



2021-22 ONTARIO CREATES INTERACTIVE DIGITAL MEDIA FUND GUIDELINES

Production and Concept Definition Programs – Interactive Content (Non-Linear)

Deadlines: April 12, 2021 by 5:00pm
August 30, 2021 by 5:00pm

The Ontario Creates Interactive Digital Media (IDM) Fund program documentation includes:

- Ontario Creates IDM Fund Guidelines (this document)
- Ontario Creates IDM Fund Budget and Financing Guidelines and Template
 - [Concept Definition](#)
 - [Production](#)
- [Ontario Creates Program Policies](#)

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

PROGRAM UPDATE: 2021/22

The IDM Fund Production and Concept Definition programs now consist of two streams:

- [Interactive Content \(Non-Linear\)](#)
- [Video Content \(Linear\)](#)

Applicants seeking support for the creation of digital first content which is intended to be accessed in a linear fashion should consult the [Video Content \(Linear\) guidelines](#). This can include, but is not limited to: web series, video content for online magazines, XR experiences with minimal interactive content, etc.

The Ontario Creates Interactive Digital Media (IDM) Fund is aimed at strengthening and stimulating economic growth in the interactive digital media sector. These guidelines outline two programs in the fund: Production and Concept Definition – Interactive Content (Non-Linear).

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1. Introduction

The objectives of the IDM Fund are to:

- support the creation of high quality, original, interactive digital media content projects* by Ontario companies for commercial exploitation;
- assist in capitalizing Ontario content companies creating interactive digital content projects*; and
- contribute to the financing of projects that make a positive contribution to the Ontario economy.

*projects that are intended for distribution on a platform, network or device that is capable of interactivity

The Ontario Creates IDM Fund – Interactive Content (Non-Linear) program provides IDM content creators with funding for activities related to the creation of interactive content. Content is considered interactive when it requires the active participation of and input from users which has an impact on the manner in which that content is experienced by those users. This can include, but is not limited to: video games, mobile content apps, e-learning content, XR experiences with substantial interactive content, digital publishing projects and other web properties.

For projects with significant video and linear content please see the guidelines for the IDM Fund – Video (Linear Content) stream.

These guidelines outline two programs:

- **Concept Definition** - support for early-stage activities that will assist the applicant company in moving towards the production of a market-ready interactive content project.
- **Production** - support for the creation of a market-ready interactive content project that will be made publicly available to an audience.

The Ontario Creates IDM Fund will support projects from a range of genres, delivery platforms and budgets. Consideration will be given to the industrial and creative benefits of activities and projects.

The Ontario Creates IDM Fund – Interactive Content (Non-Linear) is designed to support the creation of projects that consist of professionally created content that will be distributed on a platform, network or device that is capable of interactivity. Technologies, tools, platforms, hardware, software, services, etc. without a content component are ineligible. If you are unsure if your project is eligible, it is recommended that you to contact Ontario Creates prior to commencing an application. In addition to meeting the project eligibility outlined in the guidelines, applicants are also required to ensure that their company is eligible. Further considerations regarding project and applicant eligibility are included below.

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

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

Ontario Creates 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 please contact the relevant Program Consultant a minimum of four weeks before the deadline.

* Equity seeking communities are those that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization may be caused by, but not limited to, attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status. Equity-seeking communities identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation.

** The provincial definition of diversity states: the dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to: ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion (creed), sex, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

2. Eligible Applicants

Applications will be accepted from *established* and *new* companies.

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 completed screen-based content projects; 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.

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 or (2) publishing industries;
- be majority-owned by individuals that have a recent track record of working in Ontario;
- 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.

Companies are encouraged to contact Ontario Creates to review eligibility criteria. New companies and first-time applicants are required to contact Ontario Creates in advance to determine their eligibility before submitting an application.

Applications from all companies must also meet the following requirements:

- be *Ontario-based*;
 - have a permanent establishment in Ontario which serves as head office and base of operations (i.e. applicant is eligible to pay corporate income taxes in Ontario; and Ontario address is listed as head office in T2 filing);
 - companies with more than 365 days of operation must be able to demonstrate that they had a permanent establishment in Ontario for at least one year prior to the deadline.
- be a *Canadian-owned organization*;
 - as defined in the Investment Canada Act (Canada).
- be incorporated in Ontario or federally or prepared to incorporate immediately if their application is successful;
- be in a sound financial position; and
- be in good standing with Ontario Creates at time of application submission.

The following companies are ineligible:

- 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.

In addition, applications should be submitted by the primary corporate entity and not the single purpose production company.

