



2023-24 ONTARIO CREATES FILM FUND: Marketing & Distribution Initiative (MDI) Guidelines

**Deadline: Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis to
December 18, 2023 at 5:00 PM ET**

WHERE TO FIND:

1. Deadline
2. Applicant Eligibility
3. Eligible Activities
4. Eligible Costs
5. Funding Levels
6. Application Requirements
7. Submitting Your Application
8. Decision Criteria
9. Payments to Successful Applicants
10. More Information

The Film Fund: Marketing and Distribution Initiative documentation includes:

- Marketing and Distribution Initiative Guidelines
- [Ontario Creates Program Policies](#)

Applicants must review ALL of the documents listed above prior to submitting an application.

The Marketing and Distribution Initiative (MDI) is intended to assist producers of Ontario Creates Film Fund supported projects to make a meaningful contribution to the marketing and distribution of their projects leading up to and during their commercial release.

This initiative is intended to support strategies and tactics that are an extension of traditional marketing and distribution activities and/or innovative exploitation strategies that enhance and build audience and revenue. These strategies and tactics can work independently and/or in conjunction with pre-existing distributor and licensor strategies.

The objectives of the MDI are to:

- support producers with marketing and distribution costs for feature film projects;
- support producer-initiated marketing and distribution activities in place of or that complement those of their distributor/licensor
- encourage innovative ideas and strategies that are outside of the traditional M&D channels; and
- build awareness of Ontario filmmakers and productions, drive sales and increase exposure of Ontario films to a broader audience.

Ontario Creates values and supports diversity and gender parity at all levels and business roles within creative industries. We acknowledge that many communities continue to face systemic barriers, preventing them from participating meaningfully in these industries. Ontario Creates applies a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion to the evaluation criteria for this program, and directs jury members to do the same. Applicants proposing projects/activities that support, reflect, and strengthen diversity and gender parity in Ontario are expected to tangibly demonstrate a genuine and sustained commitment to these equity-deserving communities. Ontario Creates encourages applications from companies that are led by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour) or Francophone individuals and applicants that otherwise **meaningfully** meet the provincial definition of diversity.

Ontario Creates is committed to fostering respectful workplaces in all sectors and companies we support. Please see [Program Policies](#) for more details, including required respectful workplace Applicant Affidavit.

Ontario Creates is committed to:

- supporting diversity and gender parity;
- providing enhanced accessibility support to disabled people, deaf people, and people who have barriers to accessing technology; and
- fostering respectful workplaces in all the sectors and companies we support.

Please see [Program Policies](#) for important details.

1. Deadline

Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis until December 18, 2023 at 5:00 PM ET.

Applicants are encouraged to apply for Marketing Support at minimum eight weeks prior to the planned official release date of the film.

Decisions will be communicated to applicants within 4 to 6 weeks of application submission.

2. Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be recent, successful recipients of the Ontario Creates Film Fund through the Drama or Documentary Production stream. The applicant company must be the single production company contracted with for Film Fund – Production. Eligible projects must be completed, delivered or close to delivery and undertaking domestic release. Projects that have been officially released¹ are not eligible for this initiative.

To be eligible the project's commercial release date must be slated to occur between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024.

3. Eligible Activities

Eligible activities are those that build awareness of the title and enhance its value in domestic sales channels including theatrical, broadcast and digital across all potential platforms. The activities should complement and leverage the functions of a distributor where a distribution agreement is in place and work alongside licensor promotional strategies as applicable. Activities must be detailed in a Marketing and Distribution Plan that outlines the overall strategy for the film across all platforms and identifies the respective roles of the Producer and the Distributor (if there is one).

4. Eligible Costs

Eligible costs are those costs incurred by the Producer that are integral to the Marketing and Distribution Plan for the release. These can be internal costs allocated to staff time, expenses directly in support of marketing activities, direct costs of goods and services, and costs related to hiring a third party contractor. Activities and associated costs must be within a **defined 6 month period surrounding the official release** .

Eligible expenses may include, but are not limited to:

- Festival screenings (within the applicable 6 month expenditure window), private screenings, test screenings, red carpet “event” screenings, other publicity events and innovative marketing strategies;
- Travel for talent (physical and virtual), producers and key creatives to attend marketing events and screenings for promotional purposes (i.e. festivals, premieres, press days and other marketing events);
- Publicists, social media managers and marketing agents;
- Design and production of marketing materials digital and physical: EPK, website, trailers, giveaways, posters;
- Advertising: online, print, social, other; and
- Versioning into alternative languages

¹ 'officially released' refers to the date that a project has been delivered and entered into commercial exploitation for public viewing and sales. Festival and premiere screenings are not considered officially released.

Ineligible Costs

- Costs incurred directly by the Distributor or licensor;
- Costs covered by other entities (such as Telefilm);
- Expenses incurred prior to submission of the application; and
- Cost of alcohol.

5. Funding Levels

Companies may apply for up to \$25,000, capped at 75% of the total marketing budget. Minimum contribution is \$5,000.

