

Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions

Before applying to the NSI Totally Television training program you must read the Frequently Asked Questions. If you still have questions, email totallytv@nsi-canada.ca with "NSI Totally TV question" in the subject line. You can also telephone (800) 952-9307 and ask to speak to the NSI Totally TV program manager.

OVERVIEW

NSI Totally Television is a hands-on, relevant, market-driven training program designed to help strong creative writer/producer teams refine their dramatic TV series concept and secure a development deal with a broadcaster. This rigorous and individualized training program connects you with a team of experts including story editors, showrunners, negotiating gurus, broadcasting executives and executive producer mentors. The program spans 10 months and includes two training sessions, held in Toronto, and attendance at the Banff World Television Festival.

NSI Totally Television's five main objectives are to:

1. Provide teams with the skills needed to successfully develop and refine a television series concept.
2. Introduce you to the industry players (broadcasters, executive producers, showrunners, story editors etc.) so you can make those all important connections and relationships.
3. Match you with experienced mentors to create an individual 'hands-on' learning experience.
4. Help you land a broadcast development deal by working with you to prepare your project for financing and the marketplace.
5. Further your career as a content creator in the larger television industry.

This program gets results! 50% of the Phase Two projects have gone into development with a broadcaster, and of those, 50% have gone into production and been broadcast.

WHAT DOES NSI TOTALLY TELEVISION OFFER?

NSI Totally Television offers up to 6 strong creative writer/producer teams the opportunity to meet industry leaders and work with experienced mentors to help fine-tune your television series concept. Over the course of the program you will:

- Have intense sessions with showrunners and story editors who will work with you to improve, hone, perfect and refine your concept;
- learn how to negotiate successfully;
- get the latest market intelligence by hearing from the broadcasters themselves;
- learn the fine art of pitching (not performance pitching);
- sit down with a line producer who will advise you on your series budget;
- work with an executive producer mentor;
- hear firsthand how a series comes together from development, to pitch, to production, to broadcast;

- explore the world of social media, transmedia and multi-platform strategies, and find out how they can extend your brand, generate buzz, expand your audience and create a life for your series outside of conventional television.
- learn first hand how diversity can enrich and strengthen your project, create new financing opportunities, and open doors to new audiences.
- attend the Banff World Television Festival where you will have the opportunity to meet and pitch your concept to broadcasters, distributors and schmooze with industry professionals.

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM FORMAT?

NSI Totally Television is comprised of two phases.

Phase one: An intensive 5-day training session in Toronto in fall 2010 for teams (exact dates to be determined once final teams have been chosen).

Armed with the knowledge obtained from the training session, teams return home to fine-tune their proposals for resubmission, which includes a revised concept, first draft script, updated per episode production budget, list of potential broadcasters, list of potential mentors etc. The program manager, in consultation with the selection committee, will determine which projects are best suited to move forward based on the progress of the teams and their projects.

Up to three teams will be chosen to proceed to phase two for further development and training. The decision will be based on:

- Readiness of the team to land a development deal and work with a broadcaster;
- Concepts that are most clearly expressed and defined; and,
- Projects which are “timely” for the market place and are on the broadcasters “must do” list;

Phase two: Focuses on the specific needs of your project. Each team works to focus their project, refine their pitch and marketing materials, determine the format of the project, the per episode budget, choose an executive producer mentor and much more.

To help keep the development momentum going, teams attend a 4-day boot camp in Toronto in March, 2011. Each phase two team will also receive \$5,000 to help offset development costs (e.g. hiring story editors, designing one-sheets, trips to pitch broadcasters and meet with mentors), and will also have free access to a lawyer to help negotiate and draft any agreements.

Phase two culminates with attendance at the 2011 Banff World Television Festival.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO COMMIT TO THE PROGRAM?

Although we recognize the need to hang on to your day job, you must make considerable time available for the program. While project and professional development plans will be created with maximum flexibility, both training sessions take place during the day.

