



Short to Feature Fast Track Initiative

Program Guidelines

About the program

The Short to Feature Fast Track Initiative combines funding for the production of a short film or proof of concept, as well as script development funds for a low budget feature film.

The aim of this initiative is for emerging to mid-level NSW creative teams with fresh voices to have an opportunity to create a short film or proof of concept alongside script development funding on a feature film to accelerate the project towards financing and production. The feature film script does not have to be the same story or a long version of the short film but should be connected, for example, by creative voice, genre, tone or stylistic approach.

The formats can include live action and animation for both the short/proof of concept and feature. All drama genres are eligible. There is no restriction on subject matter or style, but Screen NSW is looking for scripts that are compelling, distinctive and have a strong sense of their audience.

The initiative will identify and track fresh NSW filmmaking talent and invest in developing and establishing their strong and distinctive creative voices. Supporting creative teams in producing a short film or proof of concept will act as a calling card for the feature film and armed with an advanced-stage draft of the feature film will enable teams to leverage further development support or marketplace finance.

The initiative will build networks and relationships between emerging to mid-level creative teams and experienced practitioners, as well as with experienced industry professionals from the distribution sector in order to develop the teams' understanding and awareness of the intended audience. This initiative will also assist in honing craft skills for both above the line and below the line practitioners through funding short film production.

- **Funding amount:** Up to \$45,000 for production or up to \$30,000 for post-production for short/proof of concept; and up to \$30,000 for feature film development
- **Applications open (Stage 1):** Friday 1 March 2024
- **Applications close (Stage 1):** 5pm, Thursday 28 March 2024 – *please note, late applications will not be accepted*
- [Program page](#)
- [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 screen industry
- Support connections that will shape the future of our creative landscape and strengthen our position in the global market.

Eligibility

Who can apply

Screen NSW general eligibility requirements can be found in the Screen NSW [Terms of Trade](#) which should be read in conjunction with these guidelines.

The producer must have at least one of the following:

- An [‘eligible fiction credit’](#) as a producer, OR
- A credit as a producer on a short fiction project which has received production funding through Screen Australia’s Online or First Nations Department fiction programs.

The director must have at least one of the following:

- An [‘eligible fiction credit’](#) as a director, OR
- A credit as a director on a short fiction project which has received production funding through Screen Australia’s Online or Indigenous Department fiction programs, OR
- A high level of critical acclaim as a director in a related field such as theatre, TV fiction, TV commercials or documentary (i.e., awards, critical reviews, broadcasts, box office, international sales).
- Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis where a director has previously directed a feature film, however the initiative is supporting creatives moving into features so materials must demonstrate a strong case to support, i.e., be a significant genre shift from previous work.

General Eligibility:

- The Applicant must be the producer and have a valid ABN and, if required by law, be registered for GST.
- The Applicant may be an individual or a production company and must be a NSW permanent resident or NSW based company.

- The Applicant must own or control the rights in the short/ proof of concept and feature film script and all other rights necessary to carry out the projects.
- The “key creative team” means a writer, director and producer. All Key Creatives must be permanent residents of NSW. In exceptional circumstances, a member of the producing team that comes from another state may be considered.
- Applications must include at least one Key Creative from Screen NSW’s Strategic Priority Area groups (Regional NSW, Western Sydney, First Nations peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people living with disability, and LGBTQIA+ people).
- Applications must also include at least one female Key Creative in line with NSW gender equity targets.
- A team must comprise of at least two members, and all teams must include a producer. One person cannot be both the producer and director on the project. Nor can they hold all three key creative positions: writer, director and producer. However, writer/director or writer/producer are eligible.
- An individual can submit or be attached to multiple applications; however, advice is to put your most competitive projects forward.

