



---

## BIG SKY FILM GRANT INSTRUCTIONS & GUIDELINES

---

### GRANT CATEGORIES

#### FEATURE FILM & TV

Awarded to a feature-length film or TV series that shoots at least 50% of principal photography in Montana and has a Montana spend of \$350K (or more). Possible award amount is not capped.

#### RESIDENT FILMMAKER — FULL-LENGTH

Awarded to a feature-length project that is produced by a Montana resident filmmaker that has a validated credit as a Producer, Director, or primary Director of Photography. Must shoot at least 50% of principal photography in Montana. Possible award amount is \$1,000 to \$100K per project.

#### SHORT-FORM CONTENT

Awarded to filmmakers who create short-form content. Examples include short narrative, pilots, documentary, animation, webisodes, Montana-centric stories, and series 60 minutes or less with budgets under \$350K per episode. Must be produced, created, and/or filmed at least 50% in Montana. Possible award amount is \$1,000 to \$50K per project.

### PRODUCTION TYPES

Examples of eligible productions include:  
Feature Films | Short Films | Documentaries  
Television | Limited Series

Certain categories of productions are excluded from the program, including, but not limited to, broadcast news or current affairs programs, interview or talk shows, instructional videos, sport shows or events, political campaigns, adult content, and daytime soap operas.

### HOW & WHEN TO APPLY

The Program takes yearly submissions starting April 1.

Apply through the appropriate category link on the Big Sky Film Grant (BSFG) page of our website, [MONTANAFILM.COM](https://montanafilm.com). Links are only available during the call for submissions. The Montana Film Office (MFO) uses *Submittable* (cloud-based application manager) for applying to the program; you will have to create a username and password.

### APPLICATION REVIEW

Once you apply, your application is checked for completeness, viability, and financials. If your application package is missing items, isn't complete, or is not feasible – you will be contacted right away to either amend your application or withdraw from the round.

The BSFG Review Committee will meet in late summer/early fall to score applications. If you have a complete application, it is guaranteed to be reviewed by the grant committee and scored for value and special considerations.

## HOW APPLICATIONS ARE EVALUATED – CRITERIA

Grant applications are ranked and scored on four sections of the application - which are:

- I. **Project Details:** Project description/synopsis, treatment, script, look book/mood board, and need.
- II. **Finance Plan & Budget Detail:** Budget accuracy and relevancy will be evaluated. Potential project funding/grant award will be based on your ability to meet or exceed the expenditures in your budget by evaluating your secured funding sources. The grant amount you are requesting is also compared against your secured funding and your total Montana spend.
- III. **Production Details:** The proposed project will be evaluated for its economic impact on the local area, region, and state and these topics are ranked: jobs created, payroll generated, earned media values, lodging nights, Montana resident crew hires and wages, and special considerations (detailed out below).
- IV. **Marketing & Distribution Plan:** The marketing and distribution plan will be evaluated. This includes strategy, goals, publicity, advances, and direct sales.

### **Production Details — Special Considerations:**

You will be asked to check if any of these topics are relevant to your project. You must provide supporting documentation to verify your selections.

### **Special considerations vary per category.**

- Officially accredited production company, DP, or director attached.

### **Production Details — Special Considerations:**

- Produced by a MT-based production company.
- Minimum of \$10k of local grip and electric expenditures with a MT company. **Only check if you can provide a quote for your proposed spend/ plan from a MT company.**
- Minimum \$25k of post-production expenditures with a MT company. **Only check if you can provide details/proof that you intend to work with a MT post-production company.**
- 30% or more of crew hired by the production are MT residents. **Only check if you can show these hires in your full budget.**
- Production has name talent attached.
- Project is a MT-based story (historical, topical, or place-based significance) and/or MT-writer associated.
- Shooting 100% of principal photography in MT.
- Shooting in a shoulder season (fall, winter, or early spring).
- Wide distribution contracts or agreements in place. **Only check if you have uploaded these agreements with your application.**



# GRANT APPLICATION TIPS FOR YOUR FILM PROPOSAL

Below are definitions and examples of the most common questions in the 4-part BSFG Application. This does NOT include every topic/question on the application and is intended as a guide, NOT as definite instruction.

## I. PROJECT DETAILS

### Logline

If someone asks, "What is your script about?" - this is your Logline. Describe the plot in a captivating way and state the main concept of your story in a few concise sentences.

### Project Description / Synopsis

A synopsis is a breakdown of your project's story into prose and should fit on one page. The introduction or synopsis is the most critical element of your film proposal. It tells how compelling the project is and reveals how passionate the filmmaker is. If your synopsis is dynamic and is strategically placed, it will remain active in the reader's mind.

### Treatment

A treatment is a multi-page document written in prose, that tells the story that happens in your screenplay. It is more detailed than the synopsis and may include details of directorial style. It should be written in present tense.

### Lookbook / Mood Board

Gives a visual representation of the mood/tone/feeling of your film and gives the reader an idea of what your film will look like. It tells the story of your film through images.

