

## The NBC Film Adaptation Fund 2021 Guidelines for Applicants

The Guidelines contain information to guide you with your application, including General Regulations and Assessment Criteria. Please make sure to read the Guidelines carefully and in their entirety, including all Annexes.

### General Regulations

#### Production Grant

The National Book Council Film Adaptation Production Grant is intended to facilitate the adaptation of a National Book Prize winning, or shortlisted, work in the category Novels in Maltese or English, into a feature film of 80 minutes or longer. A list of works awarded the National Book Prize for the given category, since the Prize's inception in 1971, is available at: <https://ktieb.org.mt/the-history-of-the-national-book-prize/>

The production grant up to a maximum of €200,000 will be awarded in instalments to one selected audiovisual project whose sole original version is in the Maltese language with the possibility of covering 100% of the production budget. The application must indicate whether other sources and amounts of financing have been obtained or are being sought for the project.

The National Book Council (NBC) administrators are responsible for the review of the project. The Fund administrators and/or auditors on their behalf may carry out checks to establish whether the production grant has been used in accordance with the established terms and conditions. Relevant invoices/receipts are to be submitted to the NBC administrators, in original, for every eligible item approved for the grant.

Assistance under the NBC Film Adaptation Fund cannot be accumulated with any other government funded scheme for the same costs.

The NBC reserves the right to negotiate amendments to the budget as a condition of funding.

The NBC reserves the right to alter the guidelines with general public notice to all potential applicants duly given via the NBC website and/or NBC facebook page.

The NBC is not required to award the grant if the applications received are not deemed of the required level by the adjudicators.

## **Eligibility**

Applications must be made by a representative of an audiovisual production company (registered as an audiovisual production company in Malta/Europe), with previous experience in various forms of film-making and audiovisual productions.

At least one of either the Producer/s, the Writer/s, or Director/s must be a Maltese citizen or hold a permanent residence status in Malta.

The applicant company must hold the author's approval for the film adaptation and hold the rights to adapt, produce and distribute the film BEFORE applying. Applications should include an option agreement with the author of a novel and/or holder of copyright for a minimum of a 30-month period to adapt the novel into a feature-length film. The option agreement should also detail financial obligations due to the author and/or copyright holder.

## **Application Process**

Applications must include a detailed project plan guided by the Application Form and the below information, including a breakdown of the budget, and a letter of intent from the Applicant describing the motivation for the proposed project. Any additional information that may add value to the audiovisual production company's application should also be submitted.

Applications will be reviewed by the NBC administrators for completeness and eligibility. Applications that pass this initial review will be passed on to an independent adjudicating panel appointed by the NBC on the basis of their independent and professional experience. Shortlisted applicants will be invited (together with the creative team) to pitch their proposed project in September 2021 and discuss the project further, after which the adjudicating panel will select one project to be awarded the production grant.

The beneficiary of the production grant will be required to enter into a contractual agreement with the National Book Council. The contract will set out the full terms and conditions tied to the funding of the project.

The production grant will be awarded in a number of instalments, which will be subject to reviews by the NBC administrators and the adjudicating panel to ensure that the project is developing according to the proposal and in line with the application criteria and rules. In the eventuality that the project is not developing according to expected standards, the NBC reserves the right not to issue any further production grant instalments.

The selection of a particular project for assistance does not signify agreement to the level of financial support requested and therefore the amount awarded may be less than the amount requested.

Successful and unsuccessful applications will be informed in writing as soon as possible.

## **Deliverables**

The film is to be completed within 24–28 months of the signing of the contract and delivered to the National Book Council in broadcast format (MXF) as well as a DCP for theatrical distribution by the end of 2023.

The National Book Council of Malta must be credited as Executive Producer. Furthermore, a title card at the beginning of the film must state 'The National Book Council of Malta Presents'.

The applicant must deliver three reports throughout the project:

The first report is to be delivered on finalisation of the screenplay and production planning. It should include cast and crew lists, locations, a detailed production schedule, final screenplay, and an updated budget plan.

The second report is due following the completion of production. It should evaluate the production process and outline any significant changes during production, such as changes to the schedule, scenes omitted etc. The report should include copies of production documents such as call sheets, final cast and crew lists, and behind the scenes photos and footage, as well as stills from the material shot and a detailed post-production schedule. A provisional financial report, including any payslips or invoices related to the project up to the end of production should also be submitted.

The final report due upon completion of the film must outline any further changes that occurred in post-production. It must include copies of the marketing material for the film and an updated Distribution Strategy (local and international).

Upon completion, applicants must also present the final budget and financial report, including any payslips or invoices related to the project. It is important that employment regulations are adhered to and the production operates in good faith and without any discriminatory practices.

## **Screening Rights and Obligations**

The National Book Council of Malta reserves all broadcast rights for the Republic of Malta. Theatrical rights within the Republic of Malta and all other territories are to be shared between the National Book Council of Malta and the applicant on an equal basis.