Attendance at the week-long training session in Toronto in fall 2010 is mandatory for all Phase One participants. Attendance at the mini boot camp in March, 2011 and the Banff World Television Festival in June, 2011, is mandatory for all Phase Two participants.

You will work with the NSI Totally Television program manager to plan both the professional development opportunities as well as the milestone dates for project development work, but those deadlines must be met.

Developing a television series over the course of 10 months is a huge amount of work. Throw in a week-long training session, another mini training session, and attendance at the Banff World Television Festival and you can bet you will be busy.

WHO CAN APPLY?

NSI Totally Television is aimed at two person, producer/writer teams wishing to further develop a television series concept. Preference will be given to strong creative teams who are equally passionate and invested in the creative development of the concept.

Previous participants of the NSI Totally Television program cannot reapply for the same position (i.e. if you participated as the producer, you can re-apply as the writer, but NOT as the producer).

In order to be eligible applicants must:

- Have a minimum one year's worth of experience in either production, business affairs, legal, marketing, distribution or development or a combination of the above. **Please note that writers are exempt from this criteria.**
- Have produced a minimum of one, 30 minute video, film or other multi-media project (or a number of projects with a cumulative running time of 30 minutes). The project(s) do not have to have been broadcast. Please ensure you identify which project(s) are student project(s). **Please note that writers are exempt from this criteria.**
- Demonstrate they are a strong writer/producer team. Please note that your project will become ineligible if any of the team members identified on the application form change at any point after selection.
- Maintain creative and financial control over the project.
- Demonstrate ownership of, or option on, all underlying rights (if any). The National Screen Institute reserves the right to disqualify any team that does not fully own the rights in and to the project.
- Not currently be enrolled in any full-time school or university program.
- Not be a participant in any other training program that would conflict with your ability to commit to the NSI Totally Television program.
- Be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant, reside in Canada 365 days per year and be over the age of 18.

If you do not meet the above eligibility criteria, but feel you are ready for the program, please include a letter explaining why the selection committee should consider you for the program. This letter is in addition to the deliverable paragraph outlining what you hope to gain from the program.

While there is no maximum level of experience, NSI Totally Television is first and foremost a training program. Preference will be given to applicants we feel will benefit most from the training. If you feel you would benefit from the program, despite your experience level, please include a letter explaining why the selection committee should consider you for the program. This letter is in addition to the deliverable paragraph outlining what you hope to gain from the program.

CAN WE APPLY WITH A THREE PERSON OR ONE PERSON TEAM?

If there are two writers attached to the project, only one writer's costs will be covered by the program. The second writer may attend the training, but all costs associated with their participation must be covered by the team (i.e. flights, accommodation, and per diem for all training sessions as well as the Banff World Television Festival, including registration). Additionally, you MUST convince the selection committee that creative development on the project would suffer if the co-writer was not in attendance. Failure to include a letter in reference to the above will result in the co-writer's absence from consideration.

Unfortunately co-producers can not participate in the program. The participant producer is expected to share the information and knowledge gained from the program with their co-producer.

Although we do not recommend it, one person can apply as both the writer and producer. As with a co-writer, it is your responsibility to convince the selection committee that you have the necessary experience and talent to create and produce a television series on your own.

WHAT PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

- Concepts in the genres of **drama, comedy, children's and animation** are eligible. Projects can be half-hour series, one-hour series, mini-series, or shorter times for children's series. Projects must be suitable for broadcast television. Documentary, docu-drama, and factual based concepts are not eligible.
- Projects must be scripted, have a story arc, character development and sustainable plot lines for multiple episodes.
- Theme and subject matter are up to you, although the National Screen Institute will not accept any project that contains excessive violence, sexual violence or sexual exploitation. All proposals must conform to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' Code of Ethics and to all other programming standards endorsed by the CRTC including those related to sex-role portrayal and violence. For more information, please read the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Code of ethics at www.cab-acr.ca.

CAN I APPLY WITH MORE THAN ONE PROJECT?

You may submit more than one application but you must provide a complete separate application along with a separate \$50 application fee.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Only complete applications will be considered. This means you must fill out ALL sections of the application form and must include ALL the documents listed below.

