

## Producing for WEDU and PBS: Content, Funding, Guidelines, FAQs

WEDU strives to engage and reflect the diverse communities that make up our audience. To that end, our primary emphasis and interest is in local programming - stories from, or of relevance to, the 16 counties in West Central Florida we serve.

WEDU is committed to reviewing every proposal submitted for our consideration. Please submit all program proposals to:

**Jack Conely**  
**Director**  
**Programming and Production**

WEDU 1300 North Boulevard Tampa, FL 33607-5645  
[JConely@wedu.org](mailto:JConely@wedu.org)

WEDU is a PBS member station, broadcasting local content and content provided by PBS and other distributors. The following provides an overview of key WEDU and PBS priorities, and processes we hope will invite exciting, new proposals from a fresh pool of creative talent. Dive in and explore the possibilities!

### **CONTENT**

WEDU is committed to giving viewers a well rounded, entertaining, and enlightening multi-media experience. We remain dedicated to our mission of providing a public service to our viewers and offering a unique voice in our community, which includes a commitment to the needs of our audience and their families regardless of commercial concerns or pressures. To that end, we believe that our programming should seek to enrich our community by highlighting diverse cultures, opinions, and stories. Program topics should be interesting to a wide audience and be of a high caliber throughout all elements of the production, with a well-crafted storyline, strong visuals, and a clear purpose.

We continue to seek programming drawn from the broad areas of **News and Public Affairs**; **Science and History**; **Drama and Performing Arts**; and **Children's Programming**. Programs and proposals offered to WEDU for consideration should enhance and/or complement the current schedule of programs.

- Producers should keep in mind the following when submitting a proposal as all
- proposals and programs will be evaluated according to the following criteria:
- Does the program/proposal match the mission of PBS?
- Does the program/proposal enhance the viewers understanding of the subject?
- Does the program/proposal educate and inform?
- Is the program/proposal entertaining? Does it engage the viewer?
- Does the program/proposal have obvious opportunities to create programming and promotional links through TV, Web, and print?
- Will the program/proposal attract a diverse audience? Can the program/proposal create opportunities for WEDU to reach diverse communities?
- Does the program/proposal have a plan for interactive platforms?
- Does the program/proposal continue the tradition of high-quality programming that PBS is known for and that our viewers trust? Does it add to the value of public television?

If your program or concept is intended for a national audience, WEDU can provide production services and/or act as your liaison for national distribution.

Of the approximately 846 hours available for national primetime programming each year, continuing series, such as American Experience, NOVA, and Frontline, make up over 500 hours of the schedule. As a result we have very few slots in each season for new series and specials. PBS currently receives over 3,000 submissions per year totaling close to 10,000 hours of programming. Programs and proposals that do not adhere to the criteria outlined above will not be given serious consideration for development, funding or broadcast.

PBS also works closely with its member stations to develop programming for the national schedule. WEDU can offer producers advice on matching their project to PBS' mission and content priorities, potential help with development financing, and guidance in the production, marketing, and outreach of an accepted film.

### **Factual Programming**

PBS currently has specific programming needs in the areas of **observational, science and historical documentaries**. Observational documentary proposals or programs should present interesting characters, address contemporary issues, be impactful and innovative in format, structure, and approach, and above all be journalistically sound. Submissions in the science and history genres should also be inventive in format, structure, and approach, as well as well grounded in fact and corroborated by established, reputable scientific institutions, experts, or scholars.

PBS currently has a large library of programs in the areas of **travel, adventure, and natural history**. As a result, PBS is reviewing very few programs or proposals in these genres and is only interested in seeing proposals or programs that take these subjects in new directions and tell unique, fresh stories. Any proposals or programs submitted in this subject area should have a particularly strong people-to-nature, people-to-environment component.

### **Drama, Performing Arts, and Culture on PBS**

PBS is seeking holiday/celebration specials that recognize diverse cultures and experiences, particularly in the performing arts. Programs or proposals for arts documentaries should place music, dance and other forms of artistic expression in a historical and cultural context and be accessible to a broad audience. American-oriented dramas and documentaries that show the process behind artistic endeavors are also desirable as well as performance specials covering a variety of arts.

### **Children's Programming on PBS**

PBS KIDS educates, enriches and entertains all of America's children, employing the full spectrum of media to build knowledge and critical thinking; to empower children as members of their communities, nation and world; and to welcome parents, teachers and caregivers as learning partners.

PBS KIDS employs a multi-media approach to content, providing pre-school and elementary school aged child with an entertaining, non-violent and non-commercial environment in which educational outreach activities and print materials.

Programs and proposals offered to PBS KIDS should reflect solid, age-appropriate educational goals, which incorporate the work of educational advisors and/or research to support the program's specific objectives. Program proposals should include plans describing how the educational and entertainment value of the program content will be extended through online, outreach and print activities.

### **Interactive Web Programming on PBS.org**

PBS has a multi-platform programming strategy. Producers wishing to present ideas to PBS should determine before submission the optimal means by which to tell their story across all platforms (TV, Web, handheld devices, interactive TV, wireless, etc.), though PBS is primarily interested in Web and television. Producers should be able to describe a well-thought-out proposal for the Web with a clear understanding of what the Web can do and how the story will be told using the Web. It is recommended that producers with little or no experience producing for the Web consider hiring an experienced Web production company. Producers planning on creating for both the Web and television should conceptualize and budget for both concurrently and fundraise for television and Web simultaneously. Websites on PBS.org must have strong interactive components, as purely promotional sites will not be considered.

