



## 2023/2024 INVESTMENT GUIDELINES

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## 1. OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Mission

Shaw Rocket Fund (“Rocket Fund”) will invest in and champion quality Canadian children’s content by working with strategic partners and creators.

We are strong believers that quality media fuels the imaginative minds of our kids and that their lives are enriched through interaction with creative content that is reflective of the world they live in today, in a safe and appropriate environment. We believe that children deserve stories and experiences that demonstrate equity, diversity, and inclusion with authenticity. Our goal is for children and youth throughout Canada and around the world to have access to and benefit from engaging, Canadian-made content on all platforms, and we accomplish this with strong partnerships throughout the children’s media industry.

Rocket Fund Guidelines reflect our response to the changing Canadian and global media environment. The Rocket Fund’s investment is based on providing children (the audience) the best media experiences on various platforms, and we support programming that can best demonstrate how to meet the needs of this intended audience in Canada and abroad. We are committed to supporting the Canadian children’s media sector to the best of our ability.

### 1.2 Background

The Rocket Fund is a Certified Independent Production Fund (CIPF) that is a permanent, independently governed, not-for-profit corporation dedicated to investing in the Canadian children’s media industry by stimulating the creation of high-quality Canadian children’s, youth and family media content through equity investment and industry initiatives.

We are a proud equity investor that fosters strong business partnerships to help ensure the continued creation of rich Canadian media experiences for children and their families, while promoting a safe digital environment. As a not-for-profit organization, we reinvest the recoupment of our investments in media content into creating new and original kids programming, demonstrating a strong social enterprise framework.

### 1.3 Investment Overview

For Rocket Fund’s 2023/24 fiscal year, Rocket Fund will allocate its equity investments and contributions through three application programs:

- The **Content Creation Program** is for any and all content, excluding feature films, that enriches and educates the audience and offers authentic stories and experiences that are of great interest to Canadian children, while offering safe experiences on all platforms.
- The **Feature Film Program** is for theatrical feature films produced specifically for children, youth or family audiences that tell authentic stories that are of great interest to Canadian audiences.
- The **Brand Building Program** is for all additional content or activities that build the brand of content funded by the Rocket Fund through the Content Creation Program, Feature Film Program, or any previous Rocket Fund funding program.



## **What we look for**

Our primary focus in evaluating investment proposals is:

- 1) The strength of the creative content;
- 2) the audience impact – the ability to resonate with the intended child, youth, and/or family audiences; and
- 3) the strategy for success – a meaningful and cohesive strategy on how to achieve success with the creative content, which could include audience engagement, awards and critical recognition or sales and revenue, and is relative to the nature of the content. For projects where sales and revenue are a measurement of success, additional materials will be required to support the application.

## **Specifics**

- In response to the current state of the children’s media industry in Canada, Rocket Fund aims to better support content creation and audience experiences with Rocket Fund resources. This may result in higher investments in fewer projects than historical averages.
- Rocket Fund investments and contributions are considered on a project-by-project basis. Investments and contributions are dependent on the financial needs of the content and the strength of the application and cannot exceed 75% of the total Canadian budget.
  - For the Content Creation Program, there is no cap on the potential Rocket Fund investment, which will be meaningful and reasonable.
  - For the Feature Film Program, the Rocket Fund may invest up to a maximum of \$150,000.
  - For the Brand Building Fund, there is no cap on potential Rocket Fund contribution, which will be reasonable and meaningful.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion are of utmost importance to the Rocket Fund. All Eligible Applicants must demonstrate how their projects value and showcase equity, diversity, and inclusion in an authentic way throughout the content itself and the production team involved. To further its commitments to the Canadian children’s media industry, establish a baseline for equity, diversity and inclusion data collection, as well as measure progress, the Rocket Fund will collect information related to the identity and representation of individuals associated with investment applications through the Rocket Fund Self-Identification Portal.
  - Applicants are encouraged to consult ‘On Screen Protocols & Pathways: A Media Production Guide To Working With First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories’ for guidance when working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.
  - Applicants are encouraged to consult resources like ‘Being Seen: Directors for Creating Authentic and Inclusive Content’ for recommendations and best practices for ensuring authenticity in their content.
- The applicant must demonstrate how Canadians will be able to discover and access the content in a meaningful manner.



