

# CODE KICKSTART FUND SUMMARY OF INFORMATION



## KickStart Fund (Range: \$10,000 - \$60,000)

### What is the outcome we're looking for from KickStart Funding?

To help Aotearoa New Zealand-based individuals and small teams wanting to create innovative, working game prototypes that have "found the fun". The prototypes will have a functioning core gameplay loop ready to or be in the process of attracting further funding or external investment.

### Who might you be?

You are talented, and have experience using software tools to make digital games. You might be: a graduate of a game-related vocational course in art, animation, audio or another relevant discipline with a portfolio showing this; a computer science graduate with a keen interest in games, or an experienced professional aiming to get seed funding to give you the breathing space to take a game from idea to prototype. You might even be an exceptional individual or team with titles on a digital platform such as itch.io but with no formal qualification in games.

### What are we definitely not looking for?

Hobbyists making their first game or who make games in general as a pastime without any ambition to create a commercially saleable title, or, undergraduates working on course projects. Projects must have a commercial intent and are not solely for artistic expression. However, we do really welcome people into the game-making community to help them progress to the stage where applying for KickStart Funding is a realistic goal.

Please read this document in conjunction with the **CODE Funding Terms and Conditions**.

### What Kinds of Projects Can I Apply For?

- Games intended for global consumer audiences.
- Serious & health-related games.
- Educational games.
- Narrative and non-narrative format games.
- Free-to-play and premium games.
- VR, AR, mobile, tablet, console, installation, PC and multi-platform games.

## What Kinds of Projects and Items Can I NOT Apply For?

- Games which are not primarily digital in nature (hybrid digital/physical projects are allowed).
- Gambling games.
- Games of a pornographic nature.
- Games for advertising purposes.
- Commissioned products.
- Games for internal training or corporate services.
- The purchase of Intellectual Property rights.
- The purchase of equipment and hardware, apart from console Developers' Kits.
- Esports proposals, or any project not directly involved in the creation of a game / video game production business.

Further details on eligibility of projects are on page 4.

## How can I apply?

The first stage of the application requires you to submit a simple Expression of Interest using this EOI Form. We will (1) assess these Expressions of Interest for suitability and eligibility, and (2) contact you if we need any clarifications. Then, we will select the submissions we would like to invite to progress to the Full Application stage.

Those individuals or teams who are selected to proceed to Full Application will be able to access support from CODE staff to complete the application and associated documentation.

## How will my application be assessed?

After a pre-submission consultation with one or more of CODE's staff, you will submit your Full Application and associated documentation via a second online Form – we will supply a private link to this.

This application will then be checked again for eligibility and submitted to a panel of experts drawn from a variety of senior roles in the region's video game industry. The assessment panel process is competitive so a high quality of application is encouraged.

CODE assessment panels are always drawn externally and CODE executive staff do not influence the decision process in any way.

## What criteria will be used by the assessment panel?

### Concept Appeal & General Objectives

- The economic, cultural and creative benefits of the project to Aotearoa New Zealand;
- The track record of the applicant(s) and principal(s). However, note that early career developers are encouraged to apply as long as they can demonstrate capability for project delivery;
- The innovation, creative ambition, originality and quality of the project;
- The quality and rigour of all supporting materials.

### Key Aspects: Creative Merit

- Quality, innovation, creativity and vision of the project (including but not limited to Art & Animation, Game & Narrative Design, Sound Design, Technology, UX, or Programming) evidenced by game design documentation as detailed and/or gameplay demonstration;
- The distinctiveness of the game within its genre and its ability to find an audience.

### Audience

- Demonstrated and realistic understanding of the proposed audience of the game and/or market potential of the project;
- Understanding and definition of the proposed pathways to audience;
- Indication of potential end user, target audience, and marketplace interest from bona fide investors (if approached);

### Market Validation

- Separate to the Audience understanding and segmentation, Market Validation is a new criterion to demonstrate the practical steps the developer is taking towards demonstrating the product is viable for sale.
- At a KickStart level, we are not expecting to see any live evidence, however there needs to be a demonstration of understanding when this will commence, in what forms and we expect to see appropriate budget projections (E.G. for marketing or community management).
- This can be any combination of planning for market validation via; social media, publisher or investor pathways (especially letters of interest or paper trails), Discord or Reddit community engagement, playtest events (either live or online) or any other form of proof that the product resonates with game audiences. If any of these vectors have already been engaged with, please supply proof in your application materials.

### Go-to-Market

- A go-to-market plan demonstrating the potential of the project, including: target market, proposed platforms, any planned PR or user acquisition.
- Demonstrable market attachment such as letters of intent or interest in publishing or from partners is advantageous. In some cases (especially where the customer is a business or organisation such as a district health board or school) this may be a specific requirement. If so, we will make that clear at the time of Full Application.

