



NZ ON AIR

Trans-Tasman Kids IP Incubator Guidelines

Information for New Zealand applicants

A development-to-production pathway for digital-first children's IP, delivered in partnership with Screen Australia and the Australian Children's Television Foundation.

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Introduction

The Kids IP Incubator is a partnership between NZ On Air, Screen Australia and the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF). It gives established and emerging children's content makers a structured pathway to explore, develop and, for selected projects, produce original digital-first IP for direct-to-audience online platforms.

Through this incubator NZ On Air intends to support content designed to successfully reach and engage tamariki on the platforms they're using. [NZ On Air's research into children's media use](#) shows YouTube is the most used media platform by children – 69% using YouTube or YouTube Kids daily. This initiative aligns with our support of KIDOGO and KIDOGO Junior, two hubs for local stories and songs on YouTube and YouTube Kids where tamariki, their caregivers and teachers can safely and easily access age-appropriate local kids' content on a platform they are already using.

The initiative combines development funding, in-person workshops in Melbourne alongside selected Australian teams, online modules and one-on-one mentoring from specialists with YouTube and direct-to-audience platform experience.

NZ On Air

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 [Investment Model](#) and our rautaki Māori, [Te Pae Tata](#), for more information about our funding priorities.

This is a standalone initiative. It sits outside NZ On Air's standard Scripted and Non-fiction funding rounds and has its own eligibility, application and assessment process.

What the incubator offers

The incubator aims to:

- Equip children's content creators with future-focused industry skills and create a credible pathway towards sustainable digital-first, New Zealand-owned IP (**Enable** strategic pillar)

- Encourage innovative business strategies built around direct-to-audience online platforms and develop partnership pathways to support local and international success (**Elevate** pillar)
- Allow children's content creators to design and release enriching local content that children discover and enjoy (**Engage** pillar)

The incubator begins with a strong, adaptable core idea. Participants will test and shape that idea through an iterative process, using audience insight and platform data to influence format, production process, release strategy and the viewer experience.

The incubator has two phases. Entry to Phase I does not guarantee an invitation to apply for Phase II or production funding.

Phase I: development programme

NZ On Air will select up to four NZ teams with content ideas to enter a three-month programme (approximately March – late April 2027):

- **Workshop:** An in-person, three-day workshop in Melbourne, 6 – 8 April 2027 attended by up to two people per team. The workshop will involve masterclasses, individualised mentoring, story consultation, platform insights, iterative production methods, creative feedback, IP world-building planning and professional development support from key international content strategists, analysts and marketplace experts.
- **Modules:** Teams will also take part in fortnightly online modules from approximately March to May 2027. The modules will provide practical creative guidance and opportunities for collaboration among Aotearoa New Zealand children's content creators.
- **Development funding:** Selected Phase I teams will each enter into a development funding agreement with NZ On Air and receive up to NZ\$22,000. The funding will support the development of the project concept, pitch materials, and release and distribution strategy for presentation at the pitch event.
- **Pitch event:** Teams who have received development funding will then reconvene for a one-day final pitch event in Melbourne on 28 April 2027. Teams will present their pitch to the mentor, each other and representatives of NZ On Air, Screen Australia and ACTF. Following the pitch event NZ On Air will decide which projects (if any) will move forward to Phase II of the incubator.

Phase II: production and release

Following the pitch event, up to two NZ teams will be invited to apply for Phase II production funding. After NZ On Air assesses production funding applications teams may be selected to receive up to NZ\$330,000 (subject to entering a Production Funding Agreement with NZ On Air) to further develop, produce and release content in an iterative production and release model. Successful teams that receive production funding will also receive further formal mentoring from industry professionals.

Phase I timeline

Date	Milestone
15 October 2026	Applications open through NZ On Air's portal
27 October 2026, 11:00 a.m. NZDT	NZ On Air-only live Q+A webinar for NZ applicants Register for the webinar by emailing funding@nzonair.govt.nz with the subject line 'Incubator webinar'
26 November 2026, 4 p.m. NZDT	Phase I applications close
23 February 2027	NZ applicants advised of Phase I project selections by or on this date
March to late April 2027	Online modules and mentoring for selected Phase I projects
6–8 April 2027	Workshop: an in-person workshop held in Melbourne over three days, attended by two people per selected Phase I project.
28 April 2027	Pitch event in Melbourne, attended by two people per selected Phase I project

What we are looking for

Strong Phase I applications will combine a compelling, new idea with a capable team and a willingness to test, learn and adapt throughout the incubator process.

