



Australian Government



# Narrative Content Short Film Production Funding Guidelines

Issued 01 July 2025

Updated 13 March 2026

Screen Australia reserves the right to change its program guidelines. Applicants should check the website for the latest version. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#), and the [Information for Applicants](#) and [Information for Recipients](#) on the agency's website.

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

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# 1. Funding Program

## 1.1. Overview

The Narrative Content Short Film Production Funding Program supports a team of content makers that must include Director, Writer, Producer and, where applicable, Animator, to make a Narrative Content Short Film intended for theatrical festivals.

The aims of Narrative Content Short Film Production Program are to support:

- Australian live action or animated **Narrative Short Films** for a first and primary window of a theatrical festival outcome;
- **talent** who are connected to the stories they tell and reflect the breadth of Australia in service of cultural, creative and economic benefits; and
- talent and stories with **viable pathways** to festival audiences locally and/or globally.

The program will have two application rounds per financial year.

## 1.2. Available Funding

- Applicants may apply for any amount from \$50,000 up to \$100,000 for a live action short.
- Applicants may apply for any amount from \$50,000 up to \$125,000 for an animated short, or a short that blends live action and animation.
- It is expected that Screen Australia will be the major funder, but projects can also add to their budget via other sources where available, such as private investment, post-production investment, State or Territory agency funding, other funding avenues, provided that the production budget is no greater than \$175,000.
- Screen Australia reserves the right to approve the project's Finance Plan at the time of application.
- The minimum funding amount request is \$50,000.
- 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.

Successful applicants will be assigned an industry director mentor paid and engaged by Screen Australia.

## 2. Inclusive Storytelling

For Australian screen content to deliver cultural and economic benefits it must speak to, and be for, all Australians. A range of ideas and a diverse workforce will enhance the Australian screen industry, making it more relevant to Australian audiences and more competitive internationally.

Screen Australia is committed to building equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility into its programs and into our engagement with the community.

Screen Australia encourages applications from applicants from all backgrounds, cultures and experiences. In particular, the agency welcomes applications from under-represented groups.

Screen Australia strives to make its funding programs accessible by removing barriers for people who are d/Deaf, disabled and/or those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

### 3. Eligibility

- Applicants and projects must meet Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#), any general eligibility or other requirements listed on the agency's website (see [Information for Applicants](#) and [Information for Recipients](#)), as well as the specific eligibility criteria set out in these guidelines.
- Specific requirements apply to projects which involve [First Nations community participation or content](#).
- Specific requirements may apply to projects which involve participation or content with the following communities: d/Deaf, disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+, or those from other under-represented groups.

#### 3.1. Applicant Eligibility

This program is open to companies and individuals (either alone or as part of a team of co-applicants including director, writer, producer and where applicable, animator). To be eligible:

- an applicant company must be an incorporated company carrying on business in Australia, with its central management and control in Australia.
- an individual applicant or the team of individual co-applicants must be Australian citizens or Australian permanent residents (holding a permanent visa).

Applicants must also:

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- control the rights necessary to carry out the project, meaning that they must have clear chain of title and must generally be party to any underlying rights agreements;
- be registered for the purposes of GST if required by law.

Screen Australia will accept applications from individuals (sole traders) applying on behalf of a team consisting of director, writer, producer, and where applicable, animator. However, if successful, the applicant/team will need to incorporate a company to make the project before contracting with Screen Australia. For the avoidance of doubt, all persons that apply as individuals in this capacity must comply with Screen Australia's eligibility requirements set out in the [Information for Applicants](#).

The following types of entities are **not eligible** to apply to this program:

- Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agencies or bodies

- organisations or individuals that are excluded pursuant to the [Information for Applicants](#).

### 3.2. Project Eligibility

To be eligible, the project must:

- have a **director, writer, producer**, and where applicable, an **animator**, attached;
- have a director attached who has not directed a scripted feature film that has been theatrically released by an arms-length distribution company or has had an Australian or international programmed festival premiere;
- For the avoidance of doubt, the attached producer/s must have a short film and/or theatrically released scripted feature credit as per additional eligibility below;
- have a director, writer, producer, and where applicable, animator who is attached to only one (1) Screen Australia application for the Narrative Content Short Film Production Funding Program per round;
- have been developed by Australian creatives (being Australian citizens or permanent residents holding a permanent visa);
- be a maximum length of 15 minutes or under (inclusive of titles and credits);
- intend to commence pre-production no sooner than six (6) months after the relevant application deadline to allow time for assessment and contracting;
- meet the budget threshold of under \$AUD175,000;
- not be applying for post or completion funding.

