

Online Development Fund: Guidelines

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The Online Development Fund is aimed at emerging Australian screen creatives, allowing them to access funding to develop the creative materials of their scripted or documentary projects with a primary release via an online platform.

In most cases this fund applies to projects releasing on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and TikTok, as well as Virtual Reality (and other Extended Reality) projects. Screen Australia recognises this part of the industry is fast-changing, so other release platforms may be eligible.

The Online Development Fund should be considered as a potential step prior to applying for Online Production Funding. Applications may be made for up to \$25,000 for a single stage of development. Funding for a proof of concept will be considered in addition to this, for any amount up to \$30,000.

For larger budget projects aimed at a release on broadcasters or streaming platforms, applicants are advised to apply to the Screen Story Development Fund (Generate or Premium)

WHO CAN APPLY?

Applications for the Online Development Fund are open to anyone who:

- Meets all requirements and conditions in our [Terms of Trade](#).
- Is an Australian individual or team. Co-productions may also apply with an application from the Australian Company.
- Controls the rights whether they are the writer, director or producer.
- Is able to develop, finance and produce the project for the intended platform and audience.

There are no minimum credit requirements to apply.

The project must be an online series or one-off XR project intended for public release on a screen-based device. Short films are not eligible to apply.

Online Development is for lower budget series or one-off XR project projects. It is targeted towards emerging talent as well as experienced practitioners who want to take creative risks. Applications can be made by individuals or creative teams; however individual applicants must demonstrate the ability to attract other team members at later stages of development and production.

Specific requirements apply where a project involves First Nations content, stories, characters or community participation. Please see the Indigenous content, collaboration and participation section below and our [Pathways and Protocols guide](#) for more detail.

If your project has been declined twice through the Online Development Fund or any Screen Australia development program, it is not eligible to apply again.

WHAT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

Funding available is for development costs for scripted or documentary projects. The Development budget can include funding for any of the scripted creative materials necessary for a project, including but not limited to; writing a treatment, draft scripts, bible, research, writers' rooms and key creative fees, as well as a filmed Proof of Concept.

Screen Australia will only fund Australian creatives and costs of the development budget, excluding international consultants, mentors or script editors.

Funding cannot be retrospective.

HOW AND WHEN CAN I APPLY?

Applications are open all year round and can be made through Screen Australia's [application portal with the following materials:](#)

- A completed online application form
- An up to 3-minute downloadable video pitch to camera
- A completed Development Plan* (2-4 pages)
 - *This is a creative development plan, rather than a pitch document. It should outline the project's current stage of development and your plan to address current creative weaknesses or challenges.
- Story documents applicable to the current stage of development, i.e. story bible, draft scripts, episode outlines or anything else applicable (up to three documents per application).

The Program Operations team will review each application to ensure eligibility and required application materials. Once confirmed, the applicant will receive an email advising that their application has moved to assessment and an estimated timeframe of the outcome - generally around 6 weeks from receipt of email.

FIRST NATIONS CONTENT, COLLABORATION AND PARTICIPATION

Screen Australia supports the telling of First Nations stories by First Nations creatives and storytellers and/or meaningful collaboration with the First Nations communities to which these stories belong.

Whenever there is First Nations content and/or First Nation community participation in the project, or when there are First Nations members of the team who do not have the authority to speak for the people or place being represented in the story, you will need to follow the checklists from [Pathways & Protocols: a film maker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts](#).

The checklists include a statement on how you are approaching the First Nations content, (even if you believe the content is not specific to a community or individual), evidence of your collaboration to date and where relevant, signed letters of consent confirming the community and/or individual's willingness to collaborate.

Inclusive storytelling

Gender equity, diversity and inclusivity are priorities for Screen Australia. We therefore expect that the diversity of the story world and characters are reflected in the creative team and IP of the project and/or that integrated and meaningful collaboration occurs from early stages of development. Also, consider whether your team has the right to tell the story and whether your telling of it will be authentic.

HOW ARE APPLICATIONS ASSESSED?

Applications will be assessed by Screen Australia executives and/or industry specialists against the following criteria:

- Story and development plan: is the story strong and distinctive, and suited to the proposed release platform? Does the development plan outline creative challenges and propose appropriate solutions?
- Audience and budget: does the application consider the project's audience and the pathway to building this audience in a way that is appropriate to its budget size and platform
- Team: How does the previous experience of the team position them to succeed with this project? What relevant experience do they have in this role? What about the creative potential of the team generates excitement?
- Culture and diversity: Do elements of the project reflect gender equity and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia?

All projects involving First Nations content or participation will be assessed with First Nations Assessors.

Applicants will be advised of the outcome approximately six weeks after email receipt of their project's eligibility.

Terms of Funding

Funding will be in the form of a grant and subject to a non-negotiable standard contract. All screen story development funds will be paid 100% on signing. The delivery date will be six months after signing the contract, unless an extension is provided by the Head of Online.

Please refer to the FAQs for more information, as well as Screen Australia's Terms of Trade.

If you have any further questions, please email us at online@screenaustralia.gov.au or call Program Operations on 1800 507 901. Please note that we are not able to provide creative advice or suggestions to strengthen your application.

Update Log

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- Development Plan now 2-4 pages and template has been removed.