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# **ULSTER-SCOTS BROADCAST FUND**

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for the production of Ulster-Scots  
moving image programmes  
in Northern Ireland

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## **GUIDELINES**

# NORTHERN IRELAND SCREEN

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (the 'USBF') has been set up to provide finance for the production of quality moving image projects on the Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language in Northern Ireland.

The USBF wishes to co-finance a wide range of moving image projects. Decisions to allocate resources from the USBF will be taken in line with all of the criteria detailed within this document, but key amongst these criteria is clear evidence that the project will, once produced, reach a substantial audience in Northern Ireland. This audience reach will most usually be evidenced through the commitment of an appropriate broadcaster but may in certain cases be evidenced differently (for example, through distribution in schools).

As a support to the primary aim, the USBF is also open to supporting radio content produced for BBC Radio Ulster; other local commercial stations and/or community radio with assessment based on standard USBF criteria.

The overarching aim of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund is to ensure that the heritage, culture and language of Ulster-Scots are expressed through moving image. The USBF also aims to foster the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland and to fund high quality Ulster-Scots cultural TV programmes for a Northern Ireland audience.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund are as follows:

- To deliver at least 10 additional hours of Ulster-Scots moving image programming per annum;
- To deliver at least 2 Ulster-Scots radio projects per annum;
- To deliver at least 5 digital content projects per annum;
- To broadcast 90% of the USBF funded programming within 9 months of delivery;

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- To reach a significant Northern Ireland audience, primarily but not exclusively through broadcast television, with an average per programme audience target of 40,000 people in Northern Ireland. This target is an average across all the programming supported by the USBF applied to each 12 month period. It is fully accepted that some programming will attract audiences below this target and some above; for example, NVTV commissions will not attract audiences of this scale while prime time UTV broadcast content will far exceed this audience target. To address this issue, each commissioned project will be provided with a guide audience target to be established by the USBF in conjunction with the relevant broadcaster;
- Whilst these are yearly objectives and targets it is recognised that on occasion where projects merit, it may be more beneficial to achieving the overarching aim of the USBF to spread targets across a 2 year period.

## **FUNDING**

The Ulster-Scots Investment Committee (the 'Committee'), chaired by a Northern Ireland Screen Board Member, will make funding decisions a minimum of twice a year per year. In exceptional circumstances decisions may be made outside of this time framework.

The Fund will invest up to £400,000, up to a ceiling of 75% of the overall agreed project costs (although given the size of the fund it is envisaged that project funding will be limited to £250,000 in all but the most exceptional circumstances).

Where the aid intensity is 75%, at least 70% of costs must be spent in Northern Ireland. Where the aid intensity is at a lower level, the percentage spend in Northern Ireland must be equivalent to the percentage aid intensity, for example if the aid intensity is 50%, at least 50% of costs must be spent in Northern Ireland.

## **COMMISSIONING**

### **Commissioning Process**

The Committee has, with the assistance of an independent evaluation of the workings of the USBF, revised and refined the workings of the USBF. The

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primary theme of these revisions is to present greater clarity as to the content the USBF wishes to support, and to present a framework that will more effectively ensure the quality and appropriateness of the USBF supported content. The Revised Programme Commissioning Guidance provides further information on these revisions including editorial interests/priorities, changes to the USBF's operation and objectives and targets.

The editorial interests/priorities are for guidance purposes and will be updated as required throughout the life of the USBF.

The editorial interests/priorities will be made available publicly but are largely for the use of broadcasters interested in working with the USBF and will inform the broadcasters' tender documents to the independent producers.

On the basis of the editorial interests/priorities and in line with their own scheduling and audience needs, interested broadcasters will produce tender documents detailing the specific types of programming they wish to commission. Broadcasters will provide these tender documents in line with their own commissioning procedures and timeframes.

Once an independent production company has received confirmation from a broadcaster that the broadcaster wishes to commission a particular programme, the independent production company can apply to the USBF.

