

Telefilm Canada and NIFCO
Present
PICTURE START 20 - 2026/2027

Application Kit - Guidelines & Application Forms
Deadline – Monday August 10th by 11:59pm - Via Email

Overview

PICTURE START is an Above-the-Line professional development program targeted at emerging and mid-level producers, directors and writers who already have previous filmmaking experience and wish to take the next step in developing their career. This comprehensive skills enhancement program employs a project-oriented methodology whereby participants learn by working with established filmmakers and film industry professionals. This hands-on approach will be complemented by a series of high-level workshops prior to principal photography aimed at enhancing the participants' filmmaking savvy. Local and national experts will conduct workshops, and senior filmmakers will mentor junior filmmakers throughout the development, production and post-production phases of the project.

Key components include:

- formal instruction (through specific workshops conducted by industry professionals and Picture Start program Alumni);
- individual mentorship (where staff and senior filmmakers guide the emerging filmmakers in both creative and logistical matters);
- the practical application of filmmaker skills in all aspects of film production (developing a concept, scriptwriting, budgeting and financing, production, post-production workflow and marketing).

The short, live-action narrative films produced through the program are expected to perform in the marketplace in a quantifiable way – either through festival participation, festival recognition or awards, broadcaster and online interest or other

sales and distribution methods. As per NIFCO policy, copyright in the film remains with the filmmakers.

Upon completion of the program, the participants are expected to have acquired the level of skills necessary to move forward in their film industry careers.

Key Partners

Telefilm Canada

As a Partner of Choice, Telefilm Canada is a Crown corporation dedicated to the success of Canada's audiovisual industry, fostering access and excellence by delivering programs that support cultural resonance and audience engagement. With a lens of equity, inclusivity and sustainability, Telefilm bolsters dynamic companies and a range of creative talent at home and around the world.

The Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Cooperative (NIFCO) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the development of media arts in Newfoundland and Labrador. Formed in 1975, the association supports the local film industry by providing expertise, resources, equipment, and space to its members and offers beginners a chance to explore the medium of film through its programs. **Picture Start** is committed to diversity and inclusion and encourages greater access to creative opportunities for underrepresented identities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

PICTURENL

Supports Picture Start production teams directly through the Low Budget Production Program. Picture NL is the lead agency for the province for investments in film and television productions through its equity, tax credit and development programs. Through these and other professional development support initiatives, PictureNL offers local producers and outside productions the support needed to help the province's production sector to flourish.

Objective

There are two main objectives of **PICTURE START**:

- To give current independent filmmakers who already have preliminary training and experience, and who are career-oriented in the film industry the immediate opportunity to develop as future above-the-line leaders.
- To sustain and increase the growth of the Newfoundland and Labrador film industry by fostering future professionals who will establish production companies and continue to create content based in this province.

In addition, **Picture Start** encourages a development component for crew members. Each applicant is urged to think about ways in which their project could work within a structure of a key crew member mentoring less experienced crew members.

Program Format and Timeline – *Please review the full SAMPLE PROGRAM SCHEDULE at the end of this document*****

The next deadline for applications is Monday August 10th, 2026 at 11:59pm.

Successful applicants will be notified in September 2026. Starting in October 2026, the selected teams will work with the **Picture Start** Mentor on additional funding applications, script, financing and scheduling their prep, shoot and post-production periods. Scripts will be sent out for a first read and set of notes by a professional story editor. The series of intensive workshops (approx. 10 Sessions) will take place from November 2026 to early March 2027. **Attendance at these workshops is mandatory for all selected participants.** Principal Photography will take place in March-April 2027. **Please consider this timeline in re: script setting/content. The final delivery date for all productions will be June 30, 2027.**

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Prospective above-the-line project teams of 2-3 members will submit an application to the program to make a short film **7-12 minutes maximum** in length. Therefore, we will accept scripts with **a minimum page count of 7 pages** and **maximum of 10 pages**. A minimum of two projects, each with a producer, director and writer team (minimum two people) attached, will be selected by jury and then approved by the NIFCO Board of Directors. An applicant cannot apply as both producer and director of the same film.

