

Round Tahī Information for Funding Applicants

23 April 2025

A. Purpose

The following information is for applicants planning to submit a funding application for Round Tahī, the first funding round of the 2025/26 financial year. This round covers: Scripted, Non-fiction, and Content Development.

In this round we will also consider applications for:

- **Capability** - Industry skills and training initiatives
- **Discoverability** - Industry events and awards

It is important to note that the funding allocations proposed for this round are based on our currently anticipated annual baseline budget. However, these allocations will be subject to review once we have had official confirmation of our funding for 2025/26.

B. Introduction

NZ On Air's funding strategy is founded on core public media principles. We do this by funding **valued, diverse** and **discoverable** content that inspires, engages and entertains local audiences.

Please refer to our [Investment Strategy](#) for more information about our funding priorities. The funding round deadlines for financial year 2025/26 are [here](#).

We also encourage you to review our [2025-26 Funding Priorities: Advance Planning Guide for Scripted and Non-fiction content](#) to better understand our priorities for the upcoming year.

C. Round Tahī Priorities – Audiences and Content Types

As this is the first funding round of the year, we're open to applications across the following range of target audiences and content genres: **Drama, Comedy, Documentary and General Factual, Children, Youth, Podcasts, Content Development, Capability and Discoverability**.

Please note that we will **not** be considering journalism applications into this round and instead will seek these submissions in Round Rua.

We invite projects catering to both general and priority¹ audiences. We remain committed to public media's core mission of representing diverse voices and perspectives and we believe that compelling, representative content can achieve significant audience reach through smart, targeted distribution strategies. In this funding round, we are particularly interested in projects that demonstrate how they

¹ For NZ On Air's priority audiences, see the introduction to our [Investment Strategy](#) (page 2).

can both serve specific communities authentically **and** connect with broader audiences, especially given the economic challenges currently facing the sector. We encourage applicants to show how their innovative approaches to content creation and distribution can help public media thrive in this environment.

We require all submitted projects to have confirmed support from a recognised local platform, unless yours is a qualified rangatahi/youth project as outlined below. We will give priority to projects that have a clear and considered distribution plan to ensure that the target audience is reached.

Non-fiction

Approximately \$9m has been allocated for Non-fiction projects in this round.

We will accept Non-fiction applications for screen content, with priority given to broad-reach general factual series that feature compelling public media themes. We will also consider applications for documentaries, podcasts, national event coverage, comedy panel shows, unscripted comedy shows, reality shows and partial financing of feature films supported by NZFC.

In response to challenging market conditions for local productions, we're prioritising investment in larger-scale Non-fiction projects (over \$500,000) that offer high production values and create significant employment opportunities. These projects may include gap-financing from NZ On Air for the NZ Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR).

Applications for reality shows will be accepted in this round only. We will prioritise local formats that intend to access NZSPR but an application with clear local audience appeal, a strong business case, large platform contribution and/or demonstrable public media merit, may be considered. We expect to fund an extremely limited number of these shows, if any.

We will consider Non-fiction applications with international intellectual property, but priority will be given to local formats. This prioritisation stems from our belief that investing in local IP will foster the potential of our domestic sector.

For large-scale projects, we encourage opportunities for emerging practitioners to be attached in meaningful, paid roles that contribute to their skill and craft development.

Scripted

Approximately \$9m has been allocated for Scripted projects in this round.

For this round, we are particularly seeking applications for larger-scale series projects that require \$1m-\$3m (Tier 1 or Tier 2). We especially welcome well-developed projects intending to access the NZSPR.

Please note: Any project seeking over \$3m requires prior approval from the Associate Head of Funding or Head of Funding before submission and is expected to present an exceptionally strong creative vision and business case.

We will accept Scripted applications for screen, with priority given to projects intended for digital-first release, followed by potential secondary or simultaneous linear release where applicable.

Drama, comedy, children's content, and partial financing of feature films supported by NZFC are all eligible.

While we acknowledge the challenging economic market conditions affecting the industry, we expect platforms to demonstrate meaningful commitment to these larger-scale projects through appropriate licence fees that reflect the complex multi-party financing often required to get such productions off the ground.

Music/Sync Licensing for Scripted Projects

In this round, we welcome applications from Scripted projects that plan to incorporate at least 80% local music (both track licensing and composition) into their productions. Your application should detail how you intend to use local music to elevate your project.

