



# FILM FUND GUIDELINES

Making an application for  
**COMPLETION  
FUNDING**



Awarding funds from  
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY®**

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the BFI Film Fund.

We invest National Lottery funds in original filmmaking from adventurous storytellers, for the lasting benefit of audiences, film industry and the UK's world-class film culture.

We are looking for projects which respond to our core objectives:

- Supporting the early careers of ambitious filmmakers
- Supporting work with a strong cultural or progressive impact
- Filmmaking that takes risks on talent, form and content, where the more commercial sector cannot
- Work that recognises the quality of difference – in perspective, in talent, in recruitment
- An increase in the number of active projects and filmmakers outside London & the South East

**Our completion funding supports the costs of finishing a film prior to its first festival screening. It enables filmmakers to overcome final post-production hurdles and achieve their full vision for the project, giving them the best chance of a successful launch. We consider applications from films that have been invited to launch at a major international film festival. The list of festivals is at Appendix A and covers all of the major international festivals where there is significant international buyer attendance and which are of particular strategic importance to the BFI2022 International Strategy.**

When applying, please ensure that you will be able to evidence your film's invitation to the festival. We are unable to fund retrospective activity but understand that invitations can come quite late, so we encourage you to begin the application process as soon as you receive notice that an invite is forthcoming in order to give us time to process and assess your application. All information regarding festival invitations is treated in confidence. Please see the timeline of assessment further on in these guidelines.

Completion funding for documentaries will be supported through the BFI Film Fund's documentary partner. Please visit the [Funding for Documentaries](#) website page.

Film distributors looking for support for the UK release of a film should consider applying to the [BFI Audience Fund](#).

Sales agents looking for support for promoting a film at a festival should consider applying to the [BFI Film Export Fund](#).

Please consult the [Production and development funding FAQs](#) for supporting information in relation to these guidelines.

# BFI DIVERSITY STANDARDS

The BFI's definition of diversity is to recognise and acknowledge the quality and value of being different.

We believe that in order to have a healthy, resilient and world-class film industry we need to invest in, develop and present the best talent we have in the UK. This means that diversity sits at the heart of our decision-making. We recognise the ability of diversity to raise the bar and set the standard, and one of our funding priorities is to support projects that seek to increase the diversity of the UK's film industry.

We have developed the [BFI Diversity Standards](#) to gauge the ability of projects to contribute to these aims. We ask applicants to embrace these Standards and explore the implications and opportunities of working with a more diverse workforce, not just for their productions but for the industry as a whole. More information about the BFI's commitment to diversity can be found on the BFI website at [bfi.org.uk/diversity](https://bfi.org.uk/diversity).

Applicants for Lottery funding are asked to demonstrate how their projects will tackle under-representation in relation to disability, gender, race, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

At application stage you will be asked to outline how your project seeks to respond to the BFI Diversity Standards. Successful applicants will need to send us a report following the conclusion of their projects, evaluating how they delivered in practice against their aims for diversity.

# CAN I APPLY?

We can only consider your completion funding application if your film has been invited to launch at a major international film festival and needs additional funding in order to complete the film prior to the festival screening. As festival selectors are used to looking at films in an incomplete state, such as those with temporary mix and grade, we do not offer completion funding in order to prepare a film for festival submission, only once it has been accepted. A list of qualifying international film festivals can be found at Appendix A.

We welcome completion funding applications from new and established filmmakers. In order to apply, your team needs to include a director, producer and screenwriter. The team applying must be composed of at least two individuals across the three roles and the producer must be acting solely as the producer. Applications must be made by the lead producer on your project.

