

Games Production Fund - Guidelines

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Overview

Through Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place - Australia's national cultural policy, the Australian Government is committed to delivering a complementary and integrated plan to support Australia's digital games sector. This includes \$12 million over 4 years of dedicated digital games funding through Screen Australia to support Australian independent games studios.

The Games Production Fund provides grants of up to \$100,000 to support the development of original Australian independent games, with budgets of up to \$500,000 at the time of applying, to take the game to a significant milestone of its development. The Fund is aimed at projects that already have an early-stage prototype.

Applicants must contextualise the milestone they are working towards and how this funding will help them achieve it in their applications. Significant milestones include:

- **Completion/release** of a game
- **Early access release** of a game
- Completion of a **demo** (to release at a digital event, or present at a physical event)
- Creating a **vertical slice** that is of global competitive quality and enables a team to access the international funding ecosystem
- Developing an early-stage prototype to a quality suitable for submission to an **accolade signifying cultural impact**, such as a notable award, showcase, festival, gallery or museum exhibit opportunity
- Any other goal, as defined by the applicant

The Fund will run as a series of rounds from financial year 2023/24 until financial year 2026/27.

The Games Production Fund allows Screen Australia to respond flexibly to the varied needs of gamemakers at different career stages, providing direct funding that will assist studios in meeting their goals and establishing themselves in the international games landscape.

Who can apply and what projects are eligible?

This Fund is for projects that:

- are at the pre-production or production stage of development
- have a playable prototype
- have a clear, well-scoped milestone that they are actively working towards
- have a clear idea of where they are at, where they are going, and can clearly articulate how Screen Australia funding will help them get there

In terms of business structure, applicants must be a company at the time of application. Other business structures, including sole traders and public companies, are not eligible. Sole traders are instead encouraged to consider applying for the [Emerging Gamemakers Fund](#) if they otherwise meet the criteria of that Fund. All applicants and projects must also meet the eligibility criteria under Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#).

Screen Australia can only fund Australian projects. The project must be under the key creative control of Australian citizens or permanent residents and be predominantly developed in Australia. Projects do not have to have an Australian theme or be set in Australia to be eligible.

Projects that have previously received funding from the [Emerging Gamemakers Fund](#) are eligible to apply for the Games Production Fund.

Projects must be for a digital game platform, including (but not limited to) PC, mobile, consoles, and VR. Regarding XR (including VR and AR projects):

- If you are making an XR documentary, your project may be better suited to the [Documentary Production - Producer Program](#).
- If you are making an XR scripted narrative experience, your project may be better suited to [Online Production funding](#).
- If your project sits at the intersection of games and other genres of media, we expect you to contact us and discuss eligibility prior to applying.

Screen Australia requires a minimum level of interactivity for a project to be considered a game. If you are unsure whether the level of interactivity in your project constitutes a game for the purposes of the Games Production Fund, please contact us and discuss eligibility prior to applying.

Unsuccessful applications may re-submit once with the same project to a future funding round, provided that the application materials have undergone meaningful updates since the last submission.

Applicant companies may submit only one application per round. After two unsuccessful applications, a project is no longer eligible to apply for the Fund. However, the same company may apply with a different project.

What is not eligible?

The following types of projects are not eligible. These are games that:

- have already received funding from Games: Expansion Pack or [Games Production Fund](#)
- have applied for the [Emerging Gamemakers Fund](#) during the same round as the Games Production Fund application
- are not played on a digital device with a screen. That is, games that are not completely digital, including boardgames or hybrid digital/physical games
- are part of work-for-hire contracts or exploit (make use of) intellectual property not owned by the applicant or applicant company
- are being developed by teams that include students who are currently enrolled in a games or games-adjacent field of study
- are being developed by teams led by, or significantly reliant on, full-time students, regardless of field of study
- are business-to-business products (for example, training simulations, games created solely for teaching purposes at schools, middleware tools, or a game limited a small number of locations)
- are substantially advertising or promotions
- constitute gambling activities or are gambling simulations
- feature or link to exploitative or unethical pay-to-win or play-to-earn mechanics
- contain or have a relationship to high risk and volatile trading products or technology
- contain [or link] any content or mechanic that is in breach of any law or regulation
- in the reasonable opinion of Screen Australia, may have difficulties receiving an Australian classification, due to the inclusion of content such as:
 - the instruction or promotion of crime, cruelty or violence; depictions of frequent and/or very high impact violence
 - sexual activity; sexual violence; exploitative depictions
 - instructional illicit drug use; encouragement of illicit drug use; illicit interactive drug use
 - any other content that contravenes prevailing community standards

How do I apply?

