

Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga New Zealand Film Commission

He Pounamu Te Reo Māori Feature Film Initiative

He Aratohu mā ngā Kaitono Guidelines for Applicants

June 2026



Ma te huruhuru, ka rere te manu
With feathers the bird will fly

Pūtake | Purpose

He Pounamu Te Reo Māori Initiative supports dramatic feature films in te reo Māori led by Māori creatives. The initiative celebrates Māori storytelling, strengthens te reo Māori, and enables culturally grounded pathways to production.

Please get in touch BEFORE making an application, contact the Funding Team to make an appointment to discuss your application.

Please contact the **Funding Team** by email production@nzfilm.co.nz or phone 0800 659 754.

Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga 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. We support Māori film making through all our funds, encouraging and enabling Māori storytelling and aspirations to make powerful films.

He Pounamu Te Reo Māori Feature Film (He Pounamu Te Reo) funding helps Māori filmmakers bring bold, authentic, te reo Māori feature films to audiences in Aotearoa and the world. He Pounamu Te Reo provides investment (**Production Investment or Post-Production Investment**) for dramatic features where **te reo Māori is the predominant language** (more than 50%) and **Māori creatives lead the kaupapa**.

Remember, Production Investment and Post-Production Investment available under this fund is contestable so tell us what really excites you about your project, why you need to make this project now, and what you hope its impact will be.

In your application, you must speak to which **one or two** of the following ambitions is most important for your film:

- **Te Hunga Mātakitaki /Local audience appeal** – the potential to reach a large audience here in Aotearoa New Zealand
- **Aronga Arumoni/Commercial** – the potential to be well supported by the market with strong international sales and the ambition to reach international audiences as well as local
- **Kounga Toi/Critical** – the potential for critical acclaim and film festival success: a provocative or meaningful cinema experience, reliant on a unique voice, cultural specificity and artistic excellence
- **Auahatanga/Innovation** – the potential to forge new pathways in film technologies, methodologies, language use, audience experiences and/or filmmaker talent
- **Te Pānga Ahurea/Impact** – the potential for the advancement of te reo Māori, tikanga, and Māori storytelling on screen

By applying for He Pounamu Te Reo funding, you agree to these Guidelines, our Terms of Trade (except to the extent varied or waived by us), our Code of Conduct, and our Style and Accreditation Guidelines.

CONTACT THE FUNDING TEAM FOR A PRE-APPLICATION HUI

Before applying to NZFC for He Pounamu Te Reo funding please contact the Funding Team to discuss your project and eligibility. Email production@nzfilm.co.nz to arrange a hui at least four weeks ahead of your application submission.

These Guidelines sit alongside NZFC's [Feature Film Production Investment Guidelines](#) and [Terms of Trade](#). Please read them together to understand eligibility, obligations, and the closing process.

WHO CAN APPLY

You are eligible to apply for Production Investment if you:

- are a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident; **and**
- either:
 - have a film with significant New Zealand content (as set out in section 18 of the [NZFC Act 1978](#)); **OR**
 - intend to structure the film as an official co-production, have discussed your proposed co-production structure with the NZFC [Co-Production](#) and [Incentives team](#), and have submitted your provisional co-production application before, or at the same time as, this application; **and**
- have, or your filmmaking team has, appropriate filmmaking experience for the scale and complexity of the film; **and**
- will be the lead New Zealand producer of the film (you can't also be the writer or director unless we approve this beforehand); **and**
- have, or have an option to acquire, all necessary rights to develop, produce and distribute the film; **and**
- have an established New Zealand distributor attached, which has committed to a New Zealand release (or have had this requirement waived by the Head of Funding); **and**
- have an international sales agent attached (if your film has a budget of more than NZD \$1million, or if you have had this requirement waived by the Head of Funding); **and**
- have provided all materials requested in these Guidelines; **and**
- have no overdue deliverables to the NZFC; **and**
- have reviewed and met the [Māori Content](#) requirements and the Māori creative roles (writer, director, producer) and experience are commensurate to the level of the content. **and**
- Have had a pre-application meeting.

We will accept only one application per funding round from any one lead producer. Any one director can only be attached to one application per funding round.

WHAT THIS FUND CAN SUPPORT

You can apply for a Production Investment of up to \$2,500,000, or if your main stated ambition is Innovation up to \$1,500,000, or a Post-Production Investment of up to \$500,000, for your film.

The amount you apply for should reflect the budget and aspirations for your film. Production Investment is available for scripted or documentary feature films that are between 75 and 110 minutes long, well-developed, and have a clear plan for reaching their intended audience. In all instances, any development funding previously provided for your film **will not be** included in the amount of Production Investment awarded under these Guidelines.

