Emerging Gamemakers Fund – Guidelines

Issued 03/10/2023
Last Updated 19/12/2024

Screen Australia reserves the right to change its program guidelines. Please ensure you check the website for the latest version. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#).

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

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1. About this funding program

1.1. Overview

The Emerging Gamemakers Fund offers flexible support to emerging independent games practitioners as well as established gamemakers who are interested in exploring creative and artistic experimentation within their practice.

It can fund the creation of a prototype or the completion and release of a micro-scale game. The program will run as a series of rounds from financial year 2023/24 until financial year 2026/27.

For games that are already developed to the point of having a playable prototype, consider instead applying for the [Games Production Fund](#).

Given the scale of funding available and the obligation for teams to compensate themselves fairly under Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#), this program is aimed at teams of smaller sizes, although larger teams are still eligible to apply.

1.2. Available funding

The Emerging Gamemakers Fund provides grants of **up to $30,000** to support the development of original, new projects with budgets of up to $500,000 at the time of applying, made by Australian independent gamemakers.

2. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

For Australian screen content to effectively deliver cultural and economic benefits it must speak to, and be for, all Australians. A diversity 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 applicants who are First Nations, d/Deaf and disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQ+, women or gender diverse, regionally based, or those from other under-represented groups.

Screen Australia strives to make its programs accessible by removing barriers for people who are d/Deaf and disabled and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Screen Australia expects that any experiences portrayed through gameplay, narrative, and characters which are aimed at illustrating diverse perspectives are reflected within the key creative team with appropriate representation and lived

experience. It is vital the creative team has the cultural authorship to tell the story so that the telling of the story is authentic.

3. Eligibility

All applicants and projects must also meet the eligibility criteria under Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#).

3.1. Applicant Eligibility

This program is open to individuals and companies. To be eligible:

- an individual applicant must be an Australian citizen or Australian resident, being a person who is lawfully domiciled in Australia, and who has actually been in Australia, continuously or intermittently, for more than one half of the year immediately preceding the application.
- an applicant company must be an incorporated company carrying on business in Australia, with its central management and control in Australia.

3.2. Project Eligibility

3.2.1. Eligible Projects

This program is for projects that are at the ideation or pre-production stage of development, which do one or more of the following:

- demonstrate creative innovation and experimentation in gamemaking
- represent or are developed by or from teams with diverse and underrepresented backgrounds and experiences
- target underserved audiences

Screen Australia can only fund Australian projects. The project must be under the key creative control of Australian citizens or permanent residents and be predominantly developed in Australia. Projects do not have to have an Australian theme or be set in Australia to be eligible.

Projects must be for a digital game platform, including (but not limited to) PC, mobile, consoles, and VR. Regarding XR (including VR and AR projects):

- If you are making an XR documentary, your project may be better suited to the [Documentary Production – Producer Program](#).
- If you are making an XR scripted narrative experience, your project may be better suited to [Online Production funding](#).
- If your project sits at the intersection of games and other genres of media, we request that you contact us to discuss eligibility prior to applying.

Screen Australia requires a minimum level of interactivity for a project to be considered a game. If you are unsure whether the level of interactivity in your project constitutes a game for the purposes of the Emerging Gamemakers Fund, you must contact us and discuss eligibility prior to applying.

Unsuccessful applicants may re-submit once with the same project to a future funding round, provided that the application materials have undergone meaningful updates since the last submission.

Applicants or applicant companies may only submit one application per round. After two unsuccessful applications, a project is no longer eligible for the program. However, the same applicant or applicant company may apply with a different project.

3.2.2. Ineligible Projects

The following types of projects are not eligible. Those games that:

- have already received funding from the Games: Expansion Pack or Emerging Gamemakers Fund
- have applied to or received funding from the Games Production Fund
- are not played on a digital device with a screen. That is, games that are not completely digital, including boardgames or hybrid digital/physical games
- are based on a licence to use and/or adapt pre-existing intellectual property owned by a third party under a licence agreement, such as games which are derivative works based on licensed content owned by a third party. For clarity, this does not include licences obtained for music, assets or software/plugins used in the making of the game
- are being developed by teams that include students who are currently enrolled in a games or games-adjacent field of study
- are being developed by teams led by, or significantly reliant on, full-time students, regardless of the field of study
- are business-to-business products (e.g., training simulations, games created solely for teaching purposes at schools, games with ties to academic research, or middleware tools)
- are substantially advertising or promotions
- constitute gambling activities or are gambling simulations
- feature or link exploitative or unethical pay-to-win or play-to-earn mechanics
- contain or have a relationship to high risk and volatile trading products or technology
- contain [or link] any content or mechanic that is in breach of any law or regulation