Eligible projects

Short film/proof of concept production:

- To be at least 5 minutes to a maximum of 15 minutes in duration.
- To be produced and post-produced entirely in NSW.
- Can include live action and animation.
- For post-production applications, applications must be at the rough-cut or fine-cut stage with the latest footage having been shot within one year of the application closing date.
- Projects must be shot on and mastered on HD and able to be screened via theatrical release, television, online or mobile.
- While encouraging low budget approaches to storytelling, producers are permitted to raise additional finance to produce their films. Screen NSW encourages applicants to approach industry facilities and negotiate deals, as well as crowd funding, distribution, and other sources of funds to finance their project.
- Please seek approval before committing to crediting requirements. The funds must be in place at the time of submitting your application and evidence of this provided in your second stage application.
- Third-party investment is allowed under specific conditions and following consultation with Screen NSW. Third-party investors must sit behind any deferrals in the recoupment structure.
- Sponsorship and product placement are allowed in the form of a grant, not an investment (it cannot be recoupable) and must be approved by Screen NSW in advance.
- As per our [Terms of Trade](#), Screen NSW funding is conditional on paying at least award minimum rates including key creatives, cast and crew.
- Funding cannot be retrospective.
- Documentary projects are not eligible.

Feature film development:

- The feature film script does not have to be the same story or a long version of the short film/proof of concept but should be connected, for example, by creative voice, genre, tone or stylistic approach. The formats can include live action and animation. All genres are eligible.
- There is no restriction on subject matter or style, but Screen NSW is looking for scripts that are compelling, distinctive and have a strong sense of their audience.
- The feature film must be intended to be produced and post-produced entirely in NSW.

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.

Applications must include at least one Key Creative from Screen NSW's Priority Area groups above.

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 Nation's 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](#).

In line with NSW gender equity targets, Screen NSW is also committed to supporting gender balance for both above and below the line talent. Applications must include at least one female Key Creative.

Funding

What funding is available?

Screen NSW will fund up to five teams to produce a short film or proof of concept and provide script development funds for a low-budget feature film project. Except where otherwise agreed, the short film or proof of concept is to be produced and post-produced entirely in NSW and the feature film is intended to be produced and post-produced entirely in NSW.

Short film/proof of concept production

Support can be provided for a narrative short film or proof of concept for either:

- Up to \$45,000 for live action and/or animation production as appropriate to the project, or
- Up to \$30,000 for post-production to completion funds as appropriate to the project.

Feature film development

In your application you will also need to include your plans, which address the requested development funds for your advanced-stage, low budget feature film project.

Up to \$30,000 for development costs.

- Funds may include writer fees, director fees, producer fees, pitch deck/look book, workshops with actors, research, mentorships, consultations to accelerate the project towards production and financing.
- The funds must also include an appropriately experienced Script Editor.
- In line with Screen NSW Development guidelines, development budgets cannot include funding for office overheads, legal fees, option fees, items already expended prior to applying for development funds, graphic design or printing costs associated with a pitch deck, or catering costs for writers' rooms over \$200 per day.
- You will also need to include the estimated total production budget for the feature film. Strategically, we are looking for low budget projects because they are more likely to be financed and made with emerging teams. For this initiative, we are saying this means features under \$5 million.
- Successful teams will be allocated an experienced, NSW-based Executive Producer (EP) by Screen NSW to provide guidance across both production of the short film and script development. The selected EP will be reflective of the creative genre, tone and/or stylistic approach of the short/proof of concept and feature film.

Selection criteria

Your application will be competitively assessed against the project's economic contribution to a robust and continuously developing NSW screen industry, with regard to the following considerations:

Stage 1

- The strength and distinctiveness of the concept(s)
- The originality and quality of the short film/proof of concept script and feature concept and quality of other submitted creative materials
- The track record and creative potential of the team, their unity of vision, and their balance of experience, along with potential for skills development
- The potential of the projects to reach the target audience.

Stage 2

- The appropriateness of the budget and finance plan for the short film/proof of concept, and the team's ability to realise project within them
- Evidence that the short film/proof of concept is fully developed and ready for production
- The originality and quality of the feature film script
- The quality of accompanying document outlining the vision for the project as well as a clear understanding of what the filmmakers intend to address in the next phase of development
- The potential of the feature to reach its target audience and its viability in terms of likely budget relative to market.

Application and assessment process

The application process consists of two stages.

The Short Film to Feature Fast Track Initiative will open for submissions **Friday 1st March 2024** and the closing date for Stage 1 is **Thursday 28 March 2024**.