Applicants need to create an account and submit an application via [SmartyGrants](#), attaching the following application materials:

- **Downloadable Pitch Video** (maximum 3 minutes in length) that articulates the concept of your project, the creative vision, and the aims of the team
- **Playable Prototype**
 - please ensure that your prototype has been tested and is functional prior to finalising your application

- applicants whose prototypes are inaccessible or unplayable after the close of the round may be deemed ineligible
- **30-second video of gameplay footage**
- **Prototype Details document.** This must contain:
 - a description of the minimum hardware requirements needed to run the prototype
 - step-by-step instructions that detail how to get the prototype running
 - instructions on how to control the prototype (controller map preferred)
 - description of the intended experience of the prototype
- **Production Plan** (applicants must use the template provided). Seven (7) pages maximum length. At a minimum this document contains a production timeline and description of milestones and acceptance criteria. Providing additional information that bolsters confidence in the viability of your development is encouraged
- **Strategic Outcomes document** (applicants must use the template provided). Six (6) pages maximum length. This document articulates your significant milestone, the steps to be taken to achieve it, and how Screen Australia funding will help you
- **Finance Plan and Budget spreadsheet**
- **CVs of team members**

Where a project involves First Nations content, stories, characters, or community participation, specific requirements apply. These projects will need to provide the following, additional documents:

- **First Nations content statement:** A statement setting out how you are approaching the First Nations content or participation with regard to appropriate protocols, even if the content is not specific to a particular community or individual
- **First Nations collaboration or consultation:** Signed evidence of collaboration or consultation to date
- **First Nations consent:** Signed letters of consent from First Nations individuals or communities confirming their willingness to participate

For more information on how to engage First Nations practitioners for collaboration or participation, please read [Pathways & Protocols: a film maker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts](#) and/or consider undertaking Indigenous Engagement training.

If you have access requirements that make it difficult to submit an application, please email [Games](#) and we will make arrangements to assist.

Please ensure all materials are present and functional before finalising your application. If submitting materials via cloud storage (e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox), ensure all materials are present, functional, and accessible before the Fund closes. Any materials added or edited beyond the closure of the round will not be considered.

Applications for Games Production Fund must be submitted by 5pm AEDT/AEST on the published deadline date.

How will my application be assessed?

Before assessment, all applications must go through eligibility checks. The Program Operations team review each application to ensure eligibility, that required application materials are acceptable, and that prototypes are functional.

If eligibility is confirmed, applicants will receive an email advising that their application has moved to the second step, assessment. **You can expect to receive the outcome of your application approximately 12 weeks from the 'Applications Close' date.**

Your application will be assessed by a panel of internal and external industry experts and specialists, against the below criteria. We employ a [Conflict of Interest policy](#) to ensure fairness for all applicants.

Applications are assessed based on the following four criteria, with examples of the relevant considerations listed for each:

Creative Merit

- The level of originality and the quality of execution of the game and how compelling the overall experience is, as communicated through the prototype and application documents
- The ability of the game to effectively meet the studio's strategic outcomes

Viability

- The scope of the project is viable and realistic
- The project is timely and relevant to industry and the studio's strategic outcomes
- The budget and production plan are realistic, workers are fairly compensated
- The proposed team has appropriate experience to execute their plans

Impact

- How funding will positively affect the studio's proposed trajectory
- The project provides commercial and/or cultural benefits to the Australian games landscape, and contributes to its quality and reputation

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Where diverse groups are portrayed in the project, there is either appropriate representation in the creative team, or there has been meaningful collaboration and consultation with represented groups
- The project engages with an audience that is typically underserved
- The alignment of the application with the diversity, equity and inclusion aims of the Fund

Screen Australia is committed to building equity into its programs. Gender equity, diversity, authenticity, accessibility, and inclusivity are priorities for Screen Australia. We expect that any experiences portrayed in games that are aimed at illustrating diverse perspectives are also reflected within the creative team with appropriate representation and lived experience.

Terms of Funding

Funding is provided in the form of a grant. Successful applicants will enter into a project grant agreement (PGA) with Screen Australia. Screen Australia does not expect to recoup funds from successful teams. That is, you are not expected to repay the grant in any way.

Funds are generally expected to be spent on staffing costs (wages for people making the game) and other costs associated with the game's development, such as (but not limited to) game development software and creative licensing fees and costs associated with the running of your game business (such as accounting and legal fees, digital storefront fees, or obtaining hardware necessary to the completion of the game). In the case of an application that proposes to take a project to a public-facing release, marketing expenses are also considered an acceptable use of funds.

At least 90% of the grant must be spent on development expenditure that takes place physically in Australia.

Screen Australia acknowledges and appreciates the time and effort that go into preparing and submitting applications, but given the anticipated volume of applications, will not be able to provide individual feedback on each application.

For any enquiries, please contact the Screen Australia Program Operations team on 1800 507 901 or [Games](#). Please note that we are not able to provide creative advice or suggestions to strengthen your application.