

BFI DOC SOCIETY SHORT FILM FUND

MADE OF TRUTH: BFI DOC SOCIETY  
Funding Guidelines

PROUD TO BE A PARTNER OF BFI NETWORK



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## Introduction

Welcome to the BFI Doc Society Short Film Fund. We have a mission to discover and support talented directors and producers at the start of their careers. We're seeking talent with the burning desire to tell original stories: people with inspired creative approaches and new perspectives, and work that might be surprising, revelatory or challenging.

We invest National Lottery funds in original documentary filmmaking from adventurous storytellers, with a focus on projects which respond to our core objectives which are to support:

- The early careers of ambitious filmmakers;
- Work with cultural relevance or progressive ideas;
- 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; and
- An increase in the number of active projects originated by filmmakers outside London.

**The BFI Doc Society Short Film Fund supports projects with directors based in the UK. This nation-wide programme endeavours to help more voices in more places contribute to distinctive, original storytelling.**

## BFI Doc Society Shorts funding

This fund is for non-fiction shorts, in both live action and animation. We want to support short films that:

- Bring exciting new voices and bold narratives to the screen
- Provide space for experimentation and idea-testing
- Advance the careers of the filmmakers involved through showcasing their abilities to the industry and the public.

### What support do filmmakers receive?

This fund provides grants to support the production costs of non-fiction short films. Each award of funding is accompanied by creative oversight of the short film by the BFI Doc Society Fund Executive, supported by our Production Manager and Business Affairs Executive. As well as working with filmmakers prior to and during production, they may also advise awarded filmmakers on:

- Finding screening opportunities, regionally and further afield
- Potential collaborators for your project
- Festival strategy for your film

- Other means to gain industry exposure for your work.

### Other sources of support

If you are looking for fiction film funding or related professional development opportunities, contact the [BFI NETWORK partner in your nation or region](#) to find out more about their funding for new filmmakers.

## Can I apply?

We welcome applications from director-producer teams. At the application stage though, it's not compulsory to have a producer attached. In such circumstances, if a project is accepted, the BFI Doc Society team can help in finding an appropriate producer; the filmmaker would then need to confirm a producer for the project before final approval of the funding.

During assessment of your application or after we make any award to the project, the BFI Doc Society Executives may recommend you attach an additional producer to your film, in cases where your team would benefit distinctly from this additional expertise.

This fund welcomes new talent in the documentary industry and as such the director and producer on the project can be new to documentary filmmaking but will need to be able to demonstrate a broader creative track record as part of the application. This could be student work, or something created at a grassroots/non-professional level, and it may be in film, television, theatre or another art form. All of these team members need to be over 18 and not in full-time education.

If members of your team are involved in other short film projects that are also seeking funds, or have secured funds, from BFI Doc Society, you should

state this in your application. It will need to be clear to us that those concerned would be able to fulfill their obligations to each film, should they be offered funding for more than one project.

### **What should I do before applying?**

Before you make an application you should:

- Register for the BFI NETWORK Postroom, an online space for filmmakers to post previous short films or new scripts, where they can be viewed by industry executives. This can lead to connections being made with funding decision-makers, producers and agents. You can find the Postroom [here](#) and create a profile [here](#); and
- **read the BFI Diversity Standards**, a set of measures that prompt you to consider how your project can contribute to creating a more inclusive UK film industry. You'll be asked to respond to the Standards in your application.

## **Checklist before you apply**

Please check that you meet the below criteria, and any other specifications made in these Guidelines, before submitting your application. Please note that references to the role of writer only apply if you have a designated writer on your project.

I'm seeking funding for a 'single project' documentary short film in live action or animation of no longer than 40 minutes in length	
The director, or at least one of the co-directors, of my project is/are resident of the UK	

The writer(s), director(s) and producer(s) of my project each have a creative track record as described above and I can demonstrate this in the application	
The director(s), producer(s) (and writer(s), if relevant) of my project are each aged 18 or over and not in full-time education	
I think that my short film would be capable of qualifying for certification as a British film through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Schedule 1 to the Films Act 1985 (The Cultural Test);<sup>1</sup></li> <li>ii. one of the UK's official bilateral co-production treaties; or</li> <li>iii. The European Convention on Co-Production</li> </ul>	
I believe that my film would be capable of obtaining a BBFC certificate which is no more restrictive than BBFC '18'	
I have considered how the project will address the BFI Diversity Standards	
My short film will be delivered by March 2021	

## Speculative Submissions

We can only make awards to projects that have been submitted to us through the online application process. This means that we cannot accept, or read, informal submissions such as feature ideas or other materials submitted by any means other than the online application portal.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that your own assessment of your project as being capable of qualifying for certification does not mean that it will necessarily pass. Full guidance on British certification can be found on the BFI website at [bfi.org.uk/film-industry/british-certification-tax-relief](http://bfi.org.uk/film-industry/british-certification-tax-relief)

## What can I apply for?

This fund is for documentary short films of **up to forty minutes** in length (and it's fine to aim to make a film that's considerably shorter). We will look at your idea and the rest of your application to gauge how long your film is likely to be.

