



New Zealand
FILM COMMISSION



Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga

Documentary Development Fund

He Aratohu mā ngā Kaitono Guidelines for Applicants

December 2023

Īmēra mai, mēnā he pātai āu

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



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- A detailed list of documentation required to make an application can be found in the [Documentary Development Fund Submission Checklist](#)



KUPU WHAKATAKI - INTRODUCTION

The Documentary Development Fund (DDF) supports the development of documentary films that have the potential to become compelling cinematic releases.

Key Objectives of the DDF are to:

- Support the development of documentary feature films that have the potential to be high impact, authentic and culturally significant.
- Facilitate dynamic pathways for outstanding filmmaking talent with the experience and ability to advance documentaries towards production.

You can apply for non-recoupable grants of up to \$20,000 per application and can apply more than once per project, up to a total amount of \$40,000 development funding per project.

The \$40,000 cap includes all NZFC funded early development to date, such as Boost project funding, previous Documentary Development Grants or Documentary Development Loans, International Co-Development Funding, Premium Fund Development.

Given the more fluid nature of documentary development, this funding can support both early and advanced development at any application stage.



KO WAI KA ĀHEI KI TE TONO - WHO CAN APPLY?

The applicant must either be the project's:

- lead producer; or
- writer, director, or writer/director.

To be eligible for the DDF, the applicant must:

- be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident;
- hold or have the option to hold the intellectual property rights required to develop, produce and distribute the project. Read the [Chain of Title information sheet](#) for more detail;

The applicant can either apply as:

- an individual; or
- a company.

If applying on behalf of a company, the individual lead applicant must be a director of the company and it must be a New Zealand company; that is, the company must be incorporated and carrying out business in New Zealand, and its central management and/ or control must be held by New Zealand citizens or permanent residents.

The project must:

- have significant New Zealand content in accordance with section 18 of the New Zealand Film Commission Act 1978. (Read the [New Zealand Content Information Sheet](#) for more details).
- be intended to be a feature length documentary (minimum 80mins duration)
- have a director attached (if the lead applicant is not the director or writer/director)



NGĀ ĀHEINGA KAUPAPA – KEY CONDITIONS

Experience threshold for lead applicants - writer, writer/director, or director

Writers, writer/directors, and directors must meet the DDF experience threshold below to be eligible to apply as the lead applicant. If the experience threshold is met, they can apply for the first tranche of DDF up to \$20,000 as the lead applicant without a producer attached to the project. Writers, writer/directors, and directors are not eligible to apply for DDF of above \$20,000.

If the writer, writer/director, or director of a project does not meet the experience threshold they can still be part of a team applying to DDF, but the project must have a producer attached and the producer must be the lead applicant.

Writers and writer/directors must have a “written by” credit and directors must have a “directed by” credit for:


- a scripted or documentary feature film (minimum duration 80mins), released theatrically and/or commissioned by a commercial online platform.

Or

- a minimum cumulative 80mins scripted/factual/documentary content in any of the following, or in combination:
 - single episode programme(s) of at least 52 minutes in length (screened primetime free-to-air or on a commercial online platform)
 - series (individual credited episode either screened primetime free-to-air or on a commercial online platform)
 - short film(s) each selected and screened at a significant international film festival and/or one of the New Zealand film festivals listed (see Glossary)
 - commissioned online content screened on a commercial platform.

Credits in these formats will not be considered for the Experience threshold:

- advertising programmes, commercials or corporate productions
- news, current affairs programmes, lifestyle and reality TV
- panel programme, or a programme of a like nature
- productions of a public event or live event, including sports events, stage plays, music concerts, dance performances or comedy shows

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- pornography
 - training programmes
 - interactive and gaming projects
 - content made exclusively for video sharing websites or social media

Experience threshold for lead applicants - producers

There is no experience threshold for producers to be eligible to apply as the lead applicant. Producers can apply for DDF up to the total \$40,000 cap.

The overall experience of the team will be considered as part of the competitive assessment process.

