



Digital Games Seed Development Program

Program Guidelines

Summary

Targeted at emerging and small-medium enterprise digital game creators, the fund will provide a grant of up to \$30,000 for early-stage game development.

The funds could also be used to cover scoping technical requirements of a games project, exploring commercial, creative and market potential, as well as pitch materials.

The program is funded and administered by Screen NSW, as a unit within the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport (DCITHS).

- Applications open: 13 January 2025 at 10am AEST
- Applications close: 24 February 2025 at 2pm AEST
- Type of funding opportunity: Open, competitive
- [Program page](#)
- [Apply here](#)

Program objectives

The objectives of the program are to:

- Support NSW game creators to advance early concept original digital games IPs to reach the next stage of development
- Assist successful applicants to prepare their project to raise additional finance for full-scale development
- Encourage sustainable growth for the NSW games sector and a diverse pipeline of game talent in NSW.

Contact & support

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 PDV and Digital Games team pdvgames@screen.nsw.gov.au.

Eligibility

Who can apply

All applicants need to fulfil the following criteria:

- If an individual, the applicant must be a NSW resident (i.e., lived and operated in NSW for at least six months immediately before the application)
- If a company, the applicant must be incorporated in Australia and taken to be registered in NSW, have their central management and control in Australia and carry out business in Australia
- Applicants must have an ABN
- Applicants must not be full-time secondary or tertiary students; or employing students who are currently studying games, or a field related to games. Part-time students are assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Applicants who are an employee of a Federal or state or territory government screen agency are not eligible to apply
- An applicant cannot be a licensee of a service under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (Cth)* or a related body corporate of such a licensee (as defined in the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*)
- Applicants must have the right to carry out the project, for example, own or have the licenses of any relevant copyright. If the application is based on a third-party underlying work, applicants must have an appropriate option agreement. Applicants must be able to demonstrate they have the necessary rights if required by providing chain of title documents.
- Applicants must have a project team member with a key creative credit on at least one game that has been released to the general public e.g. Steam, itch.io
- There can be only one application for a particular game. If more than one NSW developer is working on the project, a joint application for the game will need to be made.

Eligible projects

Eligible games must be:

- Intended for public release
- At concept or early-stage development
- Completely digital.

Eligible games for funding include:

- Games for entertainment purposes
- Games for any platform including console, desktop, tablet, mobile, VR/AR
- Multi-player and single-player games.

What you can't apply for

Ineligible games include but are not limited to:

- Games involving gambling, for example games falling within the definition of 'gambling service' as defined in Section 4 of the *Interactive Gambling Act, 2001 (Cth)*
- Games involving 'gambling' and 'unlawful game' as defined in the *Unlawful Gambling Act 1998 (NSW)*
- Games developed for research, advertising or corporate marketing, or other business-to-business audiences or purposes
- Games primarily designed for educational or training purposes
- Games consisting of curriculum or other educational or training material
- Games that are likely to be refused classification under the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995*
- Games that are not completely digital (board games or hybrid digital/physical games).

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:

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

If your project contains First Nations Content it will be ineligible if it cannot demonstrate appropriate First Nations 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](#).

Funding

Available Funding

Up to \$30,000 as a grant.

What you can get funding for

Funding is for direct, early development costs of a project and/or to secure investment for further game production. The funds can be used by successful applicants to invest in experimenting and developing an original IP with the goal to gain investment to transition the idea to full execution and release, including a prototype or the completion of a micro-scale game.

Screen NSW will not fund 100% of the stage of development that the applicant is seeking funding for. Applicants are expected to supplement funding with their own (this can be in-kind) or third-party contributions and submit a finance plan which demonstrates how the project will be funded including any applicant and third-party contributions.

Screen NSW expects at least 90% of the funding requested to be used directly for development costs. If an applicant requests funding for other costs, the applicant will need to substantiate how the other costs will contribute to development outcomes.

Screen NSW will only fund NSW elements – i.e., all expenditure must be in NSW and spent on NSW based funding recipients, contractors or other suppliers.

Applicants should include appropriate budget for Public Liability Insurance and legal costs for a Solicitor's Opinion letter certifying Chain of Title.

