



# INDIGENOUS SCREEN OFFICE BUREAU DE L'ÉCRAN AUTOCHTONE

## ISO Policies and Processes for Eligibility in Relation to Indigenous Identity

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The ISO is committed to developing rigorous processes to vet eligibility and ensure that our funding is going to First Nations, Inuit and Métis recipients. ISO staff and leadership are committed to an ongoing process of developing these procedures, which are reviewed annually and in response to feedback from Indigenous community members. ISO is moving beyond self-identification and box-checking; we expect applicants to be able to tell us who they are and where they come from in relation to their Indigenous identity.

The policies and processes outlined in this document are a follow-up to the report [Building Trust and Accountability: Report on Indigenous Eligibility in the Screen Sector](#), commissioned by ISO and APTN and published in February 2022. This was a third-party report capturing perspectives and recommendations related to the issue of determining Indigenous identity eligibility. The impetus for the report was to capture the complexities and considerations for vetting identity in the context of First Nations, Inuit and Métis applicants.

Building on the report, the ISO is creating transparency around all of the policies and practices that we have implemented. Not all of the recommendations included in the original report were adapted by the ISO, for example, the use of identity cards to determine eligibility. This document clearly outlines the multiple tools used by ISO at this time, which will be reviewed and updated as needed on an ongoing basis.

ISO has and will continue to work with individual consultants and advisors to support the development of these policies and processes.

# 1. Policies

The following policies and language related to identity are included in the [ISO-General Funding Guidelines Policy](#).

Program Eligibility Criteria: The spirit and intent of ISO funding is to support Indigenous storytelling and Indigenous companies that are controlled by Indigenous people, who have decision-making authority and creative control.

## **Indigenous Identity Policy Statement:**

Identity connotes the beliefs, values, and expressions that encompass the memories, experiences, and relations that enable individuals and groups to construct themselves in the present. To apply for ISO funding as an Indigenous storyteller, and to be recognized as such, Applicants must know and be able to articulate their relation and connection to their Indigenous identity. This may include familial connections or nationhood and it may also include displacement.

As an organization, the ISO supports First Nations, Métis and Inuit self-determination and the ability of sovereign nations to determine their own citizenship. The ISO respects the histories, traditions, languages, and contemporary practices of these cultural groups and acknowledges the cultural sovereignty of Indigenous peoples by respecting their artistic expression, cultural protocols, rights, and cultural self-determination.

We understand that different nations and Indigenous people have different concepts and approaches to determining identity, and there is not one way to be Indigenous. For the purpose of our work, Indigenous in the context of First Peoples in Canada includes:

- **First Nations:** are status and non-status individuals who are citizens, recognized members or direct blood relatives of a self-governing band, a reserve-based community, or a larger tribal group.
- **Inuit:** are recognized as the First Peoples of the arctic regions of Canada including Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut, and parts of the Northwest Territories, whose relatives are also in Greenland and Alaska.
- **Métis:** are culturally distinct from First Nations and Inuit and have a direct line of Métis ancestry to a known Métis settlement, community, or family group.

ISO recognizes that centuries of colonial practices including residential schools, relocation, urbanization, adoption, and the foster care system have disrupted community connections for many and have contributed to exclusion for many Indigenous peoples. We do not expect Applicants to provide private information that causes them harm; however, we do expect Applicants to tell us who they are, where they come from and how they are Indigenous so

that we may enter a relationship with them as partners and supporters of their work. Our intention is to approach issues of identity with policies that align with our values of trust and inclusivity. However, these values must also be balanced with the due diligence and accountability required to ensure that our funding is going where it belongs - to Indigenous people.

Distant or recently discovered ancestry alone does not make an individual Indigenous for the purposes of ISO funding. There are many ways of understanding how Indigenous identity is different from distant Indigenous ancestry, such as nationhood, direct familial relationships or blood ties, cultural knowledge, community accountability and belonging.

Our approach is relational; we want to hear from Applicants about who they are, where they come from and where they are going so that we can enter a relationship with them built on honesty and trust. Applicants to ISO's programs and opportunities will be asked to declare their identity and demonstrate their connections to their community or communities. At minimum this will include identifying your nation or Indigenous affiliation and describing your lived experience as an Indigenous person in the context of your work.

