

Scripted Roadmap

He Mahere Mō Ngā Tuhinga Totoko



Tōna Aronga Nui

Purpose

1. NZ On Air's Scripted Roadmap sets out our approach to allocating production funding through the Scripted stream of the NZ Media Fund.
2. Our intent is to improve the diversity of funded content and its creators; provide more opportunities for innovation; and provide pathways for different scales of production.

He Kupu Whakataki

Introduction

3. The core purpose of the NZ Media Fund is: *Great New Zealand content is valued and enjoyed by many New Zealanders*. One of the four funding streams in the NZ Media Fund is dedicated to scripted content.
4. Scripted content, for young and old, is a vital component of New Zealand storytelling; a creative and engaging reflection of our culture, people and issues.
5. It is also the genre where trade-offs due to funding constraints, competing tensions, and risks are the most intense.
6. For more detail on how we consulted on and developed this framework, see [Annex A](#). We'll be using this roadmap from 1 July 2018.

Hei Mahere Tuhinga Totoko

Scripted Roadmap

7. Using this roadmap our support for scripted content will focus on three investment areas:
 - **Premier content**
 - **Sustainable production**
 - **Newer storytellers**
8. Our first question is always: *how does the project reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture?* This cultural remit is what our statute requires.
9. Given the particular influence drama and comedy has in storytelling, we will also consider:
 - **Diversity** – is it an important story that reveals aspects of NZ culture, society or people that are different to those commonly portrayed, or which sheds a new light?
 - **Gender equality** – will the project support and reflect gender equality both on screen and within the production crew?
 - **Talent development** – does this project provide an opportunity for early and mid-career writing and production creatives, particularly people that reflect New Zealand's cultural and ethnic diversity, to stretch their wings in a supported environment?
 - **Regionalism** – will this production show us parts of the country and communities we rarely see represented in scripted content?
10. While not every project need involve these extra factors, NZ On Air must consider the collective impact of our funding decisions. Therefore the factors above may influence our decision when considering competing proposals.

10.1 Rārangi Take Matua

Premier content

Hei whakarawe kounga mō toe rarahi o te hunga mātaki.

To provide the highest quality content for large New Zealand audiences.

- This category may include series, miniseries and telefeatures; namely projects with high production values, high cultural impact, large platforms, and sizeable audiences
- Platform co-investment is mandatory
- Projects with third party investment such as co-production funds or sales advances will generally be seen as having an enhanced business case
- We'll likely only be able to support up to four seasons unless there is an exceptional audience response and the platform and/or third party contributions increase
 - Likely budget over \$500K per produced hour with a maximum NZ On Air contribution around \$6m
 - Projects will have gone through a development process

10.2 Te Toitūtanga o ngā Hōtaka

Sustainable production

Mā te whakauka kounga rārangi take, mā ngā hōtaka whaihua hou, e taea ai te auau tautokona me te auau kitea.

To ensure successful content, and new projects with potential, can aspire to stable funding for multiple seasons.

- Projects across a diverse range, with clear appeal to a target audience, on platforms appropriate to that audience
 - Smaller but adequate budgets, up to \$500K per produced hour
 - An opportunity for less experienced teams, or teams with more diverse material, to tell different stories with a reasonable level of resource
 - A prior development process is recommended
- Platform co-investment is expected. Projects with match-funding and/or third party funding will be prioritised.

10.3 He Reanga Kaikawekōrero hou

Newer storytellers

Hei tohu huarahi anō mā ngā reo hou me te mahi whakamātautau.

To provide a pathway for newer voices and experimentation.

- Adequate budgets for projects that focus on different and diverse content to that available in the Premier and Sustainable categories
 - Up to \$500K NZ On Air contribution per project
 - Prior production credits necessary (and/or a great Executive Producer)
- Platform support is required and projects will need to demonstrate the strength of the proposal with supporting material: scripts, a pilot or taste tapes.

11. As always we will assess each project for the excellence of the idea, its appeal to a target audience, and how the project meets our nine public media investment principles¹.

To further understand these categories see [Annex B](#) where we have applied them retrospectively to some recently funded Scripted content.

¹ Page 11 of our [Funding Strategy](#)

He aha atu anō hei mahi mā mātou?