The National Book Council of Malta will have the right to screen the film on non-commercial terms at special events in Malta and abroad to promote the literature of Malta and the funding programme.

Beneficiaries will be asked to supply stills, photographs, brochures and other material related to the production to be used exclusively for non-commercial purposes for the promotion of the National Book Council initiatives.

All material, print and communication by the beneficiary with regards to the project, including its website, articles, references, publications, catalogues and end credits, are to indicate that funding was received from the National Book Council. Where applicable, the beneficiary is to use the National Book Council logo as supplied by its administrators.

## **Assessment criteria**

### **Film treatment / Screenplay proposal\***

Adaptation: The script should remain faithful to the spirit of the original text and its themes. An adaptation of a novel into film does not need to follow the novel to the letter, but must be an original interpretation of the novel by the filmmakers to fit within the new medium. Final screenplays should be in the Maltese language.

Film treatment and screenplay proposals will also be assessed on the potential to reach both a national and international audience.

Structure: The film script should make sure to adopt the right structure and elements to make it work on screen. The proposed screenplay excerpt will be treated as a blueprint and is there for the cast and crew to interpret and develop into the finished film.

\*The submission of a film treatment is mandatory, a screenplay proposal is however optional.

### **Visual Interpretation**

Director's vision: The director should be able to explain what motivates interest in the novel being adapted and present a clear vision of his/her approach to the novel and resulting screenplay, the use of sound and music, casting ideas etc.

Visual style: How do the director and his/her creative team plan on bringing the vision and script to life? What kind of lenses, colours, locations, outfits etc. do they plan to use? Is it to be an animation or a live-action project? Story boards and/or other visual material such as mood boards can help illustrate the visual style aspired for.

### **Team**

The technical and creative team should be outlined and the biography and filmography of the following personnel should be included:

Producer | Writer | Director | Director of Photography | Animator | Editor | Composer

Changes to the creative and technical team will be allowed post adjudication, however changes to the above roles need be justified.

Portfolio: Along with their project plan, applicants should present a list of previous work, as individual artists and/or as a creative team where applicable. The portfolio should serve as a convincing statement on the ability of the applicant to execute the submitted project.

### **Budget Plan and Feasibility**

The production of the film must adhere to high technical standards, and ensure that enough time is given to each phase to allow the project to develop well and achieve the desired quality. The film must be filmed at 24 frames per second in progressive format.

Film projects always carry an element of risk and it is important that applicants show awareness of the risks involved in the project and how they plan to handle foreseen precarious elements. The adjudication panel will also consider the feasibility of the proposed project, taking into account the budget available and its allocation, the scope, technical abilities, previous work etc.

Schedule: The application should present a workable and realistic schedule, allocating fitting time to planning/pre-production, production and post-production phases.

- Pre-Production: including casting, location scouting, final rewrites, storyboarding, contracts and crewing.
- Production: anticipated length of shoot.
- Post-Production: including colour grading, animation, sound editing and music composition or licensing.

Budget Breakdown: It is important that applicants provide a clear and detailed budget breakdown of how they plan to use the funds and resources at their disposal. Potential payments agreed in the Option Agreement should be earmarked.

The budget will need to be adjusted throughout the process, but it is important the use of the funds and expenditure plans are presented in a transparent manner.

The budget should also include any other sources of funding which have been confirmed for the project.

\*See Annex 1 - for a list of Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Investment: Applicants should indicate, if applicable, whether they have received and/or are seeking to secure further funding opportunities for the project. Applicants should also indicate how the proposed project would change (in scope, length of shoot etc.) in the eventuality of securing further investment.

Any form of investment in the project or the acquisition of other financial support or sponsorships indicate a strong will to make the project and a promise of a greater effort.

## Distribution Potential

Through a distribution plan, the project must show potential for local and international distribution, as well as the potential to stimulate interest in sales agents, distributors and/or broadcasters.

Audience Strategy: A film's audience reach is very important. The application should indicate the target audience, including demographics, if applicable. Does the distribution plan reach beyond Maltese events, festivals, broadcasts and cinemas?

## How to apply

Apply by sending in four hard copies of the application and the other required documents to Michael Mercieca by 30 August 2021, either by post or in person, at this address:

Film Adaptation Fund  
National Book Council,  
Central Public Library,  
Joseph Mangion Street,  
Floriana, FRN 1800.

Only completed applications will be accepted. If you have doubts about the eligibility or completeness of your application, it is strongly recommended that you [contact us](#) before submitting your application.

Applications must include a project plan (with page numbers) that takes into consideration the Assessment Criteria as indicated in these Guidelines, and must include with the elements and documents listed below. Failure to present any of these documents can render your application ineligible.

The NBC administrators reserve the right to request further information or clarifications on any aspect of the application.

