CHICKEN & EGG FILMS

2026 Research & Development Grant Program & Application Guide

About this document

This PDF serves as a comprehensive guide to our Research & Development Grant. Use it to learn more about how the program works. The guide also functions as a step-by-step support for you as you apply for the program.

Contents

About the program

Now in its fourth year, the Research & Development Grant, funded by Netflix, provides financial support to directors during the research and development phase of their next feature documentary — a filmmaking stage that is often unpaid and unsupported.

Many filmmakers invest their personal resources into their films and face funding challenges in the research and development stages of new projects. It is hard to secure funding without significant sample material, yet producing material without external funding can be almost impossible. Our grant addresses this "chicken or egg" challenge.

A total of $450,000 USD is awarded in the following grant amounts:
- $10,000 USD grants for Research
- $20,000 USD grants for Development

Project stage: Research vs. Development

The differences between research and development stages are often nuanced, and the activities listed in each stage may overlap. For this grant application, we have provided the following definitions and core activities foe each stage.

Research

The research stage is a period of sowing and ideation. Core activities include:

- Identifying secondary sources such as literature, art, and cultural materials
- Familiarizing with other (film) projects
- Identifying primary sources and collaborators
- Locating visual assets and archives
- Identifying and tracking potential or multiple storylines
- Finding a narrative framework that can support the film
- Building foundational relationships with the community and collaborators at the center of the story
- Research activities could also be for specific needs in a film that is further in the development (but not production) process

Development

The development stage is a nuanced period of exploration and discovery. Core activities include:

- Gaining access to core participants and collaborators, and starting shooting
- Developing the story or form of the film
- Plotting the film's multiple and intersecting timelines
- Fine-tuning the development budget and creating a fundraising strategy
- Creating fundraising materials such as a pitch deck, trailer, teaser, etc.
- Testing pitch materials for resonance at pitch venues with potential funders
- Engaging possible partners

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Project stage: Research vs. Development

The R&D Grant is designed to be used flexibly and holistically by each filmmaking team. In addition to expenses related to the core activities mentioned on the previous page, the grant may also cover reasonable expenses for the filmmaking team's fees and salaries, as well as caregiving costs. While the type of expenses can vary, grantees will be required to submit a short narrative report and project update, including any materials they may have created, at the end of the granting period to help us evaluate the scope and impact of the grant.

Applicant eligibility

Filmmakers must meet the following criteria:

1. **Identify as a woman or gender-expansive filmmaker.**
   - Our working definition of gender-expansive is that it is an umbrella term that includes any person whose gender identity or gender expression does not comply with the socially defined gender norms and roles of their culture. This includes, but is not limited to, non-binary, trans, third gender/two-spirit, and agender individuals). Refer to our [gender expansion page](#) for more info.

2. **Have directed at least one feature-length documentary.**
   - The film must have a duration of 48 minutes or longer.
   - The film must be completed, having premiered already or have a confirmed world premiere at the time of applying at a festival taking place before the end of May - in short the film must have premiered before final selections are made.
   - The film must be independently produced. Commissioned documentaries, including those produced for news/journalism outlets, are eligible to be considered as prior work if the filmmaker had directorial control.

3. **Be based anywhere in the world, except countries under comprehensive US sanctions.**
   Further information about US sanctions can be found [here](#).

Project eligibility

Projects must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be a documentary or nonfiction film (including hybrid docs).

2. Must be feature-length (48 minutes or more).

3. Must be in the research or development stage.

4. Must be independently produced. Works-for-hire without creative control are not eligible, and student films produced in an undergraduate or graduate program are also not eligible.

Project eligibility

You may only submit one application per cycle. If you have more than one eligible project, you must submit only one for consideration. You may apply for either the Research Grant or Development Grant, but not both.

You cannot apply for an R&D grant and our (Egg)celerator Lab program with the same project in the same year. You may, however, apply to the (Egg)celerator Lab with the same film project if you applied for R&D in the previous year, as long as the project and applicant meet all other eligibility requirements.

