Screen Story Development Fund

Date: 1 July 2018
Updated: 1 October 2019

Screen Australia supports talent, quality, innovation and cultural value through programs that increase the ambitions, risk tolerance and diversity of Australian storytelling for local and international audiences.

The way screen stories are developed, financed, distributed and, most importantly, consumed by audiences is evolving at a rapid rate. In particular, delivery platforms such as online, TV, mobile content and cinema are converging, which makes definitions of screen content according to an individual platform less relevant.

Through the Screen Story Development Fund, Screen Australia supports content creators to take advantage of existing and emerging opportunities to develop compelling drama stories:

- for any platform - series or one-off.
- from and with a diversity of creative voices from around Australia.
- that capitalise on current and emerging digital platforms and audience opportunities.
- with budgets that make sense in terms of the experience of the team and audience reach.
- in order to build a vibrant creative environment with increased business and job opportunities.

Note: The word ‘drama’ refers to scripted fiction content of any genre (comedy, action, thriller, etc).

For the purpose of these Guidelines the term Commissioning Platform includes a free-to-air or subscription television broadcaster and/or online platforms such as subscription video on demand (SVOD) i.e. Netflix, Amazon, Stan, Hulu, iView, SBS on demand, etc.
Generate

**WHY**

Generate has three primary aims:

1. **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.
2. **Story & Audience**: to encourage bold and distinctive lower budget drama stories for any platform that can demonstrate a clear pathway to audience.
3. **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.

Note: you will need to answer to these aims and the assessment criteria in your application.

**WHO**

Applications will be open to anyone who:

- Is a new, emerging or experienced screen content creator who demonstrates an ability and passion for storytelling combined with a distinctive and authentic creative voice.
- Is an Australian individual or team and meets our Terms of Trade. 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.

*Previously funded?* If you have been funded previously through Story Development you can apply directly to stage 2. Contact Program Operations on 1 800 507 901.

*Previously declined?* If your project has been declined twice, you are not eligible to apply with the same project again. See the Process for more information.

**WHAT**

What you can apply for:

- Funding for a lower budget series or one-off long form drama project for any platform.
- The development budget can include whatever the project and team need including, but not limited to, a treatment, scriptment, draft script, series bible, research, time critical filming, writers rooms, actors’ workshops and/or the production of a proof of concept (POC), which could be a short film that speaks to the long form, a pilot episode, short shareable online content or sizzle reel.
- There is no cap on funding but the application must be reasonable and strategic with regards to the project, the amount of funding applied for, the proposed phase of development and any additional sources of development financing.

See What Makes a Compelling Application? for more information.

**HOW**

Applications will be open all year round with a two-stage process for assessment:

- **Stage 1**:
  - Short materials for your story and a pitch to camera.
  - Normally a three-week turnaround.
- **Stage 2**:
  - Invitation only.
  - The applicant has up to three months to submit after a Stage 1 approval.
  - Longer story materials/documents.
  - Normally a four-week turnaround.

See the Process for more information.
Premium

**WHY**

Premium has four primary aims:

1. **Ambition & Scale**: to identify and support distinctive, quality, higher budget drama projects of ambition and scale for any platform.
2. **Success**: to support successful screen content makers.
3. **Viability & Market**: to generate viable projects and teams that will attract marketplace finance and are intended for significant audience reach.
4. **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.

Note: you will need to answer to these aims and the assessment criteria in your application.

**WHO**

Applications will be open to anyone who:

- Has a significant track record/production credits on projects that have commercial success and/or critical acclaim.
- Is an Australian individual or team and meets our Terms of Trade. Co-productions may also apply with an application from the Australian Company.
- 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 vision in production for the intended platform and audience. For applications from writers and/or directors, a producer will need to be attached at later stage development.

**Previously funded?** If you have been funded previously through Story Development you can apply directly to Stage 2. Contact Program Operations on 1 800 507 901.

**Previously declined?** If your project has been declined twice, you are not eligible to apply with the same project again. See the Process for more information.

**WHAT**

What you can apply for:

- Funding for a distinctive, higher budget series or one-off long form drama project of ambition and scale for any platform.
- The development budget can contain whatever the project and team need including, but not limited to, a treatment, scriptment, draft script, bible, research, writers rooms, and/or the production of a Proof of Concept (POC) or sizzle reel.
- There is no cap on funding but the application must be reasonable and strategic with regards to the project, the amount of funding applied for, the proposed phase of development and any additional sources of development financing. Screen Australia will only support higher budget projects for a Commissioning Platform in order to leverage the aims of the fund, particularly in regards to the distinctive subject matter, diversity and inclusion. See What Makes a Compelling Application? for more information.

