



Development Program

Program Guidelines

About the program

Screen NSW Development funding supports writers, directors and producers to develop fiction or unscripted (documentary) and [online](#) projects with distinctive ideas and ambitious stories. All applications must have a well-articulated plan for their next stage of development and be able to identify appropriate market partners.

Projects can be for release on **any** platforms including cinema, television and online.

Applications can be received at any time and must clearly address all the selection criteria. Priority will be given to fully [NSW-resident](#) teams and projects that intend to shoot and/or post produce fully in NSW.

Please review the online [Application Form](#), the [Budget Guide](#), our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) and make sure you have all the required documents ready for your application submission.

In addition, [Screen NSW Terms of Trade](#) must be read in conjunction with the [Application Form](#).

Key information

- *Funding amount:* Up to \$50,000 depending on the project type and level of market interest.
- *Applications opened:* 1 July 2026
- *Applications close:* 11pm, 30 June 2027
- [Program page here](#)
- [Apply here](#)

Program objectives

The objectives of the program are to:

- Support the nurturing of new ideas and talent in NSW
- Ensure Key Creatives are given access to opportunities that benefit their careers and reinvest back into the NSW economy

- Support connections that will shape the future of our creative landscape and strengthen our position in the global market.

This program is funded and administered by Screen NSW.

Eligibility

Who can apply

All applicants must fulfil the following criteria:

- Meet the requirements of Screen NSW's [Terms of Trade](#)
- The applicant must be either a writer, director or producer who is an Australian resident or citizen
- The applicant and/or at least one member of the key creative team (i.e. Writer, Director or Producer) must have an appropriate credit on a Qualifying Project, or otherwise meet the credit eligibility exemption requirements (see 'Credit eligibility' for details)
- Applicants must hold the rights to the submitted project and be able to demonstrate this if required by providing chain of title documents
- Authenticity of story elements is mandatory and projects must have individuals in significant creative roles representing [priority groups](#) that are aligned to the project's story (see '[Authenticity eligibility requirements and Diversity Commitment](#)' for details).

Additional eligibility requirements by applicant type:

- Non-NSW Producer applicants must engage a [NSW-resident](#) writer
- Writer-only applications are only eligible for early-stage development (e.g., concept, treatment, bible, draft script), unless the writer holds eligible producer credits on a Qualifying Project. Applications seeking funding for advanced materials (e.g., market ready scripts, market-ready pitch decks) must include a producer to be eligible.
- Documentary applicants must have a director attached where the request includes shooting material.

Credit eligibility

The applicant and/or at least one member of the key creative team (i.e. Writer, Director or Producer) must have a credit on a Qualifying Project that is:

- Associated with the type of project that is being submitted for development support (e.g. narrative content; documentary/factual content)

- In the same role as the application to hand.

Qualifying Projects are those that have fulfilled at least one of the following:

- Been commercially distributed or exhibited theatrically
- Been commissioned by a recognised Commissioning Platform with proof the project is, at minimum, already in production and has a release plan in place
- Been screened at a recognised [Marquee Film Festival](#)
- Online digital projects with significant audience reach that is demonstrable.

Other eligibility requirements where Credit Eligibility cannot be satisfied

If an application does not meet the definition for a Qualifying Project above, the applicant will need to fulfil one of the following requirements:

- Individual NSW practitioners who have received development funding or successfully participated in a development program from a Screen Agency or market player. Approval of this must be sought prior to applying via a Screen NSW Investment Manager.
- Applicants who can provide evidence of market interest (Letter of Interest is minimum) or have secured co-funding from a recognised distributor or commissioning platform.

Authenticity eligibility requirements and Diversity Commitment

Screen NSW is dedicated to promoting fairness and equality in its programs and interactions with the community. Our main priorities include supporting increased participation in the industry of people from underrepresented groups, including:

- Regional NSW
- Western Sydney
- First Nations people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- People living with disability
- LGBTQIA+ people.

Supporting this participation encourages genuine storytelling and fosters inclusivity.

Screen NSW believes it is crucial for the narrative and characters of projects it funds to reflect the lived experiences of diverse communities. Furthermore, Screen NSW values the cultural expertise of the applicant's creative team in conveying an authentic story.

