



WRITER'S FIRST
(formerly Screenwriting Assistance Program)
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROGRAM
GUIDELINES FOR 2006-2007

These Guidelines are specific to the terms and conditions of the program for the fiscal year of 2006-2007 (which ends on March 31, 2007).

Please read the guidelines carefully. This document contains essential information on eligibility criteria and the application process.

There will no longer be application deadlines for Writer's First. See Annex 1 for a description of how to apply.

1) THE CANADA FEATURE FILM FUND (CFFF)

Goal of the CFFF

The overall goal of the Canada Feature Film Fund is to increase Canadian audiences in theatres for Canadian feature films, aiming to capture 5% of the domestic box office by 2006.

The CFFF includes the Development, Production and Marketing Programs (Main Program); the Screenwriting Assistance Program (now referred to as Writer's First for the English program); the Low Budget Independent Feature Film Assistance Program; and programs for Complementary Activities, including: Canada Showcase (Canadian film festivals), International Festivals and Markets, Versioning, Alternative Distribution and Awards. Collectively, these programs support the key goal of the CFFF to increase the market share of Canadian films. Guidelines for these programs are available at <http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/> or by contacting any of Telefilm Canada's Canadian offices.

In administering the CFFF, Telefilm Canada will seek to support the development, production and marketing of feature films that are owned and controlled by Eligible Applicants and which contain significant Canadian creative elements, including Canadian stories, characters, setting, themes, talent and technicians, and which reflect Canadian society and cultural diversity. While

Telefilm Canada does not intend to restrict filmmakers in their choices of stories or their natural settings, it will, wherever possible, give priority to projects that present a distinctly Canadian point of view.

2) SPIRIT AND INTENT OF WRITER'S FIRST

In keeping with the goal of the Canada Feature Film Fund overall, the spirit and intent of Writer's First (the "Program") is to develop and retain a pool of creative, talented and experienced screenwriters as well as a bank of Canadian feature film screenplays that have high box office potential. To this end, Telefilm Canada will also promote the development of partnerships among producers and screenwriters.

The Program is intended to encourage and support professional screenwriters to develop original script material that will be attractive to producers, financiers and the marketplace.

The financial assistance provided through this program will contribute to the overall growth, and professional and economic development of the Canadian film industry. Financial support is available for the writing of either:

- i) A first draft feature film screenplay based on an outline; or
- ii) A first draft feature film screenplay based on a treatment .

Linguistic and Regional Diversity

Approximately one-third of the financial resources available under the Screenwriting Assistance Program (the English program that is referred to as Writer's First) will be earmarked in support of French-language projects and approximately two-thirds to assist English-language projects. Telefilm Canada shall seek to encourage and maintain an appropriate balance, so as to encourage screenwriting in both official languages in all regions of Canada.

3) ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The applicant must be a Canadian citizen as defined in the *Citizenship Act*, or permanent resident of Canada as defined in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*.

The applicant must not be in default of his/her obligations to Telefilm Canada.

The applicant must be a professional screenwriter who complies with the minimum credit requirements identified below. Projects involving two co-applicants are permitted as long as at least one satisfies the minimum credit requirements.

Minimum credit requirements to determine eligibility based on the applicant's professional status:

- a) Writing credits on at least one produced drama or animated feature film or television movie; OR

- b) Writing credits on produced episodic television, totalling at least 120 minutes in length, which may include any combination of the following:
 - i. 60 minutes of dramatic or animated television;
 - ii. 30 minutes of dramatic or animated television.

Productions must be professionally produced, and must have been exhibited in cinemas or broadcast on television prior to the application deadline. Short films and student films will not be considered towards eligibility requirements.

For 2006/2007 only, Telefilm Canada will also accept a single application for treatment to first draft financing for projects that have successfully been financed at the outline to treatment stage through the Screenwriting Assistance Program. This exception will only be made for those projects that have not yet been submitted for treatment to first draft financing.

Applicants should consult Annex I for documentation to be submitted in support of their eligibility.

The Program is accessible to Aboriginal professional writers as well as to professional writers from all cultural and regional communities across Canada.

4) ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

To be eligible, a project must be:

- a) a feature length fictional film proposal based on an original idea developed by the applicant, or a proposal for adaptation of the applicant's own previously produced or published work, accompanied by all necessary permissions or releases;
- b) suitable for development into a dramatic feature film of at least 75 minutes in duration; and
- c) suitable for development and production as a Canadian theatrical feature film eligible for certification by the Canadian Audio-visual Certification Office (CAVCO) in accordance with the regulations of the *Income Tax Act* or under the definition of a Canadian program set out by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

The following is *not* an eligible project:

A proposal for an adaptation of an existing cinematographic, literary, theatrical, life story or other work that does not originate with the applicant.

