



29 October 2026

Aotearoa Scripted Series Initiative

Information for Applicants

Purpose

The **Aotearoa Scripted Series Initiative** is a co-development fund from NZ On Air, Sky and Dynamic Television (DTV). Together we will fund the development of up to three new one-hour scripted drama series, with the aim of shaping distinctive New Zealand stories and perspectives so they can be financed, produced and enjoyed by audiences here and around the world.

We are looking to work with collaborative and experienced producers and writers to develop serialised or procedural drama series. We are looking for high concept and unique ideas with memorable, iconic characters and strong story engines.

The first call out is open to applications from experienced New Zealand producers, and from experienced writers who do not yet have a production company attached. All applications are made through the NZ On Air Portal.

Key Dates

3 November '26	Applicant information webinar. A webinar will be held on Tuesday 3 November from 12pm – 1pm NZDT to answer questions about the initiative. Register for the webinar at: funding@nzonair.govt.nz .
6 November '26	Call out opens. All applications must be made through the NZ On Air Portal .
3 December '26	Application deadline. Call out closes at 4pm NZDT. Late applications will not be considered.
19 February '27	Decisions confirmed, applicants notified. This date may be extended at the discretion of NZ On Air, Sky and DTV.

About the three partners

NZ On Air's primary function is to reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture by ensuring local stories, songs and perspectives are created, found and enjoyed by local audiences. **DTV** is a Los Angeles-based production, financing and distribution company with a global strategy to bring premium television programming to worldwide audiences. **Sky** is a proud New Zealand broadcaster, bringing premium local and international sports, news and entertainment programming to Kiwi audiences through a range of free and pay platforms and channels, and is the intended domestic broadcast partner for the programmes funded through this initiative. Having a New Zealand platform at the table

from the start is deliberate: we want projects that have a real path to New Zealand audiences alongside their international ambitions.

What we're looking for

We welcome unique and distinctive serial dramas, procedural dramas, thrillers, crime and mystery, across commercial genres with strong international appeal and an emphasis on distinctive New Zealand stories and perspectives.

We're looking for a fresh, clear hook, characters audiences will follow across seasons, and a story engine that can sustain more than one season. Projects should have the potential to sell internationally and a natural home with New Zealand audiences on Sky.

We're open to original concepts and to adaptations of existing work, from books and articles to podcasts and true stories.

What funding is available?

You can apply with a total development budget of up to \$75,000 (NZD). NZ On Air, Sky and DTV will each contribute up to \$25,000 per project.

Funding is for actual development costs, and only for future costs, not costs already incurred. The expected deliverables for each project are a pilot episode script and a series overview or story bible.

Up to three projects will be funded across the whole initiative. There is no fixed number for each call out. We may select none, one or several, depending on the strength of the applications, and we are not obliged to select a project in any call out. If fewer than three projects are selected in the first call out, the remaining places may roll into a second call out, which we expect to open about four months later.

Who can apply?

Applications are open to anyone who:

- is a New Zealand production company and meets the producer eligibility test below, or is a writer who meets the writer eligibility test below;
- has a one-hour scripted drama series project with at least a pilot script or a series outline, or pitch documents if you propose to write a new pilot from a concept. Producer applications must have at least one producer and one writer attached;
- holds or controls all the rights in the project. You keep full creative and financial control of your project. No rights have been assigned, and no development, production or broadcast agreement has been entered into with any third party and the project has not been previously pitched, presented or submitted to any broadcaster, platform or commissioner, except where the project has participated in Ara Ki Te Puna Kairangi – The Premium Development Fund, Rupture, or Raupapa Whakaari¹.

After two unsuccessful applications within the initiative, a project is no longer eligible to apply. The same applicant company may apply with a different project.

We expect applications to show that the project is written and directed by New Zealand companies, citizens or permanent residents.

¹ The exception applies only to development funded through these three initiatives. If a project has received development funding from a broadcaster, platform or streamer, either in New Zealand or internationally, at any stage, including after taking part in one of these initiatives, it is not eligible to apply.

Eligibility of producers

A producer is eligible to apply in their own right if they hold a credited producer credit (producer, executive producer with creative and budgetary responsibility) on any of the following:

- at least one hour-long (44 minutes or longer) episode of broadcast drama;
- two or more distinct produced half-hour scripted television series, each broadcast or commissioned by a recognised domestic or international broadcaster or platform;
- a produced feature film with a domestic theatrical release or premiere at a recognised film festival; or
- a produced children's scripted series broadcast or commissioned by a recognised domestic or international broadcaster or platform.

Eligibility of writers

A writer is eligible to apply without an experienced producer or production company if they hold any of the following:

- a credited writing credit on at least one hour-long (44 minutes or longer) episode of broadcast drama;
- a credited writing credit on two or more distinct produced half-hour scripted television series, each broadcast or commissioned by a recognised domestic or international broadcaster or platform; or
- a writer credit on a produced feature film with a domestic theatrical release or premiere at a recognised film festival.

