

# Narrative Content Development Funding Program

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### How much can I apply for?

The minimum allowable funding request in this program per application is \$10,000.

The maximum allowable funding request in this program per application is \$75,000.

Screen Australia recommends that you are strategic in your funding request.

Screen Australia may decide to provide a different amount of funding than that applied for based on the assessment of all projects submitted to each funding round.

A project's development budget should be reasonable and relative to the following elements:

- the project's scope, scale, anticipated production budget and intended platform (i.e. Online/Direct-to-Audience (inclusive of VR, XR, AR); Television (inclusive of SVOD or BVOD), and Theatrical Feature Film (inclusive of VR, XR, AR));
- the project's length and the stage of development being applied for (i.e. one minute vertical, Online/Direct-to-Audience series, half-hour episode, one-hour episode, feature script, series bible, treatment, outline);
- the current stage of development and the development strategy outlined in your Story Development Plan and Project Plan;
- the applicant/stage of career or level of experience of the confirmed Key Creatives; and,
- any additional sources of development financing raised or expected including third-party arms-length development funding from a market partner.

Screen Australia has a maximum contribution we can provide for the line items in your development budget. These are not official rates. Please discuss industry and guild rates with the relevant guilds and organisations – [ADG](#), [AWG](#), [MEAA](#) and [SPA](#).

Aside from funding to support Australian creatives and costs of the development budget, Screen Australia can also contribute to costs for non-Australian script editors, consultants, mentors and executive producers.

Screen Australia development funding cannot be retrospective.

It is important that when you apply your Development Budget is substantiated. That is, all activities you are applying for are reflected in your Development Budget and addressed in your Story Development Plan and Project Plan.

Screen Australia can contribute per application up to the following maximum amounts:

<b>Role and Activity</b>	<b>Material or Activity</b>	<b>Screen Australia Contribution</b>
Writer/s	Outline, Treatment or Scriptment (where required, shared between co-writers)	Up to \$10,000 for Treatment Up to \$12,000 for Scriptment
Writer/s	Series Bible	Up to \$10,000
Writer(s)	Draft (including polish on each, and where required, shared between co-writers)  *Dependent on length, format, platform of project	Up to \$30,000* per draft, relative to platform and length
Director/s	To participate in development, provide notes on drafts and/or attend writers' rooms or workshops (where required, shared between co-directors)	\$3,000 - \$15,000
Script Editor	Series Bible, Outline, Treatment or Scriptment	Up to \$3,000
Script Editor	Draft	Up to \$8,000
Producer/s	Bible, Outline, Treatment or Scriptment, Writer Rooms and/or Workshop (where required, shared between co-producers)	Up to \$10,000
Producer(s)	Draft, Visual and/or Budget Schedule, Casting, Financing (where required, shared between co-producers)	Up to \$15,000
Consultant/s	Story, Social Strategy, Digital, Mentors for Key Creatives, Impact Producers, Community Managers, Subject Matter Experts, Authors of Source Material, Casting	Up to \$3,000
Writer Rooms	Writer Room for the brainstorming and/or plotting of an episodic work or a Writer Room development methodology for a feature film work substantiated by the Story Development and Project Plan.  See below for more detailed information	Up to \$50,000
Workshops	Table reads or other story development processes substantiated by the Story	Up to \$10,000

	Development and Project Plan.	
Development Costs	Room hire, facilities, catering (not including a company's own offices or facilities) substantiated by the Budget Breakdown submitted at time of application	Up to \$3,000
Overheads	General overheads substantiated by the Budget Breakdown at the time of application	Up to \$2,000
Research	A research plan substantiated by the Story Development and Project Plan	Up to \$3,000
Audience strategy	Audience Design Consultation  Audience Research  Audience Testing  substantiated by the Budget Breakdown at the time of application	Up to \$10,000
Visual documents	Documents and/or elements such as pitch decks, bibles, graphic design, look books, director treatments, hero character design or sample animation/animatic substantiated by the Budget Breakdown submitted at time of application	Up to \$10,000
Production Budget and/or Schedule	Production budget and/or Production Schedule substantiated by the Budget Breakdown at the time of application and by Project Plan regarding stage of development of project	Up to \$6,000
Legal and Option Extension Fees	Legal advice, contracting, underlying rights option fees (extension only)	Up to \$3,000
Carers' Costs	Carer costs may include needed and appropriate costs to contribute toward covering the costs to replace care otherwise informally provided to the elderly (65 years and older), dependent or disabled persons or parenting/guardianship and other forms of unpaid childcare, by one or more of the team's confirmed Key Creatives.  This can be shared if more than one person in the team is needing a	From 1 July 2025, the Narrative Content Development and Documentary Development guidelines will allow (per project) the option to select, when applying, Carers Costs up to \$3,000, or Accessibility costs up to \$3,000, or a combination of both up to \$5,000 total.

