



Proper Loved Up: First Nations Guidelines

A short film development and production initiative with additional opportunities for slate development and market travel.

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If you have accessibility requirements relating to submitting an application, please contact our Program Operations team via email at firstnations@screenaustralia.gov.au, or phone 1800 507 901, so we can assist.

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1. Overview

1.1. About this funding program

Screen Australia's First Nations Department in partnership with ABC, NITV, Screen West, Screen Territory, Screen Queensland, Screen Tasmania, VicScreen, Screen NSW and Screen Canberra are calling on mid-career First Nations producers to apply for the Romantic Comedy short film initiative, Proper Loved Up.

This is a great opportunity for emerging filmmakers (writers and directors) to launch their careers and for mid-career producers to gain further practical experience, producing a short film in the Romantic Comedy genre, and grow their slate with at least one pitch-ready film (not the short film) to take to both local and international markets.

Proper Loved Up is a new program combining previous short film and producer initiatives. This will enable practical experience for the producer, gaining knowledge in story, development, business, drama production and local & global markets.

1.2. Who and what we're looking for

The program is open to **mid-career First Nations producers*** who must apply with:

- an **emerging to mid-career writer/director or writer and director team**;
- a first **draft script or scriptment** for a creative and compelling short **Romantic Comedy** film;
- a two-page statement outlining your reasons for wanting to be a part of, and your commitment to, the role of producer and the program;
- confirmation that all participants (producer, writer and director) will be available to attend all workshops and online masterclasses as required; and
- a commitment to meet the deadline to produce a short film, to ensure you can take advantage of the 12-month festival holdback.

***Note:** While the program is aimed at mid-career First Nations producers, those producers who do not have this level of experience but who can demonstrate that they have a genuine interest in pursuing a career in this field, or writers who have strong projects but who do not yet have a producer attached, are still encouraged to apply. These applications may however be less competitive than those with a mid-career producer attached.

We are looking for self-motivated, organised and energetic collaborators with an understanding of storytelling, and who are committed to building a career in the industry.

The Proper Loved Up initiative is designed to upskill and develop screen practitioners, giving them vital screen credits. We are looking for **creative, emotive, thought provoking First Nations stories** in the **Romantic Comedy genre**, authored and crafted by First Nations people.

Stories should incorporate:

- a maximum of two main characters with minimal extra/support characters; and
- no more than two locations.

The selected projects will be bold, based on authentic First Nations characters and ideas, exhibit a high level of creative ambition and demonstrate the possibility of being financed for production. Stories that incorporate First Nations languages are also encouraged.

See further detail about eligibility below.

1.3. Program structure and outline

Proper Loved Up is a two-stage initiative with opportunities to access support across separate application and assessment processes.

These guidelines cover the application and assessment processes for Stage One, the Short Film Component.

Applicants must apply for Stage One (Workshops and Development) to be eligible for all subsequent opportunities. Information about the application and assessment processes for Stage Two will be circulated to applicants in due course.

Stage One: Short Film Component

1. **Workshops & Development.** The producer will apply to participate in workshops and to receive \$5000 from Screen Australia for development of a short film script. The writer and director or writer/director must be included in the application.
2. **Production.** Selected teams then need to apply for production funding. These teams will receive information about the application process for production funding at the end of the second workshop. Successful teams will have the opportunity to access up to \$152,500 for each project (from SA, ABC, NITV, and their applicable screen agency) for production and delivery of a short film with a 12-month festival holdback before broadcast on the commissioning platforms.

Stage Two: Slate Development

3. **Slate Development.** At end of the third workshop, producers will submit applications for slate development to Screen Australia (\$10,000) and if applicable, their state or territory screen agency (\$5,000).

The producers of each selected team (up to 8 in total) will then, subject to having at least one pitch-ready project ready to take to market (in addition to the short film produced at Stage One), have the opportunity to apply for funding, via [First Nations Travel Grants](#) from Screen Australia or the applicant's state or territory screen agency, to attend:

4. **International market.** An international film festival or market in 2026 (e.g. Berlin, Toronto or Cannes), to provide insight into the global market.
5. **Local market.** Screen Forever in 2026.

