



Australian Government



Documentary Development Program

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Contact a Development/Investment Manager

Before applying to Screen Australia for any Documentary funding it is advisable that you contact a Development/Investment Manager to discuss your project. Contact the Program Operations team to confirm your eligibility and they will advise with whom to speak: 1800 507 901 or documentary@screenaustralia.gov.au

WHY

The aim of Screen Australia's Documentary Development program is to assist documentary makers in achieving planned outcomes for the development of their projects. The program primarily supports one-off and series documentaries, including online and VR. This could include:

- Further research
- Writing the next draft of a script or treatment
- Strategic shooting and/or editing to attract marketplace finance for the next stage of development or production; or compiling a sizzle reel

WHAT

While each of Screen Australia's Documentary programs, across Development and Production, has its own criteria and eligibility, they all share the following goals:

- **Strong storytelling:** bold, engaging and distinctive stories that contribute to, or create, a national conversation; and shape or reflect identity.
- **Audience:** we fund any platform but are looking for a clear and genuine pathway which connects to audiences in relation to the amount requested.
- **Culture and Diversity:** to ensure-storytellers and stories reflect gender equity and/or diversity of people and experiences from around Australia all of which are important culturally, creatively and economically.
- **Talent:** to identify and support emerging talent as well as create opportunities for experienced practitioners.

Screen Australia anticipates allocating direct funding of approximately \$14-16 million across all documentary funding programs in 2019/20. With our limited funds, each program is competitive and we assess each project on how well it delivers on Screen Australia's aims, assessment criteria, and how it compares to others submitted in the same round.

HOW

You may apply at any time using the [Application Portal](#)

There is a one-stage process for assessment with, normally, a 6-week turnaround for decisions upon receipt of eligible application.

Applicants may apply for any amount up to \$30,000.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- **Strength of the Idea:** How competitively does it meet the aims of excellence, culture and/or innovation
- **Business Case:** The appropriateness of the level of funds requested in relation to the proposed development strategy; and use of funds at this stage of development
- **Pathway to Audience:** How well you understand your primary target audience and demonstrate the strength of your plan to reach them
- **Creative Team:** How appropriate are the skills and experience of the creative team to deliver on the proposal, promised audience and production funding

Other factors, including availability of Screen Australia funds, diversity of slate and the gender and cultural diversity of the team may also influence Screen Australia's funding decisions.

Applications are considered by Screen Australia executives and/or industry specialists as required. Assessments are made solely on the materials submitted through the portal.

MATERIALS MUST INCLUDE

- **Treatment / Proposal** - A maximum five-page treatment/proposal. Give an overview of your project and what you want to do. Be clear on format; what makes the story or approach stand out from similar topics; what visual techniques, style, tone and characters you are looking for.
- **Development Notes** - Details on the current stage of the project, the intended deliverables to be developed and how the materials created in this development phase will be used to secure further development or production finance or support. If applicable, include a short summary on how this project will support new and emerging talent, or create new opportunities for experienced practitioners.

- **Platform & Audience** - Description of your proposed pathway to audience and why you think it's realistic and achievable. Tell us how strong your pathway is in relation to the topic, format and grant request. We recommend you include a description of who you think this audience is and any supporting notes on how you know this audience exists, how you will build this audience and how the audience will access the project initially and in the longer term.
- **Creative Team** - two to three page CVs for all key team members and examples of director's previous work if available.
- **Cultural Collaboration** - There must be evidence of appropriate cultural collaboration on all applications with regard to the project's themes and personnel including gender, multicultural content, Indigenous content and/or participation. Applicants will need to supply proof of collaboration to date, consultation executed, willingness or consent forms if in post-production. Documentaries which deal with Indigenous content as the central theme, must have an Indigenous producer, director and/or writer, and should comply with Screen Australia's Pathways and Protocols guide.
- **Development Budget** - How much do you think you'll need to complete the development phase? Please include a clear budget breakdown, and sources of additional funding (proposed or confirmed).

WHO

Applicants must meet the general eligibility requirements set out in Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#).

