

Indigenous Initiatives Resource Guide

Production:

1. Can I speak with anyone about applying to Telefilm before I submit my application?
 - Yes. In fact, almost all filmmakers speak with Telefilm staff prior to submitting an application. If you plan to submit to the Indigenous Stream, read everything you can on our website, then email or call the Lead – Indigenous Initiatives (contact info on website) to talk through the application process.
2. How developed should my idea be?
 - You should have a polished, fully-realized, production-ready draft of your script, and a dynamic vision for your film. If you're not confident that your project is ready, consider submitting the following year. You can only submit production applications twice for the same script/project, so please choose your opportunities wisely.
3. What makes me eligible to submit a production application?
 - Two out of the three positions of Producer, writer, and director must be held by an Indigenous person. The project also must be at least 51% Indigenous-owned.
4. Who evaluates the projects in the Indigenous Stream?
 - A jury of Indigenous film industry professionals. See the Indigenous Jury section below for more details.
5. On what criteria are the projects evaluated?
 - Projects are evaluated based on the strength of their creative material, financial viability, team track record, and marketing plan.
6. Does my company need to incorporate prior to making an application?
 - Yes. You must incorporate your company and set up a Dialogue account in order to submit an application. Do these things well in advance of the deadline in order to avoid last-minute issues with your submission.

7. What is confirmed financing?

- Confirmed financing is financing that the production can prove has been committed to the project. For example, a letter from a private investor confirming their financial investment in the film. Letters of interest are not considered “confirmed” as they do not reflect a firm, binding commitment to the project. (See question 11).

8. What is projected financing?

- Projected financing refers to the amount of financing that the producer plans to bring in from a variety of sources. While these sources do not need to be confirmed, they do need to be a realistic and achievable for the project. If listing a Canadian broadcast license fee for your film, for example, projecting a \$500K fee, will likely seem unrealistic to the jury, and may cast doubt on the rest of your financing.

9. I often hear that I need to have a producer or an executive producer. Why?

- Once the jury establishes that the project is creatively exciting, they then have to determine whether or not the project is likely to be viable. In other words: can this team gather the amount of financing that they need for this project, and do they have the skills to achieve their vision? If you are being told that you should attach a producer or an executive producer, it is likely because there are questions about whether or not, at this time in your career, you have the technical skills and experience to deal with the realities of making a feature film of the size and scope you are proposing. This is normal. People who are just starting out often work with more established producers who can open doors to industry partners, and help to navigate the process of making a film. Experienced producers often partner with more established producers or companies in order to manage the complexities that come with things like international co-productions, higher budgets, or technical hurdles like VFX and animation.

10. How do I find a supportive co-producer or executive producer?

- A focused approach is best. Research Canadian producers who are involved in projects similar to yours, and reach out to them first. In-person meetings at film festivals, and even online video calls are great options. If you have a mutual acquaintance who can set up an introduction, that is often best. Come prepared to sell the producer on your project, and understand what it is that you have to offer them. If you hit it off, this is not a personal favour; it is the beginning of a business relationship.

11. What kind of documentation do you need to show confirmed financing?
 - A letter of commitment from the person or agency supporting the film will suffice. Letters of interest, while nice to have, do not commit the author to financing the project, so they don't have an impact on the project's perceived viability.
12. What percentage of confirmed financing should I have in place?
 - The more confirmed financing that is in place, the more confidence the jury will have in the financial viability of your project. However, films come in to Telefilm at all stages of financing.
13. Can I apply to the Indigenous Stream with a documentary project?
 - Yes, however the jury expects documentaries to be as compelling and cinematic as their narrative counterparts. Contact the Lead – Indigenous Initiatives to discuss your project in more detail.
14. If Telefilm supports my project in development, am I more likely to be supported for production?
 - No. Creative materials are reviewed with fresh eyes for a production application.
15. If I receive production funding for my project, can I come back to Telefilm for post-production support?
 - No. Post-production costs are factored into the overall production budget, so you cannot apply again with the same project.
16. Are there particular elements the selection committee is looking for in an application? Or things to avoid? (e.g. genres; unconventional storytelling techniques; Indigenous themes)
 - Keep in mind that this is a group of Indigenous media professionals assessing your application. They are spending time reviewing these applications because they are invested in supporting the best Indigenous stories from our communities. Wow them with your passion, with your craft, and with your understanding of the marketplace. Keep in mind the ongoing community conversations about cultural protocols, identity, status, narrative sovereignty, MMIW, trauma, etc. Make sure you speak to the creative necessity of having potentially triggering content in the film (alcoholism, sexual abuse, racism, homophobia, misogyny, etc.) The jury is looking for exciting stories from director/producer teams with bold visions and unique stories to tell.