You should apply for the amount of money you will need for the production and finishing costs of your short film, up to a maximum amount of £15,000. We will assess the feasibility of your budget and may offer you funding at a different amount than that which you've requested. Your budget should allow a minimum of £3,000 for finishing post-production and deliverables. Finishing post-production includes ingest, grading, online edit and sound post. Film deliverable items include:

- 1 Pro Res 4444 QuickTime mezzanine file;
- 1 H264 .mov or .mp4 file;
- 1 password protected Vimeo link; and
- Enhanced access materials: audio description and captions (subtitles).

The BFI Doc Society Fund is committed to ensuring that the cinema experience is open to all, especially to disabled audience members. It's a requirement of our funding that the film is delivered with subtitles and audio description, and that the availability of these materials is publicised and they are made available in time for any screenings of the film.

You will need to factor the production of these materials into your production timeline and ensure you have budgeted for them accordingly. Someone from the creative team will need to take responsibility for liaising

with the company carrying out the work. Cost estimates for this work can vary considerably so it is important to shop around as early as possible to ensure you have budgeted appropriately.

(See point 8 of Successful Applications section for further deliverables.)

## **Music**

Music can be complicated to clear in terms of permissions, and expensive. If we make an award for your short film, our agreement with you for the funding will include parameters for use of music within the film, to ensure that additional costs or delays do not arise during distribution of the film in relation to getting permission to use music.

## **Access requirements during the production of your short film**

If any members of your cast or crew have personal access needs that will incur a cost during the production of your short film, you can include these costs in your request to us. We define such needs as specific support required by people who are disabled or have a physical or mental health condition, which will result in an actual cash cost to your production budget. This might for example be a BSL interpreter to work with members of cast or crew; additional transport or accommodation costs for disabled team members; or a personal assistant for a team member with a learning disability or mental health condition to assist during the production.

If you require support for such costs, please include them in your budget under the category *Access support*. These costs will not count towards the £15,000 maximum award amount - so, if you require additional funding to pay for personal access support during production, you can make an application to us for up to £15,000 plus the additional amount you need for access support.

## **Environmental Sustainability**

We want to ensure that teams have the tools they need to understand the impact of their production on the environment. Successful applicants will be provided with a sustainable production checklist that provides up to date recommendations to help you make changes to your production and help the creative industry protect our planet. A completed copy of the checklist will form part of the condition precedents and delivery materials.

Productions should follow these core principles:

- Seek to reduce the negative environmental impact of production wherever possible
- Share and embed sustainable values and behaviour with cast, crew and their supply chain
- Promote sustainable production to colleagues within production and across the wider industry.

## **How do I make an application?**

Applications for this funding open on **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July** and close at noon on **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020** via the Doc Society website.

When first using the online application portal you will be asked to create an account which means you can save and review your applications before submission; please note this is separate to the Postroom profile described above. You will be able to access all your previous and in-progress

applications at any point by logging into your account. If you need support in completing the application form please contact [hello@docsociety.org](mailto:hello@docsociety.org)

It should be your project's producer who completes this form, or if you do not yet have a producer, the project's director. This person will be considered the 'lead applicant' to whom, if your application is successful, the award will be made. Applications can be made by individuals or through a production company.

### ***Equality Monitoring***

When completing an application you'll be asked questions concerning the diversity of your team. This collects data to help measure how effective the BFI Doc Society Fund is in attracting a diverse range of applicants for funding. It requests information about the director, producer and writer (if applicable) on your project. When filling it in, you can select 'prefer not to say' if you'd rather not share the information requested.

### ***Project, team and supporting material***

These sections will ask you for information including:

- your story idea.
- the practical elements of producing the film.
- Biographies for your producer, director and writer (if applicable).
- links or attachments to previous creative work from your core team members, such as short films, writing samples or visual artwork. You can also provide links to materials expressing your ideas for your new project.
- how your project responds to the [BFI Diversity Standards](#), e.g. how it might address industry under-representation in relation to disability, gender, race, age, sexual orientation and / or socio-economic status.

The information you provide for this answer may be anonymised and used to help inform future funding decisions, research and strategy.

## Finances

You'll be asked to state the amount of funding you are seeking from the BFI Doc Society Fund for your short film (maximum £15,000), alongside the total cost of producing it. A minimum of £3,000 should be allocated to the finishing, post-production and deliverables.

If the total cost of your film exceeds the amount you are requesting from the BFI Doc Society Short Film Fund, you don't need to have all of the additional funds raised at the point of application but will need to show an achievable plan for securing them. These additional funds would need to be secured before we make any award to you.

