Screen Story Development Fund
Premium Fund Guidelines

Date: 1 July 2018
Updated: 1 July 2023

Through the Screen Story Development Fund, Screen Australia supports screen content makers to take advantage of existing and emerging opportunities to develop compelling scripted stories. Applicants may apply for development funding from one of two strands – The Generate Fund or the Premium Fund.

The **Generate Fund** is for lower budget long form episodic television and feature film projects with an emphasis on emerging screen content makers. Jump to Generate Fund Guidelines.

The **Premium Fund**, also open for episodic television and feature film projects, is for higher budget long form projects of ambition and scale from successful screen content makers. The commercial viability of the project, and the path to a significant and clearly defined audience is a key focus of this fund.

Online and VR projects are supported through the Online Development Funding Program. Jump to Online Fund Guidelines.

About this program

The Story Development Premium Fund provides development funding support for distinctive higher-budget projects with teams who have the critical and/or commercial success to develop, finance and produce projects of ambition and scale.

For example, someone in the key creative team will need to have enough creative traction and heat around them with the marketplace in order to attract cast and raise the finance for a higher budget feature film and also the producing experience to deliver. For higher budget projects for a Commissioning Platform, the team need the necessary experience to give a Commissioning Platform confidence that they will deliver the project as well as the creative vision.

The Premium Development fund has the following aims:

- **Ambition & Scale:** to identify and support distinctive, quality, higher budget drama projects of ambition and scale for any platform.

- **Success**: to support successful screen content makers.
- **Viability** & Market: to generate viable projects and teams that will attract marketplace finance and are intended for significant audience reach.
- **Culture & Diversity**: to ensure the storytellers and stories being told reflect gender equity, and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia, all of which are important culturally, creatively and economically.

Who can apply?

Applications for Premium are open to anyone who:

- Meets all requirements and conditions in our **Terms of Trade.**
- Is an Australian individual or team. Co-productions may also apply with an application from the Australian Company.
- Has a significant track record/production credits on critically and/or commercially successful projects.
- Has a project that is a distinctive, higher-budget series or one-off long form drama project on any platform.
- Controls the rights whether they are the writer, director or producer.
- Has the demonstrated know-how to develop the project, raise finance and execute the creative vision.
- Meets the following budget thresholds
    - One-off or series for a Commissioning Platform - at least $1.5 million per hour. We may prioritise series of longer lengths (8 broadcast hours or more)
    - Feature Films - at least $3 million.

There are no minimum credit requirements to apply.

Applications can be made by individuals or creative teams, however individual applicants must demonstrate the ability to attract other team members at later stages of development.

With the exception of official Co-Productions, it is Screen Australia's expectation that applications for direct funding will demonstrate that the project is written and directed by Australian citizens or permanent residents. Please email development@screenaustralia.gov.au to discuss with a Story Development team member before applying if this is not the case.

Specific requirements apply where a project involves First Nations content, stories, characters or community participation. Please see the First Nations content, collaboration and participation section below and our Pathways and Protocols guide for more detail.

What is not eligible for this program?

You will not be eligible for Premium if you have a project that:

- Is a standalone short film

- A short form series

- Does not meet all requirements and conditions in our Terms of Trade

- Has been declined twice for Screen Australia development funding (except in exceptional circumstances)

Applications from emerging screen content makers' should refer to the Generate Fund.

What funding is available?

Funding is for development costs. The Development budget can include whatever the project and team need including a treatment, scriptment, draft script, bible, research, writers' rooms, and/or the production of a Proof of Concept (POC) or sizzle reel. For more detail and POC requirements, see Premium Fund FAQs.

There is no cap on funding but the amount applied for must be reasonable relative to the scope of the project, experience of the creative team, the development activities proposed, and any additional sources of development financing raised or expected.

Requested amounts should also align with our Contribution Guide.

Funding limits

- Screen Australia will only fund Australian creatives and costs of the development budget, but will also contribute to costs for internal consultants, mentors and script editors.

- Screen Australia development funding cannot be retrospective.

- Whilst Screen Australia can support the development of TV series, when marketplace (broadcaster, streamer etc) commits to development of a project, that project cannot apply to Screen Australia for further or matched development funding.

How and when can I apply?

Applications **are open all year** and can be made **at any time** through Screen Australia's application portal with the following materials:

- Completed online Application form
- An up to four-minute downloadable video pitch to camera
- A two-page Creative Vision Statement
- A two-page Development Plan
- Story documents such as treatment, draft script etc.
- Supporting material that will help communicate your creative vision, such as images, music or related material.

