

Documentary Development Funding Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How does Screen Australia define 'Direct-to-Audience'; 'Television'; and 'Theatrical' documentary'?

Direct-to-Audience is:

- Direct-to-Audience is the first and primary release window. It is inclusive of Virtual Reality (VR), Extended Reality (XR) Augmented Reality (AR) and social media platforms such as You Tube, Facebook and TikTok).
- Projects 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.
- In simple terms, the creators of the work are in control of self-distributing the work and taking it to audience.

Screen Australia recognises that Direct-to-Audience pathways are rapidly evolving, so additional release platforms may also be eligible.

Television is:

- Single documentary, series or feature length documentary projects for which Television (including SVOD or BVOD) is the first and primary release window, and a local Commissioning Platform and Rest of World (ROW) Sales Agent have been, or are intended to be, secured.

Theatrical is:

- Feature length project for which theatrical / cinema exhibition is the first and primary release window in Australia;
- an ANZ Distributor has been, or is intended to be, secured; and
- a Rest of World (ROW) Sales Agent has been, or is intended to be, secured.

What does Screen Australia mean by 'platform'?

- Direct-to-Audience projects that are not commissioned, rather produced and self-released.
- Television projects that are commissioned by free-to-air or streaming platforms.
- Theatrical documentary projects that are to be distributed to and exhibited in cinemas.

How much can I apply for?

The maximum allowable request in this program per application is \$30,000.

Screen Australia expects that an applicant development budget be reasonable and relative to the following elements of a project's:

- scope, scale, anticipated production budget and intended platform (i.e. Direct-to-Audience (inclusive of AR, VR, XR); Television (inclusive of SVOD or BVOD), and Theatrical Feature Film;
- length, platform and the stage of development being applied for (i.e 1 minute vertical, Online/Direct-to-Audience series, half-hour episode, one-hour episode, feature, stage 1 research, series bible, treatment, outline);
- current stage of development and the development strategy outlined in your Development Plan.
- applicant/stage of career or level of experience of the Key Creatives; and,
- any additional sources of development financing raised or expected including third-party arms-length development funding from a market partner.

Aside from funding to support Australian creatives and costs of the development budget, Screen Australia can also contribute to costs for international consultants and mentors.

It is important that at the time of application your Development Budget is substantiated. That is, all activities you are applying for are reflected in your Development Budget and reflected in how you address them in your Development Plan.

Screen Australia development funding cannot be retrospective.

Can I apply by myself?

Applicants and projects must meet Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#), any general eligibility or other requirements set out on Screen Australia's website (see [Information for Applicants](#) and [Information for Recipients](#)), as well as the specific eligibility criteria set out in the Documentary Development Funding Guidelines.

Documentary Development is open to individuals (either alone or as part of a team of co-applicants) and Australian companies:

An individual applicant must be an Australian citizen or Australian permanent resident (holding a permanent visa).

For anticipated Official Co-Productions, applications must be made by the Australian co-producer.

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and [Information for Recipients](#)), as well as the specific eligibility criteria set out in the Documentary Development Funding Guidelines.

Can I apply for 100% of my development budget costs?

- Yes, applicants can apply for 100% of your development budget but Screen Australia encourages applicants to look for other sources of funding e.g. potential market partners, State/Territory agencies, philanthropic and private investment.

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.

When is the best time to apply?

- Documentary Development Funding is an open all year round with no application deadline dates.
- Decision meetings are once every two weeks.
- 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 Key Creatives in place.
- Screen Australia expects applicant projects to be intending to commence the relevant stage of development being applied for, 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.

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

- There are no limits on the number of projects that an applicant can apply for. However, Screen Australia's expects 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.

Can I apply to the Development Fund and then a Production Fund?

- Yes, however you cannot submit to another Documentary funding program for the same project at the same time. For Documentary 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 funding is submitted.

Can I apply with a panel/reality/game show/variety show/light entertainment project?

- No, Screen Australia does not fund these genres. Please refer to the [ACMA Guidelines](#) for the definition of a documentary.

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

- No

Do I need to supply a Video Pitch?

- No

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.

Can I apply for Direct-To-Audience development funding if I don't have an audience following/subscribers?

- 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 their project

What is an Impact documentary?

- A film that's designed not just to inform or entertain, but to create social or cultural change. Through community engagement, they aim to inform, inspire action and create change in public opinion and government policy.

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 for further information.
- For anticipated Official Co-Production projects, Screen Australia requires 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 are “Carers’ and Accessibility Costs” and how much can I apply for?

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.

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 will my project be assessed?

- Your project will be assessed by Screen Australia staff with Industry Specialists 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 cultural groups may be assessed by Specialist or Cultural Assessors.

- Applications will be assessed against the aims of the program, the assessment criteria for the program, other applications in the round, and in the context of Screen Australia's Terms of Trade.
- Decisions on application outcomes are final.

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 being moved to assessment.
- You will be notified via email and where required, by telephone call by a Screen Australia staff member.

What happens if I'm successful?

- Where an application is successful, Screen Australia will advise the applicant of the decision verbally (including detail of any special conditions of funding), after which the decision will be notified in writing.
- Successful applicants will enter into a Development Grant Agreement (DGA) with Screen Australia.
- Apart from applicants that are developing projects as anticipated Official Co-Productions, where the rights in the development materials are proposed to be held by more than one Australian party as co-applicants, Screen Australia generally requires all such rights-holders to be party to the Development Grant Agreement.
- If successful, the development activities covered by the funding must commence post-contracting with Screen Australia (i.e., retrospective costs cannot be covered by the grant).

Do I have to repay development funding from Screen Australia?

- Yes, when the project goes into production, with or without Screen Australia production funding, Screen Australia 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 need to 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 through Screen Australia Development, it is not a guarantee that the project will also receive Production funding.

What happens if I'm unsuccessful?

- Where an application is unsuccessful, the applicant will receive a short, written assessment against the assessment criteria which will accompany the decision notification email.
- Due to the high volume of applications Screen Australia is unable to provide further feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

If I am unsuccessful, can I apply again with the same project?

- If an applicant's first application for a project is not approved, they can make a further application for the same project if significant changes have been made. Changes will generally be in relation to creative, team, pathway to audience, marketplace and/or budget. The applicant will need to outline these in a statement of changes and discuss it with an Investment Manager before submitting.
- Screen Australia will not consider more than two funding applications for the one project.

How does 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).

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 Documentary Department. If you are successful in receiving Development Funding from Screen Australia, your Development Grant Agreement (DGA) will outline your obligations.

How is my project announced?

- Successful projects will be contacted by a member of the Screen Australia Communication 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 or on 1800 507 901.