



New Zealand
FILM COMMISSION



Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga

HE KAUAHI CATALYST FUND

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

He Aratohu mā ngā Kaitono

September 2025

He kauahi – creating the spark to ignite the flame

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. He Kauahi Catalyst Funding supports filmmakers to make exceptional short films. This Fund is open to narrative short films for the big screen, including animation.

Remember, the Fund is contestable, so tell us why you need to make this short film project now, and what you hope its impact will be. We want to know that you have a clear idea of the kind of short film you want to make. The key objectives of He Kauahi Catalyst are:

- **Invest in talent** - by supporting the progression of New Zealand writers, directors, and producers through creating exceptional short films.
- **Critical** – the potential for 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, film methodologies, audience experiences and/or filmmaker talent.

These guidelines are intended to help you deliver the strongest application possible. Please note we cannot read your scripts or applications prior to submission. You may contact development@nzfilm.co.nz if you have any questions.

WHO CAN APPLY

You are eligible to apply for this Fund if you are:

- a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident; **and**
- the owner of the rights in your short film project; **and** a writer, director and/or producer who has 80-minutes of cumulative produced 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 Show Me Shorts; **or**
 - an experienced practitioner who can provide evidence of significant success in a related narrative discipline (e.g. published novelist, esteemed playwright); **and**

- your short film project:
 - is a narrative short film (which includes animated short films);
 - is not in an episode or documentary format; **and**
 - has significant New Zealand content. Please read the [New Zealand content information](#) sheet for more detail; **and**
- you have no overdue deliverables to the NZFC, **and**
- where applicable, you have reviewed and met the requirements of Te Rautaki Māori in regards to Māori Content.

Any individual director may only be attached to **one** application per funding round.

Māori Content

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

Īmēra mai, mēnā he pātai āu. For Māori content queries, please email development@nzfilm.co.nz to arrange a discussion.

WHAT THIS FUND CAN SUPPORT

You may apply for a grant of up to \$90,000 to produce and deliver your short film.

Retrospective applications will not be considered; that is, you cannot apply for Funding to cover costs you have already incurred.


MATERIALS YOU MUST SUBMIT

For animated short film -

- You should submit any materials that convey the story and the world of the film that can include character design, background sketches, world building sketches, animatics and storyboards.

All applications -

- A short film script, in standard formatting. (**OPTIONAL for animation** – you may instead submit a story outline that lays out the plot, including the characters' journeys. Please also include sample dialogue).
- A proposal that articulates the following:
 - Logline
 - Synopsis
 - Genre
 - Why are you the right person or team to tell this story, why do you want to tell this story and why is now the right time to tell it?
 - Director's treatment – the techniques and elements the director intends to use through casting, shooting, art department, sound design, music, editing etc. that will bring this script or story to life as a cinematic piece. Explain how you will achieve this film and include visual references.

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- Link to director's best work – Please ensure the password is provided (if required)
 - Producer statement - producer's statement for the proposed short film indicating any key aspirations and any major challenges to making the film at this budget level. Address any elements that may require particular planning such as Health and Safety and/or accessibility requirements.
 - Key Creatives (writer, director, producer) - bios
 - (Optional) Collaborators – Bios - You can also list anyone else involved in the project that is not a producer, writer, director or consultant.
 - Project history – A brief history of the short film project and its development.

Budget and schedule

- A production budget top-sheet and full production budget for the short film, including provision for insurance and legal costs.
- A proposed production schedule for all relevant stages leading up to and including delivery of the short film.

Key personnel

- Bios for the key personnel attached to the short film, including evidence of screen experience, previous work or website.
- OPTIONAL: Details of any key cast and HODs if attached to the short film.

HOW TO APPLY

- Submit your application using NZFC's [application portal](#).
- Please see the NZFC website for application deadlines.
- If you have a feature film at an advanced stage of development with NZFC, we may consider an application outside our usual funding rounds.

Please note there is an estimated six to eight-week turnaround for decisions from receipt of an eligible application.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA


We give priority to short films that contribute to all or some of our strategic objectives:

- the potential to be **creatively excellent**.
- the development of **authentic and diverse** narratives that are **uniquely of Aotearoa**.
- supporting capability development with **diversity, equity and inclusion** at the core.

If your short film 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 short film project meets these criteria, we ask some or all of the following questions:



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- Does the director have a distinctive voice / vision?
 - Does the work have thematic depth? Will the short film have something relevant to say about who, where and when we are in the world?
 - Is the script well crafted?
 - Does the writer / director 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 their vision?
 - Does the team have a clear achievable plan (including budget) for production?

We will assess each application based on these criteria, the materials provided, your team, and the funding availability at the time you apply.

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

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- Each Funding application is assessed by our Funding Team and at least one external, experienced industry practitioner.
- Our decision to allocate Funding is discretionary. Our decision is final.
- We will notify you in writing of the outcome of your application. The estimated turnaround for a decision is six to eight weeks from receipt of an eligible application.
- Any individual writer, director or producer may only be attached to one application per Funding round.
- If an application is declined, a subsequent application for the same short film project can be made only if the application materials have changed significantly. Information about how the project has changed must be included in the subsequent application.
- If two successive applications for Funding for the same short film project are declined, no further applications will be accepted 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 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