



Australian Government



# Games Production Fund

## August 2025 – Trends Report

Prepared by the Screen Australia Games Department

### Background

The Games Production Fund offers flexible support to Australian independent gamemakers. This fund is the successor to the Games: Expansion Pack grant, which required that a project's final milestone be a public-facing release of the game. The Games Production Fund instead allows applicants to self-define a significant milestone of development and submit an application centred around that.

Common milestones include release, Early Access release, vertical slice, and playable demo. Milestones may be focused on either a commercial or a cultural outcome (e.g. festival and/or award submissions).

Screen Australia's games program funding was set in the National Cultural Policy: Revive and remains at \$3 million per financial year.

### Data

Screen Australia received 61 eligible applications for the August 2025 round of Games Production Fund, alongside 131 eligible applications for the simultaneous round of the Emerging Gamemakers Fund, totalling to 192 applications in the August 2025 rounds. This is a slight decrease from 204 in the previous round (February 2025) and reflects the marginal decrease in the number of Emerging Gamemakers Fund applications received this round.

Below is a chart comparison of the three most recent Games Production Fund rounds, breaking down eligible applications submitted per round, categorised by state.

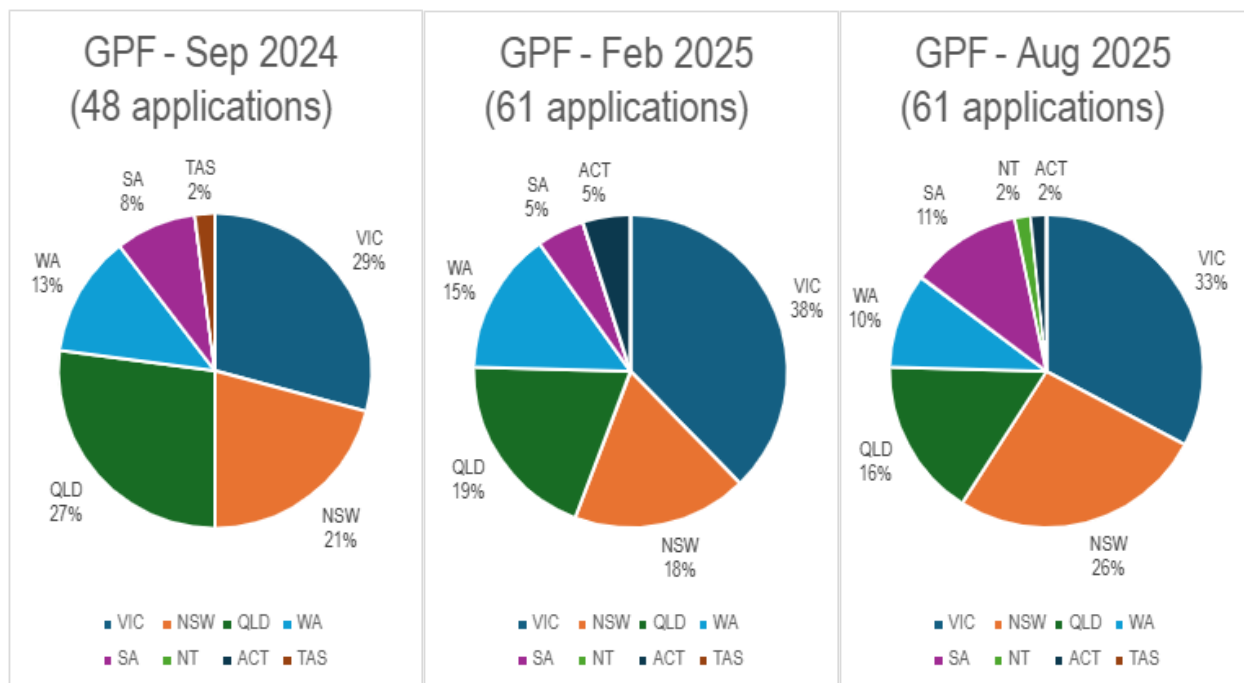


Figure 1. Breakdown of eligible applications submitted by state. September 2024 (left) had 48 applications, February 2025 (middle) had 61 applications, and the latest round, February 2025 (right), had 61 applications.

This round equals the number of eligible applications received in the previous round and jointly represent the second most Games Production Fund applications received in a single round. Once again, some of the volume can be attributed to the presence of projects successfully funded in earlier rounds of the Emerging Gamemakers Fund having concluded their grant and seeking production funding.