Funding can be used for:

- Staffing costs and other costs associated with the game's development including reasonable hardware, software licenses and capital costs that clearly contribute to outcomes outlined in the project's development plan
- Licensing costs and legal fees. This includes assistance with licensing and publishing agreements, and intellectual property protection.
- Business development activity including engagement of an experienced mentor to support key project personnel with creative, technical or business elements of the project
- Scoping technical requirements of a games project, exploring commercial, creative and market potential, as well as pitch materials.

The expenditure must be incurred by the applicant. Transactions with interested or related third-parties must be on an arms-length basis.

The following expenditure is specifically excluded:

- Payments for activities or services undertaken outside NSW
- Expenditure on international or interstate travel or freight

- Deferred fees which are payable from future revenue or profits
- Payments to service providers which are offset by a reinvestment or any other financial or other contribution to the project
- Any expenditure that precedes the date a successful applicant signs a Screen NSW funding contract.

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be competitively assessed against the following criteria:

Idea

- The strength and distinctiveness of the game concept or idea
- Level of ambition with innovative approaches to game design and development
- The overall quality of the project, considering artistry, gameplay, originality, technology and any commercial potential
- Applicant's ability to communicate the game idea and its potential as a finished game.

Audience

- 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 and Development plan

- The track record and demonstrated potential of the individual applicant or creative team to deliver the project
- The feasibility of the development plan and strength of the finance plan, including the appropriateness of the budget and schedule
- Screen NSW prioritises teams who are all NSW-residents.

Participation and Diversity

- The diversity of the team including skills, background, experiences, and perspectives
- How robustly the project advances diversity across one or more of the following:
 - o Industry access and opportunities for training/career progression/mentoring
 - o Underserved audiences
 - o Underrepresented groups
 - o First Nations' content and/or participation.

Screen NSW will determine the weighting of assessment criteria, which will then be applied to all applications at the time of assessment.

Application process

Screen NSW uses the SmartyGrants platform for submission of all applications. Applications made using any other format will not be accepted. Please note you will receive a SmartyGrants acknowledgement of submission.

A preview of the application form can be viewed on the [SmartyGrants portal](#).

Applicants are required to complete an application form and submit project documentation including:

- Project details (e.g., early design documentation, concept art)
- Creative pitch presentation
- Project plan with an estimated development timeline, finance and budget plan
- CVs of team members including information about you, your team
- and any other supporting documentation.

Late applications due to technical difficulties will be reviewed and eligibility determined with absolute discretion of Screen NSW. A request for late submission due to technical difficulties must be submitted by email to pdvgames@screen.nsw.gov.au within 60 minutes of the application close time.

Assessment process

What happens once you've submitted your application

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

Eligibility

Applications will be initially reviewed by Screen NSW staff to ensure they meet eligibility requirements, and all application materials are acceptable.

Assessment

After eligibility is confirmed, the application will be assessed by a minimum of one Screen NSW staff and an external industry specialist.

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 variety and representation of the original IP and the applicant's need for Screen NSW funds.

Recommendation and Decision

Successful applications will be approved by the Head of Screen NSW based on written recommendations from a panel consisting of Screen NSW staff and industry peers.

Timing

Screen NSW aims to turnaround applications approximately 8-10 weeks from the application close date. Applicants will be advised of the application outcome by email.

Award process

Successful funding recipients will enter into a standard non-negotiable agreement with Screen NSW, setting out the terms and conditions of the funding.

Additional information

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).

Conflict of Interest management

Any conflicts of interest will be managed in accordance with NSW Government Grants Administration Guide.

A conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, may be identified if staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- Has a professional, commercial, or personal relationship with a party who can influence the application selection process, or
- Has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicants from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently, or

- Has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation received funding under the program.

If you identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest at any time, you must inform Screen NSW immediately. Screen staff can be contacted by email: pdvgames@screen.nsw.gov.au.

NSW Government staff, committee members and other officials including the decision maker must declare any conflicts of interest and ensure they are managed according to the *Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW Government Sector Employees* and the *Grants Administration Guide*.

Complaint handling, access to information and privacy

Details on how Screen NSW handles complaints, access to information and your private information are available [here](#).