Round Rua Information for Funding Applicants

12 August 2026

Purpose

Round Rua is the second funding round of the 2026/27 financial year. This round is open to applications for:

- Scripted
- Non-fiction
- Tamariki (Children)
- Rangatahi (Youth)
- Content Development
- Capability (industry skills and training initiatives)
- Discoverability (industry events and awards).

Key Dates

13 August '26	**Applicant information Zoom webinar.** A webinar will be held on **13 August from 3-4pm** to answer questions relating to Round Rua. Register: funding@nzonair.govt.nz.
20 August '26	**Funding round opens.** All applications must be made through our NZ On Air Portal.
10 September '26	**Application deadline. Round closes at 4pm.** 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.
20 November '26	**Decisions confirmed, applicants notified.** This date may be extended at NZ On Air's sole discretion.

Introduction

NZ On Air's funding strategy is founded on core public media principles. Our primary function is to make sure New Zealand stories, songs and perspectives are created, found and enjoyed by New Zealand audiences. Established under the Broadcasting Act 1989, we exist to *'reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture'*. Our strategy sets out five key pillars:

- Engage: Audiences discover, value and enjoy diverse New Zealand content;
- Enable: Invest in the people and skills that power New Zealand's creative future;
- Respond: Ensure funding models are adaptive, fit-for-purpose and accessible;
- Inform: Deliver trusted insights that enable New Zealand content to flourish;
- Elevate: Increase the ambition, scale and global reach of New Zealand content.

Please refer to our recently revised Investment Model and our rautaki Māori, Te Pae Tata, for more information about our funding priorities. The funding round deadlines for financial year 2026/27 are here.

Round Rua Priorities

Round Rua is particularly focused on projects catering to both general and priority[1] audiences that combine strong public value with compelling audience and distribution strategies.

Applicants should demonstrate:

- A clear audience need and public value
- Strong platform support (unless specifically exempted, i.e. Rangatahi and unsupported development applications as discussed below).
- A realistic finance plan with letters of commitment attached from other financial partners where applicable.
- Appropriate creative and production capability.
- A well-considered marketing and audience engagement strategy that aligns with intended platform distribution.

Funding Priorities by Category

Non-fiction

Approximately $10m available.

General - Non-fiction

Priority will be given to:

- Broad-reach factual series with strong public media value
- Larger-scale productions with budgets over $500,000
- Projects creating significant production employment opportunities

[1] Defined as women; youth; children; persons with disabilities and minorities in the community including ethnic minorities (Section 36c Broadcasting Act 1989)

- NZ Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR) productions seeking final gap finance

We will also consider documentaries, national event coverage, comedy formats and podcasts (refer to page 15 in the Investment Model for podcast guidelines).

Applications for reality shows will be accepted in this round, with priority given to local formats intending to access the NZSPR. Applications with clear local audience appeal, a strong business case, significant platform contribution ideally on a 50/50 matched funding basis, and/or demonstrable public media merit will also be considered. We expect to fund very few of these shows.

Part-financing for documentary feature films is not available in this round.

Journalism - Non-fiction

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

We will not accept applications into the 'reporting on public institutions' category this round, except by prior agreement with NZ On Air. If you believe your project falls within this category, you must contact us before submitting; we will not consider applications in this category that have not been discussed with us in advance**.**

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

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.

Scripted

Approximately $8m available.

Priority will be given to:

- Drama and comedy series
- Larger-scale productions
- NZSPR productions with strong financing and platform support
- Projects seeking between $1m and $3m

Projects seeking more than $3m require prior written approval from the Associate Head of

Funding or Head of Funding before submission and you should include this written approval in your application.

Part-financing for feature films is not available in this round.

Music/Sync Licensing for Scripted Projects

We welcome applications from Scripted projects incorporating at least 80% local music (track licensing and composition). Applications should detail how local music will elevate the project, with an appropriate budget allocation, including a music supervisor role if applicable. This sync licensing funding should sit separately from your production funding ask but be included within the overall budget requested of NZ On Air.

Once approved, sync licensing costs are ringfenced and cannot be reallocated elsewhere in the budget. Platforms can exclude these costs when calculating their licence fee, so producers can incorporate local music without it affecting platform contribution.

Sync licensing funding is not currently available for feature film projects or Non-fiction projects, due to funding constraints, and cannot be requested for projects that have already received production funding. You can read more about the requirements here.

Content Development

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

Priority will be given to development with platform support and co-investment. Specific requirements are outlined in the Content Development – Guidelines for Applicants.

Development applications for rangatahi projects without platform support require explicit provision for legal and creative oversight. Consultation with NZ On Air is required prior to submission and you must receive written approval from the Associate Head of Funding or Head of Funding and include this in your application.

We recognise the diverse needs of projects and creators seeking development funding and encourage applicants to design a tailored development process that moves their project forward significantly.

