner if they are members of the following groups:
 - Indigenous;
 - Black;
 - People of Colour;
 - Women;
 - Gender-diverse individuals;
 - 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals;
 - Persons with disabilities; and/or
 - Members of an Official Language Minority Community.
- **Festival Selection Stream:** Emerging filmmakers can also apply directly to Telefilm without having a recommendation from a Designated Partner if their short films have been selected at a festival listed in Appendix A.

If the key members of the creative team are Indigenous, Applicants have the option to be considered under the Indigenous Component of any of the above-mentioned streams. This means that the project will be evaluated by an advisory committee of Indigenous industry professionals. You can choose whichever stream or component makes the most sense for your project, even if you qualify for several.

2 Eligibility Criteria Applicable to the Key Members of the Creative Team

2.1 General Eligibility Criteria for all Streams

The **Producers, Directors and Screenwriters** are considered as the **key members of the creative team**.

To be eligible, all the key members of the creative team must:

- 1) be **Canadian citizens**, within the definition of the [Citizenship Act](#), or **permanent residents** within the definition of the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act](#) (unless the project is an audiovisual treaty coproduction);
- 2) be **emerging talent**, i.e.:
 - they must have previously **produced, directed and/or written** at least a:
 - short film (a film of 30 minutes or less);
 - web production;
 - television content;
 - commercials;
 - music videos;

Or equivalent experience in the screen-based industry.

AND

- they must not have previously held the same key position on a feature film³.

Note 1: Producers who have previously produced **one** feature film that has received funding under this Program are also considered as emerging talent. This Program was called the “Micro-Budget Production Program” before.

Note 2: Telefilm will show flexibility in the eligibility evaluation of key creatives who have previously produced, written or directed a feature film project of micro-budget scope⁴ funded outside of this Program and that had a limited release.

³ For the purposes of this criterion, a feature film is 75 minutes or more. Telefilm may consider a project of a lesser duration as a feature film if it was considered as such by the industry.

⁴ Examples of this type of projects: films which were self-financed or produced within a festival incubator or school program.

2.2 Additional Eligibility Criteria – Festival Selection Stream

Directors of projects submitted to Telefilm under this stream must have **directed a short film that was selected at one of the recognized film festivals** listed in Appendix A in the **two (2) calendar years prior to the application** to Telefilm.

- **Indigenous Component:** the **key members of the creative team** of the project **must be Indigenous**⁵.

2.3 Additional Eligibility Criteria – Filmmaker Apply-Direct Stream⁶

All key members of the creative team (Producers, Directors and Screenwriters) must be:

- Indigenous;
 - Black;
 - People of Colour;
 - Women;
 - Gender-diverse individuals;
 - 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals;
 - Persons with disabilities; and/or
 - Members of an Official Language Minority Community.
- **Indigenous Component:** the **key members of the creative team** of the project **must be Indigenous**⁷.

⁵ “Indigenous peoples” is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. “Indigenous” refers to First Nations, Inuit, or Metis.

⁶ Telefilm acknowledges that terminology is subject to change and evolving language will be part of the ongoing and inclusive dialogue with the industry.

⁷ “Indigenous peoples” is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. “Indigenous” refers to First Nations, Inuit, or Metis.

3 Eligibility Criteria Applicable to Applicants

Applications may be submitted by **companies or individuals on behalf of a company to be incorporated in the future if selected for funding**.

If a team wishes to submit an application to Telefilm but has yet to incorporate a company, a duly authorized member of the key creative team may submit an application on behalf of the company to be incorporated. **If a project is selected by Telefilm for funding, the financing agreement will be signed with the company.**

3.1 When the application is submitted by an individual on behalf of a company to be incorporated in the future

The individual must:

- 1) be a **key member of the creative team** of the project;
- 2) meet all the **eligibility criteria set in section 2.1**; and
- 3) be **authorized by the rightsholders** of the project to apply to Telefilm.

Further, once incorporated, the company must meet all the eligibility criteria set in section 3.2 below.

3.2 When the application is submitted by a company already incorporated

In order to submit an application, the applicant must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- 1) operate as a **film production company**;
- 2) own **100% of the rights of the project** (unless the project is an audiovisual treaty coproduction);
- 3) be under **Canadian control** as determined under sections 26 to 28 of the [Investment Canada Act](#); and
- 4) be **entirely owned and controlled by one or more members of key creative team** of the project.

4 Eligibility Criteria Applicable to Projects

4.1 General Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible, a project must :

- 1) be primarily produced in English, French, an Indigenous language or, for artistic imperatives, in another language⁸;
- 2) be intended to be **fictional, or documentary** audiovisual projects;
- 3) be a feature length film of **75 minutes or more**;
- 4) with respect to Canadian content certification, upon completion be either:
 - certified by the Canadian Audio-visual Certification Office (CAVCO) as a “Canadian film or video production” with a **minimum of 8 out of 10 points** under the provisions of the [Income Tax Act \(Canada\)](#); or
 - recognized as a **treaty coproduction** by the Minister of Canadian Heritage (refer to [Telefilm’s guidelines on Audiovisual Coproductions](#)).
- 5) have a **total budget** ranging between \$150,000 and \$500,000⁹.
- 6) conform to the [Canadian Association of Broadcasters \(CAB\) Code of Ethics](#) and to all other programming standards endorsed by the CAB or the CRTC, and not contain any element that is an offence under the [Criminal Code](#), is libellous or in any other way unlawful.

