INTERACTIVE GAMES FUND CONSULTATION: NOTES FROM SYDNEY FORUM
18 December 2012

Here's a snapshot of some of the thoughts, suggestions and opinions raised during the Sydney public forum. The notes are pretty raw, and care should be taken in reading them out of context, but we hope they're useful – at least as a reminder for those who attended. If you feel that any important comments made during the forum have been misrepresented or would like to respond to any of these points, you can make your voice heard via the online discussion board, or an email submission to gamesfund@screenaustralia.gov.au.

Notes from the other public forums and a recording of the webinar are available here: www.screenaustralia.gov.au/gamesconsult

PRE-PRODUCTION

- Under the current recommendations, it looks like my project which was funded under a previous prototype fund may not have been funded (serious game)
- Extend concept of what a game is and can do – eg medical outcomes
- Medically based and educationally based projects could fly under the radar
- Pre-production could be more useful for serious games eg health based games that require research partners and extensive research
- Definition of pre-production and production bleed into each other
- Beware of film terms applied to the game industry
- Setting boundaries around terminology restricts innovation
- Aim is to fund commercially viable projects – fund a prototype to take to market and let the market fund to completion
- How to assess projects for prototype funding?
- One of the great things about the fund is that it could fund developers to concentrate on original IP (prototyping) rather than doing fee for service
- Y Combinator model – money should be spent on a large number of prototypes and projects to discover great (young) talent
- Problem is that there aren't many places in Australia you can go with a prototype to get further funding – conservative investment community in Australia
- Shouldn't preclude funding for new, untested technologies, platforms, ideas
- Is any of the money intended for film and television practitioners who are in the interactive/games space?
- Film and tv funding/financing model is very different to the games industry
- More important to give small amounts to finish a game rather than to fund prototypes

- Middleware, games engines are important for the sustainability of the industry and should be supported

MARKETING

- Most important thing is an effective marketing plan, not the expense of the plan
- Cost of acquisition and life time value of customer is what should be considered, not the percentage of the development budget dedicated to marketing
- If you don't have a marketing plan you don't have a business plan
- Easy to find technical and artistic talent – harder to find marketing talent for the games industry, money could be put towards marketing consultants/agencies
- Save marketing as additional funding for the end of the project (flexibility in amounts)
- Marketing must begin early in development process
- In iOS marketing spend happens at launch
- Gated funding – could slow development down but also could stop the fund throwing good money after bad
- Industry is prepared to have Screen Australia pull funding if project isn't working
- Subjective judgement – need consistency of approach, same people evaluating a project at each stage
- Crowd sourcing – enable public voting on funded projects

ENTERPRISE FUNDING VS PROJECT FUNDING

- Without enterprise funding we are not doing enough to build the long term sustainability of the industry
- Larger companies help renew talent base
- Experience gained through developing a small iOS game vs big budget console – not comparable
- Smaller scale developers are the ones that need the help (mentoring)
- Danger of enterprise is that is creates a 'charmed inner circle', high barrier to entry into industry
- Enterprise could be used as a catalyst for new groups forming, bring together talent from different aspects of the industry
- Need a balance between enterprise and project funding, need to fund new, innovative projects and teams as well as established enterprises
- Innovation is important to enterprise recipients/established companies as well
- Loosen criteria and choose the best applications, don't want the situation where a great application is rejected because it doesn't match predetermined eligibility criteria
- What does enterprise mean? How can small companies compete with large companies for funding? - Need to fund a range of enterprises including small companies

LOANS VS GRANTS

- Mix of grants and loans – dependent on amount applied for, small amounts should be grants
- Could be dependent on company turnover at time of application, companies with a lower turnover could get grants
- If you are supplying grants to the industry, companies will employ more people and those people pay tax which will benefit the country as a whole

- Could keep the developers honest if given loans instead of grants
- Type of funding could influence assessment decisions
- Consider public interest/good of the game eg games with health outcomes
- Research funding comes from the Australian Research Council and universities for some serious games

OTHER

- Give small amounts to small companies to create business plans as part of an application for funding, this would make assessment of applications easier
- Funding for new enterprises is available from other government programs eg New Enterprise Incentive Scheme
- Every application should be a business case whether enterprise or project, a cost/benefit risk analysis essential for every application
- Growth and sustainability should be the deciding factor for support
- Mentoring – business mentoring is essential for small companies
- Be as innovative in the way you administer the fund as the people you are funding

21 December 2012