



CANADA
MEDIA FUND

FONDS DES MÉDIAS
DU CANADA

INNOVATION & EXPERIMENTATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES 2026-2027

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Section 1 of the [IDM Content Programs – Core Guidelines](#) shall apply to the Innovation & Experimentation Program Guidelines, unless otherwise specified.

2. OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Unless otherwise specified, in addition to the requirements set out in these Guidelines, Applicants must comply with:

- i) The rules and requirements of the [IDM Content Programs – Core Guidelines](#), and
- ii) The applicable policies and definitions in [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#), namely:
 - a. [Appendix A](#): Section 7 (CMF Definitions)
 - b. [Appendix B](#):
 - i. Chapter 1 (Default Policy),
 - ii. Chapter 2 (Accounting and Reporting Requirements),
 - iii. Chapter 3 (Producer’s Fees and Corporate Overhead (PFCO) Policy), and
 - iv. Chapter 5 (Insurance Policy).

The objective of the Innovation & Experimentation Program (the “**Program**”) is to fund Canadian interactive digital media Projects that are innovative and leading-edge.

A Project requesting funding through this Program should have completed the conceptual/ideation and prototype stages and able to demonstrate a clear path to market/distribution. Production support is provided for the creation of a final, market-ready version of an Eligible Project, including localization of the Project and marketing/commercialization activities.

This Program includes a stream for Projects with budgets up to and including \$750,000 (the “**Lower Budget Stream**”). This Stream is intended for emerging producers and creatives, as well as Projects whose primary aim is cultural impact or experimentation with form, content and technology.

This Program shall fund Projects through a selective process in which Eligible Projects are assessed according to an evaluation grid. There will be different evaluation criteria for Projects applying in the Lower Budget Stream.

2.2 DEFINITIONS

Please see [Appendix A](#) Section 7 for definitions of the following terms found in these Guidelines:

- Diverse Community
- Diverse Community (Ownership) Project
- Gender Balance (Ownership) Project

3. ELIGIBILITY

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

An Eligible Applicant to this Program must meet:

- The criteria in section 3.1 of the [IDM Content Programs – Core Guidelines](#); and
- Any applicable specific eligibility criteria noted in this section.

As a reminder, the following additional requirements now apply across all IDM Programs (for more information see 3.1.1 and 3.2 of the [IDM Content Programs - Core Guidelines](#)):

- All new Applicants to the CMF through an IDM Program will be required to participate in a Pre-Application consultation with CMFPA staff in order to be considered eligible to apply.
- Applicants will be limited to holding a maximum of two (2) open contracts at the Production phase. Applicants must ensure that previous Project final phase deliverables (including a cost report) are delivered and the file(s) closed before applying with a new Project.

3.1.1 Program Specific Eligibility

An Eligible Applicant to this Program has at least one shareholder with a minimum of one (1) year professional experience working in a full-time capacity in the creation of IDM content. Content developed while enrolled in a post-secondary program will not qualify.

3.2 ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

An Eligible Project to this Program must meet:

- The criteria in Section 3.2 of the [IDM Content Programs – Core Guidelines](#); and
- Any applicable specific eligibility criteria noted in this section.

As a reminder, the following additional requirement now applies across all IDM Programs (see 3.2 of the [IDM Content Programs – Core Guidelines](#)):

- Applicants may apply to this Program with a maximum of one (1) Eligible Project per spring or fall deadline period.

3.2.1 Innovation

Eligible Projects in this Program must be innovative. Innovation may be expressed in terms of innovative content or innovative technology. While the CMF does not define or delimit what is innovative, the CMF recognizes that innovation can include both breakthrough, novel and revolutionary content/technology and the intelligent re-imagination, reworking or extension of existing content/technology¹. Applicants are encouraged to pursue their own vision of innovation.

3.2.2 Distribution Plans

Projects may be self-distributed, provided that the Applicant provides a clear plan, including a robust audience engagement strategy, and demonstrates that it has the ability to effectively self-distribute the Project.

¹For clarity, sequels to existing products and advancing existing technology or content will be considered innovative to the extent that the above noted criteria are addressed.

This should include an overview of audience interest and engagement cultivated in the Project to date. In the case of video games this could include, but is not limited to wish list numbers, demo / prototype / playtest results, community server numbers, or other suitable means reflective of where the core community for the Project is being built. Other types of Projects should do their best to quantify interest and demand as it relates to their specific release strategy.

Projects may also have a letter of intent from a Publishing or Distribution partner (the “**Publisher / Distributor**”) committed to taking the Project to market and to actively promoting the Project. A letter of intent does not need to include a cash financing commitment to the Project.

