

2014 Documentary Open Call Guidelines

Submissions Open: April 14 - May 1, 2014

What We Fund

The MacArthur Foundation funds the production of documentary films and participatory web-based documentaries that combine exceptional storytelling with in-depth journalism. We look for projects that challenge preconceptions and examine underreported social issues. These documentaries are intended to reach a large U.S. broadcast audience and, often, a targeted audience of educators, community leaders, advocates, and policymakers. We look for projects that have the potential to spark dialogue, create understanding, and contribute to social and policy change. MacArthur-supported documentaries:

- Address important, contemporary social issues – international and domestic – illustrating the human impacts of public policy.
- Follow an issue over time, providing in-depth reporting that goes beyond conventional news coverage.
- Utilize compelling personal stories to engage viewers and create empathy.
- Appeal to a broad audience because they treat differing points of view with respect.
- Are factually accurate and follow best practices in documentary ethics.
- Are led by experienced filmmaking teams that have had past success in bringing a documentary project to completion and reaching broad U.S. audiences.
- Are in production or post-production phase (on a [very limited basis](#), we may consider projects seeking research & development funding).

What We *Don't* Fund

- Biographies or films profiling one person
- Historical documentaries
- Advocacy films
- Student films
- Fiction films
- Multi-part television series
- Distribution, Outreach, or Community engagement campaigns
- Films primarily focused on sports, or the arts, without a social issue component

Requirements

- You must apply through an organization or company that is legally incorporated in a U.S. state. We **cannot** make documentary production grants to individuals.
- The applicant organization/company must have **editorial and financial control** over the documentary (**No fiscal sponsors/fiscal agents**)
- The documentary project must have a plan for reaching wide audiences in the U.S., at little or no cost to the audience.
- If your project proceeds to the Full Proposal Stage, you must be prepared to submit a work-in-progress video sample from the project for which you are applying for funding by **June 13**.
- If your project proceeds to the Full Proposal stage, you must be prepared to provide a copy of your organization's incorporation papers, bylaws or organizing papers. Your organization must also be in good standing in the U.S. state in which it is incorporated.

Timeline – 2014 Documentary Open Call

Our online application period will be open from **April 14 – May 1, 2014**. You must apply through the online application (no emails, please). If your project proceeds to the Full Proposal Stage, we will contact you by **May 30** and ask you to submit a full proposal, which includes a treatment, a detailed budget and work-in-progress video sample by **June 13**.

Early March	Open Call Guidelines posted on macfound.org
April 14	Online application opens
May 1	Applications due before 3pm Central Time
By May 30	Applicants selected for the Full Proposal Stage are notified
June 13	Full Proposals due
September	All applicants notified, winners announced

When you submit your initial application on or before May 1, you will receive an automatic email confirmation. If you do not hear from us by May 30 inviting you to submit a Full Proposal, that means that your project is no longer under consideration. We are sorry that we cannot respond to each applicant. Unfortunately, we do not have the capacity to respond to phone calls or emails asking about the status of your application.

How to Apply

- 1) Begin by reading this document and the Frequently Asked Questions carefully. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with the films that have received MacArthur funding through the Documentary Open Call in previous years (**2013, 2012, 2011, 2010**) when considering whether to apply.
- 2) Prepare your application by closely following the instructions listed under **Initial Application Stage**, below.
- 3) On or after April 14, create a user ID and password using our online system. (You may save your work and return to edit your application within the submission window before submitting it for review).
- 4) Submit your application before 3pm Central Time on Thursday, May 1, 2014.
- 5) Look for the automatic email confirmation that your application has been submitted.
- 6) If your project reaches the Full Proposal Stage, we will contact you by May 30, 2014 and ask you to submit a proposal with the elements listed under **Full Proposal Stage**, below.

Note: Organizations may submit more than one documentary project for consideration, however, each project must be submitted through a separate online application.