It is a Screen Australia requirement that all applications for direct funding must attach a director and writer who are Australian citizens or residents.

In addition:

For one-off or series documentaries intended for significant audience reach such as a recognised Commissioning Platform or commercial theatrical release:

Individuals or teams must have a key creative with at least two 'eligible credits' in the role of producer and/or director. An 'eligible credit' under this strand must be a documentary project that is 30 minutes or longer in duration, and has:

- been broadcast by a recognised broadcaster or Commissioning Platform, or
- had a commercial theatrical release, or
- been invited to screen at IDFA, Hot Docs or equivalent

Please note: If you meet the above criteria you are also eligible to apply to the online and VR strand.

For online or VR documentaries intended for public access on a screen based device:

Individuals or teams must have a key creative with at least one ‘eligible credit’ on a comparable project in the role of producer and/or director. An ‘eligible credit’ under this strand is an online or VR documentary project that has been publically released:

- on a commercially recognised platform, or
- been viewed by a significant audience, or
- been invited to screen at IDFA, Hot Docs or equivalent

Less experienced practitioners may be part of the team, as long as at least one key principal is eligible as above. The intention is not to exclude new talent, but encourage them to team up with more experienced practitioners.

DECISIONS AND FUNDING

Recommendations will be made through an internal assessment committee comprised of the documentary investment and development managers and Head of Documentary. Final decisions will be made by Head of Documentary.

Decisions on applications are final. Screen Australia will advise applicants in writing of the outcome of their application. Due to the volume of applications we receive, we will be unable to give feedback on all unsuccessful applications.

Screen Australia does not invest in programs such as reality or magazine television, light entertainment, panel or travel shows, infotainment, current affairs, cooking, ‘how to’, sports, corporate, training, games, extensions to film or TV, or community access programs or projects whose primary market is the education sector.

For more information on the definition of documentary please refer to the [ACMA](#) guidelines on their website.

Second applications for the same project:

You can only apply for a second application if significant changes to the project have been made. You’ll need to include a statement of changes. Screen Australia is looking for substantial changes in project creative or team or marketplace interest or budget. You’ll need to include what it has changed from, how it’s evolved and when you previously submitted.

Screen Australia will consider this statement when deciding whether or not to accept the application and assess it again for funding. We encourage you to discuss it with an investment manager before submitting. **Note: after two unsuccessful submissions, no further applications for this project will be accepted.**

Second applications for the same project from applicants who have previously received Screen Australia development funding will not be eligible to apply again save in exceptional circumstances.

Terms of funding:

Funding through this development program is provided as a grant.

Where Screen Australia subsequently provides production funding, its contribution to the development phase will be recognised in the production budget and will become part of Screen Australia's total funding for the project. Screen Australia's total contribution will then be treated as a grant or recoupable investment according to the Terms of Trade and guidelines for production funding.

Where the project goes into production without further Screen Australia support, the development funding provided by Screen Australia is not repayable.

Sector Development

Screen Australia will also continue to seek ways to strengthen and advance Australian documentary storytelling and its practitioners through special initiatives such as workshops, forums and other events, conducted by Screen Australia or in partnership with State bodies, industry organisations or other entities. You can find out more [here](#). Stay in touch via Screen Australia's e-news, like us on [Facebook](#) and/or follow us on [Twitter](#).

Update Log:

25 May 2020

- changed to reflect program being open for applications any time

18 March 2019

- **Exceptional circumstances added for applying development funding a second time.**

1 March 2019

The development guidelines have been separated out from the overall Documentary Program guidelines and now include Screen Australia's shared goals.

It is now a requirement that all applications for direct funding must attach a director and writer who are Australian citizens or residents.

In addition, other changes include:

- clarification on the assessment criteria
- clarification on the assessment materials, including cultural collaboration
- changes to the eligibility criteria for online and VR projects
- clarification on funding decisions
- removed further funding for successful applications applying again with matched marketplace funds
- clarification on time-critical applications
- clarification on second applications of the same project
- removal of chain of title requirements