



Australian Government



PROGRAM GUIDELINES: STORY DEVELOPMENT

ISSUED 1 JULY 2015

UPDATED 11 April 2016

Screen Australia reserves the right to change its program guidelines from time to time. Please ensure you check the website for the latest version. See page 9 for an update log.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#).

We encourage you to contact the Program Operations team before you submit your application to discuss any eligibility questions and ensure all the required supporting material is in place. This will mean we can process your application smoothly and efficiently. The Program Operations team can be contacted on **1800 507 901**.

We receive many more applications than we can support. Inevitably, some applications will be unsuccessful and applicants will be disappointed by this result. However, our decision is final.

Specific requirements apply where there is Indigenous community participation or content involved in a project. Please refer to www.screenaustralia.gov.au/funding/business/Indigenous_Content.aspx

Story Development

Creative story development involves art, craft and heart.

It's a process that needs to be flexible and responsive, embracing a diversity of tools and approaches that will enrich and focus the creative vision at the heart of a story so audiences will be engaged and entertained across a variety of delivery platforms.

We therefore encourage you to design a bespoke approach to development that will keep the project's momentum up, its purpose alive and the audience in clear view.

What funding is available?

Applications for Story Development funding can be made at any time for:

- **up to \$50,000 for feature drama films** with a total cap of \$100,000 of Screen Australia funds over the life of an individual project unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. This includes all funding received from Screen Australia's Story Development, Matched Marketplace Development, Feature Development, Family Films Initiative, Brilliant Stories (or other Screen Australia feature drama initiatives), Single Draft and predecessor agency feature development funding.
- **up to \$20,000 for online and interactive drama** including series, one-off and virtual reality. Traditional television formats suited to a mainstream broadcaster are not eligible.
- **up to \$40,000 for high-end series drama** to develop an ambitious concept into a first series bible, outline, pilot script and/or first episode script. Please note: High-end television drama is high-budget programming that has the clear potential to reach a wide global audience. These funds are intended to enable Australian companies and creatives to leverage international interest from a major international company across any platform which can commission projects and has its own transmission network. Applications must be accompanied by written evidence of strong and genuine interest.

What can you apply for?

Development plans may include, but are not limited to:

- writer, director, producer fees
- script editor, script reader reports, consultant fees
- table reads, writers' rooms, actor workshops
- consultation about digital elements, digital distribution platforms and audience engagement strategies
- series bible, series outline, pilot script or first episode script costs
- visualisation materials – pitch materials, teaser trailers, storyboards, electronic proof of concept (EPOC) that will help to inform the creative process (eg animated feature character tests, online/interactive creative tests), or test scenes (filming/production when part of the development process)
- story and character research

- costs associated with consulting with Heads of Department, eg DOP/Cinematographer, editor, production designer, sound designer
- competitive international project development workshops
- casting costs
- budgets and schedules
- reasonable legal costs
- option renewal costs (\$5,000 cap)

Only in exceptional circumstances will a request to acquire an initial option be considered (on a case-by-case basis).

Who can apply?

To be eligible for **feature film** and **high-end television** funding:

- Applications must be from one of the following eligible key creatives:
 - a producer with a 'producing credit' on behalf of a team involving at least a writer or writer/director, OR
 - a producer without an eligible credit in partnership with another producer or executive producer who have a minimum of two 'producing credits' on behalf of a team involving at least a writer or writer/director, OR
 - an executive producer with at least two 'producing credits' on behalf of a team involving at least a writer or writer/director, OR
 - a writer with a 'writing credit'. Please see note below, OR
 - a writer/director with a 'writing credit'. Please see note below, OR
 - a director with a 'directing credit' in conjunction with a writer. Please see note below, OR
 - a team supported through our [Multiplatform Drama](#) program, OR
 - a team supported through our Brilliant Stories initiatives. Note: you can only apply with the same project.

NOTE: A solo writer, writer/director or director as referred to above must include plans to attach a producer and other key creatives, if and as appropriate, to demonstrate a viable pathway for the project to move into financing and production.

To be eligible for **online and interactive** funding:

- Applications must be from one of the following eligible key creatives:
 - an online and interactive drama team who have:
 - received funding through our [Multiplatform Drama](#) program, OR
 - a YouTube channel with a minimum of 100,000 subscribers, OR
 - one video with more than 500,000 views and at least 12,500 subscribers, OR
 - a team supported through our Brilliant Stories Initiative, OR
 - a writer, writer/director, director or producer on behalf of a team who has at least one credit in their role on a short fiction film that has screened at one of the festivals listed in the [Hot Shots Short Film Fund](#)

Applicants who do not meet these criteria may be considered only in exceptional circumstances.

