

General Guidelines for Applicants – Scripted and Non-fiction.



A. Purpose

These guidelines are for content creators intending to apply for funding for Scripted and Non-fiction projects within the Creation stream of NZ On Air's Investment Strategy. In an environment where there are more applications than available funding, we want to show you how to apply and how your application will be assessed. More specific information about the applications we are seeking is published prior to each round.

B. Introduction

NZ On Air's Investment Strategy is built upon fundamental principles of public media. These encompass enhancing the culture of Aotearoa New Zealand, expanding the variety and inclusivity of local content accessible to New Zealanders, guaranteeing that content is easily accessible, strengthening social cohesion, and promoting well-informed discussions.

You can read more detail about the strategy underpinning the allocation of funding in our [Investment Strategy](#).

Our foundational document, Te Ipukarea, can be read [here in English](#) and [here in te reo Māori](#).

The information and expectations document which we provide to assist commissioning platforms can be read [here](#).

Here are the [funding round deadlines](#).

C. Applying online

You must be registered with our online portal before you can submit an application. See portal.nzonair.govt.nz. Registration is a one-off process that will give you access to the portal and allow you to apply for NZ On Air funding, as well as manage your application and contracts. You can register at any time and we strongly encourage content creators to register well in advance of funding deadlines.

You must be registered with our online system before an application deadline day.

Please have all your documents ready to upload when you submit your application. Applicants will not be able to submit proposals until all the required fields have been completed, so **please do not leave application completion to the last minute**.

You can save your application at any time throughout the process and come back to it via your dashboard prior to the deadline.

Read more about our portal on our [FAQ page](#), or email us at portal@nzonair.govt.nz.

We also require confirmation from the platforms cited in your application that they support the proposal and agree the budget is appropriate. Primary commissioning platforms will be able to confirm their support via the portal. Written confirmation of support from secondary platforms should be uploaded with your application.

If your application has been declined funding twice, it cannot be resubmitted unless you have written permission from the Head of Funding. In these exceptional circumstances, a notable change to the content proposed and/or business case is usually expected.

D. Development proposals

Sections E and F detail our expectations for production funding applications. For information specific to development applications, please read our [Content Development Guidelines](#).

The Content Development Guidelines note what you should include in your development proposal. It also lists the criteria development applications are assessed against. Those guidelines differ to the information provided in this document for production applications because we do not expect content development applications to be as detailed.

If your project received content development funding from NZ On Air, we expect that your development contract will be fully completed before a production funding application is then submitted for that project.

E. General expectations of production applications

An application for Scripted or Non-fiction production funding will typically be required to:

- provide key details about your project on all pages of the application form, including project synopsis, episode format and content duration, confirmed key personnel, confirmed platform support, intended audience, finance plan and a budget summary.
- indicate the platform/s that will distribute your content to your audience. This must include commitment from a qualifying local platform¹.
- demonstrate that the project is 'digital first' or 'digitally native'², though a linear run might be part of the distribution mix.
- attach a detailed production budget. **[This document](#) should inform the full budget you attach to your application.** It outlines our expectations about budget format and acceptable line items for funded projects.
- attach a content proposal. This document is your pitch where you describe and define the content you want to make, how you will make it and how you plan to reach the intended audience. Detail on what to include in your content proposal is in Section F.

We suggest you consider these over-arching questions when developing your application:

- why is this project a good idea?
- do you have a strong plan to reach the intended audience?

¹These are generally online or linear platforms that:

- can already attract a significant audience
- will offer free access to funded content
- will generally offer an adequate financial investment in a content proposal; and
- can show a track record of, or plan for, a sustained commitment to Aotearoa New Zealand content (in most circumstances a YouTube or social media release on its own will not be eligible. Please contact us before submitting or supporting an application with this type of distribution plan).

² 'Digital-first' means that the project is designed and optimised for online viewership from the outset, rather than adapting traditional linear formats for digital consumption. Its format may then lend itself to a secondary linear outcome (i.e. a streaming series). 'Digitally native' means that the project is inherently born and developed within online environments. Its format and style may be varied and unique to the digital platforms on which it is found (i.e. a shortform series with episodes and assets of varying lengths found on social media).

- do you have a commitment from a qualifying platform?
- are you bringing an appropriate level of co-investment to the table?
- are the skills and experience of the team appropriate for the project?
- do you have plans to ensure cultural and spiritual elements of your project (where relevant) will be dealt with appropriately and ensure the physical, mental and digital safety and well-being of the cast and crew?

Your funding request should be commensurate to the size of the audience you intend to reach and accurately budgeted based on your production plans.

