



West Midlands IP Fund: Narrative Guidelines & FAQs

The West Midlands IP Fund (WMIPF) is funded by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and delivered by Creative UK (CUK) in collaboration with Create Central (CC). The purpose of the fund is to support production companies based in the West Midlands Combined Authority area in their development of original screen IP.

WMIPF: Narrative is a call for project funding for narrative scripted and unscripted screen projects in the region.

What can I apply for?

Project development funding is available for scripted and non-scripted narrative projects for film, TV and animation – from single fiction and documentary films to series. This may include option costs, treatment development, script/story development and writer fees, design/artwork development, pilot production, early-stage project packaging costs or other activities which creatively and substantively contribute towards project development.

Funding awards are each expected to be up to £20,000 in total. We ask applicants to consider what they really need and for what specific development purposes; we ask you to break down and budget the stages of development and to request an amount of funding accordingly, specifying all the fees and costs involved. If we are unable to support the entire development process, we may still be able to fund a given stage of that process - details of those different stages will therefore allow us to make the best funding decisions possible.

We can only support one award per company through this 'Narrative' round so please apply with what you believe to be your strongest project which is at the right stage to be supported further through a development process.

Who can apply?

The intent of the fund is to support and help sustain local, homegrown screen production companies to develop their own originations and IP at a challenging time in the industry.

The fund is targeted at SMEs. Eligible producers and production companies must be based in the WMCA area of Birmingham, Solihull, Sandwell, Dudley, Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Companies must be registered trading entities at Companies House; companies should be registered or trading in the WMCA region, or alternatively lead producers must be permanently resident in the area.

Producers/companies should have in place at the point of application the creative team which is due to undertake the development process. Teams must include a lead project producer and in addition should include one or more key creative, for example: writer, writer/director, director, animator, designer. This list is not exhaustive - please specify the key creatives you need for the development process you are asking us to fund.

The fund is not designed for new or very early-stage talent and as such creative teams must be able to demonstrate a collective level of emergent experience in their given field – or in another related field (for example, ad/commercial producers developing a film project). Relevant experience might include full writing/directing/production/animation credits, professional writing commissions/engagements and in-house or freelance creative roles (for example at production companies/houses or broadcasters).

Key dates

The deadline to apply is midday, 3rd February 2025.



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How to apply?

We operate an online application process.

Stage 1: Applicants are asked to complete an application form online via the Creative UK website. You will be asked to provide information regarding the lead applicant, production company and creative team members, alongside information regarding the project such as logline, synopsis, creative statement and development budget.

Stage 2: All applications are checked for eligibility against the guidelines; we are unable to progress ineligible applications. Eligible applications will be assessed by CUK with reference to the selection criteria outlined below. During the assessment process we may send queries or request further information via email.

Requested additional information and/or materials should be provided as soon as possible and may include:

- documentary evidence of authorship, rights ownership or chain of title
- documentary evidence of any proposed partner involvement in your project

It is important to understand that requesting additional information does not constitute an endorsement of your project or guarantee of funding.

Stage 3: Once reviewed and assessed, we aim to have made a decision regarding all applications by the end of February 2025.

Selection criteria

All applications submitted will be considered according to the following criteria:

- the creative merits of the proposed project;
- the track record of the creative team;
- the viability of the project in terms of production and potential market/audience;
- the strategic benefit of the project to the creative team/production company.

In our decision making, we endeavour to support diversity in all its forms and ensure that funds benefit as wide a base of recipients as possible.

We are only able to make a limited number of awards and even if your application meets all the above criteria, the competition from other projects applying to the fund means that we may not necessarily be able to support you.



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Funding decisions

All funding decisions will be made by Creative UK, in consultation with Create Central.

Whilst all projects are reviewed against the published criteria, the selection process is inevitably subjective and our decision on whether we wish to support your project is final.

All successful and unsuccessful applications will be confirmed in writing as soon as possible after a funding decision has been made.

Creative UK's decision in all matters concerning the assessment and selection of projects is final.

Inevitably, applicants may be turned down and may be disappointed as a result.

Data Protection & Freedom of Information

[Creative UK's Privacy Policy](#) is available to read here.

Feedback

All unsuccessful applications will receive a standard declination email. Due to the volume of applications that we anticipate, we may not be able to provide feedback to projects that have been declined.

Conditions of award

You will not be able to treat funding awarded as a taxable supply for VAT purposes. Nonetheless, all funding awards will be deemed to be inclusive of any VAT that may apply and in no event will we be liable for any additional amount by way of VAT.

Grant awards are funded from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. In accordance with the UK's subsidy control legislation, eligible businesses must not have received 'minimum financial assistance' more than £315,000 in aggregate (including any grant awarded under this programme) over the applicable period (being the current financial year ending 31st March 2025) and the two financial years immediately preceding the current financial year.

You will need to provide us with evidence of your rights of ownership over your project and you may require certain approvals from us over the project including chain of title or clearance documents before any award can be made. If you cannot provide documentary evidence that you already have the necessary rights or an option to acquire those rights, then we may not be able to fund your project.

Awards will take the form of a non-repayable grant. We aim to have contracted awards by the end of March 2025 – if you are not able to demonstrate rights/ownership at the point of application, then we may not be able to support your proposed development.

You will be expected to complete your development work within an agreed proposed timeframe on a project-by-project basis.

