



What is the program?

The ABC First Look – Early Development Grant supports the development of world-class screen projects led by South Australian Key Creatives, made in South Australia (SA) to connect with audiences here and globally. This initiative is funded through the ABC SAFC Content Pipeline Fund and is aimed at progressing early-stage concepts for an ABC audience.

This fund is competitive and will operate to published deadlines. The level of funding allocated to any project is capped, but amounts offered within the cap may vary and is subject to available funding.

What are we looking for?

- A distinct and original voice
- A clear and compelling central premise
- Potential for the narrative to sustain an audience over proposed project/program duration
- Demonstrated understanding of the chosen genre (via tone, pacing, key story beats and characters)
- Demonstrated experience to drive development and production outcomes

What is on offer?

The ABC First Look – Early Development Grant offers development funding for early-stage project concepts to develop to a stage suitable for consideration for ABC committed development.

The ABC will provide feedback to selected teams on their early-stage development materials including the outcomes they would like to see from their early-stage development process to progress them to further stages of development and to being market ready.

Projects funded under this program must have clear development goals that align with the ABC commissioning priorities. Early Development is open to projects submitted in an outline or treatment format. Projects must be able to demonstrate alignment with the [ABC's commissioning priorities](#).

Applicants can apply for up to \$50,000 for Scripted (including Children's) and up to \$25,000 for Unscripted, depending on the type of project, proposed development activities and scope of the final project. The SAFC, at its discretion, may fund lesser amounts than applied for.

Early-stage development funding is available for ABC-targeted screen projects intended to be produced and post-produced in South Australia (SA), with an aim to apply for production funding via the ABC SAFC Content Pipeline Fund. IP must be held or controlled by a South Australian resident or South Australian company (as detailed in the SAFC's [Terms of Trade](#)).



Who is eligible?

The applicant must:

- have read and be compliant with the SAFC's Terms of Trade,
- be a South Australian Resident (as defined in the Terms of Trade),
- be a credited producer,
- be able to prove that they own or control, or have an option to acquire, the necessary rights to own or control the project,
- have secured the attachment of a South Australian writer and/or director,
- have not breached any contractual obligations to the SAFC,
- have read the ABC priorities and guidelines [HERE](#) (Pitch – TV Independent Production),
- have watched the ABC First Look – Early Development Grant information webinar [HERE](#),
- have understood and complied with the [ABC Editorial Policies](#).

What projects are eligible?

Projects eligible for funding under this program include:

- Documentary (including feature documentary)
- Drama
- Children's
- Factual
- Comedy
- Animation (Children's only)

What projects are ineligible?

- Short films
- Theatrical feature films
- Social/web series intended for third party distribution (social platforms)
- Digital games (see separate funding programs)
- Formats ineligible under the SAFC's [Terms of Trade](#)
- Projects that have been previously declined for funding from this program
- Projects that do not comply with [ABC Editorial Policies](#)



Evaluation criteria

A panel comprising of SAFC staff and ABC commissioners will select projects from early concept submissions taking the following criteria into account when considering applications for the program:

- SA impact: Early-Stage development funding for ABC targeted screen projects intended to be produced and post-produced in SA, with an aim to apply for production via the ABC Pipeline Fund,
- Concept: Aligns with ABC charter by delivering a bold, distinctive, and elevated concept,
- Audience: Intended for commercial release via ABC broadcast and ABC iview,
- Experience: The experience of the applicant/team in delivering premium content; opportunities for advancing new and diverse key creative SA talent.

In evaluating the project, the assessment panel will consider any information and weigh the above criteria as it judges appropriate to best serve the SAFC's [Strategic Objectives](#) and the SAFC [Diversity & Inclusion Strategy](#) in line with [ABC priorities and objectives](#) and Diversity and Inclusion at the ABC [Diversity & Inclusion - TV Independent Production](#).