17. When can we expect to hear results after submissions close?

- Response times vary, but provided that the applications submitted are complete, we will make funding decisions on production financing requests within 16 weeks of the closing date to apply to the program.

18. If we are unsuccessful can we resubmit with the same project the following year?

- Yes, although projects can only be submitted for production support twice. Before submitting, make sure you are confident in the strength of your application.

19. How many projects typically get selected and what is the average contribution/investment Telefilm makes?

- The overall investment by Telefilm is \$4M in Indigenous production and development funds. The amount per project (and the number of projects financed) is at the discretion of the jury.

20. Can I submit more than one production application?

- Yes, although it is a good practice to speak with the Lead – Indigenous Initiatives about which project is the higher priority for the company, in case the jury is trying to decide between two projects that they see as being of equal merit.

21. How do I write a Community Engagement Plan?

- This varies depending on the film's content, and the protocols of the communities involved in the production of the film. Reach out to the Lead – Indigenous initiatives to discuss the plans for your project in more detail. More than anything, the jury wants to see that the filmmakers have given thought and consideration to the way their story may impact communities, and that they have a plan for how their team will tell this story in a way that is consistent with protocols in the communities where they are working.

22. What should be in my request for Capacity Building funds?

- Requests for capacity building funds should clearly outline how this project is developing the skills of the Indigenous film production community. Successful applications tend to be very specific about how they are providing high-value paid training and mentorship opportunities for Indigenous people in underrepresented areas like producing, cinematography, editing, etc. Applications to support the hiring of people to fill less specialized positions like set PAs are not usually supported.

23. What should be in my request for Remote Region funds?

- This should be specific to the needs of your project. Reach out to the Lead – Indigenous Initiatives to discuss your application.

24. How much should I ask for? What budget is realistic for a first feature?

- Often, those who have some experience with short films come in through [Talent to Watch](#) and make their first feature film at the micro-budget level. However, filmmakers who have made short films that have done well on the festival circuit, have won significant awards, and/or have built an experienced team around themselves, have made their first films at higher budget levels. When choosing, be honest with yourself about your track record so far, and the track record of your team. If you're unsure where would be the best place for you to apply, contact the Lead –Indigenous Initiatives for guidance.

25. Can my project be chosen but with a lower amount awarded than I requested?

- Yes. The jury sometimes uses their discretion to recommend allocations that are lower than the amounts requested.

26. Are there people I can hire to assist with the budgeting or other elements of the application on a fee-for-service basis?

- Yes. Production managers or line producers are sometimes available on a fee-for-service basis for this kind of work. However, if you find yourself unable to complete the paperwork alone, you may want to consider bringing a co-producer or an Executive Producer on the project.

27. If this is my first feature-length film, should I apply with a micro-budget film first?

- This depends on the quality of the creative materials, the strength of the financing, and your track record as a creator. People have made first films at all budget levels; however first-time feature filmmakers tend to have a greater chance of success with projects that are more manageable in terms of budget and subject matter. Juries want to support projects that are well prepared to succeed in their ambitions. If a first-time feature film director/producer is making a film at a high budget level and/or with a high level of technical complexity, the jury expects the application to show that the filmmakers have adequate support, and have a solid plan to ensure success.

28. What makes a creatively strong application?

- Great creative materials: a script, and a pitch deck/director's vision. A pitch deck isn't a required document, but it goes a long way toward

demonstrating how the team can push the script beyond just words on the page. This is your opportunity to show your distinctive voice, vision, and style. If the jury doesn't believe in your vision, the project is less likely to be selected.

- A team with a track record of making exciting work that received acclaim and can clearly articulate their cinematic vision for the project. Juries like to see a strong point of view from a team with a focused, unique approach to the creative material.
- Samples of work that demonstrate how this project is a natural progression in your career.
- A compelling note from the team speaking about their connection to the material and why they believe in telling this story.
- A plan for the rewrite (if more work on the script is planned.)

