

## Kickstart Funding Guidelines

Kickstart funding is for applications of up to £10,000, and is intended to support early-stage project research and development, and the creation of immersive proof of concepts across AR, VR, and MR platforms. This fund is open only to creators who have participated in StoryFutures Academy training programmes, and are looking to put their new skills into practice and take their next practical steps in developing one of their first immersive projects.

The current call is now open and will close at midnight on **Thursday 4th February 2021**.

Support will only be provided where the applicant can demonstrate that the project is deliverable for the money requested within a defined time period, and where the project specifically addresses the criteria set out below. The applicant also needs to outline how they plan to make the project working remotely with other collaborators due to the on-going Covid-19 situation.

### All proposals should seek to:

- innovate in terms of story form or format, enabled by immersive technologies (i.e. VR, AR, MR and immersive audio technology)
- draw on known audience behaviours, insights and trends
- define a target demographic and route to that audience via digital reach or footfall.

In this context, immersive technologies refer to:

- Virtual reality (VR)
- Augmented reality (AR)
- Mixed reality (MR)
- Immersive audio technology

This may include Head Mounted Display (HMD) technology, as well as experiences that don't require an HMD (such as mobile AR). Immersive audio technology includes the use of spatial sound or other augmented audio techniques. Audio-only projects are eligible.

Please note that, while you are free to choose whichever technology or platform best suits your creative idea, StoryFutures Academy is particularly interested in supporting projects that have delivery platforms and distribution methods that are able to reach wide audiences.

## Team Criteria:

Applicants must have a demonstrable ability to drive a project through production to delivery, and as such must have both:

**A Creative Lead** (for example, a writer/director/producer/creative director from a film, TV, games or other creative background who has already taken part in a StoryFutures Academy initiative). Creative Leads do not need to have previous immersive experience.

**An Immersive Producer** (i.e. a producer, director, writer or creative developer with experience of at least one immersive production) attached to the project at the time of applying.

- All named participants must be able to demonstrate their track record through a substantial body of work and/or a considerable number of credits (in production, performance or equivalent).
- All development work and deliverables must be delivered by Friday 25th June.
- Applicants and all team members must be 18+
- Applications must be made by or through a company registered and centrally managed in the UK.
- Applicants can submit as a collaborative team but there must be a lead individual/company that will contract with StoryFutures Academy (the only company that will be paid). It is the responsibility of the lead company to arrange any collaborative agreements or subcontracts as necessary.
- Applicants must secure the rights (including any underlying rights) in any proposed idea. Proof of this will need to be provided.
- Applications must declare any other parties contributing finance or in-kind support to the project, including the amount(s) and terms of these contributions.
- Applicants are expected to grant SFA the use of anonymised data related to the project in academic and industry-facing research publications.

## Upskilling Criteria

All SFA Kickstart funded projects are part of a structured learning programme designed to help core screen industries talent to upskill in the field of immersive storytelling. Applicants must therefore:

- Demonstrate that the project provides an on-the-job learning or skill development opportunity for the creative leads in making their first immersive experiences. Please note that on final delivery, written materials plus a recorded exit interview will be required that evidences the work done. This will be used to inform SFA's work with future creators.

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- Commit to engaging collaboratively with StoryFutures Academy support programmes to include, at minimum:
- Participating in a project kickoff meeting with a SFA producer, who will discuss your project and advise on other forms of SFA support available, including industry mentorship and workshops
- Participate in an Audience Research Planning session with members of the SFA research team, who can advise on audience insight gathering and help advise on future research opportunities for your project
- Participate in a final Critical Feedback session with SFA team, at the end of the project
- Be prepared to share their expertise and experience gained on the project at future SFA training initiatives, and so contribute to the upskilling of the UK screen industries. This may include producing published case studies or testimonies, and contributing to SFA workshops. This is expected to be equivalent to approximately 4 days of time over 3 years (depending on the amount awarded).