- The Rocket Fund participation in international co-ventures and treaty co-productions will be based on the eligible Canadian costs. However, the global financing and worldwide recoupment potential will be evaluated, and applicants must demonstrate reasonable global recoupment potential of the Rocket Fund investment.
- The terms and conditions of any platform agreement must be reasonable, and the rights granted must not encumber the Rocket Fund's rights or recoupment potential.
- Any revenue generated over and above the amounts used to finance a project must be shared with the Rocket Fund in accordance with the Revenue Share Policy expressed in Schedule A.
- Applicants are encouraged to consider and implement more environmentally sustainable practices in development, production, and exploitation of their content, to reduce their environmental impacts and improve their environmental footprint.
- The Rocket Fund strives to limit barriers and increase accessibility of its funding programs and applications to all Producers and encourages any Producer that may require additional assistance to draft or submit their application to contact the Rocket Fund office at: [admin@rocketfund.ca](mailto:admin@rocketfund.ca).
- All applicants are expected to maintain inclusive and respectful workplaces, free of discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- All decisions with respect to applications and proposals will be made by the Rocket Fund Board of Directors at their sole and absolute discretion and will be final.

**THESE GUIDELINES MAY BE MODIFIED AT ANY TIME WITHOUT NOTICE.**

## 2. ELIGIBILITY

The following requirements must be met in order for an application to be considered:

### 2.1 “Eligible Applicants”

Eligible Applicants for each of the application streams must:

- (1) Be an incorporated Canadian company which is neither owned nor “controlled in fact” by any non-Canadian individual or permanent resident<sup>1</sup>, or any non-Canadian corporation; and
- (2) derive its primary source of income from the creation of audiovisual programs and/or associated non-programming digital content and, unless otherwise waived by the Rocket Fund at its sole discretion, have an arm’s length relationship to conventional broadcasters, discretionary services and/or on-demand services regulated by the CRTC.

### 2.2 “Eligible Content”

To qualify as Eligible Content for the Content Creation Program or Feature Film Program, the content must:

- Be targeted to children (under 13), youth (under 18) or a general family audience. For greater clarity, youth programming must be relevant and speak directly to a teen/youth audience and incorporate a teen/youth point of view (as opposed to a young adult audience). In respect to family, variety, documentary and magazine programming, the production must clearly demonstrate relevance to children or teen/youth, rather than a general audience.
- Be either:
  - Audio or audiovisual programming of any length, such as a series, feature-length movie, movie of the week, web series, or one-off. The production can be animated and/or live-action, fiction or non-fiction (e.g. documentaries, variety and magazine); or
  - new or updated digital or interactive content (e.g. games, apps or non-programming digital content)<sup>2</sup>, websites, or additional audiovisual content (i.e. digital shorts); or
  - new audio production (i.e. podcast).
- Not be news reporting, actualities, or sports, as defined by the CRTC.
- Qualify as either:
  - a Canadian program certified by the CRTC or CAVCO that meets a minimum of six out of ten (6/10) Canadian content certification points;
  - a treaty co-production certified by Telefilm Canada; or
  - a co-venture certified by the CRTC;

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in the *Immigration Act*.

<sup>2</sup> Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-343, Section 39.

as well as:

- have Canadians own the underlying rights;
- have the content produced in Canada, with at least 75% of the costs spent in Canada;
- ensure the content is and remains through its production and exploitation under Canadian ownership and control;
- ensure Canadians developed the content in a meaningful way.

Treaty co-productions and co-ventures must demonstrate global recoupment potential for the Rocket Fund.

