



Essential Information & Guidelines

At SDI we are passionate about independent documentary, discovering new voices and supporting them to create meaningful work and build sustainable careers in the industry. One of our flagship programmes, Bridging the Gap, is dedicated to new and emerging talent based in Scotland and Northern Ireland with an idea for a short documentary. The programme offers development training, a cash budget, and a year of distribution in international festivals.

Bridging the Gap embraces the power and creativity of the short form, a vital platform for filmmakers to express their vision and to hone in their craft.

We want to be surprised, challenged, and moved by submissions that embrace the possibilities of the documentary genre, subvert expectations in terms of form and content, and offer a thought-provoking insight into these challenging times.

Overview

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. Screen Scotland will commission up to 5 Scottish projects, and Northern Ireland Screen will commission one project.

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 2025** and are intended for distribution in cinemas and at festivals.

Application and participation in Bridging the Gap are free.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be Scotland or Northern Ireland-based. We are particularly interested in filmmakers from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds;
- We accept animation and experimental projects. Hybrid projects combining documentary and fiction will be considered on a case-by-case basis;
- Applicants must have completed at least one film/audiovisual work;
- Applicants must not be in full time education.

General Advice for Applicants

Our application form asks for some details about you, your filmmaking experience as well as your project.

We are looking for applicants who demonstrate:

- An ambition to question and push the boundaries of the documentary form;
- A sense of vision and urgency;
- Curiosity and open mindedness to actively embrace the development process which is a crucial part of the programme.

Training Overview & Schedule

If you are selected, you must make a commitment to attend the training sessions.

- Meet & Greet Session: 17 October 2024 online (5-7pm)
- Project Development & Research Workshop: 18 & 19 October in Edinburgh (9am-6pm)
- Directing Workshop: 8, 9 November 2024 in Glasgow (9am-6pm)
- Pitch & Trailer Workshop: 6, 7 December 2024 in Edinburgh (9am-6pm)
- Commissioning Pitch: early January 2025 in Edinburgh (date TBC)
- Project Delivery: June 2025

Applications FAQ

What do you mean by emerging filmmaker?

The initiative aims to bridge the gap between training/graduation and a first commission by offering filmmakers the opportunity to work closely with SDI.

By 'emerging' we understand an artist/filmmaker who is at an early stage in their filmmaking career, or who wants to transition from a different field of work or experience. They may not have received a commission before, or have had access or contacts in the industry yet.

Having made at least one audiovisual project independently or as part of a studies programme is a requirement for Bridging the Gap, as it can help the selection panel to get a sense of the applicant's style and experience, but also to ensure they have the skill set and experience needed in order to make the most out of this programme.

What stage should the project be at?

The programme is for projects in early development. You may have already done some research on the topic or the wider context, contacted the protagonists, have an idea of the story and potentially have some footage, but still be open to change and feedback.

Access to the protagonists is not required at the application stage, but you may want to explain how you will reach them or what plans you have in place if they don't want to be involved.

Filming is also not required at this stage, but if you already have some footage, it can be submitted as visual material.

I am a producer with an idea, can I apply?

This programme is for directors only. We don't encourage directors also taking the role of producers of their project. As a director, if your project will be commissioned, you will have to work with a producer who can come on board at that stage.

If you are a producer looking to work with a director on their Bridging the Gap project, get in touch with SDI to express your interest.

I have applied to Bridging the Gap before, can I reapply?

If you've not been successful in the past, you can reapply with the same project if it has significantly changed since, or with a different project altogether.

If you have been selected to take part in Bridging the Gap before but weren't commissioned, you can reapply after two years.

Can I apply with more than one idea?

You can submit multiple applications, but only one application will be accepted per person.

We would encourage you to focus on the story that you feel most passionate about, or the most urgent, and that motivates you to develop further through this programme.

Who will be part of the selection panel?

Your application will be assessed by members of the SDI team and an external reader.

When will I hear from you to know if I've been selected or not?

Successful candidates will be informed within 3 weeks of the application deadline.

Will I receive feedback on my application?

Yes, feedback will be available for unsuccessful participants, if requested.

What happens if I'm successful?

You will be asked to sign a contract with SDI in the first instance. You will then have to be available for an online Meet & Greet session and the three workshops taking place in person in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Can you tell me more about the tailored support part of the programme?

SDI will offer in-kind support throughout the programme, access to the BTG archive, equipment, advice on proposal writing, trailers, pitching etc.

If commissioned, SDI will also support the filmmaker to find crew members and will handle the distribution strategy tailored to each project. An integral part of the programme is also peer support. With a limited number of participants, BTG fosters a safe and dynamic space for open and collaborative dialogue.

Submitting your Proposal

Proposals* should be **3 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 min), production limitations (shooting early 2025 and a delivery deadline for the completed film in June 2025) 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.

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 (2-3 pages)
- 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)
- CV / Filmography (1 page maximum)
- 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

When starting your application online, you will be able to view the whole application form and you will have the option to save it as a draft and complete it in stages.

Note that we are unable to accept incomplete applications or those received after the published deadline.

We are a small team so please do not leave submitting your application, or contacting us with any questions related to your application, until the deadline day.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 15 September 2024, at midnight

Wider Resources - open to non-participants

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:

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WRITING A DOCUMENTARY PROPOSAL (2-3 pages)

The **proposal** is a shorter version of the treatment - often written earlier. 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 mobilise 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-over 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 bio

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.