



# Documentary Producers Alliance

## A GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES IN DOCUMENTARY CREDITING

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Created and recommended by the  
Documentary Producers Alliance (DPA)

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## THE DOCUMENTARY PRODUCERS ALLIANCE

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In 2016, the DPA was formed to address career sustainability challenges affecting documentary film producers. In the three years since, the DPA has focused and clarified its mission to embrace issues pertaining to wage and labor practices, structural inequality in our field, the paucity of development funds, producer recognition, and the relationship between financiers and filmmakers as expressed through crediting and investor agreements. Crediting is one of many issues that impacts sustainability and equity in our field. The following reflects the DPA's effort to correct, stabilize, and standardize documentary crediting as a first step in our broader mission to make the field more inclusive and documentary filmmaking more viable as a career.

## **BACKGROUND**

With the prominence of documentaries in a changing funding and distribution landscape, a greater variety of funding sources have been drawn to supporting independent non-fiction films. In the absence of industry guidelines, “Associate Producer,” “Co-Producer,” “Producer,” “Co-Executive Producer,” “Executive Producer,” “In Association With,” “Presented by,” or “A Production of” billing, and any combination of these credits in the main titles or end credits have increasingly been used to reflect such funding, with inconsistencies as to how and when this is done. Often, there are also graphic credits—such as static or animated logos—further complicating the array of possible attribution. As a result, many credits have experienced diminished meaning and value, which ultimately works against not only funders, but also filmmakers, for whom credits are both recognition of their labor and essential industry currency.

The DPA has identified the need to create crediting standards and best practices for independent documentary films so that: funders and investors receive the recognition that they are due (and that filmmakers want them to have); filmmakers can offer and leverage fair credits to funding prospects to get their films made; and the value and meaning of credits are protected (against, among other things, dilution and inconsistency) for filmmakers and their financial partners.

The goal of this guide is to standardize the crediting landscape for documentary films big, small, and micro, towards clarity and parity. The DPA’s intention is that these crediting standards will clarify the criteria for various producer roles—serving film investors, donors, supporters, and filmmakers alike in credit discussions and negotiations—and that they will be adopted widely. Importantly, the recommendations in this guide are crafted as best practices rather than rules, recognizing that some situations may warrant filmmakers and their partners to deviate from them. In such circumstances, we encourage filmmakers and their partners to use these standards as a starting point, with the specificities of a project dictating where, when, and how exceptions are applied.

We also recognize the vital need to proactively address and improve crediting practices as they relate to social and racial equity in documentary film. To that end, the DPA supports the authentic and fair crediting of filmmakers regardless of their race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability, and opposes exploitative practices that award credits to people of color and those from other historically marginalized groups *solely* to suggest social, political, or cultural legitimacy for purposes of fundraising or audience perception.

Ultimately, we believe that credits are an expression of filmmaker and industry values. Our broadest aim is that these guidelines, in keeping with the DPA’s other efforts, facilitate greater transparency and inclusion, and benefit the documentary industry as a whole; and, that as the field continues to evolve, the documentary industry keeps a vigilant eye on crediting standards, adjusting as needed.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES WERE DEVELOPED:**

- In collaboration with more than 100 working producers who are members of the DPA.
- Through meetings, conversations, and discussions with representatives from more than 30 granting and artist organizations, filmmaker alliances and investor consortia, directors, non-DPA producers, and industry leaders.
- Over the course of the International Documentary Association's (IDA) 2018 Getting Real documentary conference, where crediting was the subject of a panel discussion and talkback session.
- In consultation with entertainment lawyers experienced in documentary fundraising protocols, and applicable tax and investor protection laws (including equity investment and non-recoupable contributions), who vetted and approved these recommendations.

## **SCOPE**

These guidelines were developed for U.S.-based productions primarily and our research focused on the U.S. market. We also realize that not all topics related to crediting are addressed in this document (e.g. how credits affect award nominations). The DPA remains open to expanding the scope of these guidelines in the future.

## CREDITING STANDARDS FOR FINANCIERS

We recommend the following financing credit tiers based on the percentage of total budget contribution at the time of contract. Credits at the time of contract should not change, even if the film's budget is modified. Contributions can be via equity (recoupable investment with the potential for profit) or donation (non-recoupable grant, tax deductible gift through a fiscal sponsor, or contribution via a crowdfunding platform).