You do not need a fiscal sponsor to apply for the Research & Development Grant. However, if you are awarded, you must have a US fiscal sponsor, or be a 501(c)(3), to receive the funds. If granted, we can help advise on this. We require prompt response upon communication of results. If granted, there is a 12-week period following notification in which you must secure a fiscal sponsor, and the grant must be disbursed within 2026.

Evaluation criteria

Priority will be given to films committed to creating social change and/or uplifting underrepresented stories that challenge mainstream narratives. We support a broad range of stories and artistic approaches from the personal to the political, including films that are experimental, animated, essayistic, archival, and beyond.

✳ See the evaluation criteria for each grant on the next two pages.

Research Grant Evaluation Criteria

Proposed Research Idea: The proposal outlines clear and compelling topics, themes, and questions that align with Chicken & Egg Films' mission. They challenge mainstream narratives, conversations, or perceptions.

Prior Work: You are confident in the execution of the current project based on the artistry and competence of the director's prior work (even if the project is a departure from their aesthetic/practice).

Grant Impact: The planned activities are well-developed and specific, the next steps are clear, and if awarded the grant will have a big impact on advancing the project.

Access & Accountability: The director is thinking critically about their own role in the story, and they articulate why they are the filmmaker best-suited to tell this story. The director has a connection and access to the story, film participants, and community involved. They reflect on their own perspective and biases regarding the subject matter and storytelling approach. They consider the potential impacts and consequences of the filmmaking process on participants, audiences, crew, and other stakeholders.

Development Grant Evaluation Criteria

Story, Concept, Theme: The proposal outlines clear and compelling topics, themes, and questions that align with Chicken & Egg Films' mission. The proposed narrative trajectory or concept (including potential character arcs if applicable) are clear and compelling. The story challenges mainstream narratives, conversations, or perceptions.

Artistic Approach: The project has a clear and compelling creative vision and a distinct artistic approach. The approach supports the story/concept. If a current sample is provided for the current project, it shows the potential of the intended approach.

Prior Work: You are confident in the execution of the current project based on the artistry and competence of the director's prior work (even if the project is a departure from their aesthetic/practice).

Grant Impact: The planned activities, development budget, and fundraising strategy are well-developed and specific. If awarded, the next steps are clear and the grant will have a big impact on advancing the project.

Access and Positionality: The director is thinking critically about their own role in the story, and they articulate why they are the filmmaker best-suited to tell this story. The director has a connection and access to the story, film participants, and community involved. They reflect on their own perspective and biases regarding the subject matter and storytelling approach. They consider the potential impacts and consequences of the filmmaking process on participants, audiences, crew, and other stakeholders.

Reporting & deliverables

For the 2026 cohort, we hope that during the grant period running from July until December 2026, each filmmaker will make significant progress and/or take their project to the next stage, enabling them to secure additional funding for their project. At the end of the grant period, we will schedule a 6-month check-in with grantees in January 2027 to discuss the status of their projects.

Grantees will have the option to submit an updated Nonfiction Core Application (v.3.1) for their project.

Please note: Grantees will need to submit the required deliverables before applying to another Chicken & Egg Films grant or program.

Reporting & deliverables

Research Grantees will be required to deliver:

- A short narrative report detailing how the funds were utilized and the impact they had on the project and the filmmaker's career. Grantees will also be asked to report back on the status of the Planned Activities outlined in their application. No expense receipts will be required.

Development Grantees will be required to deliver:

- A narrative report detailing how the funds were utilized and the impact they had on the project and the filmmaker's career. Grantees will also be asked to report back on the status of the Planned Activities outlined in their application. No expense receipts will be required.
- A teaser and/or trailer.

Accessibility

If you require technical assistance to navigate the application platform due to a disability, please contact research-development@chickeneggfilms.org. We kindly ask that you make your request for assistance as soon as possible, and no than a week before the deadline.

Application guide

What follows is a reference of the contents of the application.

To begin an application you must:

- Create new or log in to existing SurveyMonkey Apply Account: https://chickeneggfilms.smapply.us/

- Complete the eligibility questionnaire to confirm you meet all requirements to apply. If you are eligible, you will be able to move forward with filling out the rest of the application.

- You will be notified by email if you are ineligible.

Applications must be submitted through the online platform.

Do not wait until the deadline to create an account and complete the eligibility form.