If your team meets these criteria, you can apply for completion funding if:

- you are able to make the application through a company registered and centrally managed in the UK or another state of the European Union or European Economic Area; and

- you and your team (writer, director, producer) are all over 18 years of age; and
- you own or are in the process of obtaining the rights (including any underlying rights) in the project. You will need to confirm this as part of your application, and may be asked to provide proof at a later stage

In order to be eligible for completion funding, your film must be:

- a 'single project' live action or animated film;
- a fictional film intended to be a minimum of 60 minutes in length. If your film is a documentary, please visit the [Funding for Documentaries](#) website page of the BFI Film Fund;
- capable of obtaining a BBFC certificate which is no more restrictive than BBFC '18';
- capable of qualifying for certification as a British film through:
  - | Schedule 1 to the Films Act 1985 (The Cultural Test);
  - | One of the UK's official co-production treaties; or
  - | The European Convention on Co-Production.

A summary of how points for the Cultural Test for film are allocated and full guidance on British certification and tax relief can be found on the BFI website at: [bfi.org.uk/film-industry/british-certification-tax-relief](https://www.bfi.org.uk/film-industry/british-certification-tax-relief).

## INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

You cannot apply through these guidelines if you are looking for completion funding for:

- a film below 60 minutes in length: in this case, if you are a new or emerging filmmaker, you should visit the [BFI NET.WORK](#) which can provide details of funding initiatives aimed directly at you; or
- a documentary feature film: please visit the [Funding for Documentaries](#) webpage of the BFI Film Fund
- filmed productions such as theatre productions, or filmed sporting or music events.

# WHAT CAN I APPLY FOR?

Applicants must have a demonstrable need for the funding. We do not have a minimum budget level (a 'budget floor') for the film itself or the amount you are requesting for its completion, but can only support films that are produced in accordance with all applicable UK laws, including in relation to cast and crew payments.

**We cannot use this funding to retrospectively cover costs or for payment of deferred fees. The funds you apply for must be additional costs needed to help complete the film.**

Your application to the BFI for completion funding can request the full amount required in order to complete the film. However, in order to support an application, we have to be satisfied that the film's existing financial partners are not able to meet the costs of completion. If you have a sales or distribution company attached to the film who is *also* an early financial investor in the film, we would expect the completion of the film to be covered by them; an application for your project is therefore unlikely to be prioritised.

## SPECULATIVE SUBMISSIONS

As a Lottery Fund we can only consider funding projects that have been submitted to us through the formal Lottery application process. This means that we cannot accept, or read, informal submissions such as scripts or application materials submitted by any means other than the online application portal.

# HOW DO I MAKE AN APPLICATION?

Checklist before you apply

**ALL OF MY TEAM ARE AGED 18 OR OVER**

**MY FILM IS INTENDED FOR THEATRICAL RELEASE**

**MY FILM IS INTENDED TO BE AT LEAST 60 MINUTES IN LENGTH**

**MY FILM IS CAPABLE OF OBTAINING A BBFC CERTIFICATE WHICH IS NO MORE RESTRICTIVE THAN BBFC '18'**

**MY FILM IS CAPABLE OF QUALIFYING FOR CERTIFICATION AS A BRITISH FILM**

**MY FILM HAS BEEN INVITED TO LAUNCH AT A QUALIFYING INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AND NEEDS ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO THEIR FESTIVAL SCREENING**

**THE LEAD PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR/WRITER ARE DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND I AM THE DEDICATED PRODUCER FOR THE FILM**

**I HAVE SECURED, OR CAN SECURE, THE RIGHTS (INCLUDING ANY UNDERLYING RIGHTS) IN THE IDEA PROPOSED**

**I HAVE CONSIDERED HOW MY PROJECT WILL MEET THE BFI DIVERSITY STANDARDS**

**MY APPLICATION IS BEING MADE BY OR THROUGH A PRODUCTION COMPANY REGISTERED AND CENTRALLY MANAGED IN THE UK OR ANOTHER STATE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Please check that you meet the above criteria, and any other specifications made in these guidelines, before submitting an application for funding.

## MAKING AN APPLICATION ONLINE

To apply for funding you will need to complete an application online.

