



## **Project Submission Guidelines**

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Western Documentary Unit – February 6, 2026

### **About the Documentaries We Make**

The National Film Board of Canada's mandate is to reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of Canadians through the production and distribution of innovative documentary films.

To fulfill this mandate, the Western Documentary Unit collaborates with directors and producers who are based in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories. We produce artful and impactful documentaries that:

1. have deep social, cultural, and historical relevance.
2. are made by filmmakers with a strong creative vision and a unique voice; and
3. push boundaries in the stories we tell, the forms our films take, and/or the audiences we seek to reach.

We care deeply about artistic excellence, the point of view of the filmmaker, the power of documentary, the craft of storytelling, and the freedom to experiment.

To be eligible for consideration, your film:

- must be a documentary
- can be almost any length (short, mid-length, feature, or short-form series)
- must be directed by a Canadian citizen or permanent resident;
- co-productions must be produced by a Canadian independent producer (see further information about our models of collaboration below);
- should (ideally) be at an early stage of development; and
- must not be already receiving money or services from another program at the NFB.

Please note that we only accept projects about Indigenous stories and communities if they are directed by an Indigenous filmmaker.



## How We Work

When submitting your project to us for consideration, it's important to note that we are not a funder. The NFB is Canada's public producer and distributor: we are a full creative partner in the production of your project. As such, we prefer to consider projects as early as possible in the project's development.

Before submitting your project for consideration, please familiarize yourself with the NFB in general and the Western Documentary Unit in particular:

- Understand our work by reviewing the [Western Documentary Unit webpage](#) (especially our works-in-progress).
- Watch our recent films at [nfb.ca](http://nfb.ca).

If you are based outside of the Western Documentary Unit's region or you feel your documentary might be better suited for another unit, please consult the [NFB Production Units page](#).

The NFB has two models of collaboration:

1. A **"Full NFB"** production is produced, funded, and owned solely by the NFB. The director brings their idea to us. If we choose to produce the project, the director will transfer their rights to the NFB and is then hired onto the project as its director. The NFB will retain copyright ownership of the project and full distribution rights.
2. A **"Co-Production"** is jointly produced, funded, and owned by the NFB and an independent Canadian producer (referred to by the NFB as our "co-producer"). The potential co-producer brings the project to the NFB. If we choose to co-produce the project, the NFB identifies its level of participation, contributes that percentage to the financing as an equity investment, and owns the same percentage of the copyright. The co-producer raises the remaining percentage of the financing and owns the remaining percentage of the copyright.

Please consider which model is right for your project and complete the submission form accordingly.



## How to Submit Your Project

To help you prepare your submission, a list of the submission questions can be found at the end of this document. In addition to answering the questions, you will also be asked to submit the following documents:

### For Full NFB Projects:

- ✓ **Project Proposal:** 3-5 pages, which may include a detailed synopsis, and outline of the film, a director's statement, and/or a sound and visual treatment.  
Use the following naming convention: *Title of Film\_Project Proposal*
- ✓ **Director's Filmography:** List of previous work, may also include a bio.  
Use the following naming convention: *Title of Film\_Director\_Name*
- ✓ **Links to Director's Work:** A link to a demo for the current work (if applicable) and at least one link to a previous project.

### For Co-Productions:

- ✓ **Project Proposal:** 3-5 pages, which may include a detailed synopsis, and outline of the film, a director's statement, and/or a sound and visual treatment.  
Use the following naming convention: *Title of Film\_Project Proposal*
- ✓ **Director's Filmography:** List of previous work, may also include a bio.  
Use the following naming convention: *Title of Film\_Director\_Name*
- ✓ **Producer's Bio:**  
Use the following naming convention: *Title of Film\_Producer\_Name*
- ✓ **Links to Director's Work:** A link to a demo for the current work (if applicable) and at least one link to a previous project.



## How We Evaluate Your Project

All projects submitted to the Western Production Unit are reviewed by the unit's producing staff.