Story Development funding is now a one-stage process.

First Nations content, collaboration and participation

Screen Australia supports the telling of First Nations stories by First Nations creatives and storytellers and/or meaningful collaboration with the First Nations communities to which these stories belong.

Whenever there is First Nations content and/or First Nations community participation in the project, or when there are First Nations members of the team who do not have the authority to speak for the people or place being represented in the story, you will need to follow the checklists from Pathways & Protocols: a film maker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts.

The checklists include a statement on how you are approaching the First Nations content, (even if you believe the content is not specific to a community or individual), evidence of your collaboration to date and where relevant, signed letters of consent confirming the community and/or individual's willingness to collaborate.

Inclusive storytelling

Gender equity, diversity and inclusivity are priorities for Screen Australia. We therefore expect that the diversity of the story world and characters are reflected in the creative team and IP of the project and/or that integrated and meaningful collaboration occurs from early stages of development. Also, consider whether your team has the right to tell the story and whether your telling of it will be authentic.

How are applications assessed?

The Program Operations team will review each application to ensure eligibility and required application materials. Once confirmed, the applicant will receive an email advising that their application has moved to assessment and an estimated timeframe of the outcome – generally around 6 weeks from receipt of email.

In addition to addressing the specific aims of the Premium Fund above, applications will be assessed by Screen Australia executives and/or industry specialists against the following criteria:

- **Talent:** the ability and experience of the individual or team to develop and finance the project of a high budget size, execute the vision and leverage the opportunity to progress their careers/business. In the case of a solo writer applicant, the quality of the plan for the attachment of a producer at a later stage will be taken into consideration.

- **Story:** The strength and distinctiveness of the story, and if the execution will resonate with its intended audience. Proof of Concepts (POC) will also be assessed against this criteria.

- **Audience & Budget:** A demonstrated pathway to audience appropriate to the project's budget size and financing strategy.

- **Development Plan:** The degree to which the development plan identifies challenges in the current material while also offering potential strategies to address them in the next phase(s) of development, taking in account any development funding already received.

- **Culture & Diversity:** Do elements of the project reflect gender equity and/or the diversity of people and experiences from around Australia?

All projects involving First Nations content or participation will be assessed with First Nations assessors.

Decisions will take into account the assessment criteria, availability of funds, diversity of the current slate of projects and teams across all platforms, as well as the perceived need for Screen Australia funds by the applicant.

Applicants will be advised of the outcome approximately six weeks after email receipt of their project's eligibility.

Terms of Funding

Funding will be in the form of a grant and subject to a non-negotiable standard contract. All screen story development funds will be paid 100% on signing. Generally, the delivery date will be six months after signing the contract.

What will help your application?

We receive many applications every year, so you need to make a strong case for your project. Here are some pointers to help you deliver the strongest application possible:

- Please refer to the [Premium Fund FAQs](#) and carefully consider the objectives, eligibility requirements and assessment criteria for the Premium Fund before applying.
- Make sure you meet all eligibility requirements in these guidelines and in [Terms of Trade](#).
- Preview the [application form](#) before you start
- Make sure your application talks directly to the assessment criteria as well as the aims of the fund outlined in these guidelines

If you have any further questions, please email us at development@screenaustralia.gov.au or call Program Operations on 1800 507 901. Please note that we are not able to provide creative advice or suggestions to strengthen your application.

Update Log

1 July 2023
- Applications now a one-stage process.
- TV budget threshold lifted to $1.5million from $1.3million.

1 July 2020
- TV budget threshold lifted to $1.3 million from $1 million.
- Creative vision / development plan now required at stage 1.
- Turnaround time for stage 1 extended from three weeks to four weeks

1 October 2019
- Removed contact details from first page as they are contained elsewhere within document

11 January 2019
- Defined Commissioning Platform
- Stage 1 turnaround time extended from normally two weeks to three weeks for both Generate and Premium.
- Added 'distinctive' to the Premium fund aim under Ambition & Scale.
- Changed the project's production budget level for Generate and Premium from a guide to a requirement.
- Added Story Specialists link and Conflict of Interest to the assessment process.
- Revised Stage 1 Premium assessment criteria to reflect the aims.
- Revised Stage 2 assessment criteria to reflect solo writers.
- Clarified delivery and further funding section.
- Increased the pitch time from maximum three-minute pitch to maximum four-minute pitch.
- Added a one paragraph synopsis for a Proof of Concept.
- Included Podcasts as part of the development