



# 2023-24 ONTARIO CREATES INTERACTIVE DIGITAL MEDIA FUND GUIDELINES

## Ontario Creates-CMF IDM Futures Forward Program

**Deadline: December 19, 2023 by 5:00pm**

Program documentation includes:

- [Ontario Creates-CMF IDM Futures Forward Guidelines \(this document\)](#)
- [Ontario Creates-CMF IDM Futures Forward Budget and Financing Guidelines and Template](#)
- [Application Form in Ontario Creates Online Application Portal](#)

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

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## 1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Creates-CMF IDM<sup>1</sup> Futures Forward Program is a partnership with Ontario Creates and the Canada Media Fund (CMF) that provides funding for early-stage project-related development (the “Program”). This program seeks to support companies that often have barriers to accessing project funding and to support the very beginning of a project’s creative process with the objective of giving a project a better chance to succeed in future stages of funding. This Program has a commitment to provide 1/3 of its budget towards French-language projects and 2/3 of its budget towards projects from companies owned by Indigenous peoples or members of equity-deserving communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Interactive Digital Media refers to projects that consist of professionally created content distributed on a platform, network or device that is capable of interactivity such as e-learning content (for Ontario Creates), mobile content applications, digital publishing projects and other web properties, video games, VR/AR content projects and web series.

Companies may submit an application to the Program to receive one of a limited number of grants (non-repayable contributions) to assist them with their early-stage project development activities. Applicants are encouraged to seek mentorship support for their activities.

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.

## **2. ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING**

### **2.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

An Eligible Applicant to the Program is a for-profit company that meets the following eligibility criteria:

- The company either:
  - Completed the Ontario Creates Futures Forward Workshop in 2023;
- OR
- Is an Ontario Creates IDM Fund-eligible company (see **Appendix A**) where the majority of owners self-identify as at least one of the following:
  - Women or non-binary;
  - 2SLGBTQIA+;
  - First Nations, Inuit or Métis;
  - Racialized;
  - Persons with disabilities;
  - Francophone.
- The company must:
  - be incorporated in Ontario or federally<sup>2</sup>;
  - be *Canadian-owned* - as defined in the Investment Canada Act (Canada) and is Canadian-controlled as determined for the purposes of sections 26 to 28 of the Investment Canada Act.
  - be in a sound financial position;
  - be in good standing with Ontario Creates and the CMF at time of application submission; and

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<sup>2</sup>Applicants that are not incorporated may still apply, but they must incorporate immediately after their application is selected for funding in the Program and meet all the eligibility criteria in section 3.1 of the Program Guidelines.

- be *Ontario-based* which is defined as: have a principal place of business<sup>3</sup> in Ontario which serves as head office and base of operations. In addition, the applicant must meet the following:
  - Applicant must be eligible to pay corporate income taxes in Ontario;
  - Ontario address is listed as head office in T2 filing; and,
  - Ontario address must be a stable and non-temporary establishment where the applicant can demonstrate that the location is under the corporation's control and the space can be objectively identified with the corporation. For example:
    - maintenance of an office for which the corporation pays rent or compensates employees
    - presence of office equipment
    - the place of business is listed as the corporation's residential address in the telephone directory
    - substantial quantities of the corporation's goods are kept on the property
    - residents or employees of the corporation working at the property devote all their working hours to the corporation's interests
    - substantial usage of owned/rented machinery or equipment that is used to carry out the corporation's business

If the Applicant is a successful funding recipient, the Applicant must continue to have a principal place of business in Ontario for the duration of Ontario Creates' agreement.

The following companies are **ineligible**:

- Recipients of a Futures Forward grant in March 2023;
- Have previously received more than \$500,000 from either a CMF or Ontario Creates IDM production-stage program;
- Private colleges and training institutions;
- A company that is delivering online services for individuals;
- A company that is not in good standing with Ontario Creates or the CMF or one that is associated with an entity that is not in good standing with Ontario Creates or the CMF; and
- Not-for-profit and public sector entities.

Applications should be submitted by the primary corporate entity and not a single purpose production company.

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<sup>3</sup> The corporation's principal place of business will be determined at the discretion of Ontario Creates and additional documentation may be requested as required. For this purpose, a principal place of business is not a post-office box or fixed address of a friend or relative not directly employed by the company.

## 2.2 ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

An Eligible Project must be:

- **Interactive Content** or **Video Content**, delivered on a platform, network, or device capable of interactivity.
- A new project, that has not received other development funding for the phase of work being proposed.

