

Screen Story Development Fund

Date: 1 July 2018

Updated: 1 July 2020

Through the Screen Story Development Fund, Screen Australia supports content creators to take advantage of existing and emerging opportunities to develop compelling drama stories. Applicants may apply for development funding from one of two strands - The Generate Fund or the Premium Fund.

The **Generate Fund** is for lower budget projects on any platform with an emphasis on new and emerging talent, or experienced talent wanting to take creative risks. [Jump to Generate Fund Guidelines.](#)

The **Premium Fund**, also open for projects on any platform, is for higher budget projects of ambition and scale from successful screen content makers. The commercial viability of the project, and the path to a significant and clearly defined audience is a key focus of this fund. [Jump to Premium Fund Guidelines.](#)

Premium Fund Guidelines

We encourage you to read these guidelines carefully as they are intended to help you deliver the strongest application possible. You will also need to read our [Terms of Trade](#) to ensure you are eligible for Screen Australia funding

Please also refer to the [Premium Fund FAQs](#) and carefully consider the objectives, eligibility requirements and assessment criteria in these guidelines before applying for funding under this program.

About this program

The Story Development Premium Fund provides development funding support for distinctive higher-budget projects with teams that have the critical and/or commercial success to develop, finance and produce projects of ambition and scale.

For example, someone in the key creative team will need to have enough creative traction and heat around them with the marketplace in order to attract cast and raise the finance for a higher budget feature film and also the producing experience to deliver. For higher budget projects for a Commissioning Platform, the team need the necessary experience to give a Commissioning Platform confidence that they will deliver the project as well as the creative vision.

The Premium Development fund has the following aims:

- **Ambition & Scale:** to identify and support distinctive, quality, higher budget drama projects of ambition and scale for any platform.

- **Success:** to support successful screen content makers.
- **Viability & Market:** to generate viable projects and teams that will attract marketplace finance and are intended for significant audience reach.
- **Culture & Diversity:** to ensure the storytellers and stories being told reflect gender equity, and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia, all of which are important culturally, creatively and economically.

Who can apply?

Applications for Premium 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.
- Has a significant track record/production credits on critically and/or commercially successful projects.
- Has a project that is a distinctive, higher-budget series or one-off long form drama project on any platform.
- Controls the rights whether they are the writer, director or producer.
- Has the demonstrated know-how to develop the project, raise finance and execute the creative vision.
- Meets the following budget thresholds
 - Online one-off or series - over \$10,000 per minute
 - Extended Reality* - over \$15,000 per minute
 - One-off or series for a Commissioning Platform - at least \$1.3 million per hour. We may prioritise series of longer lengths (8 broadcast hours or more)
 - Feature Films - at least \$3 million.

***Extended reality (XR)** is a term referring to all real-and-virtual combined environments and human-machine interactions generated by computer technology and wearables. It includes augmented reality (AR), augmented virtuality (AV) and virtual reality (VR).

Specific requirements apply where a project involves Indigenous 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.

What is not eligible for this program?

You will not be eligible for Premium if you have a project that:

- Does not meet all requirements and conditions in our [Terms of Trade](#)
- Has been declined twice for Screen Australia development funding (except in exceptional circumstances)

Lower budget productions from new or emerging talent, or experienced creators with a lower budget project, should refer to the [Generate Fund](#).

What funding is available?

Funding is for development costs. The Development budget can include whatever the project and team need including a treatment, scriptment, draft script, bible, research, writers' rooms, and/or the production of a Proof of Concept (POC) or sizzle reel. For more detail and POC requirements, see [Premium Fund FAQs](#).

There is no cap on funding but the amount applied for must be reasonable relative to the scope of the project, the development activities proposed, and any additional sources of development financing raised or expected.

Requested amounts should also align with our [Contribution Guide](#).

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. Generally the delivery date will be six months after signing the contract.

How and when can I apply?

Applications for the Premium Fund are open all year. There is a two-stage process for assessment, however a decision to fund at Stage 1 can be made if we have sufficient information and consider that the project and team is strong enough.

Applications for Stage 1 can be made at any time through the [application portal](#).

Applicants may only submit their project to Stage 2 by invitation after a successful Stage 1 application. An applicant has up to three months to submit after Stage 1 approval.

Stage 2 Application forms will be sent directly to the applicant, and consist of a longer story document and supporting material.

Please refer to the [Premium Fund FAQs](#) and carefully consider the objectives, eligibility requirements and assessment criteria for the Premium Fund before applying.

If you have any further questions, please email us at development@screenaustralia.gov.au.

What do I need to include in my application?

Applications consist of:

- Completed online Application form
- An up to 4-minute downloadable video pitch to camera
- A four-page Creative Visions & Development plan

Those invited to Stage 2 will have a period of up to three months to submit a further application. A 2nd Stage application will include:

- Longer story documents such as treatment, draft etc.
- A revised Creative Vision & Development Plan
- Supporting material that will help communicate your creative vision, such as images, music or related material.

For more detail on information and materials required for the application, and tips on what makes a compelling application, see the [Premium Fund FAQs](#).

How are applications assessed?

In addition to addressing the specific aims of the Premium Fund above, Stage 1 and Stage 2 applications will be assessed by Screen Australia executives and/or industry specialists against the following criteria:

Stage 1

- **Experience & Success:** Does the team, key creative or individual evidence critical acclaim or commercial success with their previous work and is there the necessary experience in the team for a higher budget project?
- **Story & Audience:** Is the story concept strong and distinctive, is it a project of ambition and scale that will it reach and resonate with the intended audience?
- **Development plan:** The degree to which the development plan identifies the challenges in the current material while also offering potential strategies to address them in the next phase(s) of development, taking into account any development funding already received.
- **Culture & Diversity:** Do elements of the project reflect gender equity and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia?

