

ITV's Diversity Commissioning Fund Supports Diverse Writers with multiple new schemes

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Having launched earlier this year, ITV can today reveal how its Diversity Commissioning Fund has generated multiple new schemes to help support diverse writers within TV production.

ITV's Diversity Commissioning Fund has reserved £80m of the content commissioning budget over the next three years to help drive change towards racial equity and disability equity, in whose stories get told and who gets opportunities in TV production. As part of this, a new £500k Development Fund was also created to develop ideas that will qualify for the Diversity Commissioning Fund.

Ade Rawcliffe, Group Director of Diversity and Inclusion at ITV, commented:

“We established our Diversity Commissioning Fund to change how and who tells our stories. By launching three different opportunities for writers, we have been excited by the fresh, new and underrepresented voices we have created opportunities for in Drama, Comedy and Entertainment. We want to continue to support this talent and look forward to seeing how these voices continue to develop and thrive at ITV and beyond.”

To date, three new diverse writers initiatives have been launched as part of the fund including:

Scripted Comedy Writers Initiative

Back in June, ITV launched an open call to their diverse networks to find nine diverse comedy writers to join a writers workshop. Here they met with the Producers and writing team on brand new comedy Piglets, commissioned by ITV's Head of Scripted Comedy, Nana Hughes. They were then tasked with writing sample scenes for the show, to demonstrate their comedy credentials.

Following feedback for all, one writer was successfully chosen to join the writers team for the entire series. In addition, a writer's annex group has been created with four of the other writers still getting the opportunity to contribute material to the show. Should their scenes be used in the final series edit, then they too will receive a programme credit.

Nana Hughes, Head of Scripted Comedy ITV said:

“The calibre of applicants to the diverse comedy writers initiative was truly impressive. It's a great way to discover and engage with new diverse writing talent, giving them the unique experience of working in a comedy writer's room. I hopefully look forward to being able to offer others a similar opportunity for future ITV comedy commissions.”

Omar Khan, Writer, Piglets said:

“Working on Piglets is an absolutely awe inspiring experience. In their midst I listen a lot, learn a lot and laugh a lot with the aim of leaving a small impression of my own on the show. Can't wait to do it all again when the show gets renewed for Season 2!”

Entertainment Comedy Writers Initiative

Working with ITV Entertainment Commissioner Joe Mace, in September an application process was launched to all of ITV's diverse networks to find up to six diverse comedy writers to join a workshop the following month. The application process included writing a short sketch and providing a CV, plus a cover letter explaining why they were so keen to take part in the initiative.

The chosen comedy writers were tasked with generating sketches and/ or pranks for an as yet untitled Saturday evening hidden camera show pilot - produced by diverse-led production company, Brown Bred Productions and soon to be filmed. They worked with Mace and two of Brown Bred's Production Executives on the day. The aim is for as much material as possible produced throughout the workshop to be included within the filmed pilot.

Jo Mace, Entertainment Commissioner ITV said:

"We ran an entire day's workshop for this new entertainment comedy writers initiative, alongside Brown Bred Productions and the atmosphere in the room for the whole day was nothing short of electric. I'm genuinely impressed with the quality of the work produced in such a short space of time and I can't wait to see how it evolves."

Joe Varley, Brown Bred Productions said:

"We were blown away by the calibre of talent at the workshop day and are thrilled to be working with ITV on this project."

Disabled Writers Programme

In ITV's ongoing commitment to foster a more diverse and inclusive media landscape, the Disabled Writers in Development programme in collaboration with Tall Story Pictures, an ITV Studios label, launched with four Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent writers each receiving a script commission to develop an ITV-focussed idea and pitch this to ITV's Head of Drama, Polly Hill.

Following its successful launch in January this year, which also saw two trainee Script Editors secure roles at the ITV Academy's Production Training Scheme, the Disabled Writers in Development programme aims to expand the talent pool of Disabled writers developing projects with producers and commissioners across ITV and the wider industry.

Writers Lizzie Watson, Katie Schofield, Lorna King and Bridget Deane are each being supported in-house at Tall Story Pictures, by experienced development

producers Amy Thurgood and Sara Johnson, gaining hands-on experience in story development and building their ideas from treatment through to script, ready to pitch to ITV's Head of Drama, Polly Hill.

Catherine Oldfield, Creative Director at Tall Story Pictures said:

"We're delighted to be developing projects with the four hugely talented writers from the Disabled Writer in Development programme. Supporting talent from under-represented groups is really important to the team at Tall Story Pictures, and we're proud to continue building on our work with our involvement here, alongside the team at DEI."

Additionally last year, 5 Acts Productions, the ITV Studios scripted label led by David P. Davis, launched Writers in Residence designed for unrepresented writers, and it has taken on two writers for a year to develop scripts. The residency received support and funding from ITV's Diversity Commissioning Development Fund.

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