All development funding is awarded under a standard Development Funding Agreement which will be sent to you at a later date. This agreement is templated and non-negotiable.

### **Eligible Costs**

- Time for the named creative lead and producers on the project
- Creative and development costs (e.g. writers, technical development)
- Equipment and studio hire
- Equipment purchase (up to a maximum of 20% of total costs applied for)
- Residency fees to support producers working in relevant collaborative environments
- Expertise and consultancy

### **Commitment to Diversity**

StoryFutures Academy is committed to supporting storytellers from a range of diverse backgrounds to work with immersive technology. This includes a commitment to reach a minimum of 50% female and 20% BAME participants across our programmes. Applications will be asked to set out the gender and ethnic make-up of their teams with reference to these targets. We will take a portfolio approach to applications, ensuring that across supported projects this target is met.

StoryFutures Academy is also committed to making its initiatives as accessible as possible. If you have a disability, or are yourself a carer, you are entitled to apply for a bursary to cover additional expenses related to these needs that you may incur as a result of taking part in an SFA programme (such as special assistance arrangements). Please contact [immersive@nfts.co.uk](mailto:immersive@nfts.co.uk) for more information.

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## Application Judging Criteria

Applications are judged by a panel of StoryFutures Academy staff, however external specialists may also be consulted in some circumstances. All applications are treated in confidence, and judged against the following criteria:

- Innovation in storyform – is the idea creatively innovative and does it provide a compelling use of immersive technologies?
- Appropriate team skills – are there appropriate team members and skills attached to the project? (including those from traditional screen industries who are new to immersive, as well as immersive experience).
- Training opportunities – have the on-the-job learning and skills development opportunities been clearly described and justified?
- Audience – has the application shown good understanding of the target audience and a realistic understanding of how they can be reached?
- Value for Money – is the budget proposed reasonable with respect to the deliverables?
- Deliverability – are the deliverables appropriate in the time frame, for the proposed budget and achievable if the project needs to be created remotely.
- Additional resource – if the budget is greater than that available through StoryFutures Academy, does the application show appropriate additional/resource from other funding sources.
- Commitment to diversity – has the application considered StoryFutures Academy's diversity commitment within its team where possible?
- SFA will take a portfolio approach to applications, and the judging process will look to ensure a variety of projects of different forms.

## Deliverables

All projects in receipt of SFA Kickstart funding will be asked to deliver the following core deliverables at the end of the project:

- A recorded interview summarising the outcomes of the Kickstart-funded project, detailing key lessons learned.
- A presentation deck describing the project, including a summary of the results of any creative, technical or audience testing that has been carried out.
- A summary of your plans for the next steps of the project including a budget.
- A demonstration of the outcome of the Kickstart funded project to members of the SFA team at a final Critical Review session
- A build of the immersive prototype in a format which can that can be previewed in SFA Immersive Labs (wherever possible)

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- A copy of any associated marketing/concept material generated for the project (e.g. trailer, walkthrough and stills)

Funding may be used to support a variety of project-specific deliverables including, but not limited to:

- Delivery of creative concept material e.g. a treatment or script, concept art, storyboard to demonstrate experience in an immersive or non-immersive setting (e.g. a trailer video and still images)
- Delivery of an immersive proof-of-concept to help showcase key creative and technical ideas
- Producing a detailed technical specification that describes the technology requirements for the project in order for it to be successful
- Development of a business plan that indicates cost breakdown for a full production, with models and partnership plans to demonstrate how secondary development and production funding will be sought
- Development of a distribution plan for the project including any interested partners/distributors (i.e. route to audience)
- Please detail the intended deliverables in your application.

Decisions will be communicated by email by the middle of February 2021. Due to the high volume of applications we envisage, it will not be possible to provide feedback on unsuccessful entries.

**[For queries please contact immersive@nfts.co.uk](mailto:immersive@nfts.co.uk)**

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