Guidelines for film production grants from Sørfond

Issued by the Norwegian Film Institute, approved by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1 October 2025.

About Sørfond

Sørfond was established in 2011 as a scheme for promoting production of films in DAC countries where film production is limited for political, social, or economic reasons. The scheme is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a part of Norwegian Development Aid.

The Norwegian Film Institute (NFI) administers the scheme pursuant to the regulatory framework *Ordningsregelverk Sørfond* issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Individual decisions made in accordance with the guidelines may be appealed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Sørfond is a cooperation between the Norwegian Film Institute and the Festival Agency Foundation, *Stiftelsen Festivalkontoret*.

1 Definitions

In these guidelines, the following definitions are used:

a) Film: a fiction film or documentary with a minimum running time of 50 minutes, produced for screening in cinemas, on television, or on other audio-visual media platforms.

b) Main producer: a private production company based in a country on the OECD's DAC-list that has prime responsibility for the financial and practical implementation of the project and owns the film rights.

c) Minority producer: a private, independent production company (limited company) in Norway that has audio-visual productions as its main activity and is not predominantly publicly owned or closely linked to a broadcasting organisation.

d) DAC countries: a country on the OECD DAC list of ODA Recipients.

2 Main goal

The main goal of Sørfond is to strengthen the freedom of speech and human rights in DAC countries where these rights are limited for political, social, or economic reasons.

To obtain this goal Sørfond seeks to strengthen film as a cultural expression, and to promote artistic freedom and cultural diversity through allocating production support to independent film producers from DAC countries. This includes support to productions and producers that will contribute to promote women’s rights and gender equality.

Sørfond also seeks to forge a close cooperation between Norwegian filmmakers and filmmakers in the above countries, and to facilitate access to further international networks for financing and dissemination of the works.

3 Scope

These guidelines apply to grants for film productions with a main producer in a DAC country and a minority producer in Norway.

Projects with a main producer in one of Norway's priority countries for development cooperation (see annex 1) will be prioritised.

Grants under these guidelines shall be awarded in accordance with the EEA-agreement rules on state aid.

4 Production requirements

The main producer must be established in a country on the DAC list. Furthermore, the director must be a citizen of, or resident in, one of these countries. The film must be principally shot in a country on the list.

Key persons connected to both the majority and the minority producer must have documented professional experience in their fields.

Production grants

5 Application for a production grant

The minority producer submits, on behalf of the production, an application for a grant to produce a film, as defined in section 1 a).

The application must be submitted before the deadline and must include:

a) the CVs of the members of the main production company and the responsible main producer.

b) the CVs of the members of minority production company and the responsible minority producer.

c) a signed letter of intent on the co-production between the main and the minority producers. The guidelines for film production grants from Sørfond must be attached to the letter of intent.

d) signed statements from main and minority producers confirming zero-tolerance towards any financial irregularities and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). (template provided)

e) the CV of the scriptwriter.

f) the CV of the director.

g) a completed form detailing previous results achieved by the main producer, the Norwegian minority producer and the director. This must also include an overview of the two films that

achieved the best results during the last seven years, including the track record of festival selections, awards and similar events.

h) copies of up to three of the director's most recent productions.

i) the director's notes.

j) the Norwegian minority producer's notes.

k) a maximum three pages note from the Norwegian minority producer which must explain how the project fulfils the main goal of Sørfond. The note should include a brief description of how the project will contribute to women´s rights and gender equality. The note should also include a brief reflection of how to prevent the project from causing unintended negative consequences on i) women's rights and gender equality, ii) human rights, iii) climate and the environment, iv) anti-corruption.

l) the script or project description if the application concerns a documentary film.

m) documentation that the main producer holds the film rights. Any original documentation that is not in English must be summarised in English.

n) the production schedule, shooting schedule and estimated date of the premiere.

o) the total budget estimate for the project in NOK, EUR or USD. The EU official monthly rate of exchange for the month when the application is submitted is to be used.

p) a financing plan in NOK that specifies all funding.

q) documentation that at least 50 % of the funding has been confirmed. Any original documentation not in English must be summarised in English. As a minimum, this must include the names of all parties to the agreement, the title of the project, amounts in the original currency in accordance with the original documentation, as well as currency conversion to NOK with a stated rate of exchange in accordance with the financing plan. Only documentation that includes an English summary will be considered as confirmation of funding.

r) any agreements with distributors, TV channels or other distribution platforms.

s) any existing pilot.

t) plans for environmental sustainability in the production (Green Production).

