



New Zealand
FILM COMMISSION



Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga

SCRIPT TO

SCREEN

TE TARI TUHI KUPU A WHAKAAHUA

Script to Screen and Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga New Zealand Film Commission Kōpere Hou – Fresh Shorts Pointers for Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One applicants

September 2020

It is encouraged you read these pointers carefully as they are related to the Guidelines for **Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One** application and are intended to help you deliver the strongest application possible. Please also read the relevant information sheets on the Script to Screen or NZFC websites.

Please get in touch with Script to Screen well before making a formal application as they can offer helpful advice and guidance.

Fresh Shorts Facilitator at Script to Screen: FreshShorts@script-to-screen.co.nz



Application Submission Pointers

Standout films have some of the following in common:

- **Exceptional story**
- **Originality**
- **Authentic voice**
- **Unique point of view**
- **Extremes**

It's important to remember that individual applications are as different as the stories they tell. There is no right way. The application 'form' is the same; everyone fills out the same sections. However, the content is always dependent on the story, and this is where uniqueness lies.

This document is a guide to support filmmakers in putting together a clear application – as opposed to a “what you must do” approach.

It also pays to remember that Kōpere Hou - Fresh Shorts is a limited, contestable fund

- Approx. 5-9% of all applications per year get funded
- Never take it personally if you don't make it through in that round
- Take feedback on board and utilise it to keep developing your project for your own learning

When experienced industry assessors consider the information applicants supply – the script, the vision of what the film will look and sound like and how the team intend to make the film, they look at the package of documents making up “the application” as a holistic expression of that story. On a practical level they are evaluating whether what is being expressed on the page by the writer, director and producer match up, and if it is feasible to make the film in the way the filmmakers say they intend to in the application.

They are also assessing whether they think the voice is unique and if the project is original and has the ingredients to become an exceptional film.

Assessors can only evaluate what is on the page. Your challenge is to make sure what is in your mind gets onto the page clearly and precisely to assist assessors in their decision-making process.

Whiringa Tono – Application Process

This year the application process for Kōpere Hou - Fresh Shorts has been changed, making it simpler for teams to apply. Kōpere Hou - Fresh Shorts is now a two-stage application process. This document will present the pointers for **Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One**.

Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One:

While a written script is still required, the rest of the application will consist of a video and a short application with some summaries, no more than 3-4 pages in total. This process will still allow a good overall picture of story, vision and team *and* help the shortlisting assessors to get to know the filmmakers.

Whiringa Tuarau - Stage Two:

A shortlist of 18 teams will be invited to submit a written script and a detailed application proposal covering story, vision, and team to help assess scope and feasibility of projects. Up to six projects will be funded. The teams for these projects will attend a two-day workshop and undertake a six-week mentorship with an experienced industry practitioner to ensure their projects are shoot ready.

What is looked for and the assessment criteria are the same for both stages of the Fresh Shorts application.

The NZFC endeavours to support a diverse range of project types, styles and scales.

Te Rautaki Māori

The NZFC's commitment to Tangata Whenua under Te Rautaki [\[Link\]](#) is to work in partnership with Māori to better support the development and progression of Māori talent.

Diversity, inclusion and equality

The NZFC is committed to providing opportunities and support for women and those from a diverse and/or underrepresented community.

Funding decisions through Kōpere Hou - Fresh Shorts will reflect these commitments.

Many times, filmmakers ask what the assessors are looking for. Below is the list from the guidelines and this *is* what assessors refer to when reading. All panel meetings and funding meetings start with reminding all present that this is the guide and to refer to the criteria below.

What we are looking for

- fresh directorial voices with distinctive, original styles;
- fresh ideas not seen before in short film, or new and original takes on familiar ideas;
- big screen potential – story and visual ideas that will work in cinematic release;
- narrative films with impact. They could be emotional, humorous or political, or designed to scare an audience. You should aim to reach audiences and move them;
- films that take risks, provoke and challenge audiences; and
- films that have something to say

The Assessment Criteria from the guidelines is what informs the reader/assessors at all stages, including assessment, recommendations, and decisions about which films to fund. This simple list *is* the guide.

Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One and **Whiringa Tuarau - Stage Two** applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- quality of the script;
- the idea and strength of the project;
- point of difference;
- director's voice/vision;
- filmmaking talent involved; and
- ability to deliver the project.