The DPA does not endorse granting the Producer, Co-Producer, or Associate Producer credits to financiers. These are day-to-day producing credits only; therefore, these credits may not be bought, sold, or traded.

### Financing Credit Tiers

- **50% OR GREATER: PRESENTATION CREDIT**

Applicable to a distributor, broadcaster, company or individual. Affords a static or animated company logo (if applicable) at the top of the film and up to four individual Executive Producer credits in the main titles, if requested.

- **20% OR GREATER: IN ASSOCIATION WITH CREDIT**

Affords a static or animated company logo (if applicable) at the top of the film and up to two individual Executive Producer credits in the main titles, if requested.

- **10% OR GREATER: 1 EXECUTIVE PRODUCER CREDIT**

Affords a credit in the main titles and a static company logo (if applicable) in the logo section of the end credits.

- Financiers who typically invest as a duo (e.g. a married couple or business partners) may be treated as a single entity.
- Additional individual Executive Producer credits can each be acquired for a supplemental 2.5% of the total budget.

- **7.5-9.99%: CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER CREDIT**

Affords a credit in the main titles or in the end credits, and affords a static company logo (if applicable) in the logo section of the end credits.

- **2.5-7.49%: CONTRIBUTING PRODUCER CREDIT**

Affords a credit and a static company logo (if applicable) in the logo section of the end credits.

- **1% - 2.49%: "THIS FILM WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF" OR "ADDITIONAL FUNDING BY"**

Affords inclusion in this section of the end credits and/or a static funder/company logo (if applicable) in the logo section of the end credits. Note that this is often the primary section for grant-making organizations.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- For financiers who take the higher risk of providing the first money in (first money is defined as within the first 10% of the budget at the time of contract), the financier crediting thresholds are reduced by 50%. For example, a financier who gives 4.5% of the budget as first money in would receive a Co-Executive Producer credit instead of a Contributing Producer credit.
- The qualifying percentages for contributions made by donation (rather than equity investment) may be negotiated down because the non-recoupable nature of the contribution provides additional financial benefits to the filmmaker/s.
- An entity or individual providing lower level financial, but critical creative support may be entitled to a credit greater than that determined by the financing tiers alone.
- The credit of Executive Producer may be afforded to individuals and/or entities that provide critical creative and strategic support regardless of their financial contribution.
- Nothing herein should imply that there is a specific dollar value for any credits given to donors making tax-deductible contributions. As credits do not have a monetary value, the examples provided can be helpful in creating a structure by which benchmarks can relate to billing. You should apply, personalize, or create your own as needed.

**PLEASE NOTE:** *These recommendations notwithstanding, credits may be subject to the exhibitor's policies and/or approval. For example, a broadcaster may discourage crediting a not-for-profit organization (even one that provided the documentary's financing), taking the position that such a credit may imply that the film advocates the organization's mission and thereby compromises journalistic objectivity.*

# DOCUMENTARY FILM PRODUCING ROLES & DEFINITIONS

**PLEASE NOTE:** The definitions below are in order of hierarchy.

## Financing Producer Credits

### PRESENTED BY

Often given to a distributor, exhibitor, and/or financier that provides a majority of the budget.

### CO-PRODUCTION OF

Used when one or more entities are jointly producing a film. Under such an arrangement, the co-funder, production company, studio, or broadcaster (for example) commits a substantial amount of resources such as funding, development resources, production support, or post-production services to the film. Importantly, the credit also often affords the Co-Production entity some degree of editorial input, but not necessarily co-copyright ownership of the film. It is not unusual for this credit to be extended to international producing partners. The contribution value required to confer the Co-Production of credit is usually equal to the other co-producing entities on the project (i.e. 50% if there is only one other producing entity, 33% if there are three production partners, etc.); however, this may vary.

### IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Applied to reflect a significant and long-term creative or financial investment in a film by an organization, broadcaster, or other entity that is not the lead production company.

