

VIRTUAL PUBLIC FORUM – TALENT TO WATCH PROGRAM

September 30, 2020

Some 100 participants attended the two public forums on the Talent to Watch Program in French and English.

After opening remarks by Telefilm Canada’s Executive Director, Christa Dickenson, and Senior Director, Cultural Portfolio Management, René Bourdages, participants heard the presentation of the program by Peggy Lainis, Regional Feature Film Executive - English Market, Quebec Region, on the program, and by Mathieu Perreault, Specialist, Economic Analysis and Program Performance, on the results of the online survey completed between September 20 and 27, 2020.

In the French-language forum, the floor was then given to Jean Hamel, Executive Director of INIS (The National Institute of Image and Sound), one of 65 designated program partners, and a past participant, Neegan Sioui, who each shared their experiences. In the English forum, Tonya Williams, Founder & Executive / Artistic Director of Reelworld, spoke, followed by a past participant, Caitlin Grabham.

Discussions among participants covered the following five main themes: the role of designated partners, mentorship, the amount of Telefilm’s financing, the pathway to a second film, and short films. They also gave their opinions and recommendations on the program criteria and its merit.

The following document presents a summary of the opinions and recommendations heard during these sessions.

Opinions	Recommendations
Designated partners	
Partners are good as amplifiers for the program	
The role of the designated partner is limited to preparing and recommending applications. The partner is not even informed of the reasons for refusal. Do the committees read the scripts or just the summary document?	This role could be expanded to support the whole process, from script development to screening. It is not within Telefilm’s mandate to provide mentorship.

Opinions	Recommendations
<p>Partners are there to get more diversity into the mix of applications, and see the value in this role</p> <p>Assisting potential candidates to prepare their application takes up a lot of time and commitment.</p> <p>Not all partners have access to the same resources to ensure eligible filmmakers have the appropriate skill sets.</p> <p>Quality of the process varies from one partner to another</p>	<p>Partners want more support in how to chose and develop and package the applications that they'll be recommending.</p> <p>Someone from Telefilm should be more hands on re: how the applicant packages are put together</p> <p>If the partners get used to gather applications and reduce the workload on administration, the money saved should go into projects.</p>
<p>There is a limit of 1 recommendation per year.</p>	<p>To encourage diversity, allow designated partners to recommend a second candidate from BIPOC</p>
<p>How are designated partners accepted?</p> <p>Partner organizations are too much of a barrier to participation.</p>	<p>More transparency about how they are chosen.</p> <p>Applicants should be able to apply directly</p>
<p>There is shopping around for a designated partner</p>	
<p>Mentorship</p>	
<p>Required skills sets are not necessarily acquired in film school</p>	<p>Teams could benefit from having on-set producer/director shadowing</p>
<p>The list of designated partners, film schools originally, has been broadened to include cooperatives and subsequently film festivals to ensure a presence outside major centers. Not all of them are in a position to offer mentorship.</p> <p>Some partners aren't able to provide a lot of mentorship (in terms of time and resources). Some are simply not capable (think of film festivals).</p>	<p>Designated partners would have the capacity to run incubators, organize bootcamps if given the resources.</p>
<p>Executive producers aren't compensated</p>	<p>Executive producers should be compensated through a fee set outside of the production budget</p> <p>Assistance is needed with business affairs, legal, accounting, bookkeeping.</p>

