



FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

The Writers Lab Canada Intensive

Presented by the Firecracker Department and Female Eye Film Festival

In January 2026, during the four-day Intensive, participants will have the opportunity to work closely with seasoned industry professionals and mentors to refine their scripts through honing their story core, scene readings, pitching practice, processing feedback, log line lessons, and examining writers' rooms. In the following months, writers build their craft by submitting developing drafts for further feedback, and exploring career connections with introductions to key industry professionals in a collaborative, supportive environment.

The Application

How Do I Apply?

- Starting July 15, 2025, you can find us on FilmFreeway - <https://filmfreeway.com/TheWritersLabCanada>

- FilmFreeway hosts submissions, and you will need to set up a free account in advance.
- Upload your script as a .pdf labelled with the project TITLE ONLY. Please DO NOT include the name of the screenwriter(s) or contact information ANYWHERE on the .pdf.
- After you finalize payment and submission, you will receive a confirmation from FilmFreeway that you have successfully entered The Writers Lab Canada contest.

What are the submission periods and fees?

Please note, there are no deadline extensions.

- Jul 15 to Jul 31, 2025 - Regular Submission Fee - \$70 USD via FilmFreeway
- Jul 30 to Aug 15, 2025 - Late Submission Fee - \$90 USD via FilmFreeway
- Oct 15, 2025 - Notifications go out to all applicants
- Nov 15, 2025 - Deadline for selected participants Intensive Fee - \$1650 CAD paid directly to firecrackerdepartment@gmail.com via e-transfer or PayPal.
- Jan 06-09, 2026 - The Writers Lab Canada Intensive in person at DGC Ontario in Toronto, ON
- January to June - Follow up support with new drafts reviewed and introductions to industry members

Application Details for TWL Canada 2026:

- **Eligibility:** Open to Canadian citizens or permanent residents who are women and nonbinary writers aged 40 or over.
- **Script Requirements:** Narrative scripts in English, professionally formatted, and submitted anonymously.
- **Submission Categories:** Feature film screenplays (80–120 pages), one-hour TV pilots (45–75 pages), and half-hour TV pilots (22–44 pages).
- **Application Fee:** Regular deadline \$70 USD, Late deadline \$90 USD
- **Program Fee (if accepted):** \$1,460 plus \$190 HST = \$1650 CAD
- **Submission Platform:** FilmFreeway

What information will I need for the application?

- Basic contact and biographical information (name, email address, contact phone number, mailing address, birth date).
- Log line, genre and script in .pdf format.
- This program is for narrative scripts only.
- Feature film script - 80 to 120 pages, pilots - 45-75 pages (one-hour) or 22 to 44 pages (half-hour). Script lengths beyond the number of pages listed will incur a per-page surcharge.
- Credit/Debit Card for payment.

How many scripts can I apply with?

Writers may submit up to three (3) complete scripts. Each script requires a separate completed application, and a separate non-refundable application fee. We encourage you to submit only your best work.

Can writing partners apply?

Yes. Both writers must meet eligibility requirements (See Eligibility Requirements section below). Please designate one writer as the primary contact/potential attendee, and list that writer first in the writing credits on the application. Or, we will do our best to accommodate both writers.

Is it possible to submit an updated draft after I've applied?

No, sorry.

Is it true that when you enter a contest late, your script doesn't have a chance?

False! You might have heard that the judges get tired of reading, or the winners have already been chosen. Quite the opposite. Every submitted script is read multiple times with the same care and rigor. Our readers are paid for their work and are eager to find talented writers and exciting projects.

Should I have industry contacts call or email with references?

No thanks. Our decision is based on the material alone. Your work will speak for itself.

How will I be notified about acceptance?

All TWL Canada notifications will be made via email. You will hear from us, whether you are selected for the Intensive or not, on or before Sep 30, 2025.

I haven't received notification about my acceptance, but I know others who have. Why is that?

Notifications may be made on a rolling basis. Final decisions will be made and sent out on or before Sep 30, 2025.

Why do you charge an application fee?

We use application fees to pay our independent readers, who carefully evaluate hundreds of scripts, through multiple rounds.

Why does the Writers Lab Canada cost \$1650 when the American one only requires transportation?

TWL flagship Lab has a funding source that isn't transferable to regional TWL Labs. The Firecracker Department is running the TWL Canada Intensive workshop. We are not funded this year, but we have big sights on future possibilities. It's always our goal to make our events and programs accessible. We may have scholarships to offer to selected participants and are actively working on raising more funds. We're really excited to be working with TWL to produce this Intensive in Canada and encourage more women and nonbinary artists to write scripts! More questions and thoughts - feel free to reach out firecrackerdepartment@gmail.com

What are the fees associated with attending the Intensive?