### EXECUTIVE PRODUCER (EP)

In independent documentary films, the EP can be a financier (as defined in the Financing Credit Tiers), or a film professional who contributes to the creative development and production of a film, offering essential value and guidance through editorial input, fundraising, producing issues, legal matters, or distribution strategy. The EP may also be an early champion and validator of the project, willing to offer initial backing before other entities take on the risk. The EP is the highest-ranking financing producer credit for an individual, and the second-highest non-financing producing credit after that of Producer.

### CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

A secondary-level Executive Producer role, this credit is used for financiers who contribute significantly, but not in equal measure to an Executive Producer.

### CONTRIBUTING PRODUCER

This credit applies to financiers only, who contribute monies to a film at a level lower than that of the Executive Producer or Co-Executive Producer.

### "THIS FILM WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF" / "ADDITIONAL FUNDING BY"

Traditionally used as places to thank granting organizations that contribute to the film by including their name and/or logo. Individuals who make smaller-sized contributions (per the Financing Credit Tiers) comparative to these grants should also be acknowledged in this section if they are not given one of the aforementioned credits. This section appears in the end credits.

## Day-To-Day Producer Credits

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

*We acknowledge that each film has a unique path from start to completion. A glossary of creative credits will therefore never entirely capture the range of work performed on all films; however, the following definitions attempt to delineate the work that different types of producers customarily perform.*

*The DPA does not endorse the use of the Creative Producer credit. We firmly believe that the Producer role is inherent to the creative process and that no qualifying adjective needs to precede the Producer credit. We also believe that by distinguishing between financier and day-to-day producer credits we eliminate the need for the Creative Producing credit, which in recent years has resulted in confusion around the Producer's role specifically and crediting practices generally.*

### **A PRODUCTION OF**

This credit is given to the production company/companies that assume the majority of the hands-on work of producing the film. (This is often the Director's and/or lead Producer's production company.)

### **PRODUCER**

The Producer works side-by-side with the Director to realize the artistic vision and overall goals of the film, ensuring that the production is funded and appropriately staffed, and also completed on time, within budget, and according to the legal and technical standards required by its distribution. While the Producer may be the initiator and/or co-creator of a film, or join a film that has already commenced production, the Producer is ultimately responsible for, in part or in full: initiating and/or supporting fundraising efforts; securing permissions and insurance; managing contracts and budgets; maintaining legal, HR, and tax compliance; negotiating wages and contracts, including interaction with collective bargaining organizations (i.e. unions); engaging with production/post-production facilities; submitting the film to festivals; strategizing distribution and audience engagement opportunities; overseeing the film's release, PR, and marketing; and archiving the project. The Producer often works closely with the Director in all phases of the creative process to: develop the story; build relationships with subjects; shape the narrative; assist in decisions regarding creative hires, graphics, and music; and review dailies and cuts. As noted previously in these guidelines, the Producer credit should be reserved solely for the person/s who are hands-on throughout the process of making the film. Sometimes, the Director is also the sole Producer or a Producer of their film.

### **CO-PRODUCER**

An individual credit, the Co-Producer works closely with the lead Producer and may not be involved in all aspects or stages of the film, but earns this credit for providing significant impact contributing to the film's completion. Like the Producer credit, the Co-Producer credit is not for individuals whose primary role is financing.

### **ASSOCIATE PRODUCER (AP)**

The AP assumes responsibilities delegated by the Producer or Director, and may work on the development and pre-production stages, the production in the field and/or in the production office, or in post-production. The AP's duties may include: story research and development; casting; shoot coordination; archival research; production-to-post workflow management; rights clearances; festival submissions; and final deliverables coordination. Like the Producer and Co-Producer credit, the Associate Producer credit is not for individuals whose primary role is financing.

## Supporting Producer Credits

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

*The following definitions are in alphabetical order.*

*Given that each documentary is unique, job hierarchy and crediting placement should be determined according to the nature, creative, and/or production demands of the project.*

### **ARCHIVAL PRODUCER**

The Archival Producer is typically responsible for every stage and aspect related to the archival materials needed for a documentary, including research, acquisition of materials, organizing, budgeting, and final licensing. The Archival Producer works closely with the Producer and the Director in pre-production and production phases, and with the Editor in post-production, to assess footage, stills, and ephemera required to tell the story narratively, creatively, visually, and cogently. The Archival Producer conducts research independently, and may oversee and direct a team of researchers on a larger-scale project.