- Be made available in a meaningful way to the targeted Canadian audience on any platform that is available to Canadians within two (2) years of completion, including, but not limited to, (i) a Canadian broadcaster, (ii) any subscription video-on-demand services, (iii) any “over-the-top” services, (iv) through theatrical release, and (v) any digital platforms, including social media, with proven audience reach. Any program agreements(s) must conform to the Rocket Fund’s Revenue Share Policy expressed in Schedule A.
- Have a meaningful and authentic audience impact strategy.
- Have a meaningful and achievable success strategy.
- Have a meaningful and achievable brand strategy.
- Be closed captioned and have descriptive video as required by the CRTC<sup>3</sup>.
- At a minimum, conform to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters’ (CAB) guidelines on television violence, advertising to children, and sex-role portrayals,<sup>4</sup> as well as the CRTC’s notice of television violence,<sup>5</sup> and any other CRTC policies or regulations.

Other requirements:

- For audiovisual content, principal photography or voice recording cannot commence prior to the application deadline date (unless otherwise agreed to by the Rocket Fund prior to submitting an application).
- For feature films, principal photography or voice recording must commence within 12 months of the application.
- Rocket Fund does not accept applications for a subsequent season of a series where the Rocket Fund did not invest in any prior season(s), unless otherwise agreed to by the Rocket Fund.

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<sup>3</sup> Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-343, Section 121.

<sup>4</sup> *Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming, Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children and Code on Sex-Role Portrayal for Television Programming.*

<sup>5</sup> CRTC Public Notice 1997-80, *Classification System for Violence in Television Programming.*



## 2.3 “Eligible Brand Building Content”

To qualify as Eligible Brand Building Content, the Brand Building Content must:

- Be related to audience development or discoverability (i.e. social media, curriculums, live promotional events and tours), or other content related to building or expanding the brand (i.e. international versioning, export and marketing support, and other brand-expansion activities).
- Be based on and tied to Eligible Content that: (i) has received an investment from the Rocket Fund, or (ii) has applied to the Rocket Fund and is being reviewed at the same time as the Brand Building Content application.
- Be of high quality and clearly demonstrate how the content will enhance the viewing experience for a children’s, youth, or family audience.



## 3. INVESTMENT STREAMS

### 3.1 Content Creation Program

Investments in the Content Creation Program are meant for Eligible Content that has appeal foremost to Canadian children. Investment decisions will be based on creative quality, the values and benefits that a program will provide to its target audience, and the strength of the plan for success.

#### 3.1.1 Creative Requirements

The Rocket Fund's primary focus of any investment is the strength of the creatives and the potential of the content to resonate authentically with children or youth. This could include unscripted content, scripted content, or interactive digital content.

Applications are evaluated on the following:

- 1) Quality and originality of its creative content, which includes authentic reflection of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Preference will be given to applications that educate and enrich the audience, promote positive role-modelling, and are distinct creatively.
- 2) The potential audience impact, which includes the audience reach, strength of the Audience Development Plan, and cross-cultural and linguistic representation, including of official language minority communities (OLMCs).
- 3) The plan for success, which identifies what success means for the content and provides a strategy for success, including any brand strategies or sales and revenue potential.

#### 3.1.2 Financing Requirements

Applications must include:

- A meaningful and achievable financing plan; and
- a strategy for making the production available on a platform clearly accessible to the Canadian target audience within two (2) years of completion.

#### 3.1.3 Recoupment Requirements

As an equity investor, the Rocket Fund expects to recoup its investment from all available revenue streams generated from all rights throughout the world, including all subsidiary rights and other platform rights as set out in the Production Investment Agreement and these Guidelines. Recoupment will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, and for projects that have revenue and sales potential, investments will be contingent on negotiated recoupment.

When required, the Eligible Applicant must provide projections of revenue streams with quantifiable metrics when applicable. Revenue streams that include platform agreements and distribution fees must be detailed for both local and international distributions and account for all significant expenses and must be based on the Rocket Fund Revenue Sharing Policy expressed in Schedule

A. Allowable distribution fees and expenses will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Recoupment projections must include calculated logic for profitability and loss projections for each revenue stream, with supportive and quantifiable evidence for the first calendar year, as well as reasonable projections for years 2 and 3.

#### **3.1.4 Rocket Online Safety Program**

Online safety of children is paramount. Therefore, any digital or interactive content in which the Rocket Fund invests must be certified as being technologically safe for children through the Rocket Online Safety Program.