You can indicate in your application that you intend to use local music in your production, and you should allocate the appropriate amount for this in your budget, including a music supervisor role if applicable.

Once approved, sync licensing costs will be ringfenced and cannot be reallocated for any other purpose within your production's budget.

At present, sync licensing funding requests for Non-fiction projects are not eligible due to funding constraints. We will not accept applications for sync licensing for projects that have previously been granted production funding.

NZ Screen Production Rebate Projects (NZSPR)

Please read our [NZSPR guidelines document](#) carefully to understand our priorities and requirements.

We welcome applications from both Scripted and Non-fiction productions seeking access to the NZSPR. However, we are seeking to be 'last-in' funders, providing the final piece of the finance plan to ensure projects can proceed promptly. We are unlikely to prioritise 'first-in' funding for projects seeking access to the NZSPR.

We will give preference to applications that include firm letters of offer that support the finance plan. Applications that have finance plan gaps will be given lower priority.

If you have received an offer of funding for a NZSPR production that is yet to contract with us, you may not apply for another NZSPR project in this round.

We expect our contribution to NZSPR projects to be in the range of \$2.5m - \$3m. Projects requesting a higher amount will require prior approval from the Associate Head of Funding or Head of Funding. Such requests will be evaluated based on how compelling the cultural value case is, as outlined in the investment principles on page 15 of our [Investment Strategy](#), the strength of the business case and the overall mix of the round.

Content Development

The round is open to content development applications with platform support and co-investment.

We will fund an extremely limited amount of development in this round.

We recognise the diverse needs of projects and creators seeking development funding and encourage applicants to design - in partnership with their supporting platform - a tailored development process that effectively prepares their project for production.

In response to our evolving role in premium scripted series production, we're adapting our development funding approach. For exceptional projects with strong platform backing and clear creative vision, we may fund multiple development phases simultaneously, enabling continuity for writing teams and reducing delays between stages.

Content development applications will be assessed against our core criteria: valued, diverse and discoverable. Read the [assessment criteria here](#).

Tamariki / Children

Approximately \$4m has been allocated for tamariki content in this round.

We remain deeply committed to funding quality content that connects with young audiences across Aotearoa New Zealand. In this round, we welcome applications for Scripted and Non-fiction children's projects as well as games.

Applications will ideally be tailored for multiple platforms, with well-defined strategies for engaging the target audience. Unless an exemption has been granted by a Co-Head of Funding, projects must secure a local platform for content distribution, either as the primary platform or as a secondary option. YouTube is acceptable as a primary or secondary platform, alongside an established local platform. Please review our [tamariki strategy](#) for more detail.

We also remain committed to supporting ambitious children's projects with NZSPR goals. We welcome production-ready projects that require last-in funding of up to \$2.5m.

Rangatahi / Youth

Approximately \$1.5m has been allocated for rangatahi content in this round.

[Our *Within My Reach* strategy](#) aims to fund bold, innovative local content for 15-24-year-old audiences on platforms where they naturally engage.

While we encourage local platform support, projects will ideally have a multi-platform distribution strategy. We are willing to consider projects without platform support, but these will need clear alternative arrangements in place to provide the legal and creative oversight that commissioning platforms typically bring and well-defined distribution and marketing plans at submission.

In recognition of the need to engage and sustain audiences on YouTube, we are willing to consider projects that require a high volume of content over an extended period.

If you submit an application for a rangatahi project without a local platform attached, your application must articulate robust plans to address the following requirements as well as meeting all our usual funding criteria:

Legal compliance

- How will you ensure that the content you create meets broadcast compliance standards?
- What is the process you will put your content through to provide assurance it is legally compliant prior to release? Who will you partner with to achieve this?

Creative oversight

- Will you have a suitable third-party attached to your project who will be able to provide appropriate creative and editorial oversight in the absence of a platform commissioner?
- This person should be willing and able to ensure that your project is delivered in line with its original creative objectives and to a high standard. They may be attached as an Executive Producer and should have suitable credentials and experience to fulfil this role.

Key Requirements:

- Free access for Aotearoa New Zealand audiences.
- Horizontal release strategy across multiple platforms (not primarily TikTok).
- Aotearoa New Zealand audience engagement data reporting.

