

CHAPTER FOUR

FUNDING

THE DOCUMENTARY
FILMMAKERS HANDBOOK



ITVS

CLAIRE AGUILAR

Q – What is ITVS?

Claire – ITVS is a funder, presenter and promoter of independent programs by independent producers for public TV.

Q – What kind of funding is available?

Claire – There's the bread and butter funding that people know us for, which is for completion funding for single programs that is via our Open Call program. We try to differentiate the funding because it's not a grant. Grants have generally no strings attached, but this is really a production license agreement. So in exchange for the financial support, we contract with the producer a license for public TV.

Q – Do you get a piece of PBS's license fee?

Claire – No. Basically let's say the project needs \$150,000 for completion support. We'd give the producer that amount in exchange for licensing the program for exclusive public TV. It's usually for three or four years. On the other hand, we're able to give that kind of support to a lot of projects. But we also have other initiatives for R&D.

Q – Do you ever get involved in licensing for theatrical or DVD?

Claire – We just want TV, but we have to approve theatrical to make sure that the TV premiere is the first and it doesn't get tied up with waiting for theatrical. That has worked out for films like *Goodbye Solo*, which we financed and was a drama, but it had a number of theatrical runs. We don't take any home video or DVD rights.

Q – What kind of film would you fund?



itvs@itvs.org



www.itvs.org



www.facebook.com/itvsfans



www.facebook.com/itvsfans

Claire – The mission of ITVS is to fund films from independents that are compelling, that tell stories that haven't been told before, that are innovative in either form or content and that push the civic discourse. That means that it's going to spawn debate. So they're usually social issue films and mostly documentaries. We're open to all genres including experimental films and documentaries and animation. We're really interested in drama, but the budgets tend to be very high for us. And with our international shows we're looking for a view on global issues for American audiences that they haven't seen either. One of the first programs we did for that was a story about Arab women living in Israel who started a pickle factory. It's an interesting film because it's about Arab women who are disenfranchised because they're women and they're widows and they're trying to improve their lives by starting a business.

Q – What would you never fund?

Claire – We don't fund any lifestyle kind of television. We don't do "how-to's", nature or entertainment. That said there are a lot of entertaining films that may not seem like they're in the ITVS mandate, but they are. It depends on the show and how you look at it. There's a film that we funded called *King Corn* where these two guys plant an acre of corn in Kansas and they track the corn to where it goes. It goes everywhere from animal feed to high fructose corn syrup for Coca-Cola. It's done in a fun sort of reality show way, but those issues we're interested in.

Q – With the international films, are you doing a similar deal with them as you would the domestic films coming to you for support?

Claire – They're more co-productions than acquisitions. There's a similar license, but since it's international the window is a little longer. On the other hand, we don't control theatrical, home video or other TV markets. We are only interested in American TV and that contains public TV, cable and the free broadcasters.

Q – How does a filmmaker approach you for funding and what is the process?

Claire – There's an application process. Go to our website and go to the "for producers" section in the funding section, look at the guidelines and see if you are eligible. You have to be over 18 and a US citizen or resident. Unless you're international. Then it's the opposite. You have to have a prominent role in the film and have completed a previous film where you are the director or producer. It can be a student film – just so long as you have something under your belt. For Open Call, you have to be in production and have a sample of the program. So a trailer or selects are required. If you qualify for all of that, you send in an application and we have two rounds a year. The deadlines are in February and August and it's a competitive peer panel review process. The other initiatives are for development for diverse producers. One is for a station partnership. The average contracts that we give are \$150,000. So the applications go through different rounds of review and it would be read internally and externally. There are three tiers of review and

ITVS FUNDING INITIATIVES

Open Call - single, non-fiction public TV programming. Must be US citizen or legal resident. Project must be in production. Deadlines: February and August.

International Call - single, non-fiction TV docs that bring international perspectives to US audiences. Production and post funding.

LINCS - see LINGS boxout on opposite page.

Diversity Development Fund - \$15,000 for research and development to producers of color. US citizens and legal residents only.

Commissioned Funding - for proposals outside the above parameters.

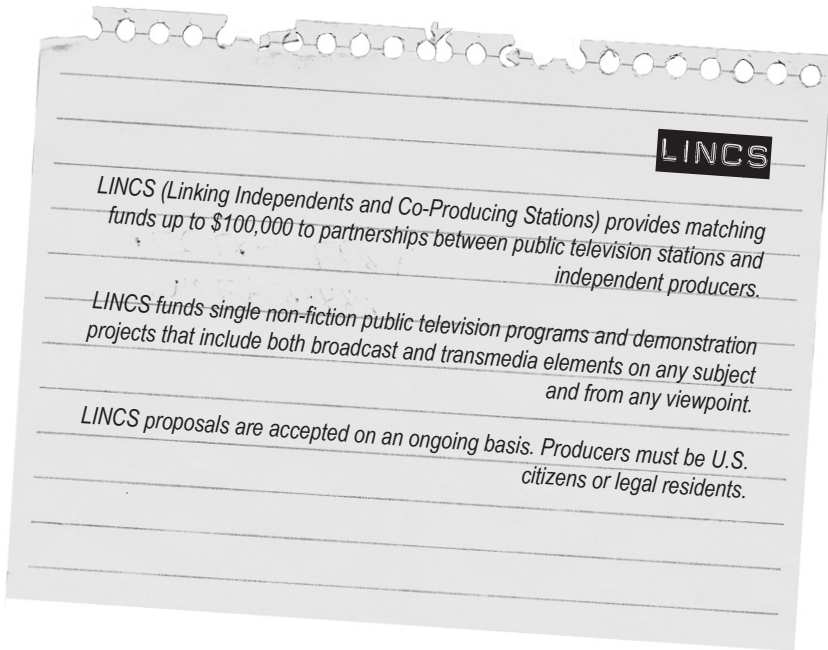
if it goes to the final tier – the final panel review, which is pretty good, there will be 30 projects in that pool and 10 will be funded. If you're chosen, the contract negotiations begin. The whole process takes about six months. We also do some outreach, but most people have heard of us. And there are some filmmakers that we do seek out if we have worked with them in the past or we hear they have a good project. We do answer some questions about how to apply, but we cannot pre-evaluate proposals.

