



EASTERN CAPE DRAMA SERIES / TELENOVELA CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

1. BACKGROUND

The Eastern Cape Arts and Culture Council (ECPACC) is a public entity of the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC), with a vision to stimulate a thriving Cultural and Creative developmental ecosystem underpinned by principles of social cohesion and preservation of the rich culture and heritage of the Eastern Cape Province. As part of its mandate, ECPACC was charged with the responsibility of implementing film development programmes, that will contribute to building a momentum towards strengthening the provincial film value chain and ultimately give rise to a thriving film industry. ECPACC is now embarking on high impact film development programmes that will lead to creating jobs in the province and stimulation of the creative economy.

2. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Eastern Cape Provincial Arts and Culture Council (ECPACC) is strategically committed to advancing the development of sustained, locally produced long-format audio-visual content. In the absence of consistent high-volume productions, the province faces the gradual loss of skilled creative and technical talent, underutilization of existing production infrastructure, and the forfeiture of significant economic multiplier effects associated with large-scale filming. To address these systemic gaps, the Council's primary objective is to cultivate a sustainable industry ecosystem that guarantees long-term employment for local creatives and technical crews, while formalizing knowledge transfer and on-the-job training pathways for emerging professionals. This initiative is further designed to stimulate localized economic expenditure and ensure that Eastern Cape landscapes, communities, and talent receive prominent, sustained visibility on national broadcasting platforms.

To operationalize this vision, the Province has established a strategic multi-stakeholder partnership between the Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury, the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC), the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC), the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and ECPACC. Collectively, these institutions are co-developing a flagship long-format drama series, intentionally structured for progressive expansion into a full telenovela. This collaborative production aims to elevate the Eastern Cape's profile within the national television sector, reinvigorate a culture of innovative and commercially viable storytelling, and align with the province's foundational commitments to social cohesion and the active promotion of indigenous vernacular languages.

In support of this mandate, a dedicated production fund has been established to grant highly experienced film producers based in the Eastern Cape who are prepared to enter into this strategic partnership. The fund will finance the development and production of a commercially competitive long-format drama series engineered for national broadcast distribution. By combining provincial creative expertise with institutional backing and market-ready distribution channels, this initiative seeks to deliver high-impact, culturally authentic content that stimulates local industry growth, preserves linguistic heritage, and positions the Eastern Cape as a premier hub for South African television production.

2.1 SPECIFICATION:

RFP NO.:	ECPACC DRA TELE
BRIEF TITLE	EC Long-Format Drama Series / Telenovela
GENRE	DRAMA
SUB-GENRE	Long Form Drama (dramedy, melodrama and realism)
SERIES	1 x 26 episodes Script & Production
LANGUAGE OF SUBMISSION	isiXhosa 70% English, Afrikaans and SeSotho 30%
SCHEDULE	Prime Time Broadcast
Platform	National Broadcaster
ACQUISITION METHOD	Grant & Pre-sale Agreement
EDITORIAL GUIDE	<p>The drama series should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clearly demonstrate the creative ability to bring a rich understanding of the socio psychological, political and cultural context of the story, world and plot. ➤ A well-defined 'world' where the stories take place, with clear rules that impact directly on the characters' journeys. ➤ Well-defined characters that are complex, real characters with clear wants, needs, flaws and goals for the series. ➤ Clear character journeys that have distinct turning points – inciting incidents, first act climax, mid-point, second act climax, climax, and resolution. ➤ Series structure through episode plots and story arc.
CREATIVE / PRODUCTION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	<p>Your proposal should contain the following creative documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A Brief synopsis of the whole series with an indication of the beginning, middle and end. ➤ Controlling idea, dramatic question, premise, logline and a statement of intent. ➤ Outline of main story arcs. ➤ Character outlines and a clear description of the relationship between characters and their position to the controlling idea. ➤ 10 pages of a sample dialogue/script. ➤ Series creative treatment and visual approach. ➤ Cast suggestions aligned to the Eastern Cape's brand positioning