*****If you are not able to find a Producer or Director and wish to apply please speak to the NIFCO Program Director well in advance of the deadline date. We will do our best to find a suitable candidate for you.*****

Participants in **Picture Start** will receive guidance in establishing a critical path for their short film: from script re-writes, preliminary casting, budgeting, scheduling, and fine-tuning of financing and marketing plans, through to production and post-production. This will be accomplished through a combination of group training sessions and on-going team-specific development and individual mentoring.

Using their own concepts and creativity, successful applicants must complete the financing of their projects within a budget range of \$50,000-\$75,000. A standard budget and financial structure form can be supplied as part of the application process upon request. Line items that may be covered by **Picture Start** funding will be identified: e.g. mentors, trainees, equipment, post-production services. Applicants can expect 30 % to 50 % of costs – with a project cap of \$20,000 – to be covered by **Picture Start** depending on the budget level and the applicant's access to other financing from sources outside of **Picture Start**.

Before any production begins, the group will receive classroom instruction in the form of a series of workshops covering a range of topics aimed at the roles of producer, director and writer. These workshops will be designed to strengthen the team prior to principal photography.

Each project will receive the services of a professional story editor who will be contracted by NIFCO to provide written notes as well as story meetings and oversee a table read with professional actors and the **Picture Start** teams.

In addition to the mentorship provided throughout the fundraising, production and post-production phases of their projects, team specific mentoring will be provided in areas of their own choosing, in consultation with the **Picture Start** Mentor.

Picture Start will provide access to both production equipment, staff and post-production services at NIFCO, including surround sound and UHD picture finishing and DCP delivery.

All films produced through **Picture Start** shall acknowledge the support of the program and **Telefilm Canada**, **NIFCO** and the **CBC** in the form of a credit on the production and on all promotional materials. Additional support organizations will also be included.

Applicants – Eligibility PS 20

Picture Start is open to NL filmmakers who wish to enhance their filmmaking skills in order to pursue or continue to pursue, at higher levels, a professional career in the industry. The program is particularly but not exclusively aimed at those who have already availed of NIFCO's successful entry-level classes, workshops and programs.

Applicants must be a resident of Newfoundland and Labrador for the full duration of the program – Sept 2026-June 2027.

Applicants must have previous filmmaking experience such as:

- **Credited as a writer, director or producer on an independent short film or web series**
- **Multiple production credits on independently produced short content**
- **Multiple crew credits on industry film and television productions**

Eligible Projects

- Project should have a finished running time of **no less than SEVEN** minutes and **no more than TWELVE** minutes.
- Projects must be live-action narrative scripts ranging from **SEVEN to TEN** pages. Unfortunately, **Picture Start** CANNOT support a documentary or animation project at this time. ***Please direct any questions on eligibility to the Picture Start Mentor***
- Theme and subject matter are up to the applicants. NIFCO will not accept any project that contravenes the Criminal Code of Canada.
- Projects can be shot on any professional industry standard format. Please check with the Picture Start mentor if you have questions regarding shooting formats.

**If you have any further inquiries, please direct them via email to:
Anna Petras at: picturestart@nifco.org**

How to apply

Please complete ALL sections of the provided application form in full and include ALL the elements listed below.