To effectively contribute to the cultural and economic well-being of the state of NSW, screen content should resonate with and cater to our audiences. Embracing diverse ideas and fostering a diverse workforce will strengthen our local screen industry, making it more relevant to local audiences and more competitive globally.

When a project includes a lead character from, or examines issues affecting one or more underrepresented groups listed above, Screen NSW expects applications to reflect this diversity within the creative team and/or to engage in meaningful, integrated collaboration with representatives of these groups from the outset of development.

If your project contains First Nations Content, it will be ineligible if it cannot demonstrate appropriate Indigenous consultation and/or participation. Screen NSW does not currently support projects with significant First Nations content without a member of the key creative team coming from an appropriate background. Please refer to Screen Australia's guidelines [Pathways & Protocols: a filmmaker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts](#).

Eligible project formats

The following projects are eligible for funding:

- Narrative fiction including children's feature films and series for any release platform including cinema, video on demand, broadcast television and online
- [Documentary](#) and factual including children's feature films and series (as defined by [ACMA](#)) for any release platform including cinema, video on demand, broadcast television and online
- Extended Reality for narrative driven audience interaction and engagement across online, mobile applications, public screens and interactive displays.

Non-eligible projects

The following projects are not eligible for funding:

- Short films under 60 minutes
- Lifestyle, Infotainment, Magazine, Sports, Game Shows and Current Affairs concepts.
- Community television
- Reality television series
- Projects being developed as part of a course of study
- Video or screen content that are for art installations.

Resubmission eligibility

- If your project has been declined, you may submit a second time but there must be significant changes to the project (for example, changes to story, writing, budget or cultural authenticity) and you must provide a statement outlining those changes.
- If your project has been declined twice you cannot submit another application for the same project.
- You can submit a maximum of two applications per project through this program in any one financial year without market interest.

Funding

Available funding

- Up to \$50,000 depending on the project type and level of market interest.
- Requested amounts should be reasonable and relative to the development stage and proposed activity, the scope of the final project being developed and align with our [Budget Guide](#).
- Applicants are expected to supplement this funding with their own and/or third-party contributions and Screen NSW funding is generally a partial contribution to the next stage of development.
- Screen NSW funding is provided as a development investment which must be repaid from the production budget unless we elect to rollover into the production. Please refer to the [Terms of Trade](#) for conditions on repayment of funds.
- When conversion to production does not occur, the funding is treated as a grant and is not repayable.

What you can get funding for

Please see our [Budget Guide](#).

Funding is for the development of a project and/or to secure market attachment for production finance.

As per the Terms of Trade, Screen NSW only funds the NSW Spend.

For example, while a non-NSW based producer applicant may apply, their producer fees cannot form the ask on Screen NSW.

Funding requests can include:

- Fees for writers’ rooms
- Writer fees for creative material such as [series bibles](#), [treatments](#), pitch documents and scripts including draft to draft
- Character and environment design work for animation
- Fees associated with research and consultation
- Strategic shooting for documentary projects
- Proof of concepts (capped at \$25,000), prototypes, concept art, test shooting (360-degree projects only)
- Budgeting, scheduling, casting and travel to finalise production finance for advanced stage projects with significant market interest
- Producer fees.

Development budgets cannot include funding for:

- Office overheads
- Legal fees (with the exception of Documentary projects)
- Option fees
- Fringes
- Items already expended prior to applying for development funds
- Graphic design or printing costs associated with a pitch deck
- Catering costs for writers’ rooms over \$200 per day
- Software hire (with the exception of animation software hire).

Funding request caps

The total requested contribution from Screen NSW should not normally exceed:

Project Type	No Market Place	With Market Interest	With Market Co-finance
Fiction: Feature	Up to \$25,000	Up to \$35,000	Up to \$50,000
Fiction: Series	Up to \$25,000	Up to \$35,000	Up to \$50,000
Fiction: Animation testing and designing	N/A	Up to \$15,000	Up to \$25,000
Fiction: Web/Online Series	Up to \$10,000	Up to \$20,000	Up to \$30,000
Fiction: Budgeting & scheduling	N/A	Up to \$5,000	Up to \$15,000

Fiction: Casting	N/A	Up to \$5,000	Up to \$10,000
Documentary: Feature, Broadcast series or One-off	Up to \$15,000	Up to \$25,000	Up to \$35,000
Documentary: Web/Online Series	Up to \$10,000	Up to \$15,000	Up to \$20,000

Selection criteria

Your application will be competitively assessed against the following criteria listed below in order of our priorities:

Story (50%)

- The underlying idea’s strength, distinctiveness, originality and dramatic potential
- Does the story feel timely or particularly resonant?
- The quality of the submitted materials: what work needs to be done on story, structure, character, dialogue, tone, etc.
- Is there clarity about genre and does the script deliver on it?