Make it clear

The following are good rules of thumb for both **Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One** and **Whiringa Tuarau - Stage Two** of the Kopere Hou - Fresh Shorts application:

- Remember readers get tired, write the most important things first in the paragraph.
- Balance detail with being concise and precise. Supply enough detail to inform but keep what you write as succinct as possible.
- Show your thinking. You may not have everything confirmed but you can write a combination of paragraphs and bullet points to show your plans and intentions.
- Be real – it's hard to produce a short film. It's OK to name the challenges and show your intentions, indicate plans and possible contingencies.
- Indicate your research especially in documentary applications but also character or production aspects.
- Readers are *visual*. Pictures can succinctly demonstrate the director's unique vision. Make sure images you choose are cinematic and reflect the film you want to make.
- Use a conversational tone in the application.
- Say it once – repetition isn't useful, it makes applications hard to read.
- Ensure your proposal read well. Read it out loud to yourself to make sure it flows.

Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One

What to provide

Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One application will include the following sections:

- **Team Video Vimeo Link** (4 minutes max duration).
- **Genre** (2 genres max from list supplied)
- **Logline** (35 words max)
- **Script**
- **Tangata Whenua, diversity, representation, and consultation summary** (300 words max)
- **Director's summary** (300 words max)
- **Director's visual inspiration images** (5 images in a single PDF upload)
- **Producer's summary** (300 words max)
- **Short Bio & filmography list each team member** (bio 250 words max each)

All applications will be filled out and read electronically.
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Team Video

The video should include the full team. If possible, have fun with it! It's important assessors get to know you a little bit and connect with the human beings making the project. A simple, authentic telling from you to the assessors of why this is an important story for you and your team and what the heart of the story is *to you*.

It is encouraged you do **not** read something. Just tell it, it doesn't have to be word perfect. It's OK to get emotional or deep, or just be quietly 'real' about the film you want to make. As mentioned in the guidelines, this is **not** a pitch of the logline or a re-telling of the script. It is also not an academic analysis. Nor is it meant to be a big 'staged' production. Assessors simply want to better understand what your connection to your story is. Keep it simple.

After each team member introduces themselves, assessors want to learn things like:

- If you've worked together before, and if you are building on films you've already made?
- If you've been working on this project for a while, how you intend to make this film? Or if you haven't known each other long, how you plan to make this film as a new team?
- And if you're going to get more experienced people to support you make the project?

The video should be a continuous shot (preferably no editing cuts) with good sound and lighting so the team can be heard and seen. This clip is not meant to be 'highly produced'. A recorded Zoom or Skype video with all your team on screen is perfectly acceptable quality.

[Recording your Zoom meeting](#)

[Sharing a Zoom recording](#)

A Vimeo link - four minutes maximum

Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One

Genre

Genres (and cross genres) have conventions and patterns that create a framework for a reader and indicate what the reader should expect. Well-defined and simple genres help the assessor to know what “kind” of story they are entering into and help the reader absorb the story. One clear genre, or a cross of two genres is useful, but more can be confusing. The genre section of **Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One** purposely has a limit of two. If you are submitting a cross genre story, make sure you list the dominant genre first.

Genres like horror have very clear conventions and set up expectations so it's important that you are aware of the conventions before labelling your project. If you need to clarify the genre of your story, do some research; there are numerous resources online to assist in identifying genre. Asking an experienced filmmaker to read your script and identify what they think your genre is can also help you know if you are hitting the mark or not.

Logline

The logline must reflect your script's story. It's a brief summary of a film that hooks the reader and describes the central conflict of the story. It's also a unique identifier. The logline illustrates that *this* story can be like no other film. The formula for a logline is simple – they are concise, involve the central character and the dramatic conflict of the story. There are many approaches to writing them. Below are a couple you may find useful.

Loglines take time to write and refine; allow a few days to develop it and hone the drafts. There are numerous resources online to assist in writing loglines e.g. <https://logline.it/> Along with the script, loglines are the piece of writing referred to most often in the application by assessors so it pays to work on them. Check your logline when you complete a new draft of your script to ensure they match.

- (a) **Protagonist centred:** Protagonist + action + stakes
 When a MAIN CHARACTER does a MAJOR EVENT, a CONFLICT arises.
 e.g. For the right price, BFFs Jen and Me! will ruthlessly end any romance. But when one grows a conscience, it threatens to derail their relationship.
The Breaker Upperers (2018)
- (b) **Inciting Incident centred:** Inciting incident + protagonist + action
 When a MAJOR EVENT happens, a MAIN CHARACTER must do the MAIN ACTION/GOAL.
 e.g. A national manhunt is ordered for a rebellious kid and his foster uncle who go missing in the wild New Zealand bush.
Hunt for the Wilderpeople (2016)

Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One

Script

As outlined in the criteria, assessors are looking for distinct, original stories with impact. The submitted draft should be the most dramatic telling of your story, in line with your story's genre, developed to the best level you can at the time of the application.