29. Beyond creative materials, what makes an application competitive?

- As much confirmed financing as possible. And, please clearly demonstrate which sources are confirmed, and which are pending.
- Producers with a track record of success, especially with a similar project.
- A polished, professional application package (all materials completed, with relevant supporting documents like letters of commitment attached) that demonstrates the abilities of a well-prepared producing team. This includes a realistic financing plan, a carefully prepared budget, and evidence that the team has connected with support personnel to fill in any gaps in the team's proficiencies. E.g. VFX Coordinator, Stunt Coordinator, Community Engagement/Cultural Coordinator, Line Producer, Executive Producer, etc. Your entire team does not need to be "locked in" but identifying areas where you need additional expertise, and demonstrating that they are interested in the project, will establish for the jury that you are laying a foundation to support your own success in production.

Development:

1. What makes me eligible to apply for a development application?
 - you must have produced an eligible short or feature film, one hour of TV or a film funded by Telefilm as part of the Talent to Watch Program distributed in theaters or on one or more digital platforms in Canada over the past five years

- be majority-owned and controlled by Indigenous persons
 - the project(s) must be written by a writer and developed with a producer who are both Indigenous and have a story consultant or a script editor who is independent from the producer
2. Who evaluates the projects in the Indigenous Stream?
- A jury of Indigenous film industry professionals. See the Indigenous Jury section below for more details.
3. On what criteria are the projects evaluated?
- The scripts are evaluated primarily on how well they achieve their goals, and how compelling those creative ambitions are. For example, a comedy about Indigenous college students trying to cheat on their exams might be funny, but it may not be prioritized by the jury if it doesn't have something interesting to say. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a film that promises to explore complex themes and ideas, then fails to show how those ideas will be spun into a story is also unlikely to receive the jury's support.
4. How developed should my idea already be?
- The idea should be developed enough to convince the jury that you have a great story to tell, and that you have the skills to tell it in a way that is focused, unique, specific, and meaningful for an audience. This could be anything from a GREAT one page, to a more fleshed out treatment, or a full (or partial) draft.
5. Does my company need to incorporate prior to making an application?
- Yes. Prior to applying, you will need to set up a Dialogue account, and submit an eligibility request. That request for eligibility will also have to be approved before you will be able to submit an application. This process typically happens in the month before the development program opens. If you attempt to begin this process in the last days or weeks before the development application deadline, you may not have enough time to complete it.
6. Am I obligated to produce the film with Telefilm if I receive development funding?
- No. You will need to acknowledge Telefilm's development support, but you are not required to apply to Telefilm for production funds if you choose not too.
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7. Does receiving development funding increase my chances of receiving production funding?
 - No. Production applications do not take previous development support into account. Projects are evaluated based on their current materials, not previous applications.
8. Can I resubmit an unsuccessful project for development the following year?
 - Yes.
9. How many applications for Development can I submit?
 - You may submit up to two script applications per company, however it is unlikely that the jury will select more than one script from each company for support. It may be a better strategy for applicants to focus on submitting one very strong application to the stream.
10. How many projects typically get selected and what is the average contribution/investment telefilm makes?
 - Telefilm's average contribution is \$180,000 - 200,000, representing about 10-12 projects in total.
11. How much should I ask for?
 - Applicants generally ask for the full \$18,000 development maximum. This allocation is higher than that which is available in the mainstream program, because it is mandatory to attach an experienced Story Editor if your project is recommended by the Indigenous stream jury.

The Indigenous Jury

1. How many people make up the selection committee? Does it change yearly?
 - The jury for Production is made up of 3-5 Indigenous film professionals. The jury for Development is made up of three Indigenous film professionals, usually writers.
 - The jury changes each year. The development and production juries are different groups of people.
2. How is the Jury chosen?
 - The jury is chosen by the Lead – Indigenous Initiatives, in consultation with the Regional and National Feature Film Executives.

- Jury members are selected with the intention of having a jury that is diverse in terms of region, gender, and Indigenous affiliation. Jury members are usually Indigenous Industry professionals with strong content analysis skills, experience with making collaborative decisions on projects, and who are familiar with Telefilm's programs.
3. Who evaluates the projects in the Indigenous Stream?
- The jury is the primary evaluation tool for the Indigenous Stream, although Telefilm does supply feedback on financial viability and producer track record.
4. Is the selection committee for Development and Production the same?
- No. The jury changes each time.