Audience (15%)

- The applicant’s demonstration of pathway to audience appropriate to the project’s budget size and financing strategy
- Potential of the project to reach and resonate with its target audience.

Creative Team & Development Plan (15%)

- Does the team have the skills and relevant experience to advance the project towards production and deliver on its creative vision?
- The appropriateness of the development plan for this stage of funding.

Participation and Diversity (10%)

How robustly does the project advance diversity and generate cultural value in terms of local storytelling i.e., content and/or authorship across the following:

- On-screen representation of diversity in protagonist/s, themes, narrative
- Key Creatives and project leadership
- Industry access and opportunities for training/career progression/mentoring.

Screen NSW does not currently support projects with significant First Nations' content without a member of the key creative team coming from an appropriate background.

Cultural and NSW Economic Benefit (10%)

- How the project generates cultural value in terms of local storytelling i.e., content and/or authorship
- How the project generates NSW economic value in terms of local storytelling i.e., content and/or authorship.
- How the project contributes to industry growth through the use of NSW facilities, service providers and businesses.

Other relevant factors and risks may also be considered, as determined by Screen NSW, in its sole discretion, including:

- The geographical distribution of funding, the composition of the team and the location of shooting/post-production
- Assessment of the applicant's management, its directors and officers and entities or individuals that exercise control over an applicant against the eligibility criteria
- Assessment of accurate and appropriate representation of key priority areas in key creative roles and content
- Assessment of other factors that may cause applicants to be unsuitable for support, such as any personnel or business activities that could cause reputational or other risk to the NSW Government
- The availability of funding for the program and the perceived funding requirements of an applicant's project
- The diversity of slate of applications Screen NSW receives in a financial year.

What your application needs to include

Support material plays a vital role in how we understand and assess your application. Choose high-quality support material that is concise, current and directly relevant to your application. Details of support material are specified in the application form and on our website [here](#), for example, series bibles, treatments, etc.

At a minimum, you must submit materials in accordance with the current stage of development and project type:

- **Series:**
 - Episode outline (1 page per episode) OR
 - Bible (10-20 pages) OR

- Pilot episode or script sample (10-20 pages) of the proposed project OR
- Mini-bible or Treatment
- **Feature:**
 - Treatment or Draft Script (indicate version number and date) OR
 - Outline (min. 3-5 pages)
- **Documentary:** Outline or Treatment
- **Digital Project:** Draft Script and/or Proof of Concept

Support material for proposals involving the First Nations arts and cultural sector and/or First Nations people, organisations and cultural material must include letters of support and confirmation of involvement from the relevant communities and/or organisations (see [NSW Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Protocols](#)).

Start your application

[Apply here.](#)

Application Submission

All applications must be submitted via the SmartyGrants portal by the closing date and time prescribed in the Program Guidelines, or as per updated timelines communicated by the Department.

The applicant will be required to:

- Complete the application form via the link contained on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder webpage.
- Submit the application through the SmartyGrants portal.
- Provide all requested information in full.
- Address all eligibility criteria (including Terms of Trade, rights, credit eligibility, and diversity requirements).
- Address all assessment criteria (story, audience, creative team & development plan, participation and diversity, cultural and NSW economic benefit).
- Include all necessary attachments (e.g., chain of title documents, CVs, budgets, market interest letters, cultural consultation letters if applicable).
- Submit the application before 11:00 pm on 30 June 2027 (as per published program guidelines).

Once an application is submitted, the applicant will automatically receive a confirmation email from SmartyGrants.

Assessment process

Applications are received on a rolling basis and are assessed on the eligibility and selection criteria. Sector Investment team members assess projects across our entire suite of development and production programs.