It's important that your script hooks the reader into your story quickly and doesn't spend pages setting the scene. Short films are generally told very visually through visual description in the script, action, and character behaviour. They build the dramatic tension to a single climactic moment (relative to the world of the story e.g. some stories are very nuanced and have subtle story arcs), and finish with a memorable, strong ending. This is as true for comedy as drama. If your script is a genre piece, it's useful for your story to embrace the tropes of the genre and if possible, subvert the genre or create surprises.

In film festivals, short films are screened in curated programmes with several films together and programmers view multiple entries back to back to decide what to programme. That is why 'getting into story' or starting your story quickly and having a strong memorable ending is vitally important. Help them remember your film!

Ask a more experienced filmmaker to read and give you some constructive feedback prior to submitting the application.

Film script development is an iterative process and can take many, many drafts. The script is always a work in progress (WIP). It can be useful to utilise the *Narrative Script Basic Checklist* below to identify and examine what might be further developed. This is as relevant to documentary stories as to fiction.

Narrative Script Basic Check List:

- Is the central dramatic question of the story clear?
- Is there enough dramatic conflict?
- Are the obstacles large enough?
- Do we enter the story as close to the inciting incident as possible and get to the heart of the story as soon as possible?
- Does the story end in a satisfying way?
- Is it clear whose story it is?
- Do characters change from the beginning to the end of the story?
- Are the stakes high enough for the characters and the story?
- Does the dialogue create the illusion of reality? Is it all necessary, can it be reduced?
- Is the story written visually?
- Does the story affect the reader emotionally?



Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One

Documentary

For documentary, a script outline/ treatment (sometimes called a script-ment) tells the reader what they will see and hear on the screen as it unfolds dramatically, from beginning to end. It will describe the overall story and action of the main character or the 'protagonist'. Be specific about what you think you will find, even if you are not sure of the final outcome. It is a version of what you *hope* to capture (within reason of your budget and planning).

Written in prose using visual, descriptive language depicting what we see and hear just like a narrative fiction treatment, the story should flow and emotionally engage the reader. It gives an indication of the character journey, story arcs and dramatic tension of the story. It should include the beginning and middle of the story and show how the story will end – *no* cliff hangers.

Tangata Whenua, Diversity, Representation, and Consultation Summary

The NZFC encourages applicants to consider ethnicity, gender and gender diversity, those with a disability and/or those from a diverse background so the storytellers reflect Aotearoa New Zealand society in their projects. Applicants are also encouraged to promote the authentic representation of Māori characters, stories, places, history and culture in New Zealand films (in front of and behind the camera). Please refer to NZFC's [Te Rautaki Māori Strategy](#).

Even if you have only just started the process, it is important to see that your team is putting a plan in place and taking action to ensure meaningful consultation and engagement and authentic characters. This may be reflected in:

- The intended timeline or timeframes of planned consultation and research in development, preproduction, production and post i.e. not just at the last minute and not just once but a depth of research and consistent, planned engagement with feedback, over a sustained time.
- An indication of your advisors or consultants, or who you plan or intend to approach and steps towards that. It is encouraged you consult with more than one person/party. Communities have multiple viewpoints and it is important that you have a breadth of input.
- Information to show that there will be an endeavour for genuine collaboration and partnership between the filmmakers and communities.



Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One

- Information to show there will be an endeavour to achieve authentic representation informed by meaningful consultation and research.

300 words maximum

Director's Summary

A summary indicating the *key* aspects of what the director imagines their film to look like, sound like and feel like, along with a few notes on how they intend to work with crucial people in their team to make that happen.

Readers are interested to understand the unique way the director perceives the story and what the director thinks *their* distinctive style is. The summary should give a sense of how the director will present *this* story on screen in a cinematic and artistic way. The director may use filmic references as a short hand that might give the reader insight into lighting, framing and [mise en scène](#). The director may indicate how they intend to work with actors to obtain engaging performances. Or how they'll work with heads of department like sound, costume and make up, production design and their DoP to bring the world of the story alive. The summary could consist of a few sentences on each area mentioned.

