



CANADA
MEDIA FUND

FONDS DES MÉDIAS
DU CANADA

DIGITAL CREATORS PILOT 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 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 interpretation by the CMF 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 as specific appendices to Programs in the Experimental Stream), 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 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 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 DIGITAL CREATORS PILOT PROGRAM WORKS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

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

Applications are encouraged from content creators who (i) have demonstrated some level of success online and wish to focus on content creation for social media as their primary output and (ii) who seek to grow their audience base and monetization opportunities over a 6-month period.

2.1.1 Program Structure

Interested Applicants will apply with a strategic business plan as well as a short overview of the planned content to be created during the 6-month time period (see “Application Process” section 2.4).

The Program shall award up to \$20,000 in funding to each successful Applicant (the “**Recipient**”) through a selective process according to an Evaluation Grid (see section 2.5.2). This selective process will include input from an external independent jury comprised of peers in the digital creator ecosystem and members of the CMF Program Administrator team (CMFPA).

Note: 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 content creators will be moved forward to the juried creative selection process. “High performing content creators” will be determined by validated total views across all channels.

Prior to signing their CMF Financing Agreement to receive funds through this Program, Recipients will be required to incorporate a company (if they have not done so already), attend a CMF business affairs and accounting workshop and submit a formal budget.

Applicants are permitted to have posted content to social media in any content type prior to application, but Recipients must agree to produce and post a minimum number of pieces of prepared and edited content during the 6-month period that align with eligible CMF genres (see Eligible Content Types 3.2.2).

Recipients will be required to submit a final report and cost report at the end of the 6-month period.

2.1.2 Definitions Applicable to the Digital Creators Program: 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 where the majority shareholders of the corporation are a member of a Diverse Community.

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; or
- d) Persons with disabilities/Disabled persons.

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

2.2 NATURE OF FUNDING CONTRIBUTION

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

2.3 FUNDING CONTRIBUTION

2.3.1 Amount of CMF Contribution

Maximum Contribution

Applicants can request up to \$20,000 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.

2.3.2 Eligible Activities

Applicants will need to outline the activities they wish to undertake during the 6-month period to support the increase of their subscriber/audience base. These Activities must include a minimum threshold of newly created (and CMF- eligible) video content (see Posting Term section 2.6.3 below), and may also include company market or business activities (see Eligible Costs section 2.3.3).

2.3.3 Eligible Costs

Eligible Costs for this Program can fall into two categories –

Video creation costs:

- Labour costs for the creation of content, including writing, shooting, editing and post production
- Equipment or location rentals
- Equipment purchases (limited to 20% of total costs)
- Reasonable costs related to environmentally-sustainable activities, practices and personnel connected to producing the content

Marketing and business growth costs:

- Company labour costs such as for a production assistant or social media manager
- Hiring of a marketing or brand consultant
- Legal or accounting fees
- Software subscription costs
- Marketing and promotion

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 necessary¹, and minus costs that the CMF considers excessive, inflated or unreasonable.

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

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

At the time of application, only a total budget amount with corresponding financing plan will be needed. If selected, Applicants will be required to participate in a business affairs and budgeting workshop. Following the workshop, a budget will be required to be submitted to the CMF and assessed before contracting for funds can occur.

¹ Gifts made to Indigenous communities recognized as cultural practice and referenced in the [On-Screen Protocols & Pathways Media Production Guide](#) will be accepted as Eligible Costs.

2.4 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:

- Brief profile of current online presence (up to 1 page)
- Current platforms and audience engagement numbers (excel template available)
- High level content overview document, including posting schedule (up to 2 pages)
- Audience engagement / Business growth strategy plan which describes a) the Applicant's current audience reach – which platforms, types of audience targeted, nature of any brand or sponsorship affiliations if any, b) proposed engagement, growth targets or affiliations over the following 6 months, and c) how the Applicant intends to reach those targets and/or that audience (up to 3 pages)
- (Optional) Pitch video which presents the Applicant's background - personality, style and content – and growth plan in a visual way (up to 3 minutes)

2.5 EVALUATION & SELECTION

2.5.1 Evaluation Process

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 economy in Canada
- Track record and experience of the key participants in the proposal
- Creative strength and distinctiveness of content being proposed

The selective process will include input from an external independent jury comprised of peers in the digital creator ecosystem and CMFPA team analysts.