### Need for Project

Establishes the focus and rationale for the grant proposal. Example: describe how the proposed project will have an economic impact on the local area, region, and state. Projects can also be needed as a pure art form. Does this provide a look into humanity, art, humor, examination, or pure escapism?

## II. FINANCE PLAN & BUDGET DETAIL

In this section, please address your finance plan for the production. Simply put, a finance plan is where you specify how much money you need to make your project and how you're going to obtain, or have already obtained, that money. It also shows where the money is coming from and that sources of income are reliable.

Accuracy is critical - as potential project funding will be based on your ability to meet or exceed these estimated expenditures.

The MT Dept. of Commerce / Film Office cannot:

- Fund concept or development ideas/projects.
- Fund projects that do not bring their own funding to the production.
- Award more than what a production will spend in Montana.

You will be asked to prove all sources of secured funding and any funding you potentially intend on utilizing.

You will be asked to upload your full budget breakdown – not just the top sheet. Your budget is judged for thoroughness – if your budget is incomplete or not feasible, it will be viewed as a lack of planning by the production company.



### III. PRODUCTION DETAILS

You'll be asked about production hires, production details for special consideration, production dates, and the option to tell us about Key Production Crew.

#### Key Production Crew Bios

Include brief biographies of your key crew (ex. Producer, Director, Writer, Director of Photography, Sound Editor, etc.). Include information that shows their experience and why they are beneficial to the project.

### IV. MARKETING & DISTRIBUTION PLAN

You'll be asked about target audience, genre, distribution platform, and your marketing & distribution plan.

### STIPULATIONS

- Do NOT apply with multiple projects. Only one project per applicant/production company can be awarded in one of the three categories per grant cycle.
- The amount awarded to the Grantee's project **must be used** for Montana expenditures. The **Grantee will be required to verify the award was spent in Montana by submitting receipts** to the Film Office that total the grant amount.
- The Grantee must supply proof of compliance with the Montana Workers' Compensation Act by either submitting proof of Workers' Comp insurance or an Independent Contractor Exemption certificate.

### STIPULATIONS

- The Production Co/LLC must register with the MT Secretary of State. To obtain registration materials, call MT SOS at 406-444-2034, or visit their website at: [sosmt.gov](http://sosmt.gov).
- Recipient/Grantee will provide the most current IRS version of a W9.
- Each production can receive only one BSFG award at a time. A production company cannot apply for an additional BSFG award, for same or different project, if they have not closed out their prior award contract.
- If applying to the Resident Filmmaker category, you will be asked to prove your Montana residency by uploading a copy of your Montana driver's license, Montana-issued ID Card, Montana Tribal ID card, voter registration card, or proof that your production company is physically Montana-based.

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES

Every BSFG that is awarded is legally bound by a contract with the Montana Department of Commerce. Deliverables (what you will do/submit to the Film Office for the award) are determined per project and by project scope – but will most likely include providing the Film Office with:

- One exclusive trailer with the MFO and BSFG logo.
- MFO and BSFG logo and name recognition in the credits of the film.
- A digital copy of your project.



## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES

- MFO and BSGF logo on any related websites and posters controlled by the Grantee; MFO name recognition in press releases.

Grantees are required to submit various reports, lists, and documents to the MFO that include:

- Progress reports.
- Vendor lists, crew lists, and/or call sheets.
- Itemized list of expenditures and receipts that prove Montana expenditures.
- Grants over \$50K may come with a CPA review requirement.
- A detailed final narrative report and packet that includes:
  - The actual, total production cost/budget.
  - The actual, total Montana spend.
  - The actual production days spent in Montana.
  - The actual post-production days in Montana.
  - The actual number of Montana hires.
  - The amount spent on Montana resident hires/labor.
  - The actual Montana lodging spend.
  - Grip, electric, and equipment expenses.

**Note:** This is NOT an exhaustive list of stipulations or reporting requirements. Grantees must also be compliant with other applicable Montana laws and permitting.

## ACCEPTABLE EXPENSE & VENDOR TYPES

Every grantee must prove they spent their BSGF award with Montana vendors by turning in receipts totaling the grant amount they received. Below is a list of acceptable primary expense and vendor types that can be turned in as deliverables:

- Montana resident cast and crew wages
- Per Diem
- Grip, electric, equipment invoices
- Camera, Sound
- Craft Services, Catering, Meals
- Lodging
- Gasoline
- Wardrobe, Hair, Makeup
- Art Department expenses
- Car rentals
- Location Fees, Permitting
- Set Operations
- Airline tickets purchased from a MT travel agent

---

We appreciate your interest in the Montana Big Sky Film Grant Program. We work to serve the Montana filmmaking community. We look forward to receiving your application.

Questions? Contact:  
Montana Film Office

[montanafilm@mt.gov](mailto:montanafilm@mt.gov) | 406.841.2876

