GAMES: EXPANSION PACK

Issued: 9 March 2022

Updated: 23 January 2023

A Screen Australia initiative to help Australian game studios increase the ambition and quality of their digital games, and to transition into businesses of scale that can better compete in the global market.

Screen Australia will provide grants of up to $150,000 per successful application for production of a digital game with a budget up to $500,000. The initiative will run for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years. Higher budget games are likely to be able to receive Australian Government support through the announced Digital Games Tax Offset.

WHAT CAN I APPLY FOR?

Applicants can apply for funding for a digital game that has a total budget up to $500,000.

Applicants can request up to $150,000 per application in respect of a game.

WHAT GAMES ARE ELIGIBLE?

Games can be for any video game platform including PC, mobile, VR and console. The primary intention of the initiative is to fund the creation of new titles. However, applications for live ops development of existing games are eligible.

Games with co-financing from commercial partners or state agencies (including state based rebates) are eligible to apply.

The following games are ineligible for support through this initiative:

- games not intended for supply to the general public (eg. a game to be used by a company for training purposes or by an institution, or a game limited to one or a small number of locations);
- games which are substantially advertising or promotions;
- gambling or gambling simulations;
- games that feature or link exploitative, or unethical play-to-win or play-to-earn mechanics;

- games that contain or have a relationship to high risk and volatile trading products or technology;
- games that contain [or link] any content or mechanic that is in breach of any law or regulation; and
- games, that in the reasonable opinion of Screen Australia, may have difficulties receiving an Australian classification, due to the inclusion of content such as:
  - instruction or promotion of crime, cruelty or violence; depictions of frequent, and/or very high impact violence.
  - sexual activity; sexual violence; exploitative depictions.
  - instructional illicit drug use; encouragement of illicit drug use; illicit interactive drug use.
  - any other content that contravenes prevailing community standards.

The initiative will preference original game ideas, rather than licensed intellectual property.

Applications for XR projects that are intended as a story-driven experience, rather than a game, should not apply to Games: Expansion Pack. Such projects may be eligible for funding under [Screen Australia's Online Production fund](#). Please speak to [Screen Australia](#) if you require clarity on which fund is best suited to your application.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

This fund targets emerging or small to medium independent Australian game developers. A game studio is considered to be independent by Screen Australia if it is a private company (not listed on the ASX) and it is not majority owned or controlled by an overseas company. This also applies to any related companies.

There are no minimum credit requirements that applicants need to meet. Regardless, Games: Expansion Pack remains an initiative for professional developers.

Applicants need to be a company to apply. The applicant company should be the actual company that will carry out the development activities on the game (i.e. employs development staff and engages independent contractors).

Screen Australia can only fund Australian projects. In the context of digital games, this does not mean that the game must have an Australian theme. However, the game must predominantly be developed in Australia, under the key creative control of Australians or Australian residents, to be considered sufficiently Australian to be eligible for funding.

The applicant company must meet the General Eligibility requirements set out in [Screen Australia's Terms of Trade](#). In particular, an applicant must be incorporated and carrying out business in Australia and have its central management and control in Australia.

Student teams are not eligible to apply and should seek funding and other support offered by their educational providers.

Screen Australia is committed to building equity into its programs and its engagement with the community. Gender equity, anti-racism, authentic story-telling, from and about under-represented groups, and inclusivity are priorities for Screen Australia. We expect that the lived experience portrayed through the narrative and characters are reflected within the key creative team. It is

vital the creative team has the cultural authorship to tell the story so that telling of the story is authentic. This will be taken into account when assessing applications.

For Australian screen content to effectively deliver cultural and economic benefits it must speak to, and be for, all Australians. Ultimately a diversity of ideas and a diverse workforce will grow the Australia screen industry, make it more relevant to Australian audiences and more competitive internationally.

Applications that were unsuccessful from round one of Games: Expansion Pack funding may apply once more with the same project. Applications that are declined within the 2022/23 year round are also able to apply once more with the same project. After two unsuccessful applications, a project is no longer eligible to apply for the fund.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Applications for the 2022-23 round are now open and can be made through the Screen Australia application portal. Applications will close 5pm AEST Thursday 4th May 2023.

Applications consist of the materials requested in the application form and a proof-of-concept in the form of:

- a playable prototype of the game
- a document that briefly contextualises the prototype by listing:
    - Description of the minimum hardware requirements needed to run the prototype
    - Step-by-step instructions that detail how to get the prototype running
    - Description of prototype controls (a controller map is preferred, but a list is acceptable)
    - Description of the intended experience of the prototype

Applicants will also need to submit:

- a development plan, including schedule and milestones;
- a finance plan and budget to completion and release (in the prescribed format);
- details of existing financing deals (such as grant agreements or deal memos); and
- a marketing and release plan no fewer than 3 pages long.
- a downloadable video that features at least 30 seconds of gameplay
- a downloadable video pitch of no more than 3 minutes outlining the vision for the game(s) and the impact of a successful release on the applicant's business.

Applicants can also provide examples of past games or credits that they consider will help the assessment of the application.

If an applicant and/or team has access requirements that make it difficult to submit their application, please email Games and we will make arrangements to assist.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The Program Operations team will review each application to ensure eligibility, required application materials, and that prototypes are operational. Once confirmed, the applicant will receive an email advising that their application has moved to assessment. They will also be given an estimated timeframe of the outcome – generally around 5-7 weeks from receipt of email.

Each application will be assessed on the below criteria:

- the level of creativity and entertainment value of the game;
- the viability of the budget and development and financing plans to enable the game to be developed to release;
- the viability of the marketing and release plan, and the potential for the game to contribute to the scale and sustainability of the applicant; and
- the level to which the project and key creatives reflect gender equity and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia.

Applications will be assessed by Screen Australia's Online and Games Unit. Screen Australia may engage external assessors to assist it with some applications.

TERMS OF FUNDING

Screen Australia's funding will be provided as a grant. It is not repayable to Screen Australia from the receipts of the game. The funding agreement will set out milestones appropriate to the game's development plan. Payments will be made on satisfactory achievement of each milestone.

At least 90% of the grant must be spent on development expenditure of the game in Australia. Successful applicants can elect to allocate up to 10% of the grant amount to marketing activities for the game, including attending conferences and festivals to promote the game. Applicants will need to provide a satisfactory acquittal of the grant against the development expenditure.

Screen Australia acknowledges and appreciates the efforts that go into applications, but given the anticipated volume of applications, it will not be able to provide detailed individual feedback on each application.

If your game receives funding through Screen Australia, please be aware that, as a government organisation, we are legally obligated to report on content we fund. This may mean that each title has to be listed online or announced after funding is approved. If first right to announce is a consideration, applicants are requested to consider the timing of submitting applications.

If you are unsure about your eligibility or have questions about the application form, please email us at games@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.

Supporting Documents

Games: Expansion Pack FAQs
Budget and Finance Plan template
Games podcast

Change Log
23 January 2023
- Added additional criteria points in for ineligible games including; play-to-win, trading, content that breaches law/regulations or community standards.
- Removed the line 'Applications are limited to one per company for this current round'.

7 September 2022:
- A prototype and gameplay video are now a requirement
- Addition of Prototype Context Document to submission material
- Only one game per application, rather than multiple
- Changes to Assessment criteria 3 and 4