	contribution towards Carers' or Accessibility costs.	
Accessibility Costs	<p>Accessibility costs may include needed and appropriate costs to confirmed Key Creatives who require support to attend, participate or undertake the funded activity for the stage of development being applied for.</p> <p>This can be shared if more than one person in the team is needing a contribution towards Carers' or Accessibility costs.</p>	From 1 July 2025, the Narrative Content Development and Documentary Development guidelines will allow (per project) the option to select, when applying, Carers Costs up to \$3,000, or Accessibility costs up to \$3,000, or a combination of both up to \$5,000 total.

### What do you mean by “Carers’ and Accessibility Costs” and are these costs repayable?

Screen Australia’s contribution towards Carers’ and Accessibility Costs must not cover care already paid for by other government support mechanisms or existing care and accessibility arrangements. It is to support short-term alternative care to free up the time of funded practitioners so they can concentrate on the development of their screen project. In the instance of accessibility, it is to pay for required support mechanisms to undertake the funded activity for the stage of development being applied for. These costs can be requested on top of the application’s maximum funding cap.

Development funding, including Carers’ and Accessibility Costs will be provided by way of grant, repayable to Screen Australia if the project goes into production, whether such project receives production funding from Screen Australia or not.

### How do I substantiate my Writer Room and/or Workshop Costs?

Writers’ Rooms or Workshops should be expressed within the budget with a reasonable level of detail in each line item, for example:

*(Name of Writer 1) x (Number) days x brainstorming (Name of Writer 1) x (Number) days x story conferencing*

*(Name of Writer 2) x (Number) days x brainstorming (Name of Writer 2) x (Number) days x story conferencing*

*Note Taker x (Number) days*

*(Name of Consultant) x (Number) days x consulting*

*(Name of Actor) x (Number) x call*

**For Feature projects only, if I secure a third-party at arm's-length to fund development, can I apply to Screen Australia to co-fund development? What do you mean by third-party arm's-length funding?**

For feature film projects only, Screen Australia can co-fund development if a project is able to secure genuine third-party arms-length funding.

“Third-party” can be defined as a transaction between two independent parties who are not related or affiliated, acting alone and independent of each other in their own interest.

If you are applying for co-funding (Feature Film) with third-party arm's-length funding in place, you must provide evidence of that development funding and any terms from the third-party arm's-length market entity, which may take the form of a letter of offer (LOO) on market partner letterhead and/or an agreement between the parties.

For the purposes of this program, arm's-length third party funding does not apply to funding from Australian State or Territory agencies.

For the purposes of this program, third-party arms-length funding does apply to funding from international agencies.

**What does Screen Australia mean by 'platform' and how does Screen Australia define 'Online/Direct-to-Audience'; 'Television'; and 'Theatrical Feature Film'?**

The Narrative Content Development Program is open to applications for narrative work that is for Online/Direct-to-Audience (inclusive of VR, AR, XR and social media platforms), Television and Feature Film Projects (inclusive of VR, AR, XR).

By Online/Direct-to-Audience we mean projects where:

- Online/Direct-to-Audience (inclusive of VR, XR, AR and social media platforms) is the first and primary release window.
- The creators of the work are in control of self-distributing the work and taking it to audience.
- Direct-to-Audience projects are those that have not been commissioned by any third party anywhere and for which the first and primary window is a social or direct-to-audience platform.

By Television we mean projects where:

- For episodic or feature-length projects for which Television (including SVOD or BVOD) is the first and primary release window, and are intended for a local commissioning platform and also a Rest of World (ROW) distributor.