## Budget

At the end of the form you will need to attach a budget using the Excel template provided alongside these guidelines, showing a breakdown of your anticipated costs. If you need any guidance about how to complete the template, please email [hello@docsociety.org](mailto:hello@docsociety.org)

Your budget should make sure to include sufficient funds to cover:

- all costs you expect to incur, with estimates used if necessary
- the clearance of all rights in the film worldwide in all media in perpetuity (including use fees, repeat fees and residuals)
- payment for all cast and crew at least at National Minimum Wage rates or higher (<https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>)
- the production insurances
- all the delivery materials (see [Successful applications](#) below) required by BFI Doc Society

- a 5% contingency
- Festival submission costs
- any other requirements of funding detailed within these Guidelines.

You may choose to budget for creating a Digital Cinema Package (DCP) for exhibiting your film. If so, please include the cost of creating an additional unencrypted DCP for the BFI National Archive, for the purposes of long term preservation.

You may also include up to £500 towards the costs of festival submissions or equivalent exhibition opportunities for the completed work.

Please note that the funding from BFI Doc Society will be a grant and inclusive of any VAT.

## What happens to my application?

Once you have submitted your application, you'll receive a confirmation within 14 days of submission that it has been received.

### A. Eligibility

We will check that your application is eligible for funding; using the criteria identified in [Can I Apply?](#) above. Only **complete** applications can be assessed so if there is information missing from your application this will make it ineligible.

### B. Assessment

Your application will be assessed against the following criteria:

- its potential contribution to meeting the stated objectives of the BFI Doc Society Fund
- the creative strengths of the proposal
- the strengths of the project team
- how the story will connect with audiences
- the impact your project could have in addressing the BFI Diversity Standards
- the project's likely need for National Lottery support, e.g. related to its potential cultural impact
- the overall balance of projects receiving support, to ensure variety in the work being funded.

The assessment will also take into account how you have managed any previous BFI or Doc Society funding you may have received.

A BFI Doc Society team member may contact you to discuss your project, including suggesting you make revisions to your application prior to a final decision being made. You might be asked for further information or invited to have a phone call or meeting - this doesn't mean any commitment has been made to fund your project but will help us gather the information needed to make a decision.

We may consult external readers or colleagues from other organisations regarding your application. If this occurs, the individuals involved will be required to maintain confidentiality regarding the application contents and agree not to retain application materials following their review.

We may undertake a due diligence assessment of the applicant as part of the review process.

## Fund Committee Consideration

The Fund Committee is comprised of the Fund executives, a representative of the BFI, and Doc Society executive directors. The Fund Committee will decide whether to award funding to an application.

All applicants will be informed in writing of the decision on their application. If your application is declined, all supporting materials will be deleted from your submission in line with our record retention policy.

The decision of BFI Doc Society as to whether it wishes to support your application is final.

## C. Timeline Summary

Stage	Timeline
Email acknowledgment of your application	Within two weeks of submission
Decision to progress or decline your application	Within eight weeks of the fund closing date.

If we request additional materials from you, the amount of time it takes for you to supply these may have an impact on our ability to take a decision on your application within the above timeframe, and it may take more than eight weeks after acknowledgment to reach a decision.

# Feedback

We are only able to support a small percentage of the applications received and unfortunately have to say ‘no’ far more often than we are able to say ‘yes’. Where applications are not successful, we are not able to provide you with feedback. However, if you’ve had a project meeting or detailed call with a member of the BFI Doc Society team as part of the application process, or if they requested additional creative material, you can ask to receive some feedback.

Some of the reasons we decline applications are:

- The project was not eligible for funding
- It did not align with our stated objectives for this funding
- We felt the material was too familiar or derivative
- We didn’t feel that the project ‘needed’ National Lottery support, i.e. it should be financeable by other means
- There was insufficient engagement with the BFI Diversity Standards.

## Complaints and Appeals

The complaints procedure cannot be used to appeal against our decision on giving a grant if we have followed our decision-making process correctly.

When the application relates to a creative submission, such as a script, we cannot reassess the script when it has been turned down on the basis of its creative merit.

Any comments about our policies should be made to

The Chief Executive Officer, Doc Society, 50 Frith Street, London W1D 4SQ

We welcome constructive feedback from you on our application process, so we can continue to improve: please send any feedback to

[hello@docsociety.org](mailto:hello@docsociety.org)

# Successful applications

If your application is successful, you will be made an **offer of funding** as set out below. Following this, a BFI Doc Society team member will provide creative input and oversight of your project.

You will need to provide an agreed final budget and a confirmed Specification for your short film, prior to us sending you the offer of funding. This will constitute the agreed criteria against which the project will be delivered.

