

Spotlight Documentary Residency

Frequently Asked Questions

These FAQs were last updated on May 28, 2024. Questions added since the last update of this document are denoted with **. Please email additional questions to spotlightwomenshistory@si.edu. We will continue to update this document with responses relevant to all applicants throughout the application period.

1. **What are the main requirements of the residency? (Complete requirements in program [Rules and Guidelines](#))**

- Complete a limited documentary series that meets content and format requirements
- Both team leads attend in-person gatherings
- At least one team lead and relevant team members participate in regular review meetings and mentorship (online)

2. ****Is it possible to apply to Spotlight as an individual or must I be connected to an organization or company?**

It is not necessary to be connected to an organization or company to apply for Spotlight, or to accept a position in the residency, though participation does require a legal contract. However, the program does require at least two team leads.

3. ****Not all of our team members have updated resumes/CVs (especially those who are elders and/or retired). Would a long form or narrative bio work instead of a resume?**

Yes, it's fine to submit a bio in place of a resume if that's necessary. If you do this, please ensure that years of experience, and other details about work are included.

4. ****What kinds of materials can I include in my moodboard?**

The purpose of the moodboard is to show the kind of visual style that you intend to use in your series. We do not have any restrictions about what you can/cannot use in the moodboard, but probably best to design it to be as easy as possible for reviewers to understand your intentions. Consider this when deciding to include links versus pulling stills, for example.

5. **What does the mentorship program include?**

Mentorship programming will give residents an opportunity to meet and learn from experienced industry practitioners across a range of topics related to film production and distribution. Some of these meetings will be more hands-on to provide opportunities to receive creative feedback on the in-progress work.

6. **What are review meetings?**

Review meetings are periodic check-ins with the program team to ensure projects are on time and align with submitted plans

7. **What if the woman our team wants to focus on wasn't born in the US or isn't a citizen? What if she was American by birth, but moved abroad?**

For a story to be eligible, the woman or women in question would need to have made a significant impact on American history while living here, regardless of origin or citizenship status. Expat American women are also eligible, noting that the application must effectively argue their importance to American history or culture.

8. Do all parts of my series have to focus on the same person/people or can my team make a series that covers different individuals in each part?

The parameters of the program leave space for a variety of approaches. We imagine that most people will opt to propose a series in multiple parts about the same subject. However, it is also possible to propose something that covers multiple people, each in their own part. The important thing is that the proposal presents a compelling and coherent story with parts that are clearly related to each other, and also presents something achievable on time and with the available budget at a high quality.

9. What do you mean when you say “American”?”

For this program, “American” refers to people and stories originating from and/or taking place within the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, The Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands.

10. Where is the residency located?

Each of the four selected teams will live and work in the location of their choice for the duration of the residency. In most cases, participants will be working from the location where they already live. Participants will come together in person in Washington DC at the beginning and end of the program.

11. Will residency-related travel expenses come out of the production award?

The cost of attending required Washington DC gatherings will be paid for by the Smithsonian. However, production-related travel needs to be covered by the award.

12. If our team is selected, how long do we have to make our series?

The residency takes place over six months, from start to finish. Teams are required to complete the limited series during that time, which means post-production is over and the series is ready for audiences. Though Spotlight Doc will provide mentorship for each stage of production, this timeline will require that teams come prepared with a good idea of the story you want to tell and a well-considered plan for how you would produce it.

13. I don't think I can accomplish my project in six months. What should I do?

If you wish to apply to the program, we recommend that you reconsider the scope of your project to align with a six-month timeline. Selection will be based not only on the quality of the idea, but also on a team's ability to complete their series within the program timeframe. (See question 8)

14. Does Spotlight allow the use of previously created assets?

Teams are allowed to use previously shot material that accounts for no more than 25% of your final series. Please include mention of this in your production plan and [email](#) with specific questions.

15. Is my team allowed to expand the series budget beyond the \$50,000 award, either by raising new funds or contributing existing funding?

In most cases, no. Please [email](#) us to inquire about your specific situation if you have questions.

16. What if I've already spent some money and/or produced material for this project?

If you've already spent money (up to \$10,000 is allowed) on creating assets that account for 25% or less than the final film requires, please indicate that investment in your budget as "cost share" and mention it in the "notes" section of the top sheet.

17. How do we note equipment we already own in the budget?

If members of your team own the necessary equipment to create your series, great! Please note that as a cost share in the budget you submit to with your application. However, teams are not required to

own their equipment, and equipment expenses can also be identified in the budget as part of the total award.

18. **Is it permitted to add items/lines to the budget template or otherwise edit it?

Yes, it is permitted to add to/edit the budget template as necessary to complete your application. That said, our purpose for using a template is to be able to easily compare across applications, so please try to keep your changes to the minimum necessary.

19. **Is Errors and Omissions (E&O) insurance required?

No, Spotlight does not require E&O insurance, though there is a line for it in the budget. If you are not already planning to secure a policy, it is not necessary to do so for the program.

20. If my team is selected, will payment milestones be assigned, or do we choose?

Payment milestones will be assigned by the museum to selected teams. With that, it would still be helpful to understand the specific needs of each project. You may include notes in your production plan about the payment schedule that would best support you in completing your series on time.

21. Can I expand upon the project following the program?

As teams retain ownership rights to the series after Spotlight concludes, you are welcome to continue building on the project as you wish. See program [Rules and Guidelines](#) for additional information.

22. Do you allow honoraria as a cost?

YES!! Not only do we allow honoraria, but we actively encourage compensating collaborators of all kinds for their time and labor. Please [email](#) with any specific questions.