



Community Film Festival Opening Night Fund

Program Guidelines

About the program

The Community Film Festival Opening Night Fund offers grants of \$5,000 to community-driven film festivals to enhance their Opening Night events and bring communities together through diverse screening experiences. New and established film festivals with experienced delivery teams are eligible to apply.

Grants can be used to cover costs such as venue hire, interpreters, marketing and promotion of the event, hospitality and entertainment, transport costs and additional expenses.

Key information

- Funding amount: \$5,000
- Applications open: 10am AEST, Monday 30 March 2026
- Applications close: 2pm AEST, Thursday 23 April 2026
- Designated Decision-Maker: Executive Director, Screen NSW (or relevant financial delegate)
- [Funding page](#)
- [Apply here](#).

Program objectives

The aims of the program are to:

- Support film festivals right across the state via their Opening Night event
- Ease the financial burden on small and medium film festivals that demonstrate a strong community origin and base
- Complement existing funding available for NSW-based film and community festivals

- Develop audiences, community engagement and screen culture across NSW
- Impact audiences and communities in NSW through increasing access to diverse screening experiences
- Support underrepresented communities to tell their stories
- Showcase the rich cultural diversity of NSW.

The Community Film Festival Opening Night Fund is funded and administered by Screen NSW, a division within the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport.

Eligibility

Who can apply

To be eligible for funding applicants must:

- Be an Australian organisation, including:
 - o Companies and not-for-profit incorporated bodies
 - o Co-operatives, trusts or local government authorities
 - o A consortium or group of organisations working collaboratively*
- Have an Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Be legally constituted, financially solvent, and able to provide proof of legal status
- Have demonstrated experience in delivering film festivals
- Adhere to the general eligibility requirements under the Screen NSW [Terms of Trade](#).

**In the case of a consortium or group of organisations working collaboratively, one eligible organisation must be nominated as the lead organisation. If successful, the lead organisation will enter into a funding agreement with Screen NSW.*

Who cannot apply

Applications will not be accepted from:

- Individuals, Sole Traders, or groups of individuals
- Partnerships
- Unincorporated organisations
- Government departments and agencies
- Primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutions and TAFE colleges
- Previous Screen NSW funding recipients who have not fulfilled conditions of funding
- Festivals receiving an annual NSW Government contribution of over \$150,000
- Festivals with an annual budget of over \$1,000,000
- Multi-disciplinary or cultural festivals where screenings and screen culture account for less than 75% of programming activity
- Applicants that cannot demonstrate relevant experience in delivering film festivals.

Eligible projects

Funding is available to support activities related to the Opening Night of a community-driven film festival in NSW held between 1 June 2026 and 31 May 2027.

Funding

Available funding under the Community Film Festival Opening Night Fund is \$5,000 per successful application.

Applicants are expected to secure other sources of income or in-kind support wherever feasible. Income may be derived from sources such as sponsorships, grants or subsidies from other agencies, revenue from ticket sales, fundraising and other activities.

Applications that do not include other sources of income or in-kind support are not considered as competitive.

What you can apply for:

- Venue hire
- Interpreters (language and/or AUSLAN)
- Cost associated with hosting a Welcome to Country ceremony
- Marketing and promotional costs for the event
- Hospitality (e.g. catering) and entertainment (e.g. artist costs such as band/musicians)
- Transportation Costs (including reasonable travel expenses for the Opening Night film's key creatives to attend for a speaking opportunity)
- Licencing fee for the Opening Night film
- Equipment hire
- Documentation (photography or videography)
- Other event costs related to an Opening Night celebration.

What you cannot apply for

Funding is not available for:

- Costs towards alcoholic beverages
- Costs related to ongoing programming of the film festival
- Activities that have also received funding from Screen NSW for the same activity in the same financial year
- Costs incurred before the execution of a funding agreement
- Development or production of screen content including festival trailers
- Awards or competition components of a film festival
- Operational costs
- Costs towards ongoing/existing staff
- Any other costs not related to the Opening Night event.

Selection criteria

All applications are assessed against a common set of four weighted criteria:

Project merit (30%)

Applications should:

- Submit a clear outline and rationale for the project, including why it should be regarded as a priority for funding
- Clearly identify the project's intended community and audience and how the project will fulfill any community needs
- Explain how Screen NSW funding will be used to contribute to the Opening Night event
- Detail key activities, milestones and dates.

Audience development and benefits to NSW (30%)

Applications should include well developed strategies for engaging the intended community and audiences in opportunities to experience quality and diverse screen content including:

- Evidence of how the project will provide access to diverse screen content that is otherwise not typically available to the community
- A marketing and audience engagement strategy that demonstrates how the project will reach its intended audience/community, including any media support (if relevant)
- An explanation of how the project will engage with one or more of the following key Government priority areas:
 - o Regional NSW
 - o Western Sydney
 - o First Nations people
 - o People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - o People living with disability
 - o LGBTQIA+ people.
- Details of the cultural benefits of the project to the NSW screen industry
- Evidence of established community links and support for the film festival, i.e.:
 - o Letters of support from prominent members of the community
 - o Articles and coverage on the festival
 - o Festival programs.