1.4. What support is available?

Support for the initiative includes:

- Workshops and online masterclass
- Development of short film
- Production of short film (selected projects)
- Slate development
- Local travel
- International travel

Stage One: Short Film Component

Workshops & Development

Intensive training program involving three in-person workshops and four online masterclasses. Travel and accommodation will be provided to and from each in-person workshop. Please see details below. Development funding of \$5,000 for each project will be issued upon signing of a participant and development agreement to attend the first workshop.

Production

Those selected for production funding will be provided with up to \$152,500 to produce the short film (inclusive of Screen Australia, State/Territory Screen Agencies, ABC and NITV) contributions made up of the following.

- Screen Australia: up to \$80,000
- State/Territory Screen Agencies: up to \$15,000*
- ABC Licence Fee: \$28,750
- NITV Licence Fee: \$28,750

A First Nations Series Producer will be provided by the ABC to oversee and support the producer during all stages of development and production of the short film.

* In some circumstances, State or territory screen agency funding is capped and can support between one and two projects only. Therefore, development and production funding from State and Territory Screen Agencies is subject to available budget. Where a state or territory screen agency is unable to fund a project, the project will still get funded production funding minus the state or territory screen agency funding.

All applications for production funding will be subject to each financier's terms of trade or program guidelines, if/as applicable.

Stage Two: Slate Development

At the end of the third workshop, each producer will submit a proposal for their slate development. Successful applicants will receive seed funding of up to \$15,000 (\$10,000 provided by Screen Australia and up to \$5,000* from the relevant state or territory screen agency) to develop a slate of projects of any genre in either film or TV format at the completion of Workshop 3. The ideal outcome of this element of the program is that the producer will have at least one project to take to market.

Note: the slate development is separate to the short film component and not aligned with the co-commissioning broadcasters, the ABC and NITV.

* State or territory screen agency funding will be subject to available budget. If the state or territory screen agency funding is unavailable, the development budget will reduce accordingly by the state or territory screen agency amount.

All applications for development funding will be subject to each state or territory screen agency's terms of trade or program guidelines, as applicable.

Travel to international & local markets

The Producers will have the opportunity to apply via Screen Australia's [First Nations Travel Grants](#) or their applicable state or territory screen agency for funding to attend:

- an international film festival or market in 2026
- Screen Forever in 2026

2. Inclusive Storytelling

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 Australian screen industry, make it more relevant to Australian audiences and more competitive internationally.

Screen Australia is committed to building diversity, equity and inclusion into its programs and into our engagement with the community. Authentic storytelling, from and about under-represented groups is a priority for Screen Australia.

For this program, Screen Australia encourages applications from First Nation Australian applicants with diverse experiences. In particular, the agency welcomes applications from First Nations Australian applicants who are d/Deaf and disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQ+, regionally based, or those from other under-represented groups.

We expect that any experiences portrayed through the narrative are reflected within the key creative team, with appropriate representation and lived experience. It is vital the creative team has the cultural authorship to tell the story.

3. Eligibility

3.1. Applicant eligibility

3.1.1. Availability

Workshop information:

Applicants must be available to attend the following workshops and masterclasses:

- **Workshop 1: *Producers and Writers must be available to attend***
Introduction, Overview & Development (30 April - 2 May 2025).
- **Masterclasses Online: *Producers must be available to attend.***
Support Producers in Development, Preparing Applications, Budgeting and Scheduling, Contracts (Masterclass 1 - 15 May 2025, Masterclass 2 - 29 May 2025, Masterclass 3 - 19 June 2025, Masterclass 4 - 26 June 2025). Sessions are 4 hours each.
- **Workshop 2: *Producers, Writers, Directors must be available to attend.***
Pre-Production, Production and Post Production (2 - 6 June 2025, 5 days).
- **Workshop 3: *Producers must be available to attend.***
Social Impact and Distribution, Next Steps, Pitch Session - Local, SVOD/Broadcasters (11-13 June 2025, 3 days).

