



2025-26 ONTARIO CREATES IP FUND GUIDELINES

Futures Forward Program

Deadline: December 15, 2025 by 5:00pm

Program documentation includes:

- [Ontario Creates Futures Forward Guidelines \(this document\)](#)
- Ontario Creates Futures Forward Budget:
 - [Interactive Template](#)
 - [Linear 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. Introduction

The Ontario Creates Futures Forward Program 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.

Companies may submit an application (one per company) 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 people with disabilities, people who are Deaf, and people who have barriers to accessing technology to complete an application; and
- fostering respectful workplaces in all the sectors and companies we support.

2. Eligible Applicants

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

- The owner or lead producer of the company either:
 - Completed the Ontario Creates Futures Forward Workshop in 2025;

OR

 - Completed an approved* workshop or course (see **Appendix 1**) between January 1, 2024 and October 31, 2025.

*Applicants may reach out to Ontario Creates at ipfund@ontariocreates.ca to confirm if a workshop or course that does not appear on the list in Appendix 1 is eligible. See Appendix 1 for additional details.

- Applications are encouraged from companies 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 federally¹;
 - 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 at time of application submission; and

¹Applicants 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 the Program Guidelines.

- be *Ontario-based* which is defined as: have a principal place of business² 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 2025;
- Have received more than \$250,000 from an Ontario Creates funding 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 one that is associated with an entity that is not in good standing with Ontario Creates; and
- Not-for-profit and public sector entities.

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

3. Eligible Projects and Activities

An Eligible Project must be:

- **Interactive Content** or **Linear Content**
- A new project that has not received and spent other development funding for the phase of work being proposed.

² 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.

- Pending funds from other industry funders must be confirmed by February 2026 and may not be from other Ontario Creates funding programs.

Interactive Content refers to:

- Video games
- XR experiences

The Video Game/XR Experience that is subject of the application must ultimately be intended to meet the Production eligibility requirements of the IP Fund. See **Appendix 2** for those details.

Linear Content refers to:

- Digital series
 - minimum 3 episodes (no min/max length)
- Feature film (Drama, Animation and Documentary)
 - minimum length 75 minutes

The Digital Series/Feature Film that is subject of the application must ultimately be intended to meet the Production eligibility requirements of the IP Fund. See **Appendix 2** for those details.

Projects in French-language are encouraged.

If you are unsure if your project is eligible, please contact Ontario Creates at ipfund@ontariocreates.ca.

For clarity, eligibility for the Ontario Creates Futures Forward Program does not guarantee project eligibility to other Ontario Creates 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](#).

Ontario Creates encourages 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.

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

- 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 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 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.

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.

5. Budget and Financing Requirements

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.

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.

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). For more information:

- **Interactive projects:** see [the Interactive Content Budget and Financing Guidelines and Template](#)
- **Linear projects:** see the [Linear Content Development Budget Template](#)

6. Application Process

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 15, 2025 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.

7. Decision Criteria

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>	• access to the capacity, skills, knowledge and expertise required to complete the proposed activities
<u>Risks and Feasibility</u>	<u>15%</u>	• clear deliverables • reasonable budget with appropriately allocated costs • secured financing • realistic schedule that is well-planned with clear key milestones • other challenges and risks

<u>Quality, Innovation and Creativity (including project diversity)</u>	<u>30%</u>	• creative merit of project • potential to result in a high-quality product • sufficiently articulated content • originality of project • project supports and reflects diversity, particularly underrepresented voices within the interactive digital media industry
<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>30%</u>	• impact of activities on project progression towards production • growth of company as a result of activities being completed • viability of market for the project that is the subject of the application • chance for resulting project to be commercially and/or critically successful
<u>Ontario Benefit</u>	<u>10%</u>	• creation and/or retention of employment opportunities in Ontario • potential for future revenue for the company • proportion of budget spent in Ontario • sustainability of economic benefits of this project • other significant benefits to the company and/or the Ontario economy that are likely through support of this project
<u>Total</u>	<u>100%</u>	

8. Successful Applicants

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

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 provide Ontario Creates 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 the Ontario Creates agreement;

- 20% on delivery of the completed project and all deliverables outlined in the contracts including a final report/cost report.

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.

9. More Information

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These guidelines are for the 2025-26 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 IP Fund Bulletins for clarifications and alterations to these guidelines.

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

Appendix 1: List of Approved Workshops and Courses

Workshop Provider	Program	Program Date <i>Applicants must have participated in the cohort aligned with the dates below</i>
Amplifia Network	Ontario Creates Futures Forward Program	Fall 2025
BIPOC TV & Film	ELEVATE	January 2024 to February 2025
BIPOC TV & Film	Unscripted Producers' Lab	May 2024
Black Screen Office	BSO-CMPA Black Producer Accelerator Program	2024-25 Cohort
CMPA	CMPA Mentorship Program for Diverse Producers	2024-25 Cohort
CMPA	CMPA Production Mentorship Program	2024-25 Cohort
CMPA	Export Development Mentorship Program	2024-25 Cohort
DOC Ontario	Essentials Bootcamp	August 2024
Hand Eye Society	Ontario Creates Futures Forward Program	Fall 2025
Interactive Ontario	Ontario Creates Futures Forward Program	Fall 2025