We are looking for:

- **A strong and adaptable IP concept** that has a clear creative identity and has the potential to attract, engage and retain a defined preschool or primary-aged audience (see more below). The idea may already be in development, but it must not have been produced and should be flexible enough to evolve throughout the incubator process.
- **A well-defined audience.** Applications should identify a defined preschool or primary-aged audience¹ within the broad up-to-11 age range and demonstrate genuine curiosity about how your audience behaves online. This initiative will increase your understanding of the creators, platforms, formats, trends and behaviours that shape how that audience discovers, consumes and engages with content online. These learnings will inform your planning of how the project will earn and maintain attention

¹ NZ On Air broadly categorises child audiences into the following relevant groups: Preschool (0 – 4 years); Primary (5 – 9 years); Intermediate (10 – 11 years).

in a competitive digital environment. We want you to tell us what you already know about your audience at this early stage.

- **Digital-first, direct-to-audience thinking.** The primary release must be direct-to-audience online. For this initiative, this means the creators retain control of self-distribution and take the work directly to its audience, so gaining, growing and maintaining an audience is down to the creator and their creative decisions. We are seeking content conceived for the behaviours, formats and feedback loops of online platforms, with YouTube expected to be the core focus for most projects.
- **A small, agile team with an experimental mindset.** The incubator is designed for teams that can move quickly from ideas to action: testing things out, learning from evidence, aren't put off by digging into statistics and hypothesising based on the data, and making changes without complex or multi-layered approval structures. We are looking for teams with the mix of creative, production, audience and digital skills needed to create, evaluate and iterate efficiently, as well as a willingness to challenge assumptions and adapt their approach based on what they learn.
- **A distinctively Aotearoa New Zealand perspective.** Projects should reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture, with authentic representation and a clear connection to the people, communities, languages, cultures or experiences at the heart of the idea.

Eligibility

To be eligible for Phase I, an application must meet all of the following requirements:

- The applicant is a New Zealand-based individual or entity. Any entity contracted for development or production funding must be registered in New Zealand and meet NZ On Air's contracting requirements.
- The project is original children's IP aimed at an audience aged up to 11. We will not accept pitches for projects that have already been produced or commissioned by a third party.
- The first and primary release window for the project must be direct-to-audience/online.
- We will accept IP pitches of any genre of linear audiovisual content made for viewing online. Interactive and immersive formats (games, VR, XR, AR) are not eligible. Your IP may have applications in the immersive media space and we are open to story world concepts with this scope but this incubator is for non-interactive outputs only.
- No more than two (2) Phase I applications per individual or company may be submitted. If two applications are submitted, they must have clearly separate IP concepts.
- The applicant controls, or has a clear and demonstrated pathway to control, the rights needed to develop and produce the project.
- The core team includes at least two key creatives, at least one of whom is the writer or writer/creator of the project. We are open to different definitions or titles of key creatives given the innovative nature of this initiative, but other team members might include director, producer, audience lead or other relevant titles. Key team members might have multiple roles. There is no maximum team size but small teams are encouraged given the agile model of this initiative.
- Both emerging and experienced children's content creators are eligible to apply to the Kids IP Incubator.
- Two team members must be available to attend the workshop and pitch event in Melbourne and participate fully in the online modules and mentoring.
- It is mandatory for all Phase I applicants to watch the [IP development video presentation](#) by Nico Lockhart. That video provides more information about this incubator initiative.
- The application is complete and submitted through NZ On Air's funding portal by the deadline 26 November 2026, 4 p.m. NZDT.

How to apply

Phase I pitch applications must be submitted through NZ On Air's portal: portal.nzonair.govt.nz.

You must be registered with the portal before submitting an application, and registration must be completed before the submission deadline day. You can register by clicking the link above.

Once registered and logged in to the portal you will see the Kids IP Incubator funding round. The funding round opens Thursday 15 October and closes 26 November 2026, 4 p.m. NZDT.

You will be required to fill in a short application form and attach your pitch document.

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 the 'My Applications' tab prior to the deadline. Read more about our portal on our [portal FAQ page](#), or email us at portal@nzonair.govt.nz.

If you have accessibility requirements relating to the application process, contact NZ On Air as early as possible so reasonable support can be discussed.

What to include in your Phase I application

We are not looking for long, fully developed proposals because the development phase takes place during the incubator. At this Phase I application stage we want clear and concise expressions of interest that include:

- **Application form:** Through the application form, applicants must provide information in all required form fields, address the eligibility criteria, and attach the required pitch document in pdf format.
- **A pitch document of no more than three pages** that includes:
 - **Your IP concept** – Tell us about your core pitch idea, give us a synopsis, and demonstrate why your idea will appeal to your intended audience. **[250 words or less]**
 - **Impact statement** – Detail your ambition as a creator/your company and how this initiative will help you achieve your vision. **[250 words or less]**
 - **Video presentation reflection statement** – Drawing on the information provided in the [IP development video presentation](#), identify the areas of the initiative that most interest you and explain how they relate to your pitch and intended audience. Applicants to Phase I must watch the recording of the video presentation. This video is separate from the live Q+A webinar that NZ On Air will hold on 27 October. **[250 words or less]**
 - **Key creatives** – Biographies of key staff/talent/creatives to be involved in this initiative highlighting their relevant experience. **[500 words or less]**

Inclusive and authentic storytelling

NZ On Air welcomes applications from people of all backgrounds, cultures, regions and experiences. We want the content we support, and the people creating it, to reflect contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand.