Applications will be assessed by a combination of Screen NSW Sector Investment Managers and an industry professional from the film distributor sector and a shortlist will be compiled.

Shortlisted teams will be interviewed by a Screen NSW Investment Manager and the industry professional who will make recommendations on the final selections to the Head of Screen NSW.

Stage 1

Application to be received through the Screen NSW online grants administration system, SmartyGrants, and to include:

- Online application form
- A simple talk-to-camera 'video pitch' of no more than 3 minutes, where Key Creatives (producer, writer, director, writer/director) talk about the story concept, creative vision and platform for their narrative short/proof of concept and how it connects to the feature film project in terms of creative voice, genre, tone, stylistic approach and the intended audience as well as the teams' career goals and plans and how they anticipate these projects will contribute to achieving these. Screen NSW supports engagement from practitioners with a disability so please contact us for a confidential discussion of your access needs at screeninvestment@create.nsw.gov.au.
- A link to demonstrate the best example of the director's previous work that demonstrates the director's narrative voice. Please do not submit montages or showreels that only show fragments of work.
- A one-page summary of the team's career plan describing where you are, where you want to be professionally and creatively and how you are planning and thinking strategically about getting there
- A script for the narrative short film/proof of concept of no more than 15 pages
- If the application is for completion funds, a downloadable, password protected link to the rough-cut of the project
- One page synopsis of the feature film
- Bios/CVs for the creative team and any crew or cast members proposed or confirmed.

Stage 2

If you are shortlisted, you will be invited to submit a further application via the Screen NSW online grants administration system, SmartyGrants, within 1 week of the selection notification, which must include:

- Up to 3 pages or 3 minutes of anything you feel will help us understand the creative vision (tone, theme, style, audience experience) for the short/proof of concept and feature film more clearly.

Short film/proof of concept production materials:

- A finance plan for the short film and if attached, evidence that additional funding from investors, crowd funding, sponsorship, etc. is in place.
- A draft A-Z budget. Post-production and insurance quotes must also be supplied to support the budget. Please see the [FAQ](#) for further information on required insurances and refer to our [Terms of Trade](#).
- All Chain of Title documents.

Long-form development materials:

- Screenplay. Must consist of a minimum of 75 pages presented in an industry standard script format. The script must be at least 2nd draft stage but have not yet reached final draft stage.
- A two-page development plan for the feature film that identifies the potential as well as the challenges and the strategies to address them in the next phase of development.
- A one-page pathways to audience plan. Projects must be able to demonstrate who the audience is and how the project will reach its audience, including the kind of market partners for whom you are developing the feature for, specifically naming distributors where relevant.

Award process

Please read these guidelines alongside the Screen NSW [Terms of Trade](#) which outline general eligibility requirements.

Successful teams will have a briefing and liaise with a Screen Investment Manager and the allocated Executive Producer, appointed by Screen NSW. At this point, we will discuss Screen NSW requirements, provide feedback, and go over any questions you may have.

You will need to finalise and execute the Screen NSW grant agreement within 4 weeks from the date of the briefing, unless otherwise agreed in writing. If this does not occur, the decision to financially support the project may lapse.

Obligations to Screen NSW will include the following:

- Screen NSW will contract only with the Applicant
- Projects must be completed in accordance with the terms of the Screen NSW agreement
- The Applicant will need to enter into a service agreement with each member of the key creative team and enter into any other relevant agreements required in order for the applicant to own or control the rights in the project
- Screen NSW will need to approve these agreements noted above prior to issuing its grant agreement to the Applicant
- Grant funds cannot be drawn down until a grant agreement with Screen NSW has been executed and specific conditions met.

Support and contact

Please make sure to read these guidelines and the FAQs before sending through your enquiries.

Screen Investment Managers:

Lauren Edwards: lauren.edwards@create.nsw.gov.au

Amelia Rowe: amelia.rowe@create.nsw.gov.au

FAQs

Important budget notes for the short film/proof of concept

You must use an A-Z budget template for the short film whether it's [Screen Australia's Hot Shots A-Z template](#) or industry standard [A-Z budget template](#).