WHAT MATERIALS YOU MUST SUBMIT

Your application must include the following materials:

- For Production Investment for a scripted feature film: a production-ready bi-lingual script, logline, one-page synopsis, a short synopsis (150 words) and director's treatment. (We expect more than 50% of the script to be in te reo Māori).
- For Production Investment for a documentary feature film: a logline, one-page synopsis, a short synopsis (150 words), treatment and director's vision document
- For Post- Production Investment for a scripted **or** documentary feature film; a logline, one-page synopsis, a short synopsis (150 words), a working link for assessors to view the rough cut, and filmmaker creative notes to the direction of the cut

For all types of investment:

- Short biographies for the director, writer and producer (including **Iwi/hapū affiliations, reo experience, and connection to the Kaupapa**) and, for Production Investment applications, working links to view the director's prior work that demonstrate their capability to achieve the film
- Producer notes that encapsulate the ambitions for the film, and a plan for reaching the intended audience (see ambitions listed on page 1 of these guidelines). A non-~~word~~ approach to engaging audiences will be considered.
- **Māori Language Plan:** notes on use and creative use of te reo for the film, incl. new kupu, use of mita/dialect, tikanga integration. How te reo will appear in the film, Impact and outcomes for audience and reo.
- Named Poutiaki / Poutikanga/ cultural advisor(s) with roles, responsibilities and authority of Pou and key personnel. Outline of involvement throughout the pre, production and post-production. Quality assurance process within the production and any kaitiaki or cultural care and considerations.
- Consultation/partnership with whānau/hapū/iwi/kaitiaki where relevant, including permissions for specific taonga
- Distributor's notes on positioning strategy including box office and screen number estimates (1 page)
- A complete finance plan. This will include no more than 90% New Zealand Government funding, unless your application is for under \$500,000 **or** your main stated ambition is Innovation **and** your request for equity is no more than \$1,500,000. Please include recoupment position for each investor.
- Full production budget
- Cashflow and drawdown schedule that reflects the finance plan (including the timing of

- all investors' contributions)
- Recoupment schedule
- Proposed overall production schedule, and for scripted features a draft shooting schedule
- A summary of the chain of title, including the expiry dates for any rights or options
- Chain of title documents
- Documents evidencing your finance plan, which will include letters of intent or commitment from your market partners, including key deal terms and sales estimates
- Evidence of commitment from your completion guarantor (if the production budget is \$1 million or more)
- Confirmation that provisional NZSPR application has been lodged (if applicable)
- Confirmation that provisional co-production certification applications have been lodged with the NZFC and the other relevant competent authority/authorities (if applicable)

HOW TO APPLY

- Arrange a pre-application hui with the Funding Team to discuss your project and eligibility at least four weeks prior to submitting your application. (Email: production@nzfilm.co.nz)
- Submit your application using the NZFC Portal at any time after the pre-application hui with the Funding Team and before the relevant closing date.

To have your application considered, you need to submit it at least ten weeks before the upcoming Board meeting. You can find relevant dates on [our website](#).

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

We give priority to strong feature films with well-developed scripts or a strong rough cut, **and** teams who evidence they can achieve their vision and clearly articulate their ambitions for the film. To receive a Production Investment, your film must contribute to some or all of our Strategic Objectives:

- **creative excellence, commercial excellence** (or both, depending on your ambitions for the film)
- **authentic and diverse** films that are **uniquely of Aotearoa** and **maximise audiences** for New Zealand films
- collaborate strategically to promote **employment and productivity** in the New Zealand film industry
- capability development with **diversity, equity and inclusion** at the core

We will also consider intellectual property ownership, benefit sharing, and capacity- building in line with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori.

How AI Use is Considered in Funding Applications. In your funding application, please outline any proposed use of AI. This will help to inform our assessment. When AI use is proposed, we will be guided by our [AI Guiding Principles](#) in assessing your application. You should ensure that your materials address at least the following key factors:

- **Cultural authenticity** - Use of AI must respect te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori, avoid misrepresentation, and include appropriate cultural consultation.

- **Creative integrity** - Use of AI should enhance - not replace - human creativity, supporting storytelling while preserving artistic vision.
- **Transparency** - It is essential that you disclose about how AI will be used in the project and consider its impact on audience (particularly for unscripted projects).
- **Ethical implications and industry impact** - It is your responsibility to ensure that the use of AI meets all relevant legal obligations. You should also consider how the use of AI affects the broader sector.

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

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

If your project meets the eligibility criteria, the assessment process will happen in two stages.

At the first stage, NZFC staff and external assessors will assess your application against the assessment criteria. We may not review the non-creative materials in this stage of assessment. We will let you know if we decide to progress your application to the second stage.

If your application moves to the second stage, NZFC staff will assess against the assessment criteria and let you know if we have any major concerns about your project. You will then have the chance to respond to and address these concerns.

At the second stage, NZFC staff may talk directly to attached distributors and other market partners.

We will then let you know whether NZFC staff intend to recommend your project to the NZFC Board or the CEO for Production Investment.

If staff do not intend to recommend your project to the NZFC Board or CEO for Production Investment, you can withdraw your application or have it considered by the Board without staff recommendation.

If a project does not meet the eligibility criteria, we will let you know that your project has not proceeded to assessment.

DECISIONS

- Production investment decisions over \$1,000,000 are made by the NZFC board.
- Production investment decisions of \$1,000,000 or under are made by the CEO.
- Production Investment is discretionary and all decisions regarding applications are final.
- NZFC will notify applicants in writing of the outcome of their application.
- If our staff don't recommend your application to the Board or CEO, or the Board declines your application for Production Investment, you can submit another application for that project only if it has changed significantly. You must describe these changes in the second application.
- If the Board declines a project twice, we will not accept any further applications for that project. In exceptional circumstances this can be waived, at our sole discretion.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will use reasonable efforts to keep the information you provide confidential. Please note that any information you give to 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 production@nzfilm.co.nz
Please note that we cannot provide creative advice to strengthen your application.**