



BUDGET 2023 SUBMISSION

on behalf of the

WESTERN AV FORUM

Ardán - Fostering talent in Film, TV, Games and Animation since 1989.

The Western AV Forum (WAVF) - The collective of key stakeholders for Film, Television, Games and Animation in the West of Ireland.



KEY ASKS

1. Re-establish the **Regional Film Development Uplift** available through Section 481, at a level of 5% for 2023 and 2024 and promote the long-term development of production in the regions by providing the resources, surety and investment required for a period of at least 10 years.
2. Continue to support **Regional talent development** through the Screen Ireland National Talent Academies providing opportunities for regional and diverse voices and crew to establish careers in the audiovisual industries.
3. Allocate at least €1,000,000 of Project Ireland 2040 National Development Plan funding annually to the **Regional Fund**, the Western Region Audiovisual Producers Fund (WRAP Fund), to build and scale regional indigenous producers in film, television, animation and games and develop sustainable production capacity anchored in the regions.

WESTERN AV FORUM MEMBERS

9th Impact / Ardán / Abú Media / Aniar Teo / Atlantic Technological University / Clare County Council / Creative Europe Media Desk / Creative Heartlands Film / Danú Media / Donegal Film Office / EÓ Teilifís / Fibín Media / Film Mayo / Fís Éireann - Screen Ireland / Galway City Council / Galway County Council / Galway Culture Company / Galway Film Fleadh / Gréasán na Meán Skillnet / Galway Roscommon ETB / Iris Productions / Janey Pictures / Leitrim County Council / Lorg Media / Lunar Pictures / Magamedia / Magpie 6 Media Entertainment / Moetion Films / National University of Ireland Galway / Romero Games / Roscommon County Council / Sligo County Council / Spooky Doorway / Studio Meala / Telegael / TG4 / Tribal City Interactive / Triggerfish Animation Studios / Tua Films / Údarás na Gaeltachta / Western Development Commission (WDC) / Western Region Audiovisual Producers Fund (WRAP Fund)

Further information

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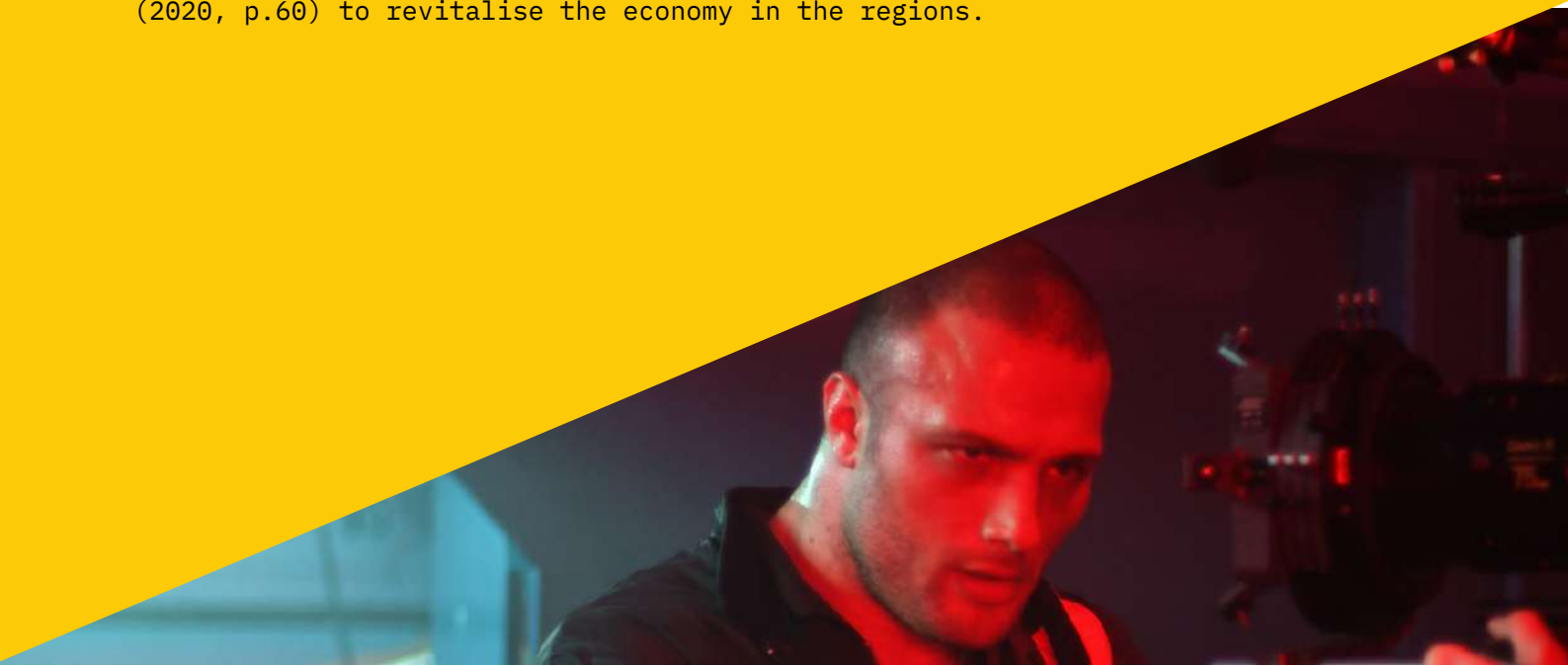
REGIONAL FILM DEVELOPMENT UPLIFT

Re-establish the Regional Film Development Uplift available through Section 481, at a level of 5% for 2023 and 2024 and promote the long-term development of production in the regions by providing the resources, surety and investment required for a period of at least 10 years.

