



Online Production: Guidelines

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Through the Online Production program Screen Australia invests in the production of scripted, children's and documentary projects that take risks and push the envelope of storytelling.

Typical examples are risk-taking projects distributed on any platform including television, online web series, feature film, Augmented and Virtual Reality, mobile and PC based distribution.

This fund is aimed at lower-budget productions which may present talent development or project development opportunities. It values these benefits ahead of commercial gain, so it is expected that above-the-line fees and company overheads are budgeted modestly in accordance with those aims.

The fund is well suited to projects that include strong and compelling social media components to engage audiences.

Inclusive Storytelling

Screen Australia is committed to building equity into its programs and its engagement with the community. Gender equity, anti-racism, authentic story-telling, from and about under-represented groups, and inclusivity are priorities for Screen Australia. We expect that the lived experience portrayed through the narrative and characters are reflected within the key creative team. It is vital the creative team has the cultural authorship to tell the story so that telling of the story is authentic. This will be taken into account when assessing applications.

For Australian screen content to effectively deliver cultural and economic benefits it must speak to, and be for, all Australians. Ultimately a diversity of ideas and a diverse workforce will grow the Australia screen industry, make it more relevant to Australian audiences and more competitive internationally.

WHAT

Applications may be for any amount **up to \$500,000 per project**. For a project utilising multiple platforms, this includes all components.

Budgets greater than \$16,500 per minute will be at the upper limit of the fund's scope and will need to be justified.

The level of Screen Australia's funding commitment will be determined by the decision making process and the total demand on available funds.

WHO

An application must first meet the following eligibility criteria in order to be competitively assessed for funding through this program.

The **applicant company** must:

- meet the General Eligibility requirements set out in Screen Australia's [Terms of Trade](#); in particular, it must be incorporated and carrying on business in Australia, and have its central management and control in Australia,

The project that is the subject of the application must:

- be a series or one-off XR* project intended for public access on a screen-based device (where content includes a television broadcast component, the content must also be distributed on at least one other digital media platform; this could include catch-up television services, other online release or mobile); and

not be:

- primarily a video game;
- light or factual entertainment
- primarily an e-book or interactive book;
- a digital/online extension to a film or TV program; or
- content made for internal training purposes only.

*XR (Extended reality) is a term referring to all real-and-virtual combined environments and human-machine interactions generated by computer technology and wearables. It includes augmented reality (AR), augmented virtuality (AV) and virtual reality (VR).

The creative team responsible for the project must:

- include a producer and director or equivalent roles relevant to the type of project with at least one credit in the same role on a comparable project which has been publicly released.

If a project has previously been assessed and declined for funding under this program, it is not eligible to apply again unless significant changes have been made, and a statement will need to be provided setting out the major changes made since the previous submission. Screen Australia will consider this statement when deciding whether or not to accept the application and assess it again for funding. Note: after two unsuccessful submissions, no further applications for this project will be accepted.

Marketplace and other sources of funding: Projects which include a television broadcast component must have evidence of a current offer by a television broadcaster to license the content. Otherwise, marketplace attachments are not required, although the involvement of a relevant marketplace entity may improve the competitiveness of the application.

Co-funding with state agencies, other government organisations, educational institutions, private investors or other partners is also encouraged. Where crowd-funding is proposed as a source of funds, a contingency plan must be provided in case this source does not eventuate.

If the finance plan relies on significant 3rd party finance, we reserve the right to request evidence of the status, including basic terms, prior to assessment.

Commissioning platform involvement: Screen Australia will not finance a production where the project has been developed by a commissioning platform and sub-contracted at a later stage to a producer, except where chain of title resides with the producer. In addition, Screen Australia expects that key creatives (producer, writer, director, director of photography, editor) are sourced from the freelance market and not from the staff of the commissioning platform.

Relationship with Screen Australia's General TV Drama program: The Online Production program focuses on smaller scale, lower-budget projects. It is not the purpose of the fund to support larger TV projects that ought to attract licence fees sufficient to be eligible to apply through Production Investment. Screen Australia reserves the right to require larger-scale projects to apply to the [General TV Drama](#) program. This also applies to the Children's Funding Program.

Relationship with Screen Australia's Feature Film Production program: The Online Production program will only support feature-length projects from applicants with access to a significant existing social media audience (a channel with more than 100,000 subscribers or followers, or a

video with more than 1 million views and at least 25,000 subscribers or followers). An online platform must form a central element of the project's distribution plan. Screen Australia reserves the right to require larger-scale projects to apply to the [Feature Film Production](#) program.

Relationship with Screen Australia's Story Development program: Funding for the development of online and interactive series is available through our Story Development program. Teams who have been successful through the Online Production program are also eligible to apply for feature film development and high-end television development. See [Story Development](#) guidelines for details.

Relationship with Screen Australia's Producer Offset program:

If a production is eligible for the Producer Offset then the producer is expected to include 90% of the projected amount in the finance plan. If a production is supported without Producer Offset included in the finance plan, but then the producer makes a successful application at a later date, they will be expected to use 90% of the Offset money to finance the project and to reduce or repay the Online Production grant accordingly.

Relationship with Screen Australia's Documentary program:

The Online Production program will only support documentary projects that have a primary release on a social media platform. Higher budget Documentaries with or without marketplace attachments may be eligible to apply through our Documentary funding programs. Lower budget documentaries may also be eligible for our Producer Equity Program. Please speak to an Investment Manager in either department if you are unsure which funding program you are eligible for.

