

# Competency Profile

## RECOMMENDED SKILLS *for* Directors and Producers of Documentary Films

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Cultural  
Human Resources  
Council

Conseil  
des ressources humaines  
du secteur culturel

# Recommended Skills for

# Directors and Producers of Documentary Films

## COMPETENCY PROFILE

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... AND TO ACCOMPLISH THE PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES, A **DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER OF DOCUMENTARY FILMS** MUST BE ABLE TO...

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## INTRODUCTION

This document presents the outcomes of an occupational analysis (1) for **DIRECTOR AND PRODUCERS OF DOCUMENTARY FILMS**.

The Cultural Human Resources Council ([www.culturalhrc.ca](http://www.culturalhrc.ca)) strives to be at the centre of vision and forward thinking in the area of cultural human resources development. CHRC brings together representatives of arts disciplines and cultural industries in the cultural sector to address the training and career development needs of cultural workers – artists, creators, technical staff, managers and all others engaged professionally in the sector, including the self-employed.

This **Competency Profile** is to be used in conjunction with the **Chart of Competencies** on documentary filmmaking, developed by documentary filmmakers in partnership with the Cultural Human Resources Council with the generous support of the Government of Canada's Sector Council Programs.

The Profile presents the combined competencies that make up the work of directors and producers in documentary filmmaking occupations.

The **Competency Chart and Profile** can be used by individuals to evaluate their own skills and to determine areas where they should pursue additional training. On a corporate level, this material can be applied in defining job profiles, developing competency-based professional development programs, negotiating and customizing training programs, developing career planning programs, recruitment profiles and individual position descriptions. On a broader scale, the Chart and Profile can be used to increase understanding of the roles directors and producers of documentary films play.

## BACKGROUND

The decision to undertake an occupational analysis for **Directors and Producers of Documentary Films** was taken in early 2004, further to requests from the sector, including the Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC) and the *Observatoire du documentaire*, to help them address serious training gaps for documentary filmmakers.

A report prepared by *Les rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal (RIDM)* entitled *Documentary Production in Québec and Canada. Phase2: Points of view of the Film Community: Report on the Interviews and Surveys – A Study prepared by Kirwan Cox, Consultant, with the collaboration of Sandra Gathercole and Bernard Proulx, November 2002*, sponsored by twenty six leading industry players revealed that the documentary production community is facing severed challenges in keeping pace with the rapidly growing demands for Canadian documentary films. CHRC convened a Steering Committee of leaders in the Documentary film community to guide the process of an occupational analysis for documentary filmmakers, and a related training gaps analysis, to help understand and address the training challenges in the industry.

<sup>1</sup> The expressions 'occupational analysis' and 'competency profile' are used interchangeably in this document.

## THE DOCUMENTARY FILM DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER COMPETENCY PROFILE

Filmmaking is an art, a craft and a business. It requires and rests upon a series of essential elements. Some are given or innate; others can be learned or acquired.

Belonging to the elements that are given or innate, there are (1) a 'feu sacré', a passion for documentary filmmaking, (2) talent, particularly imagination and the aptitude and urge to create and (3) one's personal identity (gender, ethnicity, language, nationality, socioeconomic background, etc.).

Elements that can be learned or acquired include (4) general knowledge, academic background and personal experiences, (5) general skills such as the ability to articulate ideas, to analyze and synthesize information, to make decisions, etc., (6) knowledge and culture in the field of documentary filmmaking and, finally (7) numerous professional skills.

The following document describes the general and professional skills that a group of experienced practitioners in the field (writers, directors and producers) have identified as part of the process of creating a film. The list of skills is wide ranging. However, there are other important faculties required to work successfully in the field.

To the best of their collective abilities, the authors have explored HOW documentary films are made by identifying skills that can be most easily passed on through apprenticeship, mentorship, academic training and hands-on experience. The questions WHY a documentary is made and WHAT constitutes motivation, inspiration and talent were not addressed in detail in this mandate.

As prerequisites, the core abilities and sensibilities shape the general and professional skills identified in this exercise.

