

Enterprise Program review and Future Options Submission for Discussion

Thank you for providing the opportunity to the industry for consultation to review the successes and future options for the Enterprise program.

It is timely to reflect on how the Enterprise program has impacted on the sector and what might be the best way forward in terms of enhancing growth and sustainability for future generations.

About Us:

Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF) operates only within the documentary sector. DAF was established to create a new private source of funding for documentaries in the forms of tax-deductible grants and donations and to educate filmmakers in an alternate way of working with philanthropy. The emphasis of DAF is on identifying synergies and building collaborations between filmmakers, donors and non-profit organisations around shared areas of interests to create the greatest impact through documentary. DAF works with filmmakers across a broad range of issue areas, which offers philanthropists and non-profits many entry points to access stories that highlight the issues they care to fund and screen. We also work with a broad range of filmmakers, from the very experienced larger companies in the sector to the first time and emerging filmmakers who struggle to attract broadcast pre-sales.

From where DAF sits in the industry, after 5 years since our launch and 7 years since the beginning of research and development, we see many filmmakers with powerful work that often falls between the cracks of the broadcast/film funding agency nexus. Much of this work is strong. A lot of it is attractive to private funders. Over \$5million has been donated over the last 5 years with philanthropic engagement expanding and growing. Regularly these filmmakers complete their films and forge their own avenues to audiences. DAF assists on a number of levels, from funding to audience engagement and evaluation.

Enterprise Goals:

The Enterprise Program is directed at businesses that have identified opportunities to develop and expand in terms of turnover, scale and/or range of activities to enhance the company's sustainability. Three of the stated aims are:

- Commercial sustainability
- Growing the production pie
- Collaborations

Whilst the Enterprise reports growth and commercial success for the companies that have received assistance, it is less clear that the overall outcomes for the sector as a whole have been entirely positive. Within the experience of the individual companies we have seen the positive impact in increased collaborations and mergers, scaling up with a more business minded approach to long term planning, international offices and consultations established and formats sold and licensed.

However, the impact of the Enterprise has also been detrimental. We see this particularly in the effects on smaller or boutique companies who choose not to scale up, but consistently make strong work; on emerging filmmakers who don't have the track records to apply and may want to maintain their independence; and producer/directors who have long track records and prefer to retain their own equity rather than becoming employees or contractors of larger companies. As there is significant investment in the Enterprise companies from government, it is natural that these companies are offered, and can quickly benefit from, flow on privileges such as being highly profiled domestically and internationally by government agencies, favoured by broadcasters and headlined at conferences and international film markets in programs and catalogues. Being supported as an Enterprise company delivers a broad range of flow on advantages for those companies, such as the ease with which to cash flow the offset resulting in the revolving benefit of infrastructural support from both tax rebate and proposed additional support and opportunities that continue through the Enterprise program. But these benefits erode the level playing field in the industry, handicapping other companies and sole traders from being able to compete with similar in house resources for diminishing funds and television slots.

Is this a problem? Arguably, it benefits the industry as a whole to breed success in a targeted group of companies. There is no doubt this support has resulted in the production of fine programs and inspired, creative and fruitful collaborations. Interns, attachments and development producers have received experience, training and been offered opportunities to develop new work. But does the merging of companies and the support of the few, necessarily enhance the quality of our production sector or does it diminish diversity? Another way of catalysing greater outcomes and sustainability of the industry as a whole, may be to foster a proliferation of smaller companies and independence rather than putting most of the eggs in only a few baskets.

Market Saturation or Independence and Diversity:

If we are concerned with the long-term sustainability of our industry then we must look to how we can foster the next generation by

- Providing growth opportunities,
- Building a foundation for independence and
- Encouraging a diversity of styles and voices.

Market saturation is not relevant if there is a commitment to fostering new talent and being open to new forms and ideas. DAF is very committed to developing and supporting the entrepreneurial spirit apparent in many documentary filmmakers and fostering the conditions for independence. We believe in the importance of always being open to the emergence of new ideas and new voices, and flexible enough to support maverick potential.

Recommendations:

1. Re-define sustainability to encompass cultural as well as commercial.

Being commercial is not the only indicator of success nor should it be the predominant guiding principal for government support. The cultural imperative, which currently sits outside the Enterprise program and is supported by other programs within Screen Australia, is the driving motivation of many documentary filmmakers and philanthropic funders. This priority of focus for many documentary filmmakers excludes them from the Enterprise program, as they are not necessarily developing work that is defined by commercial parameters and measured by commercial outcomes. Eligibility requirements should

- Remove the necessity for commercial investments and re-define market place attachment to include philanthropic donations

- Extend to sole traders
- Be open to organisations working to support the sector, not limited to production and distribution companies

Filmmakers working to a cultural remit would benefit greatly from the opportunity to build sustainable business through a combination of

- Infrastructural support (as a 100% grant through a redefined Enterprise)
- Producer offset to support an ongoing development slate and
- Independent and recurrent sources of funding from the private sector for both production and audience engagement

DAF could be in a position to support filmmakers working in this way through a partnership with Screen Australia, where government and philanthropy work hand in hand to underpin the sustainability of our cultural voice.

2. Grow the Pie

DAF wholeheartedly supports the necessity of growing the pie and has been established in part to achieve this aim. A major encouragement to the philanthropic sector, which has already embraced the exciting potential of documentary through the work of DAF, would be for government to stand shoulder to shoulder with philanthropy in enabling production and audience engagement to occur outside the commercial constraints of traditional broadcast and distribution deals.

DAF supports alternative models that look for new partnerships to build capacities in the sector. DAF also recommends flexibility be built into the guidelines to allow for innovative activities to be designed that will deliver new partnerships for production and audience engagement outcomes.

3. Collaboration

Broaden collaboration to include philanthropic and non-profit partners who are increasingly becoming significant stakeholders and enablers in documentary production and distribution. DAF supports Screen Australia's facilitation of deeper engagement in international co-production opportunities and business relationships in overseas territories.

4. Terms of Funding

- Enterprise funding for infrastructural support should be 100% grant where it is supporting a non-commercial enterprise.
- A new model of matched funding would rapidly increase philanthropic engagement in documentary.*

*If a filmmaker can adequately illustrate a viable distribution pathway and audience engagement strategy (eg; through non profit engagement and/or online social media strategy, alternative educational distribution) in the absence of an attached broadcaster, access to a capped matched funding scheme would fuel philanthropic donations massively.

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Mitzi Goldman has produced and directed award winning international documentaries for over 25 years. She has been commissioned by ABC, SBS, ITVS, ARTE, NGTV, YLE, SABC, Ch4. Her production company Looking Glass Pictures specialises in social issue documentary. For 6 years Mitzi was Co-Head of Documentary at AFTRS. She is currently CEO of Documentary Australia Foundation. She has a PhD in Cultural Studies and is a committed documentary filmmaker and educator.

