

Essential Information Guide

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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General Questions Applicable to All Streams

1. Can I apply without an incorporated company?

Yes. You can submit an application on behalf of a company to be incorporated in the future. If the project is selected for financing by Telefilm, you will be required to incorporate and submit your incorporation document before signing a financing agreement with Telefilm.

When you log in to your Dialogue account, in the “Actions” tab, please select “Create an Organization” and indicate the name of the company to be incorporated.

2. Can the director hold all three key creative roles, i.e. producer, director and screenwriter?

While the director of a project may also be the writer, generally, Telefilm expects that this person does not also hold the role of Lead producer as this could negatively impact the applicant company’s ability to meet the obligations and deadlines set out in the Program.

3. Can I hold the role of producer and still be considered as an emerging talent if I have received an associate producer credit on a feature film in the past?

Yes, provided that you have not previously received a producer, co-producer or executive producer credit on a feature film.

4. Can I be considered as an emerging talent if I have produced/written/directed one feature film that was financed under a program other than the Talent to Watch Program (formerly known as the Micro-Budget Program)?

Only producers who have produced a first feature film under the Talent to Watch Program (formerly known as the Micro-Budget Program) are eligible to apply with a second feature. However, Telefilm will show flexibility in evaluating the eligibility of producers, writers and directors with a credit on a feature film with a micro-budget scope that was financed outside of the Program and had a limited release.

5. Can my team hire an experienced producer who is not an emerging talent?

Yes, provided that this producer does not receive a producer credit on the project and does not hold any ownership in the company that applies to Telefilm. All rights to the project must be entirely held by the key creative team of the project. An acceptable credit for this role is Executive Producer.

Note that all personnel receiving a producer-related credit must be pre-approved by Telefilm.

6. Does the applicant company need to be owned and controlled by all members of the key creative team?

No. Telefilm requires that the applicant company be entirely owned and controlled by the key creative team of the project. This means that no person external to the key creative team shall own or control the applicant company. However, no specific structure is required i.e.: the applicant company may be solely owned by only one member of the key creative team or a combination of members.

Please note that the shareholders of the applicant company can have significant impact on eligibility of the applicant company with other government funding agencies (outside of Telefilm) and this should be carefully considered in order to avoid having to restructure the company, and to remain onside with other funders. Specifically, some funders require the director be majority or sole shareholder of the production company.

7. My project is produced primarily in a language other than French, English or an Indigenous language. Is it eligible under this Program?

Projects produced or completed primarily in a language other than French, English or an Indigenous language due to artistic imperatives are eligible. Telefilm considers that there are artistic imperatives when the story must be told in a specific language for reasons of authenticity, realism and credibility as described in the submitted materials, e.g., the director's vision, script, community engagement plan.

Please note that all projects funded by Telefilm under this program must be made available in both official languages, either in dubbed or subtitled versions.

8. Are documentaries or animated films eligible for financing under this Program?

Yes, they are.

9. Are completion projects eligible under this Program?

No, they are not.

10. What is the contribution amount my project is eligible for?

The maximum contribution amount is set at \$250,000 for fiction feature films and \$150,000 for theatrical documentaries.

11. How to submit the required documents to Telefilm?

All required documents must be submitted to Telefilm directly through Dialogue.

12. What is the self-identification questionnaire, and how does it impact my application?

When the applicant submits the application for a project, all screenwriters, directors, and producers who are not receiving a courtesy credit will receive an invitation to complete a self-identification questionnaire.

The questionnaire covers Indigenous identity, racial and ethnic identity, gender identity and expression, belonging to an 2SLGBTQIA+ community, disability status, and belonging to an Official Language Minority Community.

By filling the self-identification questionnaire, participants contribute to a culture that supports all creators, and the industry's progress towards greater diversity goals. Data collected is used strictly in accordance with the consent provided by each individual. The uses include:

- ✓ Evaluating the creative materials;
- ✓ Reviewing the Community Engagement Plan;
- ✓ Ensuring a balanced portfolio;
- ✓ Improving and evolving Telefilm's programs;
- ✓ Identifying areas to support underrepresented communities;
- ✓ Reporting on Telefilm's project pipeline;
- ✓ Supporting industry initiatives (career development);
- ✓ Promoting talent and their projects;
- ✓ Monitoring, evaluating, performance measurement, and audits.

For more information, please see the [webpage dedicated to data collection](#).

Questions Applicable to the Industry Partner Stream

13. How did Telefilm select its partners for the Industry Partner Stream?

The 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. The partners are also selected in a manner ensuring regional/provincial representation.

The list of Designated Partners is available on the Program [webpage](#). Note that this list may change from year to year.

14. How does a creative team approach an industry partner in order to obtain a letter of recommendation?

Each partner is responsible for establishing its own selection process in order to provide a recommendation under this Program. Creative teams should contact the partners directly, through the contact information provided on the Program's [webpage](#), in order to obtain information on the partners' selection process.