- Where a producer or an executive producer is attached in order to satisfy eligibility requirements, their meaningful and continued involvement in the project must be evidenced within the development and financing plans for the project.
- If a project has previously been assessed and declined for funding under Screen Australia's Story Development, Matched Marketplace Development, Brilliant Stories, Feature Development, Single Draft or predecessor agency feature development funding (or other Screen Australia initiatives) it must evidence substantial changes since the previous submission. This statement and the application materials will be taken into account when considering whether or not Screen Australia will accept the application and assess it again for funding. Note that after two unsuccessful submissions, no further applications for that project will be accepted other than in circumstances that are deemed to be exceptional.
- Screen Australia is not able to pay any costs towards international producers, writers or directors if the producers, writers or directors are not Australian citizens or Australian residents.
- Recipients of Enterprise Program funding should refer to the Enterprise Program guidelines and the specific Enterprise agreement regarding their eligibility for this program.

A **'producing credit', 'writing credit' or 'directing credit'** is a 'produced by', 'written by' or 'directed by' drama credit on at least:

- one feature film that has been selected for Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Sundance, Toronto or SXSW, or has received an Academy Award® nomination, OR
- one feature film released on a minimum of five commercial screens, excluding festival screens, in one major territory, OR
- one primetime or children's broadcast mini-series or telemovie shown on a major network, OR
- three broadcast hours of primetime series or children's series, OR
- one mainstage theatre production which has received outstanding critical and/or box office success with a professional mainstage theatre company: Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, Black Swan State Theatre Company, State Theatre Company of South Australia, Queensland Theatre Company, La Boite Theatre Company, Darwin Theatre Company.

Note: Screen Australia acknowledges the value of a wide variety of festivals and theatre companies. For the purposes of Screen Australia's story fund eligibility it is the festivals and companies listed above that are recognised.

Applicants must also meet the general eligibility requirements set out in Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#).

What materials do you need to apply?

While we are open to the type of material you submit with an application to evoke the creative vision, be strategic about the amount and length of material you include in your application. Your application will be enhanced by the quality of your submission materials rather than the quantity.

The application materials required include:

- a one-page synopsis
- a story document appropriate to the project:
 - a treatment (up to 20 pages, 10 pages preferred). A writer without previous credits must submit a number of sample script scenes (up to 5 pages) from the writer's previous work (TV, short films, feature or online drama), OR
 - a scriptment – a document that is part script, part treatment and may include visuals or illustrations (up to 30 pages), OR
 - a draft script (up to 120 pages, 12 point Courier font)
 - for online and interactive drama (series, one-off), an outline, treatment or draft scripts
- for high-end television, a copy of proposal materials used to secure the written interest from a major international company (i.e. broadcaster or internet streaming company) such as a pitch/concept/story document, episode breakdowns, proposed team, etc.
- a development plan (up to four pages) that describes the team's creative vision, outlines the progress of the project to date, identifies the current challenges and the tools and approaches that will be used to explore and address these in the next stage of development. This should include notes from the writer, director and script editor (where attached).

Note: if you are applying as a sole writer, director or writer/director, or writer and director team, please also briefly describe the genre and intended target audience, the budget level relative to the potential audience, any marketing and distribution plans, the benefit of the project to the career and business objectives of the team, as well as your plans for attaching a producer.
- if a producer is attached, a producer's statement that identifies the genre, the intended target audience, the budget level relative to the potential audience as well as the marketing and distribution plans (theatrical and/or other platforms) and the benefit of the project to the career and business objectives of the team. If the project is applying for late stage funding, this statement will need to include financing strategies, proposed cast and potential market attachments
- if an EP is attached, written confirmation that demonstrates the EP's meaningful involvement
- for high-end television, written evidence of strong and genuine interest from a major international company (i.e. broadcaster or internet streaming company), outside the ANZ territory, which can commission projects and has its own transmission network
- if the project is being submitted for a second time after a previous unsuccessful application, a summary of the substantial changes that will make it eligible to be considered again
- agreements for key creatives that are attached to the stage of development applied for (eg writer's agreement, script editor's agreement)
- CVs for all key creatives.

What other materials could you include?

Other application materials to evoke the tone, mood and style of the project may include:

- photographs, artworks, a mood reel, a look book, storyboards, EPOC, a pilot episode, a sample filmed scene, or music
- a three-minute pitch to camera (via downloadable and password protected link only).

Rights and chain of title

An applicant (be they an eligible producer, writer, writer/director or director) must be able to evidence that they hold sufficient rights in a project, and have obtained sufficient clearances necessary to be able to develop and finance it to production.

- Where an applicant is a less experienced producer who has attached an experienced producer or EP, the option or rights may remain with the less experienced producer or with them in conjunction with other key creatives.
- If a project is based on an underlying work, evidence of the option agreement and length of option must be supplied. Screen Australia expects the accumulated periods of the option and its subsequent extensions to be at least three and a half years. We advise applicants to have an option to acquire where possible sequel, prequel, remake, TV spin-off rights and all ancillary rights as these rights will be required at financing stage.
- Any commitment from us will be subject to review of key chain of title documents (which include writer's agreement, option agreement and script editor agreements) to ensure that they comply with industry standards. If the project is in late stage development, a solicitor's opinion letter on the chain of title may be requested.