Before you begin

The Research & Development Grant supports projects at the early stages of their lifecycle. If you have already raised a substantial amount of capital (over 35% of your film's total budget), and have shot and/or edited substantial footage, you may not be competitive for this grant, unless you can demonstrate very specific needs for the project (such as previously overlooked research activity).

We recognize each documentary is unique and that processes for research and development, fundraising, and production vary widely. This descriptions provided on pages 5-6 are not intended as strict eligibility criteria, but as general guidelines to help applicants understand the stage at which we aim to provide support for projects.

We have separated the Research Grant from the Development Grant to allow early-stage projects to receive support without the need to submit all the deliverables required by projects in the development phase. Important: Based on your selection, the application will be tailored to display only the questions required for each grant. You can change your selection anytime prior to submitting.

Application checklist

The majority of the questions are based on the Nonfiction Core Application v 3.1, with a few additional questions included. The Research Grant and Development Grant applications are not the same, with the latter asking an additional set of questions.

Core App Q's Asked in both applications

- Logline
- Topic summary
- Connection and Point of View
- Accountability and Community Care
- Creative Control
- Key Creative Personnel
- Total Funding Received to Date
- Funding Detail
- Estimated Film budget
- Grant Impact
- Prior work
- Visual sample (optional)
- Upload supplemental materials (optional)

Supplemental Q's

- Access to Story/Participants
- Change Statement
- Filmography
- Body of Work
- List of Completed vs. Planned Activities
- Additional support needed beyond funding (optional)

Additional Q's for Development Grant applications

- Film Summary
- Artistic Approach
- Project Stage and Timeline
- Fundraising Strategy
- Development Budget Breakdown

Contact Information

Instructions: Please add your information. For co-directing teams, all directors must be added as a contact. If you have a producer(s), please also add them as a contact.

After providing information about one contact, there is the option to add another contact - click next and you can provide information about Contact 2 on the next page. After adding a second contact, you have the option to add another contact, and so on. You can add up to 5 contacts.

Please provide a valid email address, telephone number, and mailing address. Contact information should be valid until at least July 2026.

Contact Information

First Name
Last Name
Phone Number (include country and city code)
Personal Email
Work Email
Preferred Email (dropdown)
   Personal
   Work
Street
City
Country (dropdown list)
State
ZIP
Birthdate (MM/DD/YYYY)

Role on the Film (dropdown)
   Director,
   Co-director
   Producer
   Co-Producer
Personal Website (Optional)
Nationality
Nationality 2 (Optional)
Bio
How many previous documentary feature films (48 minutes or longer) have you directed? (dropdown)
   One film
   Two films
   More than two films

Demographic Information

We recognize that questions around social identities cannot capture the full complexity of who we are in the world. While understanding this inherent limitation, we request demographic information for a number of reasons: to understand if we are reaching a diverse range of filmmakers, to understand intersecting identities that impact you as a filmmaker, to create an experience of belonging in our programs, and to include in grant reports requested by foundations and other funders. We ask a series of questions that both allow for open-ended self-identification as well as standardized responses to report on demographics.

✳ See the questions on the next three pages - please note that we ask these demographic questions for each of the contacts that are added.

Demographic Information

Do you identify as BIPOC?

BIPOC is an umbrella term that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

- ☐ I identify as BIPOC
- ☐ I do not identify as BIPOC

Which describes your race/ethnicity? (dropdown)

Arab or Middle Eastern or North African

Asian or Asian American (including South, East, and Southeast Asia)

Black or African American or African

Hispanic or Latinx/Latina/Latino

Indigenous or First Nations or American Indian or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

White or Caucasian or European American

Multiple Races/Ethnicities → Please specify (textbox)

What is your race/ethnic identity? (Optional)

This question allows for self-identification of intersectional identities. You can list as many attributes as you would like to self-identity; use a comma to separate list items.
50 words

Pronouns (dropdown)

- ☐ She/her/hers
- ☐ He/him/his
- ☐ They/them/theirs
- ☐ Just my name
- ☐ Pronouns not listed → Please specify
- ☐ Use multiple pronouns → Please specify

Demographic Information

Which gender identity or identities do you use? (check any that apply):

