



CANADA
MEDIA FUND

FONDS DES MÉDIAS
DU CANADA

EARLY-STAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

GUIDELINES

2023-2024

Please be advised, in response to the disruption in Canada's screen-based industries caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be specific exceptions to the following Guidelines found in the [COVID-19 Flexibility Measures to CMF Programs - 2023-2024](#).

Please refer to that separate document to determine if there is any flexibility to the requirements, contribution amounts and policies listed herein.

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Interpretation, Application, Disclaimer, and other Important Information

These Guidelines are for the information and convenience of Applicants (as defined in section 3.1) to the Canada Media Fund (CMF). They provide an overview of the objectives of the CMF, the manner in which the CMF is administered, and information on typical administrative practices of the CMF. Compliance with these Guidelines is a prerequisite to eligibility for any CMF funding.

The CMF has full discretion in the administration of its Programs and in the application of these Guidelines to ensure funding is provided to those Projects that contribute to the fulfillment of its mandate. In all questions of interpretation of its Programs, Guidelines, Agreements and whether Applicants and/or Projects meet the spirit and intent of any CMF policy, the CMF interpretation shall prevail.

All Applicants and broadcasters (where relevant) must abide by the Accounting and Reporting Requirements (ARR) of the CMF and follow applicable business policies as created and amended from time to time. Business policies, including the ARR, may be found in Appendix B of these Guidelines and are also available from the CMF website at www.cmf-fmc.ca. Information included in Appendices A and B is an integral part of these Guidelines.

Projects that receive CMF funding in a given year are subject to the Guidelines and CMF policies in effect for that fiscal year. To be clear, changes to CMF Guidelines and/or policies made in a subsequent fiscal year will not apply retroactively, unless specifically stated. The CMF fiscal year is April 1 to March 31.

Please note: These Guidelines may be changed or modified as required, without notice. Please consult the CMF website at www.cmf-fmc.ca for the latest Guideline news and documentation.

Provision of Documentation

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that the CMF receives all relevant documentation, and to update such documentation and information after a material change. The CMF may request other documentation and information to conduct an assessment and evaluation of the Project and, once assessed, to complete CMF file reviews. For the purposes of project assessment and evaluation, the CMF reserves the right to rely solely on the written and audiovisual materials initially submitted by the Applicant.

Failure to Comply

If an Applicant fails to comply with these Guidelines, as determined by the CMF, then the CMF may refuse the application, revoke the eligibility status of the Applicant's Project and may demand repayment of any sums paid to the Applicant.

Misrepresentation

If, at any time, an Applicant, as required by the Guidelines or as requested by the CMF, provides false information or omits material information in connection with an application, the Applicant may suffer serious consequences. These may include, among other outcomes:

- Loss of eligibility for funding of the current Project;
- Loss of eligibility for funding of future Projects;
- Repayment of any funds already advanced, with interest; and/or
- Criminal prosecution, in the case of fraud.

These measures may be imposed not only on the Applicant but also on related, associated and affiliated companies and individuals (as determined by the CMF at its sole discretion). Any Applicant receiving approval for funding will be required to sign a legally enforceable agreement, which includes further provisions concerning misrepresentations, defaults, and related matters.

PERSONA-ID self-identification information

The PERSONA-ID self-identification allows individuals to disclose their demographic information directly and securely to the Canada Media Fund (CMF).

The CMF shall rely solely on the self-identification information associated with each individual's PERSONA-ID number to determine (as applicable) eligibility for Programs, exclusive reserved portions of Program budgets, Performance and Development Envelope credit, Evaluation Grid points and/or for statistical and analytical purposes.

All PERSONA-ID self-identification information in connection with the Project is provided in accordance with the [PERSONA-ID Terms of Use & Privacy](#).

For more information about PERSONA-ID, please visit the [CMF's PERSONA-ID page](#).