The entire application must be in English. Attachments that are not in English must be accompanied by an English summary that includes, as a minimum, key information from the original document. Unless this requirement is met, the documentation will not be valid.

The producers should be familiar with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, a set of guidelines for States and companies to prevent, address and remedy human rights abuses committed in business operations, as well as with the OECD guidelines for responsible business conduct. Producers should strive for adhering to such principles when relevant or applicable.

Assessment and prioritisation

6. Jury process

An external jury consisting of three to five members will make the artistic evaluation and the final selection of the applications. At least one of the jury members must represent a country on the DAC list. One of the jury members may be a representative of Sørfond (the Norwegian Film Institute or the Festival Agency Foundation). The jury is appointed by, and presents nominations to, the Norwegian Film Institute, which holds the decision-making authority for Sørfond.

The jury's assessment and prioritisation of the applications must be based on an overall assessment of artistic, production-related and economic aspects. As a part of the assessment the jury shall consider if the projects are in line with the fund's main goal, as described in section 2.

The professional experience of the director, main producer and the Norwegian minority producer is also important. Furthermore, emphasis will be given to geographical balance and the representation of women in key positions.

7. Pre-selection

The Norwegian Film Institute may make a pre-selection of the applications to be forwarded to the jury. The pre-selection is based on Sørfond's main goal, as set out in section 2.

Applications that, for whatever reason, do not meet the formal criteria for grants or are received after the application deadline will not be forwarded to the jury for assessment.

During the pre-selection phase, the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients (ranging from least developed countries to upper middle-income countries and territories) and Freedom House’s annual Freedom in the World report will be used as a basis for calculating points. In addition, emphasis will be placed on the previous results of the director and the main producer, and the project's alignment with Sørfond's overall objective, as described in section 2.

Projects that were presented at the Sørfond pitching forum (see section 12) will go directly to the jury as long as they meet the formal criteria for grants from Sørfond.

Terms for calculation, payment etc.

8. Calculation of the grant

The amount of the grant is determined by the Norwegian Film Institute on the recommendation of the jury but must not exceed NOK 1 million for any single project. If the applicant has received funding for travel/accommodation in connection with the pitching forum (see the second paragraph of section 12), this will not be included in the grant amount.

Up to 10 % of the grant awarded may be retained by the minority production company as a co-production fee/administration grant.

The grant amount, minus the share retained by the minority producer, referred to in the third paragraph of this section, is to be transferred to the main producer in its entirety. It is a condition that at least 70 % of the total funding must be spent in a country on the DAC list.

9. Disbursement of the grant and acceptance of the terms

The grant is disbursed to the minority production company in three instalments at the company's written request.

The first instalment amounts to 70 % of the total grant and is disbursed by the Norwegian Film Institute following the minority producer's submission of:

a) the main and minority producers' written acceptance of the grant's terms and conditions, as set out in these guidelines and in the grant letter.

b) documentation that the project is fully funded and that all funding has been confirmed.

c) the invoice it has received from the main producer for the main producer's share of the first instalment.

d) the signed co-production agreement if this has not been provided earlier.

e) the signed agreement between the main producer and the film director.

f) the production schedule.

The second instalment amounts to 20 % of the total grant and is disbursed by the Norwegian Film Institute after the film has been shot, following the minority producer's submission of:

a) the invoice it has received from the main producer for the main producer's share of the second instalment.

b) a rough cut of the film, with sound.

c) the dialogue script in English if the film is not subtitled in English.

d) the updated production schedule.

e) the main producer's project report.

The third instalment amounts to 10 % of the total grant and is disbursed by the Norwegian Film Institute following the minority producer's submission of:

a) a copy of the finished film with English subtitles.

b) the invoice it has received from the main producer for the main producer's share of the third instalment.

c) audited and certified financial statements from the minority producer for the whole grant amount.

d) the minority producer's report on the use of the amount reserved for co-production fee/administration expenses (cost report).

e) the minority producer's report on the implementation of the project in the light of Sørfond's overall objective, as described in section 2.

f) the main producer's documentation of expenses including an audited statement of accounts, corresponding to the main producer's share of the whole grant amount, together with documentation that at least 70 % of the grant has been used in countries on the DAC list.

g) the main producer's report on the use of the grant and results achieved, including a report on the implementation of the project in the light of Sørfond's overall objective, as described in section 2.

h) confirmation from the National Library of Norway of receipt of all legal deposits.