Q – And if it's a filmmaker that you're seeking out?

Claire – An example is a filmmaker named Stanley Nelson who we've worked with before on a film called *A Place Of Their Own* about his family. He is a middle class black man whose family vacationed in Martha's Vineyard. He came and pitched a program he wanted to work on about black sexuality in Hollywood as it has created controversy every since *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* to *Shaft*. We said we would put in some R&D for that so he could come up with a reel and then we'd look at it and decide if we want to put in production funding in the future.

Q – What makes for a good proposal in the eyes of ITVS?

Claire – People have to have to put in a three-page treatment. There's another element, which is a half page synopsis of what the project is about. But with the treatment you hopefully say what the film is about, but how it's going to be told, what is it going to look like, what are the different elements in it. We really want to know if you can visualize the project in words. We look at other things like samples, too, but the treatment is really key.



The people who review are internal staff and external people that we engage. They are people just like the applicants, really - independent filmmakers, TV people, educators, outreach people and writers. They have seven criteria that they evaluate the projects on. Is it compelling? Is the treatment clear? Does it speak to an underserved audience - ethnic minorities, the elderly, etc? Does the project have the access that it requires? Why do they want to make the film? Is it going to be something for public TV? If it's more a theatrical film then this is the place to talk about that. Everyone wants to make feature docs and that makes sense, but they are a bit of an oil and water situation with TV. It's hard to schedule 90-minute documentaries. Is the production team strong and is the budget reasonable? Are they first time filmmaker or do they have people on their team that are really good? Is the amount that they are requesting reasonable? And while the treatment is important, we do look at the other materials. If the treatment is beautiful, but the video is really bad or vice versa, we look at them together. We have an essay on our website called *How to Write a Better Treatment* that talks about these issues. How to put into words any visualization and style. And what not to do, such as dropping names.

Q – Do you want to see a classic three-act structure?

Claire – People have said that about us, but I don't think that is the case. On the other hand, when a program definitely has a three-act structure then we have to look at the story that way. And so many documentaries are being structured that way in terms of narrative filmmaking and character based. So if it has that form, then we look to see if it is working. It's really the filmmaker who states that.

FUNDRAISING TIPS

1. Carole Dean said it best, "When you ask for money, you get advice and when you ask for advice you get money."

2. Do research to know what broadcasters and organizations are the best fit for your project.

3. Do research to find out if there are any competitive projects that have come out recently or are about to come out. People don't like funding the same thing.

4. Fundraising parties are a good way to talk directly to the people who would be most interested in supporting your film.

5. Get 501 (c) 3 status so someone's donation can become tax deductible.

6. Co-productions are a good way to get chunks of money from different countries. You can take advantage of certain tax breaks, government incentives and soft money this way.

7. Cash isn't the only thing to ask for. In-kind donations help, too, so find a way to get a free editing system or camera.

8. If you fail to get a grant in one cycle, try again. Many filmmakers get funded on the third, fourth or even fifth try!

Q – What is a way someone can get a character-based doc through?

Claire – Having video on them is really helpful. Sometimes people haven't had a chance to put together any production materials on the main character, but they pull together things like news footage or reportage or something so we know whom they are talking about and if they're going to work on TV.

Q – In your opinion what makes a good documentary program?

Claire – The level of storytelling. Something that's really engaging and talks about things that we would never know before. If you go to a film festival and you read the blurb of a film, you wonder to yourself why you would want to see a 15-year-old girl in the penal system who has bursts of violence. Then you see the film, *Aimee's Crossing*, and you are riveted by the character and the skill of the filmmaker.

Q – If someone was a first time filmmaker and had a good idea, how would they convince you?

Claire – There are different ways. Some people pair up with a more experienced person such as an executive producer or a co-producer. That's usually the way to get into ITVS. There's a great film called *Farmingville*, which was on POV and was produced by two people. One was Catherine Tambini who had done a number of documentaries before and her partner was Carlos Sandoval who was an attorney and an activist. He partnered with her and she was the main applicant. It was his first film and he did a great job. They were funded the first time they came to Open Call because the material was so strong. For an emerging filmmaker, he wasn't emerging in terms of his life. But even if someone has expertise or great access, we hold tight to this rule because so many people

that apply just don't have that experience and they need to partner.

Q – Do you do short films?

Claire – We acquire them through *Independent Lens* for American TV rights. We don't go into production funding for shorts unless they are 30-minute pieces that we could put on PBS. People send in shorts through Independent Lens and we look at them and then package them into an hour programs. Or if we need them as interstitials to round out the hour, then we look at them. Shorts are so great, there just isn't a lot of room for them. We're going to have an online shorts contest this year and we'll put them on our website.

Q – What is Independent Lens?

Claire – It's a multi-week series of independent programming – everything from documentary to drama to experimental to animation. It was conceived as a way to get independent voices on the air in primetime, works with *POV*, which airs in the same time slot but the rest of the weeks of the year – during the summer. Some of the shows are ITVS funded films and others are acquisitions. Sometimes they follow the PBS calendar themes like February they might have black films on and in June they might do gay and lesbian themes.

Q – When the projects come in do you designate slots right up front or when they are done?

Claire – We try to do it up front, but sometimes it's not possible. We may see something that we want on *Independent Lens*, but we have to make sure that PBS is on board with that. Some of our shows already have commitments to other PBS shows like *American Masters*, but we try to control the distribution of all our funded shows. And we work with the producers to find the best place for it.

Q – What is ITVS community and ITVS community classrooms?

Claire – It's an outreach program that is the umbrella of all the engagement and outreach programs that we do. That ranges from something called the ITVS Cinema Series where we go to different places and screen ITVS programs to people who are involved with the film and the issues of the film. ITVS Classrooms is where we put out study guides to work with educators to get out the word on certain issues. And not only classrooms, it can be care-givers and people in the health fields. We have a department here that does this and they work with the filmmakers to do the activities.