**HOW**

Applications will be open all year round with a two-stage process for assessment:

- **Stage 1**:
  - Short materials for your story and a pitch to camera.
  - Normally a three-week turnaround.
- **Stage 2**:
  - Invitation only.
  - The applicant has up to three months to submit after a Stage 1 approval.
  - Longer story document and supporting material.
Process:

Which fund should I apply to?

Although we have opened up eligibility requirements, you still need to consider whether you, the team and the project fit with the aims of the fund you are applying for.

The Generate Fund is 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. The project’s total production budget dictates the fund for which you should apply. In response to the changing way audiences are accessing screen stories, it is important to note that there will be a particular focus on projects utilising online pathways to audiences in the Generate fund.

The Premium Fund is for screen content makers that have produced credits and have achieved critical acclaim through awards, screening selection, a significant number of online views or commercial success through financial returns appropriate to the budget and scale of the project. You need to be able to evidence your critical and/or commercial success and why your experience makes sense in terms of the project and the budget size. 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 project’s total production budget dictates the fund for which you should apply.

We understand that development takes time, but even individual writers at the beginning of a development process need to think about their pathway to audience and how they will reach them. This should include a strategy to attach a producer at a later stage of development.

If you have a project that has a higher budget but the team are not experienced, you will need to think about the necessary elements to attract marketplace, cast, raise the finance and successfully deliver the project to its audience before you make an application to the Premium Fund. Otherwise, it is likely the project will not get through the first stage of assessment.

Screen Australia will consider higher budget distinctive projects intended for a Commissioning Platform. To be competitive, these projects will also need to leverage gender equity, diversity and inclusivity both on and off screen in addition to being distinctive, quality projects with scale and ambition. The intent of the fund is to produce early development material reflecting these aims, in order to attract interest from a Commissioning Platform or to co-develop with a Commissioning Platform.

Project Budget-Level Requirements for Generate & Premium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generate (lower budgets)</th>
<th>Premium (higher budgets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online one-off or series</td>
<td>under $10,000 per minute</td>
<td>over $10,000 per minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Reality*</td>
<td>under $15,000 per minute</td>
<td>over $15,000 per minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-off or series for a Commissioning Platform</td>
<td>under $1,000,000 per hour</td>
<td>over $1,000,000 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature Films</td>
<td>under $3 million</td>
<td>over $3 million</td>
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</table>

Normally a four-week turnaround. See the Process for more information.
*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).

If you are unsure of which fund to apply to, please contact Program Operations on **1800 507 901** or via email [development@screenaustralia.gov.au](mailto:development@screenaustralia.gov.au).

**Assessment process**

Applications will be assessed by Screen Australia executives and/or industry specialists as required and in accordance with their experience across relevant formats and platforms. Please refer to the current list of story specialists. If you have any Conflicts of Interest with any of the specialists or Screen Australia staff please send an email to [development@screenaustralia.gov.au](mailto:development@screenaustralia.gov.au) before submitting your application. An actual or perceived Conflict of Interest might include the applicant or applicant company having an active or prospective working relationship with a specialist; or entities or persons associated with a specialist, or a close personal relationship with a specialist or entities or persons associated with a specialist, or a financial or personal gain from a specialist.

Decisions will take into account the criteria listed under each stage of development, 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.

We aim to make the application and assessment processes 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. If you are unsuccessful, you will receive an email with a short paragraph outlining the reasons against the published criteria. No further correspondence or discussion will be entered into. Please note: these assessments comment against specific criteria for reporting purposes. These are not script notes and should not be regarded as such.

**Stage 1:**

Applications will be open all year round through the application portal and assessed against the following criteria. Please note: you should also review the Stage 2 criteria below in order to understand the expectations for the longer documents if you are successful at Stage 1:

**Generate**

- **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?

**Premium**

- **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?
- **Culture & Diversity:** Do elements of the project reflect gender equity and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia?

Screen Australia may decide to fund a project at Stage 1.

**Stage 2:**

If you are successful in Stage 1, you will receive an invitation from Screen Australia to apply for Stage 2. Applicants will have three months to submit their Stage 2 applications. Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **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.

**Business affairs**

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 and must meet any contractual pre-conditions. The delivery date will be six months after signing the contract.

