



New Zealand
FILM COMMISSION



Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga

FEATURE FILM DEVELOPMENT FUNDING DOCUMENTARY

APPLICATION GUIDELINES as at January 2025

If you have any accessibility requirements or require this information in a different format, please
contact: development@nzfilm.co.nz

Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga The New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) invests in talented filmmakers and exciting New Zealand films to be enjoyed in Aotearoa New Zealand and around the world. NZFC documentary development funding (Fund/Funding) supports our filmmaking community to take the time, care and energy required to craft extraordinary documentary films that are loved by their intended audiences and have lasting impact.

This fund enables filmmakers to explore, deepen and refine their documentary films in ways appropriate to their unique story and its participants.

Remember, the Fund is contestable, so tell us why you need to make this project now, what you hope its impact will be, and why film is the right form for this story. We want to know that you have a clear idea of the kind of film you want to make. You must identify one or more of the following ambitions for your film at this stage:

- **Local audience appeal** – the potential to reach a large audience here in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- **Commercial** – the potential to be well supported by market with strong international sales and the ambition to reach international audiences as well as local.
- **Critical** – the potential for critical acclaim and film festival success: a provocative or cathartic cinema experience, reliant on a unique voice, cultural specificity and artistic excellence.
- **Innovation** – the potential to forge new pathways in film: technologies, methodologies, audience experiences and/or filmmaker talent.
- **Impact** – the potential to make a significant social, cultural or political impact.

CONTACT THE FUNDING TEAM FOR A PRE-APPLICATION HUI

Before applying to NZFC for Funding, please contact the funding team to discuss your project and eligibility. Email development@nzfilm.co.nz to arrange a 15-minute hui.



WHO CAN APPLY

You are eligible to apply to this fund if you are:

- a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident **and**
- the owner of the rights in the project or have an option to acquire those rights **and**
- a writer, director and/or producer who has 80-minutes of produced documentary or scripted content or has had a short film accepted into one of these listed [international festivals](#), the NZ International Film Festival, Māoriland, Rotorua Indigenous Film Festival or Doc Edge **or**
- an experienced practitioner who can provide evidence of significant success in a related narrative discipline (e.g. esteemed investigative journalist, published writer).

Māori Content

If your project has significant [Māori content](#), you will need Māori involvement commensurate with the level of that content.

For Māori content queries, please email development@nzfilm.co.nz to arrange a discussion.

WHAT THIS FUND CAN SUPPORT

- writer, director, producer fees
- writer, director, producer legal costs and/or other legal costs
- Project development costs, including research, writing, filming, editing and associated fees, travel and expenses
- Packaging costs, including creating pitch materials and market attendance
- Development costs (as set out above) for official and unofficial co-production projects (New Zealand project costs only).

For fees or costs relating to services provided by, or for the development of, a writer, director, or producer, that writer, director, or producer must be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident.

Each film project can access a maximum of \$140,000 cumulative Funding (**Cumulative Funding Cap**).

When applying for a tranche of funding, you can apply for up to \$35,000 each time.

If we agree that your project has undergone significant development and the project needs more Funding to advance to the next stage, you can apply for more than \$35,000 at once (provided the total Funding for your project won't exceed the Cumulative Funding Cap if the Funding were to be awarded).

The Cumulative Funding Cap includes all NZFC funded development to date, including historical funds such as Documentary Development, Advanced Development, International Co-Development and Boost.





MATERIALS YOU NEED TO SUBMIT

- A **proposal** that articulates your creative vision. This includes:
 - a logline and 1-page project summary
 - a story treatment that includes information about the film's participants, where the story might go and what questions are driving the narrative, the theme, your artistic approach. Be clear about the elements of your story that remain unknown. As a guide, we suggest up to 10 pages.
 - filmmaker notes that speak to your connection to the material and theme, and your ambitions for the film. It can be useful to think about why you are telling this story now. Describe how your film is a work of cinema. As a guide, we suggest 1-2 pages.
 - producer's notes including a brief project history, and your ambitions for your film including intended audience and outcomes. In the case of co-production please include information regarding your partnership and rights in the project, and the proposed split (if you know). We suggest 1 page.
 - a development plan that includes information about access, ethical considerations and accountability. As a guide, we suggest up to 5 pages.
 - OPTIONAL: impact strategy
 - OPTIONAL: existing compiled footage
 - OPTIONAL: Any other creative materials you think support your unique vision.Below are some examples, you will know what best represents your idea:
 - photographs, artwork, underlying IP, music or sound.
- OPTIONAL: A maximum 4-minute video. This can be anything – people, pictures, text on screen, music, sound. It could be a key creative talking through the submission, or it could be sheer visual inspiration, or a bit of both. Production values won't be assessed. Ideas will be!
- A development budget that includes all sources of development investment to date. If your project is intended to be a co-production, you'll also need to provide a global development budget that reflects the spend in each territory.
- A one paragraph bio for the writer(s), director(s) and/or producer(s) attached to your project at this stage. If your project is intended to be a co-production (official or unofficial), you'll also need to include a one paragraph bio for each of your co-producing partners.
- A link to a film or other screen story you've made – the one you're most proud of.
- If we agree that your project has undergone significant development and the project requires larger investment to advance to the next stage and/or you intend it to be a co-production, you may be required to submit additional materials. You can discuss this with the Funding Team in the pre-application hui.