Q – What is LINCS?

Claire – It is a funding initiative where a filmmaker partners with a public TV station and what ITVS will do is match up to \$100,000 of the money that the station puts up. So you would go to WGBH and say I have this program, can you put in \$100,000 of post and

KEEPING FUNDERS SWEET

Where possible, fulfill any promises made. It may not always be possible to fulfill a promise, but make it a priority to do so at almost any cost.

Regular updates on email keeps the funder in touch with what is happening. If the line of communication goes cold, so will the investor.

Press – this is great for keeping people happy. Everyone associates press coverage with success, but beware, this may produce a false sense of financial returns on the part of the investors.

Invite them to a shoot. They love to see the buzz of the actual filmmaking process.

Send them a DVD of the final film and invite them to the premiere.

If things are going badly, then let them know. Funders would rather know things are going badly than hear nothing at all.

promotion? Then I could go to ITVS and get \$100,000 cash for the project. It's great. It has generated a lot of interesting programs. A recent LINCSS example is *We Still Live Here - As Nutanyunean* by Anne Makepeace. It was done in partnership with PBS station WGBY out of Springfield, Massachusetts. The film is about the Wampanoag nation of southeastern Massachusetts, which ensured the survival of the first English settlers in America, and lived to regret it. *We Still Live Here - As Nutanyunean* tells the story of the return of the Wampanoag language, the first time a language with no native speakers has been revived in this country. Spurred on by an indomitable linguist named Jessie Little Doe, the Wampanoag are bringing their language and their culture back.

Q – Are you seeing any trends in documentary filmmaking?

Claire – We are still seeing hundreds of projects about international and global subjects from independent filmmakers - the world is certainly getting smaller. The subjects range from economic globalization, migration, democratic uprisings and revolutions, women's rights and empowerment, environment, art and culture, etc. And one of the trends are the many films that ask us what the effect of Islam is on the world, on the US and on difference communities - although this might be attributed to a repercussion after 9/11, it is also an attempt to understand one of the most widespread and misunderstood religions of the world.

Q – Is PBS constrained by the same censoring regulations as the rest of American TV?

Claire – They are now ever since the Janet Jackson incident at the Super Bowl - the wardrobe malfunction. So the FCC really cracked down on what you can show on commercial TV, not cable, but commercial TV, which PBS is part of. Then PBS went and issued a policy statement of what you can and can't show. You can't really get away with anything now. You can't even say "God" on PBS without it insinuating some kind of curse. You can't say "ass" even though Jon Stewart says it every night.

Q – What are the common mistakes that documentary filmmakers make?

Claire – They don't read the guidelines or follow the directions. And I can understand in your enthusiasm not doing that, but it is better if you do. Like when we ask for a three-page treatment, don't turn in six pages because you have a lot of material. The other thing is to really think about the material for television. That means an hour show.

Q – What advice would you give a documentary filmmaker?

Claire – It's sort of obvious, but don't give up. Be resolute to what you have to do. And that is the same thing for us. We have to reject 95% of the proposals, but that doesn't mean that the project doesn't have value or that you cannot come back again. That's the spirit of making a film and that is ours as well. Don't take no for an answer.



CALIFORNIA
DOCUMENTARY
PROJECT

JOHN LIGHTFOOT

Q – What is the California Documentary Project?

John – It's a competitive grant program from the California Council of the Humanities (CCH) that supports documentary film, radio and new media projects about California subjects and issues. We look for projects that are of relevance to both California and national audiences and that are deeply informed by the humanities. The Council has made 104 grants through CDP since 2003.

Q – When you say the humanities, what do you mean?

John – We look at the humanities in two ways. We look at it both as humanities content that is evident in the piece itself and as a methodology, meaning that the project has a rigorous intellectual foundation and an approach based on humanities research and scholarship. In other words, we want to know what the story is as well as how the filmmaker is going to explore it. These projects should also take a critical, analytical and open approach to the subject matter. We want to know how you'll research the subject and which advisors will help you along the way.

Q – What wouldn't you fund?

John – We don't fund outright advocacy. So we won't fund projects that are a politically one-sided and lack critical and analytical perspective. We won't fund projects that are overly celebratory or promotional. And we don't fund post-production exclusively. Our grants are intended to come in while a project is still in production.

Q – For your Production and Research, you need to be matched one to one by



info@calhum.org



www.calhum.org



www.facebook.com/pages/California-Council-for-the-Humanities



http://twitter.com/Cal_Humanities

non-federal sources. Does that mean you have to have private money in place before you apply?

John – Well, no. The match can be made through in-kind or cash sources. Those funds do not have to be in place at the time of application, though they need to have been contributed and verified when the project is submitted for final report. So in the review we look closely at the proposal's fundraising strategy to assess whether there's a good chance of securing the funds necessary for completion or not.

Q – What are the available grants?

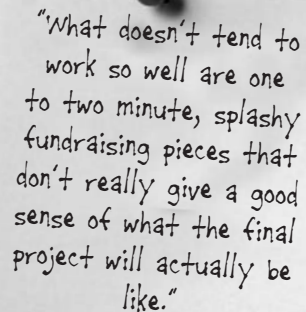
John – The Research and Development Grant is awarded at the very early stages of a project to support the development of humanities content and the overall approach to the subject matter. You can use R&D funds to produce trailers, but we like to see a majority of the funds go toward working with humanities advisors and developing the humanities content or approach. The Production Grant awards up to \$50,000 and, as the name implies, supports projects in production, the rationale being that this is when humanities advisors can play the most significant role. If you're already in post and there haven't been any humanities advisors in place all along, it's really too late for them to do anything but review rough cuts. The Production Grant has become increasingly competitive and the number of proposals received has tripled in the past three years. Then we have the Public Engagement Grant, which is intended to capitalize on the potential of these projects to reach and engage audiences above and beyond broadcast. We're excited because we haven't been able to support our projects in areas like this in the past.

Q – Would that include film festivals?