Marketplace / travel information

Applications for travel support to international and local markets will only be open to producers from selected teams who have a pitch-ready project (in addition to the short film) to take to market. Producers who are successful for the travel stages of the initiative must be available to attend the following events.

- **International market** attendance at, for example*: Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) 2026, Berlin International Film Festival 2026, or Cannes Film Festival 2026.
- **Local market** attendance at Screen Forever* 2026 Gold Coast.

*Events to be determined by Screen Australia's First Nations Department.

Applicants will be required to apply via [First Nations Travel Grants](#) or, , their state or territory screen agency.

3.1.2. Who can apply?

- Mid-career First Nations producers must apply with an emerging to mid-career First Nations writer and director team and/or writer/director.
- Note: First Nations producers who are not mid-career but who have a demonstrated interest or experience in the industry, or writers who have

strong projects but do not yet have a producer attached, are still encouraged to apply however should be aware that their applications are more likely to be successful with a mid-career producer attached. These applicants should contact an Investment Manager via firstnations@screenaustralia.gov.au prior to applying.

- Applicant key creative producers, writers and directors must identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- All applications must meet the criteria below as well as Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#), in order to be eligible for this program.
- Applicants must have an active ABN at time of application; the applicant can be an individual or a company as per Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#).
 - If you do not have an ABN, please click [here](#) for information about how to apply for an ABN.
 - Please note, applicants must apply with a company ABN when applying for the Production Stage.

3.2. Project eligibility

- The project must be between 8 and 10 minutes including titles and credits.
- Genre must be Romantic Comedy.
- All stories must be conceived by a First Nations creative.
- Stories should incorporate a maximum of two characters with minimal extra/support characters and no more than two locations.
- Stories in First Nations Language or that include First Nations Language are encouraged.

4. Application Process

4.1. How to apply

Proper Loved Up is a two-stage program with multiple steps and application processes:

Stage One: Short Film Component

- **Workshops & Development:** open for all eligible applicants.
- **Production:** is by invitation only for successful applicants at the completion of the Workshops and Development of the Short Film.

See below information about the application process for Stage One.

Producers from those successful teams will then be eligible to apply for Stage Two including support for slate development, and local and international travel.

Further information about applications for Stage Two will be provided to eligible applicants in due course.

4.1.1. Workshops & Development

Applications for the Workshops and Development of the Short Film open 12 December 2024 and close at 5pm AEDT 14 February 2025 and can be made through Screen Australia's [application portal](#).

4.1.2. Production

Those who have been successful through the Workshops and Development of the Short Film, will have attended all Workshops and delivered a third draft script.

Note, only applicants who have successfully completed the Workshops and Development of the Short Film will be eligible to apply for Production of the Short Film.

Applicants will then be invited to apply for up to \$80,000 in production funding via a private application link with the required materials by 3 July 2025.

4.2. Application Form

Through the application form, you must:

- provide all the information requested and answer the application questions
- address all eligibility criteria and assessment criteria
- include all required supporting materials
- confirm that all participants (producer, writer and director) will be available to attend all workshops and online masterclasses as required
- commit to meeting the deadline to produce a short film to ensure you can take advantage of the 12-month festival holdback

4.3. Required Materials

4.3.1. Stage One: Workshops & Development of the Short Film

Applicants for the Stage One: Workshops and Development of the Short Film must upload the following materials with their application form:

- A two-page statement outlining your reasons for wanting to be a part of, and your commitment to the role of producer and the program
- Example of project slate (minimum 2-3 drama projects)
- Two professional/industry referee contacts
- A 500-word summary of your short film's creative details including; logline, short synopsis, and why you think this idea would be of interest to an audience
- A first draft script, or scriptment detailing the major character's screen journey (no more than 9 pages)

