

“Show me the money”

Jerry Maguire in Jerry Maguire

Supporting the creation and growth of competitive businesses is an important goal for the UK Film Council, so if you're looking for:

**Financial Advice, Contacts, Business Skills**

**Equity Funding and Venture Capital**

**Where to Borrow to Fund Your Business Needs**

Then we've set out below some advice and links to sources of advice that could be helpful for film businesses with ambitions to grow and compete successfully in the domestic and global marketplace.

# **Financial Advice, Contacts, Business Skills**

“Some people will pay a lot of money for that information”

Michael Corleone, The Godfather

## Check in for a corporate health check

A quick and easy interactive tool which can help you analyse key areas of your business' finance is available free on the [National Business Link site](#). This site also contains a directory of the hundreds of publicly funded schemes throughout the UK which provide free or subsidised advice and support on how to build a better and more profitable business.

A good accountant can offer more than just help with your tax returns. They can provide expertise, advice and support on your business, and help with business planning and raising finance. The national business link site offers advice on [how to find, choose and manage an accountant](#). It also gives advice on where to find and how to manage other types of business advisers.

## Looking for the right experience for your boardroom?

Potential investors in your business are likely to want reassurance that the business has the right mix of skills and experience, particularly at director level and especially when it comes to the company's finances.

Hiring the right non-executive directors can be a way of securing valuable experience at modest cost. You can download factsheets from the [Institute of Directors](#) to help you recruit non-executive directors and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales' [website](#) gives advice on how to choose a chartered accountant and links to its online directory of firms database.

## Sharpen up your own business skills

The [Skillset](#) Screen Academies offer business skills training as part of their tuition in film, including an MA in Film Producing and Business Management from Screen Academy Wales that offers a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma as alternative exit points to the MA.

Skillset has invested over £1m in [company development](#) for TV, Film, Interactive Media and Computer Games, supporting more than 100 companies with business planning consultancy and HR grants. Check out the Skillset website for current programmes.

## ***Equity Funding and Venture Capital***

“Money isn't as valuable to our organisation as knowing who to trust.”

Mr White, Casino Royale

Anyone seeking to raise finance for a business must take care to comply with the laws that balance the need for businesses to be able to access finance against the need for investors to be treated fairly. The penalties for breaches in the law can be severe and may result in a prison sentence of up to two years.

A key piece of legislation is the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, which states:

“A person must not, in the course of business, communicate an invitation or inducement to engage in investment activity”.

This should be regarded as the default position. The Financial Services Authority (FSA) can issue licences that allow individuals or firms to market investments to the public. Certain types of fund raising activity, e.g. in connection with "sophisticated" or "high net worth" investors, are also exempted from the general prohibition but the legislation is

complex so unless the person raising finance for a business is confident, and has good reason to be confident, that they are acting within the law they should assume they are not, cease activity, contact the [FSA](#) and ask for guidance.

The terms "venture capital" and "private equity" generally refer to organisations that have already raised funds and are actively seeking opportunities to invest.

The [British Venture Capital Association's "A Guide to Private Equity"](#) (BVCA) provides a good source of advice if you would like to know more about the private equity process and how to target firms effectively.

Enterprise Capital Funds use government funding alongside private sector investment to provide equity finance for small and medium size enterprises that demonstrate growth potential. Further details of these and other Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) sponsored programmes can be obtained from the section of BIS website dealing with information for business owners and entrepreneurs, particularly the section on [access to finance](#).

Your [Regional Screen Agency](#) may be able to offer advice on what funds are available locally and the best way to access them.

[Scottish Screen](#), [Film Agency Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland Screen](#) will also be able to offer advice on the further support available from the national enterprise agencies in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) or [Northern Ireland](#).

The European Investment Fund ([EIF](#)) provides funding for the development of companies in the EU. Please note that the EIF does not invest in companies directly but instead always works through intermediaries, typically venture capital funds, contact details of which can be found on the EIF website. Details of how to access EU backed sources of financing can be found using the search facility [here](#).

The British Business Angels Association has a directory of member associations and networks of individuals who can provide both [finance and advice](#).

## ***Where to Borrow to Fund Your Business Needs***

*"You've got no imagination. You couldn't decide what to do with all that money"*

Charlie Croker, *The Italian Job*

Your existing bank manager is probably your best first port of call when seeking to raise debt finance. Even if they are unable to meet your needs, they should be a valuable source of advice and, where they already have lent to your business, will probably need to give their consent to any additional borrowing.

The Government backed [Enterprise Finance Guarantee](#) scheme is aimed at small and medium sized companies with viable business plans but insufficient assets to provide security for conventional lending from banks. Companies can access debt finance by providing lenders with a government [guarantee](#), the scheme is managed by [Capital for Enterprise](#). Participating lenders can be accessed via the BIS [website](#), however please note that the scheme is not specifically designed for media businesses and is intended to support companies which are less than five years old.

If you are looking for funding for a specific film project, please refer to the relevant section of the [UK Film Council's website](#) which deals with development, production or distribution and exhibition finance.

You could also check your National or Regional Screen Agency's website and, in particular, the [Film London website](#) for details of its London Production Finance Market held in October each year.

You may be thinking of using an Enterprise Investment Scheme ([EIS](#)) or working with an investor or trader who is seeking to offset any loss incurred as '[sideways loss relief](#)'. The legislation that governs these reliefs is complex and open to change, so you may want to obtain specialist advice from a suitably qualified and experienced accountant or lawyer before relying on them, directly or indirectly.

Bear in mind that, no matter how confident you feel about your business or your film; always check carefully the detail of any credit agreement for terms which allow the lender recourse to your home or other personal assets.

Always ensure you receive appropriate professional advice before entering into any agreement with debt or equity financiers. Whilst the UK Film Council can't directly assist individual film businesses to access finance from third parties, we would be interested in your feedback on this Access to Finance document and the organisations and programmes listed on it.

Please email [sarah.schafer-peek@ukfilmcouncil.org.uk](mailto:sarah.schafer-peek@ukfilmcouncil.org.uk) with any comments you may have, ensuring to quote 'Access to Finance' in the subject line of the email.

**“All right, son: roll them guns up, count the money, and put your seat belt on.”**

Big Chris, Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels

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