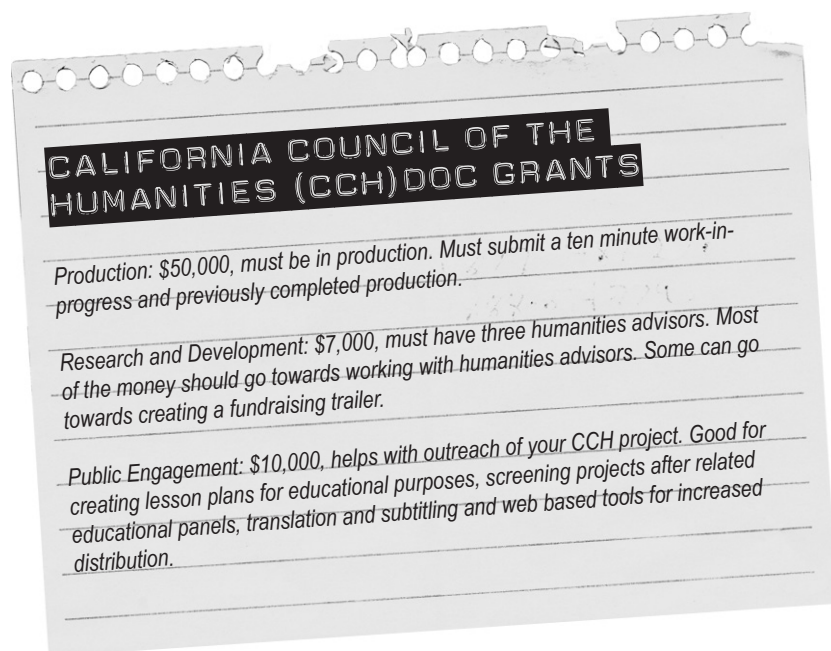
John – Potentially. But it's more about reaching beyond the obvious audience and getting people to understand the issues. At present the guidelines are fairly open. We want to support well-defined specific activities, but this could mean screening and discussions, developing educational curricula, translation and subtitling, targeted distribution, reversioning of content for new audiences, or even an associated transmedia project.

Q – How would someone apply for one of these grants?

John – For the Production and R & D grant, there's an annual deadline in the fall. Once the guidelines are posted on the CCH website read them thoroughly. If there are any questions after reading them, then feel free to contact me. You then submit a proposal, budget and work samples by the posted deadline. You can also sign up for the Council's eNews to receive notification once the guidelines are posted.



"What doesn't tend to work so well are one to two minute, splashy fundraising pieces that don't really give a good sense of what the final project will actually be like."



Q – What do you like to see in a proposal?

John – Because we tend to be an early funder, we place more emphasis on the written proposal than some others. First and foremost, we want people to follow the structure of the guidelines and be succinct. I also advise people to take what they think is common knowledge and question it because the people who are reviewing your proposal may not be as informed on the subject as those that are making the project. Yes, reviewers will have media experience, but some may also be humanities scholars and you need to satisfy both audiences. We also look for proposal narratives to address both the micro and the macro story. So for example if you are doing a biography, we don't just want to know the biographical details of the person's life, we want to know what the relevance of that information would be to society at large. None of these subjects exist in a vacuum and as much as you can establish the larger context for them, the more competitive you'll be. And then we are looking for great stories. The humanities component is important, but we also want these projects to be engaging, compelling and accessible.

Q – So you are not so much interested in what cameras are being used and other technical aspects.

John – Exactly. We ask for a treatment, but we don't need people to go into that level of specificity. It's important to state that we absolutely encourage adventurous film, radio and new media techniques and styles, but the nuts and bolts of how you do this is not necessary for the proposal.

Q – What do you want to see in the budget?

John – By definition, these grants are for somewhat experienced media makers and we assume they have some knowledge on how to create a budget. However the budget and the timeline are very revealing. You can have a fantastic proposal narrative, but if we see that there's only a tiny amount of money in the budget for post without any explanation then you know there's some experience lacking. It differs between film, radio and new media but generally we see total budgets for film projects ranging from around \$150,000 on the low end to well over \$1 million. Most film projects come in at the \$300,000-\$500,000 range, and radio is much less. We look for as complete and accurate a budget as possible so having realistic amounts for post production and rights and clearances are important. Reviewers don't want to see any sign that the project isn't going to be completed or not completed at a high enough technical quality.

Q – What are you looking for in the work samples? How could a first time filmmaker get involved in your grants?

John – For the Production grant, applicants have to submit a work-in-progress and a previously completed production. Generally a ten minute work-in-progress is about the right length. And the ones that tend to do best give a sense of the story and style and have something very compelling right at the outset, rather than a trailer that takes a long time to build. That said, we see works-in-progress at all different stages from rough assemblies of interview excerpts to very finely crafted fundraising pieces. What doesn't tend to work so well are one to two minute, splashy, fundraising pieces that don't really give a good sense of what the final project will actually be like.

Q – Do you need a fiscal sponsor to get the grant?

John – Yes. CCH doesn't make grants to individuals. You have to work through a non-profit.

Q – Do you recommend applicants having humanities advisors?

John – We require that projects actively involve humanities advisors to provide context, depth, and perspective. These can be university professors, independent scholars or they can be culture bearers, meaning their life experience gives them a perspective that will inform the project in ways others can't. The more engaged with the project your advisors are, the more competitive your proposal will be. There's no requirement that these advisors need to actually be in the piece, but they should be used as a resource. Most filmmakers that I've spoken to afterward have said that they benefited from the experience of



ACTIVIST MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

Outreach Extensions

Develops and implements solution-based media outreach campaigns that extend the impact of documentaries beyond TV and their local communities. Works with dozens of non-profit organizations like United Way and the American Diabetes Association.

www.outreachextensions.com

Working Films

Their motto says it all: "Linking non-fiction film with cutting edge activism." Their film campaigns change "toxic environments, influence equitable public policies, making communities more inclusive, and inspiring principled individual actions." They have resources for filmmakers as well like social media outreach seminars and guides.

www.workingfilms.org

Active Voice

Helps filmmakers spark social change by putting a human face on the issues of our times. Mostly focus on immigration, criminal justice, health care and sustainability.

www.activevoice.net

working with advisors.