ISO also reserves the right to request additional information, which could include but is not limited to:

- proof of citizenship or nationhood
- a letter of support from a governance organization (e.g., Band office)
- a letter of support or nomination from an Indigenous community organization or group.

The ISO understands that many are disconnected from their communities because of colonial practices and may be seeking increased connections and understanding. However, ISO funding is not a tool for that process and ISO contributions are not a pathway to reconnection.

### **Identity Complaints:**

The ISO recognizes the persistent and widespread issue of Indigenous identity fraud therefore we make our every best effort to ensure our funding is allocated to Indigenous recipients. When complaints are made directly to the ISO about an individual's identity who is also a recipient of ISO funding, we will ensure that the information we have obtained from the applicant is satisfactory. As an organization we are committed to ongoing review and working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to address cases of misrepresentation and respond to concerns when they are brought to us. We recommend that questions or concerns about the identity of another applicant are also communicated directly to the individual and/or the community or governing body they have stated their affiliation to.

The ISO may take the following steps to validate the statements of Indigenous Identity from applicants that have not provided sufficient information or where concerns are raised:

- Follow up via email to request further information;
- Ask specific questions that aren't addressed in the initial identity statement
- If the information provided is not satisfactory the ISO will request a copy of the applicants Status, Métis, governing body or land claims agreement card;
- If the applicant does not have one of the forms of identification above the ISO will request that the applicant provide a letter from the community or governing organization that they are affiliated with.

NOTE: Other steps may be taken depending on the individual case, nation, or Indigenous group.

### **Misrepresentation:**

If at any time, an Applicant, provides false information or omits material information in connection with an application, including Indigenous identity, the ISO may exercise the following rights:

- termination of any contracts;
- denial of eligibility for existing and future funding;
- repayment of any funds already advanced;
- civil and potential criminal prosecution, in the case of fraud.

These measures may be imposed not only on the Applicant but also on related, associated and affiliated companies and individuals that are parties to the application.

## **2. Application Criteria and Processes:**

**The following language and criteria are included in the ISO funding portal and program guidelines that applicants are required to complete.**

### **Eligibility Criteria:**

The spirit and intent of ISO funding is to support Indigenous projects, companies and groups that are controlled by Indigenous people, who have decision-making authority and creative control. Indigenous control means that the company is Indigenous-led and that the Indigenous partner is meaningfully involved in all relevant decision-making:

#### **Indigenous Individuals**

- Indigenous individual(s), such as researchers, academics and/or other professionals.
- First Nations, Inuit or Métis person residing in Canada

### **Indigenous Corporations**

- Indigenous controlled (minimum 51% ownership by person/s who are First Nations, Inuit, or Métis).
- The project is under the financial and creative control of Indigenous persons; Of the key members of the creative team (director, screenwriter, showrunner, key animator, ) at least the Director or Writer must be Indigenous.

### **Eligible Groups**

First Nation, Inuit or Métis Collective(s) or Ad Hoc Groups are:

- Indigenous controlled (minimum 51% ownership by person/s who are First Nations, Inuit, or Métis).
- The project is under the financial and creative control of Indigenous persons; Of the key members of the creative team (director, screenwriter, showrunner, key animator, ) at least the Director or Writer must be Indigenous.

### **Indigenous governing bodies such as First Nation Band Offices, Inuit Registered Communities or Métis Settlements:**

- Must currently be \*recognized as an Indigenous nation/established community.
- The project is under the financial and creative control of Indigenous persons; of the key members of the creative team (director, screenwriter, showrunner, key animator, ) at least the Director or Writer must be Indigenous.

### **Eligible Organizations (sector development only):**

- Indigenous-owned and controlled non-profit organizations, or registered charities.
- BIPOC non-profit organizations or registered charities.
- Other non-profit organizations, educational institutions, or registered charities.

### **Indigenous Non-Profit Organizations, or Registered Charities (sector development only):**

- Must be Indigenous-led, with a 51% Indigenous-majority Board of Directors and Indigenous Majority staff in key decision-making roles (ie. Executive Director, Artistic Director, Managing/Operations Director, Director of Finance).

### **BIPOC Non-Profit Organizations or Registered Charities (only when specified/allowed by specific programs):**

- Must be led by people who are Black, Indigenous or People of Colour, with a 51% BIPOC-majority Board of Directors and BIPOC-majority staff in key decision-making roles (i.e. Executive Director, Artistic Director, Managing/Operations Director, Director of Finance).