When first using the online application tool you will need to create an account: this allows your applications to be saved and reviewed before submission. Once the account is set up, future applications will be pre-populated with your contact details. You will be able to access all your past online applications and in-progress applications at any point by logging into [your account](#).

If you need additional support using the application form please contact us on [Filmfundcoordinator@bfi.org.uk](mailto:Filmfundcoordinator@bfi.org.uk).

## CONTENTS OF THE APPLICATION

The application form consists of a series of questions regarding your company, team and film project. Please include a link to your film and feel free to include a weblink to any other visual materials, e.g. artwork, images, shorts, etc.

Please remember that we will be reviewing a considerable number of applications and have to turn down many more applications for funding than we are able to support, so it is advantageous to make your application stand out.

You should include creative and strategic elements in your application which should detail:

- The synopsis, story, and themes of the film.

- The track record and previous work of the writer/director.
- An outline that details the stage your film is at, and post schedule to delivery. Please include festival delivery deadlines if known.
- The budget you anticipate needing to complete the film.
- Any unusual or challenging technical or budgetary requirements that you foresee.
- Your financial partners and spend to date.
- Your strategy for securing sales and distribution.
- The ambitions for the film and what the festival platform will give to the film and your team.
- How the festival platform will add to your festival and sales strategy.

You **must include a calculation of how the UK tax credit forms part of your budget**. Further guidance on UK film tax relief can be found on the [UK Creative industry tax reliefs](#) page of the BFI website.

If you have a [Locked Box Entitlement Agreement](#) with the BFI, we may require you to include some or all of any monies you have accrued in the Locked Box in the finance plan for your proposed film. Please include details in your application of any Locked Box monies you intend to use.

## **BFI DIVERSITY STANDARDS FORM**

As part of your application, we ask you to complete a BFI Diversity Standards form. You should use this form to describe your project's engagement with the Standards. This means detailing how your film addresses industry under-representation in relation to disability, gender, race, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

If your team or organisation has a long-standing commitment to diversity, enabling you to meet the BFI Diversity Standards by continuing your current practice, your application should outline how you will build on past achievements and show leadership to the wider industry.

Please note that the information provided by applicants within their Diversity Standards forms will be anonymised and used to help inform future funding decisions, research and strategy.

## **SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

We do not ask to see a script or samples of previous work as part of your application, but you should have them ready to send immediately if requested.

# WHAT HAPPENS TO MY APPLICATION?

Once you have submitted your application, the BFI will confirm by email that it has been received and a unique ID number will be assigned to the application. You should receive this acknowledgment within two weeks of submission.

## A. ELIGIBILITY

We will check that your application is eligible for funding, using the criteria identified previously. Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible. If it is ineligible, we will send you an email to inform you that your application will not be progressing further. We do not normally allow applicants to resubmit, but we may at this stage allow you to rectify an error on your application, if this is the sole reason that it is ineligible.

If your application is eligible, it will progress to the assessment stage.

## B. ASSESSMENT

If your project is eligible, we will assess your application against some or all of the following criteria:

- The creative merits of the film
- The feasibility of your strategy – are your financial ideas reasonable and appropriate for your project?
- The ambition of your diversity proposal
- The track record of the filmmaking team
- The audience potential for the film, including its UK distribution and international sales potential
- The project's cultural value

The assessment process will also take into account how you have managed any previous BFI funding you have received.

Please note that we are unlikely to prioritise filmmakers whose country of residence does not currently have a co-production agreement in place with the UK (including those countries covered by the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production).

We will then send you an email to tell you that:

- we have reviewed your application and are not considering it further and that your application is now closed; or
- we are assessing your application further.

The timeline for this decision is as follows:

STAGE	TIMELINE
Email acknowledgement of your application	Within 2 weeks of submission
Decision to progress or decline your application	Within 8 weeks of acknowledgment

If your application is progressing, we may request further information from you for consideration. We may also ask you to meet with us to discuss the project further. Please note that applicants who are invited to a meeting with the BFI Film Fund, but may need assistance with the financial costs of travel or childcare in order to attend the meeting, may apply for a bursary. More details can be found [here](#).

