



TV Production Guidelines

2021

Table of Contents

Overview of the Bell Fund

Mission	3
Background	3
Guiding Principles	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Definitions.....	4-5
3. Overview.....	5
4. Funding Contribution.....	5
5. Eligible Applicants.....	5
5.1. Canadian Production Company	5
6. Eligible Programs.....	6
7. Application Procedure – Selective Fund	6
7.1. Application Evaluation (Selective)	6
8. Application Procedure – MPF Envelope	6-7
8.1. Application Evaluation (MPF Envelope)	6-7
9. Ineligible Programming	7
10. Eligible Programming	7
10.1. Comedy, Drama.....	7
10.2. Lifestyle	7
10.3 Documentary Series	7

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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 \$246 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.

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.

Guiding Principles

The Bell Fund is committed to supporting a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive industry across Canada. This means supporting:

- Screen-based producers/creators who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour;
- Screen-based producers/creators from underrepresented groups including but not limited to LGBTQ2s+ and persons with disabilities;
- Emerging, screen-based producers/creators and teams;
- Gender parity;
- Regional representation and OLMC communities.

The Bell Fund encourages all Applicants to respect the guiding principles and best practices set out in the [On-Screen Protocols & Pathways Media Production Guide](#).

General Policies

The Board of the Bell Fund has complete discretion in the administration of Bell Fund programs including, without limitation, determination of eligibility of applicants and projects and all 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.

Bell Fund recipients are expected to support an inclusive and respectful workplace climate; free of discrimination, bullying and harassment.

The Bell Fund is committed to supporting a more inclusive industry across Canada. This means supporting screen-based creators from underrepresented groups and continuing to work towards gender parity and regional representation.

Failure to Comply and Misrepresentation: Any failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the guidelines and or any misrepresentation of information in connection with an application, as determined by Bell Fund, may result in the application being deemed ineligible and repayment of any advanced funds (with interest) may be demanded. It might also affect the eligibility of future applications.

Bell Fund reserves the right to deem ineligible any application considered incomplete. Applicants should ensure they meet all eligibility requirements prior to applying. This is a highly competitive fund and requests for funding will exceed the amount of funding available.

1. Introduction

As per the Policy Framework for Certified Independent Production Funds, the Commission “wishes to ensure that CIPF’s contribute to the development of a robust Canadian production sector, able to offer compelling high quality content to Canadians and to global audiences”.

To further that goal, the Bell Fund launched a TV program in 2018 to support the production of great, market-driven Canadian content in the genres of lifestyle, drama, comedy, and documentary series.

Funding will be allocated to programs as a function of broadcasters’ Canadian Programming Expenditure (“CPE”) (excluding news and sports) in accordance with the CRTC’s Annual Financial Summaries for the previous fiscal and as set out in more detail below.

For the purposes of the allocation of funds for this Program we are distinguishing between major production funders (see below for definition), private and public broadcasters.

2. Definitions

A major production funder: is a broadcaster group (which includes private conventional television stations, specialty services and linear pay TV services owned by the group) whose CPE, excluding news (Category 1) and sports (Category 6) as reported to the CRTC for 2018/2019 is at least \$125 million for English programming and \$50 million for French programming.

A private broadcaster: is defined as a broadcaster who is not part of a major production funder and whose CPE (excluding news and sports) for 2018/2019 is less than \$125 million for English programming and \$50 million for French programming.

A public broadcaster: is defined as the CBC/Radio Canada and educational broadcasters.

3. Overview

For eligible projects supported by a Major Production Funder (MPF), funding will be allocated from a MPF envelope. The MPF will then designate projects eligible to receive funding subject to the funding contribution caps (see Section 4: Funding Contribution) for final approval by the Bell Fund board.

For eligible projects supported by the CRTC – licensed Canadian private and public broadcasters, funding will be allocated under a selective process with applications being evaluated by an industry jury and recommendations provided to the Board for approval. (see Section 8.1: Application Evaluation).

Funding is for 30-60 minute (half hour and one hour) formats and no less than 6 episodes for a comedy, lifestyle, documentary series (minimum 3 episodes for 'blue chip' documentary series with budgets in excess of \$500,000/hour) and 4 episodes for a drama series.

4. Funding Contribution

Subject to the Broadcaster committing to a fair-market licence fee as part of the financing, funding available for eligible projects in the drama and comedy category is a maximum contribution equal to \$250,000, not to exceed 40% of the production's eligible costs and in the lifestyle and documentary categories, a maximum contribution equal to \$150,000, not to exceed 40% of the production's eligible costs/budget.