You will be required to credit Creative UK, Create Central and West Midlands Combined Authority on all materials (screenplays, decks, pilots, etc) created or developed with the funding and on the end credits of the completed content. You will also be expected to co-operate with Creative UK, Create Central and West Midlands Combined Authority in any publicity and press activity relating to your project and to the funding in general.



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My company is not registered or trading in the WMCA region – am I eligible to apply?

No. We are only able to fund SMEs either registered or trading in the WMCA region.

The company I work for is not an SME – can we still apply?

The fund is designed primarily to support creative industry SMEs in the region and priority will be given to applicants who can satisfy this criteria.

The company is based outside the region but working with talent based in the region – can we still apply?

No. The fund is designed primarily to benefit SMEs in the region.

The company is eligible but working with talent based outside the region – are we still eligible?

Yes – while we actively encourage working with creative talent in the region, it is not an eligibility requirement.

I am not the lead producer – can I apply on behalf of the production company?

We can accept applications from personnel closely involved with the project/company on behalf of the current lead producer, however we do expect the lead producer to be actively engaged and involved in the process for all funded projects.

I am a sole trader/don't have a registered company – can I still apply?

No. This opportunity is designed primarily to support registered creative SMEs in the region. Sole traders and freelancers may be closely involved with a project - but we require the application to come from a registered/trading company.

The project has previously received/is currently in receipt of funding from another source – can we still apply?

Yes. If you have received or are currently in receipt of funding you should indicate this in your application, along with details regarding any restrictions/terms over the IP/rights which may exist in relation to the funding.

Are applicants required to source match-funding?

No. We encourage additional funding on projects and you should indicate in your application where this is the case – but it is not an eligibility requirement.

My company has received (or would receive, including any award under this programme) more than £315,000 in state aid over the previous 3 financial years – can we still apply?

No. Since the funding will come in the form of a grant from a public funding source, Subsidy Control rules will apply. We will ask successful applicants to complete a declaration that confirms their eligibility in this regard.

My company does not hold the rights over the project being developed – can we still apply?

You can still apply but you should indicate clearly how the funding would be utilised in the absence of such rights, or alternatively your ability to secure them. You should indicate the current status/ownership of the IP/rights and provide evidence that you have secured or are securing an option over them.



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Is a non-narrative project eligible for support?

No – this opportunity is designed to support screen sector companies developing narrative content and we are unable to support other factual, factual-entertainment or entertainment projects.

The project does not yet have industry (eg broadcaster, distributor, financier) backing – can we still apply?

Yes. We encourage industry engagement/commitment as early as possible, but we understand that substantive development often happens first in order to secure that industry interest. We ask applicants to clearly indicate potential partners, financiers/commissioners and target audience/platform at the point of application. We are looking to support viable broadcast-standard content which is designed for the equivalent of a substantive broadcast, streaming and/or theatrical audience. We appreciate that screen production budgets and funding tariffs are under ongoing strain – but we are looking for applications from SMEs with industry-standard projects rather than the equivalent of, for example, micro-budget content for self-release.

The project does not yet have a lead creative (eg writer, director, animator) attached – can we still apply?

You may still apply, however you should clearly indicate how the funding would be utilised without such key creatives already attached and what the development process would therefore look like. We are looking for projects which are already in active development rather than ideas at a very early speculative stage.

What should be included in the synopsis?

We are looking for an overview of the form, genre/style, intended budget/scale and overall narrative arc of the project which references key characters/subjects and elements at the heart of that narrative.

What should be included in the individual/team statement?

We are looking for a creative statement which articulates as much of the following as you are able: why you want to tell the story, why you are the right team to tell it and why it needs telling now; what is distinctive and compelling about your idea and/or your approach to the subject; what your development plan is and where this stage fits into your wider strategy to realise the project; who the target audience is and how you hope to reach them; who your existing or desired industry partners might be.

What should be included in the development budget and what qualifies as an eligible development cost?

Funding awards are each expected to be up to a maximum of £20,000 in total but we ask applicants to consider what they really need for what specific development purposes and to apply for that amount accordingly. Please provide a simple budget breakdown of the stages of development, specifying all the fees and costs involved. This may include option costs, treatment development, script/story development and writer fees, design/artwork development, pilot/taster/sizzle reel production, early-stage project packaging costs, company overheads or other activity which creatively and substantively contributes towards project development. If the fund is unable to support the entire development process, we may still be able to fund a given stage of that process - details of those different stages will allow us to make the best funding decisions possible.

Can I add VAT onto fees/costs?

No – the funding is not eligible to be treated as taxable supply for VAT purposes and we will not be liable for additional VAT costs. All budgeted fees/costs must be inclusive of VAT.



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I am a creative with a narrative screen project but do not have a producer/production company attached – can I still apply?

No. We appreciate the ongoing challenges in developing content, however the fund is designed to support production companies in their onward support of creative talent. In order to realise an industry-standard/scale project, creative talent should ultimately be working with a registered production company that has a requisite level of experience and potential to realise it.

I am new to the industry – am I eligible for support?

No. The fund is not designed to support new entrants to the industry. There may be other sector specific opportunities and initiatives available which are designed for new talent.

I am already receiving support via the fund's BBC3 opportunity – can I apply for further support?

We are unable to provide additional funding for the BBC3 opportunity, which has already been supported through the WMIP Fund. However, if you have another/different eligible project then you can still apply.

I'm looking for support and/or finance to grow my company – can I apply?

No. This is a project development opportunity. However, you may be able to find company support through existing or forthcoming programmes and opportunities at Creative UK or via WMCA.