CANADA MEDIA FUND
FONDS DES MÉDIAS DU CANADA

DIGITAL CREATORS PILOT PROGRAM

GUIDELINES

2026-2027

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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 herein). 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 Appendix B is an integral part of these Guidelines.

Projects that receive CMF funding in a given year are subject to the Guidelines and the CMF policies that are in effect for that fiscal year. For greater clarity, changes to CMF Guidelines and/or policies made in a subsequent fiscal year will not be applied 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 to receive the latest Guideline news and documentation.

Provision of Documentation

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure 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 is provided on a voluntary basis, and, if provided allows individuals to disclose their demographic information directly and securely to the Canada Media Fund (CMF).

The CMF shall rely on the self-identification information associated with each individual's PERSONA-ID number to determine (as applicable) eligibility for dedicated Programs, exclusive reserved portions of Program budgets, Envelope Program credit, Evaluation Grid points, ranking position in selective Programs and/or for statistical and analytical purposes. Additionally, in certain cases this information is used to cross-reference / validate with other documentation connected to the Project (e.g. the Project's application form, Envelope Program Status Reports, etc.).

As any changes to information attached to an individual's PERSONA-ID account could impact Project eligibility, selection and/or Envelope calculations, the CMF must be informed of any revisions or updates as soon as possible.

Repeatedly providing incorrect information connected to the ownership of a Project may result in serious consequences for the Applicant per the Misrepresentation section above.

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 PERSONA-ID section on the CMF website.

2. OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Digital Creators Pilot Program (the "**DCPP"** or the **"Program"**) is designed to support the growth trajectory and business needs of mid-career Canadian digital content creators (**"Digital Creators"** or **"Creators"**), who are making original short-form video content exclusively for digital social media platforms - YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook.

In addition, starting in 2026-2027, the DCPP will also allow applications from mid-career Canadian podcast creators (**"Podcasters"** or **"Creators"**) wishing to grow or expand their business in original video podcast production for the primary podcast platforms – YouTube, Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

Applications are encouraged from Creators who have demonstrated some level of success online and wish to scale their businesses, grow their audience base and build monetization opportunities over a 12-month period.

This Program is intended for Creators who are "digital-first" and post content firstly and primarily on social media or podcast platforms. Applications from companies whose primary focus is the production of traditional linear film, streaming or television content, even if they manage channels or podcasts which meet the eligibility requirements, will not be accepted.

2.1.1 Program Structure

Interested Applicants will apply with a strategic business plan and overview of their performance to date (see Application Process section 2.3).

The Program shall award up to $40,000 in funding to each successful applicant (the **"Recipient"**) through a selective process according to an Evaluation Grid (see section 5.1). This selective process will include input from an external independent jury comprised of peers from the digital creator and podcast ecosystem and the CMF Program Administrator team (CMFPA).

Recipients will be required to incorporate a company (if they have not done so already) before they can proceed to contract.

Recipients will be required to submit a final report and cost report at the end of the 12-month period.

2.2 DEFINITIONS

The following terms can be found in these Program guidelines:

- **Diverse Community**

  The term "Diverse Community" refers to the following groups:

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

The CMF defines each of these groups in more detail in section 7 of Appendix A to the CMF Program Guidelines.

2.3 APPLICATION PROCESS

The Dialogue application system will open for applications 2 weeks before the Program's deadline. New applicants to the CMF need to first create a Dialogue account, which can be started anytime.

Applicants will be asked to submit an application form along with the following:

- Creator Overview: Brief profile of current online presence (up to 1 page)
- Audience Overview: Current platforms and audience engagement figures (excel template available – one for Digital Creators and one for Podcasters)
- Business Plan and Growth Strategy: Describe the current business operations or opportunities, goals for business or audience expansion, growth targets, intended activities to be undertaken during the 12-month period, how the funding will be used to achieve these goals and how the Applicant and its activities will contribute to a thriving Creator ecosystem in Canada. (up to 5 pages)
- Budget: Proposed budget for intended activities (excel template available)
- Pitch video: which presents the applicants' background - personality, style and previous content – and growth plan in a visual way (up to 5 minutes)

Note: The above list is for guidance only. Refer to the application checklist on the Program page for a full list of documentation required.

3. ELIGIBILITY

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

An Eligible Applicant to this Program is a for-profit Canadian Corporation (i.e., a taxable Canadian corporation, within the meaning of Canada's *Income Tax Act*) that:

a) Is Canadian-controlled as determined in sections 26 to 28 of the *Investment Canada Act*.

b) Has its head office in Canada.

c) Its shareholder(s) are at least 18 years of age.

d) Is in good standing with any applicable talent and industry associations and guilds.

Note: Individuals, groups of individuals or sole proprietorships who have not yet incorporated may apply, but Recipients will be required to incorporate before they can be contracted.

