

# Originate Genre Guidelines

## Essentials

### About this program

Originate Genre is a dynamic development program designed to support and amplify the wealth of live-action genre feature film storytellers in Victoria.

The two-stage development program will elevate projects from early-stage concept to market-ready screenplays.

### ***Stage 1: Writers' Seminars***

All writers to take part in a series of online screenwriting seminars, focusing on genre storytelling, operating over four weeks (8 hours total). The seminar is free of charge and open to any Victorian interested in learning or deepening their understanding of genre narratives.

### ***Stage 2: Writers' Lab***

From those eligible to apply (see below), eight projects will be selected to take part in a Writers' Lab, which will be comprised of group and one-on-one development sessions, operating online and in-person in Melbourne for approximately six months. The bespoke program designed around the individual needs of the project, will focus on shaping the screenplays for market, while developing the writer's skills and understanding of the development process. Projects will each receive a \$10,000 grant towards the delivery of a polished first draft screenplay.

*Both development stages will be run by Wendall Thomas, UCLA screenwriting professor, lecturer, script editor, development executive, and author, as well as other featured guest speakers.*

### What are we looking for?

- Bold and distinct live-action genre fiction feature film projects. For the purposes of this initiative, projects should conform to one or more of the following genres: Action / Comedy / Fantasy / Horror / Romcom / Science-Fiction / Thriller.
- Applications that clearly address all the Assessment Criteria.

### Who is eligible?

#### ***Stage 1: Writers' Seminars***

- Applicants must be Victorian. View our [Terms of Trade](#) for eligibility requirements.

***Stage 2: Writers' Lab***

Applicants must:

- Be Victorian.
- Have registered and attended the Stage 1 Writers' Seminars.
- Be an emerging feature film writer who can demonstrate at least one of the following:
  - Degree from a recognised undergraduate or post graduate media program.
  - Member of the VicScreen Key Talent Register.
  - Participated, as a writer, in a scheme run by a major screen agency, organisation and/or broadcaster in Australia, such as AWG Pathways or AFTRS Talent Camp.
  - A body of work in related areas (e.g. writer or director of TVCs or theatre or published narrative fiction or journalism).
  - A writer credit on a narrative short film, web series, episode of TV drama, or low budget feature film that has been commercially released, broadcast or distributed online by a recognised [commissioning platform](#).
- Applicants who already have a writing credit on one produced and released feature film may still apply. Those with credits on two or more produced and released feature films may not apply.

While the initiative will be open to all emerging feature film writers, priority will be given during assessment to candidates from communities historically under-represented in the screen industry.

**Who is not eligible for this program?**

- Writers that did not register and attend the Stage 1 lecture series.
- Students currently enrolled in a tertiary course.
- Projects with writers or writer/directors (each) who have had more than one fiction feature produced.
- Projects with a producer who has had more than two fiction features produced.

**What projects are eligible?**

- One-off, feature-length, narrative fiction projects aimed at theatrical release with a genre focus. Features must be predominantly defined as at least one of the following: Action / Comedy / Fantasy / Horror / Romcom / Thriller / Science-Fiction.
- Projects that have a producer attached, provided:
  - Producers have no more than two produced fiction feature film credits.
  - Non-Victorian producers must engage a Victorian-based producer as part of their above-the-line team.

### What projects are not eligible?

- Documentary projects
- Series, telemovies, short films, short form series, online, VR, animation

### Who can you talk to about this program?

- Grants Officer – [Connie Boyce](#), 03 9660 3267
- Development Coordinator – [Kate Darrigan](#), 03 9660 3203
- Manager, Development – [Mackenzie Lush](#), 03 9660 3232

VicScreen acknowledges that barriers may prevent writers from underrepresented communities from accessing our programs and offer contact details for a confidential discussion about individual circumstances and/or access needs.

## The Details

### **Stage 1: Writers' Seminars**

- Applications for Stage 1 open on 7 March 2025 and close on 27 March 2025.
- The seminar will operate online, with two-hour sessions across four consecutive weeks.
- Seminars will run on 27 March, 3, 10, and 17 April 2025 at 1 pm Melbourne time.

### **Stage 2: Writers' Lab**

- All eligible participants from Stage 1 can apply for the Writers' Lab.
- Applications for Stage 2 will open on 27 March 2025 and close 2 May 2025.
- Up to eight projects will be selected for the Writers' Lab.
- **Lab dates:** Commencing the week of 28 July 2025 followed by 6-months of peer-to-peer, group, and one-on-one story editing sessions culminating in the delivery of a polished first draft screenplay 31 January 2026.
- Successful applicants must be able to attend an in-person week-long lab with Wendall Thomas 28 July – 1 August 2025.

### What documents do you need to apply?

You must submit:

### **Stage 1: Writers' Seminar**

- Completed registration form via this [link](#).

**Stage 2: Writers' Lab**

- Completed application form.
- One-page synopsis of the project.
- Up to 15 pages of a screenplay-formatted writing sample.

**What happens after you apply?**

- Funding is competitive. Decisions will take into account the Assessment Criteria (see below), VicScreen's availability of funds, diversity of the current slate of projects and teams across all platforms, as well as the perceived need for VicScreen funds by the applicant.
- Preference is given to all Victorian teams.

**Assessment Criteria for Stage 2**

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Story
  - The strength and distinctiveness of the proposed project.
  - The execution and quality of the submitted materials.
- Audience and Budget
  - The applicant's understanding of a clear pathway to audience appropriate to the project's genre, budget size and potential for production financing.
- Talent
  - The ability of the individual or team to develop the project.
- Diversity, refer to VicScreen's Gender & Diversity Statement
  - How robustly the application advances diversity across one or more core areas:
    - » CALD, LGBTQIA+, Gender, Living with a Disability or First Peoples of Australia
    - » Project leadership and Key Creatives
    - » Meaningful on-screen representation of diversity in main protagonists, themes and narratives.

VicScreen does not support projects with significant First Peoples' content without a member of the key creative team coming from an appropriate background.

**How long until a decision is made?****Stage 2: Writers' Lab**

- Applicants can expect an outcome by 30 June 2025.

**Will financial assistance or compensation be offered to participants?**

- VicScreen will provide a grant of \$10,000 towards the Participant's delivery of a polished first draft screenplay.
- To improve access and increase participation, applicants who face barriers or challenges to attend the in-person events will be eligible to receive additional financial support. Depending on the individual circumstances, the financial contribution can be applied towards transportation costs or other reasonable costs that will enable full participation in these activities.

**What happens if you aren't selected to participate?**

- We will contact you to let you know if you have been unsuccessful in your application.

**What will help your application?**

- Read these guidelines and the [Terms of Trade](#) which set out the core terms on which VicScreen conducts its business. Terms underlined in black appear in the website glossary.
- Review the online application form – make sure you have all required documents ready to be submitted with the application.
- Make sure your application speaks to the **Assessment Criteria (set out above)**.
- The program will be open to all Victorian writers; however, preference will be given to writers from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in screen, with the aim of creating a diverse and inclusive cohort of participants with differing lived experiences. VicScreen reserves the right to waive any eligibility criteria in exceptional circumstances where the applicant meets the intent of the program and would otherwise be eligible. Please contact the Development Coordinator prior to your submission to discuss.
- VicScreen is committed to promoting and supporting gender equality, diversity and accessibility in the Victorian Screen Industry and requires applicants to demonstrate diversity and inclusion in their application. Applicants are encouraged to refer to our [Gender & Diversity Statement](#).