Q – Do you need to be a California resident to apply for the grant?

John – No. For us, it's about the subject matter.

Q – If you fail to get funded, can you reapply? And if so, how many times?

John – There's no limit on how many times you can reapply. However I'd encourage an applicant who wants to reapply to contact us and find out why they were declined. If they're still interested, then they can make those improvements and apply again. What I don't encourage though is either trying to force your project into fitting our requirements or applying as if it was the lottery. It's a lot of work to prepare an application and it's a lot of work for us to review them.

Q – Can you have more than one film per cycle?

John – No. You can only submit one proposal per grant round. The Public Engagement grant is a little different because it's intended to support previously funded CDP projects.

Q – What are the common mistakes you see filmmakers make?

John – Not reading the guidelines thoroughly is big. The other big one is not

understanding the humanities requirements. Grant reviewers often ask, “*Is this film a humanities based inquiry?*” If it’s pure entertainment, advocacy, or celebratory, and doesn’t use the humanities to provide context, depth and perspective, then it wouldn’t pass. We also see a lot of historical documentaries and it’s a pretty common mistake for these proposals not to make a clear and direct case for contemporary relevance.

Q – What advice would you give a documentary filmmaker?

John – To learn as much as possible from those that are more experienced than you.



NEA
ALYCE MYATT

Q – What is the NEA and how does it differ from the NEH?

Alyce – The NEA is The National Endowment for the Arts. The NEH is the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NEH covers things like literature and history whereas our portfolio covers areas such as visual arts, dance, music and the media arts – although we do consider literature an art form and provide grants in that area, too.

Q – How would documentary filmmaking fit into the NEA?

Alyce – Two fold. Through our Arts and Media section, this has been traditionally known as Radio and Television. We revised the guidelines to be more inclusive of all the platforms which one has access to. This initiative has been designed to capture the arts on every media platform – television and radio, but also mobile, game platforms and web-based media. The projects funded under these guidelines will be about the arts and media as art. We're even funding dramatic narrative under Arts in Media. Then we have Art Works, which includes film and media art festivals, service organizations such as the Independent Feature Project or Women Make Movies, community based media centers, but media creation as well.

Q – What are the monetary levels of the grants?

Alyce– The smallest is \$10,000 and it generally goes up to \$200,000.

Q – How would a filmmaker apply for a grant?

Alyce – Through our website. We don't fund individuals, but we do fund organizations. So a filmmaker would have to be affiliated with a 501(c)(3) such as IFP, Women Make



webmgr@endow.arts.gov



www.nea.gov



www.facebook.com/NationalEndowmentfortheArts



<http://twitter.com/NEAarts>

Movies or the Filmmakers Collaborative. We aren't able to fund an individual artist through a fiscal sponsor; therefore, the relationship with the nonprofit organization must extend beyond using them as a pass-through. The organization has to be registered through www.grants.gov and their proposal would come in through there as well. The 501(c)(3) has to have a DUNS number. Applying can be a bit cumbersome so we really encourage filmmakers to get everything in order and not wait until the last minute.

Q – What else would you require in an application and what gets your attention?

Alyce – We require a narrative description of the project and a budget that outlines the expenses that will be accumulated during the course of the grant. We require a listing of key personnel including the track record a filmmaker has of making documentaries; who have they tried to reach? what successes have they had? We also ask our applicants what their strategy is for attracting an audience. Do they have an outreach, engagement, or marketing plan? Do they have a social media strategy? Do they have distribution in place at the time of their application? In the past, how have their projects been distributed? Ultimately, how are people going to know that this project exists and will they be so compelled by the promotion to give their time?

Q – Do you require filmmakers to show you either samples of previous work or of work in progress?

Alyce – Yes, both.

Q – Is an NEA grant typically first money in or one that comes in down the line?

Alyce – It can be either. We convene peer review panels and it really depends on how the panel feels about the work. Needless to say, first money in for a first time filmmaker is probably not going to happen. First money in for a seasoned filmmaker is more likely.

Q – What could a first time filmmaker do to increase their chances?

Alyce – Have a brilliant trailer.

Q – Would it help if they teamed up with a more established producer?

Alyce – Not always. It has to be clear as to what that established producer is really going to be contributing; we don't want it to just be a name on the proposal. Are they really going to have any involvement and if so, what?

Q – Who populates the panels?



APPLYING FOR AN NEA GRANT

You can get between
\$10,000 and \$200,000.
Check www.nea.gov for
deadlines.

1. Register with www.grants.gov.
2. Go to www.nea.gov and download application from The Arts in Media section under Grants.
3. Fill out Application for Federal Domestic Assistance.
4. Fill out the Project/ Performance Site Location(s) Form.
5. Fill out the NEA Organization & Project Profile Form.
6. Complete and attach required items to the Attachments Form (work sample, project narrative, budget, etc.)
7. Submit application electronically through www.grants.gov.

Alyce – It depends on the nature of the panel. If we have a panel coming up that looks at film festivals then it will be comprised of people who have been affiliated with the running of film festivals in one way or another. We always have a lay person on the panel who is not directly involved with the field. They are there to represent the general American public. We generally choose these people from those that inquire about being in that position.

Q – Do you have to be an American citizen or organization to receive the funding? And does the film have to be about an American topic?

Alyce – Yes on citizenship. No on the content having to be American.

Q – Does the project have to end up on PBS?

Alyce – No, and I think that is one of the misconceptions. Projects need to reach a broad audience and television remains an important vehicle, but it doesn't have to be public television; if you had an offer from HBO or a basic cable network, that would be fine. However, you can put something on TV or up on the web and it's available to the whole nation or in the case of the Internet, the world, but unless it's strategically promoted, it doesn't mean it's going to reach an audience. What are you going to do to ensure it does?

Q – If someone wanted to have a theatrical release of their film, are you okay with that?

Alyce – Absolutely.

Q – Does the NEA require you credit them?

