

Submission form

**Increasing value
from government
investment in the New
Zealand Screen
Production Grant
Consultation**

27 OCTOBER – 18 DECEMBER 2022

How to have your say

We want to hear your views on how the New Zealand Screen Production Grant settings could be updated to help increase the value of government investment.

Submission process

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage (Manatū Taonga) are seeking written submissions on the issues raised in this document by **11:59pm on 18 December 2022**.

This document includes a number of questions to guide submissions. Your submission may respond to any or all of these questions. We also encourage your input on any other relevant issues.

Please include **your name** and (if applicable) **the name of your organisation** in your submission. Please include **your contact details** in the cover letter or e-mail accompanying your submission.

You can make your submission:

- By sending this form to screenenquiries@mbie.govt.nz
- By mailing your submission to:

Industry Policy
Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment
PO Box 1473 Wellington 6140

Arts Policy
Ministry for Culture and Heritage
PO Box 5364 Wellington 6140

If you have any questions about the submissions process, please direct these to screenenquiries@mbie.govt.nz

Use and sharing of information

We will use the information you provide in submissions to inform the MBIE and Manatū Taonga policy development process, and to inform advice to government about any proposed changes to the New Zealand Screen Production Grant. We may contact you directly if we want to clarify any matters you raise.

Submissions remain subject to requests under the Official Information Act 1982. Please clearly indicate in the cover letter or e-mail accompanying your submission if you have any objection to the release of any information in the submission, and which parts you consider should be withheld, together with the reasons for withholding the information. MBIE and Manatū Taonga will take such objections into account and will consult with submitters when responding to requests under the Official Information Act 1982.

The Privacy Act 2020 applies to submissions. Any personal information you supply to MBIE or Manatū Taonga in the course of making a submission will be used only for the purpose of assisting in the development of policy advice in relation to this review. Please clearly indicate in the cover letter or e-mail accompanying your submission if you do not wish your name, or any other personal information, to be included in any summary of submissions that MBIE and Manatū Taonga may publish.

Submitter information

About you

Name: Amber Wakefield, Executive Officer – NZCS.

Email address: eo@nzcine.com

Are you making this submission on behalf of a business or organisation?

Yes No

If yes, please tell us the title of your company/organisation.

The New Zealand Cinematographers Society (NZCS)

Would you like to be kept informed of the outcome of the New Zealand Screen Production Grant Review?

Yes No

Are you happy for us to contact you if we have questions about your submission?

Yes No

Release of information

- Please tick this box if you do not wish your name and contact details above to be included in any information about submissions that MBIE and Manatū Taonga may publish.
- Please tick this box if there is other information within your submission that you want to be kept confidential. If you have ticked this box, please state your reasons and grounds under the Official Information Act 1982 below, for consideration by MBIE and Manatū Taonga.

Executive summary to our submission

We are grateful for the opportunity to make a submission as part of this consultation process by MBIE and Manatū Taonga (MCH) on potential changes to the New Zealand Screen Production Grant (NZSPG).

Who we are and our mission

The NZCS is a non-profit professional incorporated society representing the interests of cinematographers and camera crew in the New Zealand screen production industry. The NZCS does not rely upon external funding for the running of the Society, with the operations and overheads covered by membership fee revenue. There is a wide membership base across the main production centres of Auckland, Wellington, and Queenstown, and there is continuous expansion and growth within the wider regions. Members are predominantly cinematographers and camera crew, although also include Directors, AD's, Lighting technicians, Colourists, and Producers, who have joined because we provide a sense of community, regular events, networking and professional development opportunities for members and friends of the society.

Summary of our requested recommendations

We acknowledge the vital role of the NZSPG in supporting the screen sector across Aotearoa, New Zealand; as an effective screen production incentive scheme is a prerequisite for a successful screen industry.

Our sector operates as one continuous ecosystem, whereby the whole is very much greater than the sum of its parts. Our growth in recent years has enabled additional investment in local infrastructure, equipment, culture and skills development that wouldn't otherwise have occurred. This infrastructure and know-how are now here for the benefit of the whole screen sector. It's critical we recognise and support this. Therefore we urge the Government to use this review to ensure the Screen Industry has access to an incentive that is internationally competitive, certain, predictable, and flexible.

