CHICKEN & EGG FILMS

Research & Development Grant Program & Application Guide

About this document

This PDF serves as a comprehensive guide to our Research & Development Grant program. 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.

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About the program

The Research & Development Grant supports filmmakers who are in the research or development phase of their feature documentary.

Launched in 2023 with support from Netflix, this program provides financial support to directors during a filmmaking stage that is too 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 associated with each stage to assist applicants in determining the appropriate grant to apply for.

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

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.

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 actively seeking an upcoming premiere (e.g. within next 3-4 months).
   - 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, including Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Syria, and the following regions of Ukraine: Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk. Further information on why filmmakers based in these countries/regions are ineligible to apply 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. "Work-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 R&D Grant. However, if you are awarded, you must have a US fiscal sponsor, or be a 501(c)(3), to receive the funds. You must receive these funds before the end of 2025.

We will host a webinar during our open call to address the big picture approach to applications and answer specific questions. You can watch the webinar from our 2024 open call **here**.

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.

- **Story, Concept, Theme:** The story is timely, and the topics and themes are compelling and relevant. There is a clear subject matter and questions that will be explored. In addition for Development Grant applicants: The narrative trajectory and potential character arcs are clearly described.
- **Prior Work/Directorial Vision:** The director's prior work exhibits artistry and competency that creates confidence they will execute the current project well. In addition for Development Grant applicants: There is clear creative vision for the project, and the approach is innovative and unique.
- **Access and Accountability:** The director clearly articulates their connection to the story, film participants, and community, and is thoughtful about the processes for accountability in working with them.
- **Feasibility and Grant Impact:** The project idea and planned activities feasible in terms of scope and timeline, and the grant will have an impact on advancing the project.

Reporting & deliverables

For the 2025 cohort, we hope that during the grant period running from July 2025 until March 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. In January 2026, we will schedule a 6-month check-in with grantees to discuss the status of their projects.

Grantees will have the option to submit an updated Nonfiction Core Application 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, trailer and/or pitch deck.

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 later than Tuesday, January 11, 2025.

Application guide

What follows is a reference of the contents of the application.
You must first fill out the pre-application form <u>here</u> to
confirm your eligibility.

If eligible, you will receive an email with your account login
information and the link to the application platform.
Applications must be submitted through the online platform.

Do not wait until the deadline to fill out the pre-application.

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 2.0, 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.

Asked in both applications

- Logline
- Topic summary
- Connection and Access
- Creative Control
- Potential impact of the film
- Key Creative Personnel
- Funding received
- Estimated Film budget
- Grant Impact
- Prior work
- Visual sample (optional)

Supplemental

- List of Completed vs. Planned Activities
- Resume with Filmography
- Additional support needed beyond funding
- Change Statement

Additional questions for Development Grant applications

- Story or Concept Summary
- Artistic Approach
- Project Stage and Timeline
- Fundraising Strategy
- Development Budget Breakdown

Key creative personnel

Contact Information: For co-directing teams, all directors must be listed as a contact. If you have a producer(s), please also add them as a contact. Provide complete contact information including a valid email address, telephone number, and mailing address (in the country's format). Please fill out the following information for the lead contact (you) using the edit button. Please press "Add Contact" for any additional contacts you wish to list. Contact information should be valid until at least June 2025.

Bios of Key Personnel: You do not need to include bios of director(s) or producer(s) here. They should be added to the contact record via the 'Add Contact' button above. Provide brief biographies for other key personnel if attached, such as 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. *1300 characters max per bio.*

Director's 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. The filename must end with .pdf. If there is an additional director, please submit their filmography.