3.1.1 Additional Applicant Requirements

- Recipients of DCPP funding in the 2025-2026 fiscal year are NOT eligible to apply in 2026-2027.
- While participation in the PERSONA-ID process is voluntary, Applicants should note it is the self-identification information associated with each individual's PERSONA-ID number which the CMF uses to assess any specific demographic initiatives. In this Program this includes gender parity and/or diversity evaluation grid points.
- In the case of Podcasters they must be either already be engaged in producing video podcast content, or indicate through their Business Plan that they intend to use the funds to expand their business into producing video podcast content.

3.1.2 Minimum Engagement Thresholds – Digital Creators

Eligible Applicants who are Digital Creators must demonstrate the following at the time of application:

- Channels or accounts controlled by the Applicant must:
  - Be on at least one of the following platforms - YouTube, Instagram, TikTok or Facebook;
  - Have been active for at least the last 12 months, with an average of 1 post per month in that time period;

AND

ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE OPTIONS

- if the content creators' primary language of posting is **English**, they must be responsible for at least 1 of the following options:
  - A current single channel or account with at least 70,000 subscribers or followers, **OR**
  - Multiple channels or platforms with a combined subscriber base of at least 120,000, **OR**
  - At least one video which has achieved a minimum of 450,000 views on a channel which has a subscriber base of at least 35,000.

- if the content creators' primary language of posting is **French,** they must be responsible for at least 1 of the following options:
  - A current single channel or account with at least 12,500 subscribers or followers, **OR**

- Multiple channels or platforms with a combined subscriber base of at least 20,000, **OR**
- At least one video which has achieved a minimum of 25,000 views on a channel which has a subscriber base of at least 7,500.

3.1.3 Minimum Engagement Thresholds – Podcasters

Eligible Applicants who are Podcasters must demonstrate the following at the time of application:

- Be in operation for at least 1 year;
- Produced and released at least 3 episodes of a podcast in the past year;
- Previously produced and released at least one season of a podcast series in which they are the primary owner;

AND

ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE OPTIONS

- For Podcasters whose primary language is **English**, the previously produced podcast series must:
  - Be available on at least one of the following platforms – Spotify, YouTube, Apple Podcasts;
  - Have an average of 1,000 downloads per episode, with an average consumption rate (where available to measure) of 50% per episode.

- For Podcasters whose primary language is **French**, the previously produced podcast series must:
  - Be available on at least one of the following platforms – Spotify, YouTube, Apple Podcasts or Radio-Canada's OHdio;
  - Have an average of 500 downloads per episode, with an average consumption rate (where available to measure) of 50% per episode.

For clarity, content used by Podcasters to meet minimum engagement thresholds can be audio-only podcasts.

3.2 CREATOR CONTENT AND CHANNEL STANDARDS

The following standards apply to the Creators' existing content and channels, as well as content they create during the 12-month contract period.

Content from Creators or their channels:

a) Should be suitable for consumption by a general Canadian audience (i.e., content may not be unlawful, immoral, deceptive, scandalous or obscene) and – along with the Recipients themselves – shall not injure, tarnish, damage or otherwise negatively impact the reputation and goodwill associated with the CMF. Additionally, content cannot promote hate, deliberate disinformation and/or otherwise break acceptable and reasonable standards for consumption by a general audience demographic.

b) Must respect the principles and spirit of the CMF's Policies (found on our website) including, but not limited to responsible story telling, respecting diversity and supporting a healthy audiovisual sector.

c) Cannot contain elements of excessive violence, hate propaganda, sexual violence, or sexual exploitation or elements which are obscene, indecent or child pornography within the meaning of the Criminal Code (as amended from time to time), and is not libelous or in any other way unlawful.

d) Must comply with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.

e) Must not infringe any third-party rights. Works or trademarks belonging to third parties cannot be incorporated in

any content, unless prior consent has been obtained, or the use falls under one of the exceptions to infringement provided by law.

f) 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*.

g) The CMF encourages all Applicants to implement more environmentally-sustainable practices and cleaner technologies – and reduce the use of unsustainable resources – in their business activities.

h) The CMF encourages all Applicants to consider common industry practices for inclusive design and making content more accessible including the use of alt-text, captions and descriptive video.

3.3 ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The focus of this Program is to support the business development and audience growth goals of Creators. Activities proposed should support the goals and intended outcomes of the submitted Business Plan, and can include but are not limited to: hiring staff or services, outfitting a permanent studio space, community or audience building and expanding onto new platforms. In the case of Podcasters specifically, they will need to include a focus on expanding into or growing their existing video podcast activities (see Eligible Costs section 4.3).

3.3.1. Ineligible Activities

- Individual creation or production of content
- Business activities that are for the benefit of branded, commissioned or sponsored content

4. CMF CONTRIBUTION

4.1 NATURE OF CONTRIBUTION

Recipients receive funding in the form of a non-repayable contribution.

4.2 AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION

Applicants can request up to $40,000 for eligible costs and activities.

