SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Service Start Fund
(Range: $10,000 - $50,000)

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

We are aiming to support new or young businesses in the video game industry that are providing tools or technical services for game developers – aside from CODE's usual game content funding programmes. These businesses can provide employment, build community capability, and create new pathways for recent graduates into the globally-expanding video game industry. Any grants will need to be matched by funds or investment from sources other than CODE.

Who might you be?

You could be an experienced professional in the game industry starting your own tools, technical service or asset business but needing some runway and investment to take off. Maybe you need to build business contacts, or perhaps there's equipment you are missing that would make your business a commercial reality. Perhaps you need help growing your sales pipeline or time to produce a full suite of assets for sale on online marketplaces.

What are we definitely not looking for?

Hobbyists, professionals looking for a sideline, but without interest in their project becoming their main occupation; entrepreneurs without game industry knowledge looking at exploring an idea; or existing service or tools companies looking to expand into games as an adjunct to their main non-games business; or service businesses that provide only minimal benefits to the Dunedin video game industry.

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

SERVICE START FUND
APPLICATION INFORMATION

What kinds of projects can I apply for?

Businesses that offer targeted relevant technical services or products primarily to game developers seeking to launch and grow market share. Examples of this might include, but are not limited to:

- A business selling assets within an asset marketplace designed for game developers;
- A business creating middleware or toolsets for use by game developers;
- A video game community relations agency or similar specialised marketing service dedicated solely to supporting game developers.

What kinds of projects and items can I not apply for?

- Video game prototyping or production (those are covered by CODE's other programs);
- Any product development for the gambling or pornography industries;
- Services for corporate training or advertising purposes;
- The purchase of Intellectual Property rights;
- Content creation for YouTube / streaming or other broadcast platforms, including content intended as educational material for game developers;
- Non-game businesses intending to service the video game industry as part of their main business, e.g. recruitment agencies, lawyers, accountants or insurance agents seeking to grow portfolio services for the video games sector;
- Video game-adjacent businesses eg. companies using technologies such as Unity or Unreal Engine or making tools specifically for non-game purposes such as corporate safety training, virtual production or military simulation;
- Commissioned products.

Further details on eligibility of projects are on page 5.

How can I apply?

The first stage of the application requires you to submit a simple Expression of Interest using the 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.

SERVICE START FUND
APPLICATION INFORMATION

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. This program is on a rolling basis, so the panel will be appointed to review each individual application on a needs basis.

What criteria will be used by the assessment panel?

Concept Appeal & General Objectives

- The economic, cultural and creative benefits of the project to Ōtepoti Dunedin;
- 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 and business sustainability;
- The innovation, creative ambition, originality and quality of the project;
- The quality and rigour of all supporting materials.

Key Aspects: Commercial Merit

- The business must demonstrate viability and a pathway towards a sustainable future that does not rely on future grant funding;
- The busines must show the potential to employ staff other than the founder;
- The business model should be scalable and ongoing – not just for the creation of a product or service that is then sold with no further development or without additional products or services planned;
- If a new business model is proposed, it must stand up to the scrutiny of industry experts.

Market

- A go-to-market plan demonstrating the potential of the business, including: target market, any planned PR or customer acquisition;
- Demonstrable partnerships and commercial pathways. What existing customers does the business have, if any?

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.);

Business, Finance, Budget and Schedules

- Are the business's products and services viable in terms of whether it has distinctive appeal and a well-founded assessment of customer base?

- Are there pathways which lead the business to sustainability beyond its early stages?

- Are the business' existing staff able to achieve that reach towards sustainability or are additional staff required?

- Is the scope of the business realistic and achievable?

- Is the budget realistic for the initial term of the business?

- Applicants to this program are expected to match CODE funds at least 1:1 from other sources. While we will be approaching this requirement with a degree of flexibility, we will require investment of additional monies into the business alongside the CODE grant.

- Is the production schedule credible for the scope of the game? Are the development milestones clearly articulated?

All applications must include:

- A completed Application Form

- A detailed Project Proposal that uses our supplied templates, including:
    - A full business plan detailing essential processes, requirements, risks and risk mitigation, opportunities, and growth potential;
    - Timelines showing major milestones for the business;
    - Any possible opportunities for additional investment (if relevant);
    - A hiring plan to cover growth and any existing shortfalls;
    - An ownership breakdown showing the percentage ownership of each entity and their location.

- Marketing overview, including:
    - Launch plan;
    - Details of the customer bases and methods used to reach them;
    - Ongoing marketing strategy in terms of what is initially required at the business's current stage through to what will be required withing 12 months.

- A full budget showing run for at least the Business's next 12 months.

- One-page CVs of the Key Staff, demonstrating career highlights.

Eligibility

Persons and Entities

- CODE Funding Programmes are explicitly limited to Ōtepoti Dunedin-based ventures.
- The Principal applicant and majority of the team must be over 18 and in the Ōtepoti Dunedin area.
- If Applicants are successful in securing CODE funding, they will need to set up a registered company if it does not already exist.
- CODE funding will give precedence to entities based in the local area first.
- 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 Service Start Fund expectation that 80% of the grant monies will be spent in the Ōtepoti Dunedin area.
- Labour and services may be contracted outside of Ōtepoti Dunedin, on the proviso that this does not take the overall grant expenditure outside the local area 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 multi-disciplinary 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.

Projects

- Businesses must be targeting primarily digital game-related products and services 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.

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;

- In the case of Service Start, equipment purchases which are specifically required for efficiency improvements in the service pipeline may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the CODE team;

- 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 the Ōtepoti Dunedin region;

- 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.

Prohibited spending except by express permission of CODE:

- Overheads: rent, utilities, cleaning, shared facilities;

- Any non-business-related costs.