Your application will be immediately disqualified if any of the sections are incomplete or missing. **Please check all copies of your application very carefully before you send it to us.** It is **your** responsibility to ensure the application is complete and delivered on time. A check list has been provided for your use on page 9 of the application form.

- **Three unbound, single sided and collated copies of everything** (i.e. completed application form and all supporting material).
- **Series synopsis:** a brief summary of the series giving a general overview of the premise. Usually a paragraph or less.
- **Series concept:** a one-page document outlining the story, characters, genre, format (i.e. ½ hour or hour) and target audience.
- **Episode script(s) or Series pilot script (if available).**
- **Minimum 3 episodic outlines (if not included in bible):** Episode outlines should be about a paragraph to half a page each; if there are exciting moments in the plot, make them exciting in the outline; if there are moments of humor, include a joke or two. You might even include an example or two of dialog, as long as it doesn't interrupt the flow.
- **Maximum 30 page writing sample (if applicable):** if you do not have a completed script for your proposed series, please send a maximum 30 page writing sample. Try to match your writing sample to the tone and genre of the concept you are applying with; i.e. if you are applying with a ½ hour comedy, submit a writing sample that makes us laugh; if you are applying with a heavier toned hour long drama, submit a writing sample that creates tension. Show us your writing chops!
- **Series bible (if available):** a written guide for your series describing the central premise, story and characters, the setting, genre, and continuing elements. It may include detailed characterizations and describe the interplay among the lead and recurring characters. Character and story arcs, story line and dialogue examples may also be included.
- **Preliminary development and marketing plan:** demonstrate a clear idea of the series' target audience and your understanding of its market potential; where do you see your project going and why.

- **Top sheet** of proposed per episode production budget and financing structure.
- **Digital Media Plan.** The creation of the Canada Media Fund (CMF), which will launch April 1, 2010, has made it imperative that a digital media component accompany all television programs. Please visit the Writers Guild of Canada web-site for an explanation of the CMF. www.wgc.ca/position_papers/policy_matters.html
- **Complete chain of title documentation:** refers to the underlying rights for your story. You need to provide documentation that demonstrates your right to develop the project whether it is a story idea of your own creation or an adaptation. To view a sample chain of title document, see www.cifvf.ca/English/cifvf_resources_chain_title.html
- **Curriculum vitae of each applicant clearly stating production experience. IMPORTANT:** clearly outline your film/TV experience. Include your role on the production and the following information about each project you worked on: the writer/producer/director, genre, whether it was a student film, final running time, any broadcasts and/or theatrical release.
- **Expectations:** a short paragraph from each team member describing what you hope to gain by participating in the NSI Totally Television program.
- **A letter of reference for each team member:** this should be from someone you look to as a mentor in the industry; someone who can speak to your readiness to participate in this program.
- **Description of formal relationship between the team members:** outline ownership and decision making control between yourselves. Have you incorporated a company? Have you worked together before? How confident are you that you can work together on this project?
- **Additional letters as applicable.** These letters are required only for applicants needing to demonstrate their suitability to participate in the program because they don't meet eligibility criteria, or may be perceived as too experienced for the program. Also required for teams wishing to apply with more than one writer, or applicants wishing to apply as a one-person team.
- **\$50 non-refundable entry fee.** Make your cheque or money order payable to the National Screen Institute - Canada. Cash and credit card payments are NOT accepted.

DOES NSI HAVE ANY TEMPLATES WE CAN USE?

We do not, however Telefilm, <http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/03/37.asp>, and the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund, www.cifvf.ca have some wonderful resource sections on their websites.

HOW WILL THE TEAMS BE SELECTED?

The NSI Totally Television program manager, in consultation with industry representatives, will select up to six writer/producer teams. Teams will be selected based on the strength of the creative materials submitted and the commercial potential of the series concept. The selection committee will also look at the readiness of the team members to move into television production.

WHEN WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE BEEN SELECTED?