### **CONSULTING PRODUCER**

The Consulting Producer is often a seasoned Producer who provides high-level guidance on anything from editorial/creative input, fundraising, producing issues, legal matters, or distribution strategy at any stage throughout a film's development, production, or post-production. The Consulting Producer does not typically have editorial or creative control on the project.

### **FIELD PRODUCER**

The Field Producer role has been adopted from news journalism, and serves as the local liaison to a production, maintaining relationships with subjects, tracking the story, and offering overall field support to the larger production team. The Field Producer may help research and develop story, maintain relationships with subjects, hire crews, coordinate shoots, and direct shoots under the guidance of the Director and/or with the oversight of the Producer.

### **FIXER**

The Fixer role has also been adopted from news journalism. A local individual, the Fixer researches and secures production assets including locations, permits, local crews, equipment, and offers overall field support to the production. When a Fixer takes on additional responsibilities such as identifying, securing, and maintaining relationships with subjects, and/or researching, developing, and tracking the story or negotiating access, a credit more reflective of their contribution, and aligned with industry standards, such as Field Producer, Associate Producer, or even Co-Producer, may be more appropriate.

### **IMPACT PRODUCER**

The Impact Producer is responsible for maximizing a film's potential for social change. Responsibilities may vary based on the film's content and defined distribution goals, but often include strategy development, issue mapping, brain trust facilitation, organizational partnership development and management, digital content production and engagement, and evaluation and impact measurement. An Impact Producer may also coordinate and/or oversee a film's semi-theatrical screening campaign and release. The Impact Producer may also play a role in story development and fundraising, beginning as early as pre-production.

## LINE PRODUCER

The Line Producer supervises the operational aspects of making a film from pre-production through completion. Under the guidance of the Producer, the Line Producer manages budgets, schedules, contracts, and any issues impacting these and delivery of the project, where applicable. (Many independent documentaries don't have a designated Line Producer—the size, scope, and style of a particular documentary being determinants.)

## POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

The Post-Production Supervisor is responsible for shepherding a film through its final production stages, during which time they liaise with the Director, Producer, Editor, Composer, and all post facilities (including but not limited to graphics/animation, color-correction, and sound design/mix houses). The Post-Production Supervisor's role is to ensure all deliverables are met according to both the budget and domestic and/or international distributor specifications and deadlines.

## PRODUCTION ASSISTANT (PA)

The PA is usually an entry-level credit, and is often, but not exclusively, an in-the-field role. The PA provides overall production support to the field team, goes on runs, coordinates meals, handles petty cash, gear and equipment pick-up/returns, provides transport services, and serves a key support role. The support nature of the role remains the same for an office PA, who is relied upon for any tasks the Director/Producer team may require (e.g. assistance with expense reporting, production paperwork, and office administration).

## PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

The Production Coordinator reports to the Producer, Production Manager, Line Producer, or Associate Producer (depending on the size of the production), coordinating shoots and assisting in streamlining production. The Production Coordinator job is typically the next step up from Production Assistant.

## Additional Producer Credits

**PLEASE NOTE:** These credits are more commonly utilized in documentary/non-fiction series and less frequently applied in features or documentary one-offs.

### COORDINATING PRODUCER

The Coordinating Producer organizes and supports the work of Field Producers and the production team, including coordinating shoots (sometimes with multiple units), liaising with crews, and ensuring the effective running of production. The Coordinating Producer position is usually a step up from Production Coordinator.

### PRODUCTION MANAGER (PM)

The PM assumes the responsibilities delegated by the Producer in a more narrowly defined role than that of the Associate Producer. The PM's duties are almost entirely operational: organizing business, finance, and employment issues to facilitate efficient management throughout all stages of production. (Many independent documentaries don't have a designated Production Manager—the size, scope, and style of a particular documentary being determinants.)

### SENIOR PRODUCER

The Senior Producer supervises the production, including any/all producers working under the Senior Producer. The Senior Producer is responsible for scheduling, technical requirements and guidelines, content, format, and delivery of the project within the specified budget. The Senior Producer reports to the Supervising Producer or Executive Producer.

### STORY PRODUCER

The Story Producer reports to the Senior Producer, Supervising Producer, or Executive Producer, and is responsible for researching, casting subjects, writing treatments or scripts, planning shoots, and supervising the editing of an episodic story.