## METHODOLOGY

The Cultural Human Resources Council has chosen the DACUM (Developing A CURriculum) model to conduct this analysis. One of the key features of DACUM is to rely on a group of expert practitioners to review all the competencies required to function effectively in a given occupation.

The combined **Chart of Competencies** and **Profile** present four levels of analysis:

1. A series of **General Areas of Competence**, more commonly called **GACs**. A GAC describes a major function or responsibility of a particular profession, trade or position. There are two types of GACs: **General Areas of Professional Competence** (GACs A to I inclusively) and **General Areas of General Competence** (GACs J and K).
2. Each GAC is further defined into **skills** (competencies). The skills, as well as the GACs, are identified in behavioral terms and thus begin with an action verb depicting the applied behavior.
3. Each skill is further analyzed into **subskills**. A subskill is an intermediate step between the whole skill and the detailed actions associated with practicing the skill.
4. A (non-exhaustive) series of **important actions** and **key general competencies** has been identified; these may be used as performance indicators, providing the criteria by which competence can be assessed.

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## SUMMARY – CHART OF COMPETENCIES

## A DIRECTOR AND/OR PRODUCER OF DOCUMENTARY FILMS MUST BE ABLE TO:

## PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

**A. GENERATE AN IDEA**

1. Collect ideas
2. Investigate ideas
3. Test ideas
4. Select an idea
5. Visualize film
6. Confirm idea

**B. PREPARE A PROPOSAL**

1. Research subject
2. Secure access
3. Review personal motivation
4. Write synopsis
5. Outline story
6. Provide background support
7. Describe director's approach
8. Assemble team
9. Create Schedule
10. Estimate budget
11. Propose financing plan
12. Package proposal

**C. SELL A PROPOSAL**

1. Determine audience
2. Analyze market
3. Identify funders
4. Design overall strategy
5. Produce a demo
6. Prepare a pitch
7. Access funders
8. Deliver the pitch
9. Follow up

**D. SET THE CONDITIONS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN**

1. Deliver treatment
2. Build / maintain alliances
3. Obtain financial commitment
4. Confirm subject(s)
5. Secure required rights
6. Confirm key creative team

7. Negotiate fees
8. Confirm schedule
9. Prepare detailed budget
10. Arrange interim financing
11. Verify terms of contracts
12. Close the deal
13. Develop Plan B

**E. PREPARE FOR PRODUCTION (PREPRODUCTION)**

1. Establish production office
2. Reconfirm financial arrangements
3. Hire crew
4. Conduct subject preinterviews
5. Conduct preproduction meetings
6. Determine technical requirements
7. Breakdown treatment
8. Secure locations
9. Arrange production logistics
10. Prepare for postproduction
11. Review project objectives

**F. EXECUTE PRODUCTION**

1. Record original material
2. Create and/or maintain relationship with subject(s)
3. Tell the story
4. Collect archival material
5. Assess material
6. Monitor technical quality control
7. Heighten communications
8. Manage crises
9. Determine corrective action(s)
10. Provide production-related documentation
11. Create promotional elements

**G. EXECUTE POSTPRODUCTION**

1. Prepare transcripts and translations
2. Create assembly
3. Supervise picture editing
4. Provide direction to composer
5. Conduct feedback screenings
6. Write and record commentary
7. Prepare credits

8. Supervise graphic design
9. Supervise picture postproduction
10. Supervise audio postproduction
11. Secure Errors & Omissions insurance
12. Obtain required approval(s)

**H. DELIVER DOCUMENTARY**

1. Manage relationship with distributors
2. Finalize release strategy
3. Produce all versions
4. Create publicity and promotional material
5. Audit project
6. Return borrowed material(s)
7. Archive creative material, business affair materials, legal and tax requirements
8. Acknowledge participants
9. Monitor receivables
10. Perform post-mortem

**H. RELEASE DOCUMENTARY**

1. Implement festival strategy
2. Implement community promotion strategy
3. Organize premiere screening
4. Contact media
5. Exploit project commercially
6. Compile media and public response
7. Provide / produce distribution / exploitation reports