Opinions	Recommendations
	<p>Really need the mentorship and need the learning process. Create incentives for production partners to have them assist with the whole project; “go the journey with us”. It’s easy to get lost along the way. People who truly commit</p> <p>Having a small development amount for producers who mentor (incentives)</p>
<p>Mentorship is good but has been abused by producers who “Do the minimum and cash the cheque”</p>	<p>Mentorship should be recommended to selected teams.</p> <p>Telefilm could set up a service for matchmaking exec producers/mentors with projects</p> <p>Having a formalized group of producers available for mentorship (a pool)</p> <p>Mentorship should be more structured – a certain number of hours per week</p> <p>Have Telefilm monitor the mentorship of the exec producers making sure they stay available to their teams</p> <p>Distributors should be part of the mentorship/advising process.</p>
<p>Useful to be in contact with cohort and alumni, to have them share their experience. There was a regional summit, but no contacts with participants from other regions.</p>	<p>Peer-to-peer mentorship. Creating opportunities for people who have been supportive for those coming up.</p> <p>Spend more time listening to past participants</p>
<p>Mentorship is a very serious thing, that you shouldn’t just throw a label on. It can be toxic if it comes from Telefilm. White producers wouldn’t know how to deal with racism on sets.</p>	<p>Mentorship should be designed by and for our communities. It should come from within, similar to the program set-up by the CBC.</p> <p>Alternatively, matching different social profiles who are moved by the same value and themes. This may impact the film.</p>
<p>Review the requirement that all members of the creative team be on their first film experience.</p>	<p>Allow experienced people to provide mentorship, since many regions cannot count on schools or designated partners.</p>

Opinions	Recommendations
<p>Many first-gen Canadians don't have the reach and connections Difficult to find people in the industry to embark on project</p>	<p>First-gen Canadians need mentorship from distributors and experienced producers.</p>
<p>Financing</p>	
<p>The money, not even \$200K is enough. No one is getting paid \$150K is not impossible to work with, but filmmakers feel their vision is compromised; they feel they are hitting a wall when they can't pay the cast and crew. Difficult with unions Less network accessible in regions TTW teams don't spend enough time in development. Delay too short to rewrite the script before going into production.</p>	<p>Should not be seen as charity – opportunity to discover talent and diverse stories The \$150k grant is fine for a non-narrative. For a narrative could work for a short or mid-length. Amount should allow to pay the producer and director a decent salary – say \$50k. Then think of everyone and everything else.</p>
<p>Wage concessions that the producer and director must accept (as well as their technical and acting friends) are now such that few projects are submitted from the regions where professionals have well-paying opportunities, particularly in television.</p>	
<p>Program design based on ingenuity and asking favors and relying on sponsors not sustainable for BIPOC. The low budget level of financing favours economically privileged filmmakers who have family and industry connections pre-existing, and access to private funds that can help them out. Someone without privilege would have problems participating in the TTW program Difficult to have a balance life - Can't afford to take time off work – work extra days, vacation... T2W was created with good intentions but was</p>	<p>Make this a program where career can be launched. Maybe fund less projects. More program partnerships: suppliers, insurance, legal services Engage with businesses that exist to assist emerging talent figure out their needs in production, post-prod, and find the right tools.</p>

Opinions	Recommendations
<p>created as a place for young filmmakers to fail. Hard long hours for little money for producers. Devastating effect on BIPOC.</p> <p>Many who chose not to participate in the survey, who are in personal debt. Try reducing the harm that's being done. The way to broaden accessibility to other groups is to reconsider the thinking around the economic model – a big issue</p>	
<p>Initially, the program's objective was to support experimentation. Talented directors had managed to make such films outside the system and win awards in prestigious festivals. A \$125K allocation from Telefilm for this type of film was more in keeping with the intent. Today, the projects are much more conventional.</p>	<p>In selecting the projects to recommend, the designated partners should be careful not to propose overly ambitious projects that put the teams at risk of failure.</p>
<p>Program guidelines are not in-line with other funding organizations: Canada Council, SODEC. It's difficult to make financing work</p> <p>When you reach the budget cap of 250K, your become ineligible for ACTRA micro-budget rates.</p> <p>Frustration with push-back from Canada Council on their TTW projects (because Canada Council is director-driven, and TTW is team-driven in terms of creative control and ownership).</p>	<p>CCA should be able to work together with Telefilm</p>
<p>Program criteria</p>	
<p>The \$250K cap on the total production budget, in the spirit of a micro-budget project, is a significant limitation. Telefilm allows some flexibility, which makes the interpretation of the criterion ambiguous.</p> <p>Why a cap to my creative vision and potential funding partners?</p>	<p>Must be clarified.</p>
<p>Required deliverables are onerous, can add up to 40K, leaves very little for actual production.</p>	