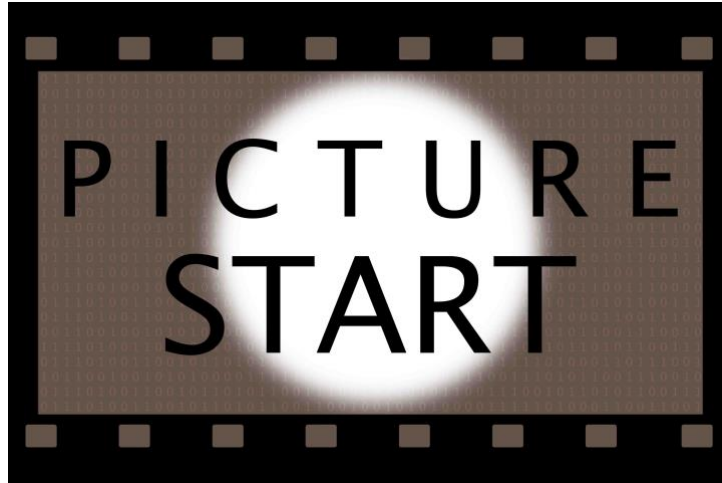
Please submit a link via email to a file storage service (ex. Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.) attn.: Anna Petras, Program Director - picturestart@nifco.org with the Subject line: **Picture Start 20** Submission "INSERT FILM TITLE". Please make sure to include any required password. ***** Please do not submit any attached files with your application email*****

Picture Start 20 SUBMISSION CHECK LIST

- **A complete script (7-10 pages Maximum)**
- **Fifty-word synopsis**
- **Director's vision statement and Look Book**- this should include your visual & sound plan for the film as well as any personal notes on the project
- **Proposed production budget** ** Note: You may choose to use a budget template that can be provided by the Picture Start Mentor or include your own budget.
- **Proposed financing structure** ** Note: the Picture Start Mentor can advise applicant Producers on potential funding sources and partnerships as part of the budget preparation process should that be required
- **A letter indicating WHY you want to participate in Picture Start, WHAT you hope to get out of the program and WHAT you feel you can contribute.** **Please note that ALL members of the applicant team must include a letter.
- **A link to the Director's most recent and relevant short film** (please include the password for viewing)
- **Preliminary Festival and Marketing Plan** for the film

Projects will be selected by a jury made up of representatives from PICTURENL and NIFCO. We will be holding interview sessions with select applicant teams as part of the final jury process. The Program Director will be in contact with teams to confirm a date and time in mid-September 2026.

Decisions will be based on creative content, feasibility, the team and support documentation. All projects will be approved by the NIFCO Board of Directors.



Application Form – PICTURE START 20 2026/2027

APPLICATION DEADLINE

The deadline for applications is **MONDAY August 10th, 2026 at 11:59pm**

Section A – Project Information

Working title of Project: _____

Logline & Short Synopsis:

Projected Running Time: _____

Total Budget: _____

The Proposed Project is:

- Original
- Based on whole or in part on a portrayal of actual persons/facts/events
- Based on other works

If the Proposed Project is based on another work, please provide the following information.

Title of work: _____

Author: _____

Copyright Owner: _____

Status of Ownership: _____

Provide details and sources of development and /or production revenue:

Section B – Applicant Information

Producer Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Have you completed NIFCO's Introductory Filmmaking Program/Film Classes?

If yes, when? _____

Have you completed the First Time Filmmakers Program? _____

If yes, when? _____

Are you currently working in the Film and TV Industry? _____

If yes, in what capacity? _____

Please provide information regarding any Film/Television education or training that you have received:

Please provide details of any Film/Television Credits that you have received:

Please ensure that you have included your letter stating why you want to participate in Picture Start as outlined in the required documents section.

*****By signing I agree to participate in all Picture Start training sessions and evaluations as required. I agree that I am entering into an agreement with other team members and I am committed to completing this project with the proposed team configuration. Also, I hereby certify that all of the information provided in this application, to the best of my knowledge, is correct and complete.**

Signature of Producer Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Section B – Applicant Information

Director Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **Prov:** _____ **Postal Code:** _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Have you completed NIFCO's Introductory Filmmaking Program?

_____ **If yes, when?** _____

Have you completed the First Time Filmmakers Program? _____

If yes, when? _____

Are you currently working in the Film and TV Industry? _____

If yes, in what capacity? _____

Please provide information regarding any Film/Television education or training that you have received:

Please provide details of any Film/Television Credits that you have received:

Please ensure that you have included your letter stating why you want to participate in Picture Start as outlined in the required documents section.