300 words maximum

Director's visual inspiration images

This is an important section, a place for the director's visual "voice" to be illustrated. Even in five images, a director's style, sensibility, and the intentions for the treatment of the film they imagine can be demonstrated. Assessors are interested to understand the unique way the director perceives the visualisation of the story. Carefully chosen images can assist the reader to better imagine the story from the director's perspective. It is important that the images reinforce or echo what the director wrote in their summary. Directors are encouraged to choose imagery that has a 'visual cohesion' rather than a mishmash of styles. The cohesion might be a combination of the framing, composition, lighting, and colour of the shots. The five shots should cover the beginning, middle and end of the story.

And it's important that images are cinematic. That is the emotional, captivating quality of cinema that is unique to the medium; use of light, shadow, colour, framing and composition. The images are requested in landscape (horizontal) format, which mirrors the proportion of a screen format.

5 image PDF



Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One:

Producer

Producer's Summary

A summary showing the producer's *intentions* in key areas with a few sentences in two key areas:

1. The producer's plans for how they will achieve the aspirations of the script and story e.g. how the producer is going to 'make it happen'? Are you bringing specific team members to the production who can help? Great deals? Support or mentoring from experienced filmmakers?

2. A brief outline of the producer's plans and contingencies for any major challenges they anticipate in making the film at this budget level – including finance. What the producer covers should be key to the specific story and while not expecting producers to cover every point, some things to think about and possibly acknowledge in the summary could be: casting, rehearsal, support for cast, support for the director to elicit performance, key props, costume, makeup, locations and travel. Intentions for completing stunts or special or visual effects. Any specific on-screen intimacy or key Health and Safety aspects.

If the overall budget intended is above the \$15,000 grant, the producer must also indicate how they intend to find the additional finance e.g. additional grant, donation, crowd funding or in-kind resources that assist the production to be made.

If you have applied for a Kōpere Hou - Fresh Shorts grant for this project before, your producer's summary should set out in a couple of sentences what progress you have made since your last application. What aspects of the script have been developed? Has more research or consultation been undertaken? Are there new team members to support this version?

300 words maximum



Whiringa Tuatahi - Stage One:

Team

Key People Bios

Film/ screen focused bio and transferable skills for those holding the creative triangle roles: writer, director, producer. It's useful to include information that lets assessors know you have the industry or life experience and skills to make the film you've proposed.

250 words maximum per person

If applicable, you may include a filmography list of films each person has made in their role (plays, VR/AR and commercials can be included in this list). If all your team don't have a filmography - don't fret! This is *Fresh Shorts* a place for new makers to apply.

Covid-19 considerations

Please note there may be additional considerations around Covid-19 and we may ask you to speak to these if you are shortlisted for funding. Script to Screen may also get in touch with each shortlisted team if we require further information from you, in this regard.

Other NZFC financing or support

Please list any other projects you, as the applicant, have in active development with the NZFC. If there are any outstanding reports or deliverables relating to those other projects or any other NZFC grants, loans or equity, they should be delivered before, or alongside, this application. Note that you may be considered ineligible for funding if you have outstanding reports or deliverables or you are in breach of any contract with the NZFC. To be accountable for the taxpayers' money entrusted to the NZFC, the organisation must be able to verify what has happened as a result of any loan or grant.



What happens to your Whiringa Tuatahi – Stage One application

Applications are assessed by industry readers, who will create a shortlist of 18 projects that fit the criteria and best reflect the intentions of the scheme. This shortlist will be approved by NZFC staff.

All 18 shortlisted teams will be notified and invited to submit a full **Whiringa Tuarua - Stage Two** application by 11 January 2021. A funding panel made up of staff from Script to Screen and the NZFC will assess the **Whiringa Tuarua - Stage Two** application submissions. This panel will then make a recommendation to the NZFC CEO and Head of Talent Development for up to six films be approved for funding.

Following this, **Te Whiringa Toa – the successful teams** will attend a two-day workshop and be matched with an appropriate experienced industry practitioner and mentored over a six-week period to further develop the scripts to 'shoot ready'.

Details regarding how the mentorships will be run will be discussed with successful teams and teams will be provided with feedback and criteria for 'shoot ready'.

A final reminder that if you have any questions please contact the Fresh Shorts Facilitator at Script to Screen: FreshShorts@script-to-screen.co.nz or ph: 09 360 5400.

