

Canada

Please read instructions carefully before opening

by: Lindsay Gibb

When speaking to producers around the world, many mention Canada as a model for coproduction opportunities - provided you're not afraid of a little paperwork. Canada has an enviable number of copro treaties (53 to date), but the system for funding opportunities within the country is confusing, at best.

For coproductions, one of the most important agencies is Telefilm Canada. Telefilm is a federal cultural agency responsible for ensuring the development and promotion of the country's film and TV productions. In this role it administers the Canadian Television Fund (CTF) and decides what qualifies as an official coproduction.

For a film to be considered an official copro, the Canadian prodco must submit an application for preliminary approval 30 days prior to the beginning of principle photography. The application for final approval must be submitted no later than 19 months following the end of the Canadian producer's taxation year. (Take a deep breath...) The minimum financial responsibility and regional spend required from each country ranges between 15% and 30%, depending on the agreement. The document on Canada's official copro policies - really only an overview of how Telefilm defines a coproduction - is 18 pages long, so this is just a taste of how much reading and paperwork you must undertake to coproduce with a Canadian company.

However, all this paperwork does result in many opportunities for funding. Recognition as an official coproduction means being treated as a Canadian production, and access to federal and regional funding and tax credits. Telefilm's CTF is the federal government's way of promoting the development of Canadian programming. A public/private partnership that was created in 1996 which Telefilm officially took responsibility for in 2005, the CTF has contributed over CDN\$2.2 billion (US\$2.2 billion) to Canadian productions in its 11-year history. With funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canadian cable industry and the direct-to-home satellite industry, the CTF gives money to productions in a number of ways. One is through a program called the Broadcaster Performance Envelope, through which the CTF gives money to broadcasters that support Canadian programming. This money is then designated to eligible projects through the broadcasters.

The CTF tends to fund only traditional documentaries. Factual programming such as how-to, lifestyle, reality and travel programs are not eligible for funding. For more information on what is eligible for CTF funding, visit canadiantelevisionfund.ca.

The federal government also offers tax credits co-administered by the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO) and the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA); these are the Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit (CPCT) and the Film or Video Production Services Tax Credit (PSTC). A production can only take advantage of one of the two, so it's important to distinguish the difference. The latter was introduced by the federal government in 1997 to encourage the employment of Canadians in the film industry, and equals 16% of total Canadian labor spend, though there is no cap on the amount that can be claimed. It is mostly used by foreign producers shooting in the region because it is easy to qualify for and the work doesn't have to be considered officially Canadian to receive the credit. The former is a refundable credit of 25% of eligible salaries and wages that do not exceed 60% of production costs. The production must pass point and expenditure tests to qualify, and must be considered Canadian content. CAVCO is also the judge of what meets Canadian Content criteria. When doing a copro for television with Canada, it helps to have your program considered Canadian Content not only for tax credit purposes, but also because Canadian channels are required to air a yearly total of 60% Canadian programming during the day (6 a.m. to midnight) and 50% between 6 p.m. and midnight. Sixty percent of public broadcaster CBC's daily programming must be considered Canadian.

Canadian links

Telefilm Telefilm is a federal cultural agency dedicated to the development and promotion of the Canadian audiovisual industry. It is also the administrator of the Canadian Television Fund.

telefilm.gc.ca

Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office

This government office determines which productions are considered Canadian under Canadian Content criteria. It also co-administers two tax credits.

pch.gc.ca/progs/ac-ca/progs/bcpac-cavco/index_e.cfm

Rogers Documentary Fund

your.rogers.com/aboutrogers/communitysupport/rogers_documentary_fund.asp

Omni Television Documentary Fund

omnimb.ca/info/funds/

Quebecor Fund

fondsdusavoir.ca/eng/index.htm

Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund

cifvf.ca/english/eng-h.html

Regional Funds

Canada has many regional funds that offer assistance, ranging from location scouting and acquiring permits to searching for local crew and lodging. What follows is a sample of the regional funds available.

Alberta Film Development Program:

albertafilm.ca

BC Incentive Programs:

bcfilm.bc.ca

Manitoba Film and Sound Recording Development Corporation:

mbfilmsound.mb.ca

New Brunswick Film:

nbfilm.com

Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation:

fin.gov.nl.ca/fin/filmvideo.html

Nova Scotia Film Development Corporation:

film.ns.ca

Ontario Media Development Corporation and the Ministry of Finance for Ontario:

omdc.on.ca

Technology PEI:

techpei.com

La Société de Développement des Entreprises culturelles (SODEC):

sodec.gouv.qc.ca

Saskatchewan Film and Video Development Corporation:

saskfilm.com

Yukon Film and Sound Commission:

reelyukon.com