General conditions

- You must have, or can obtain, all necessary rights in the project (including the intellectual property rights) needed to develop, produce and exploit the project (see NZFC Chain Of Title Information Sheet). The NZFC does not review Chain of Title at Documentary Development stage, however the NZFC reserves the right to review and approve your chain of title documentation before any payment is made.
- Should your project go into production, the NZFC allows its DDF funding to constitute producer or individual equity in the finance plan.
- Please note that by submitting your application, you acknowledge and agree that your application may be reviewed by external assessors, and you also accept that the identity of any assessor(s) used to assess your application will be kept strictly confidential to the NZFC and will not be released.
- The NZFC will use reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the information provided by the applicant. Please note that any information you provide to the NZFC is subject to Official Information Act 1982 (“OIA”) requests. In processing a request under the OIA, the NZFC may consult with the relevant applicant prior to issuing a response to the request.

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- Any statistical or demographic information provided as part of your application is not made available to external assessors. The data collected is aggregated and used only in meeting the NZFC's reporting requirements.
 - If your project is intending to be an official co-production, it must have an experienced producer who is a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident. Funding is only provided for New Zealand-based or New Zealand-specific development costs. Find out more about official co-productions on our website www.nzfilm.co.nz/international-productions/co-productions.
 - If you already have an international co-producer(s) attached to your feature film project from a New Zealand's official co-production treaty partner(s), and you are seeking matched development funding for that project, then you may wish to consider applying to the [International Co-Development Fund](#).
 - If your application is successful, you will be required to warrant that the production will comply with all current health and safety laws, regulations, and protocols.
 - If the project has been declined at one round of DDF, you cannot apply to the round that follows. All resubmissions must demonstrate that the project has been substantially reworked.
 - If the project has been declined twice at DDF it cannot be resubmitted unless the applicant is different from the original lead applicant.
 - Because grants are subject to GST, if you are GST registered, GST will be added to the grant when it is paid.
 - It is best practice for the applicant to have a limited liability company that is incorporated and carrying out business in New Zealand, though at the development stage this does not need to be a SPV (special purpose vehicle).
 - While receiving NZFC Development Funding recognises the potential of your project, it does not commit NZFC to any future financing. Your project does not have to have been awarded NZFC Development Funding for it to be eligible for NZFC Production Financing.



RAUTAKI MĀORI

Productions that include **Māori content** (see Glossary) must demonstrate involvement of Māori in the project, and to provide details of this in the application.

Productions with Māori content will be required to:

- have engaged early with secured advisor/s and or creatives with the cultural competency, te reo me ona tikanga (Māori language and cultural practices), and authority to lead and assure the Māori content as part of or alongside the creative team
- reflect Māori representation in the creative team commensurate to the level of Māori content and capacity required for the production
- demonstrate as a production a clear partnership of engagement with, or inclusion of, Māori creative/s, Māori advisor/s and where applicable, hapū and/or Iwi across the production to ensure genuine consultation and where necessary, permission for use
- demonstrate how the production will benefit the Māori filmmaking industry or local communities through the narrative or production in those regions or local tribal communities

As a consideration, projects with significant Māori content would have a **higher proportion of key creative roles** leading the project (e.g. producer, director, script writer, animation director).

As part of partnership arrangements that reflect Te Tiriti o Waitangi, NZFC will consider intellectual property ('IP') sharing structures which speak to demonstrating a commitment to capacity and capability building to achieve mutually agreed aspirations as informed by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori.

For queries regarding Te Rautaki Māori contact rautaki@nzfilm.co.nz



NGĀ MEA KA TAEA E KOE TE TONO – WHAT CAN YOU APPLY FOR?

You can apply for actual and reasonable costs of developing your documentary :

- Writer/s fees (New Zealand writers only) see [New Zealand Writers Guild rates](#) for a guide
- Producer or lead applicant fees (typically no more than 10% of the award)
- Director fees (on projects where the writer is also the director you should not include a separate fee)
- Researcher fees and research costs including travel
- Project-related consultancy fees such story and/or cultural consultants
- Creation of sample footage/interviews/teaser
- Legal costs including extensions to rights and options costs
- Direct project-related overheads such as printing, courier, or phone
- Packaging costs including market attendance

What you cannot apply for:

- Non-New Zealander 'above the line' (producer, writer, director) fees
- Initial option payments
- Costs already incurred (retrospective)
- Short film development
- Scripted feature development
- Development of programmes primarily intended for television broadcast
- Development of films intended to run at a duration of less than 80 minutes
- Capital works, acquisition, or equipment purchases
- Projects that are part of formal academic assessment;
- Advertising programmes, commercials, news, or current affairs programmes
- Productions of a public event or live event, including sports events, stage plays, music concerts, dance performances or comedy show

WHAKARITENGA TONO - APPLICATION PROCESS

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Applications for DDF are considered in rounds, with deadlines approximately every 10-11 weeks

You must apply via the NZFC online application portal
<https://funding.nzfilm.co.nz>

ELIGIBILITY

Once your application is received, it will be checked for eligibility in line with these guidelines. If the NZFC determines that your application does not meet requirements it will be deemed ineligible.

Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible.

ASSESSMENT

If your application passes the eligibility stage, your application will be assessed by NZFC staff and external assessors.

Applications will be assessed by the NZFC against the objectives of DDF.

DECISION

DDF recommendations are made by Development Executives, taking into account assessments from external assessors.

Final decisions are made by the Head of Development and Production and the Chief Executive Officer.

NZFC aims to notify applicants as to the outcome of their application within 8 weeks of the application deadline. In all cases the decision made by the NZFC is final.



TIKANGA AROMATAWAI – ASSESSMENT

Applications will be assessed against the applicant and content eligibility criteria (as outlined in these Guidelines and the relevant provisions of the [NZFC Terms of Trade](#) as applicable). Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

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.

All eligible applications will then be assessed by the NZFC against the Key Objectives of DDF. Considerations taken into account are noted in the table below.

The NZFC may engage External Assessors, including those with appropriate cultural knowledge and/or experience associated with an under-represented community, to provide valuable objective insights (“**Cultural Assessor**”).

For the current list of External Assessors and Cultural Assessors, please visit the NZFC [website](#).

If you feel you have a **Conflict of Interest** (see Glossary) with any of our External Assessors or Cultural Assessors, you must disclose this in your application to assist the NZFC in ensuring fair and impartial assessments are given for all eligible applications. Applicants should disclose if an External Assessor has a financial interest in the film; is a spouse, partner, family member or close friend of any of the creatives attached to the film, or if they have worked with any of the creatives in the past 90 days.

To provide meaningful evaluation, External Assessors will be provided with consideration areas to elicit the perspective they can provide.

They will also be asked to provide written feedback relevant to their expertise which may be based on some of these considerations. They will also be asked to provide an overall recommendation.

Therefore, the written feedback may not directly reflect the totality of the Objectives judged on but are elements that the external assessors will be considering when assessing the projects.



OBJECTIVES	WHAT WILL BE CONSIDERED
Support the development of documentaries that have the potential to be high impact, authentic and culturally significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengths and weaknesses of the treatment/story. Is the writing and/or visual materials well-executed to deliver on the promise of the idea? Does the writer or director's voice jump out as original and exciting?• The idea's strength, distinctiveness, originality, dramatic potential, and its potential to engage emotionally. Does the logline express the idea succinctly?• Is the project culturally significant (see Glossary)? If applicable, can the project demonstrate that they have in place appropriate frameworks and assurances for engagement with Māori stories (refer to NZFC's Te Rautaki Māori)?• If applicable, does the film promote the authentic representation of Māori in characters, stories, places, history and culture (refer to NZFC's Te Rautaki Māori)?
Facilitate dynamic pathways for outstanding filmmaking talent with the experience and ability to advance the project towards production.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the development budget and timeline realistic and relative to the audience?• Does the team/applicant have the experience needed to advance the project towards production, deliver creatively and show knowledge of their audience internationally and domestically?• Does the project have the potential to attract audiences to New Zealand films?• Does the project have the potential to achieve critical acclaim?• Does the project have the potential to advance skills and elevate careers?• If the project contains Māori content is Māori representation and leadership commensurate to the level of Māori content and capacity required for the production through to release (refer to NZFC's Te Rautaki Māori)?



TE HUARAHĪ WHAKAMUA - NEXT STEPS

Funding Decision

In making a funding decision, the Head of Development and Production and the Chief Executive Officer will use their discretion to ensure, as much as possible, that the decisions best support the objectives of the fund.

Therefore, it does not necessarily follow that the highest individually ranked applications will be successful, as consideration must be given to how applications best meet the overarching objectives of DDF.

Decisions will be consistent with these guidelines and the New Zealand Film Commission Act 1978 (NZFC Act). Funding is discretionary and all decisions are final.