## Diversity and Inclusion

- If elements of the product, story and/or team reflect gender equality and diversity of experience, is this handled in a respectful manner, including appropriate consultation with represented groups? (Includes sexuality, gender diversity, disability, ethnicity etc.)
- Does the game demonstrate respect for Māori or Pasifika culture and heritage, including recognition of cultural and intellectual property rights, maintenance of integrity and respect for beliefs. Is there evidence of relevant and expert indigenous partnerships and consultation?
- Does the project address accessibility, for example: configurable controls, variable difficulty levels, alternative sound settings, high visibility graphics, accessible menus and text displays, colour contrast and brightness (see <http://gameaccessibilityguidelines.com>).

## Finance, Budget and Schedules

- Is the project viable in terms of whether it has distinctive appeal and a well-founded assessment of audience reach?
- Is the game being prototyped of a commensurate scale which would enable the specific team to have a realistic chance of securing production funding?
- Do the key creatives have the capability to deliver the prototype to the required standard to attract further funding?
- Is the scope of the game realistic and achievable?
- Is the budget realistic for the scope of the game?
- Is the production schedule credible within the scope and milestones clearly articulated?

## All applications must include:

- A completed Application Form
- A detailed Project Proposal that uses our supplied templates, including:
  - Your Application Document that includes the Project's content and clearly demonstrates that the project is ready for either prototyping or further production.
  - A Developer's Statement outlining the objectives and creative vision of the Project.
  - A Functionality and/or Interactivity Overview, including details of how the gameplay unfolds across the specified platform/s and the user experience.
  - Any relevant scripts.
  - An Art section, including treatment, concept art, any screenshots etc.
  - A Production Schedule, with appropriate milestones and/or delivery dates.
  - Wireframes and/or prototyping if available.
- Marketing overview, including:
  - Release plan
  - Details of the target audience
  - Strategies for obtaining intended audience reach
- Strategies for obtaining audience reach, plus evidence of any and all market validation activities.

## All applications must include (contd.):

- A full budget to completion of the prototype or release that also includes the Aotearoa New Zealand expenditure, via the Production Spreadsheet, including any sweat-equity (“in kind” commitment).
- One-page CVs of the Key Creatives, demonstrating career highlights.

## Persons and Entities

- CODE Funding Programmes are explicitly limited to Aotearoa New Zealand-based ventures.
- The Principal applicant and majority of the team must be over 18 and based in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- If Applicants are successful in securing CODE funding, they will need to set up a registered company if it does not already exist.
- CODE’s focus is on economic development of video game developers in Aotearoa New Zealand, and a common-sense check will apply.
- Project teams are explicitly encouraged to address issues of diversity and representation in our local game development industry.
- CODE Funding Programmes are generally not available to students. No team or entity consisting entirely of undergraduate students may apply for funding, including solo projects. Students may participate in projects with the permission of their educational establishment and CODE itself.

## Location of workers or origin of contracted services

- It is a CODE expectation that 80% of the grant monies will be spent in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Labour and services may be contracted outside of Aotearoa New Zealand, on the proviso that this does not take the overall grant expenditure outside the local area over the 20% limit.

## Projects

- Funding is for digital, interactive game projects with commercial outcomes in mind. Kickstarter-level projects are expected to be pre-prototype. However, applicants will be expected to detail the commercial potential of their project in their applications.
- Developers of serious or educational games are encouraged to apply. However, applications for such projects must demonstrate potential for commercialisation in order to be considered for funding.
- Projects must be primarily digital in nature. Certain hybrid projects may be considered if digital interactivity forms the core of the product’s essential nature in an innovative way.
- Applications are expected to consider accessibility for all audiences. Consider using <http://gameaccessibilityguidelines.com> for guidance.
- Projects are permitted to be submitted for a maximum of two rounds. If the project has been unsuccessful after a second submission, it will require a radical redesign and strategic change before being eligible for another submission. This in no way prohibits a developer from making a third submission with a completely different project.

## Spending

As a general rule, CODE Funding Programme funds can be spent on the majority of expenditure related to a project including:

- Production costs: Payment to staff working on the project, whether full-time, part-time or contracted, with the proviso noted above about the location of these workers.
- Additional mentorship or expert production consultancy, this being over and above the wraparound mentorship that may be provided by CODE at its discretion. This need not be locally sourced, though should be if possible.
- Subscription-based software licenses required for the development of the project over the lifetime of the funding.
- Assets purchased from a third-party for the project that are available commercially on the open market, not commissioned specifically for the project, unless within the allowable 20% spend outside Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Prohibited spending

- Capital equipment: computers, permanent software licenses, furniture and so on.
- Overheads: rent, utilities, cleaning, shared facilities.
- Any non-project-related costs.