



Slate Development Guidelines

2023

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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 \$275 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 those from racialized communities;
- Screen-based producers/creators from underrepresented groups including but not limited to 2SLGBTQIA+ and persons with disabilities;
- Emerging, screen-based producers/creators and teams;
- Gender equity;
- Regional representation and OLMC communities.

Production teams are encouraged to consult resources like ['ON-Screen Protocols & Pathways: A Media Production Guide'](#) for guidance on working with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities and ['Being Seen: Directives for Creating Authentic and Inclusive Content'](#), for recommendations and best practices for creating content relating for working with Black, People of Colour, 2SLGBTQIA+ and People with Disabilities communities.

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

The Slate Development Program is a selective Program that supports Canadian independent production companies in building and diversifying 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

Slate

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

*see Eligible Content Section

Emerging

Emerging refers to a screen-based producer, director or writer who has not yet acquired extensive experience but has at least one credit (as producer, director or writer) in a professionally-produced, screen-based project (digital or tv series, short or feature).

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

Applicant must operate as a Canadian Independent Production Company (see definitions) and must have at least one credit as a producer, writer or director, in a professionally produced screen-based project (digital or tv series, short or feature). (see definition of emerging creator). While incorporation is not required at application, the applicant must be prepared to be incorporated if application is recommended for funding.

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

Applicants are ineligible for the November 2023 deadline if they received funding from the previous deadline (November 2022).

Bell Fund Application Clinics: Attendance at a clinic is encouraged for all applicants and is a requirement for first-time applicants. Visit Bellfund.ca for dates and registration information. Applicants are encouraged to sign up as soon as registration opens.

4. Eligible Content

Short or long-form, scripted series (including limited series and podcasts) and one-off, feature-length documentaries made for TV.

In the genres of drama, comedy, documentary, lifestyle, and factual for television and/or digital platforms.

Live action and animated.

First seasons only.

Note: Any project that receives Bell Fund Slate financing may request ONE additional round of financing. Example: In 2021 the project was funded for a first draft script. You may return in 2023, 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

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

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

Development activities for this phase of development 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. See Bell Fund's Finance & Budget Policy for more details. (See bellfund.ca FAQs for information about international co-development.)

Eligible Costs:

- Production of non-broadcast demo
- Research
- Reasonable cost to option the IP and/or acquire underlying rights, paid to a 3rd party (not the producer) in the lead up to the application deadline or the cost to extend or change option and/or underlying rights.
- Writing (Outline, Treatment, Bible, 1st and 2nd 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'

Bell Fund encourages producers to consider the environmental impact of production. Here is a link for more information: [Resources for Green Production](#)

8. Eligibility Requirements (please read carefully)

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 by the applicant, *sufficiently to develop, produce and exploit the program throughout the world. (*Minimum of 2 years.) Shopping agreements are not acceptable. See [FAQs](#) for international co-developments.

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.

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).

- A [Market Interest Form](#) for each project in the slate. This document is an expression of support from a broadcaster, digital platform or distributor (described below). At a minimum the partner support must include a meeting mid-development to review and provide feedback on creative materials.

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

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. It is the intent that funding decisions are made by the Board of Directors 10 -12 weeks after the application deadline.

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

For a full list of required documentation refer to the [Document Checklist](#).