3. Eligible Projects and Activities

The IDM Fund – Interactive Content (Non-Linear) stream consists of two programs to support content creation activities:

- **Concept Definition** will support early-stage activities that take place prior to and assist the applicant company in preparing for full production of an interactive content project. The types of activities that may be supported include but are not limited to prototype creation, preparation of pre-production documents and pitch material, business planning and research.
- **Production** will support the creation of market-ready interactive content projects that will be made publicly available to an audience on a digital media platform, network or device that is capable of interactivity. The types of projects that may be supported include but are not limited to video games, mobile content apps, e-learning content, XR experiences with substantial interactive content, digital publishing projects and other web properties.

To be eligible for the Ontario Creates IDM Fund 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 created in partnership with other companies that are not eligible applicants will be considered provided the partners are making a meaningful contribution to the project. Where partners are involved, their share of profits should be in appropriate proportion to the ownership of the project and should conform to standard industry practices. International partnerships and co-productions are permitted. Preference may be given to projects that are substantially owned by Ontario-based organizations.

An interactive content project must also:

- 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;
- include the creation or development of unique, creative and professional content;
- be released on an interactive digital media platform, network or device as the primary distribution channel;
- be intended for a consumer or magazine media business audience or intended to be used by students attending primary, secondary or post-secondary institutions as the primary audience;
- 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.

Additional notes regarding eligible content projects:

- *Projects/activities must be complete at the conclusion of the program.* Projects and activities that will be augmented and/or enhanced with additional content and components at a later date are eligible provided the applicant company can demonstrate that the portion of the project supported through this program can be considered complete. Enhancements, improvements and redesigns of existing products already underway or released to the market prior to submission of the application are ineligible.
- *Serialized content projects will be considered.* Projects that require ongoing content creation will be considered provided the applicant can demonstrate that the content that is being created is a stand-alone and complete product (edition, season, series, volume, period of time, etc.) The Ontario Creates IDM Fund is not intended to become core funding for serialized content that is regularly updated and preference may be given to content projects that have not received previous financial support through this program.
- *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.

The Ontario Creates IDM Fund will not support content projects that:

- are primarily intended to sell products and/or services;
- are primarily intended to promote companies and corporate and/or institutional agendas;
- are primarily for interpersonal communication;
- are primarily catalogues and databases;
- are primarily repurposed linear and streaming content (i.e. music, video, books, magazines) that have not been augmented or enhanced;
- involve cash pricing;
- have commenced substantial concept definition or production activities prior to application to the program;
- are contrary to public policy in the opinion of Ontario Creates; and
- 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.

Companies and their affiliates may submit up to two applications per deadline ranked in order of preference. Where more than one application is submitted, consideration will be given to the capacity of the applicant company to manage multiple projects simultaneously. Projects that were not successful at a previous deadline of the Ontario Creates IDM Fund may be resubmitted with the permission of Ontario Creates.

4. Budget, Financing and Timeline Requirements

The IDM Fund will provide a non-refundable contribution of up to 50% of eligible Ontario expenses as follows:

Concept Definition

- Maximum request = \$50,000
- Minimum request = \$10,000

Production

- Maximum request = \$300,000
- Minimum request = \$25,000

As a requirement of the program, participating companies must spend at least twice the contribution received from the Ontario Creates IDM Fund on Ontario expenses. An Ontario expense includes a payment to a business with an office in Ontario or an Ontario resident. This is a minimum requirement and applicants that spend a greater percentage of their budget in Ontario will receive a higher score in the appropriate decision category.

In addition, a minimum 10% of the total project budget is required as a cash contribution from a source other than Ontario Creates.

Budgets must be submitted on the template provided for the program you are applying for, and must include all costs through to completion and delivery. Production projects are

required to allocate a minimum of 10% of budget categories A+B to cover promotion expenses that occur during the production period.

The Ontario Creates IDM Fund will only act as a last-in participant in project financing. All financing required in addition to Ontario Creates' contribution including investment by the applicant or other investors must be committed in writing at the time of application and supported by appropriate documentation. All deferrals, discounts and other non-cash contributions must be supported in writing.

Projects that are under review for the corresponding deadline with other recognized industry funding programs (e.g. Canada Media Fund) will be considered provided financing is confirmed in advance of a formal Ontario Creates funding commitment. In all cases applicants must indicate whether they are intending to submit applications to other funding agencies. **Applicants that fail to disclose this information will be deemed incomplete.**

Applicants that have higher budgets under review with other funding agencies must submit that budget with their IDM Fund application. If appropriate they may also submit a lower, fully financed budget as part of their application with other funder contributions omitted. This alternate budget must be accompanied by a summary of adjustments/changes that show how the project scope has been reduced to allow for delivery of a complete project at the lower budget. **Alternate budgets will only be considered if they are submitted as part of the application.**

Substantial concept definition or production activities cannot commence until after submission of an application. Expenses incurred prior to submission of the application are not eligible. The applicant must begin incurring expenses no later than 90 days after notification of Ontario Creates' decision. Projects must be completed with all expenses incurred and all deliverables provided to Ontario Creates according to the timelines below. In addition, to provide applicants with flexibility to respond to volatility in the IDM industry, the program will allow for project extensions on an as-needed basis as noted. All extensions require Ontario Creates approval.