15. What does Telefilm expect from industry partners when recommending projects under the Industry Partner Stream?

In addition to ensuring that all recommended projects and teams meet the spirit and intent of the Program and the eligibility criteria set out therein, the industry partners must ensure that the projects they recommend are feasible within the Program parameters: the projects must have production-ready scripts, must be feasible at the proposed budget levels and be able to start principal photography within 18 months of receiving an invitation to submit an application to Telefilm, as set out in the guidelines.

Please note that while partners can provide support to the projects that they recommend through non-remunerated mentorship or in-kind services, in no case can they acquire rights in the recommended projects nor can they benefit from the financing provided by Telefilm to the applicants or from revenues generated by the projects.

16. Is there a regional or linguistic allocation component to the Industry Partner Stream?

No, there is not. However, during its selection process, Telefilm will seek to support projects from different regions and will make sure that official language minority communities' (OLMC) reflections and issues are taken into account. For these reasons, Telefilm will work with industry partners from across the country in order to ensure the presence of regional and OLMC talent in the competitive roster. Note that, in addition to the main component of this Stream, there is also an OLMC component as well as an Indigenous component.

17. How do I apply under the Industry Partner Stream?

Teams recommended by Designated Partners must apply directly to Telefilm.

Questions Applicable to the Festival Selection Stream

18. Does the director of the short film that won a prize at a recognized film festival also have to be the director of the feature film project submitted to Telefilm under the Festival Selection Stream?

Yes. The director must continue to hold this position in the project submitted to Telefilm under the Festival Selection Stream.

19. Can directors apply directly to Telefilm as individuals?

If they don't have a company already incorporated, directors can submit an application on behalf of a company to be incorporated in the future. If the project is selected by Telefilm, the financing agreement will be signed with the incorporated company, not the individual.

20. Does the key creative team of the short film that was selected at a recognized film festival have to be the same as the one for the feature film submitted under the Festival Selection Stream?

No. However, the director of the project must be the same as for the short film and all key creatives must be emerging talent as defined in the Program guidelines.

21. I am a director and the short film that I directed was selected at a festival listed in Appendix A of the guidelines after the Program deadline. When can my company apply to the Program?

You may submit your application during the next opening period. You have two calendar years from the date of the selection of your project to a recognized festival to submit an application to Telefilm. Such application must be submitted during the application period of the program.

22. How was the list of recognized festivals under the Festival Selection Stream established?

The list was compiled based on the international cultural influence and prestige of the festival, with the intention of including a range of festivals that would represent a diversity of genres, formats and voices.

Questions Applicable to the Filmmaker Apply- Direct Stream

23. Do all members of the Key Creative Team (producer, screenwriter, director) need to be members of a group listed in the guidelines in order for a project to be eligible under this stream?

Yes. All Key Members of the Creative Team must be members of one or more 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.

24. All members of the Key Creative Team of my project qualify for the Filmmaker Apply-Direct Stream. Are we obligated to submit an application under this stream?

No. Teams are free to apply to any stream to which their project is eligible.

Evaluation

25. How will projects be evaluated once they are submitted?

Projects will be evaluated by advisory committees composed of internal and external experts based on the evaluation criteria outlined in the Program guidelines. There may be different advisory committees for different portfolios based on considerations such as language market, and region.

External advisory committee members are film industry experts with the necessary expertise and experience to assess the strength and quality of the applications according to the evaluation criteria. The choice of external advisory committee members takes into account regional and cultural diversity as well as gender parity.

Internal advisory committee members are members of Telefilm's Cultural Portfolio Management team, including National and Regional Feature Film Executives, Content Analysts and Investment Analysts located in Telefilm's offices across the country.

Particular attention should be given to the video pitch. These video pitches of a maximum of 5 minutes should be unique and innovative and must include all the details described in the list of required documents.

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

A Community Engagement Plan is required for all projects.

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
- 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 varies by project. It 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;
- 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 and [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 29 below.

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

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

A Sustainability Plan is now 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 [website](#). 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](#).

A Sustainability Plan is an optional document at application stage, for development and all production programs. [Please use the template that is now available](#).

Indigenous Content

28. 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 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.

29. How is Telefilm assessing Indigenous identity for the purposes of an application under the Program?

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.

Contracting

30. What happens once my project is selected by Telefilm

You will receive a positive decision letter and the Business Affairs team will work with you to get to contract.

If the applicant is not incorporated at time of application, they will be required to incorporate before signing a financing agreement with Telefilm.

31. What happens if I don't proceed to production by the date specified in my Telefilm agreement or if I'm unable to fulfill any of the other conditions in my Telefilm agreement?

It is the applicant's responsibility to update Telefilm with any changes to its project. Please contact your investment analyst and Feature Film Executive as soon as possible if there are updates to your project.

32. Is it necessary to subscribe to an insurance policy for my project?

Yes. You will need an Entertainment Package, General Liability and E&O coverage. Your Business Affairs analyst will provide you with the details of the coverage requirements for each package once you have received a positive decision or an invitation letter, as applicable, and before you get your contract.