You can contract with Screen Australia as a company or an individual (eg. sole trader) but in all cases you must have an ABN. If you are intending to pay other people, you will be required to set up a company with an ABN. The cost of setting up a production company can be included in your development budget.

Screen Australia needs to contract with the entity that controls the rights to the project. This may be directly with a key creative provided it can be demonstrated that they control the rights. You may add legal costs to your budget if you need to clarify this by entering new agreements. In some cases, we will require a solicitor’s opinion letter confirming that the applicant has all necessary rights.

If you have any questions with regards to your rights please contact your relevant guild or organisation such as the Australian Directors’ Guild **ADG**, Australian Writers’ Guild **AWG**, and Screen Producers Australia **SPA**. Please refer to Screen Australia’s **Terms of Trade** for further information.

**Proof of Concepts (POC)**

Screen Australia will also fund the production of POCs through the Generate and Premium funds. Generally no more than 10 minutes in length. The POC you intend to produce should be a visual demonstration or showcase of the longer form project. This might include:

- a pilot episode for a series e.g. *Wham Bam Thank You Ma’am*
- a short film that speaks to a feature film e.g. Jennifer Kent’s *Monster* to *The Babadook*, or
- a comedy sketch for an online series e.g. *Bondi Hipsters* to *Soul Mates*, or
- a sizzle reel that features a montage, clips or segments that clearly and efficiently outline the concept and tone of the project.

**Indigenous content, collaboration and participation**

Screen Australia supports the telling of Indigenous stories by Indigenous creatives and storytellers. Where this is not the case, we expect 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**. This includes, but is not limited to; 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 with 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.

**Subsequent applications for individuals**
An individual applicant applying without a team may only apply three times to Stage 1 within the financial year across multiple projects, unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

**Delivery and Further Funding**
Successful projects that are ready to deliver will receive a link in order to submit the final delivery materials. You will also have the option to submit these materials and a new budget for further funding through the same form. This further funding application will be assessed and brought to a decision meeting. If you are successful for further funding, you will receive a variation to your existing development contract.

Projects that have received funding through previous Story Development Fund (pre July 2018), Brilliant Stories or Hot Shots Plus programs are eligible to apply directly to Stage 2. Please contact Program Operations 1 800 507 901 or development@screenaustralia.gov.au.

**Funding limits**
- Screen Australia will only fund Australian creatives and costs of the development budget, except for international consultants, mentors or script editors.
- Screen Australia development funding cannot be retrospective.

**Declined projects:**
If your project has received two declines, you are not eligible to apply with the same project again, unless in exceptional circumstances.

This includes any of the following:
- two declines across Generate and Premium Stage 1.
- two declines across Generate and Premium Stage 2.
- two declines from any previous Screen Australia drama development funding (excluding Gender Matters Brilliant Stories and Hot Shots Plus).
- one previous decline from Screen Australia drama development funding plus one decline from Generate or Premium.

If you are unsure about your eligibility please contact Program Operations on 1800 507 901 or via email development@screenaustralia.gov.au.
What makes a compelling application?

Although Screen Australia has opened up eligibility, competition for funding is high. You will still need to think strategically about submitting a strong and convincing application for funding while considering the aims of each fund and the assessment criteria. In general though, you need to think about:

- What makes your story distinctive and stand out from all the others for an audience?
- Does the team or individual’s experience and/or critical or commercial success make sense in regards to budget size?
- Is the budget size reasonable in regards to the potential audience and commercial returns? Although Screen Australia’s main focus is not on commercial returns, we want people thinking about how they are building sustainable businesses and sustainable creative careers.

Stage 1 materials

1. A simple pitch to camera, maximum four minutes:
   - Please tell us about the long-form story.
   - Why are you and/or your team driven to make this project now?
   - What makes your story distinctive and stand out from all the others for an audience?
   - Tell us a bit about the key creatives and where you are all at in your careers.
   - If you are applying for a Proof of Concept (POC), please also tell us about the idea, how it connects with the long-form project and how it will raise awareness of the project and team, attract finance and/or build an audience for the long-form project.

   The pitch to camera can take any form - people, pictures, text on screen, music, sound, etc. It does not need to be a highly produced video to ‘sell’ to assessors but an opportunity to talk through your submission. You must upload the pitch directly to the application (maximum 200MB) but you may also include a link for the assessors to view at a higher resolution if necessary.

2. A one-paragraph and one-page synopsis for the long-form project. We need to see the core of the dramatic story engine that will support the long-form project. If you are also applying for a POC, please also include a one-paragraph synopsis for the POC.