Where the application is based on an underlying work, Screen Australia will expect, at the least, an appropriate option and purchase agreement (to which the applicant or co-applicants must be party), with an option period of at least 18 months from the date of application to Screen Australia (inclusive of any possible extension period/s).

The following projects/activities are **not eligible** for funding:

- capital works or purchases
- retrospective costs
- purchase of underlying Intellectual Property
- projects that have been declined twice for this, or any predecessor Screen Australia Short Film funding program (i.e. Hot Shots)
- projects that have submitted concurrently to another Screen Australia funding program, such as Development or Production
- non-narrative projects, such as documentary, factual, sporting or entertainment (i.e. panel shows and variety shows)
- non-narrative projects created for VR/AR/XR platforms (see [Documentary](#) programs)

- narrative projects that are not intended for a first and primary window of a theatrical festival outcome
- educational and training programs and projects
- projects linked to a course of study, such as being part of any assessable material or being used to count towards credits for a course.

### 3.2.1. Additional Eligibility Criteria

Screen Australia requires a minimum level of experience for directors and producers to be eligible to apply for the Narrative Content Short Film Production Funding program.

The following additional eligibility criteria apply to this program:

- creatives **can hold dual roles**, for example writer/director, writer/producer, director/producer, animator/producer, animator/writer but must have eligible credits for any and both roles they are holding;
- creatives **can be in co-roles**, for example co-directors, co-writers, co-producers, co-animators but must have eligible credits for any and both roles they are co-holding;
- executive producers can be attached to projects;
- **director or co-director** requires the following sole or co-directing credit/s:
  - a minimum of one (1) narrative short film that has been publicly screened in a competitively selected Australian or international industry film festival that is not a student film, category or festival; and/or
  - a minimum of two (2) professional mainstage theatre or mainstage festival directing credits as sole or co-director, programmed by an artistic director or festival director with a paying audience, not an amateur or self-produced season; and/or
  - a minimum of six Narrative; (6) episodes (of any length) of directing credits on an Online/Direct-to-Audience platform, publicly released and with a minimum of 5,000 views per episode.
  - For the avoidance of doubt, if you are applying for an animation project or hybrid animation/live action project, your credits must be in animation and/or hybrid animation/live action to be eligible.
- **producer or co-producers** require the following sole or co-producing credit/s:
  - a producing credit on a minimum of one (1) short film that has been publicly screened in a competitively selected Australian or international industry film festival\* that is not a student film, category or festival; and/or
  - A producing credit on a scripted feature film distributed by an arms-length distribution company and programmed by an exhibitor in Australia or the world; and/or a minimum of six (6) Narrative episodes (of any length) of producing credits on an Online/Direct-to-Audience platform, publicly released and with a minimum of 5,000 views per episode.

\* If the applicant has evidence of a credit on a short film that is scheduled to be publicly screened in a competitively selected Australian or international festival that is not a student film, category or festival, up to one (1) month after the Narrative Content Production Short Film deadline at which the applicant is applying, evidence of that selection must be provided by the applicant at the time of application, and the applicant will be considered to have met eligibility.

**Writers do not require any credits.**

## 4. Application Process

Before applying, applicants must read and understand these guidelines, Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#), [Information for Applicants](#), [Information for Recipients](#), and preview the application form on SmartyGrants.

### 4.1. How to Apply

Complete and submit the online application form prior to the application deadline through Screen Australia's [Application Portal](#) on SmartyGrants.

### 4.2. Application Form

Through the application form, applicants must:

- provide all the information requested and answer the application questions;
- meet all eligibility criteria; and
- include all required supporting materials.

### 4.3. Required Materials

Applicants are required to provide information on or upload the following supporting materials with their application form:

- **Draft Script** for a live action, animated or live action/animated hybrid project (no longer than 15 pages)
- **Production budget** using the Screen Australia A-Z template that includes:
  - production costs (including any applicable development costs)
  - post-production Costs
  - a dedicated Marketing Budget to support the early development and creation of high-quality marketing assets as well as audience testing (if part of the applicant's strategy)
  - all delivery costs relevant to National Film and Sound Archive and festival entry costs and requirements

- closed caption and audio description costs
- cast and crew wages, which must be paid no less than minimum guild and union rates
- allowance for carer and accessibility costs (for example, Accessibility Coordinator), if applicable
- contingency of 10% of the production budget
- costs for a solicitor's Chain of Title Opinion Letter
- all post-production and delivery using the Screen Australia A-Z budget template that totals to \$100,000 (live action), or \$125,000 (animation) or up to \$175,000 (total budget either live action or animation with funding other than your request to Screen Australia) with all cast and crew paid no less than minimum guild and union rates
- Project and **Production Schedule** including Shooting Schedule and Post-Production Schedules, and any other documentation detailing the project's proposed production methodology or pathway
- **Director and/or Animation Lookbook** with vision statement (no longer than 10 pages)
- **Finance Plan**, listing all sources of financing for the project (which may include, equity, private investment, grant funding from other sources, sponsorship, post production house investments)
- **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 project applicant should provide:
  - a statement setting out how they are approaching the content or participation;
  - applicants must demonstrate that they have a consultation plan covering the full development process and are following it; and,
  - evidence of consultation taken to date.