2. HOW THE EARLY-STAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WORKS

HOW TO READ THESE GUIDELINES

Projects in the Convergent Stream may involve both a Television Component and one or more Digital Media Components. The eligibility and technical requirements for these two Components may be very different. In these Guidelines, sections dealing with requirements for the Television Component use “.TV” in their section number, and sections dealing with requirements for the Digital Media Component use “.DM”. Sections dealing with requirements for the entire convergent project – i.e., the Television Component and, where applicable, the Digital Media Component – simply use a section number without “.TV” or “.DM”.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Early-Stage Development Program, which forms part of the CMF’s Convergent Stream is exclusively for Writers that meet the Eligible Applicant criteria (defined in section 3.1) and allocates funding to Eligible Projects (defined in section 3.2 below) at the beginning of a Project’s creative process.

The Early-Stage Development Program funds Eligible Projects through a selective process in which projects are assessed according to an evaluation criterion (see section 2.4). Eligible Projects may receive funds subject to per-project Maximum Contribution amounts (see section 2.3.1) and other specified limitations.

Eligible Projects in this Program must be meant to be produced in the language applied for and Eligible Costs must be in accordance with section 2.3.2 below.

For clarity, only an eligible English- or French-language Television Component (defined in section 3.2.TV below) will be considered an Eligible Project in the Early-Stage Development Program.

Eligible Applicants may apply to the Program with a maximum of one (1) Eligible Project. Applicants are ineligible to this Program in 2023-2024 if they meet either of the following conditions:

- Applicants received funding from the Early-Stage Development Program in 2022-2023; or
- Applicants received funding for a Project from the Early-Stage Development Program prior to 2022-2023 **and** have not submitted all the required materials and documentation necessary to fulfill their Project’s Final Cost milestone noted in their Early Stage Development Financing Agreement with the CMF.

Beginning in 2023-2024, Directors of Documentary Projects are eligible to apply to the Program provided they meet the requirements noted in footnote 8 below.

At least 25% of the Early-Stage Development Program’s budget will be exclusively reserved for “Diverse Community Applicants” (defined in section 2.1.1 below).

2.1.1 Definitions Applicable to the Early-Stage Development Program: Canadian Broadcaster, Diverse Community Applicant

Any of the following will be considered a “Canadian Broadcaster”:

- a. A Canadian programming undertaking, public or private, licensed to operate by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)¹;
- b. An online service² owned, controlled and operated by a Canadian CRTC-licensed programming undertaking;
- c. An online service³ owned, controlled and operated by a Canadian broadcasting distribution undertaking (“BDU”), licensed to operate by the CRTC; and
- d. CRTC-licensed VOD services.

Diverse Community Applicant

For the purposes of this Program, a Diverse Community Applicant meets the definition of an Eligible Applicant under section 3.1 and the sole-shareholder of the corporation is a Writer⁴ who:

- Is a member of Diverse Community (defined below); and
- Has at least 5 writing **credits**⁵ of produced written work:
 - In **any**⁶ of the CMF’s supported genres: Drama, Children & Youth, Documentary or Variety and Performing Arts;
 - Broadcast or made available on a broadcaster, platform or service that meets the CMF’s definition of a Canadian Broadcaster under section 2.1.1 above.

For the purposes of the CMF’s 2023-2024 Guidelines, the term “Diverse Community” refers to the following groups:

- a) Indigenous peoples to Canada (i.e., First Nations, Inuit and Métis);
- b) Racialized Communities (i.e., Black People and People of colour);
- c) Members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community;
- d) Persons with disabilities/Disabled persons.

The CMF defines each of these groups in more detail in [Appendix A](#) of these Guidelines.

2.2 NATURE OF FUNDING CONTRIBUTION

Successful Applicants to the Early-Stage Development Program receive non-interest-bearing advances. 100% of the Eligible Project’s advance must be repaid on or before the first day of official preparation for principal photography of the Eligible Project (regardless of the platform for which it is produced).

¹This includes exempt broadcasters regulated by the CRTC via *Broadcasting Order CRTC 2015-88*.

² This includes services accessed via a set-top box.

³ This includes services accessed via a set-top box.

⁴Or Director of Documentary Projects that meet the exceptions in footnote 8 below.

⁵Regardless of the duration of the credited project/episode.

⁶The minimum credit threshold may be obtained with work from multiple CMF genres.