3. A sample of your previous work: For emerging key creatives, please supply either:
   - A sample of your previous or current written work, maximum 10 pages, and/or
   - A link to the best example of your produced work, maximum 15 mins.

   Remember, you need to showcase the best of you and/or your team’s work. We don’t want to see everything you’ve ever made.

4. Pathway to audience: We want you to be thinking about reaching your audience and how you will finance your project right from the inception of your screen story concept and to build this into the development process.

   - Who is the target audience for your project?
   - Why will this audience want to see your project?
   - How will the audience find and engage with your project?
   - How will you finance the production of your project? How will the project generate revenue for the team/individual/production company? Or, if this project is primarily a talent escalator, how will this create audience and marketplace interest in the team and their next project?

See our [Pathway to Audience Guide](#) for more information.
5. **A development budget:** You can apply for whatever the project and team need to feed the creative vision and develop the project towards financing and production. For example, you may apply for fees for:

- key creatives - writer, producer, director
- key heads of department
- script editor
- consultants - story, social media/online, marketing, financing
- mentors - producer, writer, director
- reader’s reports
- podcasts (as part of the development to screen)
- research
- writers’ rooms
- legal costs & options
- budgets, schedules and casting
- visual materials - sizzle reels, look books, pitch materials
- time critical filming
- table reads & workshops with actors

The development budget should be reasonable and strategic, reflecting what you need to effectively undertake a particular stage of development. Although there is no cap, a reasonable development budget for the Generate fund without the costs of a POC would probably sit between $10k and $30k. **Premium** development budgets may be higher, up to $100k, and may include multiple phases of development in the one application.

The following is a guide to Screen Australia’s **contribution** towards development fees for drama projects. **These are not official rates.** Please discuss industry and guild rates with your relevant guilds and organisations- [ADG](https://www.adg.org.au), [AWG](https://www.awg.org.au), [MEAA](https://www.meaaustralia.org.au) and [SPA](https://www.screenaustralia.com.au):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Screen Australia’s maximum contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writer(s)</td>
<td>Outline, Treatment or Scriptment</td>
<td>Up to $10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bible and pilot episode</td>
<td>$10,000 - $30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drafts (includes polish on each)</td>
<td>generally $20,000 per draft</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>as appropriate</td>
<td>$3,000 - $15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director(s)</td>
<td>Bible, Outline, Treatment or Scriptment</td>
<td>Up to $3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draft</td>
<td>Up to $6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Script Editor</td>
<td>Bible, Outline, Treatment or Scriptment</td>
<td>Up to $5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draft</td>
<td>Up to $10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer(s)</td>
<td>Bible, Outline, Treatment or Scriptment</td>
<td>Up to $10,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Late Stage elements</td>
<td>Up to $10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultant(s)</td>
<td>Story, Social Strategy, Digital, Mentors</td>
<td>Up to $3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td>Up to $10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,000 - $10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time critical filming</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000 - $15,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>POCs/shareable content for Generate</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000 - $50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POCs/shareable content for Premium</td>
<td></td>
<td>Up to $100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal &amp; Option fees</td>
<td></td>
<td>Up to $3,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Stage 2 materials

1. **A story** document or story materials that effectively communicate and evoke the story for the long form project. This could be a story outline, treatment (10-20 pages), scriptment, script(s) (for feature films max 120 pages), series outline or other document relevant to the project’s story, platform and length.

See our [*Story Documents Guide*](#) for more information.

We recognise that screen storytellers may develop projects in different ways, so we are also open to receiving other kinds of story materials such as existing project footage, visual materials (e.g. sample scenes, story boards, artwork or images), as well as music and/or sound. If these are the only type of story materials submitted without there being an accompanying story document, then these materials must effectively convey the central story and/or the argument, provide a strong sense of the central characters and give a sense of the intended onscreen experience for an audience.

If you are applying for the production of a POC, then please also include the story document or story materials for the POC.

Note: You must include story materials for the long-form project at the same time you apply for the POC funds, even if you are only applying for the funds for the production of the POC.

2. **A development plan**

Please tell us about your development plan in either a maximum three-page document or three-minute video.

The development plan should provide us with a strong sense of your creative vision - the emotional experience and meanings that the team is crafting for an audience - and also offer a critical analysis of the material in its current form and a plan for how these challenges will be met. In its simplest form the development plan is about where the project has come from, where it is, where it wants to go and how you plan to get it there.

Update Log:

1 October 2019

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.