

## Open Call 2009 Round 2

### FAQ

#### APPLYING TO ITVS

##### **What kind of programs is ITVS looking for?**

ITVS is looking for single public television programs on any subject, viewpoint or style. We fund programs that bring new audiences to public television and expand civic participation by bringing diverse voices into the public sphere. Please note that Open Call no longer accepts live action Drama (fiction) submissions.

##### **How often can I apply to Open Call? How many rounds are there?**

There are two funding rounds per year, and the deadlines are typically in mid-January and late July. Applicants may apply for only one project per call.

##### **Are there other ways of getting funding from ITVS?**

The LINCS (Local Independents Collaborating with Stations) initiative matches funds for independent producers partnering with public television stations. Other funding initiatives are announced in Beyond the Box and at [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org).

##### **What is the review process for Open Call?**

In the first two phases of the review process, ITVS staff and readers evaluate application materials. The top eight to ten percent are asked to submit to Phase 3, which requires a more detailed proposal. A national peer review panel evaluates the materials and makes recommendations for funding, which are approved by ITVS staff. The call is extremely competitive as we are only able to fund between one and two percent of the Open Call applicants.

##### **How long does it take to get funding for Open Call?**

The application and review process takes up to five months. Applicants

for the July deadline are notified in early December, and for the January deadline in late May.

### **What is the timetable for each round of Open Call?**

- Phase 1: After the submission deadline, all applicants will receive notification by mail or email within six weeks.
- Phase 2: At that time, a limited number of applicants will be asked to submit additional copies of their work-in-progress videos. They will be notified of their status within six to eight weeks of this submission.
- Phase 3: A small group of finalists will submit additional information and receive a final decision within six to eight weeks.

### **Does ITVS have sample applications for review?**

Because of the wide range of projects that have received support from ITVS, we do not circulate sample applications for review. We want to hear producers talk about what is unique about their program.

### **What is the most common mistake that applicants make?**

Unfortunately many applicants don't read the guidelines as carefully as we wish they would. The least explicated section of the proposal is usually the treatment, which is often generic and unspecific as to how the story will be told.

### **Am I required to have a certain amount of producing experience to apply to ITVS?**

Yes. A previously completed work sample video is mandatory. The applicant and/or co-applicant must have some previous film or television production experience in a principal production role: producer, co-producer, director, or co-director, which is demonstrated by submitting a sample video of previously completed work in its entirety.

**Regarding videos, if applying with a documentary, do I need to provide a previously completed work AND a video of the proposed program?**

Yes. All proposals must be accompanied by a video of the applicant's previously completed work. If you are applying with a documentary, you must provide a work-in-progress video of the proposed project (either selects, scenes, rough cut, etc.) with a minimum length of five minutes.

**What if I am applying with a fiction or animation proposal? How many videos am I required to send in?**

- Animation applicants must submit a previously completed work video of the same genre. Please note: If applicants are not the animators then they must also submit a demo reel from the animation team.
- Animation applicants must also submit: EITHER a work-in-progress of three to five minutes in length OR a storyboard. One scene is sufficient.
- Open Call no longer accepts live action Drama (fiction) submissions. ITVS is currently revising its policies regarding submissions in this genre. We will publicize this new policy in the coming months once it has taken effect.

**Do I need a fiscal sponsor? Can I apply as an organization?**

No, you do not need a fiscal sponsor. You can apply as an organization as long as the primary applicant is an independent producer, which is defined by ITVS as an independent producer/entity not regularly employed as a staff producer or director by a public or commercial broadcast station or studio.

**Does Open Call fund feature films?**

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.

**Does Open Call fund dramas?**

Open Call no longer accepts live action Drama (fiction) submissions.

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

We receive over 1100 proposals each year and do not have the staff 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 for Open Call, please send an email to [karim\\_ahmad@itvs.org](mailto:karim_ahmad@itvs.org) or call 415-356-8383 x259.

**I have heard that ITVS only funds programs with liberal viewpoints. Is this true?**

Not at all. ITVS funds programs from all points of view.

**What kind of producer feedback does ITVS give?**

All producers, whether they are funded or not, are given the opportunity to receive feedback by ITVS staff. Feedback consists of a telephone appointment between the producer and staff. ITVS staff reads back evaluators' comments.

**Does applying for one initiative reduce my chances of getting funded in the future?**

Not at all. We provide feedback so producers can improve their proposals for the next submission, or understand why their projects are not right for ITVS in general. An applicant can receive ITVS funding for only one production at a time.

**FUNDING AND BUDGET**

**At what stage will ITVS fund a project?**

Open Call is not for research and development, nor is it for the acquisition of finished programs; the funding is for the production and post-production phases. The programs submitted must have already begun production and be completed within one year of contract.