The Regional Film Development Uplift through Section 481 (Regional Uplift) has had a positive impact on the regionalisation of production within the country since its operational introduction in July 2019. Despite the impact of COVID-19, Nineteen (19) projects, 20% of the total Section 481 supported projects, availed of the Regional Uplift in 2020 with eligible expenditure of ~€160m and requiring crew of 2,116. A further 24 projects availed of the Regional Uplift in 2021, 21.5% of the total Section 481 supported projects, with eligible expenditure of ~€124M and requiring crew of 1941. Evident in the figures is the long lead in time required in planning productions, with longevity and confidence in support measures a significant factor in that planning process. The figures do, however, strongly suggest that the Regional Uplift at 5% had begun to achieve its policy objectives.

Unfortunately, there is significant evidence that the drop in support from 5% to 3% has dramatically reduced interest in filming in the regions. Incoming productions cite the additional costs of filming in the regions as the main impediment with much of this cost linked to the necessity to bring experienced crew from Dublin / Wicklow into the region for production. Local producers are meanwhile losing crew to Dublin / Wicklow and beyond because the volume of work in the regions doesn't support a sustainable career as of yet. Combined with other factors including inflationary pressure on accommodation and transport, the benefits accrued to the end of 2021 by the Regional Uplift at 5% are now being lost. This deterioration can, however, be stopped through efficient implementation of proven policy measures to support regional development in line with the government's own Programme for Government and Regional Action for Jobs strategies.

It is now evident that the Regional Uplift at 5% promotes regional development of the Film Industry and is an effective counter-balance to the natural gravity of the metro-centric critical mass of production in the Dublin / Wicklow area. The re-establishment of the Regional Uplift at 5% in 2023 and 2024 is critical and subject to the review of the overall Section 481 scheme from 2025, should be reimagined at that same level for a period of 10 years aligned with the mission of 'balanced regional development' in the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future (2020, p.60) to revitalise the economy in the regions.



REGIONAL FILM DEVELOPMENT UPLIFT (CONT.)

"Treasure Entertainment was hugely thankful for the implementation of the regional uplift. Having an additional 5% increase in the tax credit made it easier and more economically viable to locate our major drama series Smother in Co Clare. This allowed us to bring high-end production values and experience into a region that has been overlooked for productions of scale due to the majority of production activity being based in and around the Dublin area. The people of Clare and its surrounds could not have been more welcoming and it was a privilege to be able to interact with them during the 3 years that we were situated in Lahinch. We loved our time there and are very proud of the work that we accomplished.

However, the reduction of the credit to 3% in 2022 placed a noticeable constraint on our finances for the third season, despite an increase in investment from our funding partners. It was also noticeable that more and more crew members were leaving the regions despite production activity increasing in Ireland across the board. The draw back to Dublin and its environs is starkly apparent and it is something that we have had to closely look at in relation to situating our next major series. Originally we had intended to return to Clare, but it is more likely that we will situate the production closer to Dublin as the 2% uplift in 2023 will simply not be adequate to cover the additional costs of a more remote base.

With inflationary pressures across the board on Irish production activity it is imperative that the uplift be restored to 5% if we are to encourage production activity. As an industry we are doing a disservice to the people that we promised careers to within their own regions if we disincentivise the bringing of productions to those areas. From a production company perspective it is a massive loss of opportunity if we are forced by simple economics to abandon areas and people that we have invested time and energies in. We want and need to be able to create a sustainable industry across the country and we need incentives like the regional uplift to assist. It needs to be a long-term strategic investment and not a year-on-year steadily decreasing percentage to be of a real and tangible benefit."

Niall Murphy, Treasure Entertainment



REGIONAL FILM DEVELOPMENT UPLIFT (CONT.)

"As a producer from the West of Ireland, it is a passion of mine to bring Film and Television projects there and into other regions around the country. This is not inexpensive to do and is a real challenge to production budgets, so unfortunately I have had to decide against on a number of occasions because of these cost factors.