- [ ] Woman - Cis (or cisgender)
- [ ] Woman - Trans (or transgender)
- [ ] Man - Cis (or cisgender)
- [ ] Man - Trans (or transgender)
- [ ] Transfeminine
- [ ] Transmasculine
- [ ] Non-binary
- [ ] Genderfluid
- [ ] Gender nonconforming
- [ ] Third gender/Two Spirit
- [ ] Agender (I do not identify with any gender)
- [ ] Personal gender identity → Please specify
- [ ] Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to be gender-expansive? (Dropdown)

Our working definition of gender-expansive is an umbrella term that includes any person whose gender identity or expression does not comply with the socially defined gender norms and roles of their culture. This includes, but is not limited to, non-binary, trans, third gender/two-spirit, and agender individuals). More information is provided on our gender expansion page.

- [ ] Yes - I am gender expansive.
- [ ] No - I am not gender expansive.

Demographic Information

As we have embarked on extending our eligibility to all gender expansive applicants, we would like to better understand who we are serving. If you selected that you are gender-expansive in the previous question, you have the option to elaborate on what this means to you, to the extent that you are comfortable. This is not a required question and is completely optional.

Please note: We recognize that each individual's experience and relationship to their own gender is complex and deeply personal. We also understand that how one chooses to identify or express their gender is multi-faceted and does not fit squarely within any definition that we provide. Please note that what you share here, if you choose to do so, will not be made public.

No word limit

Is there anything else you would like to share about your gender identity or gender expression?(
This question allows for self-identification of intersectional identities.
50 words

Do you identify as LGTBQIA+?
- [ ] Yes, I identify as LGTBQIA+
- [ ] No, I do not identify as LGTBQIA+
- [ ] I prefer not to answer

Do you have a disability?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] I prefer not to answer

Key creative personnel

Bios of Key Personnel: Provide brief biographies for other key personnel beyond directors/producers, if attached. This includes cinematographer, editor, executive producer, etc. For each team member, include information about relevant expertise and the individual's role in the project. Bullet list names and titles of any confirmed advisors who are attached. *50-100 words per bio*

Note: You do not need to include bios of director(s) or producer(s) here. They should be added to the contact.

Filmography (upload): Please submit your filmography. The filmography should be a chronological list of films, videos, and other completed media works. For each title, list your position, the date of completion, a link to the website if there is one, and any major awards, nominations, or major public screenings. Please limit your filmography to 2-4 pages. *Accepted formats: .pdf, .docx, .doc*

If there is an additional director, please upload their filmography as well.

Body of work: Discuss the relevance of your prior work(s) to the current project. If the current project is a departure from the previous works, how will this film differ? *250 words max*

Project info

Working Title of Project: Please provide a working title, or write Untitled if you do not have one yet. Please do not include quotation marks on your title.

Logline: Please provide a 2-3 sentence summary of the project that captures the most important elements—setting, participants, key issues, and form. *100 words max*

Subject Matter 1 (dropdown)

Subject Matter 2 (dropdown)

Subject Matter 3 (dropdown)

Geographic Region (dropdown): Please indicate the primary region where your film takes place.

Australia and Oceania

Central America and the Caribbean

East Asia and the Pacific

Eastern and Southern Africa

Europe

Middle East and North Africa

North America

South America

South and Central Asia

West and Central Africa

Topic Summary: Explain the topic, theme, context, stakes, relevance, or questions that you're exploring in your project. *250-750 words*

Project info

Film Summary: [This question is only for the Development Grant application]. Give an overview introducing the main participants and plot points in the film. If your project is non-narrative or not character-driven, what is your concept, and how is it constructed? Please be clear about the elements of your story that remain unknown or unclear and highlight the questions that may steer its direction.
250-750 words

Connection and Point of View: What is your connection to the story (i.e., to the participants, themes, community, location, archives, etc.)? How do your interests, motivations, and/or worldview shape your approach to this story? What lens, perspective, insights, or bias do you bring to the story?
125-250 words