Following the original licence agreement, funded content should still be easily accessible for New Zealand audiences either through relicensing to another platform, being offered to a site like NZ On Screen, or uploaded to a video sharing platform such as YouTube.

F. How to structure your content proposal

This section is a guide to the information you should include in your content proposal for production funding. You do not need to follow this structure directly, but you should include all aspects relevant to your application.

As a general rule, the higher the level of funding requested the more detailed we will require your application to be. That said, less is often best. Be clear and succinct – there are no prizes for applications with the most pages.

Content proposal details

Project description. An overview of your project and what you want to do.

Format. Half to one page. We are asking for the actual content length, e.g. ‘a 13 x 44’ drama series’ or ‘a 6-part factual series for an online platform with 32’ total duration’. If this is a series, tell us how the episodes connect.

Style/Treatment. How will the content be presented? How will you treat the narrative or the context? How will your content look and feel? What is important for us to know? What is the tone and style for the project? Please provide mood boards or style frames to demonstrate the look and feel. If you are applying for Scripted production funding, we require a full treatment and script/s.

Structure. An episode breakdown of a series. As noted above, for higher value funding requests we expect to see more detail. Walk us through the structure of a one-off.

Equity and representation (including cultural and spiritual elements) – both on and off screen. We will want to see aspects covered in your application including:

- where a project has specific cultural or spiritual elements, we will expect you to include information (i.e. a plan) that demonstrates how these will be handled through production and distribution to ensure safety of cast and crew, and appropriate handling of sensitive subject matter.
- appropriate people attached to the project in leadership roles who can manage and advise on these cultural and spiritual aspects of the production at critical stages (i.e. character development, set design).
- IP ownership structure: who created the idea? Who was involved in the initial stages of development and is this appropriately recognised in the budget, credits and potential income share of the project?

- language strategies to ensure correct pronunciation and use of language/s. Correct use and pronunciation of languages / dialects on screen (unless it is important to the narrative not to, e.g. demonstrating mono-cultural attitudes).
- meaningful representation on screen in key talent roles. We want to see depth and complexity of character arcs and storytelling; multi-dimensional cultural characters who appear credible to the communities they represent and aren't reliant on stereotypes.
- where relevant, mentoring and talent development – leading to career pathways.

Duty of care. We expect you to address any clear and obvious risks or sensitivities that are inherent in your subject matter and/or production approach. Your proposal should include a plan to mitigate such risks and that plan should be reflected in your budget where relevant. Letters of support from relevant organisations, hapū, communities, whānau, and/or subjects participating in the project can show us you have appropriate backing for your production.

Interactive elements. For productions with online interactive components, please provide information about the site or app including the following:

- who will design and develop the interactive aspect?
- what process will they follow?
- what user testing will be included?
- what will the user experience be?
- include wireframes where relevant.

Production process. Production plan/schedule – include planned key deliverables and production milestones from commencement to delivery of the content.

Research plan for Non-fiction applications. Outline your approach to research. Wherever possible include your sources for statistical data, historical accounts and other research elements such as access to archives.

Team. Who are the intended key personnel on the project (both on screen and in production roles)? Please make it clear if their participation is confirmed or provisional on funding. Include one paragraph per person and a link to their bio if available.

Platform and production partners. Which companies are involved? Briefly outline their experience with this type of production. What will they bring to the project?

- If your partners are providing cash, publicity, distribution or in-kind support, please provide details. You need to provide written confirmation from the partners in terms of what they are providing – you can attach this as supplementary material to your application. Your primary commissioning platform will be able to confirm its support directly through the application portal.

Distribution and discoverability

Finding your audience. Outline your distribution plan. This plan should cover:

- Audience – describe your target audience. What do you know about their viewing behaviour? What do you know about them in relation to potential interest in your proposed project? How big is your target audience? What secondary or other audience(s) do you have for this project?

- Relevance – how will the content produced from this application benefit the intended audience? Why will they be interested?
- Reach – what is your plan for reaching your audience? Provide as much detail about your marketing and promotions plan as possible, e.g. what is your plan for social media? What additional marketing content or assets will you create for promotion? What tools will you utilise to get the greatest reach?
- Promotion – what will your partner(s) provide in terms of promotion?
- What is your launch and release plan?

Marketing and publicity costs. You can allocate a proportion of your production budget to marketing (paid media promotion and publicity costs) and/or the creation of marketing assets. At a minimum, we expect all applications to include budget lines for marketing asset creation.

NZ On Air will support selected projects with a discoverability marketing campaign planned and implemented by our media partner. Please read our [Discoverability Guidelines](#) for more information.