What else will we do?

12. All projects must be available free to NZ audiences. Ideally this is at the time of first distribution or soon after. Subsequent plays behind a paywall are acceptable.
13. However we will occasionally consider high quality applications for content initially playing behind a paywall accessible to New Zealanders that -
 - offer subsequent, timely, free-access New Zealand distribution confirmed at the time of application *and*
 - have significant paywall platform co-investment *and*
 - clearly reflect New Zealand identity and culture.
14. We will also:
 - Keep development funding criteria, budget, and assessment processes under review to ensure gender balance, ethnic and cultural diversity have the right incentives
 - Track and publish diversity data for funded development and production to inform and encourage industry discussion and appropriate action
 - Work with guilds to provide targeted professional development opportunities as part of our industry development work
 - Discuss further synergies with the NZ Film Commission, and Te Māngai Pāho.

Ko taua mahi anō rā

The business as usual bit

15. The usual funding practices and policies of the [NZ Media Fund](#) apply: for example -
 - Specific information regarding scripted content will be provided in the Round Guidelines published prior to each round opening.
 - Requested funding should be proportionate to the size of the anticipated audience; i.e. projects requesting more than \$1m would be expected to secure a relatively sizeable New Zealand audience.
 - Co-investment is expected, preferably including commissioning platforms. Proposed platforms will need to demonstrate an existing commitment to local content and the ability to engage NZ audiences.
 - Online distribution for a minimum of a year is also expected (this may be cumulative if a third-party distribution partner is involved and we agree)

[Tāpiringa A: Te ahunga mai o te mahere](#) [Annex A: How we developed the roadmap](#)

Tōna horopaki o mua Background

16. In September 2017 NZ On Air hosted a stakeholder conversation about the state of NZ drama production. The primary areas of discussion concerned:
 - **Development** – the need for more and longer development and greater opportunities for professional talent upskilling
 - **Diversity** – the desire for a wider range of projects, and more diversity of on-screen and off-screen personnel to drive more diverse, authentic storytelling
 - **Innovation** – finding a mechanism to encourage riskier drama content with reasonable budgets to be produced
 - **Newer platforms** – we need a clearer articulation of the basis on which NZ On Air is willing to fund content for new platforms, given their generally smaller, less consistent audiences, and low co-investment.
 - **Premium drama** - how best to support this given the relative high cost, yet its importance in telling stories of production scale to a global standard
17. We released a [summary paper](#) that outlines the points discussed on the day and a number of potential actions for a new approach.
18. Over the past five years NZ On Air has spent an average of \$35m each year on drama and comedy, securing an average 108 hours of content. See [Annex C](#) for information about this expenditure.
19. Recent comedy production outside of returning sketch and panel shows has been sporadic as funding has become constrained. Producers and platforms have been focused on developing and producing drama series, many of which have comedic elements. Returning successful comedy series such as *7 Days* and *Jono And Ben* have delivered volume and regular work for local comedy writers and performers, but other forms of broadcast comedy such as sitcoms are rare.

He Whiringa Kōrero: He rerekē tā tēnei, he rerekē tā tēna Discussion: The competing tensions

20. Funding for scripted content is highly contested. There are a number of competing environmental tensions to balance, when creating policy, which were well-canvassed by stakeholders. We summarise these into five main categories:

Cultural value and international stories

21. The first and most important criterion for NZ On Air's scripted content is that it has high New Zealand cultural resonance. Our Act requires us to *reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture*.
22. Many producers work internationally which is a strong contributor to a healthy industry. International projects involve offshore funding and often also the NZ Screen Production Grant, both funding sources with different goals. The more international the story, the less likely NZ On Air is able to support it: the NZSPG was created to fill this gap. NZ On Air can only consider international stories with an obvious on-screen New Zealand connection.