3.2.3 Miscellaneous Requirements

- a) A Project cannot have substantially commenced Production prior to submission of an application, nor have already been made publicly available (except as clearly indicated for demo or prototyping testing in previous phases of work).
- b) A Project that has been refused funding from this Program two (2) or more times since 2010-2011 cannot apply again for CMF-funding in this same Program.
- c) A Project that has been refused in the Innovation & Experimentation Program can apply to the Commercial Projects Program (and vice versa), if eligible. However, a Project cannot be submitted to both the Commercial Projects Program and the Innovation & Experimentation Program in the same spring or fall deadline periods.
- d) The CMF may commit to up to 50% of this Program’s allocation for Applications submitted on the First Closing Date. The CMF will make the remainder of the allocation available for the Second Closing Date.
- e) The Project must be made available in Canada.

4. CMF CONTRIBUTION

A CMF Contribution to an Eligible Project in this Program will follow:

- The criteria in section 4 of the [IDM Content Programs – Core Guidelines](#); and
- Any applicable specific criteria noted in this section.

4.1 AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION

4.1.1 Lower Budget Stream Contribution

For Projects with budgets up to and including \$750,000, successful Applicants will receive funding in an amount appropriate to the needs of the Project and subject to a Maximum Contribution of 75% of the Project's Eligible Costs.

4.1.2 Main Stream Contribution

For Projects with budgets greater than \$750,000, successful Applicants will receive funding in an amount appropriate to the needs of the Project and subject to a Maximum Contribution of the lesser of 75% of the Project's Eligible Costs or \$1.5 million.

4.2 ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible Costs must be costs directly related to the Project, including but not limited to:

- Research and preparation of content;
- Salaries and benefits/wages/contracts for Project team (Project management, business development, coding, design, system infrastructure, content development);
- Technology infrastructure (hardware and software);
- **Starting in 2026-2027**, design, construction or exhibition costs related to the physical exhibition of immersive / experiential works, so long as the production of digital content remains the primary component of the budget;
- Travel and accommodations;
- Project audit fees;
- Other technical and administrative expenses;
- Localization activities;
- Marketing and promotion; and/or
- Reasonable costs related to environmentally sustainable activities, practices and personnel.

Projects must spend a minimum of 25% and maximum of 50% of budget categories B + C of their production budget on eligible marketing and promotion costs.

Design, construction or exhibition costs related to the physical exhibition of immersive / experiential works can account for a maximum of 20% of the Project's Eligible Costs.

5. DECISION PROCESS

5.1 EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Evaluation of an Eligible Project in this Program will follow:

- The criteria in section 5 of the [IDM Content Programs – Core Guidelines](#); and
- Any applicable specific criteria noted in this section.

This Program shall fund Projects through a selective and competitive process in which Eligible Projects are assessed according to the following evaluation grids.

Total Project budget will determine which Stream is used to evaluate a submitted Project. Projects will only be evaluated against the other Projects within the same Stream. Up to 30% of each funding round will be allocated to Projects from the Lower Budget Stream.

5.1.1 Lower Budget Stream Evaluation Grid

The following grid will be used for Projects with budgets up to and including \$750,000 and is intended for emerging producers and creatives, as well as Projects whose primary aim is cultural impact or experimentation with form, content and technology.

| Assessment Criteria | Weight |
|---|------------------|
| <p>Team (13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional experience and achievements of the Applicant and its team members within the interactive digital media industry. Team members shall include lead production, creative, technical, sales and marketing roles. In the case of new Applicants or emerging team members, the potential of the Applicant and/or its team members to contribute to a thriving future IDM ecosystem will be assessed. ▪ Feasibility of the team assembled to carry out and deliver the Project. ▪ Quality and degree to which the Applicant and creative and production teams are well-positioned to create this Project. <p>“Well Positioned” is outlined in the CMF’s Narrative Positioning Policy and can be addressed in the submitted Narrative Positioning Statement.</p> <p>Parity (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eligible Projects that meet the Gender Balance (Ownership) Project definition² (as defined in Appendix A). <p>Diversity (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eligible Projects that meet the Diverse Community (Ownership) Project definition² (as defined in Appendix A). | <p>17</p> |
| <p>Community and Sustainability</p> <p>Community Engagement Plan (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Applicant and team members commit to (i) concrete steps to create the content responsibly, thoughtfully and without harm, including community engagement steps, and/or personnel hires, and (ii) will provide a written report at final costs stage confirming the work completed. | <p>4</p> |

² The CMF will rely on the self-identification information associated with an individual’s PERSONA-ID number for shareholders and board of directors of the Applicant company (and co-applicant, if applicable) and parent company(ies) to determine whether Projects qualify. For clarity, non-Canadians will not be counted in these scores. For more information on PERSONA-ID, please see section 1 of the [IDM Content Program Core Guidelines](#).