	<p>and core target audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The drama series must be a minimum of 26 episodes and 48 minutes in length. ➤ The drama series must be structured in a manner that will allow it to be adaptable to any changes and be progressively developed into a Telenovela. ➤ Completed budget pack for development, scripting, production, post-production and distribution. ➤ The pack must include line budget and schedule.
ADMINISTRATIVE SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A motivation letter (maximum 2 pages), expressing why the project should be supported. ➤ A project plan detailing how the funds will be used with clear objectives and deliverables. ➤ Proof of secured funds. ➤ A Job Creation Plan detailing how the project will create jobs and the number of anticipated temporary and potentially long-term jobs. This should include any economic spin-offs anticipated. ➤ Company profile and CVs of key creative team (writer, producer, director). ➤ Proof of concept is a requirement. ➤ Company Registration documents. ➤ Valid SARS tax clearance certificate. ➤ Certified Copy of South African identity document. ➤ Proof of residence obtained from Local Municipality or Local Traditional Authority or in line with Financial Intelligence Centre (FICA) Act 83 of 2001. ➤ BBBEE Affidavit.
FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At least 80% of the principal photography of the project should be shot in the Eastern Cape; ➤ ECPACC's investment must be spent within the Eastern Cape, plus at least 80% of the other secured funding from other funders (the SABC, DTIC, NEF, IDC, etc.); ➤ At least 20% of Heads of Departments for the Drama Series must be sourced from within the Eastern Cape; ➤ Projects must include a training and skills transfer programme to be implemented within the Eastern Cape; ➤ At least a minimum of 80% of procurement of goods and services must be allocated to Eastern Cape-based service providers; ➤ Producer will need to secure a pre-sale, commission or licencing agreement by a reputable and viable national broadcaster. (A letter of Offer from a broadcaster is mandatory) ➤ Previous projects are completed and production company is in good standing with current and past financiers/investors; ➤ The applicant must be a South African production company, registered and complying with CIPC and all other legal requirements; ➤ The applicant must provide the ECPACC with a distribution plan and evidence thereof, including a distribution agreement at the time of submitting claim(s). The ECPACC must be credited for its contribution to the production as detailed below:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The project is required to include the ECPACC & DSRAC logo in the opening credits and closing credits for the supported production; ➤ ECPACC, DSRAC, must be recognised as the Executive Producers of the project in opening and closing credits of the production; ➤ ECPACC, DSRAC, as the Executive Producers, are invited to all premiers of the Drama Series, are engaged in all strategies for release of the series and retain part ownership ➤ The ECPACC & DSRAC's Logo will be attached to all promotional material for the film. ➤ The applicant should provide a written confirmation that the ECPACC & DSRAC will be credited for its contribution to the production at application stage; ➤ The series will showcase the beauty of the Eastern Cape province through the duration of its screening; ➤ ECPACC will request raw footage of locations to include in location promotional material for the Eastern Cape. The applicant must comply with municipal by-laws regulating the affairs and the services the municipality provides in its area of jurisdiction; and other statutory regulations, where applicable; ➤ The production must confirm its commitment to be rated by the Film Publication Board.
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2.2 CO-FINANCE:

The fund will be made available to producer/s that are able to '*co-finance*' or *top -up* the existing budget.

Therefore, our fund will be used as a '*seed capital*' to leverage additional investment/ funding to produce the series, in which case verifiable evidence of 'co-financing' must be provided.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA - WHO SHOULD APPLY?

In order to be considered for this opportunity, the applicant must meet the following requirements:

- The applicant must be an Eastern Cape born producer with relevant experience and a credible track record in producing content of broadcast quality.
- Collaborations are welcome. However, for co-productions with regional and international producers, compliance to treaty requirements is compulsory.
- A producer with at least three completed nationally broadcasted long-format comparative projects.
- Company profile which demonstrates proven industry experience and CVs of the core team (Head writer, director, director of photography and the producer).
- At least 70% of the team falls within the definition of being historically disadvantaged individuals as defined in the constitution of South Africa.
- Conversant in vernacular languages spoken in the Eastern Cape.