- All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application.
- If your application is successful, you will be invited to enter a Grant Funding Agreement (**Agreement**) with the NZFC.
- The Agreement will outline the obligations and conditions of the grant, including regular reporting deadlines and deliverables. No payments will be made until you have agreed to the terms and conditions and the Agreement has been fully executed.
- You will be provided with feedback for the next draft of your project.
- You must submit deliverables required under the Agreement in accordance with the Agreement. This is usually within six months from the date the Agreement is signed.

Deliverables may include revised treatment, revised logline and synopsis, a cost report on expenditure, and a producer report including your next stage development plan.



KUPUTAKA - GLOSSARY

Conflict of Interest: A conflict of interest may exist when an External Assessor has a personal interest with the applicant, other creatives, or the film itself. Personal interests can be financial or relate to family, friends, and associates. A conflict of interest can be an actual conflict, a perceived conflict (a situation that others might see as a conflict), or a potential conflict (a situation that while not an actual or perceived conflict right now, could eventuate into an actual conflict).

Culturally Significant Content: Culturally significant films and screen stories are those that New Zealand audiences will recognise as reflecting New Zealand identity and culture. Minority co-productions set in another country are unlikely to meet these criteria. The NZFC has a target of 80% of all long form screen stories funded over a three-year timeframe being culturally significant.

Māori Content is anything sourced and generated from a Māori world view, Te Ao Māori - including but not limited to:

- Māori kupu, proverbs, expression of language, dialect, genealogical information, naming conventions;
- reference to or inclusion of Māori names, people, places, characters, protocols;
- anything based on Māori history, stories, myths & legends, songs, dance, cultural expressions that may or may not be in public domain;
- Toi Māori – art, carving, tā moko, raranga, visual arts, games, both traditional and modern cultural expressions;
- Taonga Māori - te reo, landmarks, whakapapa, photographs, heirlooms, tribal landmarks, museum artefacts, flora and fauna – native trees, birds, taonga species;
- use of or reference to specific whānau, hapu, Iwi tribal land, waterways, mountains, social systems and structures;
- Mātauranga Māori - anything that is sourced in the wide context of Māori knowledge, its expression and cultural practice.

Significant International Film Festival: Annecy, Cannes, Berlin, Busan, Doc Edge, HIFF, IDFA, ImagineNATIVE, London, Sundance, SXSW, Tokyo, Toronto, Venice, and any Academy Award accredited film festival.

Selected New Zealand Film Festivals: Māoriland, NZIFF, Rotorua Indigenous Film Festival, Show Me Shorts, Wairoa Film Festival, and any Academy Award accredited film festival.

Te Rautaki Māori

Te Rautaki Māori is the Māori Strategy of NZFC and is in place to ensure responsible cultural representation is held by Māori with relevant experience or authority for the Māori content within a story or project. To have clear accountability, permission and leadership of the protocols, approach, and inclusion of cultural practice or tikanga elements in the project or story; and to elevate the capacity and capability of Māori creatives, cast, crew, and advisors as an asset and critical to making great films with Māori content. For queries regarding Te Rautaki Māori contact rautaki@nzfilm.co.nz

CHANGE LOG: Updated Dec 2023 to restructure for clarity and the following changes:

Assessment	Decision maker to be both HOD and CEO.
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CHANGE LOG: Updated April 2022 to restructure for clarity and the following changes:

Eligibility	No longer a requirement to have a producer attached for first tranche up to \$20,000. Applicant can either be producer or writer, writer/director, director if the DDF Experience Threshold is met.
What can you apply for?	DDF no longer differentiates between “early” and “advanced” development.
Director attachment	It is a requirement to have a director attached (if the lead applicant is not the director or writer/director).
Team vision	Producer or lead applicant overview is mandatory. Director’s vision is mandatory. Development notes are mandatory.
Rights – Chain of title	The lead applicant (previously lead producer) must have, or can obtain, all necessary rights in the project (including the intellectual property rights) needed to develop, produce and exploit the project.
Ability to use EDF as individual equity	Should your project go into production, NZFC allows DDF funding to constitute producer or individual equity in the finance plan.
Repeat applications	If the project has been declined once at DDF you must wait one further funding rounds before resubmitting a DDF application. If the project has been declined twice at DDF it cannot be resubmitted unless the applicant is different from the original lead applicant.
Assessment	Key objectives and assessment process have been updated and clarified.