PBS requires that all proposals for Websites be submitted not less than 15 weeks prior to a proposed launch date. Any proposal received with less than 15 weeks production time will not be considered.

All Web projects accepted by PBS must be hosted on PBS.org and follow PBS Online Guidelines.

### **Continuing Series and Anthologies on PBS**

Much of the PBS program schedule consists of continuing series and anthologies. These programs make up 60% of our primetime schedule. Producers wishing to have their programs considered for the following continuing series and anthologies should send them to the attention of the executive producers of those strands at the following:

WNET/Thirteen.  
450 West 33rd St  
6th Floor  
New York, NY 10001

- American Masters
- Nature
- Great Performances
- Egg: The Arts Show

WGBH Boston  
125 Western Avenue  
Boston, MA 02134

- Frontline
- NOVA
- American Experience
- ExxonMobil Masterpiece Theatre
- Mystery!

P.O.V./American  
Documentary, Inc.  
32 Broadway, 14th Floor  
New York, NY 10004

- P.O.V.

### **FUNDING**

Funding for PBS programs comes from a variety of sources. In addition to seeking foundation and corporate support, producers are able to seek production funding through PBS. While PBS's

production funds are quite limited, the majority of funding is distributed through a PBS general fund and projects considered for funding are evaluated based on the criteria outlined above.

PBS also disburses production dollars through two jointly managed funds:

- **THE CARLTON FUND**  
Managed by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, PBS and Carlton Television International, the Carlton Fund provides full financing and sales support to high-impact series and specials. Only those projects in development which feature international topics that appeal to a worldwide audience and are available for international television distribution will be considered. The fund is open for consideration year round.
- **THE PROGRAM CHALLENGE FUND**  
The Program Challenge Fund was created in 1987 to support high-visibility, primetime limited series appropriate for the national public television schedule. The Challenge Fund is jointly managed by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and PBS, and decisions are based on mutually established programming goals and objectives. In an effort to address industry-wide goals for digital content development, PBS and CPB will dedicate FY 2003 Program Challenge Fund dollars to digital production (high-definition or standard-definition widescreen).

Proposals that meet Challenge Fund criteria may be submitted at any time throughout the year, and should be sent to PBS and CPB for consideration.

**Note:** There is no standard application process for either of these funding sources. Producers should submit projects according to the general PBS submission guidelines. Along with CPB and Carlton professionals, PBS' Senior Programming Team contributes to the decision making that determines which projects merit funding through the Carlton Fund and the Program Challenge Fund.

### **GUIDELINES**

WEDU has no formal guidelines for proposals; rather, we encourage sending as much relevant information about each project as possible. Suggestions for elements to include are:

#### **Project Proposal/Incomplete Program**

- Program description, including treatment, approach, and description of any interactive elements (including Web site, interactive TV, etc.)
- Episodic descriptions (if project is a series)
- Project timetable
- Identification of key project staff and talent, including resume information
- Business Plan, indicating approach being taken to secure funding from underwriters
- Examples of producer's previous works (including Web links if a Web site is proposed)

#### **Completed Program**

- Program description, including treatment, approach, and description of any interactive elements (including Web site, interactive TV, etc.)
- Episodic descriptions (if project is a series)
- VHS cassette of program
- Web site address (if available)
- Identification of key project staff and talent, with resume information for each.
- Information on how the program was funded
- Indication of rights available

## **Web Site**

- If you're proposing a Web site, please check PBS's Web Production Manual for guidelines and expectations before making a submission.

## **FAQs**

### **Q. Should I send my proposal to my local public television station or to PBS headquarters?**

**A.** Since PBS stations broadcast their own local programming in addition to national programming, program proposals with a local or regional focus often find more success at the local station level. Some producers of national programming also choose to submit proposals to local stations, since PBS partners with local stations on a variety of projects for the national program schedule. Producers should contact the local station's program director for more information on programming priorities and proposal submission processes. For more information on submitting a proposal directly to PBS, please visit [pbs.org](http://pbs.org).

### **Q. How do I submit a proposal to WEDU?**

**A.** Please follow the Producing for WEDU guidelines.

### **Q. Do I need to present a completed program for evaluation or a rough cut? How about a treatment or script, or just a concept?**

**A.** We look at programs and proposals in various stages of development, from concept to completed program. Program descriptions should always be well thought out and fairly detailed. Rough-cut programs are appropriate if your program is not yet completed.

### **Q. When can I meet with someone at WEDU to explain my project?**

**A.** We receive nearly 3,000 proposals and programs each year and simply do not have the staff to meet with everyone who submits a program idea. We encourage enough detail in your submission that our evaluators can get a full sense of your concept and the quality of your work.

### **Q. When producing for WEDU/PBS, are there any standards, requirements or policies (i.e. packaging, underwriting, technical, etc.) that I need to know?**

**A.** The PBS Red Book is the handbook for producers of PBS programs. It contains information needed to ensure programs meet all of PBS's on-air standards, including information on packaging, underwriting, product offers, formats and delivery.

### **Q. If my program is complete, do I need a presenting station for national distribution?**

**A.** A station can provide support in the areas of station relations, community engagement and fundraising. However, it is not a requirement to work with a presenting station.

### **Q. Will my project be seen throughout the country?**

**A.** WEDU has many means of distributing programming to our PBS member stations. Final scheduling authority, however, rests at the station level. (All *Web sites* that gain PBS.org hosting live on the national PBS site, gaining an audience throughout the country and the world.)