We would be grateful to see the following enhancements and optimisations adopted in any proposed changes to the NZSPG:

- **NZSPG-Domestic – maintain 40% with certainty** - It is critical that there is a baseline 40% rebate for domestic productions without any of the additional, imposed criteria under options 1 or 2.
- **NZSPG-International – flat 25%** - To be internationally competitive the rebate needs to be increased to a baseline of 25%. We support implementing an additional uplift process on top of this baseline, to further close the gap with international competitors i.e. up to 30%. To be effective, any introduced uplift should be certain, timely, self-assessable, and offer multiple pathways to qualify.
- **Allow all projects to combine multiple funding sources (e.g., NZ on Air and NZSPG funding)** - this levels the playing field relative to domestic producers in other countries – such as Australia – which permit similar combinations.
- **Introduce a skills plan or skills levy requirement** – We strongly support the introduction of a skills plan and/or skills levy requirement, and believe it could be an effective tool, and have set out suggested principles to guide this on page 7 onwards of this submission.
- **Remove all project budget caps on QNZPE** – While large productions may cause spikes in the demand for our resources from time to time, they are an essential element that stimulates local investment in screen infrastructure & equipment and talent creation.
- **Cultural content – remove any criteria for this under option 1 or 2:** Multiple and objective pathways to qualify facilitates the creation of a diverse range of content; there should not be a narrow path to

qualification for the NZSPG; instead, the NZSPG should support a wide variety of projects in all shapes and sizes. Organisations such as The NZ Film Commission, NZ on Air and Te Māngai Pāho are better placed to directly stimulate an increase in cultural content upstream.

We otherwise refer to the [Film Auckland Inc. \(FAI\)](#) submission and cite that we agree across the board with their points and recommendations.

We support your comments in the consultation paper to provide more clarity and certainty in accessing the SPG. We hope that any modifications made will contribute to an optimised interconnecting screen sector ecosystem.

The NZCS has vision where our talented emerging technicians continue to contribute to the creation of New Zealand's stories in the domestic industry but also benefit from the investment, infrastructure and learning opportunities afforded by large-scale international productions visiting our shores, by enabling training and creating pathways into the industry for local talent.

Finally, we fully support the suggested word adjustment from "grant" to "rebate", changing the name of the NZSPG to the New Zealand Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR).

We are very grateful for the opportunity to put forward our views, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these further with you.

Ngā mihi maioha

Amber Wakefield

Amber Wakefield, on behalf of New Zealand Cinematographers Society (NZCS)

Skills levy or skills plan

Question 2 - 5

We support and are acutely aware of the need for greater skills development across our sector. We stress that any initiatives that are created from the review, must be industry-led and help foster a strong sense of shared reciprocity across our ecosystem.

One of our industry's challenges has always been skills development. Production companies assemble teams of talented people for a specific project for a finite period, and then often assemble different teams (based on the different creative requirements or crew availability) for a finite period for a subsequent project.

Another challenge in upskilling our crew is when international productions bring in overseas crew to be placed in key roles. The role of the Cinematographer is one illustration of this. When local crew are passed over due to perceived lack of international/big budget experience, and foreign DPs hired, the local crew are then unable to acquire the necessary expertise to be recruited in the role on subsequent productions in the future. Because of this vicious cycle, many of our talented local crew must travel abroad in order to advance their careers and gain experience. A Skills Levy and Plan in place would absolutely assist towards breaking this cycle by funding and creating placements on productions for local crew to learn from the highly experienced international crew coming to work on our shores.

A skills levy with a cap per project, could be applied to both domestic and international productions. Offering the applicant the option to choose between either the skills levy or the skills plan, would offer flexibility while not placing any additional onus of responsibility on the production.

A good example of how this might operate is the United Kingdom's Film Skills Fund, which is managed by ScreenSkills, an industry-led body that can respond quickly to shifts in demand for certain skills.

If an application and approval process is required, the process should be quick, objective, and transparent, with projects offered the opportunity to update their plans based on clear feedback provided. This is to avoid creating uncertainty during the greenlight process, which would negatively affect New Zealand's competitive position.

It is very important that there would be support for below-the-line roles, as much as above-the-line roles, in any application of a skills levy/plan requirement.

The NZCS has been active in Professional Development in recent years, running a series of Masterclasses and Workshops, part-funded by sponsorship and entry fees, with shortfalls made up from our own resources. These have included day courses on HDR Colour grading, Specialist Underwater Cinematography, Assistant Camera Workshops, Lighting and Camera for Drama Masterclasses and a series of on-line webinars during the Covid lock-down. In association with the NZFC and Warners/Discovery we recently collaborated in a Virtual Production masterclass in Auckland on the set of *"Our Flag Means Death"* utilising the local and international talent involved in this large scale venture.

With support from the NZFC, the NZCS has been running the 'Cushla Lewis Gender Diversity Programme' to address the noticeable gender imbalance in the Camera department. Our overall objective is to inject a new level of diversity into the camera community by supporting more women in the earlier stages of their career, increasing visibility and therein building change. We are acknowledging the base of women who already work in the camera department and giving them an

opportunity to up-skill in their role. Visibility is critical to profiling a career path enabling women to key positions who are then more likely to engage other women.