Continuing the trend from previous rounds, the August 2025 round saw the highest quality level of applications so far. This can be explained by the relative uptick in experience of applicants, both as gamemakers and as grant application writers: over half (~56%) of applications received this round were not from first time applicants and these applications commonly demonstrate the quality increase that stems from increased familiarity with the funding program’s requirements and objectives.

Screen Australia was able to support 18% of applications in this round, the same approval rate as the previous round.

In short, the fund continues to be competitive, and applications need to be exceptional to receive funding.

# Observations & Takeaways

Below are observations and takeaways noted by the Screen Australia Games Department that may be beneficial for future applicants when preparing their applications for the Games Production Fund.

## Key observations:

- The quality of applications, game ideas, prototypes, and diversity in teams have all increased this round. The projects being submitted are more resolved and have a clearer sense of identity and market positioning.
- For the first time, the Games Production Fund saw the overall gender balance of creative teams reach closer to parity than the Emerging Gamemakers Fund.
- Many applicants provided Chain of Title / IP Ownership information that was unclear or that could provide complications at the point of contracting. Circumstances where rights are held by an individual or individuals (rather than the applicant company) or where appropriate contractor agreements are not in place may cause problems, not just in a funding application but in regular business operations. Applicants are encouraged to seek legal advice to ensure that the applicant company has all rights and agreements required to produce, market, and sell the project that is the subject of an application.
- While the presence of Australian work-for-hire studios on a project is not inherently problematic, it is important to note that our funding programs are not open to auspicing (where the applicant is only acting as a pass-through or administrative partner) and the applicant and applicant company should be materially involved in the production of the project.
- The presence of international collaborators on an application is both anticipated and permissible. However, please note that the purpose of Screen Australia's games funding is the direct support of Australian gamemakers, studios, and IP. Any applicants unsure about the values and objectives of the funding programs is encouraged to consult the program guidelines and the most recent Screen Australia Corporate Plan.
- While marketing costs are anticipated and, depending on the target milestone, expected, the articulation and justification of these costs varies substantially. It is generally more competitive for applicants to justify their intended approach and explain how and why different activities (ads, events, influencers, etc.) will benefit the project.

- This round saw a number of projects applying having received the Emerging Gamemakers Fund. There is a noticeable level of quality across these applications; the impact of the Emerging Gamemakers Fund is tangible.
- Bespoke, smaller, well curated and prepared prototypes were more effective than prototypes that were simply the latest work-in-progress build of a game.
- Most applications received were premium, single-player titles targeting a Steam release. Console (17%), VR (8%), and Mobile (15%) were all slightly less prevalent than in the previous round and, once again, were most often included where a project was targeting more than one platform.. This is representative of both broader industry conditions and also of the scale and size of studio that the Games Production Fund can meaningfully support.
- Many applications were positioned around vertical slice, demo, or Early Access release as their significant milestone (approximately 75% of applications). This seems to continue to validate the change from ‘release funding’ to ‘milestones determined by the applicant’ has improved the flexibility and relevance of the grant.
- While less common, projects targeting a Full Release made up approximately 25% of total applications (reduced from 35% last round). Projects targeting some form of public launch milestone (e.g. Full Release or Early Access release) comprise almost 53% of applications, suggesting that many applicants are looking for production funding to support them through to the point where sales revenue can enable further development.
- Many supplied Finance Plans and Budgets failed to include a comprehensive account of the funding and financing sources for the project. Finance Plans and Budgets submitted as part of an application should capture all funding and financing, including EGF and other screen agency funding as well as in-kind contributions from the applicant, to present an accurate and complete overview of the project from its starting point. We saw an improvement in the number of applications appropriately budgeting for their intended localisation plans. Localisation continues to be an important consideration—particularly considering the high density of projects that self-identify as Story-driven—and appropriate resourcing is required for this to be viable and competitive.
- We saw several notable shifts in the self-identified genres across this round. The increased popularity of Action, Adventure, and Story-driven as genre tags continues, with each of these tags appearing on almost half of all total applications. Multiplayer, both Local and Online, has seen a significant uptick—almost one-third of applications received feature multiplayer. The number of games that self-identify as ‘experimental’ remains lower in Games Production Fund than in Emerging Gamemakers Fund

representing 4% of total applications. Story-driven remains the third-most popular genre tag this round at 39% (down from 43%), demonstrating the keen desire for Australian gamemakers to tell authentic Australian stories.