Stage 2

- **Story:** The strength and distinctiveness of the story, and if the execution will resonate with its intended audience. Proof of Concepts (POC) will also be assessed against this criteria.
- **Development plan:** The degree to which the development plan identifies the challenges in the current material while also offering potential strategies to address them in the next phase(s) of development, taking into account any development funding already received.
- **Audience & Budget:** A demonstrated pathway to audience appropriate to the project's budget size and financing strategy.
- **Talent:** the ability of the individual or team to develop and finance the project, execute the vision and leverage the opportunity to progress their careers/business. In the case of a solo writer applicant, the quality of the plan for the attachment of a producer at a later stage will be taken into consideration.

All projects involving Indigenous content or participation will be assessed with Indigenous assessors.

Decisions will take into account the assessment criteria, availability of funds, diversity of the current slate of projects and teams across all platforms, as well as the perceived need for Screen Australia funds by the applicant

Decisions are normally a four-week turnaround for Stage 1 and a four week turn around for Stage 2 applications.

Indigenous content, collaboration and participation

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

Whenever there is Indigenous content and/or Indigenous community participation in the project, or when there are Indigenous 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 Indigenous 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.

Please also refer to the [Australian Film, Television and Radio School \(AFTRS\) video](#).

All projects involving Indigenous content or participation will be assessed by Indigenous Assessors.

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/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.

What will help your application?

We receive many applications every year, so you need to make a strong case for your project. Here are some pointers to help you deliver the strongest application possible:

- Please refer to the [Premium Fund FAQs](#) and carefully consider the objectives, eligibility requirements and assessment criteria for the Premium Fund before applying.
- Make sure you meet all eligibility requirements in these guidelines and in [Terms of Trade](#).
- Preview the [application form](#) before you start
- Make sure you have all the required details and attachments ready to be submitted with the application. See the [Premium Fund FAQs](#) for more detail on what information is required and tips for what makes a compelling application.
- Make sure your application talks directly to the assessment criteria as well as the aims of the fund outlined in these guidelines

If you have any further questions, please email us at development@screenaustralia.gov.au or call Program Operations on 1800 507 901

Update Log

1 July 2020

- TV budget threshold lifted to \$1.3 million from \$1 million.
- Creative vision / development plan now required at stage 1.
- Turnaround time for stage 1 extended from three weeks to four weeks

1 October 2019

- Removed contact details from first page as they are contained elsewhere within document

11 January 2019

- Defined Commissioning Platform
- Stage 1 turnaround time extended from normally two weeks to three weeks for both Generate and Premium.
- Added 'distinctive' to the Premium fund aim under Ambition & Scale.
- Changed the project's production budget level for Generate and Premium from a guide to a requirement.
- Added Story Specialists link and Conflict of Interest to the assessment process.
- Revised Stage 1 Premium assessment criteria to reflect the aims.
- Revised Stage 2 assessment criteria to reflect solo writers.
- Clarified delivery and further funding section.
- Increased the pitch time from maximum three-minute pitch to maximum four-minute pitch.
- Added a one paragraph synopsis for a Proof of Concept.
- Included Podcasts as part of the development budget.

Generate Fund Guidelines

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About this program

The Story Development Generate Fund provides development funding support for talented emerging screen content makers to develop bold and distinctive lower budget drama stories for any platform.

It is also for screen content makers who may be experienced but want to take creative risks within a lower budget context. In response to the changing way audiences are accessing screen stories, there will be a particular focus on projects utilising online pathways to audiences in the Generate fund.

The Generate Development fund has the following aims:

- **Talent:** to identify and support new and emerging talent and their career progression, as well as create opportunities for experienced practitioners to take creative risks.
- **Story & Audience:** to encourage bold and distinctive lower budget drama stories for any platform that can demonstrate a clear pathway to audience.
- **Culture & Diversity:** to ensure the storytellers and stories being told reflect gender equity and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia, all of which are important culturally, creatively and economically.

Who can apply?

Applications for Generate 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.
- Meets the following budget thresholds
 - Online one-off or series - under \$10,000 per minute
 - Extended Reality* - under \$15,000 per minute
 - One-off or series for a Commissioning Platform - under \$1,300,000 per hour
 - Feature Films - under \$3,000,000

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What is not eligible for this program?

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- Does not meet all requirements and conditions in our [Terms of Trade](#)
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Higher budget productions from experienced content creators should refer to the [Premium Fund](#).

What funding is available?

Funding is for development costs. The Development budget can include whatever the project and team need including a treatment, scriptment, draft script, bible, research, writers' rooms, and/or the production of a Proof of Concept (POC) or sizzle reel. For more detail on POC requirements, see [Generate Fund FAQs](#).

There is no cap on funding but the amount applied for must be reasonable relative to the scope of the project, the development activities proposed, and any additional sources of development financing raised or expected.

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Stage 1

- **Talent:** Is there something about the individual or team that generates excitement about their creative potential?
- **Story & Audience:** Is the story concept strong and distinctive and will it reach and resonate with the intended audience?
- **Culture & Diversity:** Do elements of the project reflect gender equity and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia?
- **Development plan:** The degree to which the development plan identifies the challenges in the current material while also offering potential strategies to address them in the next phase(s) of development, taking into account any development funding already received.

Stage 2

- **Story:** The strength and distinctiveness of the story, and if the execution will resonate with its intended audience. Proof of Concepts (POC) will also be assessed against this criteria.
- **Audience & Budget:** A demonstrated pathway to audience appropriate to the project's budget size and financing strategy.
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- **Talent:** the ability of the individual or team to develop and finance the project, execute the vision and leverage the opportunity to progress their careers/business. In the case of a solo writer applicant, the quality of the plan for the attachment of a producer at a later stage will be taken into consideration.

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