

## New draft guidelines for drama development funding

**Thursday 3 May 2018:** Today Screen Australia has published proposed new guidelines for Screen Story Development (drama) funding, which are open for industry feedback until Thursday 31 May, before coming into effect on 1 July 2018.

“The proposed development guidelines represent a seismic shift for early career creators - doing away with barriers based on eligibility credits, distribution platform, when funding is available and even administrative barriers in the application process itself,” said Screen Australia CEO **Graeme Mason**. “We expect experienced creators will also welcome the ability to apply for multiple phases of development on a single application, and the removal of funding caps.”

“In proposing these changes we are seeking to ensure that our funding is accessible to the best projects on the platform and budget that best suits that story, with an emphasis on supporting talent who have a strong idea and a clear pathway to an audience. We expect the proposed changes will increase the diversity of screen stories being told and who is telling them.”

“Bottom line is the magic happens in the development stage - it’s where the concept, the characters and the script all come to life, and this is the crucial point where Screen Australia can assist. I’m confident the proposed guidelines will empower Australia’s talented screen creatives to do their best work.”

The proposed guidelines allow projects for any platform including TV, film and online, will be able to apply for development funding from one of two program strands - the **Generate Fund** or the **Premium Fund**.

The Generate Fund will be for lower budget projects with an emphasis on new and emerging talent or experienced talent wanting to take a creative risk. There will be no eligibility requirements for this fund, however applications will need to be competitive against the criteria and in line with the aims of the fund.

The Premium Fund will be for higher budget projects from creatives who have had critical and/or commercial success. This will be for projects that demonstrate ambition and scale. The commercial viability of the project, and the path to a significant and clearly defined audience will be a key focus of this fund.

What Screen Australia considers to be low and high budgets will be outlined in the draft guidelines. Both funds will share a key aim of supporting inclusive storytelling, which is written into the assessment criteria. Under the new guidelines there will be no caps to funding requests, however the requests should be reasonable and appropriate to the budget of the project.

Both funds will have a simplified and faster application process:

- Stage 1 will include short application materials (a one-page synopsis and sample of work for new or emerging practitioners) and a pitch to camera which will be assessed by internal and/or external assessors every two weeks. Projects that are declined at this stage can re-submit a revised application for the same concept once more in the future.
- Projects selected to proceed to Stage 2 will need to supply a longer story document and a development plan/pathway to audience statement. A Screen Australia Internal Committee will assess projects for funding, aiming for a four week turnaround.
- In some cases, if the team, pitch and short materials are particularly strong, they may be funded at Stage 1.
- Applicants to the Premium Fund may apply for multiple phases of development on a project in the one application.

Successful projects will be facilitated by a Screen Australia Development Executive as is the case now, but with a more ‘hands off’ approach for the Premium fund.

The total funding pool between the two funds will be \$3 million for 2018-19 which is approximately the same as the development funds available in 2017-18. Applicants will be able to apply for whatever the project and team need to support the creative vision and develop the project towards financing and production. This can



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also include the production of proof of concepts such as a short film, sample scenes, first episodes of web series etc.

Processes will be simplified with development funds issued in full at contracting and with a standard delivery date of six months. Upon delivery, applicants will be able to automatically elect to apply for further funding. A separate application will no longer be necessary.

Screen Australia's Indigenous Department, and Documentary Department provide development funds separately, and have distinct eligibility requirements. No changes are proposed to these streams at present.

The [Wildcard Pitch Fund](#) which is currently available for those that don't meet eligibility requirements, as well as the [Hot Shots Plus](#), will no longer be required when the new guidelines come into effect.

## NEXT STEPS

Screen Australia is seeking industry feedback via email from today until Thursday 31 May inclusive. Submissions should be made to [DevelopmentReview@screenaustralia.gov.au](mailto:DevelopmentReview@screenaustralia.gov.au) direct into the body of the email or via a Word document attachment, including the respondent's full name and contact details. Submissions will only be made public if the author gives permission in their email.

Questions about the proposed changes can also be submitted to the above address.

Screen Australia has already started to consult with key industry bodies directly. Subsequent to industry feedback, the revised guidelines will take effect from 1 July 2018.

## RESOURCES

- The existing guidelines are available to view [here](#).
- Draft new guidelines are available [here](#).
- Draft new guideline application process available [here](#).
- Draft guidance for what makes a compelling application available [here](#).

## BACKGROUND

Screen Australia provides [development](#) and [production](#) funding across both drama and documentary. 'Development' refers to any stage of a project as it travels towards production. It can involve everything and anything that will help get a project to the screen from various stages of scripting to filming proof-of-concept, such as a short film or series pilot. Projects can be in development for many years, for instance [Last Cab to Darwin](#) began development in July 2006 but didn't shoot until November 2014. Only a relatively small amount of projects that are developed will go into production.

Development of 'drama' refers to fictionalised stories of any genre including comedy, action and thriller. The current Screen Story Development fund is for film, TV and online, and generally requires a producer to be attached, except for experienced writers or writer/directors. Funding is capped at \$100,000 over the life of a project.