**Interactive Content** requires the active participation of and input from users which has an impact on the manner in which the content is experienced by the users. For example:

- Video games
- Mobile content
- E-learning content
- XR experiences
- Digital publishing projects

**Video Content** is digital-first content intended to be accessed in a linear fashion. For example:

- Web series
- Video content for online magazines
- Video-based e-learning projects
- XR experiences

Projects in French-language are encouraged.

For further detail on Eligible Projects, please see **Appendix B**. If you are unsure if your project is eligible, please contact Ontario Creates at [idmfund@ontariocreates.ca](mailto:idmfund@ontariocreates.ca).

**For clarity, eligibility for the Ontario Creates-CMF IDM Futures Forward Program does not guarantee project eligibility to other CMF funding programs.**

Applicants are encouraged to respect the guiding principles and best practices set out in the [On-Screen Protocols & Pathways Media Production Guide](#) and the [Black Screen Office Being Seen Report](#).

The CMF and Ontario Creates encourage all Applicants to implement more environmentally-sustainable practices and cleaner technologies – and reduce the use of unsustainable resources – in the development, production and exploitation of their Projects.

## 2.3 ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Eligible Activities in the Program:

- Will accelerate the development of the associated project through the creation of early-stage project-related deliverables;
- Cannot be in progress before the application is submitted and must begin incurring expenses no more than 90 days after notification of the decision; and
- Must be completed within one year of notification of the decision.

Examples of eligible activities include:

- Project conceptualization activities.
- Production of teasers/trailers (note that production of a pilot episode is not eligible).
- Proof of concept testing or creation of a prototype
- Preparation of pre-production documents including pitch materials for funding applications.
- Business planning such as market/audience research.
- Mentorship support for specific project-related activities (capped at 25% of budget).

Activities that are part of the production phase of the Project will not be eligible.

Ontario Creates and CMF must be notified of any significant changes to the Project as defined in the contract and if applicable, changes will require the consent of Ontario Creates.

A Final Cost Report and Financing Statement is required for all Projects supported by Ontario Creates.

- Successful Applicants must have a duly authorized notarized [affidavit](#) attesting to the true and fair representation of the Final Cost Report.
- Upon request, copies of invoices and proofs of payments must be submitted.

## 2.4 SAFE AND RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES

Ontario Creates is committed to fostering respectful workplaces in all sectors and companies we support. A respectful workplace is one that values diversity and inclusion, dignity, courteous conduct, fairness, positive communication and professional working relationships. A respectful workplace is free from harassment and discrimination including sexual harassment.

- Ontario Creates expects that all funding recipients maintain the principles of a respectful workplace including taking every reasonable step to:
- cultivate and sustain a respectful, positive, inclusive and supportive work culture
- Provide a safe mechanism for staff to report incidents or allegations of inappropriate behaviour
- Take action to prevent, identify and eliminate workplace harassment and
- discrimination in a timely manner

An eligibility requirement for Ontario Creates programs includes the Applicant Organization confirming that they have in place both guiding principles and a process for maintaining a respectful workplace. Please download the [Applicant Affidavit](#) from the Ontario Creates website or from the application form in the OAP, sign, and include with your application as instructed.

## **3. APPLICATION AND FUNDING PROCESS**

### **3.1 Accessibility**

This Program welcomes applications from people with disabilities, people who are deaf, and people who have barriers to accessing technology. If you would like to request an alternative process or format for submitting an application or request funds (up to \$500 per application) towards service providers to assist with your application, please contact the relevant Program Consultant a minimum of four weeks before the Program's December 19, 2023 deadline. Support for application assistance is also available to First Nations, Inuit or Métis applicants facing language, geographic and/or cultural barriers.

Services may include, but are not limited to, assistance to create an account and navigate the Online Application Portal; transcribe/edit/organize/translate application materials; complete and submit application materials.

Applications must be submitted electronically through the Online Application Portal at <https://www.apply.ontariocreates.ca/>

Applicants that do not have a user account on OAP, should go to <https://www.apply.ontariocreates.ca/> and click on "Register". For assistance, please see Ontario Creates' website for the "OAP Quick Start Guide".

Applicants that are already registered will see the relevant Ontario Creates program deadline in their dashboard. To start the application, click on "Start New Application" and follow the directions to access the application form. For technical assistance, please contact the OAP Helpdesk at [applyhelp@ontariocreates.ca](mailto:applyhelp@ontariocreates.ca).