The NZCS has created 18 paid placements for both camera trainees and emerging cinematographers since the program began in 2019 for a total of 316 intern days on working film sets. \$50,000 has been received in grants from the NZFC, the production companies have almost matched this contribution with a \$45,600 input and the NZCS has covered admin costs of approximately \$9,000 from its own resources.

Here is a summary of the internships we have supported since the Gender Diversity in Camera Program began in 2019:

- Kelly Chen with Denson Baker NZCS ACS on *'Luminaries'*
- Ainsley Calderwood with Drew Sturge on *'The Educator'*
- Tammy Williams with Aaron Morton NZCS on *'Sweet Tooth'*
- Zyanya Jackson on *'Black Christmas'*
- Nina Wells with Sigi Spath NZCS on 2x TVCs
- Mara Yambao with Gin Loane NZCS on *'The Justice of Bunny King'*
- Bailey Mitchinson with Ari Wegner ACS on *'The Power of the Dog'*
- Niki Winer with Bevan Crothers on *'Wellington Paranormal'*
- Bayley Broome-Peake with Aaron Morton NZCS on *'The Lord of the Rings Series'*
- Alyssa Kath with Dave Garbett on feature film *'Evil Dead Rise'*
- Daniela Conforte with Dave Garbett on feature film *'Evil Dead Rise'*
- Alice Toomer (Camera Trainee on 2nd Unit) with Ziga Zupanic on 'on feature film *'Evil Dead Rise'*
- Raphaella Holder-Monk (2nd Assistant Camera) with DP Ziga Zupanic on low budget feature film *'Samara'*
- Bridie MacInnes (Camera Trainee/2nd AC) with DP John Toon NZCS on feature film *'A Mistake'*
- Sofi Issak-Zade (Camera Trainee) with DP Paul Mockrdge on the Reality TV series *'Taskmaster'*
- Pikihuia Haenga-Little with Mike Berlucchi on TV series *'Stonehenge'*
- Aline Tran with DJ Stipsen NZCS on TV series *'Stonehenge'*
- Vanessa Vandy on *'Our Flag Means Death S2'*

The NZCS has also created four non-gender specific DP intern/cam trainee roles, directly with production companies as below:

- Jess Charlton with Richard Bluck NZCS on additional shoot for feature film *'Avatar'*
- Mike Potton with Richard Bluck NZCS on additional shoot for feature film *'Avatar'*
- Sasafraz Marshall-Johnson on travel documentary series *'Men in Kilts 2'*
- Rowena Simes on travel documentary series *'Men in Kilts 2'*

It should be noted that some production companies voluntarily offer internships at their expense, in support of the current 5% uplift requirement to “significantly contribute to the local NZ film economy”. Other production companies join the program indirectly, when applying for letter of non-objection to bring in foreign cinematographers, and wishing to be seen to be giving something back to training the local industry - but this is an ad hoc arrangement which we would like to see formalised in the future as one pre-requisite for Working Visa approvals.

Below we attach a recent report submitted by mid-career cinematographer Aline Tran on completion of her recent NZCS Cushla Lewis Gender Diversity DP internship placement on *'Stonehenge'*:

Aline Tran - feedback after 3 week DP internship on "Stonehenge"

"I had the privilege to shadow cinematographer DJ Stipsen on the pre-production and production of one episode of Stonehenge. Here is a summary of what I achieved during the placement.

During pre-production:

During this prep week, DJ was incredibly generous with his time. I was able to observe the creative processes of the Cinematographer on Stonehenge and attend every meeting DJ was a part of, notably:

- The shotlisting process between the Director, the Director's assistant and DJ. We played out the scenes, most of the time in the shooting locations.*
- The meeting with the rigging gaffer and onset gaffer. It was very interesting to observe the prelights of all the sets. In pre-prod, we tested different looks for the "desert scene": daytime, evening and dusk.*
- The collaboration between DJ and the onset and offset art directors and how DJ worked with the construction crew to build sets that allowed for camera and light placement.*
- I observed how DJ prepped the "LED volume" where the virtual production set is. I learned the motion capture technology, workflow, settings of the LED wall and how best to work with the limitations of the virtual production set.*

In addition to these, DJ also taught me his methodology as he goes through a script and how he communicates with his camera, lighting and grip crew. I learned how to use Scriptation and DJ shared with me his google docs with all his technical notes and shotlists, as well as the technical drawing of the sets.

During the two weeks of the shoot.