Once your application has been submitted, you will receive an email confirmation from our secure online grants system, SmartyGrants.

Applications will be initially reviewed by Screen NSW staff to ensure they meet eligibility requirements, and all application materials are acceptable. Where projects are deemed ineligible, the applicant will be advised within 4 weeks.

After eligibility is confirmed, the application will be assessed by a minimum of one Screen NSW staff member or an external assessor with industry experience. The application will be then reviewed by an assessment panel including a minimum of three Screen NSW staff members, chaired by the Senior Manager Content Investment (or delegate), which is convened on a monthly basis. The assessment meeting may also be attended by a probity representative.

Please note that funding allocation follows a competitive process. Evaluations will consider the assessment criteria outlined above, the availability of funds at Screen NSW, the quality of the application against other applications received during the same assessment period, and the applicant's need for Screen NSW funds.

Final recommendations will be made in writing for approval by the Executive Director, Screen NSW.

We shall endeavour to notify you on the outcome of your application between eight to ten weeks from the date that Screen NSW acknowledges receipt of a completed application.

Award process

If successful, the applicant will be notified by email and must enter and abide by the terms of a standard non-negotiable Development Agreement with Screen NSW, setting out the terms and conditions of the funding.

Enquiries and Feedback

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email and can request with a feedback session. Feedback sessions will be delivered by the Department.

To register for a feedback session, applicants must email the Investment Manager or investment@screen.nsw.gov.au

The following information will not be provided:

- Individualised creative development advice (e.g., rewriting story, editing scripts).
- Comparative information about other applicants' submissions or assessment scores.

Appealing a Funding Decision

Funding Decisions cannot be appealed.

Variations

Any variations to the Funding Grant Agreement, including project scope or activities, location or timeframes outlined in the application form and Grant Guidelines must be submitted in writing for approval from Screen NSW. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of the grant offer.

Screen NSW has the discretion to approve or reject any variation request from a grantee where the grant agreement has already been executed.

To submit a variation request please contact the investment manager assigned to your project.

If you are unsure if your enquiry qualifies as a variation, contact the Screen Investment team at investment@screen.nsw.gov.au.

Support for Applicants

To ensure fairness and transparency, all applicants to the Screen NSW Development Program will have equal access to information and assistance.

Screen NSW can provide:

- General information about the program guidelines, eligibility criteria and assessment criteria
- Guidance on completing the online SmartyGrants application form
- Clarification of required attachments and support materials
- Technical support for using the SmartyGrants portal.

Screen NSW cannot provide:

- Individualised advice on the merits of a specific project or how to strengthen creative material
- Editing or correction of application content
- Advice that may provide an unfair advantage to one applicant over another.

Support will be provided through:

- Program Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) published on the Screen NSW website
- Responses to enquiries via the Screen Investment team at investment@screen.nsw.gov.au
- Technical assistance with the SmartyGrants platform
- Information sessions or webinars, with recordings and materials made publicly available.

To ensure equal access:

- All applicants receive the same program documentation, published FAQs and standardised responses to common queries
- All enquiries and responses will be documented and managed in accordance with NSW Government probity standards.

Ongoing Management and Reporting

Once a funding agreement is executed, the management of the grant program transitions into a structured phase governed by the terms of the Program's Funding Deed. This includes oversight of payments, milestone tracking, reporting obligations, and acquittal requirements.

Payments & Milestones

Funding is typically released in milestone-based instalments, with each payment contingent on the satisfactory completion of agreed deliverables. These milestones are clearly defined in the funding agreement and may include development stages such as script drafts, treatments, or production plans. The grantee must submit evidence of milestone completion before payment is processed.

Funding Conditions

The grantee is required to:

- Comply with all terms outlined in the Funding Deed.

- Maintain accurate financial records and provide documentation upon request.
- Notify Screen NSW of any material changes to the project scope, timeline, or team.
- Acknowledge Screen NSW support in all public communications and materials related to the funded project.

The Department (Screen NSW) may impose additional conditions, such as requiring consultation with First Nations communities or compliance with specific industry protocols, depending on the nature of the project.