Can we source further funding for the short film / proof-of-concept production in addition to Screen NSW funds?

Yes, you can. If shortlisted for stage 2, we will require a finance plan, budget and all sources of any additional finance at that time.

First Nations and Cultural Content

Where there is First Nations or cultural content that is not reflected by the key creatives then you will need to provide a statement setting out the consultation and participation process you have undertaken with regard to this First Nations and cultural content.

You must also demonstrate that you have a consultation and collaboration plan covering the full production process and are following it and that the communities and people being represented in the story have provided signed letters of consent confirming their willingness to participate. For First Nations content, please refer to the [Pathways & Protocols: a filmmaker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts](#). And please note that we encourage collaboration, not only consultation.

My project has previously received funding from a Screen NSW program. Am I still able to apply?

Yes, you can apply, provided you have acquitted previous Screen NSW funding and meet all the eligibility requirements for the initiative.

Terms of funding

Short film/proof of concept production

Funding is in the form of a grant.

Feature film development

Funding is in the form of an investment.

Further funding and marketing information

Successful recipients may apply for [additional development funding](#) after they deliver on this tranche of long-form development funds, however, the application will be competitively assessed against the criteria published in the development guidelines. Acceptance into some of the top-tier international film festivals may require [festival travel funding](#) and applications will be competitively assessed against the criteria published in the festival guidelines.

Can I please have help with the various film insurances?

It is a condition precedent to Screen NSW paying the second instalment of the Grant for the short film/ proof of concept that you have delivered to us copies of all receipts for the payment of all the Insurance premiums and copies of all cover notes and policies.

Screen NSW has taken out public liability insurance for the insured sum of \$20,000,000 for the period. Please note you will however be liable for a \$1,000 excess should any claims be made. This can be covered as an element of your contingency which should be set at 10%.

You will need to take out, within fourteen (14) days of payment of the first instalment, and before commencement of principal photography, the following insurances:

Any insurance (in addition to workers compensation insurance required by clause 4.3) if necessary, to ensure that all persons involved in the production of the Film, including volunteers, are adequately covered for personal accident and injury ("Insurance").

You shall take out workers compensation insurance as required by law until the completion of the Film, to the full insurable value of the risk.

Screen NSW requires copies of all insurance documentation as a condition to its second drawdown.

Do I need to supply any safety reports?

Yes. Depending on what and where you are filming, in conjunction with the Executive Producer, Screen NSW could require you to produce a safety report at least two weeks before commencement of principal photography by a licenced safety officer, which has been previously approved by Screen NSW. MEAA and [Who Dares](#) can supply you with approved contacts.

Screen NSW requires copies of all safety reports as a condition to its second drawdown. All incidents must be recorded and supplied.

COVID Safety Procedures

You will need to provide a Covid Safety plan for the production as part of contracting, covering pre-production, the shoot and post-production.

When will we be paid?

Short film/proof of concept production

Please factor into your production schedule the following four drawdowns for Screen NSW: 60% upon execution, 25% on start of principal photography, 10% on approval of fine cut, and the final 5% on delivery.

Feature film development

Please factor in the following two drawdowns for Screen NSW: 80% on execution of the agreement; and 20% on delivery of the delivery materials.

How much do I need to pay my cast and crew?

Screen NSW expects all recipients to act fairly and reasonably in relation to third parties involved in the funded project. Fairness and reasonableness include: paying at least award minimum rates or, where applicable, any minimum agreed between the relevant guilds, for all work performed by third parties on their project, including Key Creatives, cast and crew; respecting the rights of all relevant persons, whether those rights be copyright or other intellectual property rights, moral rights or Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights.

If deferrals of crew and cast award rates or agreed rates (above award) are to be negotiated, the producer is responsible for ensuring this is undertaken in a fair, reasonable and legal manner.

Producers should factor in any additional rights with cast outside of Festival screenings as required.

What about GST?

Generally, GST is payable on top of Screen NSW funding. You will need to have an Australian Business Number (ABN), and to register for GST if required by law. Where GST is payable, Screen NSW will require the applicant to issue a Tax Invoice as a precondition to drawdown of the Screen NSW funds.