### **3.2 PERSONA ID LANGUAGE**

In 2021, the CMF launched [PERSONA-ID](#), a self-identification system that allows individuals to disclose their demographic information directly and securely to the Canada Media Fund (CMF).

While PERSONA-ID is not a requirement at the time of application to this Program, if selected for funding in this Program, Selected Applicants will be required to provide the CMF with their PERSONA-ID number.

### **3.3 NATURE OF FUNDING CONTRIBUTION**

The funding provided to successful applicants consists of non-repayable contributions from both Ontario Creates and the CMF.

Selected Applicants will be administered by Ontario Creates and by the CMF's Program Administrator ("CMFPA") at Telefilm Canada. On acceptance into the Program, Selected Applicants:

- will be required to sign a standard Ontario Transfer Payment Agreement covering the terms of their participation in the Program

- will be required to submit an application to Telefilm’s Dialogue system, and then sign a legally enforceable agreement with CMF, which includes further provisions concerning misrepresentations, defaults, and related matters.
- will be required to provide Ontario Creates and CMF with permission to use the project and delivery materials for promotional purposes.

Selected Applicants to the Program will receive contribution amounts during the course of the Program, triggered by deliverables as follows:

- 80% on execution of both the Ontario Creates and CMF agreements;
- 20% on delivery of the completed project and all deliverables outlined in the contracts including a final report/cost report.

### 3.4 AMOUNT OF FUNDING CONTRIBUTION

The maximum contribution to a project funded through the Program shall be the lesser of \$20,000 or 75% of the project’s eligible costs with (i) 50% of such Program contribution amount from the CMF and (ii) 50% from Ontario Creates.

Ontario expenses must account for no less than 75% of the total budget. The balance of the budget not covered by the Program contribution may be in the form of cash or non-cash contributions from the Applicant or a third party.

Selected Applicants to the Program who are deaf or otherwise disabled may be eligible for supplementary funds for accessibility expenses required to complete their project deliverables.

### 3.5 ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible Costs are the budgeted or final costs of the project activities that are included in the application, as applicable (including both related-party and non-related party costs), plus any costs the CMF and Ontario Creates consider necessary, minus costs the CMF and Ontario Creates consider excessive, inflated or unreasonable. Assessment of a project’s Eligible Costs shall be done at the CMF and Ontario Creates’ discretion. See [the Budget and Financing Guidelines and Template](#) for more information.

### 3.6 PROJECT ASSESMENT IN THE SELECTIVE PROCESS

Applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Considerations</u>
<u>Project Team</u>	<u>15%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to the capacity, skills, knowledge and expertise required to complete the proposed activities</li> </ul>
<u>Risks and Feasibility</u>	<u>15%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear deliverables</li> <li>• reasonable budget with appropriately allocated costs</li> <li>• secured financing</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>realistic schedule that is well-planned with clear key milestones</li> <li>other challenges and risks</li> </ul>
<u>Quality, Innovation and Creativity (including project diversity)</u>	<u>30%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creative merit of project</li> <li>potential to result in a high-quality product</li> <li>sufficiently articulated content</li> <li>originality of project</li> <li>project supports and reflects diversity, particularly underrepresented voices within the interactive digital media industry</li> </ul>
<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>30%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>impact of activities on project progression towards production</li> <li>growth of company as a result of activities being completed</li> <li>viability of market for the project that is the subject of the application</li> <li>chance for resulting project to be commercially and/or critically successful</li> </ul>
<u>Ontario Benefit</u>	<u>10%</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creation and/or retention of employment opportunities in Ontario</li> <li>potential for future revenue for the company</li> <li>proportion of budget spent in Ontario</li> <li>sustainability of economic benefits of this project</li> <li>other significant benefits to the company and/or the Ontario economy that are likely through support of this project</li> </ul>
<u>Total</u>	<u>100%</u>	

**4. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**4.1 INTERPRETATION, APPLICATION, DISCLAIMER, AND OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

These Guidelines are for the information and convenience of Applicants (as defined in section 2.1) to this Program. They provide an overview of the objectives of the Canada Media Fund (CMF) and Ontario Creates.

The CMF and Ontario Creates have full discretion in the administration of this Program and in the application of these Guidelines, to ensure funding is provided to those projects that contribute to the fulfillment of their respective mandates. In all questions of

interpretation of these Guidelines, the CMF and Ontario Creates' interpretation shall prevail.