### **3.2 Feature Film Program**

Investments in the Feature Film Program are meant for Eligible Content that has appeal foremost to Canadian children, youth, and families. Investment decisions will be based on creative quality, the values and benefits that a program will provide to its target audience, and the strength of the plan for success.

#### **3.2.1 Creative Requirements**

The Rocket Fund's primary focus of any investment is the strength of the creative content and the potential of the production to resonate authentically with children or youth.

Applications are evaluated on the following:

- 1) Quality and originality of its creative content, which includes authentic reflection of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Preference will be given to applications that educate and enrich the audience, promote positive role-modelling, and are distinct creatively.
- 2) The potential audience impact, which includes the audience reach, strength of the Audience Development Plan, and cross-cultural and linguistic representation, including of official language minority communities (OLMCs).
- 3) The plan for success, which identifies what success means for the feature film and provides a strategy for success, including any audience strategies or sales and revenue potential.

#### **3.2.2 Financing Requirements**

Applications must include:

- A meaningful and achievable financing plan;
- a commitment from Telefilm Canada if a Telefilm Canada investment is contemplated in the financing plan; and
- a clear distribution strategy and partners for distributing the film in Canada and internationally, including a strategy for making the production available on a platform clearly accessible to the Canadian target audience within two (2) years of completion.



### **3.2.3 Recoupment Requirements**

As an equity investor, the Rocket Fund expects to recoup its investment from all available revenue streams generated from all rights throughout the world, including all subsidiary rights and other platform rights as set out in the Production Investment Agreement and these Guidelines.

## **3.3 Brand Building Program**

The Rocket Fund will accept investment applications for original Brand Building Content that is based on and accompanies Eligible Content that the Rocket Fund has agreed to invest in through the Content Creation Program, Feature Film Program, or any other Rocket Fund funding program. The Rocket Fund may invest up to a maximum of 75% of the total Brand Building Content budget.

### **3.3.1 Application Requirements**

Applications must:

- Include a detailed production and/or marketing and promotion plan demonstrating the feasibility of the Brand Building Content; and
- demonstrate how the Brand Building Content will help build or expand the brand and continue to serve the target audience.



## 4. APPLICATION / EVALUATION PROCESS

### 4.1 Application Process

#### 4.1.1 Content Creation Program:

Two deadlines between September 2023 and August 2024 will be held for the Content Creation Fund, in accordance with the application process as detailed on the Rocket Fund website: [rocketfund.ca](https://rocketfund.ca).

The Rocket Fund online application portal opens four (4) weeks prior to the deadline date and closes at Midnight ET (9 p.m. PT / 10 p.m. MT) on the deadline day. Deadline dates are on the Rocket Fund website and the online application portal can be found at: [application.rocketfund.ca](https://application.rocketfund.ca).

The Eligible Applicant will be asked to submit a list of company shareholders and key creative personnel in their online application, along with their Rocket Fund Self-ID Number. Prior to submission, we encourage all shareholders and key creative personnel to complete the Rocket Fund Self-ID Questionnaire through the Rocket Fund Self-ID Portal and provide the Eligible Applicant with their Rocket Fund Self-ID Number. Information regarding the Rocket Fund Self-Identification process can be found on the Rocket Fund website. The Self-ID Portal can be found at: [selfid.rocketfund.ca](https://selfid.rocketfund.ca)

The Board of Directors endeavours to make investment decisions between eight (8) and ten (10) weeks after the deadline date. The decisions of the Rocket Fund Board of Directors are at its sole and absolute discretion and are final.

Once the Rocket Fund commits to invest in the content, if the Rocket Fund determines, at its sole discretion, there has been a material change to the financing and/or creative elements prior to finalizing a Production Investment Agreement, the investment may be put on hold and may need to be re-evaluated by the Rocket Fund Board of Directors.

#### 4.1.2 Feature Film Program:

One deadline will be held for the Feature Film Fund in 2023/2024, in accordance with the application process as detailed on the Rocket Fund website: [rocketfund.ca](https://rocketfund.ca).