If an applicant's first application for a project to this program is not approved, they can make a further application for the same project if significant changes have been made. The applicant will need to outline these in a statement of changes. Please contact [shortfilm.narrativecontent@screenaustralia.gov.au](mailto:shortfilm.narrativecontent@screenaustralia.gov.au) to discuss before submitting. Screen Australia will not consider more than two funding applications for the one project.

Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

#### **4.3.1. First Nations community participation or content**

Where there is First Nations participation or content involved in the project applicants should provide:

- a statement setting out how they 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. Applicants must demonstrate that they have a consultation plan covering the full production process and are following it. The statement should be based on the checklists available in Screen Australia's guide [Pathways & Protocols: a film maker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts](#)
- evidence of consultation to date
- if the project will involve particular First Nations individuals or communities, signed letters of consent confirming their willingness to participate

## 5. Assessment

### 5.1. Process

- Once submitted, the Program Operations team will review each application to determine eligibility and ensure that required materials have been submitted. A member of the team may contact the applicant if there are questions regarding submission materials or eligibility. Once eligibility is confirmed, the applicant will receive an email advising that their application has moved to assessment which will take approximately twelve (12) weeks.
- Applications are assessed against the published criteria by Screen Australia delegates, with industry specialists consulted as required.
- All projects involving First Nations content or participation will be assessed or co-assessed by First Nations Assessors.
- Some projects involving representation of communities and culture may be assessed by Specialist or Cultural Assessors.

### 5.2. Criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Story (25%):**
  - Is the story strong, distinctive and entertaining and does it demonstrate storytelling craft?
  - Does the story contribute to a depth and diversity of Australian stories?
  - Is the story suited to short film?
  - Is the story production ready?
- **Talent and Team (25%):**
  - Is there evidence of the talent's creative potential and/or previous experience and are they positioned to execute the vision at its budget level?
  - Does the project have the potential to leverage and extend the career of the talent and team?

- Does the talent and team have authentic connection and/or cultural authorship to the content of the story, character and world they are representing?
- **Audience and Budget (25%):**
  - Does the project have the potential to resonate significantly with Australian and/or global audiences?
  - Will the story have impact for audiences and/or reflect the depth and diversity of people and experiences from around Australia?
  - Can the project be successfully realised for its budget and methodology?
- **Director's Vision (25%):**
  - Is the director's vision clear and compelling?
  - Is the director's vision realisable?

Other factors may be considered including the:

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

### **5.3. Decision & Notification**

- Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application within twelve (12) weeks from the application deadline.
- Screen Australia will advise applicants in writing of the outcome of their application.
- Due to the high volume of applications anticipated to be received for this program, Screen Australia is unable to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
- Decisions on applications are final.

## **6. Successful applicants**

### **6.1. Contracting**

- If a project is approved, the applicant will receive a Letter of Approval detailing the level and type of Screen Australia's contribution, as well as information about the contracting process and any applicable conditions.
- Successful applicants will enter into a Production Grant Agreement (PGA) with Screen Australia.

- If successful, the production covered by the funding must commence post-contracting with Screen Australia (i.e. retrospective costs cannot be covered by the grant).

## 6.2. Terms of Funding

- For further information about Screen Australia’s standard conditions of funding, see Screen Australia’s [Terms of Trade](#), [Information for Recipients](#) and the FAQs for the program.
- Funding will be provided by way of non-recoupable grant.
- A Chain of Title solicitor’s Opinion Letter will be required prior to contract execution.

## 7. Other Resources

Further information about Screen Australia funding and resources to assist with submitting an application is available on Screen Australia’s website:

- [Terms of Trade](#)
- [Information for Applicants](#)
- [Information for Recipients](#)
- Program FAQ
- A-Z Budget [Template](#)
- Finance Plan [Template](#)

## 8. Contact

- If applicants have any further questions contact Screen Australia’s Program Operations at [shortfilm.narrativecontent@screenaustralia.gov.au](mailto:shortfilm.narrativecontent@screenaustralia.gov.au) or on 1800 507 901.
- Please note that Screen Australia is unable to provide creative advice or review any materials that may form part of an application.

## 9. 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](#).