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 content creators will be moved forward to the juried creative selection process. "High performing content creators" will be determined by validated total views across all channels.

Funding in this Program will be distributed on a 2/3 (English): 1/3 (French) basis.

2.5.2 Evaluation Grid

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

Assessment Criteria – DIGITAL CREATORS’ PROGRAM	Weight
<p>Creator Track Record (26%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge and experience of the Applicant Creator and their collaborators (if applicable). (10) ▪ Demonstration of success delivering content, and building and engaging with audiences on social media platforms. (6) ▪ Quality and engagement of previously posted content. (10) <p>Parity (2%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Applicant is majority owned by individuals who identify as women. <p>Diversity (2%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Applicant is majority owned by members of a Diverse Community (as defined in section 2.1.2 above). 	30%
<p>Business Plan and Growth Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Articulation of the Business Plan and growth strategy. (10) ▪ The relevance and timeliness of the proposed activities in supporting the Applicant’s career trajectory. (5) ▪ Feasibility of proposed goals or audience targets within the time period. (10) ▪ Capacity of the Applicant and their collaborators (if applicable) to carry out the proposed activities. (5) ▪ Ability to deliver proposed activities within the proposed budget. (5) ▪ Potential of Applicant and their collaborators to contribute to a thriving and resilient creator economy in Canada. (5) 	40%
<p>Content – creativity and potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strength and quality of proposed content. (10) ▪ Originality or distinctiveness of proposed content within the ecosystem. (10) ▪ Reflection of Canadian topics, issues, themes and demographics. (5) ▪ Alignment of proposed content to CMF Eligible Content Types. (5) 	30%

2.6 CONTRACTING AND FINAL REPORTING

2.6.1 Business Affairs and Accounting Workshop

Recipients will be required to participate in a CMF business affairs and cost accounting workshop and submit a budget for review and approval by the CMF before they can proceed to contract. Those who cannot participate will not be able to proceed to contract and will forfeit their commitment. Dates will be: March 1, 2024 (French) and March 5, 2024 (English).

2.6.2 Contracting

Recipients who have not yet incorporated a company will be required to do so before they can proceed to contract and receive funds. Recipients will have the opportunity to revise their posting schedule prior to contracting.

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

2.6.3 Posting Term

Based on the personalized business plan proposed by the Applicant, Recipients will generate and post an agreed upon minimum number of new (CMF-eligible) videos over a 6-month period (“**Posting Term**”). The Applicant can propose the final number, but it must be a minimum of 4 videos during the period that align with at least one of CMF’s traditional linear content types. (see Eligible Content 3.2.2).

All other content created during the Posting Term can continue to be in any content type generally accepted on social media platforms, so long as it meets reasonable morality standards of 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.

2.6.4 Final Report

Following the end of the Posting Term (roughly 8 months following contracting), Recipients will be required to submit a final report and cost report that outlines the activities undertaken during the Posting Term and the outcomes of the business plan / growth strategy.

3. ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

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.

AND

- e) All individuals that own and control the Applicant company have registered for a PERSONA-ID account(s) and have provided this account number as part of their Application.

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.

Note: Recipients will also be required to affirm and attest that the Content submitted for funding complies with the [CMF's Narrative Positioning Policy](#) before contracting can occur.

3.1.1 Minimum Engagement Thresholds

Eligible Applicants must demonstrate the following at the time of application:

- Channels or accounts controlled by the Applicant – on at least one of the Eligible Platforms (see section 3.2.3 below) – 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 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 75,000 subscribers or followers, **OR**
 - Multiple channels or platforms with a combined subscriber base of at least 125,000, **OR**
 - At least one video which has achieved a minimum of 500,000 views on a channel which has a subscriber base of at least 40,000.
- if the 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 15,000 subscribers or followers, **OR**
 - Multiple channels or platforms with a combined subscriber base of at least 25,000, **OR**
 - At least one video which has achieved a minimum of 30,000 views on a channel which has a subscriber base of at least 10,000.