Please note that where an application is received from an organisation located outside of NSW, the project must be delivered in NSW or have direct benefits to NSW audiences and communities.

Organisational capacity (30%)

Applications should provide brief information regarding the organisational capacity to deliver the project, including:

- An outline of the core business, aims and objectives of the organisation
- An outline of the experience and expertise of the organisation as it relates to the project and the ability to successfully realise the event
- Details of the organisation including board or committee and governance arrangements
- Information about the personnel who will deliver the project including details of their roles, relevant experience and key achievements.

Additional assessment criteria – new film festivals

- If an applicant is a new film festival, they must submit evidence that the delivery team producing the event has a strong track record in delivering similar events and the proven ability to launch a new festival.

Additional assessment criteria – established film festival

- If an applicant is an established film festival, they must submit evidence of their track record and value to the community (e.g. press covering the festival, annual reports, programs, financial reporting, etc).

Budget (10%)

Applications should demonstrate value for money by submitting:

- Top-line budgets for both the Opening Night event and film festival, including income and expenditure targets
- Confirmed sources of other financial and in-kind support
- Previous year's budget actuals (if recurring event).

Explanatory notes should be used where appropriate.

Other Considerations

Where an applicant does not provide the required information identified above, Screen NSW reserves the right to:

- Provide the applicant with the opportunity to provide the required information within probity requirements; or
- Assess the application based on the information provided; or
- Deem the application to be non-conforming and decline the application, including where the application is considered not viable due to unsatisfactory governance.

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

- Assessment of the applicant's management, its directors and officers and entities or individuals that exercise control over an applicant against the eligibility criteria; and
- 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.

Screen NSW reserves the right to use any other resource, process or procedure available – which may include the use of third-party services – to assess any claims made by, or risks associated with, the Applicant.

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.

Support material for proposals involving the Aboriginal arts and cultural sector and/or Aboriginal 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](#)).

Please refer to the Application Form to gain a complete understanding of application requirements, including (but not limited to):

- A brief biography or CV for any screen practitioners or key collaborators involved in the project (maximum one A4 page per person)
- Confirmation letters and/or letters of support related to your project (provided as one document), such as from partners, venues, key sector contacts or other funding agencies

Other support material may include:

- A program of activities
- Relevant and recent examples of your artistic work (images, video, recordings, written material or links to websites)

Please submit your support material in the amount and format required, including:

- Combined files not exceeding 25MB
- Up to five minutes of video or audio recording
- No zipped or compressed files
- Documents in PDF format where possible
- Links for externally hosted work only.

Assessment process

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

Late applications due to technical difficulties will be reviewed and eligibility determined with absolute discretion by the Industry and Audience Development Manager, Screen NSW. You must lodge a request for a late application by email to industry@screen.nsw.gov.au setting out the reasons for the request, along with any evidence, by 4pm on the day applications close.

Eligibility

Applications will be initially reviewed by Screen NSW staff to ensure they meet eligibility requirements, and all application materials are acceptable. If an application is assessed as ineligible, the applicant will be advised via email within 14 days of this outcome.

Assessment

If your application is considered eligible, it will progress to the assessment panel for consideration against the Assessment Criteria. The Assessment Panel will consist of a minimum of one Screen NSW staff member and two external advisors with relevant screen industry expertise. Each panel member will assess and score applications individually, before meeting as a group to discuss the results and finalise recommendations.

Based on outcome of the assessment meeting recommendations will be made in writing to the Designated Decision-Maker.

Please note that funding allocation follows a competitive process. Evaluations will consider the assessment criteria outlined above and the availability of funds at Screen NSW.

Recommendation

The recommendations from the assessment panel will be provided to Designated Decision-Maker for consideration and approval. The assessment process will take up to 7 weeks from the application closing date. Screen NSW aims to advise applicants of the outcome via email by 18 May 2026.

Additional Considerations

Additional considerations Screen NSW may, at its sole discretion, and at any stage of the application process, do all or any of the following:

- Require additional information from an applicant
- Change the scope or the requirements of these guidelines vary, amend (including by replacement) or terminate the application process
- Re-open an application after the closing date, provided it doesn't give the applicant an advantage over other applicants.

Award process

Successful applicants must enter into, and abide by the terms of, a funding agreement with Screen NSW, which will include details of the funding's deliverables, acquittal requirements and treatment of unspent funds.

The award of funding is subject to execution this agreement and satisfactory completion of all terms contained within the funding agreement.

Variations

Any variations to a funding 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, or if you are unsure if your enquiry qualifies as a variation, please contact the Industry and Audience Development team at industry@screen.nsw.gov.au.

Publication of grants information

The NSW Government 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 the 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 via email at industry@screen.nsw.gov.au.

Support and contact

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 Industry and Audience Development team on industry@screen.nsw.gov.au.

Complaint handling, access to information and privacy

Details on how Screen NSW handles complaints, access to information and your private information is available at:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/dciths/policies-plans-and-procedures/access-to-information/agency-information-guide>