## SUMMARY – CHART OF COMPETENCIES

## A DIRECTOR AND/OR PRODUCER OF DOCUMENTARY FILMS MUST BE ABLE TO:

## GENERAL COMPETENCIES

**I. DEMONSTRATE COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

1. Demonstrate writing skills
2. Verbally articulate ideas
3. Make presentations
4. Demonstrate listening skills
5. Conduct interviews
6. Chair meetings
7. Communicate non verbally
8. Maintain focus
9. Demonstrate interpersonal skills
10. Communicate visually
11. Communicate with other cultures
12. Use communication technology and tools

**J. DEMONSTRATE PERSONAL COMPETENCIES**

1. Act ethically
2. Demonstrate curiosity
3. Follow intuition
4. Demonstrate analytical skills
5. Demonstrate creativity
6. Make decisions
7. Demonstrate patience and perseverance
8. Inspire and exercise leadership
9. Demonstrate power and persuasion
10. Negotiate
11. Demonstrate flexibility
12. Demonstrate respect and sensitivity
13. Collaborate
14. Demonstrate organizational skills
15. Perform multi-tasks
16. Demonstrate attention to detail
17. Delegate
18. Solve problems
19. Remove obstacles
20. Take risks
21. Break rules
22. Manage stress and maintain composure
23. Keep current and continue to learn
24. Self-criticize
25. Demonstrate computer skills

COMPETENCY PROFILE

**A DIRECTOR AND/OR PRODUCER OF DOCUMENTARY FILMS  
MUST BE ABLE TO ...**

A DIRECTOR AND/OR PRODUCER OF  
DOCUMENTARY FILMS MUST BE ABLE TO:

## A. GENERATE AN IDEA

SKILLS	SUBSKILLS	IMPORTANT ACTIONS	GENERAL COMPETENCIES
1. <b>Collect ideas</b>	1.1 Conduct research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine all types of media</li> <li>Ask and answer questions</li> <li>Focus questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DEMONSTRATE CURIOSITY (K2)</li> <li>FOLLOW INTUITION (K3)</li> <li>KEEP CURRENT AND CONTINUE TO LEARN (K23)</li> </ul>
	1.2 Catalog ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and implement filing system</li> <li>Prioritize ideas</li> </ul>	
2. <b>Investigate ideas</b>	2.1 Determine scope and uniqueness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Search for similar projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DEMONSTRATE ANALYTICAL SKILLS (K4)</li> <li>DEMONSTRATE ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS (K14)</li> </ul>
	2.2 Determine format and tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider scope of project</li> <li>Establish point of view</li> </ul>	
	2.3 Determine feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess content resources</li> <li>Assess production company resources</li> </ul>	
3. <b>Test ideas</b>	3.1 Consult with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine and select advisors</li> <li>Describe idea</li> <li>Respond to feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VERBALLY ARTICULATE IDEAS (J2)</li> <li>DEMONSTRATE LISTENING SKILLS (J4)</li> <li>MAKE PRESENTATIONS (J3)</li> </ul>
	3.2 Validate ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider that a film is the best format for your subject / topic</li> <li>Conduct additional research</li> <li>Explore market interest</li> <li>Revise ideas</li> <li>Short list ideas</li> </ul>	
4. <b>Select an idea</b>	4.1 Confirm personal passion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review challenges</li> <li>Review desired outcome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SELF CRITICIZE (K24)</li> <li>DEMONSTRATE POWER OF PERSUASION (K9)</li> <li>MAKE DECISIONS (K6)</li> </ul>
	4.2 Confirm feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm access to subjects / location</li> <li>Confirm access to archival material</li> <li>Confirm resources (budget – schedule)</li> </ul>	
	4.3 Confirm interest of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm interest of key crew and collaborators</li> <li>Confirm interest of buyers and broadcasters</li> <li>Confirm interest of funders</li> </ul>	