- While the most and least popular genre tags still differ significantly between Emerging Gamemakers Fund and Games Production Fund, this divide is narrowing. The presence of more applications from successfully completed Emerging Gamemakers Fund projects only partially explains this change.
- Games Production Fund receives comparatively fewer projects that use Australia as a setting than in Emerging Gamemakers Fund. Despite this, the proportion of projects that use animal or anthropomorphic animals in lieu of human characters remains quite high.
- Many applications indicated accessibility measures that the project would implement but did not substantiate or provide a plan or documentation for this work to be carried out (e.g. in the budget, timeline, and/or production plan). The articulation of a scoped, considered accessibility plan—including allocation for time and budget—is generally more competitive than a stated intent to implement an overly ambitious, widespread suite of accessibility features.
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility is one of four criteria upon which all applications are assessed and this area should be addressed in applications.. The application process highlights resources that applicants can use to consider accessibility in their design process.
- Some applications had relatively large team sizes without providing evidence of fair compensation at industry standards. While acknowledging that sweat equity and in-kind work may be prevalent in the industry, particularly at an informal stage of development, Screen Australia funding requires that any contractors involved in a project are compensated fairly. In instances where in-kind work is being performed, it is generally more competitive for this in-kind work to be given an appropriate valuation. See the Screen Australia Terms of Trade for details.
- We noted an increase in the number of creative team members who appeared on multiple applications in this round, or who are known to be working on other active game projects. While this is not inherently problematic, it is essential that applications acknowledge this fact and ensure appropriate steps are taken to clarify any concerns around capacity and viability that may stem from team members juggling multiple projects simultaneously.
- A high volume of re-applications was noted again this round (approximately 36%, compared to 38% last round). Of these re-applications, the more competitive ones were

those that took on feedback from the Trends Reports, improved on the necessary areas of their application and/or project, and provided clear evidence of these changes in their application—for example, by providing a changelog detailing the updated areas of their application, or by providing stronger, clearer, and more targeted supplementary materials.

- We noted a significant proportion of projects this round (approximately 30%) applied with confirmed funding from other screen agencies. This further reinforces the fact that the Games Production Fund is a highly competitive grant with many projects already proven to be of quality. Additionally, this speaks to the high calibre of gamemakers Australia-wide working on creative and culturally relevant projects.
- We noted a continued trend of teams moving away from proprietary software towards open-source solutions, presumably due to perceived business and reputational risks of using proprietary software.
- We noted a high volume of applications that used ‘playtesting’ and ‘QA testing’ interchangeably; these are not synonyms and have different goals, processes, and requirements.
- Given the volume of high-quality of applications and Screen Australia’s ability to support only 18% of applications, the reputation of the applicant alone cannot carry an application. Likewise, the presence of existing market traction is not a guarantee of success. The grant writing quality and the strength of the project and support material must be strong, regardless of an applicant’s level of industry experience. Government assessing protocols require detailed, quality information.
- A small number of applications featured language that appeared to be written by generative AI tools. While Screen Australia does not have a policy on the use of generative AI in applications, guiding principles can now be found on the Screen Australia website. Applicants are encouraged to read and adhere to these principles. Applicants are encouraged to consider that, as assessors see hundreds of applications each round, it is evident when generative AI has been used. Due to generative AI’s inability to conceive original creative thought, it may not be an appropriate tool in crafting a competitive application for cultural funding.
- A small number of applications had a history of being learning projects whose scope has evolved to an unviable level. It is rare for games that first evolved as learning projects to be viable in other contexts, especially commercial ones. Those who have succeeded are the exception, rather than the rule.
- Some applications dealt with sensitive topics that would require subject matter experts either on the team or to be consulted. We encourage future applicants to conduct or

have plans for conducting consultations and/or sensitivity reading, and to include these plans within the application. Budgeting both time and money for these consultations—and the implementation of any changes—also makes these applications more competitive.

- It is generally very difficult to make a last-minute application competitive. Applicants who gave themselves adequate time to proofread and polish their submissions were generally able to submit a more viable and competitive application.
- This round, we received an unprecedented number of updates and communications from applicants after the closure of the round. While we understand that applicants desire to provide the most competitive perspective on their application, our commitment to a fair, transparent, and equitable process necessitates that these details cannot be considered as part of the assessment process.

