



Australian Government



Digital Originals 2026: Guidelines

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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](#), [Information for Applicants](#) and [Information for Recipients](#) on Screen Australia's website.

If applicants have accessibility requirements relating to submitting an application, they may contact Screen Australia's Program Operations team via email at initiatives.narrativecontent@screenaustralia.gov.au or phone 1800 507 901 for assistance.

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1. About this funding program

1.1. Overview

Digital Originals is a joint initiative of Screen Australia, SBS and NITV, aimed at developing exciting and innovative short-form scripted series for SBS and NITV. These series contain 6 x 10-minute episodes for broadcast on SBS and NITV platforms.

Digital Originals is targeted at emerging creators working on exciting and risk-taking scripted projects. Following the success of past participants such as *Homebodies*, *Moonbird* and *Appetite*, this opportunity is aimed at episodic narrative series designed for SBS and NITV audiences. Prior experience in writing for screen is not necessary.

Digital Originals aims to:

Screen Australia, SBS and NITV aim to support practitioners and projects that reflect the unique diversity of people and experiences from around Australia, all of which are important culturally, creatively and economically.

This initiative is designed to support screen creatives currently under-represented in the sector, including people who are culturally and linguistically diverse, First Nations Australians, d/Deaf and disabled, women and gender diverse, LGBTQIA+ and those who are in regional and remote areas. Please use this reference for definitions of regional and remote [areas](#).

1.2. Available funding/support

Up to ten teams will be selected to attend an exclusive workshop run by Screen Australia, SBS and NITV, featuring a range of industry guest presenters and past Digital Originals teams. The workshop will focus on short form narrative writing skills, pitching and developing the projects to align with the SBS Charter and audiences, culminating in a pitch to Screen Australia, SBS and NITV.

From the ten teams invited to attend the workshop, up to five will be chosen to take their project into further development, and from these, up to three will be chosen for production funding and commissioning with SBS, NITV and Screen Australia. Teams will have the support and resources of SBS, NITV and Screen Australia through the development process.

Team members residing outside of New South Wales (NSW), and residing in Australia, will receive economy return flights and accommodation within Australia for two to three team members to attend the workshop in person. Teams residing in NSW but outside of Greater Sydney may be provided with accommodation for the workshop and Pitch Day.

Following the workshop, selected teams will be provided with funding to develop their project, with delivery required by May 2027. Decisions on next steps will be made thereafter.

2. Inclusive Storytelling

For Australian screen content to effectively 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 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 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 these guidelines.

Specific requirements apply to projects which involve [First Nations community participation or content](#).

Specific requirements may apply to projects which involve community 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 as co-applicants).

To be eligible, an applicant must:

- an applicant **company** must be an incorporated company carrying on business in Australia, with its central management and control in Australia;
- an **individual** applicant must be an Australian citizen or Australian permanent resident (holding a permanent visa);

- be registered for the purposes of GST if required by law;
- control the rights necessary to carry out the project, meaning that it must have clear chain of title and must generally be party to any underlying rights agreements;
- demonstrate that the project is written, directed and produced by Australian citizens or permanent residents;
- have an active ABN at the time of application. Teams can apply with a company ABN or if the team has not yet established a company, they can elect one individual to apply as the lead applicant with their individual ABN for the workshop phase. Note, if successful for development funding, teams will require a company ABN to be established prior to contracting. If you do not have an ABN, please click [here](#) for information about how to apply for an ABN;
- Applicant teams must be made up of at least two key creatives (which must include at least one writer);
- At least one writer must identify as one or more of the following: First Nations Australian; culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD); d/Deaf or disabled; a woman or gender diverse; LGBTQIA+; or located in a regional or remote area.

Experience in writing for screen is not necessary. In recognition of the barriers and lack of professional pathways into the screen industry, applicants who do not have screen industry experience, but who can evidence the relevant skills and potential to take advantage of screen industry career opportunities will also be considered.

- While you can be attached to more than one project that applies for Digital Originals, we strongly recommend you carefully consider which project or projects are best suited to your skill set when applying. It is strongly recommended that individuals are not attached to more than two projects as a key creative.
- For teams provided with funding to develop their project after the workshop and pitch day, the requirement is that **two out of the three key creatives** (writer, director, producer) identify as one or more of the following: First Nations Australians; culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD); d/Deaf or disabled; women or gender diverse; LGBTQIA+; or located in a regional or remote area.
- For First Nations projects, this means at least two out of three key creatives must be First Nations Australians in line with NITV commissioning guidelines. Noting key creatives are defined as writer(s), director(s), producer(s).

3.1.2 Ineligible Entities

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

- Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agencies or bodies; and
- any organisations that are otherwise excluded pursuant to the [Information for Applicants](#).