It is foreseeable that, in some circumstances, a USBF priority (for example with educational programming) could be better achieved through a platform of delivery other than a broadcaster. In this case, the independent production company would apply directly to the USBF without reference to a broadcaster. All other criteria would apply as normal and, most importantly, evidence of audience reach would still apply.

Potential applicants considering applying to the USBF are encouraged to contact Northern Ireland Screen to discuss the application prior to completion of the application form.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **Investment Committee**

The Investment Committee has delegated authority within Northern Ireland Screen to make funding decisions regarding the USBF.

The Investment Committee is made up of 7 members including the chair who is a Northern Ireland Screen Board Member.

The other members are a nominated member from BBC NI who represents

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broadcasting interests generally, a nominated member from the Ulster-Scots Agency and three independent representatives on behalf of the Ulster-Scots audience in Northern Ireland.

The British Film Institute, which channels government funding for the USBF from the Department of Culture, Media & Sport, will have observer status on the Committee.

### **Assessment Criteria**

When making its decisions, the Investment Committee will have due consideration for the following criteria:

- The project complies satisfactorily with the USBF Objectives and Targets;
- The project complies satisfactorily with the editorial/priorities;
- Contribution to increased awareness and understanding of Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and/or language;
- The quality of the proposal and the audience appeal;
- Value for money/maximising the resources within the USBF;
- Accessibility within the broadcaster's schedule/maximising audience access to ensure an audience appropriate for the genre of programme can be reached;
- Contribution to the growth and development of the Ulster-Scots independent production sector and infrastructure;
- The commitment of match funding and satisfactory evidence that the project is additional to the programming levels already undertaken by the attached broadcaster.

## **BUSINESS TERMS**

### **Who can apply?**

Applicants to the USBF must be registered independent companies with a permanent agency in Northern Ireland. The only exception is if a specific call for applications is open to individuals. The USBF does not demand that specific

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production activities are undertaken within Northern Ireland. Applicants are free to choose whichever part of the production process it sees fit to undertake outside of Northern Ireland, if it wishes.

The USBF will accept co-production arrangements where the co-producer does not have a permanent agency in Northern Ireland provided the project and the co-production clearly fulfil all of the stated criteria and the project, in the view of the Investment Committee, contributes more significantly to the aims of the USBF than a similar project without the co-production arrangement.

### **Investment Levels**

The USBF will not invest more than £400,000, up to a ceiling of 75% of total production costs, in any given project or series (although given the size of the fund, it is envisaged that project funding will be limited to £250,000 in all but the most exceptional circumstances).

The level of funding will be at the sole discretion of the Investment Committee, but will be in line with market rates for the appropriate genre within Northern Ireland.

### **Match funding**

The USBF will provide a maximum of 75% of the overall agreed project costs. Where the USBF is investing 75% of the overall agreed project costs, the broadcaster must provide the balancing 25%. This 25% must have a minimum of 15% cash into the project but may include a fixed 10% overhead cost to the broadcaster reflecting the broadcaster's editorial contribution to the development and production of the project and the cost of broadcast.

Where the USBF is investing between 5% and 50% of the overall agreed project costs, full match funding to cover 100% of the costs must be clearly committed with a minimum of 25% being provided by the broadcaster.

If circumstances arise where a broadcaster is not attached and satisfactory audience reach is achieved by other means, sourcing the 25% match-funding will be the responsibility of the applicant company.

The USBF will at no time require a degree of territorialisation greater than the contribution which the USBF will make to the overall project costs. For example, where the maximum aid intensity of 75% is applied, the degree of territorialisation is limited to 70%.

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## **Eligible Broadcasters**

The USBF is open to all broadcasters who can demonstrate a significant reach across the whole of Northern Ireland.