4. SUBMISSION CRITERIA

The EC Province seeks to acquire a long-form drama series that introduces a “new” world with progressive, compelling, and dynamic themes and characters while foregrounding an Afrocentric perspective. The concept should align with the brand positioning of the Eastern Cape and should be able to be realized within the stipulated guidelines.

4.1 THE THEME

The proposal should have a strong point and purpose. The drama should be originally authored. Its voice should be unique; it should have a strong point of view that will differentiate from other dramas available to South African audiences. The series ought to conscientise, educate and simultaneously entertain its viewers while promoting the culture and virgin locations of the EC Province.

The series would need to dynamically explore defining binary tensions: modernity negotiates with tradition as protagonists blend constitutional strategy and sustainable innovation with ancestral land ethics; greed confronts compassion as communal stewardship challenges corporate extraction and internal compromise; and asymmetric resistance faces overwhelming power through the strategic mobilization of knowledge, language, and moral authority. These thematic currents drive high-stakes political intrigue, intergenerational family drama, and cultural preservation, ensuring compelling serialized pacing while maintaining rigorous historical and cultural authenticity.

Visually and linguistically, the production leverages the Eastern Cape’s untouched landscapes from mist-shrouded mountain valleys to rugged coastal cliffs as active narrative forces, while positioning isiXhosa as the primary engine of dialogue, plot progression, and philosophical depth. The series deliberately breaks from prevailing South African television and instead offers a uniquely voiced, community-co-created drama that treats indigenous knowledge systems as dynamic and contemporary.

Aligned with the Eastern Cape Provincial Arts & Cultural Council’s vision, the project extends beyond broadcast through eco-cultural tourism initiatives, ensuring that the narrative not only captivates audiences but actively restores cultural pride, promotes provincial locations, and embeds enduring African philosophical values into the national consciousness.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications and proposals will be evaluated through a two-phase approach by independent teams of renowned industry players.

5.1 PHASE 1: CREATIVE EVALUATION OF PROPOSAL BY THE EDITORIAL TEAM.

Scoring for Phase 1 is out of 100 points and the minimum threshold required to move on to Phase 2 evaluation is 80 points.

CRITERIA	SCORE
RELEVANCE TO ECPACC's STRATEGY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does the concept and idea fit with ECPACC's strategy and positioning? (5) ➤ Will the idea be effective in achieving the EC Province's targets? (5) 	10
AUDIENCE APPEAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Will this idea appeal to all audiences in a prime slot? (5) ➤ Does the concept allow content to live on multiple channels within the national broadcasters and different platforms beyond television? (5) ➤ Does the application have a proof of concept? (10) 	20
UNIQUE VALUE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the quality and value of the content being offered? (mandate, branding, financial or competitive value). We will be looking for a drama concept that has strong and clear dramatic issues that are expressed through the characters and the story. Does the proposal have qualities that lift these above the mediocre and that make the concept a unique value proposition? (5) ➤ We seek proposals that are original in that they have not been seen on television and are not re-versioned copies of other international or local properties. What competitive value does this property offer in the TV landscape? And here we would like to see an understanding of the target audiences and their preferences (what are they watching and what will draw them to this series) (5) ➤ Does the writer innovate and take risks with the story structure? Does the idea and execution thereof excite the imagination? Has the writer demonstrated the narrative style expected for that genre? Has the writer enriched the proposal by mixing genres or subverting them to create a more interesting and complex story? (5) 	15
CAPACITY <p>Is there capacity to execute the idea?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the company's previous experience in long form drama? Please reference 3 projects. (5) ➤ What set of skills and experience does the author/head writer have? Please reference at least 4 projects? (5) ➤ What set of skills do the suggested key HODs including post-production have? (5) 	15
FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is the proposed budget realistic and cost-effective? Can the concept be realized as per the proposed budget? Is there valid and verifiable proof of co-financing, we need proof of committed capital (Additional financial contribution and Letter of Offer from funders)? (30) 	30
REVENUE GENERATION AND JOB CREATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does the ownership/core team meet the required BBBEE criteria? (5) Does the proposal effectively demonstrate any direct or indirect jobs to be created? (5) 	10

5.2 PHASE 2: INTERACTIVE EVALUATION (PITCHING)

Proposals that meet the functionality scoring will move to the second phase and successful producers will be invited to a pitch. The pitching will be evaluated on concept realization, ability of team to deliver and the understanding of the creative needs of the target audience.