3.2. Project Eligibility

Projects must be of a scale suitable for online and television audiences – immediately compelling, creatively outstanding and risk-taking in their nature. They can be of any scripted narrative genre, and cannot be documentary, factual or reality.

Specifically, we are looking for:

- Scripted narrative projects suitable for the SBS and/or NITV platform(s) (6 x 10-minute episodes, which together also form a 1-hour program for broadcast)
- An awareness of **who** the project is for and **why** that audience will keep returning to watch it
- Unique stories that add to the cultural landscape of Australian content, for a global audience
- Projects that traverse new ground in the Digital Originals program – we encourage applicants to view the past Digital Originals commissioned, and to be bold and fresh in the stories they present to us.

Projects that have been declined twice for previous Digital Originals programs are **not** eligible to apply again.

3.3. Additional Eligibility Criteria

The workshop will be held in Sydney 27 - 29 October 2026, with a Pitch Day, also in Sydney, following on 17 November 2026.

All applicants must be available in person for this workshop and pitch day to be eligible for the initiative (maximum of up to three team members per project).

Please note dates are subject to change.

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

Applications close **5pm AEST on Thursday 2 July 2026** and can be made through the Screen Australia [application portal](#).

4.2. Application Form

Through the application form, applicants must:

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

4.3. Required materials

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

- A pitch document, up to 3 pages, consisting of:
 - Information on the series format (how many episodes, length of episodes)
 - Genre, characters, story arc and brief plot summary
 - Themes and tone of the project
 - The target audience, including demographics and viewing habits
 - The team and their experience creating content
 - What is unique and exciting about the project
- A downloadable pitch video (up to 3 minutes) outlining the creators' personal connection to the project, why this project, why this team and why now.
- One script sample on behalf of the writer(s) of the project which must be a sample from a previous work and up to 10 pages (note: the script sample must **not** be part of the current project that is the subject of the application).

5. Assessment

5.1. Assessment process

Once submitted, the Program Operations team at Screen Australia 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.

Applications are assessed against the published criteria by Screen Australia, SBS and NITV executives 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 culture may be assessed by Specialist or Cultural Assessors.

5.2. Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed against the aims of the program, the following equally weighted criteria, against other applications in the round and in the context of Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#):

- **Creativity.** The creative strength of the project, and its ability to successfully engage or grow the SBS and/or NITV audience;
- **Team.** The track record of the key team members and the likelihood that this program will develop their skills in content production;
- **Writing.** The standard of the supplied writing sample, and its demonstration of the capabilities and skills of the writer(s); and,
- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.** The alignment of the team and project with the diversity and inclusion aims of the initiative and with the SBS Charter, SBS Codes of Practice, SBS & NITV Commissioning Inclusion Guidelines, and Editorial Guidelines.

Other factors may be considered including the:

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

5.3. Decision and notification

Applicants will be advised of the outcome by Tuesday 8 September 2026.

Screen Australia, SBS and NITV acknowledge and appreciate the efforts that go into applications but, given the anticipated volume of applications, will not be able to provide individual feedback on each application.

Decisions on applications are final.

6. Successful applicants

6.1. Contracting

If a project is approved, the applicant will receive an approval email with information about the contracting process and any applicable conditions.

6.2. Terms of Funding

Successful applicants will enter into a Participant Attendance Agreement with Screen Australia which will outline the terms of attendance at the Digital Originals Workshop and Pitch Day.

Following the workshop, those teams selected to receive funding to develop their project will enter into further development agreements with Screen Australia and with SBS/NITV which will outline the relevant terms of funding, with delivery required by May 2027.

SBS Exclusive Option:

In applying for the Screen Australia / SBS / NITV 'Digital Originals' initiative, Applicants agree and acknowledge that in the event an Applicant team is successful in securing development funding for their 'Digital Originals' project, SBS and/or NITV has an exclusive option to acquire on standard SBS terms all Free Communication Rights in Australia in respect of their project. In accordance with SBS's standard terms, the Applicant must not offer the project (or any similar project), or any rights or interests in the project or its source material, to any third party until the earlier of:

- a. SBS notifying the Applicant in writing that it does not wish to proceed with, or has no further interest in, developing or producing the project; or
- b. 12 months having elapsed from SBS's acceptance of the Stage 1 Development Delivery Materials.

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](#)
- [Pathways and Protocols](#)

8. Contact

If applicants have any further questions after reviewing these guidelines, the application form, and other available resources, they may contact Screen Australia's Program Operations on 1800 507 901 or via email at initiatives.narrativecontent@screenaustralia.gov.au.

Please note that Screen Australia is unable to provide creative advice or suggestions to strengthen 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](#).