Kingston Film Office	Producers Accelerator	July 2024 to May 2025
National Screen Institute	Disabled Producers Lab	October 2024 to February 2025
National Screen Institute	Access BIPOC Producers	January 2025 to October 2025
OBAC- OYA	OYA – Scale up Business Bootcamp	2024 Cohort
Reelworld Screen Institute	Reelworld Producer Program	February 2025 to June 2025
Reelworld Screen Institute	Reelworld Training Lab presented by Amazon MGM Studios	2024 *Producers Only
Webseries Canada	Ontario Creates Futures Forward Program	Fall 2025
WIFT-T	Ontario Creates Futures Forward Program	Fall 2025
WIFT-T	Media Business Essentials Program	March 2024

If a workshop or course is not listed but meets all or most of the parameters below and was completed between January 2024 and October 31, 2025, applicants may reach out to Ontario Creates at ipfund@ontariocreates.ca to confirm if it is eligible.

Courses not listed above must be targeted to linear Producers either emerging or mid-career and:

- Result in a business and marketing plan for their project
- Provide an understanding of business operations including budgeting, financing and financial statements
- Result in the ability to effectively pitch their project to an investor, channel partner or funding agency

Appendix 2: Eligible Project Requirements

IP Fund Interactive Eligible Projects and Activities

The IP Fund - Interactive Content stream will support the Pre-Production and Production of:

- Video Games; and
- XR experiences.

Pre-Production

- Supports early-stage activities that take place prior to and assist the applicant company in preparing to enter full production of a Video Game or XR experience. Deliverables may include a pre-release playable version of the game or XR experience (prototypes, demos, MVP, vertical slice) pre-production documents and pitch material, business and marketing plans.

Production

- Supports the creation of a complete Video Game or XR experience that will be made publicly available. Deliverables must include a complete, market-ready Video Game or XR experience that is suitable for release³.

The Video Game/XR experience that is the subject of the application must:

- be proprietary⁴;
- be primarily intended for a consumer audience (as measured by source of revenue);
- be intended to entertain⁵;
- be intended for commercial exploitation;
- consist primarily of unique, creative and professional content developed by individuals or groups of individuals; and
- consist primarily of digital content.

Projects that have commenced prior to submission of an application may be eligible provided substantial Pre-Production or Production activities remain (no more than 20% of the project has been completed) and the Ontario Creates contribution will have a meaningful impact on the success of the project. Expenses incurred prior to submission of the application are not eligible.

³ Video Games and XR experiences that will be augmented or enhanced with additional content and components at a later date and/or require ongoing content creation are eligible provided the applicant company can demonstrate that the portion of the project supported through this program can be considered complete and market-ready.

⁴ The applicant company must:

- own at least 51% of the copyright of the project that is being submitted and/or have obtained permission to adapt any material for the project.
- 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.

⁵ Projects with a dual focus on educating and entertaining a consumer audience are eligible.

The following Video Game and XR experiences are ineligible:

- enhancements, improvements, augmentations, ports and redesigns of existing products already released to the market;
- projects primarily used by businesses, organizations, training and educational institutions or for professional development purposes;
- projects that require the creation of physical content components to enable users to interact and engage with the Video Game and XR experience;
- projects that involve gambling/cash prizeing; and
- projects receiving support through other Ontario Creates programs for the same activities.

Other Considerations:

- International partnerships and coproductions are permitted. Preference may be given to projects that are substantially owned by Ontario-based organizations. [Official treaty coproductions](#) where the Ontario company is a minority partner may be considered.
- Eligibility for the IP Fund – Interactive Content stream does not confer eligibility for the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit.

IP Fund Linear Production Requirements

	Drama (incl. Animation)	Documentary	Digital Series
Minimum Budget	\$1 million	\$500,000	
Minimum length/ episodes	75 minutes		Three (3) episodes
Principal Photography	Must commence after application submission.		
	Must be shot in Ontario (excluding coproductions and factual content).		
CANCON	Must be either eligible for certification as a Canadian Production by CAVCO; as a treaty coproduction by Telefilm Canada and by coproducers equivalent certifying body; or eligible to receive Canadian Program certification from the CRTC.		
Exploitation	Productions with budgets <u>Less than \$3.5 million</u> without a confirmed Canadian distributor must include a marketing plan that demonstrates how the film will be commercially exploited in Canada, and internationally if appropriate. See Appendix 1.	Documentaries may apply without a Canadian distributor in place but must have a commitment from a Canadian broadcaster or streaming service available in Canada and include a marketing plan that demonstrates how the film will be	Acceptable online platforms include subscription-based video-on-demand (SVOD), advertising-based video-on-demand (AVOD), free ad-supported streaming TV (FAST), hybrid video-on-demand (HVOD), transactional video-
	Productions with budgets		

	<u>\$3.5 million and over</u> must have a Canadian distributor attached to the project. The distributor must commercially exploit the film in Canada, and internationally if appropriate. While not required, the application can be strengthened with a marketing plan. See Appendix 1.	commercially exploited in Canada, and internationally if appropriate. See Appendix 1.	on-demand (TVOD), or other models, as long as the platform makes productions commercially available for viewing by the public via download or streaming. See Appendix 1.
Release	Theatrical, digital, or XR release		Digital or XR release