The award will take the form of a non-recoupable grant and you will be required to enter into an agreement with Doc Society that sets out the terms and conditions of our funding. The agreement will include the following:

1. A legal undertaking by you that the work being funded is wholly original to you and your team and that all third-party materials incorporated in the film are cleared for use in the film in all media in perpetuity.
2. A permanent, non-exclusive license shall be granted to Doc Society and the BFI to exhibit the film in educational establishments and/or by online means on the BFI's website (including BFI Player and the BFI NETWORK Postroom) and to authorise others to do so via linked websites throughout the world in perpetuity and the right to use clips of the film.
3. A right of approval for the Doc Society of the rough and final cuts of the film.

4. A right of approval of all main production elements (including heads of department) and final credits.
5. A requirement to put in place all customary production insurances on which the Doc Society and BFI must be named as an additional insured.
6. A delivery date of the end of March 2021 by which you agree to finish work on your short film and submit the required delivery materials to us.
7. A cashflow that breaks down the award total into instalments, with the final payment being subject to submission to us of the delivery materials. The majority of the award is generally provided in an initial instalment (e.g. of 80%) to provide funding for use during delivery when costs are incurred. Any underspend on the award will be retained by, or reimbursed to, the BFI Doc Society Fund.
8. Delivery materials: We will require delivery of the following items (the cost of which must be contained in the budget for the film):  
*Film and Video Materials* - to be shared with Doc Society electronically via a secure cloud-based computer file transfer service  
1 Pro Res 4444 QuickTime mezzanine file.  
  
1 H264 .mov or .mp4 file.  
1 password protected Vimeo link.  
Caption (i.e. subtitle) files.  
Audio Description (“AD”) track.

In the event that it is not possible to deliver the Film and video materials electronically, they should be provided using a portable hard drive such as the Avastor HDX series.

*Publicity Materials*

5-10 production stills taken from the film.

5-10 behind the scenes stills taken from the film.

1 written pack to include one synopsis of approximately 250 words and a 160 character logline, flyers and other publicity material, full credits list, biographies of principal cast, individual producer(s), director(s), writer(s) and key crew, and production information, in electronic format by e-mail or file transfer.

*Documentation*

1 Final Cost Report.

Completed Credits Template.

Any applicable rights clearances.

Copies of all approved clearance agreements including Artists Agreement(s), Contributors Agreements, Crew Agreements (to include at a minimum all Heads of Department: DOP, Sound Recordist, Editor, Art Director/Production Designer, Sound Designer (if applicable)) and Music Contributors Agreement and a copy of the music cue sheet.

Sustainable Production Checklist with final evaluation complete.

*Release Plan*

9. An undertaking from you to acknowledge publicly that you have received National Lottery funding. The support provided by BFI Doc Society is only possible because of the National Lottery. We ask the filmmakers we fund to do everything they can to acknowledge the National Lottery as the source of this funding. This includes displaying the National Lottery logo on your short film, related

marketing materials, press releases and on the front pages of project and organisational websites. We ask beneficiaries to actively acknowledge and spread the word about their project being made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, whenever they can. This includes mentioning the National Lottery, at a minimum, on press releases, on print and marketing materials, online including through social media, and when speaking to the industry and the wider public about the project.

10. An undertaking from you to deliver against the plans 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.
  
11. Standard termination provisions.

## **Doc Society Funding General Conditions**

1. The information in these guidelines can change. The law and Government regulations on distributing National Lottery funds may also change. Doc Society 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 BFI Doc Society uses to decide which applications to fund. The BFI Doc Society team can ask applicants for extra information.

3. All applications are made at the applicant's own risk. Doc Society will not be liable for loss, damage or costs arising directly or indirectly from:
  - the application process;
  - BFI Doc Society's decision not to provide an award to an applicant; or
  - dealing with the application.
4. Please check your application form carefully. Doc Society will not process applications which are incomplete or which do not comply with these guidelines.
5. The BFI and Doc Society decisions on applications are final.
6. Doc Society 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 Doc Society.
7. Doc Society 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 Doc Society. This includes information held in relation to applications to the BFI Doc Society's National Lottery funding programmes or schemes. Therefore, if you choose to apply to BFI Doc Society 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 Doc Society's Board Members 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. Doc Society 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.

Doc Society will follow up cases of suspected fraud and will pass information to the police.

11. Doc Society requires that any measures taken by applicants to address underrepresentation be fully in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 - see more at [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com).

12. Complaints and Appeals: Doc Society'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. If such a situation arises, please send a letter to the Chief Executive Officer, Doc Society, 50 Frith Street W1D 4SQ

13. Recognition of the National Lottery: The BFI Doc Society Fund distributes ‘good cause’ National Lottery Funding. We ask all of our 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 spread the word.

It is therefore an important condition of BFI Doc Society funding that the source of the funding (being the National Lottery) is prominently acknowledged through conspicuous use of the BFI Doc Society/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.