

# CANBERRA SCREEN AND GAMES FUND

## *Game Development and Production Guidelines*

Guidelines released: 4 December 2025

Last updated: 3 December 2025

### 1 **General Principles**

The Canberra Screen and Games Fund is an ACT Government Program delivered in partnership with Screen Canberra. It has been established to support the creative industry within the ACT.

The Digital Games Program provides strategic investment to support ACT-based digital game studios in the development and production of commercially viable digital games.

#### PHASE 1

##### **Development (Concept & Prototype)**

This phase is focused on exploration, validation, and planning. Funding at this stage is intended to de-risk the project by transforming a creative idea into a tangible and viable concept, laying the essential groundwork for full-scale production.

##### **Primary Goal**

To develop a strong proof of concept and a comprehensive plan that demonstrates the project's creative, technical, and commercial potential.

##### **Eligible Activities**

Funding for the Development phase can be used for activities including, but not limited to:

- **Prototyping:** Building a playable demo to test and prove core gameplay mechanics and systems.
- **Vertical Slice:** Creating a small, polished section of the game that represents the final quality and experience.
- **Narrative and Game Design:** Finalising the game design document (GDD), story, script, and world-building.
- **Business & Commercial Planning:** Conducting market research, defining the target audience, and creating a marketing and release strategy.

##### **Expected Outcome**

Upon completion of this phase, the project should have a compelling, playable build and a robust business plan ready to attract a publisher or secure the financing required for full production.

#### PHASE 2

##### **Production (Full-Scale Build)**

This phase is for projects that have successfully completed the development stage and are ready to be built into a full, market-ready product. Funding is focused on scaling up the team and executing the established vision.

### Primary Goal

To complete the principal development of the game, taking it from a proven prototype to a feature-complete, polished product ready for commercial launch.

### Eligible Activities

Funding for the Production phase is intended for the main build of the game, including:

- **Full-Scale Asset Creation:** Producing all final in-game art, models, animations, sound effects, and music.
- **Programming & Engineering:** Executing the complete coding of all game features and systems.
- **Level & Content Design:** Building all the game's levels, missions, and player experiences.
- **Quality Assurance (QA):** Comprehensive bug testing, playtesting, and optimisation.
- **Project Management:** Managing the team, timeline, and budget through to the completion of the game.

### Expected Outcome

The completion of this phase results in a finished game that is ready for submission to distribution platforms, marketing campaigns, and release to the public.

## 2 Available Funding

- **Funding Phase 1:** Up to \$30,000 per development project
- **Funding Phase 2:** Up to \$100,000 per production project
- **Type:** This is a **non-recoupable grant**.
- **Requirement:** Applicants must demonstrate a **1:2 ratio** of Qualifying ACT Expenditure (QACTE). For every **\$1** of grant funding requested, the game production business must commit to spending at least **\$2** in the ACT.

Investments above the standard thresholds will be considered in exceptional circumstances. This increase in funding would be evaluated on the project's unique merits, potential impact, and alignment with strategic objectives.

## 3 Eligibility

- Applicants and projects must meet Screen Canberra's Terms of Trade, as well as the specific eligibility criteria set out in these guidelines.
- Specific requirements apply to projects which involve [First Nations participation or content](#).
- Specific requirements may apply to projects which involve community participation or content with the following communities: d/Deaf, disabled, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQA+, or those from other under-represented groups.
- All projects must fit the ACT Government's [Ethical Investments Framework](#)

This funding program is open to companies and in certain circumstances, individuals.

### 3.1 General Eligibility for all Applicants

#### ALL APPLICANTS MUST:

- Have an active ABN and be registered for GST if required by law.
- Be based in the Australian Capital Territory or be able to display **clear ACT economic benefit**.
- Meet the specific requirements of the relevant program guidelines.
- Not be engaged in a legal dispute related to the application.
- Have meaningful financial and creative control of the project.
- Have the capacity and resources to execute the project.
- Hold the necessary rights (e.g., copyright) to carry out the project.

### **3.2 Individual Applicants**

#### INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS

An individual applicant must be:

- At least 18 years of age.
- ACT-based, or have at least two ACT-based Key Creatives (Producer, Director, Editor or Writer) on the project.

#### INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS CANNOT BE

- A full-time secondary or tertiary student.
- An individual must not have a real or conceived conflict of interest with ACT Government or Screen Canberra.
- An individual with an outstanding obligation to Screen Canberra unless an exception has been agreed upon.

### **3.3 Organisational Applicants**

An organisation must:

To qualify for the Screen & Games Fund, a company must either be based in the ACT or be a non-ACT-based company genuinely co-producing with an ACT-based company, or meet a minimum qualifying ACT spend requirement.

#### ORGANISATIONS CANNOT BE

- An educational or training institution
- A gambling company
- An organisation with an outstanding obligation to Screen Canberra.

### **3.4 Application Limits**

- Applicants may submit one application per round.
- A project may be resubmitted once if the application materials have been meaningfully updated.
- After two unsuccessful applications, that project is no longer eligible.

## **4 Ineligibility**

The following are not eligible for funding:

Those games that:

- are not played on a digital device with a screen. That is, games that are not completely digital, including boardgames or hybrid digital/physical games
- are being developed by teams of students who are currently enrolled in a games or games-adjacent field of study
- are being developed by teams led by, or significantly reliant on, full-time students, regardless of the field of study
- are substantially advertising or promotions
- constitute gambling activities or are gambling simulations
- feature or link exploitative or unethical pay-to-win or play-to-earn mechanics
- contain or have a relationship to high risk and volatile trading products or technology
- contain [or link] any content or mechanic that is in breach of any law or regulation
- in the reasonable opinion of Screen Canberra, may have difficulties receiving an Australian classification, due to the inclusion of content such as:
- the instruction or promotion of crime, cruelty or violence; depictions of frequent and/or very high impact violence;
  - sexual activity;
  - sexual violence;
  - exploitative depictions of instructional illicit drug use;
  - encouragement of illicit drug use;

- illicit interactive drug use
- any other content that contravenes prevailing community standards.

## 5 Inclusive Games Industry

Screen Canberra is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive games industry. Applications are strongly encouraged from:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- Multicultural communities, including migrants and refugees;
- People who identify as living with a Disability;
- People of different age groups;
- People who identify as being part of LGBTIQ+ communities.

## 6 Environmental Sustainability

Screen Canberra is committed to the ACT Governments emissions reduction targets of achieving net zero emissions by 2045.

We encourage all studios working in the Territory to consider the environment and strive to reduce their Carbon Footprints. Projects which can incorporate sustainable practices are encouraged.

## 7 Application Process and Assessment Process

### APPLICATION DETAILS

- Before applying, applicants must read and understand these guidelines, Screen Canberra's Terms of Trade, and preview the application form on SmartyGrants.
- Applicants are encouraged to contact Screen Canberra to discuss their project before applying.
- All applications must be submitted via the online SmartyGrants form and include all required supporting materials.
- Applicants must disclose all other funding applications and any funding already secured for the project.
- A non-refundable application fee of **\$100** for applications.

### HOW TO APPLY

Complete and submit the online application form prior to the application deadline through Screen Canberra's Application Portal on SmartyGrants.

### APPLICATION FORM

Through the application form, applicants must:

- provide all the information requested and answer the application questions;
- meet, where required, all eligibility criteria; and,
- include all required supporting materials.

### ASSESSMENT AND DECISIONS

- Applications are reviewed by Screen Canberra staff for eligibility.
- Once eligibility has been confirmed, the applicant will receive an email advising that their application has moved to assessment, which will take approximately eight **(8)** to twelve **(12)** weeks.
- All applicants are assessed by independent assessors before being presented to the Assessment Committee.
- Screen Canberra applies a Conflict of Interest policy to ensure fairness for all applicants.
- Decisions are made by the Screen Canberra Assessment Committee for funding projects.
- Screen Canberra may contact third parties (e.g., other funders, publishers) to discuss an application.
- All applications involving First Nations content will be assessed by a First Nations assessor.

- All applicants will be notified of the outcome by email.
- An offer of funding may be withdrawn if a funding contract is not completed within six (6) months.
- All funding decisions will be signed off by the responsible ACT Government Minister.

### ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Applicants must upload the following required materials with their application form:

- Downloadable Pitch Video (maximum 3 minutes in length) that articulates the concept of your project, the creative vision, and the aims of the team
- Creative Pitch Deck communicating the vision for your project
- Project Plan four pages maximum length. The purpose of this document is to help assessors understand how you plan to measure the success and viability of your project. At a high level, this document should communicate where you are now, where you want to be, and how this funding and project will help you get there
- CVs of team members

### FIRST NATIONS CONTENT

Where there is First Nations community participation or content involved in the project applicants must provide:

- a statement setting out how they are approaching the First Nations content or participation with regard to appropriate protocols. Applicants must demonstrate that they have a consultation plan covering the full production process and are following it. The statement should be based on the checklists available in Screen Australia's guide [Pathways & Protocols: a film maker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts](#);
- evidence of consultation undertaken to date; and
- if the project will involve particular First Nations individuals or communities, signed letters of consent confirming their willingness to participate and any relevant access agreements.

### ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applications are assessed based on the following four criteria, with examples of the relevant considerations listed for each:

#### **Economic Impact**

- Does the project contribute to the long-term viability and growth of the applicant studio?
- The commercial benefits it provides to the ACT games industry.
- Strength of the commercial plan

#### **Creative Merit**

- The originality of the game idea,
- Clarity and strength of the application and support materials

#### **Viability**

- The scope and realism of the project,
- the feasibility of the budget and timeline - (ensuring contracted workers are appropriately remunerated in line with award rates)
- The strength of the team
- Does the game have a clear target audience and potential to be a commercial success?

## **8 Successful Applicants**

### CONTRACTING

- If a project is approved, the applicant will receive a Letter of Offer (LOO) detailing the level and type of Screen Canberra's contribution, as well as information about the contracting process and any conditions.

- Successful applicants will enter into a Production Grant Agreement (PGA) with Screen Canberra.
- Screen Canberra reserves the right to cancel a contract if it is not closed within a six-month period.

#### TERMS OF FUNDING

- If a project has received development funding from Screen Canberra, the previous development funding must be recognised in the production budget and will become part of Screen Canberra's total grant or investment in the project.
- Applicants must adhere to the Screen Canberra Credit Policy in any executed or future deals with any partners.
- For further information about Screen Canberra's standard conditions of funding, see Screen Canberra's Terms of Trade.
- Projects utilising the Digital Games Tax Offset must have the DGTO Provisional Certificate approved and issued prior to contract execution.

#### DELIVERABLES

- As a condition of the grant, the applicant must deliver the materials set out in the funding agreement.

#### PUBLICITY

Funding for the CBR Screen and Games Fund is provided by the ACT Government. The Territory and Screen Canberra may disclose and publicise funding details (including recipient name, project title, funding amount and a brief description of the funded activities) as required under applicable [freedom of information legislation](#) and for reporting or promotional purposes, including websites, media releases, announcements and annual reports. Except for such disclosures, the applicant and Screen Canberra must keep all application and assessment information confidential and must not disclose it to any third party without prior written consent.

### **9 Other Resources**

Further information about Screen Canberra funding and resources to assist with submitting an application is available on Screen Canberra's website:

- Screen Canberra Terms of Trade
- Information for Applicants
- Information for Recipients
- Screen Canberra Credit Policy
- Screen Canberra's AI Guiding Principles
- [Finance Plan Template](#)
- [A-Z Budget Template](#)
- Qualifying ACT Expenditure

### **10 Contact**

For any enquiries, please contact the Screen Canberra team. Please note that we are not able to provide creative advice or suggestions to strengthen your application.

Email: [info@screencanberra.com.au](mailto:info@screencanberra.com.au)

Post: GPO Box 9, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia

### **11 Privacy**

Screen Canberra collects personal information in various ways, including through funding applications, acquittal reports, registrations for events, program participation, and supporting documentation provided with forms.

All personal information is managed in accordance with the Information Privacy Act 2014 (ACT) and

Screen Canberra's Privacy Policy, and may be used for assessment, administration, reporting, and other related purposes.

## 12 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure it remains consistent with Screen Canberra's operational objectives, national screen industry standards, and evolving technologies and creative practices.