Where a project draws on the stories, identities, mātauranga, language or lived experiences of particular communities, the application should show that the relevant people have meaningful creative influence and

that appropriate relationships, permissions and safeguards are in place. Applications should also consider accessibility and the physical, cultural, mental and digital safety of participants, especially children.

Legal and editorial oversight

Projects funded through this direct-to-audience model must demonstrate appropriate editorial oversight and legal compliance. This is something applicants should be considering before they apply for Phase I, and selected teams will need plans in place before submitting a production funding application, as it will be a requirement of production funding.

Legal compliance plan: Phase II production applications will need a robust legal compliance plan — with a ringfenced budget line — that sets out how content will meet editorial standards, legal requirements and regulations, as well as relevant platform guidelines for e.g. YouTube Community Guidelines. This plan will need to explain how any significant risks will be monitored and factchecked, and how all rights, licences and consents will be secured and retained before release (ideally with an entertainment lawyer engaged).

Editorial oversight: Applicants will need to assess the experience level of the core team relative to the subject matter and intended child audience. Following submission of your application NZ On Air may further discuss with you the level of additional support your team may require, i.e., the attachment of a suitably credentialed third party, such as an executive producer, to provide creative and editorial oversight and ensure the project is delivered to a high standard and remains appropriate for its intended child audience.

Assessment process

Phase I applications will be individually assessed by a minimum of two assessors. Applications will be assessed against the aims of the Kids IP Incubator, NZ On Air's [funding strategy](#) and the criteria below. External, specialist or cultural assessors may be engaged where appropriate. At the end of this Phase I assessment process up to four (4) teams from Aotearoa New Zealand will be selected to take part in Phase I of the incubator. NZ applicants will be advised of Phase I project selections on or by 23 February 2027.

The Phase II production application and assessment process will be shared with the relevant shortlisted applicants in 2027.

NZ On Air will make the final decisions on New Zealand teams and projects. Decisions are final. We acknowledge and appreciate the time and effort that goes into preparing and submitting applications, but given the anticipated number of applications, individual feedback may not be available to every applicant.

Assessment criteria

- **Creative strength and adaptability:** the originality and potential of the core IP, and its capacity to be shaped through an iterative development process.
- **Clarity of strategy and pitch:** a well-articulated understanding and execution of the submitted materials, with clear alignment to the goals of the incubator.
- **Alignment with NZ On Air's purpose and principles:** contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand identity and culture, the opportunity to develop sustainable New Zealand IP.
- **Team and capability:** the relevance and complementarity of the team's skills, willingness to collaborate and learn, and demonstrated capacity to deliver.

What happens if your Phase I application is selected

Successful Phase I applicants will receive an approval letter via email from NZ On Air by or on 23 February 2027 setting out next steps regarding workshop participation and accessing development funding.

Participation in the workshop and development funding is not confirmed until the relevant agreement(s) required by NZ On Air have been signed.

Economy return travel, accommodation and stipend will be made available for up to two (2) people per selected NZ team to attend the workshop in Melbourne 6 – 8 April 2027. Economy return travel, accommodation and stipend will also be made available for up to two (2) people per selected NZ team to attend the one-day pitch event in Melbourne on 28 April 2027. NZ On Air will liaise with selected teams as soon as possible after 23 February to confirm travel arrangements.

Should you require further assistance for carers and/or accessibility costs to enable you to attend the workshop, this may also be arranged. If you have accessibility needs or concerns about the travel required, please get in contact with us at funding@nzonair.govt.nz so we can assist.

Development funding of up to NZ\$22,000 per selected NZ team will be conditional on teams participating in the workshop, mentoring and online modules, and applying what they learn to the development of their project and distribution strategy. This funding supports teams in developing their materials for the pitch event.

To enable workshops and mentoring, application and development materials may be shared securely with Screen Australia, ACTF, the programme mentors and workshop providers. Those parties will use the information for the purposes of delivering the initiative and will be expected to protect confidential and personal information.

He pātai?

Email any questions about the Kids IP Incubator to funding@nzonair.govt.nz and we will be in touch.