- in the reasonable opinion of Screen Australia, may have difficulties receiving an Australian classification, due to the inclusion of content such as:
  o the instruction or promotion of crime, cruelty or violence; depictions of frequent and/or very high impact violence
  o sexual activity; sexual violence; exploitative depictions
  o instructional illicit drug use; encouragement of illicit drug use; illicit interactive drug use
  o any other content that contravenes prevailing community standards

This program is not aimed at projects from established companies looking to offset project risk. It is not aimed at projects that already have significant funding or publisher support. Projects of a larger scale (but still under the $500,000 budget limit) should consider instead applying for the Games Production Fund.

4. Application Process

4.1. How to Apply

Applicants need to create an account and submit an application via SmartyGrants.

Applications for Emerging Gamemakers Fund must be submitted by 5pm AEDT/AEST on the published deadline date.

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
- include all required supporting materials.

4.3. Required Materials

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

- **Downloadable Pitch Video** (maximum 3 minutes in length) that articulates the concept of your project, the creative vision, and the aims of the team
- Creative Pitch Deck communicating the vision for your project
- Project Plan 4 pages maximum length. The purpose of this document is to help assessors understand how you plan to measure the success and viability of your project. At a high level, this document should communicate where you are now, where you want to be, and how this funding and project will help you get there
- **CVs of team members**

Where a project involves First Nations content, stories, characters or community participation, specific requirements apply. These projects will need to provide the following additional documents:

- **First Nations content statement:** A statement setting out how you are approaching the First Nations content or participation with regard to appropriate protocols, even if the content is not specific to a particular community or individual
- **First Nations consultation:** Signed evidence of consultation to date
- **First Nations consent:** Signed letters of consent from First Nations individuals or communities confirming their willingness to participate

For more information on how to engage First Nations practitioners for collaboration or participation, please read [Pathways & Protocols: a film maker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts](#) and/or consider undertaking Indigenous Engagement training.

5. Assessment

5.1. Assessment Process

Once submitted, the Program Operations team will review each application to determine eligibility and ensure that required application materials have been provided. Once eligibility has been confirmed, the applicant will receive an email advising that their application has moved to assessment.

Your application will be assessed by a panel of internal and external industry specialists, against the below criteria. The assessment panel consists of industry experts with varied specialisations. We employ a Conflict of Interest policy to ensure fairness for all applicants.

5.2. Assessment Criteria

Applications are assessed based on the following four criteria, with examples of the relevant considerations listed for each:

- **Creative Merit**
    - The originality of the proposed game idea
    - The level of experimentation, skill-building, and risk-taking to be undertaken by the applicant
    - The strength and ability of the application and support materials to communicate the game idea

- **Viability**
    - The scope of the project and how viable and realistic it is

- How timely and relevant the project is to the applicant's practice
- Feasibility of the budget and timeline, whether workers are fairly compensated

- **Impact**
  - The extent to which the project expands, deepens, or diversifies the creative practice of the applicant
  - The commercial and/or cultural benefits the project provides to the Australian games landscape, and contribution to its quality and reputation

- **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility**
  - Where diverse groups are portrayed in the project, whether there is either appropriate representation in the creative team, or there has been meaningful collaboration and consultation with represented groups
  - Whether there is engagement with an audience that is typically underserved
  - The alignment of the application with the diversity, equity, and inclusion aims of the grant

5.2. Decision & Notification

You can expect to receive the outcome of your application approximately 12 weeks from the application closing date.

Screen Australia acknowledges and appreciates the time and effort that go into preparing and submitting applications, but given the anticipated volume of applications, will not be able to provide individual feedback on each application. Please see this program's Trends Report for the latest trends.

6. Successful Applicants

6.1. Contracting

Successful applicants will enter into a project grant agreement (PGA) with Screen Australia which will outline the terms of funding.

6.2. Terms of Funding

Funding is provided in the form of a grant. Screen Australia does not expect to recoup funds from successful teams. That is, you are not expected to repay the grant in any way.

Funds are generally expected to be spent on staffing costs (wages for people making the game) and other costs associated with the game's development, such

as (but not limited to) game development software and creative licensing fees, and solicitor fees. In the case of an application that proposes to take a project to a public-facing release, marketing expenses are also considered an acceptable use of funds.

At least 90% of the grant must be spent on development expenditure that takes place physically in Australia.

7. Contact

For any enquiries, please contact the Screen Australia Program Operations team on 1800 507 901 or [Games](). Please note that we are not able to provide creative advice or suggestions to strengthen your application.

8. 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]().