HOW TO APPLY

- Arrange a 15-minute pre-application hui with the Funding Team to discuss your project and eligibility. Email: development@nzfilm.co.nz Submit your application using the NZFC Portal at any time after the pre-application hui with the Funding Team.
- Please note there is an estimated eight-week turnaround for decisions from receipt of an eligible application.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

We give priority to feature films which contribute to some or all of our Strategic Objectives:

- The potential to be **creatively excellent, commercially excellent** or both, in line with your stated ambitions for the film.
- The development of **authentic and diverse** narratives that are **uniquely of Aotearoa** and **maximise audiences** for New Zealand films.
- Strategic collaboration which **promotes employment** and **productivity** in the New Zealand film industry.
- The development of talent with **diversity, equity and inclusion** at the core.

If your project has Māori content, we will also consider intellectual property ownership and capacity-building in line with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori.

To assess how a film development project meets these criteria, we ask some or all of the following questions:

- Does the work have thematic depth and does it reflect the central concerns of the film and filmmaker? Is the filmmaker employing subtext and metaphor to convey meaning in their work?
- Does the film have something relevant to say about who, where and when we are in the world?
- Is there evidence that the participants are compelling and interesting?
- Will the film provide an emotional journey for the audience? Is the filmmaker consciously using their tools to affect the audience psychologically/emotionally?
- Is the filmmaker's style original and/or bold? Are they telling the story in a new way or from a new point of view?
- What is the filmmaker's connection to the material and to the theme of the film?
- Is the proposal in line with what the filmmaker has said in their notes they are trying to achieve, and do they have a good sense of where to next?
- Does this filmmaker have the knowledge and experience to tell this story with integrity?
- Is there evidence within the application or from prior work that this team can achieve this vision?
- Does this film offer an enduring contribution to NZ culture?
- Will the film be recognisably of Aotearoa and/or does it reflect New Zealand's place in the world? Will it be made in New Zealand or internationally with a uniquely New Zealand perspective? Does it have the potential to connect with New Zealand audiences?

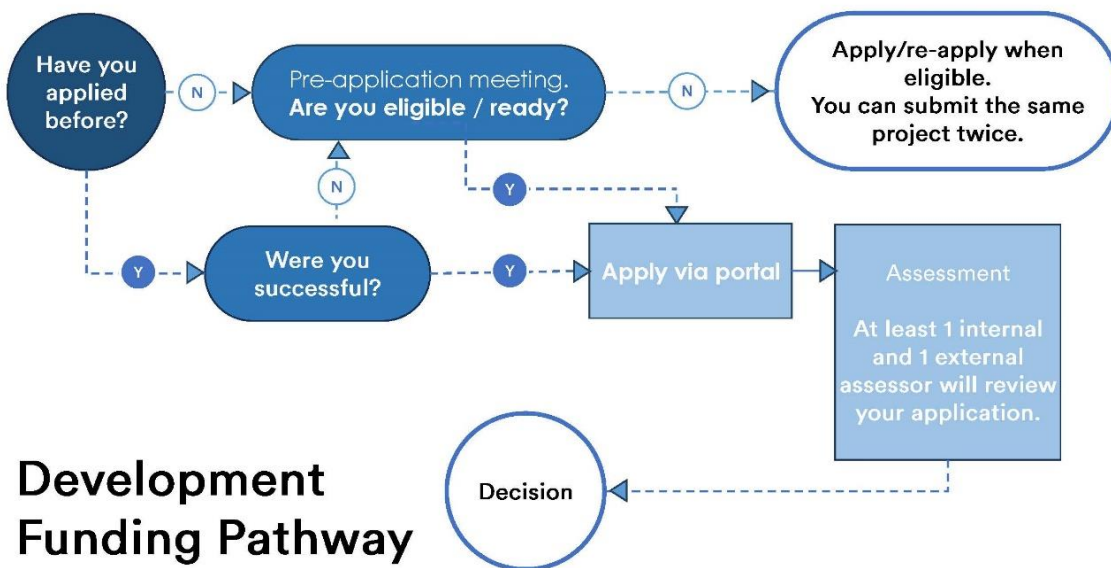


We assess each application taking into account on these criteria, the materials provided, your team, the range of projects we are supporting you on across all funding programmes, and the funding availability at the time you apply.

If your project is intended to be an official co-production using one or more of New Zealand's 18 co-production arrangements, then any application for further tranches of Funding will first be reviewed by the NZFC's Co-Production and Incentives Team. The project's overall viability as an official co-production, based on the co-production guidelines and the relevant co-production arrangement(s), will be a key factor in the funding decision.

By submitting an application for Funding, you agree to these Development Funding Guidelines (except to the extent varied or waived by us) and our [Code of Conduct](#).

ASSESSMENT PROCESS



Development Funding Pathway

- Each Funding application is assessed by our Funding Team and at least one external, experienced industry practitioner.
- In the first instance, we will review your written submission materials and up to 15-minutes of provided video footage (if applicable). We will then decide whether we will do a full assessment.
- If we decide to do a full assessment, we will review all submitted materials.
- Our decision to allocate Funding is discretionary. Our decision will be final.
- We will notify you in writing of the outcome of your application. The estimated turnaround for a decision is eight weeks from receipt of an eligible application. Any individual writer, director or producer may only be attached to a maximum of two applications at one time.
- If an application is declined, a subsequent application for the same project can only be made if the application materials have changed significantly. Information about how the project has changed must be included in the subsequent application.

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- If two successive applications are declined for development funding for the same project, no further applications will be accepted for that project. In exceptional circumstances this can be waived, at the sole discretion of the NZFC.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will use reasonable efforts to keep the information you provide confidential. Please note that any information you give us can be requested under the Official Information Act 1982. If we get such a request, we can talk to you before responding.

If you have any further questions please email us at development@nzfilm.co.nz