### SUPERVISING PRODUCER

The Supervising Producer oversees one or more Producers in the performance and fulfillment of some or all of their producer functions and obligations. The Supervising Producer usually reports to the Executive Producer. (Many independent documentaries don't have a designated Supervising Producer—the size, scope, and style of a particular documentary being determinants.)

## THE DPA

The **Documentary Producers Alliance (DPA)** is a working group of more than 100 documentary producers nationwide that advocates on behalf of producers for the health and welfare of the documentary industry. DPA cosigners of these guidelines include:

Trish Adlesic	Laura Coxson	Robin Hessman	Joanna Natasegara	Dallas Brennan Rexer
Maria Agui Carter	Trish Dalton	Ines Hofmann Kanna	Evan Neff	Larissa Rhodes
Jameka Autry	Linda Davis	Tracie Holder	Raphaela Neihausen	Ann Rose
Danny Alpert	Tom Davis	Melissa Jacobson	Marilyn Ness	Alicia Sams
Alexander Baertl	Jessie Deeter	Elisabeth James	Laura Nix	Amanda Spain
Robert Bahar	Rachel Dickson	Alexandra Johnes	Leslie Norville	Martha Spanninger
Joslyn Barnes	Fenell Doremus	Susan Kaplan	Jacki Ochs	Elizabeth Lodge Stepp
Mikaela Beardsley	Sky Dylan-Robbins	Kirsten Kelly	Jennifer Ollman	Annie Sundberg
Diane Becker	Laura Wilson	Ian Kibbe	Xan Parker	David Felix Sutcliffe
Patricia Benabe	Fallsgraff	Christina D. King	Ferne Pearlstein	Helen Hood Scheer
Allison Berg	Violet Feng	Lance Kramer	Sierra Pettengill	Noah Stahl
Richard Berge	Ina Fichman	Christine La Monte	Josh Penn	Ricki Stern
Veronique Bernard	Kerthy Fix	Gretchen Landau	Rachel Pikelyn	Nathan Truesdell
Nicole Bernardi-Reis	Yance Ford	Lisa Leeman	Zak Piper	Landon Van Soest
Erin Bernhardt	Ariana Garfinkel	Beth Levison	Amanda Pollack	Chai Vasarhelyi
Maggie Bowman	Megan Gilbride	Justin Levy	Sam Pollard	Danielle Varga
Iyabo Boyd	Jamie Gonçalves	Loira Limbal	Dawn Porter	Leah Warshawski
Rachel Boynton	Sabrina S. Gordon	Maida Lynn	Gordon Quinn	Caroline Waterlow
Caitlin Mae Burke	Lisa Gossels	Anne de Mare	Diane Moy Quon	Elizabeth Westrate
Caryn Capotosto	Michael Gottwald	Susan Margolin	Lisa Remington	Eden Wurmfeld
Nina Chaudry	Jennifer Grausman	Korelan Matteson	Esther Robinson	Jeremy Yaches
Lori Cheatle	Stina Hamlin	Daphne McWilliams	Cyndee Readdean	Svetlana Zill
Katy Chevigny	Judith Helfand	Yael Melamede	Tricia Regan	
Jimmy Chin	Alice Henty	Laura Michalchyshyn	Jeff Reichert	
Williams Cole	Tony Heriza	Alysa Nahmias	Heidi Reinberg	

For more information, please visit us at [www.documentaryproducersalliance.com](http://www.documentaryproducersalliance.com) and follow us on Facebook (@DocProducersAlliance), Instagram (@DocProducersAlliance) and Twitter (@DocProducers).

If you are an independent documentary film producer, we invite you to join the DPA.  
Contact us at: [docproducersalliance@gmail.com](mailto:docproducersalliance@gmail.com)

## ENDORsing ORGANIZATIONS



+impact partners

KARTEMQUIN

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The **INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY ASSOCIATION (IDA)** has agreed to be a convener and to provide a platform for advancing the conversation around documentary crediting guidelines as part of its advocacy and policy work.

**KICKSTARTER** has agreed to share these guidelines with their filmmaker community and to also help advance the conversation around documentary crediting.