We're Seeking:

- Bold concepts with distinctive voices.
- Bite-sized, cross-platform content.
- Youth-created content (key personnel aged 18-34 prioritised).
- Breakthrough ideas with potential social currency.
- Research-informed projects on youth media habits.
- Strategic understanding of platform algorithms and marketing.

Industry Development and Capability Support

In this round, we will accept Capability and Discoverability funding applications for:

- Industry capability – skills and training initiatives.
- Discoverability – industry events and awards support.

If you plan to make an application, we encourage you to discuss it with Glenn Usmar at glenn@nzonair.govt.nz before submitting your application.

Marketing and Publicity

At a minimum, we expect all applications to include budget lines for promotion and marketing asset creation.

You may allocate a proportion of your production budget to marketing (paid media promotion and publicity costs). We are looking for applications to demonstrate an understanding of effective call-to-action marketing campaigns and to indicate how this pūtea will be spent. For funded projects, the budget lines dedicated to marketing costs will be ringfenced and will not be able to be used for other parts of your production.

Additionally, NZ On Air will support selected projects with a Discoverability marketing campaign. When you complete your application form, you can indicate that you would like your project to be considered

for a discoverability marketing campaign – either one that you run yourself or one that may be planned and implemented by our media partner, Contagion. Please refer to our [Discoverability Guidelines](#) for more information.

If you would like to run your own discoverability marketing campaign, you will need to provide a marketing plan and budget with your funding application, detailing how the pūtea will be used and clear evidence that your team has the skills to deliver the campaign. A very small number of applications will be allocated up to \$50k in ringfenced marketing funding to run their own campaign

D. Timeline

24 April 2025

Applicant information webinar.

A webinar will be held on Zoom on **24 April** from 3-4pm to answer questions relating to Round Tahi.

To register, email funding@nzonair.govt.nz.

1 May 2025

Funding round opens.

All applications must be made through our [NZ On Air Portal](#)

Applications not submitted through this system will not be accepted.

22 May 2025, 4pm

Application deadline. Round closes.

Late applications will not be considered. In very exceptional circumstances, for time-sensitive projects agreed prior by a Co-Head of Funding, we may consider an out-of-time application.

1 August 2025

Decisions confirmed, applicants notified.

This date may be extended at NZ On Air's sole discretion.

E. Application Limits

To address the rising demand for our funding, and the consequent increase in declined applications (with an average decline rate of approximately 70% year-on-year), we are maintaining application limits per round for both producers/production companies and platforms.

Producers/production companies are limited to a maximum of four applications, with a maximum of two applications per category (Scripted, Non-fiction, Content Development, Industry Capability, Discoverability).

Platforms, on the other hand, can submit up to 10 applications per round, without any restrictions per category within that total. It's important to note that children's projects and returning series do not count towards a platform's application total.

If you have a strong case for exceeding these limits, please contact a Co-Head of Funding before submitting your applications. For any questions, please email either kelly@nzonair.govt.nz or glenn@nzonair.govt.nz.

F. Assessment Criteria

Alongside our [nine investment principles](#), we will additionally assess the following when evaluating applications:

- **Equity and representation** – Does the content reflect the diverse makeup of Aotearoa New Zealand's population and provide opportunities for under-represented groups? Does it shed light on aspects of NZ culture, society or people that are often overlooked or misunderstood?
- **Gender equality** – Will the project promote and uphold gender equality on and off screen?
- **Talent and skills development** – Is this project offering a supportive environment for early and mid-career writers and production creatives, particularly those who represent Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural and ethnic diversity, to hone their skills?
- **Regionalism** – Will this production showcase regions and communities that are seldom represented in local content, giving us a glimpse into parts of the country that we rarely see?

G. Industry Standards

Your production budget should consider the costs of operating in line with the agreed industry standards as expressed in the Individual Performance Agreement (SPADA and NZ Actors' Equity), Screen Industry Workers Act, and The Blue Book (The Screen Industry Guild of Aotearoa New Zealand).

H. Health and Safety

Your production budget should consider the costs of operating in line with the [New Zealand Screen Sector Guidelines](#) published by ScreenSafe.

I. General Guidelines

Information on how to make a funding application is [here](#).