- I was able to be in the DIT tent with DJ. I learned the postproduction and colour workflow as I discussed this with the DIT and the dailies' colourist.*
- When I could, I sat next to the A camera operator when he was operating the remote head crane, and listened to the way he communicated with the grip team to set up his shot.*
- I also observed the gaffer and was on the lighting channel so that I'd follow the lighting set-up. Scott Harman the gaffer was also very helpful whenever I had a question. I also talked with the board operator about the colours and pixel mapping of the LED lights.*
- During the shoot, I was tasked to do a still shoot for Art Department. I had to photograph the actors of the "Fortress Gang" in prosthetics. We shot that in one of the locations. The shoot was directed by the Art Director with the showrunner coming to give us notes.*

These three weeks have been amazing in terms of personal development. I learned so much in all aspects of the role of the cinematographer and I am incredibly grateful to DJ for his time and his generosity in sharing his knowledge.

A TV series of this scale is differently complex than an independent production, as the number of people and the tools and equipment available to realise a DOP/director vision is huge. One of the biggest takeaways from this experience for me is what I learned regarding lighting and lighting continuity when working with big sets:

- How to light a virtual set, and how to match the LED volume with the other stages.*
- How to light with the type of equipment only accessible in big productions.*
- Gaining more insight and the confidence to use colourimetric contrast when lighting a scene.*

I also learned a lot about communication between the DOP and the crew. DJ is an excellent communicator and he's able to be very precise about what he requires from his crew. It helped me a lot in understanding the importance of being a clear and precise communicator and how to set myself properly to answer the multitude of questions a cinematographer faces. Mainly it has to do with how the DOP prepped himself and how he/she has to think about everything beforehand.

The value of the placement is incredible. It's very rare for a DOP to be able to observe another DOP but I learned in a few weeks what could have taken me years of personal experimentation. I think this scheme is a great way to upskill mid-career

female cinematographers so we see more of them taking the role on a production the size of Stonehenge. I am beyond grateful to have been part of this scheme.

~ Aline Tran, Cinematographer

Bayley-Broome-Peake – feedback after her “LOTR; Rings of Power” TV Series NZCS internship:

In May/June 2021 I undertook a cinematography internship on the Lord of the Rings TV series, primarily under cinematographer Aaron Morton NZCS.

I want to express to the NZCS how extremely advantageous of an opportunity this has been for my career. Last week I was DP for a Catalyst short film where I had an opportunity to put into practice many of my key learnings. Without going into great detail about my pages and pages of notes from my placement, some of the key takeaways that really benefited me were:

- How cinematographer Aaron Morton uses a light meter and application thereof on set.*
- His approach for lighting an environment rather than an actor on a mark to create freedom for both cast and camera.*
- Best practice of communicating with key crew heads such as gaffer, key grip, etc (and via a radio).*
- Not being afraid to turn lights off if they're not working and re-jig and trim as required.*

Deep diving into a set such as Lord of the Rings and having direct access to Aaron with his wisdom/knowledge was an opportunity that I don't see possible by any other means. Having this opportunity whilst also being paid meant that I had the financial support to throw myself at the placement whole-heartedly (I didn't need to worry about loss of income during the time engaged).

I see the program as being helpful into the future for women and gender diverse applicants. I would also say the program could be extended to include slightly lower budget/tier productions that are more realistic to NZ budgets. This would be extremely helpful, as well as the big productions.

Thank you so much for providing this opportunity to myself and other female or gender-diverse participants. It's opportunities like these that really help pave the way for gender equality in the camera department in New Zealand.

These are two examples of how a Skills Levy supporting an industry-led training plan could create and nurture possibilities for industry-specific training.

The NZFC has indicated it is keen to continue to fund our Gender Diversity program in 2023 because of our support of an under-represented group. Any funding for general below-the-line talent development, however, falls out of scope from the NZFC, highlighting a current gap in funding to upskill our camera, lighting and grip crew of any gender or ethnicity.

In addition to the recommendations above, we also encourage a cross-government approach to skills and training levies by both collaborating and alignment with tertiary training outcomes via Toi Mai, who are already underway in researching and developing systems of change for the screen industry; with the first Workforce Development Plan being for the screen industry.

The NZCS has made major strides in industry training off our own initiative, but much of our work is done by volunteers, and so much more could be achieved with a funding strategy in place. We would like to see a Pathways program in place where a database of emerging camera dept talent/film school

graduates was maintained as a resource for production companies seeking trainees and entry level positions. We would like to identify areas where there is a shortage of upcoming talent and run workshops to address these voids before it becomes an issue impacting production. Although we have made great progress in Gender Diversity in Camera, we recognise that this is a long term program that must be maintained to have lasting benefits. We also recognise that not only women, but minority ethnic groups are under-represented in camera, and need to be encouraged through access to internships.

We stress again how critical it is that the specifics of the plan are developed in close consultation with industry, or completely industry-led, so that industry has direct input in the Governance and decision-making of an entity tasked with implementing this. We support a major step in this direction with the proposed development of a Screen Industry Training Board to cover all areas of production.