

DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT FUND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What kind of programs is ITVS looking for?

ITVS is looking for single public television programs of any subject matter or viewpoint and in any style. We fund programs that bring new audiences to public television and expand civic participation by bringing diverse voices into the public sphere. Projects that address an underserved audience will have higher priority. Underserved audiences can be defined in terms of race, age, class, geography, or any number of specific communities and interests not usually addressed on public or commercial television. Other priorities include projects that convey new approaches to storytelling, and projects that demonstrate strong craftsmanship, attention to visuals, creativity and innovation. We are also looking for projects that demonstrate viability in terms of access to the subject and a well-thought-out budget.

What is the Diversity Development Fund?

The Diversity Development Fund (DDF) provides up to \$15,000 to both seasoned and emerging producers of color to research and develop single programs for public television. Funded activities may include travel, research, script development, preliminary production for fundraising/work-in-progress reels, or other early phase activities. The fund is supported in part by the Ford Foundation

Is DDF only looking for stories about diverse or minority communities?

DDF was created to support minority producers but does not specify which stories they must tell. However, we are looking for programs that fit the ITVS mission to serve underserved audiences, take creative risks, explore complex issues, inspire dialogue and express points of view seldom seen on commercial or public television.

Why aren't other minority status categories included in this initiative?

DDF is specifically for producers of color, as defined by ethnic communities of color, historically underrepresented in our public broadcasting system. They are African American, Asian American, Arab American, Latino/Latina, Native American/Native Alaskan, Pacific Islander, and mixed race.

How much research should be done before I apply? Should I have picked characters at this phase of the process?

You need to have done enough R&D to know that your story is a viable project that will work for the screen. This means that your project is more than just an idea. You need to have access to your characters or potential characters. If you need to travel or visit archives you should be able to justify where you want to go and why.

I have fundraising tape for my project already. Am I eligible for the DDF?

You are not eligible if you have already completed enough principal photography to complete a sample reel or work-in-progress. If you have a sample tape you are eligible to apply for production funding.

Can I apply with more than one program to the DDF?

You may submit only one application for one program.

Can I have a co-applicant on my project for the DDF?

Only one applicant may apply to the DDF. But if you have a team in place you should describe it in the Program Information section of your proposal. Do not send their resumes with your application. You will be asked to submit them if you are chosen as a finalist.

What makes a DDF proposal competitive?

A successful DDF proposal combines a compelling untold story with good access to characters, places and sources of information. In addition, a strong application includes proposed R&D activities that are specific to the story being told and in alignment with project development completed thus far.

Can I apply with a series?

DDF funding is only for single shows not series. In some cases, we will consider funding a pilot episode of a series in development if the pilot episode can stand alone and be distributed to the public television system as a one-off. If you are considering this, please call us to discuss it first.

If I am awarded funding from the DDF, will my project automatically go on to receive ITVS production funds?

The goal of the DDF is to help producers create programs that will be competitive in our other funding initiatives and in the public television system at large. Funded programs are encouraged to apply to other ITVS initiatives but DDF funding is not an automatic guarantee of production funding.

I am applying to write the first draft of a script. How long should my treatment be?

As a general rule of thumb treatments for ½ hour programs should run anywhere from 3-5 pages and for an hour program up to 10 pages. In the case of features treatments should not exceed 20 pages.

I understand that Open Call and LINCS no longer accept dramas. If I get DDF funding for script development how can I apply for production funds for my drama?

All dramas that receive DDF funding will be considered for production funding through our commissioning process.

How is ITVS Funding different from a grant?

Funded applicants receive funding in the form of a Development Agreement that assigns ITVS certain important rights over the project during the term of the contract. The independent producer maintains creative, editorial and financial control of the project, owns the copyright to the program and delivers all elements within 6 months of the contract date. ITVS retains the option for U.S. television broadcast rights, among others, up to 60 days after the receipt of all deliverables required under the contract.

In the budget information section do I also need to attach a detailed budget?

When applying, complete the budget form that is in the application. If your project is forwarded to the finalist phase, we will ask for a detailed budget.

What is the review process for DDF?

ITVS staff review and evaluate application materials. The top ten to fifteen percent are asked to submit materials for the finalist phase. An internal review panel made up of programming staff evaluates the materials and makes recommendations for funding. The call is competitive with 5-10% of applicants receiving an award.

Can I review a sample application?

Because of the wide range of projects that have received support from ITVS, we do not circulate sample applications for review.

What are the most common mistakes that applicants make?

Unfortunately, many applicants do not read the guidelines as carefully as they should. Many producers do not write clear treatments, making them generic and unspecific as to how the story will be told. Other common mistakes are incomplete proposals and no completed sample work. Applicants also forget to sign their signature at the end of the application. These can make applications ineligible.

Will ITVS fund a first-time filmmaker? Am I required to have a certain amount of producing experience?

No, ITVS cannot fund first-time filmmakers. To be eligible the applicant must be an independent producer with previous film or television experience. All applicants must be able to prove this experience by submitting a previously completed sample work on which they had a primary role. Applicants sometimes send tapes on which they were an editor, executive producer or associate producer. While this experience is relevant and should be included in your résumé, such tapes are not included in the review process, so please don't send them. If you have limited producing experience, we encourage you to find an experienced mentor or consulting producer to work with, preferably someone in your area with a proven track record of producing work for public television

What video materials must I submit with my application?

All proposals must be accompanied by a previously completed work sample on which the applicant had a principal role: producer, co-producer, director or co-director. For dramas only, applicants may apply with completed works on which they were writers but not necessarily director or producer. The sample work does not need to have been broadcast or even be a specific length, but it should demonstrate your best work and ideally have some relevance to the project at hand.

Do I need a fiscal sponsor? Can an organization be an applicant?

No, you do not need a fiscal sponsor. Organizations such as universities, foundations, and nonprofit media organizations are not eligible.

Does ITVS have restrictions on program length?

Standard PBS lengths are half-hour and one-hour. Producers can apply for funding for feature-length programs as long as the length is justified in the proposal. The producer should make a case for how the material warrants feature length in a television environment. The review panel may ask for more justification or make recommendations about the length.

Can an ITVS staff person review my proposal before I apply?

ITVS receives hundreds of proposals each year and does not have the capacity to review proposals before the deadlines. We encourage enough detail in your proposal that our evaluators can get a full sense of your concept and the quality of your work. If you have general questions about the guidelines and application process you may call the programming manager for the Diversity Development Fund.

Why is there no feedback for DDF applicants?

Due to the volume of proposals we receive and limited staff resources, we are only able to give feedback to producers that reach the finalist phase.

Does ITVS encourage applicants to resubmit proposals that have been declined?

As long as your project is at the research and development stage you may resubmit it to DDF.

How long does it take to get funding for DDF?

The entire process from application and staff review to contracting is approximately four months. DDF funds are disbursed in three installments over the course of a six-month contract period.

When conceiving a project for PBS, are there editorial standards, requirements or policies that I need to know?

All ITVS funded programs must adhere to PBS Editorial Standards (http://www.pbs.org/aboutpbs/aboutpbs_standards.html).

When will I be notified regarding my application's status?

- Phase 1: After the submission deadline, all applicants will receive notification by mail or email within 8 weeks.
- Finalist Phase: A limited number of applicants will be asked to send a revised proposal answering additional questions regarding the project along a more detailed budget. Finalists receive a final decision within six weeks of submitting additional materials.