If you are invited to a meeting, all members of the team involved in the application should attend. It is important to understand that having a meeting does not mean we have made a commitment to funding your project. The meeting is an opportunity for us to discuss your application and for you to ask any questions you may have. You will have the chance to explain in person why you have decided to make the film and to outline your ideas in more detail. We will have questions about the application and may ask you to develop some of your ideas further or address specific aspects of the production.

You may need to supply further information after the meeting so we do not have a set deadline for letting you know whether we are taking your application forward. Based on assessment of the further information received (if applicable), the Film Fund will select projects that are being recommended for funding. Internal discussion with our Production, Business Affairs and Production Finance departments will take place before we are able to formally commit to the project.

## LOTTERY FINANCE COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

Funding recommendations are then made to the BFI Lottery Finance Committee for approval.

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing of our decisions as soon as possible. Our decision on whether we wish to support your project is final.

# FEEDBACK

We aim to make the application process as transparent as possible, but as a result of the volume of applications we receive, we do not have the resources to provide feedback on projects where we are not requesting further material or a meeting.

In these circumstances, we will send you a standard rejection email and the documentation held on file for the assessment of these projects will simply state “pass”.

On projects that have received further consideration or that we have met to talk about, we will try to provide some feedback, if requested, and if we have some constructive advice to offer beyond the meeting.

We welcome constructive feedback from you on our application process, so we can continue to improve.

# RESUBMISSION

No resubmissions can be made to the Film Fund for completion funding projects that it declines.

# SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

If your application is successful, you will be made an **offer of funding**.

You will be required to enter into an agreement with the BFI that sets out the terms and conditions of our funding. These conditions will include the following:

- 1** The BFI will pay the funding to a limited company registered by you in the UK (either as a company incorporated in the UK or incorporated in the European Union or European Economic Area and registered as a branch in the UK).
- 2** The BFI Corridor will be available for all production funding. This is a 25% share of the BFI's recouped investment in the film until the BFI has recouped 50% of its investment (including the BFI Corridor), rising to 50% of the BFI's recouped investment until the BFI has recouped 100% of its investment (including the BFI Corridor). The BFI Corridor is payable into a Locked Box bank account held by the BFI for the benefit of the writer, UK production company and director of the film who may draw-down those funds and spend them on further development or production of film projects or on staff skills training, subject to certain conditions and caveats.

The UK production company will also be entitled to recoup an amount equal to the UK Tax Credit advance included in the final finance plan used to finish the film (capped at the final amount of the UK Tax Credit if lower) which is called the UK Tax Credit Entitlement. The UK Tax Credit Entitlement is payable into the Locked Box and can also be drawn-down for future development or production activity or on staff skills training. The UK Tax Credit Entitlement is either payable alongside or after the BFI's production funding recoupment position from the film's sales revenues provided all other financiers providing production funding agree to the UK Tax Credit Entitlement being available to the UK production company from the film's revenues and if so, its recoupment position.

Further information on the BFI's locked-box entitlement scheme is available on the [Locked Box](#) page of the BFI website.

- 3** You will be required to provide the BFI with a net profit share.