Accountability and Community Care: Describe your ethical considerations and practices of accountability in your filmmaking process. This can include a description of your guiding values, processes of establishing and maintaining ongoing consent, providing transparency about your filmmaking processes, collecting feedback etc. For example: How do you reflect on and address the potential consequences of your storytelling choices on participants, audiences, your crew, and/or other stakeholders? What activities or strategies do you use to implement your values as they relate to care for yourself and others? [For further guidance, reference DAWG's Framework for Values Ethics and Accountability in Nonfiction Filmmaking](#)
125-250 words

Project info

Change Statement: Documentaries have a unique ability to move and transform people. They contribute to our collective understanding of issues, people, and the way the world is constructed. They often inspire us to think differently. Chicken & Egg Films see documentaries as one of many tools that are necessary for creating narrative, cultural, and social change. We seek to support nuanced narratives that inspire individual and societal transformation for a better world.

Therefore, we want to understand what kind of change your film seeks to make. How will your film challenge mainstream narratives, conversations or perceptions? What would change as a result of the film if you are successful?

Please note: we are not asking for an impact campaign idea or activities, but rather your overarching goal(s) for creating change with your film. *125-250 words*

Creative Control: In one or two sentences please describe who has creative control and legal ownership of the project. *50 words*

Artistic Approach: [This question is only for the Development Grant application.] Describe your artistic vision for your project. What are the formal elements of the project, including any artistic devices, visual and audio elements? Does this project fit within or reference any specific filmmaking or narrative traditions? *250-750 words*

Project Stage and Timeline: [This question is only for the Development Grant application.] In list form, outline the projected production timeline from the development of the project to the anticipated completion date. Please include major project activities, production schedules, and anticipated post-production and release dates. *50-100 words*

Project info

Applicants are encouraged (but not required) to include visual material such as scene selects, teasers, or other edited footage (up to 15 minutes).

Do you want to add a current sample? (Yes/No)

If Yes:

> **URL:** If sharing a Google Drive link, make sure the sharing settings are set to "Anyone with link can view." The link must be subtitled in English. Unless you have security concerns regarding sharing footage, please make your link **downloadable** so that our reviewers may watch offline.
>
> **Password**
> **Runtime**
> **Description:** Describe the sample you are submitting for consideration. Work samples should be your own work. It is important to clarify your relationship to or role in the submitted work. If your sample includes any audio, visual, or text elements generated with AI, please describe how and what tools or 4 technologies you used. *100 words*

Content Warnings (Optional but encouraged): Please note below if the film contains any content that may be triggering for reviewers, and the timestamps where it occurs. This information will be used as an advisory to reviewers, but has no effect on your application or the reviewing process. Items to flag include, for example: Violence, Bodily Harm/Mutilation, Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence/Abuse, Suicide, Depression, Drug addiction, Alcoholism, Paedophilia, Sexual abuse, Suicide, White supremacy, Police brutality. *100 words*

Supplemental Materials (Optional) (upload): Applicants have the option to upload supplemental materials such as a film still, vision board, pitch deck, other visual material, etc. You can upload materials via the button below.

All file formats accepted. Maximum individual file size is 1GB. Can upload multiple files.

Budget & grant use

Estimated Film Budget: Enter the amount in U.S. dollars using just numerals. Include only costs up through completion.

Funding to Date: List all sources of funding and amounts. Include types of funding (i.e. government, foundations, pre-sales, private sources, other) and status (to apply, applied, and confirmed).
500 words max
Example:
- Foundation A $X Applied
- Private Investment A $X Confirmed
- Foundation B $X To Apply

Total Funding Received to Date: Enter the amount in U.S. dollars using just numerals.

Completed Activities: Please include a **bullet point list** outlining the core activities you have engaged in for the project so far. Please include the time frame (Month/Year) in which they occurred. Be specific in outlining the activities. *500 words max*
Examples:
- Identified # potential participants (Month/Year)
- Conducted pre-interviews (Month/Year)

Planned Activities: Please include a **bullet point list** outlining the core activities planned for the next stage of project work. Please include the time frame (Month/Year) in which they will occur. Be specific in outlining the activities. *500 words max*
Examples:
- Visit [X] Archive [Month/Year]
- Write first draft of creative treatment [Month/Year]
- Shoot test materials/footage [Month/Year]
- Edit trailer/reel [Month/Year]