Additional Terms and Conditions

Please be aware that the following 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
- NZ On Air may share any submitted application material from NZ applicants with Screen Australia, ACTF, the programme mentors and workshop providers during the selection process for information-sharing purposes only. The sharing of the applications with our Australian partners is not for the purpose of decision-making in NZ On Air's assessment process. Screen Australia and ACTF will handle any personal information provided in accordance with their respective Privacy Policies. Programme mentors are bound by the same Conflict of Interest policy and Privacy policy as agency staff and external assessors
- the dates and details of the incubator and related travel may change at NZ On Air's discretion
- 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](#) but note the formal funding agreement for this special initiative might differ
- Content creators must adhere to NZ On Air's [Code of Conduct](#)
- 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)
- Any public announcement about selected teams or projects will be coordinated by NZ On Air with Screen Australia and ACTF
- The content is clearly branded as [NZ On Air-funded](#), and/or as a Kids IP Incubator project where appropriate.

Trans-Tasman Kids IP Incubator

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What counts as Children's content?

For the purposes of this incubator, we are focusing on content for children up to the age of 11. It is up to you as the applicant to articulate what your target demographic is within the age range of 0-11, why your pitch is appropriate and engaging for that age range and support that positioning with your application materials.

Projects will need to abide by the community standards and policies for children's content on the intended platform/s of their choice.

Do I need a broadcaster or local platform attached?

No. The attachment of a traditional commissioning platform is not a feature of this incubator, which sets this apart from NZ On Air's regular funding rounds. This initiative is specifically intended to explore creator-controlled, direct-to-audience online release.

What does Audience First / Digital First mean?

In this context for the purposes of the incubator, audience and digital first means engaging with how audiences consume, how they use platforms, how platforms recommend content, and how to adapt creative ideas and make creative decisions that help content be found by both local and international audiences. This requires an openness to adapt, and an excitement to analyse metrics to focus and refine creative decisions moving forward.

What about The Online Safety (Minimum Age and Child Safety Risk Assessment) Bill currently before Parliament?

The bill aims to protect children from the risk of online harm by creating an online safety framework that places a minimum age restriction of 16 years on certain online platforms. It was tabled before Parliament rose for the 7 November election. The incoming Government must explicitly decide to proceed with the Bill or it will lapse. It is not possible yet to know the incoming Government's policies or priorities.

If the Bill as tabled does become law, YouTube Kids is likely to be exempt, as it is in Australia, where government legislation prevents children holding social media accounts until they are 16 years of age. Children will still be able to access YouTube Kids and YouTube content as it is a free public platform that does not require an account. NZ On Air will continue to promote parent/carers supervision and safety.

Can I apply with an idea that is already in development?

Yes, provided it has not already been produced or commissioned and remains adaptable enough to benefit from the incubator.

What genres are eligible?

Scripted, animation, live action, non-fiction, music-based, and hybrid ideas may be considered. The core idea, audience opportunity and digital-first approach are more important than a conventional genre label.

Interactive and immersive formats (games, VR, XR, AR) are not eligible. Your IP may have applications in the immersive media space and we are open to story world concepts with this scope but this incubator is for non-interactive outputs only.

Can the project be based on existing IP?

Potentially, if you control the necessary rights and the proposed project is new. For example, a screen idea may draw from games IP, provided the incubator proposal is not a game experience itself.

Does Phase I selection guarantee production funding?

No. Phase II is a separate, invitation-only application and assessment process. NZ On Air may select up to two New Zealand projects for production funding.

Will production funding decisions be made at the pitch event?

No. After the pitch event, and dependant on the strength of individual pitches, NZ On Air may invite NZ teams to submit production funding applications through the NZ On Air portal.

What is the required file type for my pitch document?

Your pitch document must be a PDF file. The PDF file size limit is 15MB. You will need to upload your pitch PDF to your application form at portal.nzonair.govt.nz, and it should be no more than three (3) pages long.

Do I have to watch the video presentation?

At least one person from an applicant team needs to watch the [IP development video presentation](#) by Nico Lockhart. The video presentation is an opportunity to learn more about the programme and part of your application and assessment will be a response to the video content.

Following the video presentation, in your application we want to hear about your vision and ambition for working in this space and how this incubator will help you achieve this vision. Please refer to the guidelines for information on the assessment criteria for this programme.

The video presentation will be available when applications open and for the duration of the application period. The webinar will no longer be available after the application deadline. This video is separate from the live Q+A webinar that NZ On Air will hold on 27 October.

What level of experience do I need for this initiative?

We encourage applicants of all experience levels. Part of the assessment will be based on the viability of your concept and whether you have the capacity to deliver on your ambition. Teams with mixed levels of experience (for example, early career and established) are welcome.