If you are a writer applicant

You apply with the same project materials as a producer-led team, and you do not need a production company attached at application. You must hold or control all the rights in your project.

If your project is selected, the three parties will work with you to agree a production partner. That partner must be approved in writing by NZ On Air, Sky and DTV, and until they are attached no development funding is released and no development work starts. If a production partner has not been agreed within 60 days of you being told you have been selected, the selection lapses and the place may roll into a later call out.

How and when can I apply?

The call out opens on Friday 6 November 2026 and closes at 4pm NZDT on Thursday 3 December 2026. All 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. You can register by clicking the link above.

Please submit the following materials:

- Script, concept, treatment or outline that best reflects the creative ambition for the project.
- CVs for all creatives attached. Writer applicants should make sure the credit that makes them eligible is clear.
- A development plan (2 pages maximum) setting out the work the funding will pay for, whether that is a new pilot script or further drafts of an existing one.

- A market exposure declaration confirming the project has not previously been pitched, presented or submitted to any broadcaster, platform or commissioner except where the project has participated in Ara Ki Te Puna Kairangi – The Premium Development Fund, Rupture, or Raupapa Whakaari.
- An itemised development budget with a total of no more than \$75,000 for the current stage of development.
 - Funding can only be provided towards future costs, not costs already incurred.
 - You can apply for less than \$75,000 if you do not need the full amount.
 - NZ On Air, Sky and DTV reserve the right to approve a lesser amount than you applied for, at their discretion.
- Where the project includes Māori or Pacific stories, characters, te reo, tikanga or cultural practices, or has team members who do not have the authority to speak for the people or place represented in the story, please include:
 - a statement on how you are approaching the content, even if you believe it is not specific to a community or individual;
 - evidence of your collaboration to date; and
 - where relevant, written confirmation from the iwi, hapū, whānau, community or individuals concerned that they are willing to collaborate.
- Please refer to NZ On Air's [Te Pae Tata \(Māori Strategy\)](#).
- Your budget should consider the costs of operating in line with agreed industry standards, as expressed in the Individual Performance Agreement (SPADA and NZ Actors' Equity), the Screen Industry Workers Act, and The Blue Book (The Screen Industry Guild of Aotearoa New Zealand).

How are applications assessed?

NZ On Air will review each application to check eligibility and that the required materials have been provided. NZ On Air will share applications and all submitted materials with Sky and DTV for the purposes of assessment under this initiative.

Eligible applications will then be assessed by staff from NZ On Air, Sky and DTV against the following criteria:

- The strength of the story, the creative materials and the development plan;
- The capacity and experience of the team;
- The global appeal of the project, and its fit with Sky's channels and audiences;
- The public value of the project for New Zealand audiences against NZ On Air's [nine investment principles](#), including how it reflects and develops New Zealand identity and culture.

Projects are selected by unanimous agreement of the three parties. We are not obliged to select a project in any call out, and any places not filled may roll into a later call out.

Conflicts of interest

Each party will tell the others about any actual or perceived conflict of interest in relation to an applicant or project, including any prior or existing development relationship with an applicant. A party with a conflict will not take part in assessing that application unless the other parties agree in writing.

Outcomes

We expect to confirm decisions and notify all applicants by 19 February 2027, about 10 weeks after the closing date, which allows for the Christmas and summer break. This date may be extended at the discretion of the parties.

Terms of funding

Successful projects will enter into a Development Agreement with NZ On Air, Sky, DTV and the production company.

You, as the producer, keep the intellectual property in everything created as a deliverable of the development. None of NZ On Air, Sky or DTV is obliged to commission, license, acquire, represent or further finance your project by reason of taking part in this initiative.

Sky terms

When you deliver the final development materials, Sky will have 60 business days to choose whether to enter good faith negotiations to commission or license the project in New Zealand. If Sky makes that choice and a deal is not concluded within a further 60 business days, or if Sky does not make the choice at all, you are free to offer the project to other New Zealand broadcasters and platforms, subject to a matching right in favour of Sky. Sky's rights are limited to New Zealand.

DTV terms

DTV will have a first look and last negotiation right to deficit finance and to act as international co-producer and distributor of your project, on terms negotiated in good faith directly with you. We expect this to be documented in a short-form option agreement signed with your Development Agreement, and in a full distribution agreement if DTV takes up the right.

Feedback and questions

NZ On Air, Sky and DTV appreciate the effort that goes into an application. Given the number we expect, we cannot provide individual feedback on each one, and we cannot give creative advice or suggestions to strengthen your application. If you are unsure about your eligibility or have questions about the application form, please come along to the applicant webinar or email funding@nzonair.govt.nz.