These documents must be submitted in Norwegian or English.

10. Disclosure requirement

The minority producer must, at all times, provide the Norwegian Film Institute with all information necessary for processing the application and requests for disbursement.

Once the grant has been awarded, it is the duty of the minority producer to immediately inform the Norwegian Film Institute of any changes of relevance for the award of the grant. No significant changes to the project, including a change of director, may be made without written approval from the Norwegian Film Institute.

The minority producer must inform the Norwegian Film Institute about the film's further distribution, selection for festivals, etc. for a minimum of three years after the film's premiere.

11. Time limit

The final decision on the award of a grant is to be set out in a grant letter, to which these guidelines in English are to be attached. The request for disbursement of the first instalment must be made within six months, unless otherwise specified in the grant letter, or approved by the Norwegian Film Institute at a later date. If this request is not received within the deadline, the grant will automatically be cancelled.

The grant is valid for a period of two years after the payment of the first instalment, unless the Norwegian Film Institute has approved an extension of the validity period in writing. Any request for payments received after the end of the validity period will be refused.

The Sørfond pitching forum

12. The Sørfond pitching forum

The Festival Agency Foundation organises a Sørfond pitching forum in connection with the annual Films from the South festival. The purpose of the pitching forum is to give selected main producers/directors the opportunity to present their projects to potential Norwegian minority producers with a view to entering into a co-production agreement.
The participants at the pitching forum are selected by the Festival Agency Foundation in cooperation (satellite cooperation) with film festivals and markets that promote film projects from developing countries. Projects selected through the satellite cooperation will receive

funding for travel to, and accommodation in, Oslo, so that they can participate at the pitching forum and meet potential Norwegian minority producers.

Information about the various satellite partners and the application deadlines for these are continuously updated on the Sørfond' website: www.sorfond.no.

Projects that have been presented at the pitching forum will proceed directly to jury assessment without pre-selection as long as the formal criteria for grants from Sørfond are met, see sections 2, 3 and 4.

Conditions, sanctions, etc.

13. Screening rights

The Festival Agency Foundation holds exclusive rights to the Scandinavian premiere at the Films from the South festival for all films that have received production grants from Sørfond. No payment can be demanded from the Festival Agency Foundation for this screening or for other non-commercial use of the production.

14. Credits

All films that have been produced with support from Sørfond must include the logo of Sørfond and the official logo of the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the film's opening and final credits, on promotional material, and in connection with other promotional activities, on an equal basis with other investors and providers of funding. It must be clear and visible in credentials and promotional material that Sørfond is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

15. Repayment of unused funds

The Norwegian Film Institute will demand repayment of any unused funds, if the final statements and documents show that the actual expenditure was lower than budgeted. The Norwegian Film Institute may also demand repayment if the project has not been carried out as planned, or if the scope of the project has been considerably reduced in relation to the original budget.

16. Sanctions

If the minority producer or the main producer is found to be in breach of these guidelines, of the terms of the grant letter, or of other conditions of the grant, the Norwegian Film Institute may withhold the grant or claim repayment of a grant that has already been disbursed by the responsible producer.

If withdrawn funds are not repaid, the minority production company, the minority producer, the main production company and/or the main producer may be excluded from Sørfond and from all other grant schemes administered by the Norwegian Film Institute. This also applies in the case of repeated breaches of the terms or conditions of these guidelines, of the terms of the grant letter, or of other conditions of the grant. Adopted sanctions must be reasonable and proportionate to the breach of the rules or other prerequisites.

Annex 1

Projects with a main producer in one of Norway’s priority countries for development cooperation will be prioritised. These countries are:

- Ethiopia
- Colombia
- Ghana
- Indonesia
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Tanzania
- Uganda

- Afghanistan
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
- Mali
- Niger
- Palestine
- Somalia
- South Sudan
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