For the eight (8) writers selected for the TWL Canada Intensive, the fee is \$1,650.00 CAD per person.

Writers are also responsible for travel to and from Toronto, and their accommodations while in Toronto. Breakfast and lunches will be provided during the four-day Intensive.

What if I can't afford the workshop fees?

We hear you. We are working on engaging industry partners to help with scholarship contributions for those in financial need. To keep up to date subscribe to our newsletter at www.firecrackerdepartment.com, or visit our websites as we announce more scholarship contributions.

1. One full scholarship is provided by the Firecracker Department and will go to a selected participant in need.
2. The Female Eye Film Festival is providing a full scholarship to a selected participant who is a FeFF alumna of the festival.
3. We are optimistic there'll be more to come.

We encourage you to look into bursaries such as the Director's Guild Bursary and Canada Arts Council grants for artistic development and travel.

What if I can't pay by credit card, e-transfer or PayPal? What if I can't afford the application fee? What if I can't submit online? Can I deliver my application in person?

Please contact firecrackerwritingdepartment@gmail.com.

Eligibility

Am I eligible to apply?

TWL Canada Intensive is open to Canadian women and nonbinary writers 40 years of age or over. We honour the fact that gender is personal and specific and seek to create an inclusive and supportive community. Applicants must be 40+ as of the first day of the Intensive, so born before Jan 06, 1986.

Why does the application ask for my birthday?

Your birthdate is necessary for us to confirm age eligibility, as outlined in the previous question.

I am a Canadian abroad or a Canadian Permanent Resident. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes! Keep in mind that we do not cover transportation to or from Toronto.

Do I need to provide proof of passport or visa with my application?

No, you do not need to submit these documents with your application. However, accepted writers will need to provide these documents in order to sign the TWL Canada Intensive Contract, which finalizes acceptance.

I don't have much experience. Does this affect my chances of acceptance?

Absolutely not. TWL Canada seeks to foster exciting voices, regardless of professional experience. However, we do NOT teach screenwriting basics. Submissions must exhibit knowledge of screenwriting formatting, standards, technique and style.

For advice or to apply for an optional Script Prep Session, click here: [Firecracker Department Script Prep Form](#).

The Script

Am I required to submit a feature or pilot script?

Yes. TWL Canada Intensive requires submission of a FULLY COMPLETED script.

Is there a correct length for a script?

While there is no correct length, features are generally 80 to 120 pages; one-hour pilots are 45 to 75 pages; and half-hour pilots are 22 to 44 pages (depending on genre and other factors). Please note that feature screenplays longer than 120 pages, and pilots longer than 75 pages (one-hour) or 44 pages (half-hour), will incur a per-page surcharge to the application.

Are there any requirements regarding the software I use to write?

We have no software preference, as long as the script uses industry-standard formatting, and is converted to .pdf before submission.

What file formats can I use to submit my script?

All scripts must be submitted as .pdf files. Film industry professionals expect scripts in .pdf format, so this is a good opportunity to circulate your script in accordance with industry standards.

Will you consider scripts not written in English?

Although your script may include other languages, the predominant language must be English. (Tip: Providing translation for passages in other languages can help, but we don't recommend translating every non-English line, as doubling up can slow the pace, and is often unnecessary.)

Some questions for you to ask about your script.

- Are all characters clearly introduced, established, and fully realized, with a defined need and arc?
- Is every line of dialogue necessary, either revealing character or moving the plot along?
- Are the descriptions well written, specific and succinct?
- Will this story speak to a wide audience?
- Is this story right for this Intensive? Does it tell a story from a POV not generally seen?
- Does the script follow standard formatting protocols? Has it been carefully proofread so that readers will not struggle with typos, long paragraphs, or confusing scenes?

Can I submit a script based on a book or an adaptation?

Yes, we will consider scripts based on prior works as long as you have secured the underlying rights to the material. We ask for proof of rights, in the form of a contract, email, or letter, if your script reaches the Finalist level in the selection process.

If the majority rights are already held by a producer, is the script eligible for the program?

One of the goals for the program is 'developing material for production'. If you don't have all of the rights, you may not be able to get the piece made. Submit at your own risk.

Can I submit a treatment if I don't have a completed draft by the deadline?

No. TWL Canada Intensive is for completed feature and television pilot scripts only.

What does TWL Canada consider complete?

While TWL Canada will consider scripts at various stages of development, the draft submitted must meet the following standards of completion:

- Scripts must be either feature-length polished drafts, 80 to 120 pages, or polished pilots that are 45 to 75 pages (one-hour), or 22 to 44 pages (half-hour).
- We will not consider screenplay fragments, treatments, synopses, book excerpts, or stage plays.
- Scripts should show a strong understanding of screenwriting technique and style.
- Scripts should present a fully realized story, with an identifiable concept, world, characters and genre.

