



SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

StartUp Fund (Range: \$50,000 - \$150,000)

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

To help experienced, Aotearoa New Zealand-based game developers take their first game to commercial launch, with support from mentors.

Who might you be?

Perhaps you have extensive experience working for a gamedev company and want to paddle your own canoe. Perhaps you have an Indigenous story to tell interactively. Perhaps you have worked with one or two other experienced devs for a while on outside-of-work projects or game jams, and you want to coalesce as a partnership to realise a shared vision with great commercial prospects. Perhaps you have launched, failed and learned from a previous self-funded venture. We want to help talented people with vision, from a diverse range of backgrounds, start great games companies in Aotearoa New Zealand.

What are we not looking for?

Teams with a killer idea on the back of an envelope – we want to see a running prototype at least. Arts projects with no commercial prospects: these should apply via other funding bodies. Games with no differentiation – we want to see projects that will succeed through originality and innovation. And we need to see evidence the team is in place to carry through on the production plan.

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

STARTUP FUND APPLICATION INFORMATION



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 Development 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 6.

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.

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How will my application be assessed? - contd.

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 can 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.
- StartUp grants are to be used for establishing a long-term business heading towards sustainability. CODE is looking for a business that will remain after its first title is launched.

Learning Outcomes

- Although the primary purpose of the grants are to help developers within our programme push forward commercially, it is likely that they will achieve learnings as well from the travel and events.
- The learning outcomes may be as simple as how to maximise one's own opportunities at such an event or as complex as having a special opportunity to engage in some high-end workshops with one of the world's leading experts in a particular field or discipline.

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);

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What criteria will be used by the assessment panel? - contd.

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. Does the project have lead developers from the appropriate cultural background? 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 built 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:
 - A Game Design Document of the Project's content that clearly demonstrates that the project is ready for either prototyping or further production. (Note: this is a "pitch highlights" version of a GDD rather than the full document).

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All applications must include - contd.:

- A Developer's Statement outlining the objectives and creative vision of the Project.
- A Game Design Document of the Project's content that clearly demonstrates that the project is ready for either prototyping or further production. (Note: this is a "pitch highlights" version of a GDD rather than the full document).
- 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
- 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 presently explicitly limited to Aotearoa New Zealand-based ventures.
- The Principal applicant and majority of the team must be over 18 and 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.

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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 NZ over the 20% limit. If labour is sourced outside the area, preference will be shown to NZ sourced support over international services.
- However, we realise with the distributed nature of teams in the current environment and multidisciplinary nature of the video game industry, limited flexibility may occasionally be necessary. Negotiation on this point will take place at the sole discretion of CODE.
- It is a CODE expectation that our grant money is used to establish a company in Aotearoa New Zealand, that will maintain a presence there for the lifespan of the company.

Projects

- Funding is for digital, interactive game projects with commercial outcomes in mind.
- 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.

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Spending - contd.

- Marketing costs, from strategy to execution - this might include strategic advice, marketing agency fees, social media costs, community management, media outreach, advertising and so on.
- Legal, accounting and other necessary professional fees: any costs associated with professional services necessary to the running of the business and protecting its intellectual property. This does not include premises costs such as cleaning or reception services.
- It is expected that all successful applications will require minimum levels of insurance coverage to proceed to funding contract.
- Business development costs: assistance with the construction of pitch decks, publisher meetings and business development strategies in general.
- Quality Assurance costs, including either testing in-house or contracting of a third-party firm. This may become part of the 20% allowable spend outside of Dunedin.

Prohibited spending

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