*\*recognition as an Indigenous Nation/Established Community must come from the broader governing Indigenous Nation affiliation.*

## **Ineligible Applicants**

Applicants who are unsure about whether they are eligible for funding based on their Indigenous identity are recommended to meaningfully connect directly with their nation, community, or group before applying to the ISO or any other funding body. ISO reserves the right to ask Applicants questions pertaining to their Indigenous identity or withdraw applications in cases where information is inadequate, unclear, or is contested by community members.

## **Application Requirements:**

Application Questions regarding Indigenous identity:

**1. Please name the First Nation, community or settlement you are affiliated with.**

**2. I am applying as a:**

- First Nation, Inuit or Metis company that is at least 51% Indigenous owned
- First Nation, Inuit or Metis Individual/ Sole Proprietor
- First Nation, Inuit or Métis band council or registered community or settlement (currently recognized as an Indigenous nation/established community)
- First Nation, Inuit or Métis Collective or Ad Hoc Group that has an Indigenous membership of at least 51%

**3. For companies: Is this owner Indigenous (and/ or 51% of the company owned if multiple owners)? Indigenous Group? Please name the First Nation, community or settlement you are affiliated with.**

**4. Declaration of Indigenous Identity**

Please tell us how you identify as Indigenous, for example, what nation or community you come from, and who your family is. What is your lived experience and relationship to your Indigenous nation/s, community, culture/s? How does this context inform your work as an Indigenous storyteller or company?

## **3. Review and Assessment Processes**

### **Reviewing applications**

An initial review for eligibility and missing documentation is conducted by ISO Program Managers and supported by the Program Coordinator and the Director of Funding Programs. The review and analysis of each application is based on program criteria (including Indigenous Identity). Each application is evaluated and analyzed with care and attention taken with regards to identity to ensure accuracy, clarity and transparency. If there is any question about the validity of the declaration, the ISO team members will reach

out to the applicant for clarity or additional information. The reviewers/peer assessors will flag any questionable criteria regarding identity, which will prompt an internal discussion during the assessment process.

### **Assessment Process:**

#### **Peer Assessment:**

Peer assessment is the basis for most of the ISO's funding. For peer assessment processes, the ISO will ensure that a minimum of three (3) Indigenous assessors are reviewing applications and that clear and transparent metrics are in place for assessing applications. For internal assessment processes, which are valuable for the delivery of time-sensitive and responsive funding, a minimum of two (2) ISO representatives will review applications and make decisions. The review and analysis of each application is based on program criteria. No peer review panel members with immediate family members in the applicant pool can adjudicate. Peers selected should not be involved with the works in their category/ program area and are subject to ISO's Conflict of Interest Policy. All discussions pertaining to the assessment process are confidential.

Peer assessment includes evaluating and comparing eligible applications against program criteria and objectives, discussing the relative merit of the application, and scoring each application against the assessment criteria. The scoring structure is different for each ISO program. Whether internally or peer assessed, scoring criteria will be based on the strength of the project idea, the viability of the project including its leads, feasibility (scope, timeline, budget) and the overall potential impact.

#### **Processes for Determining Eligibility and Priorities:**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide information related to identity to satisfy ISO's eligibility criteria. If an applicant has not satisfactorily answered questions related to identity, the ISO or its assigned peer assessors may take one or more of the following actions as part of our screening and assessment processes:

- Follow up with the applicant to seek further clarification
- Informing the applicant that eligibility questions were not answered satisfactorily;
- Withdraw the application from the review process prior to assessments
- Deem the application as ineligible

The ISO will recommend the applicant as a low priority for funding.

Applicants who have received prior funding can resubmit their identity information but are not exempt from the process of having this information reviewed by ISO staff and peer assessors.

**Disclaimer: The ISO cannot ensure that every applicant is representing themselves truthfully. However, we make every effort to put in place due diligence processes as outlined in this document and vet each application to the best of our abilities.**

The ISO is committed to updating this policy regularly. We are open to recommendations from community members on improving our processes on an ongoing basis. If you have feedback you can reach out to us at [info@iso-bea.ca](mailto:info@iso-bea.ca).