I'm looking for a location in NSW for my project. How can Screen NSW help me?

You could access [Screen NSW image location database](#). Showcasing locations in Sydney and regional areas of NSW the searchable database highlights a diverse range of geographical locations from tropical jungle, alpine to outback as well as architectural styles, towns, urban environments, and buildings.

You can request further information about the locations via the website or if you have any specific questions about finding a location in NSW you can reach out to our [Screen Destination Attraction team](#).

What is an ‘eligible fiction credit’?

An ‘eligible fiction credit’ under this program is a short fiction film that has been selected to screen at one of the following film festivals:

- Annecy International Animation Festival
- Berlin International Film Festival
- BFI London Film Festival
- Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival
- Busan International Film Festival
- Cannes Film Festival (excluding Shorts Corner)
- Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival
- Edinburgh International Film Festival
- Fantastic Fest (Austin, TX)
- Hong Kong International Film Festival
- International Film Festival Rotterdam
- Karlovy Vary International Film Festival
- Melbourne International Film Festival
- Ottawa Animation Festival
- San Sebastian International Film Festival
- Sitges International Film Festival
- South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Festival
- Sundance Film Festival
- Stuttgart Festival of Animation
- Sydney Film Festival
- Telluride Film Festival
- Toronto International Film Festival
- Tribeca Film Festival
- Venice International Film Festival
- Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival

OR, won or been nominated for one of the following awards:

- Academy Award® for Best Short Film (Live Action or Animated)
- AACTA/AFI Award for Best Short Fiction Film or Best Animation

OR, won one of the following awards:

- Flickerfest Best Short Film or Best Animation
- St Kilda Film Festival Best Short Film or Animation
- Dendy Award, Best Short Film / Dendy Live Action Short Award
- Sydney Film Festival’s Yoram Gross Animation Award
- Melbourne International Film Festival’s Best Short Film

Can the short film or proof of concept be a segment / scenes from the feature film script?

The feature film script does not have to be the same story or a long version of the short film but should be connected, for example, by creative voice, genre, tone or stylistic approach. Focusing on a scene from the feature script, would be accepted.

Our team has a feature film script that has not yet reached its first draft stage. Are we still able to apply?

Unfortunately, no. The intention of the initiative is to accelerate the project towards financing and production, and the script must, at a minimum, be at second draft stage.

What happens if I'm shortlisted?

Shortlisted applicants will be notified by a member of the Screen NSW team and provided with a one-week timeline to submit second stage materials. Please familiarise yourself with second stage material requirements in advance.

What is the role of the Screen NSW allocated Executive Producer?

The intention is to pair the successful teams with leading NSW -based producers that will provide guidance and mentorship across both the short production and further development of the feature screenplay and provide broader market and industry guidance. For the recipients in 2023, Screen NSW attached Liz Watts, Kylie du Fresne and Timothy White to the projects as EPs.

General eligibility questions

What if one member of the Key Creative team (producer, director or writer) is not a NSW based creative? Can I still apply?

The applicant and all Key Creatives must be NSW-based. Under the guidelines, the only exception that will be made is where one member of the producing team, who is not the applicant, is from another state.

Will Screen NSW make any exceptions for teams and projects that don't satisfy the eligibility requirements? Will you consider other film festivals not listed under 'what makes an eligible fiction credit'?

We are not able to consider other significant credits for the role of director and producer besides those outlined in the guidelines. You must be able to provide evidence to reflect the appropriate eligibility criteria.

I have significant credits in a different format to the project I am applying for in the role of director. The other Key Creatives in my team have eligible credits as stated in the guidelines. Am I still able to apply?

For the director, we will consider a high-level of critical acclaim in related fields. In submitting an application, the responsibility is on the team to demonstrate how they satisfy the eligibility requirements, including confirming the eligible fiction credit and relevant festival a project has screened at, previous agency funding or high level of critical acclaim.

I am a creative attached to two separate projects. Am I able to be attached to both applications?

Yes, you can be attached to more than one project but please keep in mind this is a competitive process, and we recommend submitting your strongest application.