*****By signing I agree to participate in all Picture Start training sessions and evaluations as required. I agree that I am entering into an agreement with other team members and I am committed to completing this project with the proposed team configuration. Also, I hereby certify that all of the information provided in this application, to the best of my knowledge, is correct and complete.**

Signature of Director Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Section B – Applicant Information

Writer Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Have you completed NIFCO's Introductory Filmmaking Program?

If yes, when? _____

Have you completed the First Time Filmmakers Program? _____

If yes, when? _____

Are you currently working in the Film and TV Industry? _____

If yes, in what capacity? _____

Please provide information regarding any Film/Television education or training that you have received:

Please provide details of any Film/Television Credits that you have received:

Please ensure that you have included your letter stating why you want to participate in Picture Start as outlined in the required documents section.

*****By signing I agree to participate in all Picture Start training sessions and evaluations as required. I agree that I am entering into an agreement with other team members and I am committed to completing this project with the proposed team configuration. Also, I hereby certify that all of the information provided in this application, to the best of my knowledge, is correct and complete.**

Signature of Writer Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Section C – APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The following support material must accompany your application, or your application will be considered incomplete.

- **A complete script (7-10 pages Maximum)**
- **Synopsis (50 Words)**
- **Director’s vision statement and Look Book** - this should include your visual/sound plan for the film as well as personal notes on the project
- **Proposed production budget** ** Note: info above on budget templates in guidelines
- **Proposed financing structure** ** Note: info above in guidelines
- **A letter indicating WHY you want to participate in Picture Start, WHAT you hope to get out of the program and what you feel you can contribute.** **Please note that ALL members of the applicant team must include a letter
- **A link to the Director’s most recent short film** (please include the password for viewing)
- **Preliminary Festival/marketing plan for the film**

Please submit a link via email to a file storage service (ex. Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.) attn.: Anna Petras, Program Director - picturestart@nifco.org with the Subject line: Picture Start 20 Submission “INSERT FILM TITLE”. Please make sure to include any required password. *** Please do not submit any attached files with your application email***

If you have any further inquiries, please direct them via email to:

Anna Petras
Program Director
NIFCO
E: picturestart@nifco.org



SAMPLE Picture Start Workshop Sessions & Key Dates

Date/Time Info

LOCATION

First set of Detailed Story Notes & Calls

Mid November

Zoom/In person

2nd drafts submission Deadline	December 12	Zoom/In Person
2nd Set of Notes from Story Editor - Follow Up Meetings	December 17 -1 hr per team	Zoom
All teams Meet & Greet -"If I knew then what I know now"	Jan 8 th 9:30-11am	In Person/Zoom - TBC
PS Bootcamp Sessions - PictureNL Programs Session	Jan 8 th 11am-12noon	In Person/Zoom - TBC
2nd Set of Notes from Story Editor - Follow Up Meetings	Jan 9 th - 1hr per team	Zoom
FUNDING DEADLINE - PICTURENL	January 12th	Consultation w/AP
PS Bootcamp Session - ACTRA Marlene Cahill	Jan 13 th - 10:30am-12:30pm	Zoom/In Person - TBC
Working with your DOP & Communications with Above-the-Line	Jan 20 th – 10am-1pm	NIFCO
Submit Final Table Read Drafts	by Friday Jan 23 rd	via email
Script Table Reads	Jan 30 th 1pm-4pm	NIFCO
Budgeting Intensive Session w/Producers	Feb 3 rd 10am-1pm	NIFCO
PS Producing Session & Intro to Business Affairs	Feb 10 th 10am-12:30pm	In Person/Zoom - TBC
Production Insurance w/Gallagher Insurance	Feb 12 th 10am-11am	Zoom
PS Intensive Directing & Inspiration Session	Feb 17th, 10am-2pm	NIFCO
PS Post-Production Workflow & NIFCO Tour	March (can also be one-on-ones)	NIFCO
PS -Directing One-on-One Mentorship	One on One - DATES TBD	
Picture Start Shoots	Mid March-End of April	