Will my ideas be protected?

We will make all reasonable and customary efforts to protect your ideas.

In Canada, as soon as your idea is in writing, it has common law copyright status. You simply need to email it to give it a timestamp.

You may choose to copyright your piece with the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO) <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/en>, or register your script with various Writers Guilds.

You are participating at your own risk. The Writers Lab, Firecracker Department, Female Eye Film Festival and TWL Canada are not responsible for protecting your Intellectual Property.

Do you accept scripts that have been submitted elsewhere?

Yes. We have no restrictions on material that has been to, or developed through, other labs, workshops or programs.

The TWL Canada Intensive

Who will attend the retreat?

- Eight (8) In-person Intensive writers who have been selected.
- Two (2) TWL mentors, Elizabeth Kaiden and Nitza Wilon.
- Four (4) or more Canadian mentors - established industry film and TV writers.
- Team members from the Firecracker Department and Female Eye Film Festival.

When and Where?

TWL Canada Intensive will be from Jan 06-09, 2026. Location: Toronto, Canada.

What happens at the Intensive?

The selected writers, mentors, guests, and team members gather for workshops, discussions, peer groups, story rooms, individual story presentations, log line lessons, keynotes, Q&As, panels, and, of course, one-on-ones. We also connect informally during meals, cocktail hours, and screenings.

On the fourth day, the Intensive will be audited by additional paying participants in-person and online. For more information on auditing the fourth day, subscribe to our newsletter at www.firecrackerdepartment.com, or our websites.

What kind of production support does the Lab offer?

TWL Canada is a film and TV script development Intensive. We are not a producing entity, nor do we offer any kind of production funding. However, in addition to connecting participants with a peer group of driven and talented writers, we offer access to, and interaction with, a range of other film industry professionals. Once your script has gone through the full mentorship process of the Intensive, with your permission and if there is interest, it will be shared with selected Canadian producers and production companies.

If my script is good enough to be accepted, why do I need to develop it further?

Any script accepted to our Intensive will benefit from further development. That is the primary focus of TWL Canada, and all selected writers should expect to revise their scripts with the support of experienced industry mentors. Beyond script development, the Lab offers recognition for your work as well as a unique chance to connect with a supportive community of peers and industry professionals.

Does TWL Canada offer any follow-up for writers beyond the Retreat?

TWL Canada Intensive selected writers may receive additional development support online from their mentors in the months following the Intensive.

The Writers Lab and Firecracker Department have ongoing alumni events including scriptwriting workshops, story development opportunities, and networking events.

The Submissions & Selection Process

How does the reading and selection process work?

We have a team of trusted readers who have been trained to look for well-crafted stories that meet The Writers Lab, Firecracker Department and Female Eye Film Festival missions. We convene regularly to discuss scripts and answer questions. Each reader must complete a scoring section, answer a list of questions and provide a few lines of commentary on their assigned scripts. The founders and producing partners read alongside readers. All scripts are read blind. All readers are paid per script.

Because TWL Canada serves women and nonbinary writers 40+, applicants must identify as women or nonbinary; confirm that they are 40 years of age or older; and must be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The reason for this program is there are no equity initiatives in Canada that consider women 40+ as an equity-deserving group. We recognize that women 40+ are highly underrepresented in the film and TV industry and that diverse individuals within this group may face additional barriers to equity and inclusion. In our selection process, we strive for 30% participation from individuals faced with additional barriers, including socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, physical, mental health, neurodiversity, sexual orientation, or barriers due to having primary or secondary caregiver responsibilities.

In the application process, we invite you to let us know if there are additional barriers you face.

What are some of the questions readers must answer?

Readers are instructed to look for a strong grasp of screen and TV writing craft as well as distinct voices, POVs, genres, stories and characters. Below is a sampling of the questions our readers must answer:

- **Craft and Formatting:** Is this a complete feature or pilot (one-hour OR half-hour)? Does the writer know basic screencraft? Does the script show standard formatting (slug lines, character introductions, indented dialogue, proofed for typos, etc)?
- **Cinematic Storytelling:** Is the writing VISUAL? Does the writer clearly establish the world, characters and action?
- **Characters and Representation:** Are the characters distinct? Are they authentically and fully developed with individual voices, appropriate arcs and journeys?

When and How are writers notified?

All applicants will be notified on or before Sep 30, 2025, via email.

Firecracker Department Optional Script Prep Sessions

Liesl Lafferty of the Firecracker Writing Department, offers optional Script Prep sessions, so your piece will be in a polished state for submission. Two of her clients made it to the final round last year! To apply click [Optional Script Prep Application Form](#) or contact firecrackerwritingdepartment@gmail.com.

Any more questions?

Please contact firecrackerwritingdepartment@gmail.com