



**Independent  
Media Arts Alliance**  
**Alliance des arts  
médiatiques indépendants**

**Written Submission for the Canadian Heritage  
Recovery Consultations**

**October 5, 2020**

# Context for submission

Provided by Canadian Heritage

The cultural, heritage and sport sectors were among the first to experience the immediate financial impacts of COVID-19 and will be among the last to return. These sectors are not only an important driver of the Canadian economy, but also play a critical role in nation building, fostering Canadian identity, and social cohesion. These guidelines are intended to assist with the development and consideration of written proposals that aim to support arts and culture, heritage, and sport organizations in the recovery period, where COVID-19 health and safety risks are expected to remain significant and normal economic linkages may still be damaged. If applicable, information is also requested on partnerships, costing, and return on investment.

Your proposal should align with priorities of the recovery framework to:

1. Foster the sustainability of the arts and culture ecosystem by ensuring more stable sources of revenues for organizations and better remuneration for artists, creators, and cultural workers;
2. Increase the demand for Canadian art, productions and cultural products;
3. Increase the number of individuals from under-represented and equity-seeking groups who can earn a living from the creation and production of art and culture and participation in sport, including in management and leadership positions;
4. Increase the number of people who live in Canada who practice a sport on a regular basis (for sport-related sectors only); and
5. Reduce the environmental footprint of the art, culture, heritage, and sport sectors.

## Organization information

**Organization name:** Independent Media Arts Alliance / Alliance des arts médiatiques indépendants

**Organization address:** 4067 boul. St-Laurent, suite 200-A, Montréal QC H2W 1Y7

**Organization description:** IMAA is the PCH-designed Registered National Arts Service Organization for independent media arts in Canada. Representing over 100 independent film, video, audio, and new media production, distribution and exhibition organizations in every province and all but one territory, IMAA serves over 15,000 independent media artists and cultural workers. [www.imaa.ca/about-us](http://www.imaa.ca/about-us)

**Author of proposal:** Emmanuel Madan, National Director, with input from IMAA membership

# Summary of proposal

IMAA is active in many networks across the arts and culture sector, including the Canadian Arts Coalition among other groupings. We coordinate closely with our peers in the visual arts and performing arts sectors, as well as our counterparts in the media production industry.

IMAA supports many of the proposals already submitted by our partner organizations to the Canadian Heritage Recovery Consultations. The specific proposal we describe here speaks to the particular issues faced by film, video, new media and digital artists whose production models are artist-driven rather than industry-oriented: productions and projects initiated and controlled by artists and where creative control and IP rights are wholly retained by the director or artist, not delegated to producers or broadcasters. This community of creators has faced specific challenges since the onset of the Covid-19 crisis, and is well-positioned to seize unique opportunities as we look ahead toward recovery.

We welcome the Minister's recent statements, reaffirmed in the Speech from the Throne, that multinational web giants' sizeable profits generated in Canada should dictate a commensurate investment in Canadian-driven media production. The fundamental principle at play is that all those who derive economic benefit from the media ecosystem in Canada should participate in ensuring its sustainability and renewal. It is essential that this principle extend to online platforms in order for the overall regime to remain equitable, viable and coherent with the media realities of our interconnected online world. We look forward to the upcoming bill that will enact this key recommendation of the Yale Report.

Further, we believe that the imminent overhaul of the regulatory and funding framework also presents an opportunity to examine not only *who contributes* to sustaining Canadian content production, but also *how and to whom those contributions are distributed*. Canadians have innumerable ways of telling and consuming stories, and the current mechanisms for investing profits from content delivery into new production serve some of those storytelling modes well while leaving others out. Currently, the principal funding mechanisms for audiovisual and digital content are the Canada Media Fund and the dozen or so Certified independent production funds (CIPFs) regulated by the CRTC as vehicles for broadcast undertakings to meet their funding obligations. Projects that are self-produced by independent filmmakers, game developers, and digital creatives are not served by these structures.

**We therefore propose the establishment of new funding streams specifically to address the development, production and discoverability challenges of wholly independent, artist-driven audiovisual and digital media productions.** These new mechanisms would channel a portion of the anticipated new revenues flowing from media undertakings newly covered by the regulatory framework, and direct these resources to innovative forms of content creation currently unserved by the CMF and the CIPFs. These new funding systems would place particular emphasis on creative production by under-represented and under-served communities, incorporating lenses of equity, youth, regional diversity, and diversity of presentation forms in their governance models and decision-making processes.

Specifically, we propose:

- 1. Creating a new dedicated CIPF specifically mandated to invest in artist-driven productions and media projects;**
- 2. Establishing dedicated funding programs within the existing funding structures (CMF and the existing CIPFs) designed to support artist-driven audiovisual productions and digital projects.**

# Alignment with Canadian Heritage's recovery framework priorities

## 1. Fostering innovation, resilience, and sustainability

The funding structures of the Canada Media Fund and CIPFs are open to broadcasters and production companies, but not directly to artists. Their programs are designed to support productions destined for conventional television formats.