In the case of each broadcaster, the Investment Committee will have to be convinced that the proposed project is additional to the Ulster-Scots heritage, cultural and/or language programming the broadcaster was transmitting prior to the availability of the USBF. In assessing additionality, the Investment Committee will have due regard to the number of hours of Ulster-Scots programming previously transmitted by the broadcaster, the value of the broadcaster's Ulster-Scots independent production commissions within Northern Ireland, and the overall quality of the Ulster-Scots heritage, cultural and/or language programming previously transmitted by the broadcaster.

The USBF will not be used to subsidise activities already undertaken by broadcasters. The aim of the USBF is to combine resources to realise the shared objective of securing an enhanced and more diverse representation of the Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language on the screen.

## **Exclusions**

Northern Ireland Screen may refuse to consider an application in such circumstances as it may, in its absolute discretion, consider inappropriate. Such circumstances include, but may not be limited to:

- If it is evident from the proposal that the project is likely to be pornographic, or to depict violence gratuitously or as a form of gratification, or to advocate the violation of human rights;
- If it is evident from the proposal that the project will be calculated to foster discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, whether or not a person has dependants, religious or political beliefs.

## **Awards**

Investment from the USBF is in the form of a recoupable award together with a 25% profit participation (if the USBF's investment is less than 75% a lower recoupment will apply pro rata). The awards granted by the USBF only become repayable where there are secondary sales beyond the initial commissioned and agreed production budget.

Digital content projects are expected to be free to use for the end user as such a revenue model is not usually expected or required.



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## **Broadcasters Licence**

Given the broadcasters' relatively small investment, their rights will be covered by a licence to broadcast but will not include equity in USBF funded projects. All rights over and above the broadcaster's licence will be retained by the applicant production company. This structure allows the applicant companies to exploit any secondary rights and build value in their companies and the sector.

The USBF will also have non-exclusive rights to the materials produced. Given the level of public funding offered by the USBF to projects it is important to ensure the best value for money possible and to retain the option to use supported material in the future, e.g. in future projects, within relevant festivals. Potential use of this material will work alongside the broadcasters and not against their licence agreements. This also applies to digital content projects.

## **Production Agreement, Budget & Cash flow**

The USBF will expect a production budget to be based on industry norms and market rates and will advance funds in accordance with a cash flow schedule agreed in advance.

The USBF will not release any part of its investment until a production agreement has been concluded and evidence of insurance cover has been provided. Any offers of funding will be made in principle, subject to contract.

## **Offer Duration**

An offer of investment from the USBF will normally be valid for a period of 3 months from notification of the award, unless otherwise agreed, and will at all times be subject to the continuing availability of funds within the USBF.

## **Commitment to Good Practice**

All productions supported by the USBF must commit to, and adhere to, the NI Industry Code of Practice published by Northern Ireland Screen. A copy of this code is available on the application website.

## **Credits, Publicity and Delivery Materials**

The USBF will require digital delivery on hard drive of the finished programme/project. For television programming pro-res files should be delivered.

The USBF will also require a selection of at least 10 stills (at least 300 dpi) of the production.

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The USBF will require an end credit to include the Northern Ireland Screen/USBF logo.

All printed publicity material must credit Northern Ireland Screen as administrators of the USBF.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

The USBF will require cost reporting in line with the standard practice of the attached broadcaster.

The USBF will require approval and sign off during pre-production, production and post production of the project in line with the standard practice of the attached broadcaster.

The USBF reserves the right of access to financial reports throughout the life of the production and in all cases for no less than five years after the delivery date. An external audit may be undertaken for the USBF by a third party on any funded project.

### **Equality of Opportunity**

The USBF has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, gender, race, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, whether or not a person has dependants. The USBF must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. Please note that Northern Ireland Screen operates this policy in respect of all of its funding decisions.

### **Application Process**

An application must be submitted by the applicant on the standard USBF online application form. To request access to the application form please email [usbf@northernirelandscreen.co.uk](mailto:usbf@northernirelandscreen.co.uk) Any supplementary information, must be submitted by email to [usbf@northernirelandscreen.co.uk](mailto:usbf@northernirelandscreen.co.uk) . The cost of making the application will be the responsibility of the producer.