



Slate Development and Webdocs Development Guidelines

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The Board of the Bell Fund has complete discretion in the administration of Bell Fund programs including, without limitation, determination of eligibility of applicants or projects and funding decisions. All Board decisions are final. Program guidelines may be changed at any time, provided that guidelines publicly posted at the time of a Program deadline will be the applicable guidelines for that application. Producers are encouraged to ensure that they have reviewed the most current guidelines, templates and policies available on the Bell Fund website prior to submitting their application.

Overview of the Bell Fund

Mission

To support Canadian media content makers in creating for and connecting with, audiences here and everywhere.

Since 1997 the Bell Fund has received over \$200 million in financial contributions from Bell TV to support the development and production of cross-platform digital media and TV content. In 2001 the Bell Fund was awarded an endowment of \$10 million from Bell TV, as a result of a tangible benefits package. The revenues generated by this endowment are made available for development funding.

In 2017, in order to implement the [CRTC's Revised Policy Framework for Certified Independent Funds](#), the Bell Fund retired its convergent production and development programs, as well as its performance accelerator and TV Development Online programs.

Background

The Bell Fund is a not-for-profit organization. It has been certified by the CRTC as an independent production fund eligible to receive and administer contributions from broadcast distribution undertakings under section 29(2) of the Broadcasting Distribution Regulations.

The Fund is governed by a nine member Board of Directors which operates as an arm's length corporation with representatives from broadcasting, television and digital media sectors and from Bell TV.

The Fund has offices in Toronto and Montreal.

1. Definitions

Discoverability Plan:

Is a document detailing the strategy and tactics and measurement methods for how the Producer will find, retain and build an audience for the project.

Please refer to the documents available at bellfund.ca/application-components/ before submitting your plan and budget.

Market Interest: Can include but is not limited to a meaningful letter of interest from a Canadian CRTC-licensed broadcaster, a digital platform accessible to Canadians or a distributor.

Digital Platform:

A broadcaster-owned digital platform or Hybrid VOD service: licensed to operate by the CRTC (ex. aptn.ca, CTV GO, tva.ca, Club illico, Crave TV).

Digital platform accessible to Canadians (Canadian or foreign-owned): includes but not limited to AVOD (advertising-based video on demand), TVOD (transactional video on demand, ex. iTunes Canada), SVOD services (subscription video on demand, ex. ICI Tou.tv Amazon Prime Canada, Netflix Canada), or social media platforms (ex. YouTube or Facebook).

For each of these digital platforms to be eligible Producer must be able to demonstrate the Platform's ability to effectively reach the appropriate targeted Canadian audience.

According to CAVCO, digital platforms accessible to Canadians "is a service where Canadians would likely look for linear audio-visual content, as opposed to a service primarily intended for foreign territories". In addition, the Fund requires that this service also be one where Canadians would likely go to view a particular type of content – i.e. scripted drama, scripted comedy, non-fiction/factual series. The fund reserves the right to determine the acceptability of the service.

Distributor:

Canadian Distributor – is Canadian owned within the meaning of the Investment Canada Act. The distributor generally distributes third party content in addition to its own content and has the experience necessary to negotiate terms, marketing and promotion spends and other promotional activities in favour of the Producer.

Third Party Sources:

May include but not be limited to sponsorship funding, public and private funding agencies, provincial agencies, and a distribution advance. However, the 10% cash financing must be committed in writing at the time of application. Projects that are under review with another industry funding program (OMDC, SODEC, IPF, Shaw Rocket Fund, CMF etc.) will be considered as financing and qualify as the

10% cash contribution, provided the financing is confirmed in advance of the Bell Fund Board's decisions for that particular deadline (not applicable to webdocs).

While in kind and deferred costs are not eligible as the cash contribution, these can be included in the budget as long as they are necessary and reasonable. Please see the Budgeting and Financing Policies for more information.

2. Eligible Applicants

2.1 Canadian Production Company

- a. Is a for profit company carrying on business in Canada and a resident of Canada for the purposes of the Income Tax Act - owned and controlled by Canadians as determined in sections 26-28 of Investment Canada Act
- b. Is incorporated in Canada
- c. Has a Canadian business address as its head office

The CRTC defines an independent production company as a production company in which a television licensee owns or controls, directly or indirectly, less than 30% of the equity. This definition will apply to broadcaster-affiliated companies as well.

2.2 Independent Producer

- a. Whose primary business is developing, producing and distributing professional content including (but not limited to) linear video, interactive digital media, and social media content, and has sufficient experience to undertake the project
- b. Must be able to demonstrate a sound financial position and the required expertise within the team to successfully produce the program. A less experienced producer is encouraged to ensure that other members of the team are more experienced either as individual talent (i.e. screenwriter, director) or as a co-producing or executive producing company. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Bell Fund in advance of the deadline to obtain assistance in determining the experience level of their team.
- c. Is directly responsible for the financial and creative control of the production
- d. Is the central decision maker
- e. Rights must be owned, optioned or controlled (including the underlying rights to the program) sufficient to produce and exploit the program throughout the world
- f. Retain a reasonable share of the financial backend

In the event that the applicant is a broadcaster-affiliated company (See definition of CRTC independent production company in Section 2.1), only up to 25% of the available funds in a program can be accessed by these companies.