- Concept Definition - within 15 months of notification of the decision (12 months for Concept Definition activities and 3 months for preparation of financial reporting documents) with a possible extension of up to 6 months
- Production - within 30 months of notification of the decision (24 months for Production activities and 6 months for preparation of financial reporting documents) with a possible extension of up to 12 months

In situations where projects undergo beneficial and significant changes after contracting such that they are no longer able to meet IDM Fund requirements, Ontario Creates will work to negotiate a modified delivery of the project that takes into account the objectives of the IDM Fund.

Applicants must review the Ontario Creates IDM Fund Budget and Financing Guidelines and Template ([Concept Definition](#) or [Production](#)) which includes information regarding additional mandatory budget and financing requirements. Failure to meet these requirements may result in your application being deemed incomplete or ineligible.

5. Application Process and Evaluation

There are two deadlines. Applications must be submitted to Ontario Creates **by 5:00pm on April 12, 2021 or August 30, 2021**. All applications must be submitted electronically through the Online Application Portal (OAP) at <https://apply.ontariocreates.ca/>.

A complete list of required application materials is outlined in the application form **on the OAP**. It is imperative that applications include all requested documentation and adhere to the stated page limits. Incomplete applications may not be considered. Applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the application process early to allow ample time to complete the necessary information.

- Applications will be assessed for completeness and eligibility by Ontario Creates staff immediately following the deadline.
- Applications that pass this initial review may be sent to specialist industry advisors with relevant knowledge who will prepare written assessments of the feasibility, market potential and creative strength of the projects. (Ontario Creates reserves the right to limit the number of applications forwarded to the specialist industry advisors and/or jury for consideration).
- A jury of industry professionals and/or Ontario Creates staff will review the applications and written assessments prepared by the specialist industry advisors to make final recommendations to Ontario Creates.
- Applicants will be notified about the status of their application within 4 months of the deadline.

6. Decision Criteria

This is a highly competitive program and it is anticipated that the total request for funding will be much greater than the funding available. Applicants are advised to ensure that they meet all eligibility requirements before submitting an application. Applicants should also ensure that their application material clearly conveys the strengths of their application with respect to the program guidelines. The number of applicants who will receive funding and the amount of funding received is dependent on the quantity and quality of the projects selected by the jury and the individual needs of each applicant.

Ontario Creates applies a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion to the evaluation criteria for this program, and directs jury members to do the same. Applicants proposing projects/activities that support and reflect diversity are expected to tangibly demonstrate a genuine and sustained commitment to these equity-seeking communities. Ontario

Creates may identify particular underrepresented communities within a particular sector. The provincial definition of diversity states: the dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to: ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion (creed), sex, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

Once applicant and project eligibility have been confirmed, applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Concept Definition

- Track record of the applicant company and project team including an assessment of diversity among senior leadership, staff or contract employees and company policies and/or initiatives that support diversity, equity and inclusion, particularly underrepresented communities within the interactive digital media industry (15%)
- Project risks and feasibility (15%)
- Project quality, innovation, and creativity including an assessment of the extent to which the project supports and reflects diversity, particularly under-represented voices within the interactive digital media industry (30%)
- Potential for positive impact on the company's growth (30%)
- Benefit to the Ontario economy (10%)

Production

- Track record of the applicant company and project team including an assessment of diversity among senior leadership, staff or contract employees and company policies and/or initiatives that support diversity, equity and inclusion, particularly underrepresented communities within the interactive digital media industry (15%)
- Project risks and feasibility (15%)
- Project quality, innovation, and creativity including an assessment of the extent to which the project supports and reflects diversity, particularly under-represented voices within the interactive digital media industry (30%)
- Potential for critical and commercial success and revenue generation (20%)
- Benefit to the Ontario economy (20%)

7. Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will receive IDM Fund support during the course of the program, triggered by pre-determined deliverables as follows:

- 60% on execution of the Ontario Creates agreement;
- 15% on delivery of an interim report;
- 15% on delivery of the completed project and a final report; and
- 10% on delivery of financial reporting documents.

8. More Information

For Video Game Projects	For Digital Publishing, E-learning, Other Content	For Video, Web Series Projects
Kim Gibson Program Consultant 416-642-6651 kgibson@ontariocreates.ca	Matt Hilliard-Forde Program Consultant 416-890-0648 mhilliard- forde@ontariocreates.ca	Danielle Hébert Program Consultant 416-642-6687 dhebert@ontariocreates.ca

These guidelines are for the 2021-22 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.

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