Budget & grant use

Grant Impact: Should you receive a grant, describe how any granted funds would be spent and how the funds would help you move forward with your project. Please be as specific as possible on how the grant would be applied toward completing any and/or all of the planned activities you have listed in the previous question. You can find a list of core activities for the research and development stages of a project in the downloadable program guide on the [program page](). *50-200 words*

Fundraising Strategy : Describe the overall fundraising strategy and who from the team will lead these efforts for the film. *50-100 words*

Development Budget Breakdown (upload): [This question is only for the Development Grant application.] Please provide a detailed budget breakdown of the anticipated costs for development only. The budget does not have to equal the amount of the grant - please include all development costs.

Accepted formats: .pdf, ..xlsx, .xls

Prior work

INSTRUCTIONS:

The filmmaker must have directed at least one completed feature-length documentary or non-fiction film (this includes hybrid docs). Prior work must have been independently produced; however, commissioned documentaries and television documentaries, including those produced for news/journalism outlets, are eligible to be considered as prior work if the director had directorial control

Fiction work, music videos, and PSAs are not accepted as prior work. We value the creative value of this work but because of its nature it does not allow us to see your author's voice and your vision as a documentary director.

Please provide information for prior feature-length documentary films you have directed. We consider a feature-length documentary to be **48 minutes or longer**. You must provide a link to **at least one feature-length documentary film** in which you participated as a director or co-director. If you have directed additional feature-length films, you can provide information for up to 2 additional works.

Prior work

Film Title

Logline: Please provide a 2-3 sentence summary of the project that captures the most important elements — setting, participants, key issues, and form. *100 words max*

Year completed

Total budget (in USD)

Link to completed film: Please provide a link to the full finished film, not trailers or scenes. If sharing a Google Drive link, make sure the sharing settings are set to "Anyone with link can view." The link must be subtitled in English. Unless you have security concerns regarding sharing footage, please make your link **downloadable** so that our reviewers may watch offline.

Password: If no password is required for your link, please write "N/A" in this field. We recommend you protect your materials with a password.

Runtime: Please round to whole numbers in minutes.

Description and Section of link to review: Please note the start and end run times of a 15-minute section that you'd especially like to highlight for reviewers and provide a short description for the section. *100 words max*

Content Warnings (Optional but encouraged): Please note below if the film contains any content that may be triggering for reviewers, and the timestamps where it occurs. This information will be used as an advisory to reviewers, but has no effect on your application or the reviewing process. Items to flag include, for example: Violence, Bodily Harm/Mutilation, Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence/Abuse, Suicide, Depression, Drug addiction, Alcoholism, Pedophilia, Sexual abuse, Suicide, White supremacy, Police brutality. *100 words max*

Prior work

☐ **Add another prior work**

Checking this box this will pull up fields for you to enter information about the second prior work.

Note: You can add up to 2 additional prior works

Supplemental questions

Besides funding, what other kind of support do you need for this project to be a success? (Optional)
Besides funding, what other kind of support do you need for this project to be a success? If selected, as a grantee you will be part of our AlumNest community of over 500 filmmakers that we have supported since 2005. Through the AlumNest, we offer programming tailored to the specific challenges and interests of granted filmmakers. You may bullet point your responses. *100 words max*

How did you hear about Chicken & Egg Films? (Dropdown)
- From a Chicken & Egg Films Films member at a festival/forum/market
- From a Fellow Filmmaker/Peer
- Chicken & Egg Films Newsletter or Chicken & Egg Films Social Media
- Other Industry Newsletter or Social Media
- Other —> Specify below

How did you hear about The Chicken & Egg Films 2026 Research & Development Grant open call? (Dropdown)
- From a Chicken & Egg Films Team member at a festival/forum/market
- From a Fellow Filmmaker/Peer
- Chicken & Egg Films Newsletter or Chicken & Egg Films Social Media
- Other Industry Newsletter or Social Media
- Other —> Specify below

Questions?

If you have questions that aren't answered by this guide or the <u>FAQ</u>, please contact <u>research-development@chickeneggfilms.org</u>.

We do check the inbox regularly and no question is too small!