Cost

23. Compared to other genres, professional drama and sitcom production in NZ is expensive (\$600K-\$1m+ per hour).² There is insufficient funding to meet aspirations of existing content creators with good, ambitious ideas, let alone provide significant opportunities for new content makers.
24. Scripted content such as webseries has been made for much lower budgets by motivated production teams. These projects have provided content diversity, 'proof of concept' for potentially larger projects, and production credits for some less experienced personnel. This ultra-low budget approach is not sustainable from a business or career perspective, and there is increasing pressure from producers for more sustainable funding for online scripted content.
25. With our Scripted stream so highly contested, the maximum level of funding NZ On Air is now able to commit to a single project is around \$6m, down from previous years. Co-productions and pre-sales are hard to secure for smaller producers but are increasingly needed to augment funding. Usually we have required third party contributions to reduce the level of taxpayer funding, rather than extend the production value or scope of a series.

Audience size

26. Given the high cost of production NZ On Air has previously targeted most drama investment at projects for large audiences on mainstream platforms: a value-for-money approach seeking the largest number of eyeballs for our largest investments. This remains an important consideration in a risky environment.
27. But it is also increasingly clear that we need to support more diverse outcomes for changing audiences, as well as helping provide pathways for different and new stories and storytellers.

Platforms

28. Broadcast platforms continue to provide the largest aggregated audiences and cash investment. While online viewing of scripted content is rising, online viewing data is inconsistent and total viewers are still relatively low compared to broadcast.
29. The audience shift to streaming content has been led by SVOD platforms like Lightbox and Netflix. NZ On Air's current funding policy requires free access, a core principle of public media, which precludes supporting projects exclusively behind a paywall. Licencing deals for local content that would see scripted content screen across SVOD as well as free access platforms have to date not been able to be negotiated, but there appears to be some softening on this from platforms.
30. Most local platforms are keen to distribute local scripted content. However, few are prepared to commission and fund projects without significant public subsidy: some platforms offer little or no cash investment at all.

Success vs new ideas

31. Success in the small-screen space is hard won; a consistent and supportive funding policy is crucial. Two current drama series, *Westside* and *The Brokenwood Mysteries*, continue to attract strong audiences, as does long running comedy series *7 Days*.
32. Being able to continue to support successful series while at the same time committing resources to fund new projects is increasingly difficult. Broadcasters now prefer shorter-run dramas (2-6 eps) to longer-run dramas, but shorter series often lack economies of scale.

² NZ drama production is nonetheless highly cost-competitive compared to international drama production.

Tāpiringa B: Ngā Hōtaka Tuhinga Totoko i whai pūtea i tēnei tau

Annex B: Scripted Projects recently funded

The table below categorises some previously funded projects using the new investment categories to show how we would view them now.

Description	Sub-Genre	Total Approved Funding	No. of Episodes	Length of Episodes	Hours	Platform
PREMIER CONTENT						
WESTSIDE 4	TV Series	7,710,000	10	44.00	7.33	THREE
FRESH EGGS	TV Series	4,385,309	6	45.00	4.50	TVNZ 2
THE BROKENWOOD MYSTERIES 5	TV Series	3,636,000	4	90.00	6.00	Prime
IN DARK PLACES	Telefeature	2,944,175	1	90.00	1.50	TVNZ 1
DAFFODILS	Feature Film	200,000	1	100.00	1.67	TVNZ 1
SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION						
THE CUL DE SAC 3	Children's Drama	1,220,591	6	24.00	2.40	TVNZ 2
7 DAYS	Panel Show	1,056,000	40	32.00	21.33	THREE
DARRYL: A COAST TO COAST STORY	Webseries	472,500	9	8.00	1.2	TVNZ OnDemand
NEWER STORYTELLERS						
AROHA BRIDGE	Animation	534,900	18	8.00	2.4	Māori Television
AT MY MOST BEAUTIFUL	Webseries	295,523	6	10.00	1.00	Watch Me
THE OUTLOOK FOR SOMEDAY 2017-18	Webseries	186,000	6	8.00	0.80	Fairfax - Stuff
ALIBI	Webseries	143,460	6	10.00	1.00	TVNZ OnDemand
HOUSIE WIVES	Webseries	98,800	5	8.00	0.67	The Coconet.TV
GAMEFROOT	Children's game	129,240	-	-	-	Gamelab

Tāpiringa C: Te nui o t pūtea me te tatauranga o ngā hāora pāoho 2012 - 2017

Annex C: Scripted Expenditure and Hours 2012 - 2017

