



Early 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 [**EARLY DEVELOPMENT FUND SUBMISSION CHECKLIST**](#).



KUPU WHAKATAKI - INTRODUCTION

The Early Development Fund (EDF) supports the development of scripts that have the potential to make great New Zealand feature films.

The Key Objectives of the EDF are to:

- Support the development of scripted 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 feature films towards production.

You can apply for non-recoupable grants of up to \$25,000 per application and can apply more than once per project, up to a total amount of \$60,000 funding per project.

The \$60,000 cap includes all NZFC funded early development to date, such as Boost project funding, Seed and Seed Advanced, previous Early Development Grants or Early Development Loans, International Co-Development Funding, Premium Fund Development and Blacklist.

This fund is primarily focused on early development of scripts. If you have a market ready script and are looking for funding for packaging, then you may be eligible for an [Advanced Development Fund](#) Grant.

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

The individual lead applicant must be identified in the application as either the project's:

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

The lead applicant (either as individual or representing a company) 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;

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 either 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 scripted feature length film (minimum 80mins duration)



NGĀ ĀHEINGA KAUPAPA – KEY CONDITIONS

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

Writers, writer/directors and directors must meet the EDF 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 EDF up to \$25,000 as the lead applicant without a producer attached to the project. Writers, writer/directors and directors are not eligible to apply for EDF of above \$25,000.

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

And/or

- a minimum cumulative 80mins scripted 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 EDF up to the total \$60,000 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 Early 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 EDF 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 EDF, 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 EDF 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 the actual and reasonable costs of developing your project:

- Writer/s fees (New Zealand writers only) see the [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)
- Project related consultancy fees such as story and cultural consultants
- Script-related research costs including limited travel costs (for example where all team members do not live in the same city)
- Legal costs including extensions to rights and options
- Direct script and project-related overheads such as printing, couriers, phone, and scripting related software

What you cannot apply for:

- Non-New Zealander 'above the line' (producer, writer, director) fees
- Initial option payments
- Costs already incurred (retrospective)
- Treatment writing
- Short film development
- Documentary development (see our Documentary Development Fund)
- Development of programmes primarily intended for television broadcast
- Development of a film intended to run at a duration of less than 80 minutes
- Capital works or acquisitions 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 shows

WHAKARITENGA TONO - APPLICATION PROCESS

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Applications for EDF 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 against the assessment criteria set out in these guidelines.



DECISION

EDF 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 of 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 EDF. 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 screen stories that have the potential to be high impact, authentic and culturally significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengths and weaknesses of the script. Is the writing well-executed to deliver on the promise of the idea? Does the writer or director's voice jump out as original and exciting?• 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 feature film 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 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 HUARAHI 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 EDF.

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 script, revised logline and synopsis, a cost report on expenditure, and a lead applicant 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 the 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. Change to notification process and advice to applicant.
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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 of funding up to \$25,000. Applicant can either be producer or writer, writer/director, director if the EDF Experience Threshold is met.
Team vision	Producer or lead applicant overview is mandatory. Writer’s notes are mandatory. Director’s vision is optional.
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 EDF funding to constitute producer or individual equity in the finance plan.
Repeat applications	If the project has been declined once at EDF you must wait two further funding rounds before resubmitting an EDF application. If the project has been declined twice at EDF 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.