Initial Application Stage

For the Initial Application Stage, please submit the following information through our online portal by **Thursday May 1 at 3pm Central Time** (no emails, please):

- 1) LOGLINE
Provide a 1-2 sentence description of your documentary project. (25 words maximum)
- 2) SYNOPSIS
What is the documentary about? (300 words maximum)
- 3) BACKGROUND & ACCESS
What led you to this story? (150 words maximum)
- 4) EXPERIENCE
Provide a 50-word bio for up to 3 key production team members. (150 words maximum)
- 5) BUDGET SUMMARY
Total Production Budget: _____ Amount requested from MacArthur: _____
(the typical grant amount is between \$50,000 and \$200,000)
- 6) FUNDING STATUS
List other funding sources that you have secured, or to which you have applied.

Full Proposal Stage

If your project proceeds to the Full Proposal Stage, you will be contacted by **May 30** and asked to submit a full proposal by **June 13. Please note that you may have less than two weeks from the time you are notified to the Full Proposal due date.** Your Full Proposal must contain the following components:

- 1) TREATMENT
Describe the way in which the documentary unfolds, providing a clear sense of the format, style, characters, and point(s) of view.
- 2) URGENCY & PERSPECTIVE
Why does this story need to be told now, in a documentary format? Why is your team particularly well-qualified or positioned to tell it?
- 3) CURRENT STATUS & USE OF MACARTHUR FUNDS
Describe the current status of the film's production. Detail how MacArthur funds will be used to advance the project.
- 4) DISTRIBUTION PLAN (Preliminary)
Who is the target audience? Describe your plans for television broadcast, theatrical release, and community engagement screenings.
- 5) DETAILED PROJECT BUDGET
Provide a line-item production budget, which lists sources of funding and expenses.
- 6) VIDEO SAMPLE
Provide a link to a 5-10 minute sample from the project for which you are applying for MacArthur funds. Vimeo or dedicated website, please (no YouTube links).

Grantee Requirements

The following information is provided for reference, so that you can be aware of the MacArthur Foundation's requirements for making grants before deciding whether to apply.

All activities that the MacArthur Foundation supports must be for charitable purposes. This means they must not give rise to private benefit or monetary profit to the organization receiving the grant, or any individual.

The MacArthur Foundation will make grants to organizations that do not have a 501c3 tax exempt letter from the IRS, including organizations that are incorporated as for-profit business corporations, with certain conditions, detailed below.

Non-profit corporations with 501c3 status:

If you are a non-profit corporation with 501c3 status, your organization must be able to provide a letter stating that the documentary seeking funds is a project of the organization, over which the organization has "complete financial and editorial control." The Foundation's Media Program does not make grants to fiscal agents, or fiscal sponsors.

Non-profit corporations without 501c3 status:

If you are not a tax exempt 501c3 organization, but have incorporated as a non-profit, in addition to the requirements above, your organization or production company must be able to provide the Foundation with proof of incorporation and organizational by-laws, and a Certificate of Good Standing from the state in which you incorporated. In addition, the activities for which you are seeking funding must be for a charitable purpose. You must accurately state that the resulting documentary will be distributed to the public, at little or no cost, and provide a distribution plan with your proposal.

For-profit corporations:

If you are incorporated as a for-profit company (a business corporation) applying for a grant to support a documentary film being made in the public interest, in addition to providing proof of incorporation, by-laws or operating agreement, and a Certificate of Good Standing from the state in which you incorporated, **you must be able to accurately state in writing that all professional fees are being charged at or below cost, and that the project will not give rise to a profit for the organization, or anyone else, and provide a production project budget that supports your statement.** You must also be able to accurately state that the resulting documentary will be distributed widely to the public, at little or no cost, and provide a distribution plan with your proposal.

Reporting requirements:

All organizations applying for funding through the Documentary Open Call must be prepared to keep detailed financial records of any expenditures of the grant funds, and report these to the Foundation on a yearly basis for the duration of time during which the grant funds are being spent.