4.2 Additional Eligibility Criteria – Industry Partner Stream

Projects submitted under the Industry Partner Stream **must be recommended to Telefilm by a [Designated Partner](#)**.

- **Main component:** the partner must confirm that the director of the recommended project is a recent alumni¹⁰ from one of the Designated Partner’s production programs, an active member¹¹ of the Designated Partner’s film cooperative or, in the case of a film festival partner, has participated in an incubator offered by that festival.

Note that partners can recommend producers and writers who are not recent alumni or active members of their institution, film cooperative or incubator initiative but, in all cases, producers and writers must be emerging talent as defined above.

⁸ Audiovisual Treaty coproductions may be in any language, subject to compliance with the applicable treaty(ies).

⁹ Telefilm may show flexibility for projects outside this budget range.

¹⁰ Recent alumni of a Designated Partner’s production program are students who have graduated in the last five years calculated from the date of recommendation to Telefilm under this Program. Telefilm reserves the right to accept, under certain conditions, projects involving graduates who have graduated more than five years ago.

¹¹ Active members are people who have participated in workshops, programs and/or other training initiatives offered by the cooperative in the last three years calculated from the date of recommendation to Telefilm under this Program. Members having registered with the Designated Partner on or near the same day as when their application is submitted are not considered active members.

- **Indigenous component:** in addition to the criteria applicable to the Main component, the **key members of the creative team** of the project **must be Indigenous**¹².
- **OLMC component:** in addition to the criteria applicable to the Main component, the **key members of the creative team must:**
 - **Self-identify as Anglophones residing in Quebec**, if the project’s main language is English and it is produced, written, and directed in Quebec; and.
 - **Self-identify as Francophones residing outside of Quebec**, if the project’s main language is French and it is produced, written, and directed outside of Quebec.

Note: The partner must be able to demonstrate to Telefilm that it has the resources and the capacity to carry out the evaluation of the recommended project in the language in which they are submitted.

4.3 Ineligible Project Types

The following **non-exhaustive list** provides examples of the types of projects that are **not eligible**:

- projects done on contract for, or produced by, a government agency;
- projects produced primarily for industrial, corporate, or institutional purposes;
- advertising;
- projects using film as a tool to record or document existing artworks such as a stage play;
- conventional forms of television entertainment, such as pilots, movies-of-the-week, and news reports;
- student films.

4.4 Limitation on the Number of Applications for the Same Project

A project may only be submitted to the Program once, unless it receives an invitation to re-apply¹³.

4.5 Audiovisual Treaty Coproductions

Please note that projects that are recognized as [audiovisual treaty coproductions](#) are eligible to apply to this Program but are not guaranteed funding. The determination of eligibility of applicants and projects will be adapted to reflect the conditions set out in the applicable treaty(ies) while meeting the spirit and intent of these guidelines.

¹² “Indigenous peoples” is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. “Indigenous” refers to First Nations, Inuit, or Metis.

¹³ Applicable starting fiscal 2022-2023.

5 Evaluation Criteria and Decision-Making Process

5.1 Evaluation Criteria

All eligible projects will be evaluated based on the following evaluation criteria:

5.1.1 Creative elements

Telefilm evaluates the creative elements of the projects with a focus on the pitch video, synopsis, director's vision and community engagement plan. Full scripts are reviewed for shortlisted projects as per section 5.2.

5.1.2 Track record of the Key Members of the Creative Team (Producer, Director, and Screenwriter)

Telefilm evaluates the screen-based industry experience of the creative team, primarily the producer, director, and screenwriter, including critical acclaim.

Telefilm will also consider the creative team's full range of industry experience and level of expertise as it relates to the nature and scope of the project.

5.1.3 Project Viability

The financial feasibility and creative viability will be taken into account in the evaluation of the project.

5.1.4 Cultural Impact and Audience Reach Potential

Telefilm will consider the applicant's promotional strategy to make the film available to its target audience, including through film festivals, theatrical release and digital platforms.

5.2 Decision-Making Process

Advisory committees will assess the projects based on the evaluation criteria described above and make recommendations to Telefilm. Advisory committees may be composed of internal members, external members, or a mix of internal and external members.

Each advisory committee will use an evaluation grid to score and rank eligible projects. There may be different advisory committees for different portfolios based on considerations such as language market, and region.

Due to the volume of applications, eligible projects undergo a shortlisting process. For projects which are competitive and are shortlisted, the advisory committee will review the script, focusing on originality, quality and production-readiness. Note that only applicants whose projects have been successfully recommended will receive feedback.