A very small number of applications will be allocated funding to run their own marketing campaign. If you would like to run your own 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.

Success Measures. How will you measure success for your project? Include detail about your viewing targets: total views or streams, average episode views or streams, completion rates, average linear audience or other relevant metrics. What other engagement do you expect, i.e. shares, likes or comments on specific social media platforms?

Contribution to NZ On Air goals.

How will your content help NZ On Air achieve its investment goals? Please provide 1-3 paragraphs for at least one of the goals your project addresses. Our goals are:

Investment Goal	How NZ On Air will achieve this:
Valued	<p>New Zealand audiences value local content that matters</p> <p>New Zealanders believe NZ On Air supports local content important for New Zealanders</p>
Diverse	<p>New Zealand audiences value local content made for a range of communities</p> <p>New Zealand audiences appreciate the diversity of content funded by NZ On Air</p>
Discoverable	<p>New Zealand audiences can find and appreciate local content</p> <p>Funded content will be available and enjoyed by audiences on the platforms they use</p>

You can read more about these goals, as well as the nine investment principles that guide our funding decisions, in our [Investment Strategy](#).

G. Business case expectations

Co-investment is important because it shows market interest in your project – which adds to likelihood of success on release – and because a reduction in the request from NZ On Air allows us to support more applications.

Platform co-investment is an important criterion, along with other appropriate co-funding sources. Applications seeking 100% NZ On Air funding will only be successful in very exceptional circumstances so you should discuss this with a Funding Advisor prior to submitting your application.

Co-investment will take one or more of the following forms:

- *Platform cash contribution to the production budget*

This is our preferred option. The level of contribution will be part of our assessment and will influence our funding decision.

- *“In kind” or non-cash platform contribution to the production budget*

This type of contribution is eligible co-investment if it is a genuine contribution to the production budget by providing necessary resources or services that are appropriately costed.

- *Third party cash contribution to the production budget*

This can include different funding sources, including co-production finance, distribution or sales advances, sponsorship and private investment. Letters of support are expected at the application stage. We also expect that any third-party finance that is subject to contractual conditions with the applicant are spoken to in the proposal - particularly in cases where that third-party finance is dependent upon an additional presale by that party.

New Zealand Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR): NZ On Air can provide funding to all categories of screen productions applying for the NZSPR. Please read [our NZSPR Guidelines](#) carefully to understand our priorities and requirements.

Funding requests of less than \$50k are primarily for development applications. Please contact a Funding Advisor prior to deadline if you wish to discuss a non-development project that is less than \$50k.

H. How will we assess proposals?

We will assess proposals using the nine investment principles set out in our [Investment Strategy](#).

We will assess the business and cultural case for each application, using an assessment process that is designed to show how it contributes to NZ On Air’s investment goals of supporting content that is valued, diverse and discoverable.

Our rigorous assessment process has five phases and ensures fairness and strategic alignment.

A description of the assessment process can be found [here](#).

I. The fine print

Please be aware that the following standard terms and conditions apply to your application. In submitting your application, you are deemed to have read, understood and agree to be bound by these terms and conditions:

- you must bear all your own costs in preparing and submitting your application
- you represent and warrant that all information provided to us is complete and accurate
- we may rely upon all statements made in your application
- we may amend, suspend, cancel and/or re-issue these guidelines at any time
- we may waive any irregularities or informalities in the application process
- we may seek clarification of any application and meet with any applicant
- we will not seek clarification of all applications or meet with all applicants
- we are not bound to accept any application
- you will not submit in your application any data that breaches any third party right (including intellectual property rights and privacy rights) or is objectionable, incorrect or misleading
- we both agree to take reasonable steps to protect the other's confidential information. Our obligation to protect your confidential information is subject to the Official Information Act 1982 and other legal, parliamentary and constitutional conventions
- you acknowledge that the commissioning platform you nominate will be able to access your full application for the purpose of verifying their support
- there is no binding legal relationship between us: a successful application is only formally accepted if we both sign a funding contract.

Please also be aware that if your application is successful, among other requirements we will stipulate that:

- Content creators enter into a formal funding agreement with NZ On Air. Our standard agreements are [here](#).
- Content creators must be aware of their obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.
- Creators of video projects are required to:
 - follow the Health and Safety in the New Zealand Screen Sector guidelines found at screensafe.co.nz.
 - abide by agreed industry work standards as expressed in the Screen Industry Workers Act, Individual Performance Agreement (SPADA and NZ Actors Equity) and The Blue Book (SIGANZ).
- The content is clearly branded as NZ On Air-funded. See our accreditation requirements [here](#).

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