The CMF can account for **no more than 75%** of the intended costs of a budget. Recipients will need to demonstrate other financing (or contribute it themselves) towards the overall costs of the intended activities.

4.3 ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible Costs for this Program include:

- Company incorporation costs (if not already incorporated)
- Company labour and staffing costs such as a production assistant, social media manager, or editor
- Hiring of a marketing or brand consultant
- Hiring of an audience engagement expert
- Legal or accounting fees
- Software subscription costs
- Marketing and promotion
- Equipment purchases (limited to 20% of total costs)
- Long term studio space rental
- Reasonable costs related to environmentally sustainable activities, practices and personnel
- Travel costs, only as it can be verifiably related to business growth opportunities (limited to 15% of total costs)

Eligible Costs are real and verifiable costs set out in the budget or the final cost report, as applicable (including both related-party and non-related-party costs), plus costs the CMF considers necessary, and minus costs that the CMF considers excessive, inflated or unreasonable.

Core business operations or capital expenditures, such as the purchase of real estate, are not Eligible Costs.

Assessment of Eligible Costs shall be done at the CMF's sole discretion.

5. DECISION PROCESS

5.1 EVALUATION & SELECTION

The evaluation process will be selective and competitive.

Applications will first be reviewed for eligibility by the CMFPA.

Eligible applications will then undergo a selective review process, based on:

- Viability and likelihood of delivering on the proposed business plan and reaching stated goals
- Potential for Applicant to contribute to a thriving and resilient creator or podcast economy in Canada
- Track record and experience of the key participants in the proposal
- Creative strength and distinctiveness of Creators' content and their channels

The selective process will include input from an external independent jury comprised of peers in the digital creator and podcast ecosystem and CMF Program Administrator team (CMFPA).

In the event that a large number of applications are submitted to the Program, creating significant oversubscription, the CMF reserves the right to conduct a preliminary selection process where only a reasonable number of high performing Creators will be moved forward to the juried creative selection process. For Digital creators, "High performing" will be determined by validated total views across all channels. For Podcasters "High performing" will be determined by total downloads across all episodes.

At least 30% of the Program budget will be reserved for applications from Podcasters.

1/3 of the funding in this Program will be distributed to French-language Applicants.

5.1.1 Evaluation Grid

The CMF will choose Recipients in a selective scoring process according to the following evaluation grid.

Assessment Criteria	Weight
Creator Track Record (26) ▪ Knowledge and experience of the Creator and their collaborators (if applicable). ▪ Demonstration of success delivering content and building and engaging with audiences on social media or podcast platforms. ▪ The degree to which Creator content or channels demonstrate an upward trend in audience engagement or consumption rates over the past year. **Parity (2)** ▪ The Applicant is majority owned by individuals who publicly identify as women[1]. **Diversity (2)** ▪ The Applicant is majority owned by individuals who are members of a Diverse Community (as defined in section 2.2 above)[1].	**30**

[1] The CMF will rely on the self-identification information associated with the PERSONA-ID number of individual shareholders and directors or Board Members of the Applicant company to determine whether Applications qualify. For clarity, non-Canadians will not be counted in these scores. For more information on PERSONA-ID, please refer to section 1 of these Guidelines.

Business Plan and Growth Strategy ▪ Articulation of the Business Plan and Growth Strategy. ▪ The relevance and timeliness of the proposed activities in supporting the Applicant's career trajectory. ▪ Feasibility of proposed goals or audience targets within the time period. ▪ Capacity of the Applicant and their collaborators (if applicable) to carry out the proposed activities. ▪ Ability to deliver proposed activities within the proposed budget. ▪ Potential of Applicant and their collaborators to contribute to a thriving and resilient creator economy in Canada. ▪ Alignment of budget allocation to proposed activities.	**50**
Previous Content ▪ Technical strength and quality of previously produced content. ▪ Originality, uniqueness sand distinctiveness of previously produced content within the ecosystem. ▪ Reflection of Canadian topics, issues, themes and demographics in previously produced content. ▪ Meaningful audience or community engagement through previously produced content.	**20**
TOTAL	**100**

6. CONTRACTING AND REPORTING

6.1 CONTRACTING

Recipients will receive a positive recommendation letter that details the specific requirements for contracting. The CMF reserves the right to withdraw the committed amount if recipients do not meet these requirements and execute a contract within the timeframe indicated in this letter.

Recipients who have not yet incorporated a company will be required to do so before they can proceed to contract.

The contract must be signed by the Recipient; it cannot be signed by an agency or 3rd party on their behalf.

There will be 2 drawdowns: 80% on signature and 20% on acceptance of the final report and cost report.

6.2 REPORTING

Following the end of the 12-month contract period Recipients will be required to submit a final report and cost report that outlines the activities undertaken and the outcomes of the business plan/growth strategy.

Recipients will also be required to provide interim updates ("**Success Reporting**") for a period of 2 years following the final report.