## Mandatory document checklist

- Filled-in Application Form
- Project Plan (3,000 words max)
- Copy of applicant's ID card
- Option agreement
- Synopsis of the film (1 page)
- 10–15 page treatment
- Complete screenplay, or an excerpt, in industry format (optional)

- Director's Statement (what is the motivation for taking on this particular project and why will an audience relate to it, how you will treat this particular production in terms of techniques, casting etc. This will help evaluators to understand your visual approach and style)
- Screenwriter's Statement
- Producer's Statement
- Cinematographer's Statement (optional)
- Bios and CVs of the main creative team (including profile, filmography – detailing previous experience and previous works in the role listed for this application: type of works, duration/running time)
- Portfolios of the Director and Producer (URLs)
- Storyboard excerpt and/or moodboard for the film adaptation, other visual style references
- Teaser for the film (optional)
- Proposed cast for the lead roles and main supporting roles
- Location list
- Estimated Production Schedule (including pre-production, shooting and post-production phases)
- Audience Strategy
- Distribution plan
- Company Registration Certificate
- Company VAT Registration Certificate
- Financing plan + budget breakdown (if the budget submitted is greater than the total funds available for the competition, the applicant must submit a financing strategy outlining how the remaining funds will be secured)
- Level of confirmed financing (if other sources of financing or sponsorships have been confirmed, they should be supported by letters of intent from financial partners or other agreements)

## **State Aid Rules**

### **Applicable State Aid Regulations**

The NBC Film Adaptation Fund will be implemented in line with Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty, as amended by Commission Regulation (EU) No 2017/1084 of 14 June 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 as regards aid for port and airport infrastructure, notification thresholds for aid for culture and heritage conservation and for aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures, and regional operating aid schemes for outermost regions and amending Regulation (EU) No 702/2014 as regards the calculation of eligible costs, and by Commission Regulation (EU) 2020/972 of 2 July 2020 amending Regulation (EU) No. 1407/2013 as regards its prolongation and amending Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 as regards its prolongation and relevant adjustments, and by Commission Regulation (EU) 2021/1237 of 23 July 2021 amending Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 declaring

certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (the General Block Exemption Regulation).

In line with the General Block Exemption Regulation difficult audiovisual works defined under the NBC Film Adaptation Fund as films whose sole original version is the Maltese language may receive assistance up to 100% of the eligible costs. This assistance is capped under the Fund at €200,000.

Assistance under the NBC Film Adaptation Fund is not applicable to undertakings in difficulty as defined in terms of the General Block Exemption Regulation. However, the scheme will apply to those undertakings which were not an undertaking in difficulty on 31 December 2019, but which became an undertaking in difficulty in the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021.

Furthermore, assistance may not be granted in favour of a beneficiary which is subject to an outstanding recovery order following a previous Commission decision declaring an aid granted by Malta illegal and incompatible with the internal market should be excluded from the scope of this Regulation.

#### **Rules on Cumulation of Aid**

Assistance under the NBC Film Adaptation Fund cannot be accumulated with any other government funded scheme for the same costs. Should it become apparent that any project has been awarded separate funds for the same costs, i.e. double dipping, funds will have to be reimbursed.

Rules on cumulation of aid shall be in line with Article 8 of the General Block Exemption Regulation.

## Annex I - Eligible and Ineligible Costs

### Indicative List of Eligible Costs

1. Set (design, construction, rental, location)
2. Hire of equipment and technology
3. Acquisition of rights (e.g. book rights, music clearance)
4. Travel and transportation expenses including fuel expenses (eligible fuel expenses will be capped at an average of EUR 25 per/month)
5. Salaries/fees: production crew, director's staff and crew, technicians, other crew, actors, musicians (including development costs following the official date of approval for assistance through this Fund)
6. Film material and post-production
7. Insurance costs
8. Subtitling
9. Financing and Legal fees related to project
10. Creative and production costs of marketing material (i.e. posters, dedicated website, trailer)

### Ineligible Costs

1. Purchase of equipment of any kind
2. VAT and other taxes and charges
3. Contributions in kind
4. Interests owed, doubtful debts, loan charges, financial penalties, foreign exchange commissions and losses, fines and expenses of litigation
5. Any costs paid outside the eligible period of the operation, including costs paid prior to the official date of approval for assistance through the Fund
6. Any costs which have been claimed under a previous grant ('double dipping')
7. The purchase of land and real estate
8. Office overheads
9. Telecommunications (i.e. mobile, phone and internet expenses)
10. Food (other than catering and craft services provided on set for cast and crew)
11. Production costs relating to the EPK
12. Cost of Virtual Print Fee (VPF)
13. Costs relating to censorship – rating
14. DCP dispatch/tracking costs
15. Costs relating to the engagement of a Marketing Executive/Marketing Company
16. Costs including accreditation fees and stand fees relating to film markets or fairs
17. Fees for International Film Festivals
18. Rental of a screening room and equipment to organise dedicated screenings.