### **The most competitive applications:**

- Used the current templates provided and responded to the guidelines.
- Articulated a clearer sense of the shape of the project, its goals, and how it fits into the applicant's practise.
- Were both concise and comprehensive with the details provided. Competitive applications stuck to the page number restrictions and provided brief contextualising information to ensure assessors could clearly follow the project proposal.
- Had clear alignment in all elements of the application. For example, ensuring that team members were present in both the application and the budget, or ensuring that the project timeline was consistent throughout all documents.
- Were able to demonstrate or articulate what makes their game unique, in terms of visuals, design, gameplay, gamefeel, story, and mechanics, even if the game sits within an established genre.
- Had others streams of income indicated in their Finance Plan & Budget spreadsheet. This could be pending or confirmed, cash contribution or in-kind. Where sources of finance were mentioned in the application, they were also reflected in the Finance Plan & Budget spreadsheet.
- Had strong and clear visual identity that set it apart from other games in the market. Standing out visually does not exclusively imply photorealism, high fidelity, or polish.
- Had a well-balanced and thought-out video pitch. These videos not only hit all the vital points of a pitch (e.g. who is your team, what is the game, why is your team working on this project, and how will this grant help you), but were also well-planned and prepared,

and addressed the assessment criteria. These videos typically spent a minute or less talking about the game itself. Cutting to screenshots or video were also useful to see in video pitches.

- Were able to articulate the importance and timeliness of their project both in terms of their own professional creative practice and the current state of the industry and marketplace.
- Had a strong understanding of the importance of marketing, promotion, and discoverability, and could demonstrate a clear marketing plan for the project and/or identify the marketing expertise and experience within the team. These applications indicated a strategy early in the development process, and prioritised building momentum and audience early.
- Had included a marketing plan that covered a competitor analysis, target audience, and/or player psychographic profiles.
- Knew who their audiences were and could demonstrate their ability to reach them. An audience does not have to be big (i.e. '9-to-99-year-olds who play games' is not the best target audience) and can be a niche underserved audience.
- Provided letters of support from peers, clients, and industry leaders.
- Provided letters of confirmation from team members, collaborators, and stakeholders regarding their commitment to the project.
- Provided thorough and detailed risk analysis and mitigation plans.
- Ensured adequate payment to all workers involved in the project, meeting minimum industry rates or higher.
- Provided bespoke, relevant, succinct, and easily navigated support material.
- Provided realistic milestone dates with explicit, adequate buffer time.

### **The least competitive applications:**

- Deviated significantly from the provided templates and/or did not provide detailed responses to all the questions asked. These applications sometimes seemed to rely on favourable assumptions or interpretations by assessors, rather than providing comprehensive explanations that remove doubt.
- Tend to be highly derivative of existing released games. They commonly feature design intentions centred on the single dimension of enjoying and/or wanting to iterate on a perceived problem with the design of an existing released game.

- Spent disproportionate time and effort explaining or focusing on some particular details of the project while ignoring other elements of the application.
- Did not have a strong foundation or premise and could use more time to develop the concept and vision for the project. There may be a misunderstanding of expectations around how early it would be appropriate to access funding. All the projects in question had prototypes, but were commonly not representative of the game experience, visually or mechanically.
- Submitted application materials that did not provide clarity on what the game would be or how it would play beyond the scope of the submitted prototype.
- Did not have all their submission materials in order (e.g. out of date or wrongly addressed documents) or had missing submission materials and/or broken URLs.
- Had budgets where the allocated Screen Australia expenditure did not match the total Screen Australia ask.
- Did not consider accessibility or diversity at all. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility is one of the four assessment criteria and should be addressed in each application.
- Had video pitches that were not well planned, rehearsed, or produced. Uncompetitive pitch videos spent the majority of time speculating about design intentions or possibilities, or specific game mechanics.
- Were too ambitious without strong backing of their ambitions, and without a solid plan with contingencies and risk mitigation.
- Did not include or identify all creative team members in their application, or had missing or inconsistent information about the creative team.
- Did not acknowledge outstanding obligations in their application. If you have received previous Screen Australia funding, you must indicate this in your application (including your Finance Plan & Budget).
- Did not have a marketing, promotion, and/or discoverability strategy, plan, or expertise to back up their marketing expenditure (e.g. if the application plans to run an advertising campaign and spend \$10,000 on it, it may be appropriate to provide information about the advertising strategy in detail). These elements are particularly important for projects with commercial ambitions.
- Included a long list of release platforms without demonstrating experience in releasing for them. While Screen Australia appreciates the ambition behind this intention, unless the applicant is able to demonstrate experience in releasing or porting to these

platforms, has a solution in mind to compensate for their lack of knowledge or experience, or notes existing relationships with platform holders, selecting a large number of release platforms works against the applicant in terms of viability.

- Had compressed timelines or short runways, especially in instances where a project is expected to be 'complete' before or shortly after the expected contracting date. Projects that are near to release are best served by clearly indicating the work remaining post-contracting and budgeting for / planning around future expenses, such as marketing or expenses for post-launch updates and bugfixes, as 'backpay' is not a valid use of Screen Australia funding.