5. Eligible Applicants

5.1. 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
- d. In the event that the applicant is a broadcaster-affiliated company, only up to 25% of the available funds in an MPF envelope or 25% of the total funding available in the selective fund can be accessed by these companies.

6. Eligible Programs

- a. Principal photography has not been completed at the time of the application deadline.
- b. Qualify for CRTC or Canadian audio-visual certification office (CAVCO) program certification with a minimum of 8 out of 10 points (unless otherwise stated in CAVCO guidelines or regulations) or as an official treaty co-production certified by Telefilm.
- c. A minimum of 75% of program expenses are paid for services provided by Canadians or Canadian companies or subject to official treaty co-production guidelines.
- d. Underlying rights are owned and meaningfully developed by Canadians and creative and financial control remains with the Canadian producer throughout the production.
- e. Must be broadcast within 2 years of completion of the program.
- f. Program must be closed captioned and contain described video.
- g. Must conform to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' (CAB) code of ethics as well as the CRTC's programming standards including but not limited to sex-role portrayals and television violence.

7. Application Procedure – Selective Fund

The Bell Fund will only accept three (3) applications from each public or private broadcaster per deadline. When there are multiple broadcasters affiliated by ownership to a parent company the company is only allowed three (3) applications. There must be a Bell Fund Broadcaster support form provided to the producer/applicant, in order to apply.

7.1. Application Evaluation (Selective)

- a. Quality/originality of content - 1 or 2 scripts plus bible/treatment
- b. Budget – feasibility of budget to creative material
- c. Proof of financing (incl. Canadian broadcaster license agreement) and any other agreement(s) between the parties related to the production, i.e. equity, back-end, etc.
- d. Production Schedule
- e. Creative Team (track record and experience)
- f. Proof of eligibility for 8/10 CAVCO certification (unless otherwise stated in CAVCO guidelines or regulations)
- g. TV Ratings for previous seasons, if applicable.

8. Application Procedure – MPF Envelope

Major production funders (MPF) will receive a letter from the Bell Fund confirming the amount of funding being allocated to the MPF along with the terms that the MPF must abide by. Each project approved by the MPF for submission to the Bell Fund must meet all the eligibility requirements:

- a. MPF shall provide a Bell Fund Broadcaster support form to the Producer that allows the Producer to submit an application for funding to the Bell Fund
- b. All funds will be paid to the Producer/Applicant for the eligible project
- c. All MPF project allocations must be submitted to the Bell fund no later than December 1st.

8.1. Application Evaluation (MPF Envelope)

- a. Series Bible
- b. Budget
- c. Proof of financing (incl. Canadian broadcaster licence agreement)
- d. Production schedule
- e. Creative Team (track record and experience)
- f. Proof of Eligibility for 8/10 CAVCO certification (unless otherwise stated in CAVCO guidelines or regulations)

9. Ineligible Programming

Children's & youth, tutorials, Reality, Reality competition, international formats, Comedy Festival programming, standup comedy, talk shows, awards shows, broadcaster in-house programming.

10. Eligible Programming (excerpted from CMF guidelines)

10.1. Comedy, Drama

Comedy, Drama – is defined as an entertainment production of a fictional nature including situation and sketch comedies in a series or limited series format. While children's/youth programming is ineligible, dramatic programming targeted to families is eligible because of its attraction to people of all ages – adults and children together or adults without children.

10.2. Lifestyle

Lifestyle programming presents information or explores topics in a manner that emphasizes the practical information aspect of the subject matter. While the programming is informative, it typically doesn't provide critical analysis or commentary. Usually, lifestyle programming reflects the aspirations of the viewer.

Programming often focuses on subject matter in which accomplishing practical objectives is illustrated, discussed, or explored. Practical information is shared with the primary goal of helping to achieve those objectives and thus, the aspirations of the viewer.

Can include but not limited to the following:

1. An unveiling of a "result" which is the product of host's expertise – ex – Property Brothers, Love It or List It, Un chef à la cabane, Tous pour un chalet.
2. An exploration of destinations by a host which relies on commentary – ex – David Rocco's Dolce Vita, Carnival Eats, 99 envies d'évasion, Partir autrement en famille.

10.3. Documentary Series

A Documentary is defined as an original work of non-fiction, primarily designed to inform but that may also educate and entertain, providing an in-depth critical analysis of a specific subject or point of view over the course of at least 30 minutes.