

Mongolia's Film and TV Location Incentives Are Ready for Use

By Patrick Frater



Mongolian National Film Council

Italy's Aurora Vision has joined with Mongolia's BroSis Pictures and Culture Distributor to co-produce documentary "Round Ger." The film is among the first to make use of Mongolia's newly hatched location production rebate scheme.

Co-directed by Lia Beltrami and Bolortsetseg Dugardondov, and produced by Andrea Morghen, Beltrami and Tsengel Davaasambuu, "Round Ger" focuses on the relationship between a young mother and her disabled daughter. Production is expected to get under way in July next year.

"We are determined that Mongolia become a major new location for productions," Nomin Chinbat, Mongolian minister of culture, told Variety in Cannes. "For that, it is not sufficient simply to have an amazing variety of locations. We also need to be able to offer a meaningful incentive program."

Mongolia offers a basic 30% rebate scheme, which is already competitive with other locations in Asia. That can be increased by a further 10% for culturally relevant productions that pass a test. A further 5%, making 45% in total, is available to help with cast and crew costs.

The scheme applies to both film and TV and has a minimum spending requirement of \$500,000. There is no cap on the money that can be paid out to any single project, though there is an initial pool of \$25 million allocated by the government. Some two years may be needed from first application to final payout.

The new Mongolian National Film Council, the country's first official government film entity, will operate the rebate plan, and has taken a booth at the Cannes Market. "We want the MNFC to be autonomous from government, even if it is government backed. This is intended to ensure that the incentives are protected in in case of a change of government," said Chinbat, who was previously the head of Mongol TV. "I think what we have is simple, clean and competitive."

She says that it took roughly three years to develop the scheme within the ministry and to then convince the finance ministry and lawmakers. It was finally passed in parliament in January this year. "We had to provide examples of the success of similar schemes overseas," Chinbat said. "And to show the economic benefits of production incentive schemes."

The country has few formal co-production treaties in the audiovisual sector but has some 43 cultural co-operation agreements with 26 countries. These could help drum up interest in using the location incentive scheme or make it go further.

Mongolia was among the first countries in the world to react to the COVID-19 crisis with shutdowns. These were inevitably disruptive to film and TV production. But Mongolia was also among the first to reopen. Its international borders were open to everyone from Feb. 2022, film releases have picked up in volume and new cinemas have opened in the past two years.