2.3 AMOUNT OF FUNDING CONTRIBUTION

2.3.1 CMF Contribution

The CMF may contribute financially to an Eligible Project at the level requested by the Applicant up to a Maximum Contribution of \$40,000.

2.3.1.1 Combining Funds

Eligible Projects submitted in the Program must be new projects that have not received any previous CMF funding.

Projects that receive funding through this Program may subsequently be submitted to CMF development and production Programs. It is important to note that any funding a Project receives through this Program will be integrated into that Project's development and/or production budget and financial structure.

2.3.2 Eligible Costs

In this Program, only Canadian costs are Eligible Costs. Costs incurred before the 2023-2024 CMF fiscal year will not be considered Eligible Costs. Funding received through this Program should focus primarily on the creation of early-stage creative materials.

Allowable Eligible Costs in this Program shall be the following:

- Writing (Treatment, Outline, Bible, or Script);
- Scriptwriting consultant;
- Story editor;
- Preliminary research;
- Travel costs for research or to meet with national/international production partners (limited to 2% of Eligible Costs); and/or
- Printing and collating costs.

Please note, the [CMF Early-Stage Development Program](#) budget template outlines specific allowable costs.

Additional CMF business policies relating to Eligible Costs are in [Appendix B](#).

2.3.2.1 Related-Party Transactions

All related-party fees, related-party allowances and any other related-party transactions must be:

- Disclosed to the CMF
- In accordance with the current [CMF Accounting and Reporting Requirements](#).

2.4 PROJECT ASSESSMENT IN THE SELECTIVE PROCESS

Projects in this Program shall compete for funding according to a selective process. To make its funding decisions, an independent jury will use the criteria noted below to evaluate the required anonymous pitch document⁷ submitted by Applicants.

It is important for Applicants to note that the CMF will not accept any revision to the evaluated elements of a Project once it is submitted that would affect its evaluation score.

Projects will be evaluated by the jury based on the following criteria:

Originality and Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Premise• Plot• Characters• Structure• Themes	90%
Narrative Positioning Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality and degree to which the Applicant is well-positioned to create this Project. For additional clarity, the Narrative Positioning Statement will be evaluated on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ any relevant information such as relationship to the content, any lived experience with the content, or the Applicant's interest in developing this content;○ if the Project includes or reflects storylines, main characters or subject matter related to one or more Sovereignty- and/or Equity- Seeking Communities, the steps that the Applicant has undertaken and will undertake to create the content responsibly, thoughtfully and without harm.	10%
TOTAL		100%

⁷It is important to note that the pitch document submitted by the Applicant must be anonymized and any identifying elements that can be linked to the Applicant (e.g., name, email address, photos, phone number) must be removed, failure to do so may render the Application ineligible.

3. ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

For clarity, Eligible Applicants may apply to the Program with a maximum of one (1) Eligible Project.

3.1. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

An Eligible Applicant is a single-shareholder company:

- a) that is a for-profit (i.e., a taxable Canadian corporation, within the meaning of Canada's *Income Tax Act*) production company;
- b) that is Canadian-controlled as determined in sections 26 to 28 of the *Investment Canada Act*.
- c) that has its head office in Canada;
- d) that has not received funding from the Early-Stage Development Program in 2022-2023 (either the company or the sole shareholder);
- e) that if it received funding (either the company or the sole shareholder) for a Project from the Early-Stage Development Program prior to 2022-2023, has submitted to the CMF all of the required materials and documentation necessary to fulfill its Project's Final Cost milestone noted in its Early Stage Development Financing Agreement with the CMF;
- f) that is in good standing with all applicable talent and industry associations and guilds;
- g) has affirmed and attested that the Project submitted for funding complies with the CMF's [CMF's Narrative Positioning Policy](#);
- h) the individual that owns and control the Applicant company has registered for a PERSONA ID account and has provided this account number as part of their Application; and
- i) whose single shareholder is **EITHER**:

- A Writer⁸ with the following credentials:
 - **Total Hours Threshold:** The Writer has at least ten (10) hours⁹ of produced written work¹⁰: in one (1) of the CMF's supported genres: Drama, Children & Youth, Documentary or Variety and Performing Arts.

Applicants may combine projects from Drama and Children & Youth in order to meet the required Total Hours Threshold .