Alyce – Yes. We ask that they credit the Endowment and we do ask for a final report that states how the funds were used and whether or not the grant was effective.

Q – If one fails to get a grant, can they resubmit for the same project?

Alyce – Yes, there's no limit to how many times people can submit one project but you can't reapply in the same year. There have been cases where projects look very promising but it's just too early in the process and the panelists didn't feel that it was appropriate to invest. The panel will say that they are favorable and encourage them to reapply.

Q – Can someone call the NEA before starting the process to see if their project is appropriate?

Alyce – Absolutely, but we really have just about all of the answers to most questions on our website. Our guidelines are posted there along with a series of FAQs, but we are always here to help if need be.

Q – What are the common mistakes that you see filmmakers make?

Alyce – I would say not clearly and succinctly articulating the story that we will experience through their film. Very often they will put the rationale of why this film should be made – why this film is important. But at the end of the day our questions are: what are we going to see? What story are you going to tell and how are you going to tell it?

Q – What advice would you give a new filmmaker?

Alyce – Raising money is hard and if you're looking to foundations and government funders for that money, you need to clearly state the how and why of your film in terms of engaging your audience. An example of that would be engagement campaigns that have been developed by organizations such as Outreach Extensions, Working Films, or Active Voice. Develop partnerships with organizations interested in your film's themes that then serve as part of your distribution plan. This is what's of interest to funders especially those that come on earlier rather than later. Make sure you read a funder's website and see what their missions are. Your film needs to speak to that.

APPLYING FOR AN NEA GRANT

8. Mail materials to NEA for staff review.

Media Arts Office/The Arts
in Media
Room 729
NEA

1100 Pennsylvania
Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20506-
0001

9. Eligible proposals sent off to panelists for review. Panels meet for 1 to 5 days to discuss projects.

10. Panel sends recommended proposals to National Council where they are reviewed in open session.

11. Council recommends proposals to Chairman who makes final decision on granting and amount of grant.

12. Notification



CROWD FUNDING

INDIEGOGO

DANAE
RINGELMANN

Q – What is IndieGoGo?

Danae – It's the largest open funding platform in the world. It helps raise money from more people, faster. We launched in 2008 at Sundance and since then we're now in over two hundred countries, run over 26,000 campaigns and distributed millions of dollars. We allow anybody to use our platform whether they be entrepreneurs, publicists, technology developers, app developers, food trucks owners or restaurants. Creative people can use it as well, so musicians, writers, filmmakers, photographers are welcome. In addition, we are open to anybody who wants to raise money for a cause or charity. We have a lot of activists, community gardens, cancer research teams and individuals raising for their own personal endeavors. For example, we have a couple raising money for IVF. We have a young volleyball team in Utah raising money to go to the Junior National championships in Georgia. There's a man named Pastor Marion who for years has been saving lives from execution in the Congo. When his kidneys started failing, a CNN reporter who's been covering his work for years launched an IndieGoGo campaign to raise money for a kidney transplant. In the end, they raised \$50,000 and he was able to fly to South Africa and have the surgery.

Q – How did IndieGoGo come about?

Danae – After college, I worked on Wall Street in finance in a media group. I'd meet a lot of filmmakers and producers at nighttime events. One time, I met a 70-year-old producer who Fedexed me his project thinking that I could finance his movie. It broke my heart to think that a man with a lifetime of experience was begging me, a young girl aged twenty-two with no experience, for money. It seemed that Hollywood was well financed, but not the independent world. I went back to business school so I could start a fund to help independent creative endeavors. There, I met my co-founders who also had experience



www.indiegogo.com



<http://www.indiegogo.com/blog>



www.facebook.com/IndieGoGo



<http://twitter.com/IndieGoGo>

with fundraising. Eric Schell had founded a theater company in Chicago and my other co-founder, Slava Rubin, created a fund to raise money for cancer research. So we all came together and very quickly realized the way to make it the most impactful business was to make it global, be democratic in our approach and allow anybody from around the world to raise money. That meant using the internet. We had enormous visions and still do. You have to have that kind of mentality if you want to build anything real. That's why we called ourselves IndieGoGo. We're all about the independent spirit happening.

Q – How can IndieGoGo help documentary filmmakers?

Danae – It's a vital tool for doc filmmakers for it helps get their projects off the ground. If you can show that you can execute something with a small amount of money, such as a fundraising trailer, it validates your overall project. That's very important to investors. In fact, there are five major benefits to crowd sourcing. First is money, obviously and the more you can get the better. Second, is market validation. When people donate to you it's like they're voting for your project with dollars. Other investors see this and realize they have less risk by putting in money when others have. This also helps ease distributors' nerves because they see there's a market for your project.

Third is marketing and awareness building. The one mistake filmmakers make is that they take years to make an amazing film, putting in tons of sweat equity, and only when they're done do they tell people about it. They expect people to show up out of nowhere. That's not the world we live in anymore. They should tell people about it from day one. They should use production as a new form of promotion. They should share snippets, dailies, progress updates and stories. People today are active consumers. We want to be part of things, we want to participate, give feedback, give our reactions, thoughts and comments on a product. So if you can create awareness of your project early on and give the public a way to interface with it, you will draw larger crowds when you're ready to release your film to the world.

Fourth is participation, which is allowing people to engage with you. On IndieGoGo, we allow people to leave comments, ask questions and keep a dialogue going about a project. The campaign owners can do video updates such as stating they got a great new interview and how it's going to help the perspective of the film. It allows filmmakers to have dialogue throughout production or post-production of the film in a way that allows your audience to participate - maybe give ideas. We had one filmmaker, Roberta Grossman, who had a couple of campaigns on IndieGoGo to raise \$13,000 for a documentary about a famous Jewish song that everyone dances to. It was a very heartwarming project. She started her campaign, got a ton of feedback and people reached out to her. It flew around the internet and it ended up in the inbox of the granddaughter of the man in Israel who wrote the song. She reached out to her saying that they had seen her campaign on IndieGoGo and she wanted to be a part of it.

