

Round Rua Information for Funding Applicants

13 August 2025

Purpose

The following information is for applicants planning to submit a funding application for Round Rua, the second 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

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 can be found [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.

Concurrent with Round Rua, NZ On Air and Te Māngai Pāho will run the annual co-funding round. The RFP and dates for this initiative [can be found here](#).

Round Rua Priorities – Audiences and Content Types

In Round Rua we are open to applications across the following range of priority¹ audiences and content genres: **Drama, Comedy, Documentary and General Factual, Journalism, Children, Youth, Podcasts, Content Development, Capability and Discoverability.**

Please note that we will **not** consider games applications in this round.

We invite projects catering to both general and priority 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. We encourage applicants to show how innovative approaches to content creation and distribution can help public media thrive in this environment.

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

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 \$12m has been allocated for Non-Fiction projects in this round.

We will accept Non-fiction applications for documentaries, general factual, podcasts, national event coverage, comedy panel shows, unscripted comedy shows, journalism (see below), and partial financing of feature films supported by NZFC.

We will consider international format applications, but priority will be given to local formats. This 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. We recommend you contact [Head of Funding](#), Amie Mills, to speak about this prior to adding it to your submission.

Journalism

Round Rua is the only round in which we will consider Journalism applications this financial year.

NZ On Air journalism funding now operates through two distinct categories, each with specific requirements:

- Specialist current affairs and investigative projects responding to current events
- Reporting on public institutions

Priority will be given to returning projects that can demonstrate strong audience engagement.

Specialist current affairs and investigative projects responding to current events

This round considers specialist current affairs and investigative journalism projects with a supporting local platform delivered as daily, weekly or occasional series.

Applications must specify total content output, ideally delivering high volume at low cost-per-minute, while demonstrating digital-first design, strong audience reach, and meaningful platform contribution.

We will prioritise teams with strong journalism track records partnering with platforms that have demonstrated commitment to quality journalism and significant audience engagement.

Reporting on public institutions

Limited funding is available for journalism projects that systematically cover factual reporting of Aotearoa New Zealand's public institutions (excluding national politics), including courts, councils, and other bodies that exercise public authority, use or oversee public funds, and impact local or regional communities.

Projects must embed trained specialist reporters in a nationwide network of established newsrooms with rigorous editorial oversight and quality control measures, training and support, demonstrate pre-agreed content sharing through media partnerships for maximum public access, and provide

coverage of institutional proceedings that require expert knowledge to report effectively.

The eligibility bar is deliberately high. **All applicants must consult with NZ On Air's Funding team and receive confirmation from the [Associate Head of Funding](#) or [Head of Funding](#) before submitting their application.**

Note: Fact-based one-off or series documentaries using journalistic storytelling techniques are not considered Journalism projects under our funding definition and will be considered in any round. If you are unsure whether your project would be considered Journalism or general Non-fiction, please contact the [Funding team](#).

Scripted

Approximately \$8m has been allocated for Scripted projects in this round.

For this round, we are particularly seeking applications for series projects that require \$1m-\$3m. We especially welcome well-developed projects intending to access the New Zealand Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR). Drama, comedy, children's content and partial financing of feature films supported by NZFC are all eligible.

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 give priority to projects intended for digital-first release, followed by potential secondary or simultaneous linear release where applicable.

While we acknowledge the challenging economic market conditions affecting the industry, we expect platforms to demonstrate meaningful commitment to these Scripted projects through appropriate licence fees - especially for the NZSPR projects 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

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

We can only fund a very limited amount of development in this round.

We welcome content development applications with platform support and co-investment.

We will also accept applications for unsupported development in this round. The purpose of unsupported development funding is to help projects that are already in development progress to a point where they can secure market and platform support and eventually move into production. Your unsupported development application must clearly demonstrate how funding would enable your project to do this, including information about the work that has been done so far, and what the next stage of development will entail. Projects are eligible for one round of unsupported development funding only.

Unsupported development applications must meet the following criteria in order to be considered for assessment:

- The company applying must have no outstanding development contracts with NZ On Air.
- The application should come from a producer with at least one screen producing credit and all key talent attached should also have screen credits in the roles they will have on this project. Unsupported development applications without a producer attached will not be accepted.
- The project applying must not have received unsupported development in the past.
- Your application should include at least three of the following in draft form:
 - a log line,
 - a synopsis,
 - episode outlines,
 - a treatment,
 - character arcs,
 - a script for the pilot episode.

- We will not accept unsupported development applications for returning series.
- We will accept no more than two unsupported development applications per production company 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.

Multi-stage development funding

In response to our evolving role in larger-scale, scripted series production, we're adapting our development funding approach. For exceptional projects with significant - ideally match-funded - platform co-investment and clear creative vision, we may fund multiple development phases simultaneously, enabling continuity for writing teams and reducing delays between stages.

Applicants must demonstrate established credentials, detailed development plans and clear paths to production readiness, with limitations of one project per company. We will only fund a very small number of these projects per year.

Tamariki / Children

Approximately \$3m 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.

Applications will ideally be tailored for multiple platforms, with well-defined strategies for engaging the target audience. Unless an exemption has been granted by the 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 seeking in the range of \$2.5m - \$3m.

Rangatahi / Youth

Approximately \$2m 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 local 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 for YouTube or any other social media, 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 plan

You may allocate a proportion of your production budget to cover legal compliance costs. For funded projects, the budget lines dedicated to legal compliance costs will be ringfenced and cannot be used for other parts of your production unless approved by NZ On Air. We are looking for applications with a robust legal compliance plan that address the following:

- How will the amount allocated to legal compliance in your production budget be spent?
- How will you ensure that the content you create meets editorial standards, legal requirements and regulations? This includes Aotearoa New Zealand broadcasting standards, Media Council principles, YouTube Community Guidelines and thorough fact-checking of content where relevant.
- How will you ensure any significant risks related to the project are appropriately monitored?
- What is the process you will put your content through to provide assurance it is legally compliant prior to release? This includes how you will ensure that all necessary rights, licences, consents and other authorities required to publish your project will be obtained and retained. We recommend you partner with an entertainment lawyer to achieve this.

Editorial oversight

We expect applications to assess the experience level of the core team relative to the funding level and subject matter of the project. Following submission of your application, NZ On Air may further discuss with you the level of additional support your team may require. Your application should address the following:

- 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).
- Local 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.

A. Timeline

14 August 2025

Applicant information webinar.

A webinar will be held on Zoom on **14 August** from 3-4pm to answer questions relating to Round Rua.

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

21 August 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.

11 September 2025, 4pm

Application deadline. Round closes.

Late applications will not be considered. In very exceptional circumstances, for time-sensitive projects agreed prior by the [Head of Funding](#), we may consider an out-of-time application.

21 November 2025

Decisions confirmed, applicants notified.

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

B. 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?

Please refer to our [AI Guidelines document](#) for guidance on how NZ On Air will assess funding applications that propose the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI (GenAI) in the creation of screen and music content.

C. 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).

D. Health and Safety

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

E. General Guidelines

Information on how to make a funding application can be found [here](#).