**How much money can I apply for?**

There is no minimum or maximum amount, but ITVS monies must be the last dollars in—meaning they should be sufficient for completing the

production. Be realistic and request what you need to finish your program. After review of your budget, ITVS will make an offer of funds that we believe will allow you to complete your project.

### **Will I increase my chances of getting funded if I ask for less money?**

We do consider the amount of money requested when assessing whether a proposal is a good investment. Be realistic and request what you need. Although ITVS funds are limited, you should base your budget request on what is required to complete your program. There is no advantage and several distinct disadvantages to asking for less than what is required.

### **What does "completion funding" mean?**

Completion funding means the last money needed to deliver a program. This does not include deferrals. ITVS funds can only be applied to work occurring forward from the commitment of ITVS funds.

### **How much can I pay myself as a producer?**

You should give yourself an equitable wage based on your time and effort. This must be expressed as a flat fee. ITVS does not pay deferred salaries, so you must calculate your time as a producer starting the moment you receive ITVS funding.

## **PRODUCTION**

### **Do I have to shoot in a particular format?**

All shooting formats (35mm, 16mm, super-16, DV, mini-DV, Beta-SP, super-8 film, or mixed formats) are acceptable, provided the final video master is able to pass a PBS required technical evaluation. The program is for television broadcast and must be mastered on digital video.

### **Who has editorial control?**

The producer has editorial, creative and financial control of the project and will own the copyright. ITVS will contract a license agreement for exclusive domestic television rights for a determined time period (usually

4 releases in 3 years). In exchange, ITVS provides a comprehensive service including funding, creative development through feedback and support for the public television launch including publicity, website, station relations and outreach.

### **What length does my program have to be?**

Standard PBS lengths are 26:40 and 56:40. Non-standard broadcast lengths for features will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **Can my program be distributed in other venues besides public television?**

People sometimes forget that television is our middle name. Our mission is to present works for television and not for theatrical release. We allow producers to pursue non-television distribution on a case-by-case basis if the opportunity arises. We review all theatrical or non-theatrical distribution contracts to ensure they meet CPB requirements and do not infringe on ITVS's rights. Most ITVS-funded projects have success in the festival, educational video, home video and foreign broadcast markets.

### **When producing for PBS, are there standards, requirements or policies that I need to know?**

We provide producers with a handbook outlining the required standards for packaging, underwriting and product offers. A more general version - the ITVS Production Manual - is available for sale. PBS also makes their standards public in their Red Book.

## **TIMELINE**

### **How long do I have to make an ITVS-funded film?**

For Open Call, producers have one year from contract to produce and complete the program.

### **What are the financial reporting requirements?**

ITVS requires periodic financial reporting, and it must be able to withstand an audit. Each year ITVS randomly selects a number of projects for auditing. Every funded producer is assigned a member of the production

staff who works with them to review financial and narrative reports and other deliverables. The production department representative will also be in dialogue about the program and its progress.

## **DISTRIBUTION**

### **Does ITVS help me get on PBS?**

As your program is completed, ITVS offers the program to PBS and works with public television programmers around the country to secure broadcasts.

### **If ITVS funds my show am I guaranteed a PBS broadcast?**

ITVS does not give grants, but enters into a production licensing agreement. This means that although the producer retains the copyright, s/he grants ITVS the public television rights for four years. ITVS offers every program it funds to PBS, who has first right of refusal. PBS can accept the program for the NPS (National Program Service or "hard feed") or PBS Plus ("soft feed"). In addition, ITVS works closely with series like Independent Lens, P.O.V., American Experience and Frontline to encourage placement of ITVS-funded programs. If PBS and the various series pass on a program, we offer it directly to every public television station through a process we call an "ITVS offer". This means we buy the satellite time and feed the program directly to stations and then work with programmers across the country to encourage broadcast. This effort, known as station relations, ensures that some, many or all of the public television stations will broadcast ITVS-funded programs.

### **What percentage of ITVS-funded shows go to PBS? What percentage does PBS turn down?**

About two-thirds of ITVS shows are offered through PBS subscription services such as NPS, PBS Plus, P.O.V., Frontline or Independent Lens. The remaining programs are offered to stations directly by ITVS.

### **If my program is funded by ITVS, can I still make ancillary sales?**

If you enter into the ITVS license agreement, ITVS holds exclusive

domestic television rights. ITVS encourages educational distribution. Certain other ancillary sales rights are controlled by the contract as dictated by CPB. You cannot, for instance, exercise any ancillary rights before the public television broadcast unless you receive permission from ITVS. ITVS reviews all distribution contracts to ensure there is no conflict with the ITVS license agreement.