



COVID-19 Budget Support Fund: Guidelines

Issued 30 July 2020

Productions are required to prepare COVID-19 Safety and Risk Assessment Plans in order to shoot with the foremost regard for health and safety of cast, crew, suppliers, contractors and others involved with the projects. In most cases there will be additional costs to the original budget due to strict compliance with such plans (“COVID Costs”).

This program is not intended to fill gaps in finance plans but only to fund direct COVID Costs

Screen Australia has not been allocated additional funding or human resources for this Program, but acknowledges the importance of green-lit blocked projects getting safely into production, and will reallocate some Production Funding for these purposes.

Accordingly, Screen Australia will be unable to support every production seeking COVID Cost assistance. This fund is limited in both funding and time and will close either when funding is exhausted or at the end of the 2020 calendar year.

WHY

In order to go into production safely during the Coronavirus pandemic, production companies must prepare and rigorously implement COVID-19 Safety Plans. In almost all cases this will result in additional COVID Costs. Screen Australia intends to assist current stalled projects to resume or get into production, and will contribute to the COVID Costs for some projects, particularly those that are of scale.

WHAT

The COVID-19 Budget Support program funding is purely for additional COVID Costs on current, green-lit projects which could not have anticipated them.

Screen Australia will pay reasonable COVID Costs up to a limit of \$300,000 or 10% of the existing production budget, whichever is less.

Funding above this cap may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligible projects are:

- projects that have already been approved for Screen Australia production funding, OR
- other projects which are well known to Screen Australia, such as sequels (Series 2 and beyond) or spin offs, **AND/OR**
- are from production companies with a strong and reputable track record.

AND in each case above are:

- projects which are green-lit, in late stage development, or pre-production, and intending and ready to go into (or resume) production within 6 months from the date of the relevant application if additional funding is approved to cover COVID Costs, AND
- projects that would be eligible for one of our existing production funding programs
- meet our Terms of Trade (see note below)

Your project may be more competitive if:

- the project is of scale and funding will result in a significant number of cast, crew, screen sector workers and suppliers benefitting in the near term. (Please see note below.)
- other parties are contributing towards the COVID Costs.
- all or most (at least 80%) of the production spend is in Australia, and on Australians

- Note: There are several references in these Guidelines to Screen Australia prioritising COVID Costs for projects that have impact and scale. Whilst these are a priority, we do not wish to exclude documentary or online projects, which historically operate on a smaller scale. Funding COVID Costs for these projects will also be considered based on a relative scale and costs basis.
- In these extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19, we may make exceptions to compliance with the Screen Australia Terms of Trade/Program Guidelines for the term of this Program.

EXCLUDED PROJECTS

We stress that this program is not intended to fill gaps in finance plans but only to fund direct COVID Costs.

This program is not for:

- projects that are currently in physical production (save for documentaries or animations in production, but having to work at a slower pace due to compliance with their COVID-19 Safety Plan)
- other items in a budget/finance plan which are not COVID costs,
- projects yet to put together finance plans, budgets and schedules, as they have the ability to factor such costs in.

WHO

This fund is for all projects that meet the eligibility criteria for our existing programs. This includes: factual and scripted, episodic scripted drama (including web series), feature films and feature documentaries. Please see our [Terms of Trade](#) and [Program Guidelines](#).

Applications will be open to anyone who:

- is an Australian producer, or production company/SPV which, controls the rights,
- has a project that is fully financed (apart from COVID Costs) and complies with Screen Australia's Terms of Trade and Guidelines (see note above),
- has a project that meets the Eligibility Criteria above and is not an Excluded Project.

HOW

Please email covidbudgetsupport@screenaustralia.gov.au before applying to ensure your project meets the criteria of the COVID-19 Budget Support Fund.

Applications can be made at any time through the [application portal](#) until the cessation of the fund (either when funding is exhausted or at the end of the 2020 calendar year).