Scoring for Phase 2 is out of 100 points and the minimum threshold required is 85 points.

CRITERIA	SCORE
CONCEPT <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Innovation and cutting edge? (4)➤ South African context with particular reference to the EC, originality and currency? (8)➤ Clear dramatic proposition for the series? (4)➤ Is the episodic structure clear? (4)➤ Are the characters believable and appealing? (4)➤ Does the creative treatment, the style of shooting, production design and location suit and support the concept? (4)➤ Is the series structure sustainable and achievable? (4)➤ Are the stakes high, will it carry through the series? (4)➤ Are the characters appealing? (4)	40
AUDIENCE APPEAL <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Will the programme drive cross-consumption on various artforms? (5)➤ Will the show appeal to a progressive millennial audience in the 2-10 Living Standard Measurement? (10)➤ Does the concept, world of the story and characters have audience appeal? (5)➤ Are there marketing opportunities in terms of casting, location? (5)➤ Does the concept have the potential to drive appointment viewing? (5)	30
VISUAL REALIZATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Is the set/location appropriate? (5)➤ Has the producer demonstrated the capacity to realize the story concept to final delivery? (5)➤ What is the treatment in terms of production design, cinematography, etc? (5)	15
REVENUE DRIVER <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Has the producer demonstrated an understanding of the commercial elements of programming and broadcasting? (5)➤ Does the producer effectively demonstrate job creation opportunities? (5)➤ Will there be any opportunities for growth of other emerging filmmakers to gain practical skills? (5)	15

6. FUNDING EXCLUSIONS

ECPACC does not fund the following:

- ECPACC, DSRAC, DEDEAT, ECDC, provincial and local government employees including their Agencies and entities and related persons to employees are not eligible to apply for funding nor enter partnerships with applicants.
- Applicants who are not primarily involved in the film and television industry.
- Organisations and/or individuals who have not satisfactorily discharged of the contractual obligations on a previously funded project. This includes those funded

by SABC, ECDC, National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), Department of Trade and Industry (DTIC) and any other state organs.

- Persons or companies who have not satisfactorily discharged of the contractual obligations on ECPACC's previously funded or collaboration project/s, including those funded by our partners, SABC, ECDC, NFVF and DTIC.
- Capital expenditure including equipment purchase.

7. IMPORTANT NOTE

Please take note of the following disclaimers:

- ECPACC reserves the right to alter program guidelines with a public notice to all potential applicants.
- Fronting is not permissible. It is advisable that the main applicant applies instead of using a 3rd party to apply on their behalf.
- Only valid and recently certified documents will be accepted, date stamp not older than 3 months.
- Applications which do not submit the above-listed mandatory documents will be automatically disqualified.
- The SABC is the preferred first run broadcaster for the winning bid/project, however, this should not be seen as a legal expectation that the SABC will do business with you or that it will automatically contribute a funding percentage to your production or work. All media projects are evaluated independently on their own merit and bidders are encouraged to familiarise themselves with content acquisition model, editorial and television programme technical submission requirements of the SABC for their own benefit.

NB: All submissions to be EMAILED ONLY to: Filmfunding@ecpacc.co.za

Please note that no late applications will be accepted.

For any queries please contact:

Mr. Bonganjalo Marala - Email: bmarala@ecpacc.co.za - Telephone: 043-743 6187

CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS:

DATE: 30th June 2026 @ 12H00

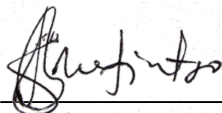
Prepared by: _____



Mr. Bonganjalo Marala

Manager – Film Development

Budget Verification by: _____



Mr. S Mtintso

Chief Finance Officer-ECPACC

Approved by: _____



Mr. M Nkasawe

Chief Executive Officer - ECPACC