Contact Telefilm Canada before submitting your application if you have any questions about the eligibility of your project. Telefilm Canada's decisions with respect to eligibility of applicants and their projects will be final.

5) NATURE AND TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

a) Financial Participation

Assistance is available in the form of a non-interest-bearing advance, in the following amounts:

- i. Outline to First Draft \$ 28,372
- ii. Treatment to First Draft \$ 16,550

b) Story Editor Option

Telefilm Canada encourages the involvement of professional Story Editors

A “Story Editor” (or “Story Consultant”) is someone whose duties include analysis, consultation, research and editorial advice regarding script material. Story Editors are not necessarily writers. The applicant may indicate his/her interest in employing the services of a professional Story Editor, either:

- i) Upon submission of the application;
- ii) following Telefilm Canada’s decision to support the application; or
- iii) following the recommendation of Telefilm Canada.

The Story Editor must

- a) be a Canadian citizen as defined in the *Citizenship Act*, or permanent resident of Canada as defined in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, and
- b) maintain a permanent residence in Canada.

The applicant may wish to contact the Writer’s Guild of Canada, the SARTEC or Astral Media The Harold Greenberg Fund for recommendations on professional Story Editors.

For successful applications, Telefilm Canada will pay the following amounts (in the form of a non-interest-bearing advance) for the services of the Story Editor:

- i) Outline to First Draft \$5,000
- ii) Treatment to First Draft \$3,500

It will be the applicant’s sole responsibility to pay the Story Editor for services rendered.

c) Terms of Participation

Terms of payment – Applicants: The schedule for payment of advances is in two instalments: 60% on signing an agreement and 40% on delivery of the contracted material. Successful applicants will be required to complete and deliver the creative material within a specific period of time, as detailed in the contract (approx. 6 months) as well as the contract duly signed between the applicant and the Story Editor (as applicable).

Reporting Requirements: The successful applicant will be required to submit a project status report within six (6) months of delivery of the final first draft script. Should the first draft script be optioned within the six (6) months following delivery of contracted items or anytime thereafter the applicant will submit a project status report and a copy of the option agreement.

Terms of Reimbursement

Disposition of the creative material:

The contract between Telefilm Canada and the successful applicant will stipulate that any and all advances received by the applicant from the Program for the writing of a project, as well as any advances to Story Editors, are repayable in full by the applicant on the earlier of:

- i) The first day of principal photography or taping of any cinematographic, video or audio-visual work based in whole or in part upon the creative materials or any other use of the creative materials; or
- ii) The sale, transfer, assignment or other disposition of the creative materials (i.e. Telefilm Canada will require full and immediate repayment of all advances if the rights to the project are sold, transferred, assigned, or otherwise disposed of by any other means).

Optioning:

An applicant's optioning of the creative material that was the subject of an advance from the Program, to a Producer (or other party) does not trigger the immediate full repayment of the advance. However, any option fees received must be used to begin repaying Telefilm Canada. If the option fees received by the applicant are not sufficient to repay the full advance amount, the applicant will nevertheless remain responsible to Telefilm Canada for repayment of the outstanding amount upon exercise of the option (or other sale or disposition of the creative materials). Consequently, the applicant should ensure that the option agreement adequately provides for the applicant to be repaid the full amount of the Telefilm Canada advance upon exercise of the option, so that the applicant will have sufficient funds to repay Telefilm Canada. Telefilm Canada's consent to such optioning is not required; however Telefilm Canada recommends that the applicant consult with both Telefilm Canada and their lawyer prior to signing any optioning agreement.

6) EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

a) Evaluation Method

Projects will be evaluated and decisions made by Telefilm Canada's professional staff in its four regional offices.

Applicants are advised that Telefilm Canada's participation in a project should not be considered a guarantee of Telefilm Canada's future participation in development or production -- each application is subject to separate analysis.

b) Evaluation criteria

Telefilm Canada will base its decisions on the following criteria:

- The originality and quality of the creative materials (including elements such as concept and story; characters; dialogue ; structure; tone; and pacing);
- The track record of the applicant;
- The likelihood that the film being developed will eventually succeed at being selected for production financing from the CFFF.

7) CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

Telefilm Canada is required to act in accordance with both the *Privacy Act* and the *Access to Information Act*. The *Privacy Act* protects the personal information of individuals and provides them with a right of access to such information about themselves. All other information may be accessible under the *Access to Information Act*.

8) CONCLUSION

Telefilm Canada may make adjustments to these guidelines from time to time as required, without notice.

While compliance with these Guidelines is a prerequisite to eligibility for funding, unfortunately compliance cannot guarantee entitlement to Telefilm Canada funds due to possible over subscription.