For Applicants applying with Documentary and Variety and Performing Arts Projects, all projects must be in the same genre as the Eligible Project seeking Early Stage Development funding.

- **Recent Hours:** At least two (2) of the hours in the Total Hours Threshold noted above must have been originally broadcast no earlier than January 1, 2019 ¹¹.

⁸For Documentaries only, the CMF will allow Directors to be eligible for this Program, provided (i) they meet all the criteria in section 3.1, (ii) no other Writer credits exist on the Projects they are using for eligibility in this Program, and (iii) they are credited as "Director", "Filmmaker" or "Film by" on those Projects.

⁹If the Applicant is applying with only feature-length Documentaries, this threshold will be 6 hours.

¹⁰The CMF will accept "Teleplay by" or "Written by" credits with suitable exceptions for Documentaries (e.g., "Documentary Script by...", "Narration Written by...", etc.). If a team of Writers share a credit, each Writer may claim that credit and the hours associated with it.

¹¹If the Applicant is applying with only feature-length Documentaries, the requirement will be at least one (1) project must have been originally broadcast no earlier than January 1, 2019.

- **Canadian Broadcaster:** All of the required hours must have been broadcast or made available on a broadcaster, platform or service that meet's the CMF's definition of a Canadian Broadcaster under section 2.1.1 above.

***For clarity, only those credited hours broadcast on the CMF's definition of a Canadian Broadcaster will count towards eligibility.**

Credited work that is only broadcast or made available on other digital and/or international platforms (e.g., NBC, YouTube, Netflix, Amazon, etc.) will be ineligible for the credited Total Hours Threshold noted above.*

For English-language projects only,

- the Writer received at least one (1) producer-level credit (for live-action productions) in the genre they are applying for or one (1) story-editor credit (for animated productions) in the genre they are applying for.
-

OR

- A Writer¹² who meets the requirements of the Diverse Community Applicant definition under section 2.1.1 above.

**Note: For the purposes of these Guidelines, the term Applicant includes all co-applicants, and/or all Related Parties (defined in [Appendix B](#)), associated, affiliated or parent companies and/or individuals (as determined by the CMF at its sole discretion), as applicable.*

3.2 ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

An Eligible Project in this Program is an English- or French-language TV Component that meets all applicable section 3.2 criteria and subsections. The CMF recognizes that projects at the early development stage are necessarily nascent, evolving works that may not strictly comply at application with all requirements of section 3.2 and its subsections. As such, TV Components must be reasonably intended to comply with the three Essential Requirements (see section 3.2.TV.1), as appropriate to each category of production and programming genre, as set out in [Appendix A](#), plus all other requirements of sections 3.2.TV.1 through 3.2.TV.4.

Eligibility for funding in this Program does not guarantee Applicant or Project eligibility for further CMF development funding or CMF production funding.

Please note, returning series are not eligible for this Program.

3.2.TV The Television Component

A Television Component of an Eligible Project must be linear audiovisual content that meets the following requirements (that are further explained in this section):

- the CMF's Essential Requirements;
- the CMF's Genre requirements (as set out in [Appendix A](#));
- ownership and control requirements; and
- miscellaneous requirements.

¹²Or Director for Documentary Projects, per footnote 8.

The Television Component of an Eligible Project must be developed as a Canadian production or intended as an audiovisual treaty coproduction. A Canadian Writer must be involved in all stages of development. In this Program, for Television Components meant for Canadian audiovisual treaty coproductions, a Canadian Writer is required.

The Applicant must have acquired all rights and options to the Television Component, exclusive for at least 24 months, which are necessary for the adaptation of the original work or concept, the scriptwriting, the production and worldwide distribution (with appropriate case-by-case exceptions for a purchased format).

3.2.TV.1 Essential Requirements

A production must meet the Essential Requirements listed here. For a series, the Essential Requirements apply to every episode of the cycle, even if all episodes are not submitted for CMF funding. The CMF solely decides whether or not a project meets the Essential Requirements and its interpretation shall prevail.