Reporting and Acquittal Requirements

Following completion of the project, a final report, along with other delivery items listed in the Funding Agreement must be submitted via the SmartyGrants Acquittal Form. The final report must:

- Identify if and how the intended outcomes have been achieved
- Include the agreed evidence as specified in the Funding Agreement
- Identify the total eligible expenditure incurred
- Confirm compliance with all program obligations, including acknowledgements and community consultation where applicable
- Provide copies of deliverables and any relevant supporting documentation.

Late reports and invoices for milestone payments may be accepted at the discretion of Screen NSW, provided the grantee communicates delays in advance and offers valid justification. The Legal Team must be consulted during the design of acquittal and reporting processes to ensure all requirements are properly reflected in funding agreements.

Payment Process

The grant will be paid directly to the nominated bank account only after the grant agreement has been duly executed by all relevant parties. Payments will be made according to the milestones established in the grant agreement, ensuring that each payment follows the successful completion and verification of those milestones.

Payments are contingent upon the submission of correctly completed invoices that align with the agreed deliverables and reporting requirements. The timing of payments will adhere strictly to the schedule outlined in the funding agreement, providing transparency and predictability for both the grantee and Screen NSW.

All payments will be made **GST exclusive**, consistent with the current financial protocols (confirmation with the Finance team is advised for any GST-related inquiries).

Unspent Funds

If a grant recipient completes their project and there are unspent funds remaining from the allocated grant, those funds must be returned to Screen NSW in accordance with the terms outlined in the Funding Agreement. The process for returning unspent funds will be confirmed in consultation with the Finance Team and the Legal Team to ensure compliance with financial and contractual obligations.

The Funding Agreement will clearly specify the conditions under which unspent funds must be returned, including the method of repayment and any required documentation. Grant recipients are responsible for identifying unspent funds during the acquittal process and must report them accurately in their final financial reconciliation.

Failure to return unspent funds or to disclose them during acquittal may result in breach of contract and impact eligibility for future funding.

Complaint Handling

Complaints concerning grant outcomes or the application process should be emailed to investment@screen.nsw.gov.au.

Receipt of complaints

- Complaints are received via the Screen NSW investment@screen.nsw.gov.au inbox.
- Complaints are recorded in a complaints register managed by the Screen Investment Team.

Acknowledgement

- Complaints will be acknowledged by email within 3 business days of receipt.

Assessment

- Complaints are assessed by the Senior Manager, Content Investment within 20 business days of receipt.

Complaints are assessed based on:

- whether the issue falls under Screen NSW's jurisdiction
- involvement of other organisations
- feasibility of the complainant's suggestion
- severity, urgency and complexity
- health and safety implications
- impact on the applicant, general public and the agency
- potential to escalate.

Resolution

- Where a complaint is considered complex or high-risk, the proposed resolution will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Director, Screen NSW.

Following assessment, the Senior Manager, Content Investment will determine appropriate action:

- Request additional information or correspondence with the complainant.
- Refer the matter for further investigation if serious.
- Advise the complainant if no further investigation is required.

Communication of outcome

- The Senior Manager, Content Investment will inform the complainant of the action taken.

Escalation

- If the matter needs to be escalated, it will be referred to the Executive Director, Screen NSW for internal review.

Record keeping

- All assessments and actions taken will be recorded in the complaints register.

External review

- If the matter cannot be resolved internally, the complainant will be advised to contact the NSW Ombudsman for external review.

Publication of Grants Information

The Grants Administration Guide (Guide) requires that certain information is published in relation to grants awarded no later than 45 calendar days after the funding agreement takes effect (see section 6.5 of the Guide and Appendix A to the Guide).

This information is also open access information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (GIPA Act), which must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information.

In accordance with these requirements, relevant information about the funding awarded will be made available on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder as soon as possible after the funding agreement is executed.

All records in relation to this decision will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 (NSW).

Support and contact

We encourage you to discuss your funding expectation with us prior to making your application.



Screen NSW staff are available to provide technical advice and general information to potential applicants on the interpretation of these guidelines, including the types of activity eligible for funding and support with the online application process.

Screen NSW staff cannot help directly with your application. To maintain a fair and equitable process, staff cannot edit or correct any applications or provide advice on the content or choices required against the Assessment Criteria.

For further information or clarification, please contact the Screen Investment team at investment@screen.nsw.gov.au.