If you are selected for the training program we will notify you by telephone. If you are not selected, you will be notified by mail. We will do our best to notify everyone by the end of June 2010.

INTER-PROVINCIAL TEAMS?

It is not a requirement that both members of the team reside in the same city. However, you must be able to demonstrate how you will overcome physical distance barriers.

WHO IS THE NSI TOTALLY TELEVISION PROGRAM ADVISOR?

Sam Linton is an award winning producer and director and executive producer. Sam has worked as Head of Factual Programming at Cineflix, Head of Development for RTR Media where she helped create *Maxed Out* and *From the Ground Up*. She also worked as Head of Original Production for Discovery Channel Canada, where she oversaw and executive produced hundreds of hours of programming.

WHO IS THE NSI TOTALLY TELEVISION PROGRAM MANAGER?

Brandice Vivier has worked in the film and television industry for over 15 years. As Manager, Programs and Development at NSI, Brandice develops and delivers many of our training programs. In addition to managing NSI Totally Television, she is currently working with the NSI Online Film Festival and Featuring Aboriginal Stories Program. Brandice has also managed NSI Drama Prize, NSI Storytellers, NSI Pitch to Win!, NSI Global Marketing, Telefilm Canada Spark Plug, and DiverseTV.

WHAT ARE THE EXACT DATES OF THE PROGRAM?

NSI Totally Television is a 10-month training program. The program manager will conduct one-on-one phone consultations with each team over the summer months to help shape the training sessions.

The five-day training session will take place in Toronto in fall 2010 - exact dates will be determined once the final teams have been chosen. Teams who successfully move onto phase two will attend a three to four day training session in March 2011 and will be expected to demonstrate total commitment in the period leading up to the Banff World Television Festival in June 2011.

WHAT RIGHTS DOES THE NATIONAL SCREEN INSTITUTE HAVE ON THE PROJECT?

All copyright in the project remains with the applicants. The National Screen Institute reserves the sole right to disqualify any team that does not fully own the rights in and to the project.

The National Screen Institute and its sponsors will retain the right to exhibit (non-commercially) completed productions for promotional purposes only and will use best efforts to notify the producer of any such screening prior to its occurrence. NSI requires a tail credit on all produced episodes.

A contract will be signed with each team outlining the team's and the National Screen Institute's commitments and responsibilities under the program.

WHAT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WILL I RECEIVE?

Phase one teams will have their airfare, accommodations and per diems covered while they are in Toronto for the training session. Phase two teams will have their airfare, accommodations and per diems covered for the training session in March as well as the Banff World Television Festival (including registration).

Phase two teams receive \$5,000 to help with costs associated with choosing mentors, story editors, creating pitching materials, meeting with broadcasters etc.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NATIONAL SCREEN INSTITUTE AND THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT?

The relationship between the applicant and the National Screen Institute shall not be deemed to constitute a partnership or joint venture. The applicant shall not have the right to incur any debts nor to make any commitment of or on behalf of the National Screen Institute.

CAN I SUBMIT MY APPLICATION BY FAX OR EMAIL?

No. All applications must be mailed, couriered or hand-delivered to the National Screen Institute.

WHERE DO I SEND MY APPLICATION?

Fully completed applications should be mailed, couriered or hand-delivered to:

NSI Totally Television
National Screen Institute - Canada
400-141 Bannatyne Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0R3

The National Screen Institute must receive your application Tuesday, May 4, 2010, 4:30 pm Central Time. No extensions.

IMPORTANT: Please use your tracking number or call your courier company, to confirm delivery of your package. Do not call NSI - we will NOT have an answer for you.

I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS. WHO DO I CONTACT?

Email your question to totallytv@nsi-canada.ca with "Totally Television question" in the subject line. Or call us at (800) 952-9307 and ask to speak to the NSI Totally Television Program Manager.

NSI Totally Television is made possible by Presenting Sponsor CTV and the CTV/CHUM Benefits; Program Partner Telefilm Canada; Strategic Sponsors Rogers and Women in Media Foundation (WIMF); and Provincial Sponsor MANITOBA FILM & MUSIC.