Important: You do not need to have lodged an application for your Producer Offset Provisional Certificate at the time of applying to the funding round unless specifically requested by your Investment Manager. In most cases producers will be able to wait to see whether or not their project has been successful for funding before applying for a certificate, saving time and application fees. However, if you are approved for funding you will need to lodge your application and receive your certification prior to contract execution.

HOW

Applications can be made at any time via the [Application Portal](#). As part of your application, you will need to submit:

- a Proof of Concept (POC) or proof of prior work from the team (e.g: linear fiction may require a sizzle reel, filmed sample scenes or a pilot). Examples of previous work can be from one or more members of the team, and will ideally speak to the team's ability to produce content in a similar style and tone of the proposed project.
- a project proposal and/or a design document that demonstrate the project is production ready
- Applicants should include a complete set of scripts if available, but at a minimum there should be scripts included for at least half of the planned production
- a simple talk-to-camera downloadable 'video pitch' of no more than three minutes, where key principals present their vision for the project - particularly what's distinctive or innovative about the storytelling
- a project plan, including production schedule, with appropriate milestones
- a marketing and release plan (minimum three pages) outlining; a thorough understanding of the intended audience, their viewing habits, the intended release platform and strategy around how this project will attract an audience. A digital strategist or marketing agency is not essential, but if applicants intend to engage one, they should be attached at time of applying.
- a statement setting out how success will be measurable on your specific project, and how you will achieve these targets

- a business impact statement setting out how this project will contribute to and/or help you build your business, and any plans to exploit IP such as franchises, spinoffs, merchandising.
- 200 word bios and CVs for the key creative team
- a full budget to completion (and release) using the relevant standard [Screen Australia budget template](#). Fees should at least comply with industry standards. They will be considered in the context of the budget and track record of the personnel; and
- a [finance plan](#) using the standard Screen Australia template.

Assessment Criteria

Eligible applications will be considered by Screen Australia executives. Industry specialists may be consulted as required.

Funding decisions will be made against the following criteria:

Creative strength of the project (30%), including:

- the concept/idea: its distinctiveness, clarity of objectives (preference will be given to original formats over content based on foreign formats);
- the proposed execution: level of distinctiveness or innovation in storytelling, entertainment value; and
- quality of submitted production materials (script, design document etc as relevant).

The existing experience, expertise and talents of the production company and the key principals and/or the potential for further talent escalation (30%), including:

- the relevance and quality of their track record;
- their demonstrated capacity to deliver the project;
- their creative and business networks; and
- the proposed career development outcomes.

Viability of the project (25%), including

- release plan: appropriateness and viability of marketing strategies; potential to deliver what the project sets out to achieve eg, audience engagement, commercial success, market penetration, cultural impact, based on appropriate measurable indicators
- appropriateness of the budget relative to the scale of the project and the intent of the Online Production program.

Strength of the marketplace (15%), including

- financing plan, and proportion of overall budget provided through other/third party sources

Other factors, including availability of funds, diversity of projects and the gender and cultural diversity of the team, may also influence Screen Australia's decisions.

Applicants may be interviewed if further information is required. Decisions on applications are final. Screen Australia will advise applicants of the outcome of their application.

Applications can be received at any time. The turnaround time for application decisions is approximately seven weeks from when an application is made eligible.

Terms of funding

INCLUSIVE ATTACHMENT SCHEME

As a condition of Screen Australia production support an above or below the line attachment must be allocated to each project: for example an attachment to a Director, Producer, DOP, Editor or Composer. The attachment should reflect the theme or content of the project: for example First Nations Australian, ability, gender, LGBTI+, culturally or linguistically diverse. Or the attachment should be targeted at providing experience to emerging practitioners. The costs must be included within your production budget and potential attachments should be discussed with your Investment Manager.

Funding is provided as a grant unless the project is funding for production investment by Screen Australia and the producer includes the development funds as part of Qualifying Australian Production Expenditure ([QAPE](#)). Screen Australia does not take a copyright interest in projects for which it provides grant funding.

A Solicitor's Opinion letter on all Chain of Title documents will be required if your project is successful.

You may apply as an individual/sole trader but you may be required to incorporate your company if your application is successful.

Additional marketing support may be requested on completion of the production at the discretion of Screen Australia. The amount will be a variation to the existing contract.

Screen Australia Online Production funding cannot be retrospective.

SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Screen Australia can allocate Online Production funds to special initiatives through partnerships with the industry. These initiatives leverage finance from third parties in order to increase the available funding pool, or to otherwise advance digital storytelling activities and talent escalation. Past examples include the *Skip Ahead* joint initiative with Google and the *Fresh Blood* joint initiative with the ABC. Stay in touch via Screen Australia's [e-news](#), like us on Facebook and/or follow us on Twitter.

For any enquiries, please contact the Screen Australia Program Operations team on 1800 507 901 or online@screenaustralia.gov.au.

Update Log

1 July 2021

- Documentary and children's projects eligible to apply for to this program
- Digital strategist or marketing agency not essential, but should be attached at time of applying if the applicant intends to engage one.
- Inclusive Storytelling statement added

9 September 2019

- funding cannot be retrospective
- additional detail for marketing and release plan

9 April 2019: simplified marketing and release plan definition

12 November 2018: scripted one-off and series further defined as scripted series and one-off XR project.