- CVs for all key creatives
- A producer's statement (maximum 2 pages) describing in detail the producer's approach to the project and how they believe this can be made within budget limitations.
- If a writer or writer/director is attached, script development notes (maximum 2 pages) that provide detailed critical analysis of the project. They should identify current problems in the script, potential difficulties that may arise in the further development of the project, the project's creative and conceptual strengths, and its potential to reach an audience
- If a director or writer/director is attached, a director's statement (maximum 2 pages) describing in detail the directorial approach to the project. Notes on style, tone and other film references are always helpful
- Professional development statement(s) (maximum 2 pages) outlining how this project would enhance the career aspirations of the principal creatives (writer, director, producer)
- Examples of applicant's previous work via screening link

4.3.2. Stage One: Production of the Short Film

Applicants for Stage One: Production of the Short Film must upload the following materials with their application form:

- A one-line and one-paragraph synopsis of the idea
- A third draft script
- A revised producer's statement maximum 2 pages
- A fully itemized A-Z budget and production schedule
- A director's statement maximum 2 pages
- A visual look book
- All Chain of Title documentation, including a director's agreement and writer's agreement

Screen Australia may request additional documentation when required.

5. Assessment

5.1. Assessment Process

5.1.1. Stage One: Workshop & Development of the Short Film

Eligible applications will be considered by Screen Australia's First Nations Department, ABC and NITV Executives and industry specialists as required. See applicable assessment criteria below.

5.1.2. Stage One: Production of the Short Film

Eligible applications will be considered by Screen Australia's First Nations Department, ABC and NITV Executives and industry specialists as required. See applicable assessment criteria below.

Stage Two (Slate Development and Market Travel)

Further information about the assessment of Stage Two of the initiative will be provided to eligible applicants in due course.

5.2. Assessment Criteria

Applications will be considered against the following equally weighted criteria.

5.2.1. Stage One: Workshop & Development of the Short Film

- **Producer Experience.** Evidence of proven track record of the mid-career producer.
- **Producer Commitment.** Evidence of the producer's commitment to the program.
- **Concept.** The strength and distinctiveness of the idea and concept; the use of compelling characters; and the project's ability to advance Australian First Nations filmmaking and storytelling.
- **Career Development.** The strategic benefit of the initiative to the applicant and demonstrated desire for a career in the screen industry as evidenced by the written application and supporting materials.
- **Team Experience.** The skills and capacity of the team to undertake the project as evidenced by the written application and supporting materials.
- **Viability.** The practical viability of the project within the initiative parameters.

5.2.2. Stage One: Production of the Short Film

- **Story & Voice.** The originality and distinctiveness of the story, and strength of the directorial voice in embracing the parameters of the initiative.
- **Team's Experience.** The skills, experience and track record of each of the key principals and the potential to advance key creative careers.
- **Viability.** The viability of the budget and schedule in relation to the script, and a production approach that embraces the budget parameters of the initiative.

5.3. Decision & Notification

Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application for Stage One: Workshops and Development of the Short Film by 28 March 2025.

Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application for Stage One: Production of the Short Film 7 August 2024, approximately 5 weeks after

submitting.

More information about the process and timeline for decision for applications for Stage Two (Slate Development and Market Travel) will be provided in due course.

6. Successful Applicants

6.1. Contracting

Successful applicants for Stage One: Workshops and Development of the Short Film will enter into a participant and development agreement with Screen Australia which will outline the terms of attendance and development.

Successful applicants for Stage One: Production of the Short Film will be required to enter into a Production Grant Agreement (PGA) with Screen Australia which will outline the terms of production funding.

More information about contracting for Stage Two (Slate Development and Local and International Travel) will be provided in due course.

7. Contact

For any enquiries, please contact the Screen Australia Program Operations team on 1800 507 901 or firstnations@screenaustralia.gov.au. Please note that we are not able to provide creative advice or suggestions to strengthen your application.

8. Privacy

Screen Australia collects personal information from individuals in different ways, including via funding applications, acquittal reports, or supporting material supplied with forms. Screen Australia will handle any personal information provided in connection with a funding application in accordance with its [Privacy Notice](#) relating to funding applications and its [Privacy Policy](#).