All Applicants must abide by the applicable accounting and reporting requirements of the CMF and Ontario Creates and follow applicable business policies as created and amended from time to time. CMF business policies are available from the [CMF website](#) under Reference Files.

Successful companies will fulfill separate agreements with both CMF and Ontario Creates.

#### **4.2 PROVISION OF DOCUMENTATION**

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure the CMF and Ontario Creates receive all documentation relevant to its application, and to update such documentation and information after a material change. The CMF and Ontario Creates may request other documentation and information to conduct an assessment and evaluation of the project and, once assessed, to complete file reviews. For the purposes of project assessment and evaluation, the CMF and Ontario Creates reserve the right to rely solely on the written and audiovisual materials initially submitted by the Applicant.

#### **4.3 FAILURE TO COMPLY**

If an Applicant fails to comply with these Guidelines, as determined by the CMF and Ontario Creates, then the CMF and Ontario Creates may refuse the application, revoke the eligibility status of the Applicant's project and may demand repayment of any sums paid to the Applicant.

#### **4.4 MISREPRESENTATION**

If, at any time, an Applicant, as required by the Guidelines or as requested by the CMF or Ontario Creates, provides false information or omits material information in connection with an application, the Applicant may suffer serious consequences.

These may include, among other outcomes:

- Loss of eligibility for funding of the current project;
- Loss of eligibility for funding of future productions;
- Repayment of any funds already advanced, with interest;
- Criminal prosecution, in the case of fraud.

These measures may be imposed not only on the Applicant but also on related, associated and affiliated companies and individuals (as determined by the CMF and Ontario Creates at their sole discretion).

## 5. MISCELLANEOUS REQUIREMENTS

The Project must be protected by all industry-standard insurance policies, and adhere to Ontario Creates and CMF insurance requirements for successful applications, as applicable to the activities to be undertaken.

Ontario Creates is required to provide a list of funding recipients to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and to disclose funding information on the Ontario Creates website. Information provided may include but is not limited to company, project title/description and amount of funding.

Ontario Creates and CMF support are to be acknowledged with a credit and logo on the project and all related publicity and promotional materials. Ontario Creates and CMF are to be advised in advance of any mention of Ontario Creates and CMF or their involvement in the project in media releases, publicity materials or social media.

### For more Information:

Danielle Hébert, Program Consultant  
Interactive Digital Media  
Email: [dhebert@ontariocreates.ca](mailto:dhebert@ontariocreates.ca)  
Phone: 416-642-6687

Monika Ghuman, Program Coordinator  
Interactive Digital Media  
Email: [idmfund@ontariocreates.ca](mailto:idmfund@ontariocreates.ca)  
Phone: 416-642-6697

**These guidelines are for the 2023-24 deadline only. This document is subject to change for future deadlines.** Applicants are advised to consult the Ontario Creates website for any relevant Frequently Asked Questions documents and Ontario Creates IDM Fund Bulletins for clarifications and alterations to these guidelines.

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### **Ontario Creates**

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](http://ontariocreates.ca)

### **Canada Media Fund**

The Canada Media Fund fosters, promotes and finances Canadian content, across all audiovisual platforms, and help share it with the world. The Canada Media Fund receives contributions from the Government of Canada and Canada's cable, satellite and IPTV distributors. The CMF thanks its financial contributors for their continued support of Canadian television and digital media content.

## Appendix A: Applicant Eligibility

Applications will be accepted from (1) companies that completed the Ontario Creates IDM Futures Forward Workshop in 2023, (2) *established* and *new* content creation companies with majority ownership from Indigenous people and equity-deserving communities.

*Established* Companies must meet **one** of the following tests:

- at least 25% of the company's revenue or 50% of the company's expenditures over the previous two fiscal years comes from the creation of screen-based content projects that are similar in nature to the proposed project; or
- at least 50% of the company's revenue over the previous two fiscal years comes from eligible publishing activities as described in the [Ontario Creates Book Fund](#) and [Ontario Creates Magazine Fund](#).

They must also have at least one owner or full-time employee with a minimum full-time equivalent of three years of experience in the creation of professional, commercialized content for interactive platforms, networks or devices or professional, commercialized linear video content creation that is similar in nature to the proposed project.