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 brief summary of the project that captures the most important elements — setting, participants, or central conflict. *325 characters max.*

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

Subject Matter 1 (dropdown)
Subject Matter 2 (dropdown)

Topic Summary: Explain the relevant cultural, historical, political, or social context for the film. Detail the topics, issues, themes, challenges, stakes, or questions that your project will cover. Please highlight for us the central question that you want to explore in this project. *3250 characters max.*

Project info

Story or Concept Summary: This question is only for the Development Grant application. Give an overview of your story, introducing the main participants and potential plot points. Describe the anticipated story and narrative trajectory or potential character arcs for your film. If your project is non-narrative or not character-driven, what is your project's concept, and how is it constructed? Give an overview of the subject matter and your primary questions and ideas to be explored. Please be clear about the elements of your film that remain unknown or unclear and highlight the questions that may steer the direction of your film. *6500 characters max.*

Connection and Access: What is your connection and access to the story (i.e., participants, community, location, archives etc.)? Why are you the best filmmaker(s) to tell this story? *1625 characters max.*

Accountability: If relevant, describe your relationship with the participants or community being filmed? What are your processes of accountability, including consent, transparency, feedback, and any other steps being taken to ensure the participants or communities that are featured in your film have agency in the filmmaking process, from pre-production through distribution? *1625 characters max.*

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. *1800 characters max.*

Creative Control: Who has creative control and, if applicable, ownership of the project? *325 characters max.*

Artistic Approach: This question is only for the Development Grant application. Describe your creative vision for the finished project. What are the visual and audio elements that will bring your film to life? Explain your intended use of artistic devices or any particular creative approach that informs the storytelling (e.g., animations, re-creations, transitions). *3250 characters max.*

Project Stage and Timeline: This question is only for the Development Grant application. Outline the projected production timeline from the project's current state to the anticipated completion date. Please include a detailed breakdown of the development timeline. *3250 characters max.*

Project info

Visual Sample (Optional): Please share visual material such as scene selects, teasers, or other edited footage (up to 15 minutes). The link must be subtitled in English.

URL
Password
Runtime

Description: Describe the sample you are submitting for consideration. *500 characters 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, Nudity, Drug addiction, Alcoholism, Pedophilia, Sexual abuse, Suicide, White supremacy, Police brutality.

Supplemental Materials (Optional) (attachment): If available, you can attach a film still, vision board, pitch deck, other visual material, etc. To add multiple files, you must attach them as a zip file.

Budget & grant use

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

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. *1300 characters max.*

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. *1300 characters max.*

Funding to Date: Include all sources and amounts raised to date. Only include funding that has been secured or is in the process of consideration/negotiation, and clearly indicate the status of each. *1300 characters max.*

Example:
Foundation A $X Secured
Private Investment A $X Secured
Foundation B $X Applied
Broadcast License A $X In Negotiation
Crowdfunding $X In Process (Campaign End Date MM/DD/YY)

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

Budget & grant use

Grant Impact: Should you receive a grant, describe how the 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 at the beginning of this PDF document. *2000 characters max.*

Fundraising Strategy : This question is only for the Development Grant application. Describe the overall fundraising strategy for the film. *1300 characters max.*

Development Budget Breakdown (attachment): This question is only for the Development Grant application. Please provide a detailed budget breakdown of the anticipated costs for development. Please upload it here as PDF (filename must end in .pdf).

Prior work

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

The following are the subfields when you select 'Add Prior Work.' You must fill out all the fields for 'Project Information' and 'Link to completed film' for each film added.

Film Title

Logline: Please provide a brief summary o.f the project that captures the most important elements — setting, participants, or central conflict. *325 characters max.*

Year completed
Total budget

Link to completed film: Please provide a link to the full finished film, not trailers or scenes. The link must be subtitled in English.

URL: Please make your link downloadable.

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.

Prior work

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. *500 characters 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, Nudity, Drug addiction, Alcoholism, Pedophilia, Sexual abuse, Suicide, White supremacy, Police brutality.

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? *1300 characters max.*

Supplemental questions

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.
3250 characters 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, Please specify

How did you hear about The Chicken & Egg Films 2025 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, Please specify

Questions?

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

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