3. Slate Development

The purpose of the Slate Development program is to help independent production companies diversify their development slate (both in terms of number of projects and variety of platforms and media) by offering financial support for the planning and development of original intellectual property (“IP”). Preference will therefore be given to applications that support multiple projects (no more than three), which can be multi-platform. **At least one project must be linear video** program or series

- a. Producers may apply with projects in varying stages of development.
- b. Producers must demonstrate how the funding will help to move the project from development into production.
- c. IP must be original though it may be an adaptation of an existing licensed property.
- d. All rights and underlying rights must be owned, optioned or controlled sufficient to develop, produce and exploit the program throughout the world.
- e. Producers must demonstrate that they have the requisite experience to complete the development. Otherwise they are encouraged to seek out a mentor.
- f. **Eligible costs** in the development budgets may include but not limited to research including audience research, option payments, scriptwriting (including outlines and treatments), the production of a short presentation demo, business, marketing and promotional plans, discoverability plan and the creation of plans for worldwide exploitation.

Ineligible Content

Ineligible content includes feature films, MOW's and primarily re-purposed content and subsequent seasons.

Content may not be an industrial, corporate, or primarily promotional project. For greater clarity, infomercials, promotional and corporate videos or content are not eligible.

Interstitial programs, wraparound segments or filler content, commonly used by broadcasters as additional information of the television programs are not eligible.

Amount of Funding Contribution:

Funding is available as a non-interest bearing advance **of 75% of eligible costs up to a maximum of \$100,000**, repayable from production financing (on a per project basis).

- g. Minimum funding that can be requested is **\$25,000**

At the time of application Producer will provide evidence that at least 10% of the budget for each project is financed in cash by a third party.

This financing must be committed in writing at the time of application. Projects that are under review with another industry funding program (OMDC, SODEC IPF, Shaw Rocket

Fund, CMF etc.) can qualify as the 10% cash contribution, provided the financing is confirmed in advance of the Bell Fund Board's decisions for that particular deadline.¹

- h. Producer must provide evidence that all costs are Canadian (unless the Producer can establish the need for non-Canadian development costs, which in no event shall be more than 25% of the budget).
- i. Costs incurred prior to the application are not eligible.
- j. Producer fees and corporate overhead must be capped at 20% of A+ B
- k. All funds must be spent consistent with the application for funding, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Bell Fund.
- l. Funding can be used to leverage other Funds like CMF, OMDC, or SODEC. Producer will have 3 months from approval to provide evidence of commitment.

Please Note – Given the limited funds available, a Company comprised of and/or exercising common control over, several production companies is only entitled to one application per deadline.

4. Webdocs Development

The purpose of the Webdocs (also referred to as idocs or interactive documentaries) Development Program is to support the development of original, interactive, digital non-fiction.

"Such content is primarily designed to inform but may also educate and entertain, providing an in-depth critical analysis of a specific subject or point of view"² through the integration of interactive digital technologies and platforms. Users will navigate through and interact with the components of the project autonomously.

A webdoc is not a series on the web. For further details about the webdoc definition, see FAQs on our web site.

- a. At application, applicants must demonstrate **market interest** for the proposed final webdoc (*See Section 1 definitions*).
- b. **Eligible costs** for funding can include – subject matter research, interviews, shooting video as well as various other media such as images, photos, animatics, text, audio, hyperlinks and user generated content, storyboarding, prototype development, detailed production planning, content and technology design, design documentation, user testing plan, budgeting and financing, production scheduling, business and marketing planning, discoverability planning research and testing, and project proposal development.
- c. At the end of this stage of development Producers will have a prototype and supporting documentation which will be viable to attract production financing but cannot yet be commercialized or presented as a monetizable Minimum Viable Product (MVP).

¹ Updated April 2018

² CAVCO definition for documentary

- d. Producers must also provide as part of the development deliverables³ a **Phase 1 Discoverability Plan** that will leverage an audience's insights to improve the webdoc as well as grow the audience including the Canadian audience throughout all phases, i.e. pre-launch, launch and post-launch. Producer may but is not obligated to include the cost of implementing a Phase 1 Discoverability Plan in this development phase.
- e. The copyright of the project(s) being developed must be owned, optioned or controlled by the applicant.

Amount of Funding Contribution:

- f. Funding is available as a non-repayable grant of **75% of the eligible costs up to a maximum of \$100,000**
- g. Applicants are encouraged to build collaborative partnerships that can serve to strengthen the overall success of the development and the ultimate financing of the production of the webdoc.

5. Evaluation Process

1. Applications are reviewed to ensure that all eligibility criteria are met and that the required documentation is complete.
2. Eligible applications are assessed by independent industry.
3. It is the intent that funding decisions are made by the Board of Directors six to ten weeks after the deadline for application.
4. Projects that do not receive funding may only be resubmitted if the resubmission addresses any notes provided from the previous application and there are clear changes to the application. These changes should be outlined in a separate document or in the cover letter. An unsuccessful project may only resubmit one additional time in the applicable program.
5. Successful applicants must finalize financing of their projects within 90 days or the Bell Fund's commitment may be cancelled at the Board's discretion.
6. The Bell Fund Evaluation Grid contains the key criteria that are examined in the evaluation process (see www.bellfund.ca).

³ updated jan 2018 from an application deliverable to a development deliverable