- 4** You may be required to include the BFI animated logo and presentation credit at the start of the film (regardless of whether the other main title credits appear at the end of the film) and certain closing credits at the end of the film.
- 5** You will be required to assign a share of all rights (including copyright) in the finished film to the BFI which the BFI shall hold in perpetuity and license back to you to make and exploit the film.
- 6** The BFI will generally take a security interest over the company producing the film and may take a security interest over any co-producer but may decide not to do so when advancing completion funding.
- 7** You will need to establish a clear title to your project i.e. demonstrate you have or can trigger all the rights necessary to produce and exploit the film.
- 8** The BFI may withdraw any offer of funding if it has reasonable concerns relating to the terms of any third party finance.
- 9** You will be required to provide a contribution to the Skills Investment Fund of 0.5% of the BFI award (subject to the SIF cap).
- 10** You will be expected to put in place all customary production insurances (including errors and omissions insurance) on which the BFI must be named as an additional insurer.
- 11** All revenues for the film must be collected by an independent collection agent and any irrevocable payment instructions issued by the sales agent of your film to sub-distributors must cite and direct payment of any minimum guarantee and overages to the collection account.
- 12** The BFI will require certain approvals over your film including in relation to the terms of other finance, the identity and terms of appointment of the sales agent and all distributors, and all documentation prepared in relation to the film.
- 13** The BFI will not normally agree to contribute funding to a production budget which includes interest, premium or overhead fees charged by other financiers or investors other than bank interest where gap financing is in place or where sales are being discounted or where premiums are being charged by private equity investors.
- 14** The BFI is keen to ensure that you receive your full entitlement to a reasonable producer fee and production company overhead from within the production budget and does not encourage deferral of any such amounts.

- 15** If you deliver your film within budget the BFI will support your participation in underspend of up to 50% after any UK Tax Credit funder has first participated in the underspend to the extent the UK Tax Credit has reduced as a result of the underspend.
- 16** Your film's budget should include sufficient funds to clear worldwide rights in all media in perpetuity from all individuals or organisations who are contributing to, or whose material is to be featured in, the film.
- 17** You will be required to ensure that your film is produced in accordance with the requirements of all unions and guilds having jurisdiction and with all applicable laws and statutes.
- 18** You will be required to ensure that any agreement for the distribution of your film in the UK provides for distribution of soft-subtitling and audio-description materials in cinemas and on any video-on-demand, DVD or Blu-ray disc release of the film.
- 19** You will be required to provide certain delivery materials to the BFI, the costs of which must be included in the budget of the film.
- 20** The BFI will not commence cashflow until it is satisfied that you have complied with certain conditions as set out in the agreement. At our discretion, we may provide an advance in the form of 'pre-closing cashflow' but there will be no automatic entitlement to this. The BFI will hold back 5% of its funding until delivery to the BFI of specified delivery materials, including disability access materials (and a letter from the UK distributor confirming receipt of the same) a diversity standards report and a final audited cost report certified by an independent auditor.
- 21** The BFI funding must be paid into a separate dedicated production account.
- 22** During completion of your film the BFI will want access to information about the film and to be able to attend any stages of production.
- 23** The BFI will have consultation rights over assembly and all cuts of the film and a shared approval over the final cut (alongside other financiers as is customary).

- 24** The BFI promotes the BS8909 Standard, a specification for a sustainability management system for film, which has been designed to help the film industry run its business in a more sustainable way. As we investigate the feasibility of making BS8909 compliance a requirement of funding, you may be asked about what sustainability initiatives you already employ, or how you might make your production more sustainable or 'green'.
- 25** You will be required to comply with certain requests in relation to interns or trainees and you may be expected, if asked and where feasible and within reason, to participate in any apprenticeship schemes run by the Film Fund, during production or at some point in the future.
- 26** You will also be asked to provide access to the production, or the film, for other BFI activities such as film education or fundraising screenings and/or from time to time to make yourself or the writer and/or director of your film available, subject to professional commitments, to provide industry training or mentoring if the BFI reasonably requests.

- 27** You will be required to deliver against the undertakings made by you in relation to the BFI Diversity Standards. Failure to deliver against those undertakings without good cause may affect your ability to receive future project funding from the BFI.
- 28** The agreement will include standard termination provisions.

## **DIVERSITY STANDARDS REPORTING**

Successful applicants will be required to submit an Equality Monitoring Report at the end of the project which will be used to measure success against the BFI Diversity Standards. Projects achieving a high level of good practice will be able to display the Screen Diversity logo to advertise to the industry and audiences the contribution their film has made to sector diversity.