By Feature Film we mean projects where:

- For feature-length projects for which theatrically distributed feature film is the first and primary release window and are intended for an Australian and New Zealand territory Distributor and also a Rest of World (ROW) sales agent.

### **Can I apply by myself?**

This program is open to companies and individuals (either alone or as part of a team of co-applicants where there are multiple rightsholders).

### **Can I apply for 100% of my budget?**

Yes, you can apply for 100% of your Development budget except in the instance of Feature Film projects applying for co-funding with third-party arm's-length funding. In the instance of co-funding applications, you can apply for 50% of your Development budget, capped at \$75,000.

### **Is there a minimum amount I can apply for?**

\$10,000 is the minimum amount you can apply for.

### **When is the best time to apply?**

Narrative Content Development Funding is an open and rolling application with no deadline. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply when their project is ready for the stage of development being applied for, have all submission materials in place, and have confirmed Key Creatives in place.

Screen Australia expects applicant projects to be intending to commence the stage of development, if successful, after contracting with Screen Australia.

Projects that intend to be in development for the stage being applied for at the time of application will not be eligible as Screen Australia does not fund retrospective costs.

### **What if I have no screen credits?**

Screen Australia expects that applicants have some experience in developing work for the screen sector, although it is not mandatory. An applicant with no screen development experience or no screen development credits for the platform they are applying to develop, must supply a writing sample for the platform (online/direct-to-audience, television, feature film) for which they are applying (maximum 15 pages). The sample does not need to be from the project being applied for.

### **Do I have to talk to Screen Australia before submitting an application?**

No, you do not have to talk with Screen Australia before submitting an application.

Please read and review the Narrative Content Development Funding Guidelines, the [Application Form](#) and this FAQ.

### **Can I apply with more than one project at the same time??**

There are no limits on the number of projects that you can apply for in the Narrative Content Development Funding program, noting there is no deadline for this program as it is open and rolling. However, we expect applicants to be strategic about when they apply. Projects should be rigorously thought through, meet all application requirements, and be strong against all stated assessment criteria. In addition to the program's assessment criteria, when assessing Screen Australia will also consider:

- availability of funds;
- range of projects in receipt of development funding from Screen Australia inclusive of a project's scale, budget, intended audience, genre and themes;
- range of applicants in receipt of development funding from Screen Australia inclusive of applicant, applicant company and geographic diversity;
- extent to which a project is likely to effectively and properly increase and amplify equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

### **Can I apply to Screen Australia's Development Fund and then the Production Fund?**

Yes, however you cannot submit to another Narrative Content funding program for the same project at the same time. For Narrative Content Production Funding applications, Screen Australia expects the development of the project to be completed and production-ready and materials delivered/acquitted to Screen Australia before an application for Production is submitted. Any development funds previously paid by Screen Australia will need to be repaid if your project goes into production. Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#) outlines more information regarding repayment of Screen Australia development funding.

### **Can I apply to the Narrative Content Development Funding program to make a proof-of-concept (POC)?**

No, Screen Australia no longer offers funding for proof-of-concept (POC) production. The Narrative Content Development Funding program does offer support, where applicable, and if funded, for:

- Documents and/or elements such as pitch decks, bibles and graphic design elements;
- look books;
- director treatments;
- hero character design or sample animation/animatic.

Please refer to [Narrative Content Production Funding](#) and [Short Film Production Funding](#) guidelines.

### **Do I have to repay development funding from Screen Australia if my application is successful?**

Yes, when the project goes into production with or without Screen Australia production funding, Screen Australia generally requires the producer to repay the development funding previously provided by Screen Australia.

If a project has received development funding from Screen Australia and later goes into production with production funding from Screen Australia, the previous development funding must be recognised in the production budget (as an above-the-line cost) and will become part of Screen Australia's total grant or investment in the project.

You do not repay Screen Australia's Development funding if your project is not produced.

### **Does Screen Australia Development funding guarantee a project will receive Production Funding?**

No. If a project has received funding from Screen Australia for development, it is not a guarantee that the project will also receive production funding.