Please note, funding is limited for the MDI program and applications will be evaluated as they are submitted on a first-come first-served basis.

6. Application Requirements

Eligible applicants must submit their application to Ontario Creates electronically through the Online Application Portal (OAP). The application must provide details of the marketing strategies and activities, a proposed budget, a financing plan to support the budget and expected results and outcomes of the activities proposed within the application.

Budget and Financing

- The MDI will support up to 75% of the marketing activities contained in the Marketing and Distribution Plan budget;
- The remaining 25% must include a minimum 10% cash contribution from the production company/producer. General administration costs are capped at 15% of the total M&D budget;
- Applicants may claim eligible M&D costs for a defined period of up to 6 months. The applicant must identify the start and end dates of their activities. Ontario Creates will only allow expenses within the indicated six month period;
- Realistically valued “in-kind” services may be included in the financing plan for the marketing activities. In-kind or deferred labour costs cannot exceed 15% of the total budget; and
- Ongoing operational costs are not eligible budget items for this program.

It is imperative that applications include detailed responses to all questions listed within the application and that all required materials be provided.

7. Submitting Your Application

- Applicants must submit their application to Ontario Creates electronically through the Online Application Portal (OAP) at <https://apply.OntarioCreates.ca/>

- Applications must be received electronically via the OAP system no later than 5:00 PM ET on the applicable deadline;
- Applications that are received after the deadline will not be considered;
- Applications will be reviewed by Ontario Creates for eligibility and completeness;
- Incomplete applications will not be considered;
- Successful applicants must sign a contract with Ontario Creates within one month of notification.

8. Decision Criteria

This is a competitive process and availability of funds is dependent upon the number and quality of submissions; number and size of awards; and budget of the initiative for the fiscal.

Ontario Creates applies a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion to the evaluation criteria for this program, and directs jury members to do the same. Applicants proposing projects/activities that support, reflect and strengthen diversity and gender-parity in Ontario are expected to tangibly demonstrate a genuine and sustained commitment to these equity-deserving communities. Ontario Creates may identify particular underrepresented communities within a particular sector. The provincial definition of diversity states: the dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to: ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion (creed), sex, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

Criteria	Weighting	Considerations May I nclude:
Well-defined marketing and distribution plan which clearly articulates the proposed strategy and how the objectives will be met, with realistic goals and anticipated ROI	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the goals clearly stated? • Are the goals realistic and achievable? • Is it transparent how the objectives will be met? • Will the project generate a positive return on Production? • Is there a strong likelihood of critical acclaim and/or critical success?
Identified market appeal of the film, and its target audience. Thoughtful consultation, collaboration, and participation of equity-deserving communities	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clearly defined audience, supported by research/comps? • Is there a rationale for the choice of the proposed activities, supported by research? • Will the activities be effective in engaging the targeted audience and generating the expected revenue?

Innovative , creative and appropriate strategy and activities to reach that audience	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the strategy unique/innovative/creative in its attempt to reach its target audience? • Does the strategy have the potential to reach its target audience? • Does the strategy support and reflect diversity, particularly under-represented voices within its audience? • To what extent does the strategy respond to challenges and opportunities faced by producers in the distribution/exploitation arena?
Viability of the plan and likelihood that goals will be met	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-defined project scope and activities that align with a defined strategy • Well-defined audience • Reasonable and detailed budget • Realistic, detailed schedule with milestones and appropriate resources • Comprehensive assessment of risks • Thoughtful consultation, collaboration, and participation of equity-seeking communities
Experience of the team to execute on the proposed marketing and distribution strategies	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the company, including diversity among senior leadership, staff, or contract employees • Track record of the applicant organization • Experience delivering similar activities • Explanation of company policies and/or activities that support diversity, equity and inclusion
Total	100%	

All Ontario Creates decisions are final. Ontario Creates reserves the right to alter program guidelines with general public notice to all potential applicants and to refuse any application for any reason. The number of awards and amount awarded is contingent on confirmation of Ontario Creates' annual budget. Ontario Creates is not required to make any minimum number of awards. Subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, all information contained in the application will remain strictly confidential.

9. Payments to Successful Applicants

Ontario Creates' contribution will be advanced at the following stages and on the receipt of all required documents specified in the agreement:

- 60% on execution of the Ontario Creates Contract* for the 1st drawdown; and
- 40% on receipt of final report outlining the results and outcomes of execution against the plan, and a final cost report for the 2nd installment.

The final report must include a description of activities completed with qualitative and quantitative metrics such as:

- Measurable box office revenues
- Other sales and revenues
- Media impressions
- Other business outcomes which are directly/indirectly related to the M&D plan

****The MDI contract will be with the same entity as the Ontario Creates Film Fund Production contract.***

10. More Information

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Ontario Creates is an agency of the Government of Ontario that facilitates economic development, investment and collaboration in Ontario's creative industries including the music, book, magazine, film, television and interactive digital media sectors.

ontariocreates.ca