What is the assessment process?

Applications will be assessed by Screen Australia executives and/or industry specialists/peers as required. Please see the [full list of External Assessors](#) on our website. See also our [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

We will advise applicants of the success or otherwise of their application.

Where an application is declined, the applicant will be advised of the reason.

We aim to make the application process as transparent as possible, but given the volume of applications we receive, we do not have the resources to provide extensive feedback on each project.

Assessment criteria

When assessing applications for this program, we will take the following criteria into account:

- The dramatic potential of the concept, the strength and distinctiveness of the story within its own genre and the potential of the story and characters to engage an audience (40%)
- The progress of the project to date, the degree to which the development plan identifies and articulates the challenges present in the current material while also offering potential strategies to address them in the next phase of development; OR for late stage applications, the readiness of the script for production and the perceived effectiveness of the financing strategy (20%)
- The relevant skills and experience (or mix of experience) of the team, the likelihood that the team will advance the project through development, financing and into production (20%)
- The team's understanding of the market and audience for their project, the viability of the intended budget relative to the potential audience and the intended platform of distribution (20%).

Other factors including availability of funds, diversity of slate and the gender and cultural diversity of the team may also influence Screen Australia's funding decisions.

What is the application timing?

Applications can be submitted at any time through the Online Application Portal and must include all necessary and relevant additional supporting material.

Maximum turnaround time for decisions is approximately four weeks.

Terms of funding

Funding through this program is provided as a grant unless the project is funded for production investment by Screen Australia and the producer includes the development funds as part of qualifying Australian production expenditure (QAPE).

Where the project goes into production without Screen Australia production funding, Screen Australia may require the producer to repay the development funding previously provided in order to acquire any copyright interest held by Screen Australia.

See [Terms of Trade](#) for more information.

Funding cannot be retrospective.

Funding recipients must deliver the delivery materials for which the funding was provided.

Contact us

Please contact the Program Operations team on **1800 507 901** to discuss your proposal before submitting your application.

Wildcard Pitch

For teams who do not meet the eligibility criteria, the Wildcard Pitch provides an alternative avenue to be eligible for Story Development feature film and online and interactive funding.

A video pitch of up to three minutes can be emailed via a downloadable and password-protected [link](#) at any time through the [online application portal](#).

The pitch must describe:

- the [concept](#) for a fiction feature project or online and interactive drama series, one-off or virtual reality drama installations of any genre
- the potential audience for the film or online and interactive drama.
- the current stage of the project (eg treatment, draft script or whatever form your project is in if your development plan is utilising more non-traditional approaches)

You will also need to include in the [online application portal](#):

- ☐ a 250 word (maximum) synopsis; and,
- ☐ a maximum 5 page writing sample that is either an excerpt of the project you are pitching for in Wildcard or any other previous screen project that portrays your original storytelling style.

We are looking for pitches that grab our attention, that evidence a story [concept](#) that will generate and sustain the dramatic structure of a feature film, online and interactive drama or virtual reality drama installation and one that knows its audience.

Pitches will be viewed by Screen Australia personnel and/or industry specialists as required and some teams may be invited to apply for Story Development funding. The intention of this pitch is to provide a virtual open door to talented storytellers to be eligible for story funding.

Given the magnitude of submissions we do not have the resources to provide feedback. We will advise whether or not an invitation to apply for funding will be afforded within approximately six weeks of receiving your pitch.

Wildcard pitch submissions that are invited to apply for Story Development funding will be evaluated competitively against our story development [assessment criteria](#).

Update log

11 April 2016

- Story Development:
 - Removed the limit on online and interactive duration
 - Clarified the intent of high-end television funding
 - Expanded eligibility credits for writers, writer/directors and directors with no eligibility restriction on tranches
- Wildcard Pitch:
 - Added online and interactive drama in addition to feature films
 - Clarified and expanded on pitch descriptions and successful funding

11 December 2015

- Story Development: As part of the assessment criteria, added: Other factors including availability of funds, diversity of slate and the gender and cultural diversity of the team may also influence Screen Australia's funding decisions.

15 September 2015

- Story Development, What funding is available? and What materials do you need to apply?:
 - Clarified high-end television definition
 - Added that the major international broadcaster or internet streaming company must be outside the ANZ territory.

1 September 2015

- Story Development, Who can apply?:
 - Added that applicants who do not meet these criteria maybe considered in exceptional circumstances.
 - Clarified criteria required for online and interactive drama applications.
- Story Development, Rights and chain of title:
 - Added that evidence of the option agreement and length of option must be supplied and that the accumulated periods of the option and its subsequent extensions must be at least three and a half years.