3.2 ELIGIBLE CONTENT

As a pilot Program in an evolving space, Eligible Content that is created using the funds from this Program will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In addition to supporting the business and audience goals of the Applicant, the aim is to fund the creation of new original prepared and edited audio-visual content that is intended for consumption and meant to appeal to audiences on a recognized online digital social media platform. Content length of any individual video can be determined by the Applicant, but should follow acceptable industry standards for that platform and their target audience.

3.2.1 Canadian Ownership Criteria

Eligible Content must meet the following ownership criteria:

- a) Its underlying rights are owned, and significantly and meaningfully developed, by Canadians.
- b) It is produced in Canada, with at least 75% of its Eligible Costs being Canadian costs.
- c) It is, and remains throughout its production, under Canadian ownership and Canadian executive, creative, and financial control.

Recipients must provide due diligence that all elements of produced content are original or owned by the Recipient.

3.2.2 Types of Content

Eligible Content to be created using the funds from this Program should align with at least one of the following CMF's linear content types:

- Drama (scripted and edited content of a fictional nature for entertainment purposes. This can include live action or animated scripted drama, comedy or sketch comedy)
- Documentary (an original work of non-fiction, primarily designed to inform but that may also educate and entertain. It should aim to provide an increased understanding of a theme, topic or person. For clarity it is not intended to include first person "rants", opinions or stream of consciousness presentations. See ineligible content below including vlogging, reaction videos, and "streeters")
- Children or Youth (educational or entertainment content intended for consumption by an audience under the age of 17 that meets the minimum age of the intended platform's user, or monitored user platforms such as YouTube Kids. It should be designed and produced according to the needs and expectations of the target age range - rather than to those of adults or parents - and ideally reflect reality from their point of view)
- Variety or Performing Arts (content that contains one or more on-screen artistic acts or performances such as singing, dancing, acrobatic exhibitions, comedy sketches, drama sketches, magic or stand-up comedy. Performing arts is defined as performances of traditional and popular music, opera, operetta, musicals, ballet and other forms of dance or performance)

All other content created during the Posting Term can continue to be in any content type generally accepted on social media platforms, so long as it meets reasonable morality standards of consumption by a general Canadian audience (ie. Content may not be unlawful, immoral, deceptive, scandalous or obscene) and – along with the Recipient themselves – shall not injure, tarnish, damage or otherwise negatively impact the reputation and goodwill associated with the CMF.

3.2.3 Ineligible Content Types

Notwithstanding the evolving nature of the space, the following is an inexhaustive list of ineligible types of content that cannot be created using the funds from this Program:

- Promotional or advertorial, or content intended as advertising or marketing
- Any content that is the result of a brand partnership or sponsorship deal
- Unboxing, production reviews, rating videos
- Duets, remixes or reaction videos
- Live-streaming / Videogame play videos
- Vlogging, talk shows, panel shows, or recorded podcasts
- Competitions or contests
- Compilations, "Listicles" or reposted videos comprised solely of other peoples' content (e.g. clips from films, tv shows, musicians or other influencers)
- "Streeters" - random and "surprise" encounter interviews conducted live with strangers on the street

- Award shows, galas, fundraising, benefits, tributes
- Religious programs
- News reporting
- How-to, DIY, cooking videos
- Official track Music videos or filmed recordings of live events, performances or exhibitions
- Longer form and serialized content primarily intended for digital streaming platforms that would be eligible through other CMF programs (ie. Digital series, web series, television series etc.)

3.2.3 Eligible Platforms

For the pilot phase of this Program, Eligible Platforms for demonstrating minimum audience engagement thresholds and for posting new content are:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- TikTok
- YouTube

3.2.4 Miscellaneous Requirements

- a) Content or Channels cannot contain elements of excessive violence, 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), or libelous or in any other way unlawful.
- b) Content must comply with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
- c) Content must not infringe any third party rights. Works or trade-marks 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.
- d) Content that has been funded or may be funded through other CMF Programs, specifically the Digital Linear Series Program, is not eligible.
- e) Content or Channels cannot promote hate, deliberate disinformation and/or otherwise break acceptable and reasonable morality standards for consumption by a general audience demographic.
- 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 the creation and exploitation of their Content.
- 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.