- 1) The TV Component will be certified by the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO) and has achieved 10/10 points (or the maximum number of points appropriate), as determined by the CMF using the CAVCO scale.
- 2) Underlying rights are owned, and significantly and meaningfully developed, by Canadians.
- 3) The TV Component is shot and set primarily in Canada.

Further details on these Essential Requirements and permissible genre-specific exceptions are in [Appendix A](#) of these Guidelines. This Appendix includes other important information and is an integral part of these Guidelines.

3.2.TV.1.1 Audiovisual Treaty Coproductions

With respect to the CMF eligibility of audiovisual treaty coproductions, these Essential Requirements shall be interpreted so as to treat the coproduction partner as “Canadian.”

Accordingly, the term “Canadians” in Essential Requirement 2, and the term “Canada” in Essential Requirement 3 include the coproduction country. The 10/10 points referenced in Essential Requirement 1 must be attained by citizens of Canada or the coproducing country.

The CMF recognizes that projects at the development stage are necessarily nascent, evolving works that may be unable to strictly comply at application with all of the requirements of Section 3.2.TV.1. As such, TV Components must be reasonably intended to comply with the Essential Requirements, as appropriate to each category of production and programming genre, as set out in [Appendix A](#), plus all other eligibility requirements that may be applicable to development and, in the CMF’s discretion, comply with the spirit and intent of the Guidelines.

For information on audiovisual treaty coproduction between Canada and other territories, please see [Telefilm Canada’s treaty coproduction guidelines](#).

3.2.TV.2 Genres of Programming

The CMF supports the following genres: drama, documentary, children’s and youth programming, and variety and performing arts. The CMF defines each in [Appendix A](#) of these Guidelines.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of genres and programming formats that are not eligible to apply to the CMF: sponsored productions, sports, news, game shows, current affairs, public affairs, lifestyle productions, “how-to” productions,

reality television, instructional television, infomercials, music videos, formal or curriculum-based educational programs, foreign format buys without significant Canadian adaptation and creative contribution, magazine productions, talk shows, “talkshows culturels,” non-cultural galas and award shows¹³, reporting and current events, religious programs, fundraising productions, benefits, tributes, promotional productions, pep rallies, travelogues and interstitials.

Note: Some flexibility exists for children’s and youth programming. See [Appendix A](#) for more information.

3.2.TV.3 Canadian Ownership and Control

The Television Component must meet these criteria:

- a) It is under Canadian ownership and Canadian executive and creative control.
- b) It is under the financial control of Canadian citizens or permanent residents.
- c) The Applicant owns all rights (including copyright) and options necessary for the development, production and its distribution in Canada and abroad (with appropriate case-by-case exceptions for a purchased format), and retains an ongoing financial interest in the TV Component.

Note: The interpretation of these criteria shall allow Canadian audiovisual treaty coproductions to access the CMF.

3.2.TV.4 Miscellaneous Requirements

The Television Component must meet these criteria:

- a) It conforms to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters’ (CAB) Code of Ethics and to all programming standards endorsed by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), including the CAB Violence Code and the CAB Equitable Portrayal Code.
- b) It is a new production. A new production is one which is not substantially a repackaged version of a previously-produced production. For a series, the CMF will consider the entire cycle to determine if the TV Component is a repackaging (e.g., some “best of,” “making-of” and/or “catch-up” episodes may be permitted). Television Components comprised mainly of stock footage may be new productions provided the footage is not merely repackaged in whole or large segments for the TV Component.
- c) When working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, cultures, concepts and stories, the CMF encourages all Applicants to respect the guiding principles and best practices set out in the [On-Screen Protocols & Pathways Media Production Guide](#).
- d) The CMF encourages all Applicants to implement more environmentally-sustainable practices and cleaner technologies – and reduce the use of unsustainable resources – in the development, production and exploitation of their Projects.
- e) Successful Applicants are required to submit Final Cost documentation one (1) year from the date of the Early Stage Development Financing Agreement. Failure to do so may place the Applicant in Default resulting in the possibility of any of cancellation of the Agreement, reduction the CMF financial commitment, requirement of repayment (with interest), and/or refusal to accept any future applications for CMF funding.

¹³Cultural award shows and galas that meet the CMF’s Variety and Performing Arts definition shall be considered eligible programming.