5.2.1 Indigenous Component

Projects submitted to the Indigenous Component of a stream will be evaluated by advisory committees composed of Indigenous industry professionals, that will evaluate the based on the evaluation criteria described above and make recommendations to Telefilm.

5.2.2 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 where the key members of the creative team (i.e., director(s) and/or screenwriter(s) and/or producer(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 experiences¹⁴.

¹⁴ Telefilm acknowledges that terminology is subject to change and evolving language will be part of the ongoing and inclusive dialogue with the industry.

6 Terms of Funding

Telefilm's funding will be in the form of a non-repayable financial contribution¹⁵ that may cover up to 100% of the project's financing. The maximum contribution amount is set at **\$250,000 for fiction** feature films and **\$150,000 for documentaries**.

Telefilm's financial contribution must be used to **cover direct expenses relating to the production, and post-production** of the project.

Please note that all projects supported through this Program must:

- Have a complete insurance package including an Errors & Omissions Insurance Policy satisfactory to Telefilm;
- Be **made available in both official languages**, in either in either subtitled or dubbed versions¹⁶;
- Be **closed-captioned**; and
- Be available in **described video**, regardless of the distribution platform¹⁷.

Sufficient funds must be reserved for these elements in the project's production budget.

7 Mentorship Program

In order to help the teams succeed in entering the Canadian film industry, Telefilm has mandated two of the Program's major partners, the Institut national de l'image et du son (INIS) and the National Screen Institute (NSI) to create a mentorship program tailored for teams whose projects are selected under this Program (the "**Mentorship Program**").

As a condition to funding, **all teams receiving funding under this Program will be required to participate actively in the Mentorship Program** for the **entire project cycle**, from preproduction to distribution. The Mentorship Program fees will be covered by Telefilm.

¹⁵ All contribution amounts are subject to the overall availability of funds and the number of projects supported.

¹⁶ Except for projects produced and completed primarily in an Indigenous language, which must be available in one official language.

¹⁷ Unless otherwise agreed to by Telefilm.

8 Availability of Completed Projects

Applicants who have received a financial contribution under this Program must start the principal photography of their project no later than **18 months** after Telefilm's positive decision letter.

Furthermore, all projects must:

- be made available in **both official languages**, in either subtitled or dubbed versions.

Note: Projects that are produced and completed in an Indigenous Language must be made available in one of the official languages.

- be available in **described video**¹⁸;
- have a **close-captioned version available as widely as possible**; and
- be made available on digital platforms no later than **one year following their completion**. No theatrical release is required under this Program.

Note 1: Projects funded under this Program do not need to have a distributor attached. If a distribution company wishes to acquire a project's distribution rights in Canada, such distribution company must be a Canadian distribution company in accordance with the [Investment Canada Act](#), and the distribution agreement must be preapproved by Telefilm.

Note 2: Please note that **video description, encoding and subtitling or dubbing costs should be included in production budgets** and it is deemed to be the Applicant's responsibility to ensure that both versions are produced. Dubbing costs included in the Production budget will not be eligible for funding under the Canada Feature Film Fund (CFFF) Marketing Program.

¹⁸ Unless otherwise agreed to by Telefilm.

9 Application Process

9.1 How to apply

All applications must be submitted online using [Dialogue](#) and must be accompanied by all applicable documentation described in the Required Documents list found on [Telefilm's website](#). All documentation required to be submitted after the application is submitted must also be submitted online through Dialogue¹⁹. Please see the Essential Information Guide on the Program's [webpage](#) for more information. If you have technical difficulties, please contact your regional program agent.

9.2 When to apply

Please refer to [Telefilm's website](#) for the Program's opening and closing dates. Telefilm recommends that applications for production financing be submitted well in advance of the commencement of principal photography.

10 General Information

While compliance with the guidelines is a prerequisite to eligibility for funding, compliance does not guarantee entitlement to Telefilm funds. Telefilm may adjust its guidelines and application forms from time to time as required. Telefilm has full discretion in the application of 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 this Program, Telefilm's interpretation shall prevail.

Any information, in any form, provided, obtained, created, or communicated in connection with the application is subject to the [Access to Information Act](#) and the [Privacy Act](#).

All Telefilm programs are subject to the availability of funding from government and other sources.

¹⁹ Applicants will be advised if their application is incomplete and will be given five (5) business days to provide missing documentation, following which additional documentation will not be accepted. Please see the Essential Information Guide on the Program [webpage](#) for details.

Appendix A – List of Eligible Festivals for the Festival Selection Stream

- Anecy International Animated Film Festival
- American Indian Film Festival
- Venice Film Festival
- Berlin International Film Festival
- Cannes Film Festival
- Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival
- Sundance Film Festival
- Locarno Film Festival
- International Short Film Festival Oberhausen
- Tampere Film Festival
- Telluride Film Festival
- Valladolid International Film Festival
- South by Southwest
- Slamdance Film Festival
- Festival International du Film Francophone de Namur
- Tribeca Film Festival