Opinions	Recommendations
Guidelines require captioning in the other official language, which further reduces the meagre funding granted.	
Regrettable that web series will no longer be funded. A gateway for emerging BIPOC talent.	
4 months lapsed before the money was deposited, while the 2-year deadline to complete the project was ticking.	
Pathway to a 2nd film	
<p>Participation in the Talent to Watch program is not a natural sideway to do a 2nd film. Not the same energy. There's a gap between the T2W and budget film under 2.5 M. There is a problem with the entire ecosystem.</p> <p>It's hard to get the next project going. Hard to wait 2-3 years to do a second feature.</p>	<p>Every program should be related.</p> <p>Think of system where you can apply depending of level of budget</p> <p>Maybe having a program for shorts for first works and then a better T2W program</p>
<p>Not clear what is the natural sideway for people who just finished their 1st feature to go in competition with experienced directors in the low-budget program (under \$2.5M).</p> <p>There was focus on attaining "fast track" status for a second feature.</p> <p>The qualifications for Automatic funding for second feature are too high</p> <p>Not accessible for most features</p> <p>Festivals are in the business of being exclusive. At odds with increased diversity. Festivals qualifying for fast track are exclusive.</p> <p>Living in a small city outside of big centers where big festivals are too costly to go there</p>	<p>Have a program for 2nd feature from a pool of T2W winners</p> <p>Making a TTW feature should immediately unlock automatic second feature film funding.</p> <p>Transparency on the program results should be improved. Who went on to make a 2nd feature, at what budget level, in what genre, creators from under-represented communities.</p>

Opinions	Recommendations
<p>It is not clear that Telefilm offers fast-track production assistance to the director of an award-winning film and how to access it.</p> <p>Fast-track production funding is granted to the director – and not to the producer who has led the project from start to finish and assumed all contractual obligations, at the cost of wage concessions and years of work.</p>	<p>The producer should be the sole owner of the project. – the producer will be the one who completes the project</p>
<p>There is a sense that filmmakers don't know that they can come to the Regional program for a first feature.</p> <p>Female identifying filmmakers need to prove themselves more at Regional, and aren't' being trusted with a higher budget.</p>	<p>The Regional fund shouldn't be so much of a "secret" to first time filmmakers.</p> <p>Regional needs to be more accessible.</p> <p>More money should go to Low Budget and less to National.</p>
<p>Development funding is confusing – as far as team-points and breaking up points to access development. Don't now how to access development and production if you are not working with the same team</p>	<p>Teams want a clear way to break apart their TTW companies so that accessing development funding is a cleaner process for the teams. Need for Telefilm to develop a system for directors and producers to be "unlinked" from each other on a TTW project after it is completed.</p>
<p>TTW projects should have been Regional</p>	<p>TTW program should be wrapped up into Regional</p>
<p>No interactions with Telefilm. The selection is farmed out to juries. No way to sit down and have a discussion on what's next even when the film is successful.</p>	
<p>Short film</p>	
<p>Outside Quebec, funding sources are more limited, so this may have merit.</p>	
<p>The short film is as demanding to produce as a feature film, maybe even more so, and some good opportunities exist at international festivals. It is more difficult to have them distributed, but you can bundle them together to make a feature film.</p>	<p>Short films should be supported, but for the same grant amount of \$150K which would make it possible to comply with industry standards.</p>

Opinions	Recommendations
Program merit	
A funding source and the chance to make your film when other funds tell you no	
Learning on the job	
Great that control is with the creative team, to prevent other people taking advantage of emerging talent	

***More data on program will be made available this week**