### **What if I have not submitted all required materials when I submit at the deadline?**

Once your Narrative Content Development Funding application is submitted, Program Operations will review each application to determine eligibility and ensure that required application materials have been submitted. If and when eligibility has been confirmed, the applicant will receive an email advising that their application has moved to assessment.

After assessment the applicants will be advised of the outcome.

### **How long will I have to wait for a funding decision?**

Due to the volume of applications, you will be notified of the outcome of your application within eight (8) weeks of your application moving to assessment.

You will be notified via email and where required, by telephone call from a Screen Australia staff member.

### **What happens if I'm successful?**

Funding will be in the form of a grant and subject to a **non-negotiable** standard contract. Successful applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application verbally by a Narrative Content Investment Manager and will also be advised of any special conditions of Screen Australia's funding, after which the decision will be notified in writing.

Approved applicants receive a Letter of Approval detailing the level of Screen Australia's approved funding, as well as information about the contracting process and any applicable conditions. Following this, successful applicants will enter into a Development Grant Agreement (DGA) with Screen Australia. Your agreement will set out requirements for publicly acknowledging support. Please refer to [Crediting Screen Australia](#).

Please allow sufficient time for contracting with Screen Australia, and where required, with other parties. A member of the Screen Australia Communications team will be in contact to discuss how and when your funding will be announced. All funding decisions are embargoed until an

announcement strategy is confirmed and agreed.

### **What happens if I'm unsuccessful?**

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing.

Projects that are unsuccessful can reapply in a future funding round; however, you will need to provide a Statement of Changes, outlining key changes to the project.

If a project is declined twice, it is unable to apply again to Screen Australia's Narrative Content Development Funding program.

### **Will my application have a better chance of being approved if I ask for less money?**

You should apply for the amount of funding you need in order to undertake and complete your project within the context of the funding caps for this program.

It is recommended that you are strategic in the amount of funding you request based on the platform, scale of project, and development stage.

### **Can I have volunteers/students/unpaid practitioners as part of my project?**

Screen Australia expects all recipients of funding to pay those involved in the development of the project aligned with Screen Australia's contribution table (above).

### **What can't I use the funds for?**

See the guidelines for a list of projects/activities that are not eligible for funding. Your development budget will need to be approved by Screen Australia before contracting.

### **If I have previously received Development funding, can I apply again for more funding for that same project?**

Yes, but there is a limited number of times and amount of funding you can be supported for by Screen Australia.

#### Online/Direct-to-Audience and Television projects:

- a maximum of two tranches of development funding, totalling up to \$150,000.

#### Theatrical Feature Film projects:

- a maximum of three tranches of development funding, totalling up to \$225,000;
- if a project receives third-party arms-length development funding from a market partner (see section 3.3.1 below) and is awarded one or more tranches of co-development funding, such project is eligible to apply for an additional fourth tranche, up to a maximum aggregate amount of \$300,000.

## **What if my project intends to be an Official Co-Production?**

Applicants that are developing projects as anticipated Official Co-Productions (i.e. projects intending to be made under an existing Treaty or Memorandum of Understanding arrangement between Australia and another country) should contact the Producer Offset and Co-Production Unit (POCU) to discuss the proposed Official Co-Production structure and the application and assessment process.

We strongly recommend, where applicable, that all applicants for Development funding familiarise themselves with the Screen Australia [International Co-Production Program](#) Guidelines. Applicants can contact POCU at [pocu@screenaustralia.gov.au](mailto:pocu@screenaustralia.gov.au) for further information.

For anticipated Official Co-Production projects, applicants must provide supporting documentation (such as a co-development agreement or heads of agreement between the co-producers) outlining the terms on which the shared rights-holding or anticipated Official Co-Production will be governed. Screen Australia expects such documentation to clearly indicate an intention from the co-producers to develop and produce the project as an Official Co-Production.

## **What if my project intends to be an unofficial international co-production?**

An unofficial international co-production is a project which is intended to go into production as a co-production between an Australian co-producer and one or more producers from a country that Australia does not have a formal co-production Treaty or MOU with. For example, where the underlying copyright and other intellectual property rights and/or future Producer equity entitlements in a project are shared between an Australian co-producer and an international co-producer.