You must supply:

- fully completed application form, which will include information about the key creative, cast and crew (and whether confirmed or intended)
- 200-600 word synopsis of your project, or an Outline or Bible or similar if episodic drama
- your COVID Safety Plan AND Risk Assessment Plan
- your production budget, including separate COVID Costs section.
- your existing Finance Plan (in Screen Australia Format) which includes a separate row for Screen Australia's COVID Cost contribution being requested, and additional rows for any other parties who are contributing to COVID Costs.
- any other evidence of your realistic intent and ability to be in physical production within 6 months from the date of your application. This may include, but is not limited to, the following dated documentation:
 - preliminary shooting schedule, cast and crew deal memos, location agreements, evidence of the commencement of contracting, evidence of location reces and costing, or confirmation from State Bodies and or local government areas about intention to shoot in regional or remote areas.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

We will not be making creative assessments, only light touch risk assessments in regard to the content of projects.

Applications will be assessed by Screen Australia executives on the following equally weighted criteria:

- strength of your COVID Safety and Risk Assessment Plans and accuracy of your COVID Budget
- a demonstrated requirement for COVID Costs from Screen Australia
- likelihood that the project can realistically be in physical production within 6 months of the application.
- impact of project going into production being of scale and creating significant work for the Screen Sector, and benefit to Australian audiences.
- contributing to our policies of supporting Gender equity and diversity and inclusion in front of and behind the camera.

Decisions are normally a 4-week turnaround from receipt of eligible application. Applicants will be advised of the outcome in writing.

NOTES FOR APPLICANTS

Screen Australia's contribution to the COVID Costs

COVID BUDGET

This will be a separate section within the existing production budget which includes line items for all COVID Costs. The Cost Reports will indicate expenditure actually incurred against each line item in the COVID Budget.

REPAYMENT

If any COVID Costs funded by Screen Australia are not expended they shall be repaid to Screen Australia within 30 days of delivery of the Final Cost Report and Audit (pro rata with any other parties who contributed to the COVID Costs).

If other parties contributing towards COVID Costs are taking a priority position for recoupment of their contributions, we will normally do the same. Likewise, if such parties are taking a share of any Underages to go towards reducing or repaying their COVID contributions.

TREATMENT OF SCREEN AUSTRALIA COVID COSTS

If the project already has Production Investment funding from us, any COVID Costs funded by Screen Australia and expended by the Producer will be treated as recoupable investment addition to Screen Australia's existing funding. If the original funding was a grant, Screen Australia will have discretion to convert the grant into an investment if the total funding exceeds \$500,000.

If the project does not already have Production Investment from Screen Australia, COVID Costs funded by us and expended by the Producer shall be treated as a grant, and not repayable, save in respect of any underspend.

PRODUCER OFFSET

If expenditure of some or all of COVID Costs results in the Production receiving additional Producer Offset, such additional Producer Offset shall not be repayable to us.

NEW APPLICATIONS TO SCREEN AUSTRALIA FOR PRODUCTION FUNDING

If you are intending to come into Screen Australia for production funding, then you are not eligible under these Guidelines (as you are not yet fully financed).

However, when you do apply for production funding from us, if you are also in need of COVID Costs, you should supply the relevant documents referred to under "HOW" above, namely;

- your project's COVID-19 Safety and Risk assessment
- separate COVID-19 Budget
- finance plan with a separate row for COVID Costs requested by you from us, and additional lines showing other parties contributions towards the COVID Costs, and
- evidence of your realistic intent and ability to be in physical production within 6 months from the date of your application.

If your application for production funding is approved, your request for COVID Costs will then be assessed according to the Assessment Criteria and other considerations in these Guidelines. You do not then have to apply separately to this COVID-19 Budget Support Fund.

CONTRACTING

Australia will issue a contract detailing the amount of the COVID Costs, matters referred to above, and Core Conditions. This does not apply to projects already contracted with us, which will be dealt with by a variation to such contracts, rather than a separate contract.

CREDITS

Screen Australia will be credited in the end credits "This production was supported by Screen Australia through the COVID-19 Budget Support Fund Program".

Applications for COVID-19 Budget Support cannot be made retrospectively.

If you are unsure about your eligibility, for example, your Project does not meet our Terms of Trade, or have any questions about your application, please contact covidbudgetsupport@screenaustralia.gov.au.