The fifth thing is the idea of curbing serendipity. Morrie Warshawski talks about this a lot. When you share information with the world, positive things can come back to

5 BENEFITS OF CROWDSOURCING

1. Money.
2. Market Validation. When investors see others have invested in you, it provides less risk. Also helps distributors realize there's a market for your film.
3. Marketing and Awareness. Telling people about your project from day one. Use production as promotion. Share snippets, dailies, program updates and stories from the field as a way to engage and involve your audience.
4. Participation. Allowing people to engage, ask questions and start a dialogue with you while you are making the film.
5. Serendipity. You never know who is out there that can help.

help you. With Twitter, Facebook and other social media, it's easy to share and you never know who's listening. The reason someone decides to do a documentary film is because they're passionate about the subject. And they feel that other people would be passionate about it too. At this point, that's an assumption. But what happens is when they do a campaign, they start raising money from people they know, then they start raising from people they don't know via friends of friends or Facebook. Then it goes from an assumption to being real. People are out there, are interested in the project and start sending in money. That's the icing on the cake for a documentary filmmaker.

Q – What would you say is the advantage of crowd funding?

Danae – Years ago there were lots of obstacles to anyone who wanted to break into filmmaking and very few ways around them. These days, the obstacles are still there, but crowdfunding allows someone who doesn't have a trust fund, credit cards or an in to main funding opportunities, a way of getting their project started and completed. It's an exciting time for creative people. There's no excuse for a documentary filmmaker to not make their film these days. Marketing is free and the equipment is cheap.

Q – Why do you think people will give money to someone they don't know?

Danae - There are a lot of different reasons. One is people want to support in what they believe. Two, they want some kind of perk that might be offered for investing. Three, they want to be part of something bigger than themselves, but can't due to their busy lives. They can satisfy those urges by living vicariously through the campaign. And four, there's

a certain element who just look for cool stuff to support. The most successful campaigns get validation from the donations of people that they know. Then we provide a ton of tools and tips of how to go out to the communities that would care about your project and engage with them for fundraising.

Q – How would a doc filmmaker go about running a successful campaign?

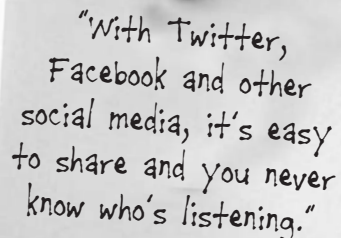
Danae – There are three key elements. The first is a great pitch that's personal and authentic. Don't be somebody else. You aren't going after an investor with his or her own objective. This is your fan base. These are people who care about your project, so just be yourself. That means telling them why you're passionate about making this film and why it's important that it gets out to the world. Often times filmmakers just pitch the project, but in the social funding world, people fund people. So make a video pitch with you in it stating what I just mentioned. You should also come up with some unique and exclusive perks that are personalized or customized. For example, you could give away signed tee shirts or offer a chance to watch an editing session. There's also financial perks such as they will get the DVD before anyone else does or for half price. Then there's exclusivity perks, which might be that you only give out a limited number of a certain object and then it's unavailable. Then you need to engage participation from your funders. So when you're running your campaign, put out progress reports as well as updates on whatever your film is about. A great example is *100 Yen*, a film about the Japanese arcade experience. They had a tee shirt campaign and in the middle of it, they asked their funders to vote on the tee shirt style. With *Sound It Out* a UK doc by Jeanie Finlay, they were very authentic. They showed the story and themselves. The second key element is being proactive. Doing updates and reaching out to influencers makes a big difference. The *100 Yen* guys were great at this. They reached out a quirky, niche video arcade blog online. They went right to their core audience and raised \$12,000 in a couple weeks. The readers of that blog saw the campaign and thought, "Sweet, I want in." The third element is having an audience that care. If you're making a film about paper clips, you have to make sure that there are people in the world that care about paper clips.

Q – Some filmmakers want to do everything themselves. Does it help to have help?

Danae – Totally. We've noticed that and films that have four to six members raise 72% more than just one person. People who do more than eleven updates do 137% more.

Q – When you do a campaign, is it better to do it in small chunks?

Danae – We encourage people to start small, especially if they're new to crowd funding. Run a \$1,000 campaign to get comfortable with it. It teaches people what it takes to be out there and authentic.



"With Twitter, Facebook and other social media, it's easy to share and you never know who's listening."

Be specific with your use of funds and be transparent. So say that your film is going to cost \$50,000, but you are raising \$1,000 because you have to shoot a trailer in order to take the next step. You have to put in the energy and time to make it work, but if you remember that the whole reason for making the film was to impact people and share a story, then why not start at the beginning?

Q – Any suggestions for documentary filmmakers to increase traffic to their site?

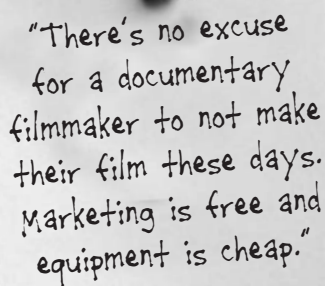
Danae – Everything that I just talked about. Be proactive. Do updates. Reach out to influencers like bloggers and organizations with newsletters. We have a campaign called E-maker for inventors in the UK. One group created some 3D printers and over a week they raised over \$107,000. They made it onto a blog called Gizmoto, which went to their core audience. When you reach out to influencers, don't just ask them to cover your campaign. Go to the ones who can be helpful. Maybe they are someone who you'd want to interview for your project. Also the people you interview could tell their friends via Facebook or something. The way it usually works is you put out an email to your friends and family. Then you go on Facebook and get the Twitter stuff going. Then you reach out to the influencers and hopefully they will drive traffic your way. Then it's about to maintaining your updates and giving reasons for people to re-share.

Q – How is IndieGoGo different from Kickstarter?