As the Canadian cultural community emerges from the deep crisis triggered by COVID-19, it will require novel and forward-thinking approaches that mobilize a wide and diverse community of creative voices. IMAA believes it is essential to seize the unique generational opportunity created when foreign-owned media undertakings are brought into the Canadian regulatory regime. A portion of this new influx of funding can be used to fill the gap in funding infrastructure, enabling a more diversified and resilient ecosystem for audiovisual and digital creation.

It is clear that the media environment in the 2020s is characterized not by "convergence" but by an accelerating proliferation of distribution media. Newer formats, from mobile apps to games to immersive technologies, need not be dominated by distribution monopolies as other communications media have been. Linking financial support directly to artists is a key strategy to building an innovative, resilient creative ecology for the next generation that embraces the full range of possibilities of digital media and ensures sustainable remuneration for these creators.

## 2. Diversity and inclusion

The existing media funding channels are predicated on the production modes of Canada's dominant cultures and centered in its major cities. If the Canadian government wishes to foster a true diversity of storytelling, it cannot be sufficient to expect storytellers and artists from equity-seeking communities to adapt their cultural practices to these existing structures. Rather, new models that are responsive to a range of creation styles must be developed with the active input and participation of artists, directors, screenwriters, designers, and developers who are not reflected in the established production structures.

IMAA's proposal to channel new funding directly to independent artistic voices will exponentially expand the entry points to sustainable careers in creation and production for artists who have long been excluded from these industries on the basis of race, culture, ability, gender identity, age, immigration status, language status, religion, or region. These systemic exclusions have posed obstacles to independent artists from these and other backgrounds in establishing production structures which they themselves control. It is therefore imperative that the overall funding environment actively evolve and expand to meet these creators on their own terms. We cannot simply continue to wait passively for these historic and present exclusions to very gradually diminish in the broader society. Circumventing these systemic exclusions will be essential to mobilize the full potential of this country's cultural expressions.

## 3. Environment

Micro-productions have a competitive edge as regards sustainability: smaller crews, shorter production times, and less intensive travel all generate lower environmental footprints than those typically prevalent in the larger media industry. IMAA's proposal will support production modes that are inherently more sustainable than large industrial film and TV operations.

In addition to our proposed initiative, we believe it will be essential to incentivize local hiring and sourcing for productions located outside major centres. Policies should be implemented to encourage productions to

favour local sources in their hiring and provisioning practices, rather than parachuting in outside talent, crew and material resources. This would have the double benefit of reducing unnecessary travel-related emissions as well as stimulating local economies. The Canadian Production Tax Credit has a clear role to play here, and the federal government's Regional Development Agencies could play a partnership role in these efforts.

Travel restrictions during the pandemic have highlighted the need to reduce the sector's dependence on long distance travel. Even post-Covid, the carbon footprint of air travel for the purposes of promoting and touring work will continue to be a major consideration. Our sector is seeking to adapt and update its business models and strategies in ways that not only mitigate health hazards but also minimize carbon footprint. Digital tools, although they have environmental side effects of their own, continue to be optimized throughout our sector. However, these tools are often developed in isolation and not widely propagated. We recommend increased support for sharing and co-developing best practices in this area, in order to increase the sustainability of the sector as a whole. More efficient, better coordinated approaches to international touring (such as block booking and cost-sharing between presenters) are promising strategies to economize resources and minimize waste while maximizing impact.

## Other considerations

### Partnerships

Our key recommendations would be implemented by the CRTC in consultation with the community of independent AV and digital media creators, and in coordination with the existing roster of Certified independent production funds and the Canada Media Fund.

As noted in Question 3, partnerships with the federal government's Regional Development Agencies would enable a policy of incentivizing local hiring and purchasing policies for remote, rural and Northern productions.

### Costing

The overall budgets of the new funding vehicles being proposed is still to be determined. However, it should be emphasized that our proposal would be entirely funded by new revenues generated through the anticipated expansion to the media regulatory framework. Because independent, artist-driven productions tend to require much lower budgets than broadcaster-oriented projects, even a modest commitment of new funds towards the proposed purposes would carry significant impact.

### Return on investment (social, environment, economic)

As mentioned above, independent AV and digital media productions generate high impact even from relatively low amounts invested. This means that at similar investment levels, the returns from independent artist-controlled productions stand to be an order of magnitude greater in terms of number of productions and projects completed. The dollar-for-dollar returns on investment would be substantially greater not just in terms of quantity of content, but also from the point of view of creative diversity, social impact and inclusion, and community economic development.