However, over the last number of years, the availability of the Section 481 5% regional uplift has proved instrumental in making this possible, helping greatly to off-set costs of shooting in the regions, costs such as travel, accommodation, per diems etc. and it has been wonderful to see so many projects shooting in many counties throughout the country because of it. I know that the availability of the 5% regional uplift was absolutely key in the decision by producers to film Wild Mountain Thyme in County Mayo (Crossmolina & Ballina area) in 2019. Having a production in the regions, whether that be Mayo, Galway, Donegal, Kerry or Limerick etc. breathes life into that area and provides work at a local level to cast, crew as well as local suppliers, hotels, restaurants etc. as well as providing much sought after training to local people in a variety of disciplines across the film and television sector. The continuation and sustained nature of this support is absolutely vital in helping to grow an industry base and developing local pools of talent in those regional areas.

I am concerned about the reduction of this support to 3% this year, 2% next and then that it will no longer be available to productions who seek to film in the regions and as such I would welcome any review of this. The regional uplift has become one of the absolute key deciding factors in taking projects outside of our capital area to film and this was evident over the last number of years by the amount of production activity happening in those regions. We are inevitably seeing that reduce now, with the reduction in the uplift and likely to see it drop off significantly in the years to come, which would be a real shame."

Martina Niland, Port Pictures Ltd



REGIONAL TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Continue to support Regional talent development through the Screen Ireland National Talent Academies providing opportunities for regional and diverse voices and crew to establish careers in the audiovisual industries.

Since April 2019, over 45 regional skills development plans and over 500 regional skills development participants have been tracked by Screen Ireland on productions availing of the Regional Uplift. In addition, the establishment of the National Talent Academy – Film & TV, the National Talent Academy – Animation, and the three regional Crew Academies (West, South and East), have firmly established the structures to support the upskilling and training of regional talent to meet the demands of both incoming and regionally led productions. Combined with experienced crew from Dublin/Wicklow brought into productions by regionally based producers, and facilitated by the Regional Uplift at 5%, the groundwork has been laid for a significant, experienced crew base in the regions.

This building of production capacity in the regions must be continued through the ongoing development of talent and crew within the regions. Growing capacity and crew in the regions will not only support the development of a more inclusive and diverse workforce in the screen industries but also more green/sustainable production with crew not having to travel to and/or relocate to Dublin/Wicklow. This diverse, regional talent base can only be supported in their career development in the regions through production in the regions, both through inward production supported by the Regional Uplift, and the direct funding of indigenous regionally based producers and production through a Regional Fund.



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Allocate at least €1,000,000 of Project Ireland 2040 National Development Plan funding annually to the Regional Fund, the Western Region Audiovisual Producers Fund (WRAP Fund), to build and scale regional indigenous producers in film, television, animation and games and develop sustainable production capacity anchored in the regions.

Production capacity in the regions must be built through the continued development of talent and crew within the regions, anchored by production companies that are indigenous and local to the regions. Sustainable regional careers must be nurtured in the short term through the support of inward productions with the Regional Uplift. The long-term strategy for a broader, more balanced industry must develop regional production companies to ensure that projects are born, developed and produced from a regional base. The Regional Fund, in line with standard international practices, must provide focused non-commercial funding of €1,000,000 initially with a goal of €2,500,000 annually to ensure regional production capacity has the opportunity to achieve the same critical mass evident in Dublin/Wicklow.

Growing this regional capacity supports a more inclusive and diverse workforce in the screen industries, reduces the economic and environmental cost of production crew having to travel large distances for work, and creates a more balanced and sustainable industry across the island of Ireland. Through the continued support of the Screen Ireland National Talent Academies initiative with a focus on the development of diverse and regional talent and the direct funding of indigenous regionally based producers and production through a Regional Fund, the full policy objectives of the Regional Uplift as well as the Audiovisual Action Plan, Strategic Outcome 3 of Project Ireland 2020 (Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities), and the Regional Enterprise Plans can be achieved.



CONCLUSION

Development of talent, crew and production capacity in the regions can transform the Screen Industries in Ireland, making them more inclusive, more balanced, and more sustainable both from an economic and an environmental perspective. Through the continued support of the Screen Ireland National Talent Academies initiative focusing on the development of diverse and regional talent, the direct funding of indigenous regionally based producers and production through a Regional Fund, and the reinstatement of the Regional Uplift at 5%, the full policy objectives of the Regional Uplift as well as the Audiovisual Action Plan, Strategic Outcome 3 of Project Ireland 2020 (Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities), and the Regional Enterprise Plans can be achieved.

Therefore, the Key Asks of the Western Audiovisual Forum are:

1. **Re-establish the Regional Film Development Uplift** available through Section 481, at a level of 5% for 2023 and 2024 and promote the long-term development of production in the regions by providing the resources, surety and investment required for a period of at least 10 years.
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'In a competitive global market where screen production spend has reached unprecedented levels, incentives are increasingly recognised by governments as an efficient and strategic tool to attract high-value inward investment, strengthen local production sectors and build skills, employment and infrastructure in a future-facing global industry with ongoing growth prospects', Olsberg SPI Global Incentive Index. May 2022 update (p13).





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**For further information on any of these matters,
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