Telefilm Canada has full discretion in administering its programs and in the application of these Guidelines to ensure that its funding is provided to those projects that meet its spirit and intent. In all questions of interpretation of either these Guidelines or of the spirit and intent of the Program, Telefilm Canada's interpretation shall prevail.

ANNEX 1

HOW TO APPLY

The Application Form and all supporting material must be sent to the Telefilm Canada office in your region to the attention of the Writer's First Coordinator (See ANNEX II).

Application Forms are available at all Telefilm Canada offices or by visiting the Telefilm Canada website (www.telefilm.gc.ca).

Limitations

Applicants may submit a maximum of two applications per year.

Projects not accepted for financing from outline to first draft may be resubmitted to Writer's First, but only for treatment to first draft financing. Projects not accepted for treatment to first draft financing may be resubmitted, but only if there have been substantial changes to the script and the application must be accompanied by a full explanation of the changes.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

It is the applicant's responsibility to include all material that gives evidence of their eligibility as applicants as well as their project's eligibility. Applicants must submit all requested application material.

MINIMUM COMPLETENESS REQUIREMENTS - ALL APPLICANTS

All creative materials must conform to the following standard: no less than 1.5 line spacing, with text in a 12-point font. **Note: Creative materials submitted that exceed the specified page length may not be read in full.**

- a) A completed and signed application form (two writers: two signatures), indicating the applicant's eligibility;
- b) Curriculum vitae of the applicant(s) to a maximum length of three pages each;
- c) The applicant's filmography (dated), including running times for each production, screening dates, where screened, who distributed or broadcast.
- d) **Synopsis**: not exceeding 10 lines and **clearly indicating the genre of the proposed work**;
- e) If the project is based on previously published work by the applicant, a written summary of the chain of title is required, accompanied by all contracts and documentation evidencing that the applicant owns the necessary rights to adapt her/his own work.
- f) Curriculum vitae of the proposed Story Editor(s) (if applicable).

APPLICANTS APPLYING WITH AN OUTLINE must include either:

- An outline, not to exceed five pages and two key dramatic sample scenes in standard screenplay format, including dialogue and direction, the combined length not to exceed five pages;

OR

- An outline between ten and twelve pages in length.

APPLICANTS APPLYING WITH A TREATMENT must include:

- g) **Treatment:** a document between 20 and 25 pages (at no less than 1.5 line spacing, with text in 12-point font), incorporating scene-by-scene development and structuring of a story in screen terms to provide a schematic of the feature film script to be written from it, consisting of the basic narrative, idea, or theme and integrating character development and action suitable for use in or representing a substantial contribution to a final script.

Telefilm Canada reserves the right to request additional documentation or material to confirm the applicant's eligibility. *Applicants with unsubstantiated producing credits will be notified by phone or email and will have five (5) business days from the time of notification to produce adequate proof of eligibility* or the application will be removed from consideration.

Material submitted with the application will be retained by Telefilm Canada. Telefilm Canada is not responsible for the loss or damage, whatever the cause, of support material.

2) NOTIFICATION OF DECISION

Applicants will receive written notification of the results of their application. Every effort is made to advise applicants of results with the least possible delay. Telefilm's standard of service targets an 8 week turnaround time from the receipt of a complete application to a decision for development financing. All decisions are final.

If the application is successful, Telefilm Canada will issue a Decision Letter and a Contract outlining the terms and conditions of the financing agreement.

ANNEX II

Telefilm Canada's web site: <http://www.telefilm.gc.ca>

TELEFILM CANADA'S OFFICES

Quebec Region

Telefilm Canada

Writer's First Coordinator
360 St-Jacques Street
Suite 700
Montreal, Quebec
H2Y 4A9

Phone: (514) 283-6363
Toll-free: 1 800 567-0890
Fax: (514) 283-8212

Atlantic Region

Telefilm Canada

Writer's First Coordinator
1684 Barrington Street
3rd floor
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2A2

Phone: (902) 426-8425
Toll-free: 1 800 565-1773
Fax: (902) 426-4445

Ontario and Nunavut Region

Telefilm Canada

Writer's First Coordinator
474 Bathurst Street
Suite 100
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 2S6

Phone: (416) 973-6436
Toll-free: 1 800 463-4607
Fax: (416) 973-8606

Western Region

Telefilm Canada

Writer's First Coordinator
#410-609 Granville Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V7Y 1G5

Phone: (604) 666-1566
Toll-free: 1 800 663-7771
Fax: (604) 666-7754

FOR INFORMATION:

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366 Adelaide Street West, Suite 401
Toronto ON M5V 1R9
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