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); the SAFC's [First Nations Cultural Protocols Guide](#) and the [ABC First Nations Protocols Guide](#).

What can funds be used for?

Development Funding is considered a partial contribution to the next stage of development. Funds may be used towards development activities including (but not limited to):

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| • Writers' room costs | • Producer fees and overheads* |
| • Series bibles | • Writer fees |
| • Episode outlines | • Script editors |
| • Draft scripts | • Script consultant |
| • Detailed research | • Legal fees |
| • Indicative filming / reel (for factual) | |

*Producer fees and overheads are capped at 10% of development costs.



What can't the funds be used for?

- The costs of options in the work, copyright, life rights,
- The purchase of assets, equipment, hardware or software,
- Retrospective development expenses or international travel,
- Non-South Australian producer fees or overheads,
- In-kind or deferred fees,
- Non-arm's length market contributions must be net of related party fees and overheads.

Application process

Applications for the ABC First Look – Early Development Grant are open by rounds and 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 by the SAFC. The application will be assessed for eligibility based on the materials submitted 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 designated closing date of Stage One eligibility.

After Stage One acceptance, eligible applicants will be invited to proceed to Stage Two.

Stage Two is full assessment and consideration of an offer of funding.

Applicants will be notified of a Stage Two Offer or decline within five business days from the Panel Decision.

Applications will be assessed at Stage Two by a panel comprising SAFC staff and ABC Commissioners. SAFC staff will be involved only to ensure the evaluation criteria have been followed, and will not be involved in the creative assessment.



Application materials

Stage One (eligibility assessment)

- Warranties confirming the project meets SAFC rights holding eligibility requirements,
- Warranties confirming the project meets SAFC Residency status of applicant and/ or Key Creatives eligibility requirements, as applicable,
- Evidence of all market attachments that specify the commercial terms and level of commitment (dated no earlier than three months from application unless otherwise agreed with SAFC), if applicable,
- Short form creative materials – logline and synopsis,
- Demographic information of the applicant and Key Creatives,
- Filmography of the applicant,
- Evidence of the project meeting the SAFC's eligible format requirements, if applicable,
- Development budget total,
- Level of SAFC funding requested,
- Warranties that SAFC Terms of Trade conditions and contractual obligations to the SAFC are met.

Stage Two (if invited to apply)

- ASIC Current Company Extract for the Production Company applying,
- ASIC Current Company Extract for the Production entity Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) if formed,
- Documents evidencing Chain of Title,
- Documents evidencing South Australian Residency,
- Detailed development Budget (Including SA Expenditure),
- Development Schedule,
- Creative materials*,
- Evidence of consultation relevant to the content and participants, if applicable, for example, in the case of First Nations or D/deaf and/or disabled content in the application.

*Creative materials are dependent on the project type:

Scripted Series	Logline, one full page synopsis of story and paragraph stating intended audience
Documentary/Factual Series or Feature	Early Pitch deck including logline, one-paragraph to one page synopsis and paragraph stating intended audience
Children & Family	Logline, one-page synopsis, paragraph of intended audience, genre

*Additional materials may be included e.g. early footage or access for documentary

GUIDELINES

ABC First Look

Early Development Grant



South Australian **Film Corporation**

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 shall receive a development credit on the draft script cover page, pitch materials or teaser.

Further terms will be set out in the relevant contract issued by the SAFC.

Key Dates

Applications Open: Stage One ELIGIBILITY	14 September, 2026
Applications Close: Stage One	5 October, 2026
Eligible applicants notified by	12 October, 2026
Applications Open: Stage Two ASSESSMENT	12 October, 2026
Applications Close: Stage Two	13 November, 2026
Assessment Panel	9 December, 2026
Applicants notified by	16 December, 2026

Next steps?

Before applying, all applicants must read the SAFC's [Terms of Trade](#) and speak to the SAFC regarding their intended SAFC grant request and the estimated SA spend on your project.

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)