A company is considered *new* if it has less than a year of operation or it has not yet released a product. *New* companies must:

- have an executive team including at least one owner or full-time employee with a minimum full-time equivalent of three years of experience (1) in the creation of professional, commercialized content for interactive platforms, networks or devices that is similar in nature to the proposed project or professional, commercialized linear video content creation and/or at least one linear video content project that has been made publicly available to an audience including but not limited to: a complete season of a web series; a feature film or, a television property or (2) in the publishing industries;
- be majority-owned by individuals that are Ontario residents;
- be prepared to incorporate immediately if their application is successful; and
- meet the relevant eligibility criteria for established companies on incorporation.

Work that is completed while enrolled in a post-secondary education program is not considered professional content creation.

Established and new companies are advised to ensure that they have experience and a track record that is relevant to the proposed project.

## Appendix B: Project Eligibility

Eligible Projects must be either:

- An Eligible Project under [section 3.2 of the CMF's Conceptualization Program Guidelines](#); OR
- An Eligible Project under [section 3.2 of the CMF's Digital Linear Series Program Guidelines](#).

AND:

- An Eligible Project under [Section 3 of Ontario Creates IDM Fund Production and Concept Definition Program Guidelines](#) (Interactive and Video Content).

*\*Note: E-learning content and first seasons of digital linear series as well as genres not typically supported by CMF (such as reality and lifestyle content) are eligible for this program but will not be eligible for other CMF-run programs*

An Eligible Project must meet the following criteria:

- Its underlying rights are owned, and significantly and meaningfully developed, by Canadians.
- It is produced in Canada, with at least 75% of its Eligible Costs being Ontario costs
- It is, and remains throughout its production, under Canadian ownership and Canadian executive, creative, and financial control.

Note: a project that complies with the [Framework for International Digital Media Co-Production](#) will also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In addition:

- The content project that is the subject of the application must be proprietary content. Content is considered proprietary if the applicant company is the originator of the project, the majority holder of copyright and/or has obtained copyright permission to adapt any material for the project. The applicant company must own at least 51% of the copyright of the project that is being submitted and must be able to demonstrate that their revenue share is in appropriate proportion to the ownership of the project and reflects industry standard practices. Projects that are equally owned by two companies (50/50 share) that meet the eligibility criteria will also be considered eligible.
- The project must consist of professionally created content. While it is assumed that companies will make use of and/or will develop new technologies to enable interactivity, the Ontario Creates IDM Fund supports the creation and production of content projects. Projects that consist entirely of technology, hardware, software, applications, tools, services, platforms, etc. without a significant content component are ineligible.
- Projects that consist primarily of user generated content, social networking tools and/or distribution of licensed content projects provided by a third party are also ineligible. Applicants with projects that include user generated content and/or social networking functionality must have an ongoing content development plan that integrates robust professionally created content with content contributed by end users.

- require the active participation of and input from users which has an impact on the manner in which that content is experienced by those users and/or be a linear video content project intended for a digital platform;
- include the creation or development of unique, creative and professional content by the applicant company;
- be intended for use by individuals or groups of individuals;
- be intended to educate, inform or entertain;
- consist of a combination of at least two of text, sound (music, sound effects, voice, etc.) and images (pictures, animations, video, etc.) Exceptions may be made for projects that demonstrate a high degree of interactivity and/or innovation. Please contact Ontario Creates prior to submitting an application; and
- be intended for commercial exploitation.

Ineligible Projects are the following:

- Products with a specific corporate, industrial or mainly promotional focus
- Projects which essentially serve the Applicant's current activities, including obtaining contracts or orders from other businesses
- Partial or split Projects (and Project portions) that cannot be independently exploited
- Project porting or Project adaptation from one platform to another
- Catalogues or compilations of repurposed material, presented without benefit of new, value-added original content
- System software
- Pure research and development, such as Projects or activities that would be eligible for the Federal Scientific Research and Experimental Development Tax Incentive Program
- Casino type games
- Sequels and further iterations of existing content/applications
- Gamification of non-cultural content (e.g., scientific, research, medical, etc.)
- Digital marketplaces, even if related to the cultural sector
- Projects which contain elements of excessive violence, sexual violence, or sexual exploitation or elements which are obscene, indecent or child pornography within the meaning of the Criminal Code (as amended from time to time), or libelous or in any other way unlawful.
- Are also receiving support through other Ontario Creates programs including Ontario Creates Book Fund, Ontario Creates Magazine Fund, Ontario Creates Film Fund and the Ontario Music Investment Fund or receiving support through other IDM Fund programs for the same activities.
- Are also receiving support through other Canada Media Fund programs including CMF Conceptualization, the CMF/IPF Development Packaging Program or receiving support through other Experimental Stream funding programs for the same activities.