The Rocket Fund online application portal opens four (4) weeks prior to the deadline date and closes at Midnight ET (9 p.m. PT / 10 p.m. MT) on the deadline day. Deadline dates are on the Rocket Fund website and the online application portal can be found at: [application.rocketfund.ca](https://application.rocketfund.ca).

The Eligible Applicant will be asked to submit a list of company shareholders and key creative personnel in their online application, along with their Rocket Fund Self-ID Number. Prior to submission, we encourage all shareholders and key creative personnel to complete the Rocket Fund Self-ID Questionnaire through the Rocket Fund Self-ID Portal and provide the Eligible Applicant with their Rocket Fund Self-ID Number. Information regarding the Rocket Fund Self-Identification process can be found on the Rocket Fund website. The Self-ID Portal can be found at: [selfid.rocketfund.ca](https://selfid.rocketfund.ca)



The Board of Directors endeavours to make investment decisions between eight (8) and ten (10) weeks after the deadline date. The decisions of the Rocket Fund Board of Directors are at its sole and absolute discretion and are final.

Once the Rocket Fund commits to invest in a feature film, if the Rocket Fund determines, at its sole discretion, there has been a material change to the financing and/or creative elements prior to finalizing a Production Investment Agreement, the investment may be put on hold and may need to be re-evaluated by the Rocket Fund Board of Directors.

#### **4.1.3 Brand Building Program:**

Applications for the Brand Building Program will be open throughout the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Eligible Applicants with Eligible Content can apply at any time when their applications are ready.

The Eligible Applicant will be asked to submit a list of company shareholders and key creative personnel in their online application along with their Rocket Fund Self-ID Number. Prior to submission, we encourage all shareholders and key creative personnel to complete the Rocket Fund Self-ID Questionnaire through the Rocket Fund Self-ID Portal and provide the Eligible Applicant with their Rocket Fund Self-ID Number. Information regarding the Rocket Fund Self-Identification process can be found on the Rocket Fund website. The Self-ID Portal can be found at: [selfid.rocketfund.ca](https://selfid.rocketfund.ca)

Funding decisions through the Brand Building Program will vary depending on the Rocket Fund request. For requests under \$25,000, decisions will be made within 30 days. For requests over \$25,000, we will strive to have decisions made between four (4) and six (6) weeks after the application submission. The decisions of the Rocket Fund Board of Directors are at its sole and absolute discretion and are final.

The Production Investment Agreement for the Eligible Content that the Brand Building Content supports must be executed prior to the Brand Building Content Agreement.



## SCHEDULE A - REVENUE SHARE POLICY

The Rocket Fund expects to recoup its investment from all available revenue streams generated from all rights throughout the world, including all subsidiary rights and other platform rights (but excluding any revenue used to finance a program), as set out in the Production Investment Agreement or other Rocket Fund agreements and these Guidelines.

Agreements are subject to Rocket Fund approval and must at all times be in accordance with Rocket Fund's recoupment requirements as set out in the Rocket Fund commitment letter for the Eligible Content, and adhere to the following revenue sharing policies regardless of the entity that exploits the rights:

- (1) Third-party or related-party distributors and platforms that have been granted exploitation rights in and to the Eligible Content on behalf of the Eligible Applicant, will use best efforts to exploit the rights granted within Canada and throughout the world as the case may be, to generate a meaningful return on investment for Rocket Fund.
- (2) Distributors are entitled to deduct from gross revenues only the most current industry standard distribution fees and distribution expenses within established caps with no further deduction, and are subject to Rocket Fund approval.
- (3) If a Canadian platform has been granted exhibition rights to the Eligible Content outside of the territory of Canada, an appropriate fee over and above the Canadian fee is expected.
- (4) Exhibition rights granted to any platform must not encumber the Rocket Fund's rights or recoupment potential by limiting the exploitation of the Eligible Content in any given territory.
- (5) For Canadian platforms that are non-revenue-generating or are not able to utilize a revenue-generating model (i.e. public broadcaster platforms), but may receive revenue as a result of the exhibition of an Eligible Content on their platform, such Canadian platform will be expected to share gross revenue if and when Gross Receipts, as defined in the Production Investment Agreement, reach a certain threshold, to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
- (6) Should a platform be granted rights over and above their exhibition rights, such rights will be considered distribution rights, with the platform acting as the distributor on behalf of the Eligible Applicant and where the most current industry standard distribution fee and distribution expense deductions will apply. No further revenue or profit share entitlement from such rights will be allowed and in no event shall the platform retain in aggregate more than 50% of gross revenues.
- (7) In the event that a platform receives profit share or percentage of revenue from rights that are not licensed by the platform (e.g. a percentage of merchandising revenue), as the case may be, such revenue share must be after recoupment by all parties including related parties as set out in the agreed recoupment schedule, and then out of the Eligible Applicant's share of the revenues, unless otherwise agreed to by the Rocket Fund.
- (8) Gross revenues will be calculated from revenues actually received by the distributor or platform on behalf of the Eligible Applicant (Gross Receipts less reasonable and verifiable third-party deductions only [e.g. iTunes fees]), without further deduction.



Rocket Fund reserves the right to withdraw its investment in Eligible Content should Rocket Fund determine that the rights and revenue granted to any distributor or platform encumber Rocket Fund's rights and recoupment.

## SCHEDULE B - TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF INVESTMENT

### 1.1 Content Creation Program and Feature Film Program

- (1) Rocket Fund investments are by way of the acquisition of an undivided copyright interest in the Eligible Content. As such, Rocket Fund is entitled to certain ongoing rights in the Eligible Content as set out in the Rocket Fund Production Investment Agreement, including profit participation in perpetuity and a reasonable royalty, when applicable, based on the Eligible Content, that the Rocket Fund did not invest in.
- (2) The Rocket Fund acknowledges that copyright for Indigenous productions may be held by communities, and is open to discussing other ways to structure our contribution with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Eligible Applicants.
- (3) Should the Rocket Fund invest in the first season of a series or pilot, a reasonable profit participation in future productions will be required subject to terms set out in the Production Investment Agreement.
- (4) The Producer must be able to demonstrate how the Eligible Content will be made available in a meaningful way to the intended Canadian audience, to the satisfaction of the Rocket Fund.
- (5) Eligible Content must meet the Rocket Fund recoupment requirements for its investment as approved by the Board of Directors and set out in the Rocket Fund commitment letter.
- (6) The Rocket Fund must participate in the revenue generated from all exploitation of the Eligible Content, whether exploited by the Producer, broadcaster, platform, or distributor, and all parties exploiting those rights must respect the Rocket Fund's recoupment.
- (7) Eligible Applicants must sign and meet all of the requirements in the standard Production Investment Agreement (including proof of complete financing of the Eligible Content to the Rocket Fund's complete satisfaction, including tax credit calculations) within six months of investment approval. If the Production Investment Agreement is not executed within six months of Rocket Fund issuing the commitment letter, the Rocket Fund may expire its financial commitment at its sole and absolute discretion.
- (8) Eligible Content must include an acknowledgment of the participation of the Rocket Fund (including both logo and written credit when appropriate), (i) on all versions of the Eligible Content, (ii) on all promotional and publicity material, and (iii) on websites and physical media. The written credit is to read: **Produced with the financial participation of the Shaw Rocket Fund**. The Rocket Fund logo must accompany the written credit unless otherwise agreed to by the Rocket Fund. Rocket Fund logos can be found on the Rocket Fund website: [rocketfund.ca](http://rocketfund.ca).
- (9) All digital or interactive Eligible Content, whether or not such content received Rocket Fund investment, must be certified technologically safe for children through the Rocket Fund Online Safety Program.





## 1.2 Brand Building Program

- (1) The Rocket Fund contribution from the Brand Building Program must be towards Eligible Content that the Rocket Fund has invested in.
- (2) Rocket Fund contribution may be by way of a non-recoupable contribution or become an additional investment in the Eligible Content. If such contribution becomes an additional investment, the Terms and Conditions in Section 1.1 will apply.