Such unofficial co-productions are not eligible for Screen Australia development funding. Outside the context of an anticipated Official Co-Production, Screen Australia expects that Australian producer/s own and control 100% of the rights in the project that is the subject of the application.

## **What do I need to provide in my application?**

Review the application form in Smartygrants for application questions.

Through the application form, applicants must provide all the information requested and answer the application questions.

**You will also need to answer information in the application form about your story, and your project**, as well as diversity, equity and inclusion, if applicable. More information on required information is below:

- **story development plan** – self-analysis of the current story document, its strengths and weaknesses, and if approved, what development work will be done to progress the project creatively and the rationale behind the development budget being requested;
- **project plan** – a plan that outlines the strategy and explains how the applicant or team, if

approved, will progress the project towards market, intended audience, and production company, where relevant;

- **diversity, equity and inclusion plan** where there is participation or content from the following communities: including d/Deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+ or other under-represented groups, the applicant should provide:
  - a statement setting out how the applicant is approaching the relevant content or participation;
  - a consultation plan covering the full development process and demonstrate that they are following it; and
  - evidence of consultation taken to date.

### **Submission Checklist**

Applicants are required to upload the following supporting materials with their application form:

- a story document** – an existing document that effectively communicates the story that the applicant wishes to develop i.e. an outline, a treatment, a mini-bible or a draft script;
- a writing sample** – in addition to the required story document, an applicant with no screen credits or no credits for the platform for which they are applying, must supply a writing sample for the platform (online, television, feature film) (maximum 15 pages). The writing sample does not need to be from the project being applied for;
- documented evidence of third-party funding** – if applying for co-funding (feature film platform only) with arms-length third-party funding in place, evidence of that development funding and any terms from the third-party arms-length market entity, which may take the form of a dated and executed letter of offer (LOO) on market partner letterhead and/or an agreement between the parties.
- co-production agreement** – where relevant, applicants must provide supporting documentation (such as a co-development agreement or heads of agreement between the co-producers) outlining the terms on which the shared rights-holding or anticipated Official Co-Production will be governed.
- additional materials** - applicants may upload one non-mandatory additional item, which may be a further writing sample, a document that communicates the creative vision of the project, or support for other key areas related to the project such as a Letter of Interest from market, or audience insights information (maximum 10 pages).

### **Why does the application require me to write about audience?**

We want you to be thinking about reaching your audience and how you will finance your project right from the start of your screen story concept and to build this into the development process and project plan. You can also apply, where relevant for your project and its stage of development, for budget to do audience testing, engage an impact producer and other audience facing elements.

### **Do I need to supply a Video Pitch?**

No, this is no longer required.

### **What if my project changes during development?**

While we expect projects to change during development, all changes require review and approval from the Screen Australia's Narrative Content Department. If you are successful in receiving Development Funding from Screen Australia, your Development Grant Agreement (DGA) will outline your obligations.

### **Can I apply with my panel/reality/game show/variety show/light entertainment project?**

No, Screen Australia does not fund these genres. Please see [Information for Applicants](#) for more information.

### **I don't have an Online audience following. Can I still apply?**

Yes. While having a strong audience following can be beneficial to your application, it is not a requirement of this fund. We are interested in projects where the applicants know who the target audience is, how to reach them and why this audience will watch your project.

### **How do contracting, payment and delivery work?**

Successful projects are contracted with a Development Grant Agreement (DGA), and within 7 days of execution of this agreement 100% of the funds are paid on presentation of a valid invoice. Generally, you will be expected to deliver in 6 months from the signing of the Development Grant Agreement (DGA).

### **How is my project announced?**

Successful projects will be contacted by a member of Screen Australia's Communications Team to discuss the announcement. This will most likely take the form of a media release or an announcement in the Screen Australia Newsletter along with multiple other development projects. We provide a draft to you for input prior to any announcement. All funding decisions are embargoed until an announcement strategy is confirmed and agreed.

### **Further questions**

If applicants have questions about the Narrative Content Development Funding program or accessibility requirements relating to submitting an application contact Screen Australia's Program Operations team at [development.narrativecontent@screenaustralia.gov.au](mailto:development.narrativecontent@screenaustralia.gov.au) or on 1800 507 901.

