



# Slate Development Guidelines

2021

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# Overview of the Bell Fund

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## 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 Canadian Independent Producers in the development and production of great Canadian 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 operating at arm's length from Bell TV and 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.

Content must be compliant with all standards and policies applicable to broadcasting and to intellectual property laws and not infringe upon any public or private rights and not otherwise contravene any civil and criminal laws in effect in Canada.

### **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.

# 1. Introduction

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The purpose of the Slate Development Program is to help Canadian independent production companies build and diversify their slates by offering financial support for the development of original intellectual property ("IP") with the intent to grow and foster the independent production industry.

## 2. Definitions

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### **Slate**

Two or three, eligible\* projects, in development, in the English or French language, that are owned, optioned or controlled by an independent production company.

\*see Eligible Content Section

### **Emerging**

Writers, directors, producers and other crew members who have acquired some professional experience and have some market interest or support from industry e.g. festivals, experienced producers, audience viewership, funding, and want to grow and create content for commercial distribution.

### **Canadian Independent production company:**

Is a for-profit company (a taxable Canadian corporation within the meaning of Canada's Income Tax Act) carrying on business in Canada, with a Canadian business address, owned and controlled by Canadians, whose business is the production of film, video or live programs for distribution.

### **Broadcaster Affiliated production company:**

Is a for profit Canadian company (a taxable Canadian corporation within the meaning of Canada's Income Tax Act) carrying on business in Canada, with a Canadian business address, owned and controlled by Canadians, whose business is the production of film, video or live programs for distribution and, in which, a company with a licence to carry on business as a broadcasting undertaking known as a licensee, or any company related to the licensee owns, in aggregate, a 30% or greater (voting) equity interest.

### 3. Eligible Applicant

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Applicant must operate as a Canadian independent Production Company. Incorporation isn't required at the time of application but is required if application is successful.

First-time applicants must book a one-on-one information session via email at [info@bellfund.ca](mailto:info@bellfund.ca)

A Company, comprised of and/or exercising common control over several production companies, is only entitled to one application per deadline.

#### **Applicants are ineligible if they meet the following criteria :**

Applicant received funding from the previous deadline (November 20, 2020).

Going forward those applicants that received funding in the previous year, can only return every two years.

### 4. Eligible Content

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Short or Long Form\* scripted series (live action and animated) in the genres of drama, documentary, lifestyle, and factual for television and/or digital platforms.

\*Including limited series and podcasts.

\*Including one-off feature-length documentaries made for TV.

\*Excluding subsequent seasons

Note: Any project that receives Bell Fund Slate financing may request ONE additional round of financing. Example: In 2020 the project was funded for a first draft script. You may return in 2022, with the same project, and request funding for e.g. a polish. You may not return a third time with this project.

### 5. Ineligible Content

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Ineligible content includes; interactive digital media (apps, games, digital books, webdocs), feature films, MOWs (movies of the week), short (one-off) films, subsequent seasons, news/current affairs, reporting and actualities (conferences/events), sports (events/analysis), gameshows, infomercials/instructional/industrial/corporate/promotional content, talk shows, variety (awards shows), wraparound segment/interstitials/filler content, content mainly comprised of repurposed footage, and, content with a primary mission to provide a public service.

## 6. Funding Contribution

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

Although 100% of eligible funds may be requested from Bell Fund, producers may include financing from another source.

Per Project	Maximum Request \$25,000
2 Project Slate	Maximum Request \$50,000
3 Project Slate	Maximum Request \$75,000

Minimum Request for any slate is \$20,000

Bell Fund has the discretion to reduce the amount awarded in order to allow funding for more applicants.

Broadcaster-affiliated companies are limited to a maximum of 15% of the available funds in a program.

## 7. Eligible Costs

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Development activities must not start until after the Bell Fund application deadline and must be completed within 12 months (from Bell Fund notification of funding). Below is a non-exhaustive list of typical activities.

### **Eligible Costs:**

Production of non-broadcast demo

Research

Extension or change to option fees or underlying rights acquisition fees paid to an unrelated party. (Note: the initial cost to option or buy rights is not an eligible cost)

Writing (Outline, Treatment, Bible, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft Scripts etc.)

Script workshops

Development of production budget and financing plan

Scriptwriting consultant/Story editor

Audience Research

Focus Groups

Reasonable costs for travel and accommodation for research and demo shoot  
Producer fees and corporate overhead (subject to the Finance & Budget Policy)  
Accounting fees (if review engagement is required as per the Finance & Budget Policy)  
Reasonable, third-party legal costs  
Third-party preparation of the production budget breakdown  
Production of drawings (animation)  
Preliminary Casting  
Creation of 'one sheet/look book'

## 8. Eligibility Requirements (please read carefully)

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Bell Fund will deem ineligible any application considered incomplete. This includes unsigned documentation. Prior to applying, applicants should ensure they meet all eligibility requirements as this is a highly competitive fund and requests for funding will exceed the amount of funding available.

The following conditions must be met:

- Slate must contain two or three projects.
- Proposed development activities have not commenced at time of deadline
- Project is not under consideration for production financing from any source.
- The Intellectual Property (IP) of each project in the slate is original, though it may be an adaptation of an existing licensed property.
- At time of application all rights and underlying rights are owned, optioned or controlled sufficiently to develop, produce and exploit the program throughout the world.

The following documentation must be provided at application. (For a full list of required documentation see the [Document Checklist](#))

- A budget and finance plan for each project in the slate.
- Fully executed, commitment letters or long form agreements, for each source of financing, for each project in the slate (if applicable).  
Note: Applications with unconfirmed financing from other Canadian funding/provincial agencies (such as IPF, Creative B.C. Quebecor, TELUS, etc.), are acceptable provided that notification of funding is received within **30 days** of the Bell Fund notification of approved funding\*. Details must be uploaded with your Bell Fund application including name of



funder, name of funding program, amount pending, deadline date and expected date of notification.

Note; in all cases funding agreements must align with the Bell Fund application in terms of deliverables and timelines (development must start after the Bell Fund Slate deadline).

\* It is the intent that funding decisions are made by the Board of Directors eight to ten weeks after the application deadline.

- A [Market Interest Form](#) or Meaningful<sup>1</sup> letter of market interest for each project in the slate. This document is an expression of support from a broadcaster, digital platform or distributor as described below;

A Broadcaster: Canadian programming undertaking, public or private, licensed to operate by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC);

A Broadcaster: An online service owned, controlled and operated by a Canadian licensed programming undertaking including operating as a Hybrid VOD service (Crave, Club Illico)

A Digital Platform that features Entertainment Programming and is accessible to Canadians (Canadian or Foreign owned).

A Distributor (Canadian or Foreign): Generally licenses content to third parties in addition to negotiating pre-sales for projects seeking third party financing and has the experience necessary to negotiate terms, marketing and promotion spends and other promotional activities in favour of the producer. In the case of a digital property the distributor must be industry recognized as a distributor of digital content.

## 9. Evaluation Process

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1. Applications are reviewed to ensure that eligibility criteria are met and that the required documentation is complete.
2. Eligible applications are assessed by an independent jury.
3. Funding decisions are made by the Board of Directors.

The Bell Fund Slate Development [Assessment Criteria](#) contains the key criteria that are examined in the evaluation process.

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<sup>1</sup> A Meaningful letter of market interest is an alternative to using the Market Interest Form. It should be addressed to Bell Fund and contain the same information found in the Form.