# BFI LOTTERY FUNDING GENERAL CONDITIONS

- 1** The information in these guidelines can change. The law and Government regulations on distributing National Lottery funds may also change. The BFI therefore reserves the right to review this funding scheme and/or change its policies, procedures and assessment criteria.
- 2** The application form does not necessarily cover all the information the BFI uses to decide which applications to fund. The BFI can ask applicants for extra information.
- 3** All applications are made at the applicant's own risk. The BFI will not be liable for loss, damage or costs arising directly or indirectly from:
  - the application process;
  - the BFI's decision not to provide an award to an applicant; or
  - dealing with the application.
- 4** Please check your application form carefully. The BFI will not process applications which are incomplete or which do not comply with these guidelines.
- 5** The BFI's decisions on applications are final.
- 6** The BFI will not pay any funding until it has received a fully executed copy of the funding agreement and any conditions precedent to that agreement have been satisfied or waived by the BFI.
- 7** The BFI will publicise information on the number of applications it receives and the awards made. This information will include the name of the successful applicant, award amount, project name and project details.
- 8** The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request certain information held by the BFI. This includes information held in relation to applications to the BFI's Lottery funding programmes or schemes. Therefore if you choose to apply to the BFI you should be aware that the information you supply, either in whole or in part, may be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act.

**9** Sometimes the BFI's Governors or members of staff may be involved in some way with applicants. This interest has to be declared in applications from such applicants. The relevant Governor or staff member will not be involved in assessing the application or the decision to make an award. Applicants are advised not to try to influence the success of their application by approaching a Governor or staff member.

**10** It is important that applicants carefully check the information given in the application form. The BFI standard terms and conditions entitle it to withhold or reclaim an award in the following circumstances:

- if the application was filled in dishonestly or with incorrect or misleading information about the organisation or the project whether deliberately or accidentally; and
- if the award recipient acts dishonestly or negligently to the disadvantage of the project

The BFI will follow up cases of suspected fraud and will pass information to the police.

**11** The BFI requires that any measures taken by applicants to address underrepresentation are fully in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 – see more at [equalityhumanrights.com](http://equalityhumanrights.com)

## **12 Complaints and Appeals:**

The BFI's decision is final. Inevitably applications will be turned down and applicants may be disappointed by this result. Formal appeals against the final decision will not be considered unless the applicant has good cause to believe that the procedures for processing the applications were not adhered to, or applied in such a way as to prejudice the outcome of the application. A copy of the BFI's Complaints and Appeals procedure can be obtained on request from the BFI's Communications Office.

## **13 Recognition of the National**

**Lottery:** The BFI distributes 'good cause' National Lottery Funding. We ask all of our partners and award recipients to increase the visibility of the National Lottery by:

- Promoting and proudly displaying the National Lottery logo; and
- Warmly and energetically finding ways to get all beneficiaries to spread the word.

It is therefore an important condition of BFI funding that the source of the funding (being the National Lottery) is prominently acknowledged through conspicuous use of the BFI/National Lottery lock up logo and through agreed verbal and written acknowledgement. Also that partners and beneficiaries take frequent opportunities to highlight not just the fact of the funding but why it is funded and therefore the good work that is possible through the National Lottery.

# APPENDIX A: QUALIFYING FILM FESTIVALS

In order to apply for completion funding, your film needs to have been accepted at one of the following international film festivals:

**ANNECY (ANIMATION)**

**BERLIN**

**BUSAN INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL**

**CANNES**

**EDINBURGH**

**FANTASTIC FEST**

**HONG KONG**

**KARLOVY VARY**

**LOCARNO**

**LONDON**

**ROME FILM FESTIVAL**

**ROTTERDAM**

**SAN SEBASTIAN**

**SITGES INTERNATIONAL**

**SUNDANCE**

**SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST**

**TELLURIDE**

**TOKYO FILM FESTIVAL**

**TORONTO**

**TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL**

**VENICE**