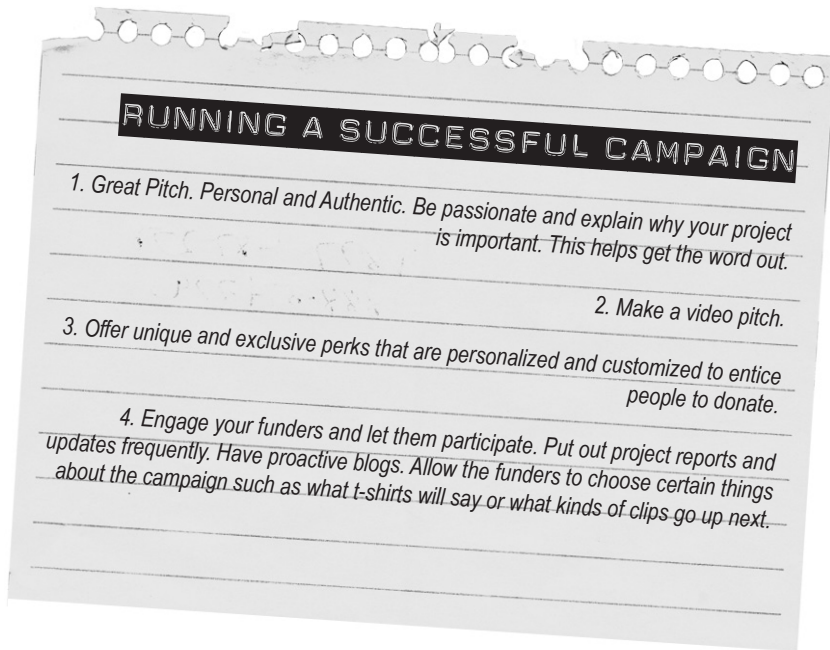
Danae – We don't curate so we allow anyone to post. We don't believe it's our decision on who should be successful or not. We are international, so anyone in the world can create a campaign as long as you have a bank account. We don't just support creative projects. Entrepreneurs, causes and charities can be with us, too. What's interesting is that since our launch in 2008 we now have over two hundred competitors and we are still the only ones that are broad. The other difference is that you keep the money you raise and we provide you an incentive so you pay a lower fee if you reach your goals. We integrate with Paypal and allow you to use credit cards while they force you to use Amazon Checkout, which a lot of people have a hard time using. It's not very common.

Q – How much can you realistically raise?

Danae – It all depends on who you are and how big your audience is. If you're Kevin Smith, you're going to raise a lot of money because you connect with a huge amount of active fans. If you're a first time filmmaker out of film school, you're not likely to raise a million dollars. Emily Hagen made a film called *My Sucky Teen Romance*. She's a high school filmmaker and she raised \$9,000 to help get the film underway. Then she got the buzz going and did another campaign and raised \$6,000 for post. She raised that a lot faster because she was connected to Harry Knowles of Ain't



"There's no excuse for a documentary filmmaker to not make their film these days. Marketing is free and equipment is cheap."



It Cool News. He blogged about it and his fans came through.

Q – What are partner pages?

Danae – Certain organizations have pages on IndieGoGo so they can tout their own campaigns. One of them is the Sheffield Doc Fest. When you go to their page, you will see all these docs that are related to the festival. It's extra marketing. And another difference between Kickstarter and ourselves is that some of our partners are non-profits like Fractured Atlas and the San Francisco Film Society. They allow for donations to be tax deductible without paying double fees. Normally they would pay us a fee of 4% and then 6%-7% to the non-profit on whatever they raise. We came up with a flat 6% for both so the filmmaker can keep more of the cash.

Q – What is the GoGo Factor?

Danae – It's an algorithm that measures how active a campaign is. We want to reward people who work hard. So if you're working hard to promote, share and update your funders and your community is working hard commenting, sharing and funding you, then you get a high GoGo factor. At that point, we'll promote you to the press and feature you. We're very democratic. Everyone has an equal chance for success. It's all based on how hard you work.

Q – What common mistakes do you see filmmakers make?

FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS

A.J. Muste Institute
www.ajmuste.org

Nat'l Black Programming Consortium
www.nbpc-online.com

Arthur Vining Davis Foundation
www.avdf.org

National Fund for Jewish Documentary
www.jewishculture.org

Creative Capital
www.creative-capital.org

Native Public Television
www.nativetelecom.org

Dance Film Association
www.dancefilms.org

The North Star Fund
www.northstarfund.org

Ford Foundation
www.fordfound.org

Open Meadows Foundation
www.openmeadows.org

Frameline Film & Video Comp. Fund
www.frameline.org

Pacific Pioneer Fund
www.pacificpioneerfund.com

Guggenheim Fellowship
www.gf.org

The Playboy Foundation
www.playboyenterprises.com

The Jerome Foundation
www.jeromefdn.org

Puffin Foundation
www.lpbp.org

Latino Public Broadcasting
www.puffinfoundation.org

Rockefeller Foundation
www.rockefellerfoundation.org

The LEF Foundation
www.lef-foundation.org

Roy W. Dean Film and Writing Grants
www.fromtheheartproductions.com

MacArthur Foundation
www.macfound.org

The Sister Fund
www.sisterfund.org

Nathan Cummings Found.
www.nathancummings.org

The Unitarian Universalist Fund.
www.uua.org

For more info on grants go to: www.foundationcenter.org

Danae – They have the belief that *“if they build it, they will come.”* Nothing in the world works that way. Even if you have an amazing pitch and video, if all you do is put it up and walk away then when you come back two months later, you won’t be successful. You have to put yourself out there. You will have a much higher success rate if you speak for yourself as well. That’s the importance of making it personal and putting yourself in the video to show who you are. And then the last mistake is not being themselves. You aren’t pitching Hollywood studios. You don’t have to be somebody else. If people don’t believe you because you are trying to pull some song and dance, then you won’t be successful.

Q – What advice would you give a new filmmaker?

Danae – Action speaks louder than words. Just do and the momentum will build. Then more people will want to jump in because people like to be part of action. So if you are having a hard time raising \$5,000, then try and raise \$1,000. Then go off and do something real with that \$1,000 and then come back and say, *“This is what I did.”* Do that enough, then people will know you can execute and will want to be a part of your project.