Ambitious projects requiring multi-stage development support

As part of Elevate, which aims to build greater scale and ambition in Aotearoa New Zealand content, we may fund multiple development phases at the same time for exceptional projects. This supports continuity for writing teams and reduces delays between stages, and applies to projects with significant, ideally match-funded, platform or third-party co-investment and a clear creative vision. Applicants must demonstrate established credentials, detailed development plans and a clear path to production readiness, with one project per company. We will fund only a very small number of these projects each year.

Unsupported Development

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 to be considered for assessment:

- The company applying must have no outstanding unsupported 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 perform. 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.

Tamariki (Children)

Approximately $5m available.

We anticipate very high demand for tamariki funding in this round, particularly for pre-school content, and expect only a small proportion of applications to be successful.

We are seeking:

- Scripted and Non-fiction screen content
- Projects with strong audience engagement strategies
- Multi-platform distribution approaches
- Ambitious NZSPR-ready productions

Games projects are not eligible in this round.

Our strong preference is for projects with local platform attachment, either as the primary or

secondary platform. YouTube is acceptable as a primary or secondary platform alongside an established local platform, not in place of one. Where there is no local platform attachment, we may still discuss funding in certain circumstances, where the project can demonstrate strong oversight and a credible path to reaching an audience/leveraging an existing audience; this requires an exemption granted in writing by the Associate Head of Funding or Head of Funding.

Rangatahi (Youth)

Approximately $1m available.

Our *Within My Reach* strategy aims to fund bold, innovative local content for 15 to 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 time of submission.

Key requirements:

- Free access for Aotearoa New Zealand audiences
- Horizontal release strategy across multiple platforms
- 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 will be prioritised)
- Breakthrough ideas with potential social currency
- Research-informed projects on youth media habits
- Strategic understanding of platform algorithms and marketing.

Projects without local platform support must demonstrate appropriate editorial oversight, legal compliance and audience development, with robust plans addressing the following requirements.

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 addresses 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.

- 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.

If you would like to submit an application for a rangatahi project without a local primary platform, you must consult with NZ On Air's Funding team and receive written confirmation from the Associate Head of Funding or Head of Funding before submitting your application. This confirmation must be included in your application.

Capability & Discoverability

A limited number of applications will be considered for:

- Industry support, capability and skills initiatives
- Industry events, awards and conferences

We are taking the opportunity to refresh our approach to Capability and Discoverability funding. Central to this is a stronger alignment with the Government's Amplify strategy for the cultural sector, which prioritises co-ordinated, high-impact investment in sector capability and discoverability. In practice, this may mean some rationalisation of how we fund industry events and capability-building activity, and some projects we have previously supported may no longer sit within scope. We are working alongside NZFC and Te Māngai Pāho as part of this, given our shared Mahi Tahi goals in this space.

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. More information on criteria is here.

NZ Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR)

Applicants should review the NZSPR Guidelines before applying. Priority will be given to projects where NZ On Air is the 'last-in' funder providing the final piece of the finance plan so a project

can proceed promptly, and we will not approve applications where the finance plan is not fully locked in place. You must have firm letters of offer covering all other funding sources, before we will consider your application.

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 no more than $3m per project. Such requests will be evaluated on the strength of the cultural value case, as outlined in the investment principles on page 18 of our Investment Model, the strength of the business case, and the overall mix of the round. Projects requesting a higher amount must receive written confirmation from the Associate Head of Funding or Head of Funding before submitting your application and you must include this confirmation in your application.

Marketing and Publicity

All applications must include budget lines within your production budget for promotion and marketing asset creation, such as paid media and publicity costs. You should demonstrate an understanding of effective call-to-action campaigns and how this pūtea will be spent. Once funded, these budget lines are ringfenced.

Separately, NZ On Air, in collaboration with broadcasters, may select projects for a larger Discoverability marketing campaign, planned and delivered by our media partner, Contagion. All successful applications will be considered for this.

A very small number of experienced applicants may instead choose to run their own Discoverability campaign rather than use Contagion. If you'd like to apply to be considered for this option, please include a separate marketing plan and budget with your application, detailing how the pūtea will be used and demonstrating your team's capability to deliver it. Selected applicants will receive up to $50k in ringfenced funding for this purpose. These funds sit outside your total production funding request and are additional to the marketing and publicity budget already included in your production budget. Please refer to our Discoverability Guidelines for more information.

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).

Health and Safety

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

Before You Apply

Please ensure you have reviewed the relevant guidance documents:

- NZ On Air Investment Model
- Assessment Process and Investment Principles
- General Guidelines for Applicants
- Content Development – Guidelines for Applicants
- Discoverability (Marketing and Publicity) Guidelines
- NZSPR Guidelines (where relevant)
- Capability / Discoverability Guidelines
- AI Guidelines
- Sync Licensing
- Te Pae Tata (Māori Strategy)
- Tamariki Strategy
- Within My Reach (Rangatahi Strategy)

These documents contain the detailed eligibility requirements, assessment criteria and strategic priorities that apply to funding decisions.