| | |
|---|------------|
| <p>Sustainability Plan (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Applicant and team members commit to (i) steps related to environmentally-sustainable activities, practices and/or personnel hires on this Project, and (ii) will provide a written report at final costs stage confirming the work completed. | |
| <p>Children and Youth Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projects whose target audience is General Public - Children or General Public – Youth. Marketing strategies need to reflect this target audience selection in order to qualify. | 2 |
| <p>Experimentation, Creativity and Advancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent to which the Project develops or integrates innovative or experimental technologies, proposes a novel and sophisticated approach to the content or narrative/story, or explores emerging modes of expression or exhibition ▪ Potential for Project to have impact within industry and marketplace - to renew, transform or contribute to critical success. As applicable this can include potential to add cultural significance - for example adding greater representation in voices from Diverse Communities, sharing new perspectives or exploring stories, themes, topics or issues important to Canadians. ▪ Originality, quality and relevance of content or form, and as applicable, narrative/story. ▪ Quality and sophistication of design elements and programming. ▪ Quality and distinctiveness of user experience and interactivity. | 58 |
| <p>Financial Viability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget accuracy and relevance, and financial structure risk (confirmation and validity of investments). ▪ Applicant's financial stability in relation to the size of the Project. ▪ Project completion risk. | 9 |
| <p>Strategic Positioning and Marketing</p> <p>Market Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audience analysis. ▪ Ecosystem analysis and positioning. <p>Marketing Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality and relevance of the Project's marketing and promotional strategy and plan. ▪ Quality and relevance of distribution plan in relation to content and intended audience. | 10 |
| <p>TOTAL</p> | 100 |

5.1.2 Main Stream Evaluation Grid

The following grid will be used for Projects with budgets greater than \$750,000.

| Assessment Criteria | Weight |
|---|------------------|
| <p>Team (13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience and achievements of the Applicant within the interactive digital media industry. ▪ Professional experience and achievements of team members within the interactive digital media industry. Team members shall include lead production, creative, technical, sales and marketing roles. ▪ Experience and track record of team members working with one another. ▪ Feasibility of the team assembled to carry out and deliver the Project. ▪ Quality and degree to which the applicant and creative and production teams are well-positioned to create this Project. <p>“Well Positioned” is outlined in the CMF’s Narrative Positioning Policy and can be addressed in the submitted Narrative Positioning Statement.</p> <p>Parity (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eligible Projects that meet the Gender Balance (Ownership) Project definition³ (as defined in Appendix A). <p>Diversity (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eligible Projects that meet the Diverse Community (Ownership) Project definition³ as defined in Appendix A. | <p>17</p> |
| <p>Community and Sustainability</p> <p>Community Engagement Plan (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Applicant and team members commit to (i) concrete steps to create the content responsibly, thoughtfully and without harm, including community engagement steps, and/or personnel hires, and (ii) will provide a written report at final costs stage confirming the work completed. <p>Sustainability Plan (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Applicant and team members commit to (i) steps related to environmentally-sustainable activities, practices and/or personnel hires on this Project, and (ii) will provide a written report at final costs stage confirming the work completed. | <p>4</p> |
| <p>Children and Youth Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projects whose target audience is General Public - Children or General Public – Youth. Marketing strategies need to reflect this target audience selection in order to qualify. | <p>2</p> |

³ The CMF will rely on the self-identification information associated with an individual’s PERSONA-ID number for shareholders and board of directors of the Applicant company (and co-Applicant, if applicable) and parent company(ies) to determine whether Projects qualify. For clarity, non-Canadians will not be counted in these scores. For more information on PERSONA-ID, please see section 1 of the [IDM Content Program Core Guidelines](#).

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| <p>Innovation, Creativity and Advancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Originality, quality and relevance of content or form, and as applicable, narrative/story. ▪ Extent to which the Project develops or integrates innovative technologies, and/or proposes a novel and sophisticated approach to the content or narrative/story. ▪ Quality and sophistication of design elements and programming. ▪ Quality and distinctiveness of user experience and interactivity. ▪ Potential for Project to have impact within industry and marketplace - to renew, transform or contribute to critical success. As applicable this can include potential to add cultural significance- for example adding greater representation in voices from Diverse Communities or sharing new perspectives. | <p>58</p> |
| <p>Financial Viability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget accuracy and relevance, and financial structure risk (confirmation and validity of investments). ▪ Applicant's financial stability in relation to the size of the Project. ▪ Project completion risk. | <p>9</p> |
| <p>Strategic Positioning and Marketing</p> <p>Market Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audience analysis. ▪ Market analysis and positioning. <p>Marketing Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality of the Project's marketing and promotional strategy and plan. ▪ Diversity and relevance of distribution modes. ▪ Relevance of promotional activities. ▪ Level of interest demonstrated by Publisher / Distributor partners and/or quality of self-distribution plan. | <p>10</p> |
| <p>TOTAL</p> | <p>100</p> |