Six National Playbooks, Compared

What each country actually bought with public money, and what it got. The honest bottom line is at the end.

South Korea · institutional layer, self-funded

MECHANISM	A Film Development Fund of roughly US$430 million (government, a 3 percent box-office ticket levy collected through 2014, and a legacy fund), paying for KAFA (the national film academy), Busan (festival plus project market plus production fund plus academy), and KOBIS, a mandatory real-time national ticketing system.
WHAT WORKED	Market opening and the end of prior restraint cost the treasury nothing. The 1993 to 1994 reclassification of film from a "service" to a "manufacturing sector" unlocked bank loans and tax exemptions, arguably the single most replicable item in the whole story.
COST / DIDN'T WORK	Import quotas produced "quota quickies." The screen quota is, on the evidence, a "paper tiger": mandated screen days did not mandate ticket sales, and most turning points happened while it was unchanged. The subsidy itself was modest, US$106.28 million in 2011 against France's €676 million; the boom came a decade before the money did.
BOTTOM LINE	KOFIC cut Busan's grant by roughly 45 percent (1.46 billion won to 800 million won) after the festival screened a film critical of the mayor who chaired it. A state-funded institution is exposed to its funder. Korea built the capability over 25 years on domestic capital, then foreign streamers captured a large share of the upside from IP they now own outright.

Ireland · the payable production tax credit

MECHANISM	Section 481, a 32 percent tax credit paid direct to the producer since 2015, an anti-leakage reform rather than an act of generosity. Under the old investor-relief structure, producers received only 26 to 28 percent of the 41 percent headline rate.
WHAT WORKED	Production spend hit €544 million in 2025, up 26 percent on 2024. Over 10,000 direct full-time roles.
COST / DIDN'T WORK	Three Department of Finance cost-benefit analyses, all negative: -€40m (2015), -€72.4m (2016), -€78.54m (2020).
BOTTOM LINE	The state's own defence is that the net cost "may be considered the revealed value of the social and cultural dividend." That is a cultural-subsidy claim, not a jobs claim. Irish Equity: "the real value of the film and television industry does not exist at the point of production."

New Zealand · the subsidy that rewrote labour law

MECHANISM	The New Zealand Screen Production Grant (up to 20 to 25 percent), alongside the 2010 Hobbit Law, which excluded film workers from the legal definition of "employee" and passed 66 votes to 50 in 48 hours.
WHAT WORKED	Inbound productions invested about NZ$5.85 billion between 2014/15 and 2023/24, against about NZ$1.2 billion in rebate payments.
COST / DIDN'T WORK	Sapere's 2018 evaluation found the domestic grant returns NZ$0.68 per dollar. MBIE 2022 found "no quantitative evidence" of spillover benefit from the largest incentive tier. MBIE's Year 1 additionality result for the 2025 Budget: "Nil."
BOTTOM LINE	Peter Jackson sold Weta Digital's tools to Unity for US$1.625 billion in November 2021; by December 2023 Unity had laid off the entire staff. Two decades and NZ$2 billion of state investment could not stop the ecosystem's most valuable asset from being sold offshore and dismantled, because the state never owned any of it.

Nigeria · distribution first, no state

MECHANISM	None, in the state sense. Built by private marketers financing VHS and VCD distribution through informal channels (Alaba, Idumota) fifteen years before production values improved.
WHAT WORKED	Distribution solved before production quality, Nollywood's founding insight. The rail that persisted is YouTube channels the filmmakers own outright.
COST / DIDN'T WORK	Government funds exist on paper, US$200 million "Project Nollywood" (2010), ₦3 billion "Project ACT Nollywood" (2013), the CBN Creative Industry Financing Initiative (2019); disbursement and outcomes are unverified. iROKOtv raised US$25 million and still had to abandon African web streaming in June 2015, surviving only on the diaspora.
BOTTOM LINE	A million Nigerian YouTube views earns roughly US$1,000 to $1,500. The same million American views earns US$10,000 to $15,000. Audience geography, not audience size, is the revenue variable.

Iran · institutions make auteurs

MECHANISM	Institution-built training, not a subsidy scheme: Kanoon, a 1965 children's-education institute, and the Farabi Cinema Foundation.
WHAT WORKED	Kiarostami's entire early career was made inside Kanoon; Panahi learned to run a camera there as a child. Constraint became a production method: *This Is Not a Film* cost €3,200, shot on a camcorder and an iPhone in four days by a director under a 20-year filmmaking ban, and was Oscar-shortlisted.
COST / DIDN'T WORK	Made under active political censorship, and for some directors, prosecution.
BOTTOM LINE	The lone-genius story is false. A filmmaker community that runs a training programme and a shared-equipment pool is doing the same category of work Kanoon did, and it needs no state to start.

Colombia · the parafiscal levy

MECHANISM	Ley 814 (2003), Article 5: an 8.5 percent levy on exhibitors, 8.5 percent on distributors of foreign films, and 5 percent on Colombian producers, collected monthly by the national tax authority.
WHAT WORKED	Output share tripled from 1.4 to 9.6 percent of theatrical releases; domestic market share rose above 16 percent. Funded Colombia's first Oscar-nominated film, *El abrazo de la serpiente* (2015).
COST / DIDN'T WORK	2024 to 2026 coverage reports falling admissions even as the number of releases rose.
BOTTOM LINE	Colombia proves a fund can reliably manufacture films. It does not prove a fund can manufacture viewers, the same lesson the 2016 MMFF taught in Manila.

The honest bottom line on tax credits. Every serious government evaluation of a tax-credit scheme in this dossier found a net economic cost. Ireland: three Department of Finance analyses, all negative. New Zealand: Sapere 2018 found the domestic grant returns NZ$0.68 per dollar, and MBIE's Year 1 additionality result was "Nil." Both states extended their schemes anyway and said plainly why: not because the credits pay for themselves, but because the states judged the cultural dividend worth the cost. That is a legitimate policy choice. It is not the "tax credits pay for themselves" claim that circulates in industry advocacy.