In our review, we look for projects that align with our mandate – and with the kinds of documentaries that we typically make – by considering the following:

- Project originality and creative potential
- Filmmaker vision and skill
- Potential audience and impact
- Community representation and relationships
- Geographic location
- Project feasibility
- Our current project slate and studio capacity

Please note that we receive more than 100 submissions per year. The programming process is a very competitive one, as we are only able to move forward with approximately 5% of submitted projects. We endeavor to respond to all submissions within 8-10 weeks and we are typically programmed 10-12 months in advance.



## PREVIEW

### Project Submission Form

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Please note: this is not the official application form. Use this document to help you prepare your submission offline.

#### First Page – Basic Information

1. project title
2. project synopsis  
*max 1000 characters, approximately 200 words*
3. director's name
4. director's email address
5. your name (if not the director)
6. your email address
7. is this film a documentary?  
*Yes/no*
8. proposed format  
*- feature doc*  
*- mid-length doc*  
*- doc series*  
*- short doc*  
*- other*
9. proposed length  
*for series, please include episode numbers and runtimes of each*
10. has this project been submitted to the NFB before?  
*Yes/no*
11. have you talked to a Producer at the NFB about this project?  
*Yes – Teri Snelgrove*  
*Yes – Coty Savard*  
*Yes – Chehala Leonard*  
*Yes – Tina Ouellette*  
*No*  
*Other*
12. has the director made a film with the NFB before?  
*Yes/no*

*Please note: The NFB's Western Doc unit only produces documentary projects.*

*We have a broad definition of what makes a documentary, so please review the [Western Documentary Unit - NFB Production | NFB Production](#) webpage to learn more about our work and feel free to resubmit if you feel your project might be characterized as a documentary.*



## **Second Page – Project Information**

13. What stage is your project at?
- *Pre-Development (very early development of your concept)*
  - *Development (early development, with solid concept)*
  - *Production (very developed and ready to shoot)*
  - *Post-Production (mostly or entirely shot and ready to edit)*
  - *Uncertain*

*The NFB prefers to begin working in collaboration with filmmakers at the development phase. We rarely become involved with a project that has already been fully developed and/or shot.*

14. Who is the intended audience? How will the work be relevant to them? What is the director's relationship to this audience?  
*Max 1000 characters, approximately 200 words*
15. What are the films, books, or other media that currently exist on the same subject matter? How is your documentary different? Please especially consider any previous NFB projects that cover the same subject matter.  
*Max 1000 characters, approximately 200 words*
16. What participation from the NFB are you looking for?

*A "Full NFB" production is produced and funded solely by the NFB. The director transfers their rights to the NFB and is then hired onto the project as its director. The NFB will retain copyright to the project and full distribution rights.*

*A Co-production is produced, funded and jointly owned by the NFB and the co-producer.*

*If you are a director who is bringing your project to us, you are likely applying for a "Full NFB." If you are a producer, or are working with a producer, you are likely applying for a Co-production.*

## **Third Page – Director's Information**

17. Director's Bio  
Please provide a brief description of the director as a filmmaker, including any personal or community connections to this story. (Please note we are accepting projects on Indigenous stories and subject matter only if they are directed by Indigenous creators.)
18. Director's experience level  
Emerging (directed 3 films or less)  
Established (directed more than 3 films)
19. Director's location
20. Director's website or main social media platform
21. Reference Videos - film demo and/or previous work (no more than 10 mins each)
22. Video 1 – description
23. Video 1 – link
24. Video 1 - access code (if applicable)
25. Video 2 – description
26. Video 2 – link
27. Video 2 - access code (if applicable)
28. Video 2 – description
29. Video 2 – link
30. Video 2 - access code (if applicable)



#### **Fourth Page – Production Company Information**

Only applicable to Co-Production applicants

31. Name of Production Company
32. Producer's Name
33. Producer's Location
34. Producer's email address
35. Production Company Website

#### **Fifth Page – Supporting Materials**

36. Please upload the following documents in PDF format, following these naming conventions:

Full NFB Submissions

- *Project Proposal (Title of Film\_Project Proposal)*
- *Director's Filmmography (Title of Film\_Director CV\_Name)*

Co-Production Submissions

- *Project Proposal (Title of Film\_Project Proposal)*
- *Director's Filmmography (Title of Film\_Director CV\_Name)*
- *Producer's Bio (Title of Film\_Produce Bio\_Name)*