

BRIDGING THE GAP

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Bridging the Gap is one of the leading documentary new talent initiatives in the UK, offering development training, a cash budget, and one year of international festival distribution to emerging filmmakers based in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Bridging the Gap is run by Scottish Documentary Institute (SDI).

For our 21st edition of Bridging the Gap we are running an open call, inviting filmmakers to submit their ideas for short creative documentaries.

We want to be surprised, challenged, and moved with submissions that embrace the creativity of the documentary genre, subvert expectations in terms of form and content, and explore thought-provoking stories told from unique perspectives.

Up to 12 ideas will be short-listed based on the proposal and supporting visual materials submitted. The projects will be developed and honed further through **workshops run online** by international filmmakers and leading industry professionals. The 12 filmmakers will then pitch to a panel of experts, who will **commission up to 6 films**. Creative Scotland will commission up to 5 Scottish projects, and Northern Ireland Screen will commission 1.

As well as a **cash budget of £8,500** (plus in-kind production and distribution support) the selected filmmakers will receive further mentoring over six months to create vibrant and thought-provoking contemporary stories.

The films will be delivered by June 2024 and are intended for **distribution in cinemas and at festivals**.

Application and participation to Bridging the Gap are free.

Eligibility

The initiative aims to bridge the gap between training/graduation and a first commission by offering filmmakers the opportunity to work closely with SDI. We also encourage applications from filmmakers who want to shift their skills into documentary directing.

Scotland and Northern Ireland-based filmmakers are welcome to apply. And we are particularly interested in filmmakers from under-represented and historically marginalised communities.

We cannot accept applications from students in full time education.

Submitting your Proposal

Proposals* should be **3/4 pages maximum** in length. They should start with a short description (premise) of the film, then follow with a slightly lengthier description of the idea with notes on research, access, character, visual style, etc. and some brief information on the collaborators you would like to work with.

**See 'Writing a documentary proposal' included at the end of this document.*

We are looking for **strong narratives and visual ideas** with cinematic scope. Can you imagine watching them on the big screen? If you are short-listed there will be time to hone your proposal throughout the training period, but initially well written and clear proposals with a creative approach, real vision and a feel for story will stand out.

While we like distinctive and ambitious ideas, make sure your project is realistic in respect of length (ca 10/12 min), production limitations (shooting in January, February, March 2024) and financial considerations.

You can add a key image or two to the proposal to give a more visual idea of the story - but make sure it enhances your idea, rather than mislead the reader.

Visual Material

We would like you to submit **a taster** with your application. This can be a **clip** showing your main character or your main location (if relevant to your story). It doesn't need to be edited but should help us visualise your project. If you don't yet have any footage for the film, you can shoot some material to show us what style you hope to achieve instead.

Selection Criteria

Up to 12 ideas will be pre-selected by industry professionals based on the proposal and supporting materials, and on how beneficial the programme will be to them.

Successful candidates will be informed within 2 weeks of the application deadline.

Please note that Bridging the Gap financiers and partner organisations will have access to all applications.

Accessibility

Please get in touch if you would like to submit your application in a different format (video presentation for instance) or if you have any accessibility requirements so we can support you throughout the application process.

Checklist

Your online application (www.scottishdocinstitute.com/opportunities/bridging-the-gap) should include:

- **Proposal** (3/4 pages incl. cover page)
- **Visual Material** (one short clip to show the style of your film and the access to your contributors if you already have them)
- **Short note** from the heart on why you are passionate about making your film through Bridging the Gap (100-250 words)
- **Short biography & your filmography**
- **Example** of your latest work, or one of your short films that you feel is most relevant to your application and shows your directorial and storytelling skills. **Maximum 30 min in length and NO show reel please!** An online version (on Vimeo or YouTube) is much preferred.
- **Equal Opportunities Form** (anonymous) to be filled in online once your submission is completed

APPLICATION DEADLINE - END OF DAY TUESDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2023

Training Overview & Schedule

If you are selected, you **must make a commitment** to attend the training sessions which will take place in person in Edinburgh. Travel and accommodation bursaries will be available.

- **Project Development & Research Workshop:** Saturday 14th & Sunday 15th October 2023
- **Directing Workshop:** Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th November 2023
- **Pitching & Trailer Workshop:** Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th December 2023
- **Commissioning Pitch:** January 2024 (date & time tbc)
- **Project Delivery:** Late May 2024 (date tbc)

Wider Resources open to everyone

We also host **masterclasses** and **screenings** by internationally recognised industry speakers and filmmakers, which are held online and **open to all**. Details of those events will be available on www.scottishdocinstitute.com

Masterclass highlights well as our coffee morning recordings can be found online: (www.scottishdocinstitute.com/masterclasses).

For any further question please contact us: bridgingthegap@scotdoc.com

BRIDGING THE GAP IS SUPPORTED BY:

SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA



WRITING A DOCUMENTARY PROPOSAL (3/4 pages)

The **proposal** is a shorter version of the treatment. Although you should save the specific, detailed descriptions for the treatment, your proposal should give the reader a clear idea of the film you want to make.

Passion

When writing a proposal, don't be afraid to infuse your words with passion. Your excitement and the sense of urgency should be contagious. Documentary is about emotion not information. And don't forget that humour also has a place in documentary! Look out for those quirky moments making life precious.

Theme

The theme is what your story is *really* about - the underlying point your story is making. While your documentary tells a specific story rooted in a particular time and place, it no doubt addresses an overarching societal issue or universal human concern. Like a cell's DNA, this theme should be embedded in every scene of your film, keeping it focused and on track.

Background

Brief background information will help the reader understand the context of your project and of the story you want to tell.

Story, structure & characters

The **story** is you following the evolution of a specific moment in someone's life, some event, some transformation, etc. and this is the vehicle for you to explore the theme of the film.

Like the frame of a house, or a human skeleton, **structure** holds up all the parts of a story, supporting and organising the elements into a coherent and interrelated dramatic whole. Structure determines how the story will unfold dramatically, how it will build - moving through moments of tension and conflict - from beginning to middle to end. Tell us what the overall story is, and what could happen over the course of the film. Try to give the reader a sense of the film's emotional trajectory.

Give a brief description of your **characters** and try to bring them to life for the reader. Mention the kind of access you have to them and the story you want to tell. Do you know the characters, or do you still need to approach them? Have you researched your story already? Etc. It's good to include photos of your characters as well.

Style

Style refers to a variety of tools one can mobilize to give the story a distinctive quality, feel, look or tone. Style can be articulated through camera work, editing, sound design, score, lighting, production design, interviewing technique, etc. Every stylistic choice becomes a signifier, telling the viewer something important about the story. Be concise and try to avoid generic statements ('the film will be cinematic').

Voice and Point of View

"Voice" can be a many-layered thing. When considering voice, you have to ask, *Who* is the storyteller and *whose* story is being told? The answers to these questions determine not only the viewer's sense of intimacy with the characters, but the director's point-of-view. In a truly personal story, the teller and subject are one and the same.

When a director represents another character or community, it is useful to be conscious of the ways storytelling can mediate the voice of the subject or main character.

Short biog

Tell us a bit more about yourself, your experience and past film(s), and what drives you to make films. Make sure to also add any professional experience which may be relevant to the story you want to explore.