GUIDELINES

Film Lab: New Voices Development Fund

What is the program?

Film Lab: New Voices (Film Lab) is a low-budget feature film skills development initiative designed and delivered by the South Australian Film Corporation (SAFC) to provide a platform for the next generation of diverse South Australian filmmaking talent.

The fourth Film Lab program will commence in 2026 with development funding from the SAFC and Screen Australia.

What is on offer?

Film Lab is a bold, ambitious, and creative program designed to produce world-class films that reach audiences here and globally and launch the careers of a new generation of South Australian Key Creatives (writers, directors, producers).

The program will give three South Australian creative teams development funding and industry mentoring across a 12-month period to develop a low-budget feature film script which must be conceived and designed for the allocated budget. Industry mentors with expertise in low-budget filmmaking will guide the three teams through a rigorous skills development program.

At the end of the development phase, the three teams will apply through a competitive process where one team will be selected for Film Lab production funding to produce a low budget feature film.

Development funding on offer is $30,000 per project for the 12-month program.

Who is eligible?

The applicant must:

- be a South Australian Resident (as defined in the SAFC's Terms of Trade),
- have read, and be compliant with, the SAFC's Terms of Trade,
- be able to prove that they own or control the necessary rights to produce the project.

The Key Creatives team must:

- all be South Australian Residents,
- include at least one key creative (i.e. one of the writer/director/producer) from a group under-represented in the SA screen industry*,
- not have prior feature film credits in their roles, unless prior features were produced without any federal or state/territory government funding or where the Key Creative's prior credit is in a different medium (i.e. documentary director who is attached to a scripted project),

- have demonstrated a commitment to, and aptitude for, feature filmmaking through prior short-form or unreleased credits in their roles,
- demonstrate their ability to deliver the project to professional standards on schedule and within the allocated budget, and
- not be in breach of any contractual obligations to the SAFC.

*The SAFC is committed to supporting increased participation of people from groups under-represented in the SA screen industry which include:

- First Nations practitioners,
- Female identifying writers and directors,
- LGBTQIA+ practitioners,
- Practitioners residing in Regional or Remote areas of SA,
- Practitioners from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background,
- D/deaf and/or disabled practitioners.

For Round Four, priority will be given to applications from teams including at least one South Australian Key Creative who identifies as D/deaf and/or disabled.

Who is not eligible?

- Key Creatives from interstate,
- Key Creatives who have previously participated in Film Lab,
- Key Creatives who are in breach of any contractual obligation to the SAFC.

What projects are eligible?

Film Lab is a program for new, narrative-driven feature-length projects of any genre that demonstrate a strong authorial voice, authentic storytelling and independent spirit.

Projects must be designed with consideration to the available low budget production funding and are expected to be wholly produced and post-produced in South Australia (SA).

The SAFC and industry mentors will work with teams to further develop the production methodology to deliver within the project's approved budget.

What projects are ineligible?

- Short films,
- Digital games (see separate funding programs),
- Formats ineligible under the SAFC's Terms of Trade,
- Projects which have commenced production or are applying for retrospective funding.

Evaluation criteria

The SAFC will take the following into account when considering an application for the Film Lab Development Fund:

- The track record of the writer, director and producer, and the potential for Film Lab program to launch their professional career as a Key Creative,
- The originality and creative ambition of the concept,
- The marketability and potential audience for the project as presented in the pitch documents,
- The overall quality of the pitch materials,
- The diversity of the key creative team,
- The authenticity of the storytelling,
- The potential for the project to be realised within the proposed production budget,
- The commitment of the applicants to engage in the Film Lab development process and to work professionally and to a high technical standard within the budget.

In evaluating the project, the SAFC will consider any information and weight the above criteria as it judges appropriate to best serve the SAFC's Strategic Objectives and the SAFC's Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.

Specific assessment will be required for applications that include First Nations content. For more information, please refer to the SAFC's Terms of Trade (Working with First Nations Content and Communities); Screen Australia's Pathways & Protocols guide, and the SAFC's First Nations Cultural Protocols Guide.

Application process

Applications for Round Four of Film Lab Development Funding must be made via the SAFC's online grants platform safilm.smartygrants.com.au. Applications will be processed in two stages:

Stage One is assessment of eligibility. The assessment will be undertaken with the materials provided in the application platform. The onus is on the applicant to ensure that all required materials have been supplied to determine eligibility. Additional materials will not be accepted without the prior written agreement of the SAFC.

Applicants will be notified of a Stage One acceptance or decline within 10 business days from receipt of a complete Stage One application. After Stage One acceptance, applicants will be invited to proceed to Stage Two.

Stage Two is full assessment and shortlisting. Teams can pitch up to three projects within a single application. Applicants will be notified of a Stage Two shortlisting or decline within 30 business days from receipt of a complete Stage Two application.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to pitch to an industry panel comprising the SAFC, Screen Australia and finance and industry representatives.

Final decisions will be available five business days after the panel meeting.

Application materials

Stage One (eligibility assessment)

- A completed Film Lab: New Voices application form via Smarty Grants,
- Warranties confirming the project meets the SAFC rights holding eligibility requirements,
- Warranties confirming the project team meets the SAFC eligibility requirements of South Australian Key Creatives,
- Demographic information of the Key Creatives team applying,
- Evidence of the project meeting eligible format requirements, if applicable,
- Evidence of ICIP requirements met, if applicable,
- Warranties that SAFC Terms of Trade including contractual obligations to the SAFC are met.

Stage Two (if invited to apply)

- A maximum two-page pitch document for each project submitted which includes project logline, one paragraph synopsis (no longer than 1/3 page), genre, format, audience, potential market pathways, proposed low budget methodology and the team's vision for the film,
- A Mood Board to support the two-page pitch document,
- Curriculum vitae of all principals named in the team (maximum two pages each),
- One paragraph biography for all principals named in the team (for publicity purposes),
- An 8–10-page sample of screenwriting,
- Evidence of chain of title,
- Examples/links to previous work.

Development Funding Conditions

The SAFC will provide the development funding as a grant.

- If a project proceeds to production with SAFC finance, all previously awarded development funding must be recognised in the production budget (as an above-the-line cost) and will form part of SAFC funding represented in the finance plan.
- If the project goes into production without SAFC funding, the SAFC will require the producer to repay the development funding provided by the SAFC.

The SAFC will only contract with the copyright holder(s). Transfer of copyright is a matter for the applicants, not the SAFC.

Projects successful in the development stages must enter into a Development Grant Agreement (DGA) with the SAFC and approved projects are subject to SAFC terms and conditions.

Next steps?

Prior to the submission deadline, the SAFC will host a program of Film Lab: New Voices film screenings and filmmaker Q&A events to demonstrate the low budget film methodology.

The SAFC strongly suggests that all applicants and Key Creatives attend **at least one** of the screenings prior to submitting their application. Details of these screenings will be made available in advance on the SAFC website safilm.com.au

Before applying, all applicants must read the SAFC's Terms of Trade and speak to the SAFC regarding their intended SAFC grant request and expectations.

Contacts

Please direct all phone enquiries to the relevant staff below via SAFC Reception on +61 8 8394 2000.

For initial enquiries, please contact SAFC Program Coordinator Julia Light, programs@safilm.com.au

For other enquiries, please contact SAFC Talent Development Manager Jessica Giacco jessica.giacco@safilm.com.au

(Note: All amounts in this guideline are quoted exclusive of GST, unless otherwise stated)