



SUMMARISED REPORT ON

FUNDING FOR MALTA'S DOMESTIC SCREEN PRODUCTION





This is a summarised report authored by Arts Council Malta based on research conducted and reported by Culture Venture between February 2024 and May 2024. The research was commissioned by Arts Council Malta.

Acronyms

ACM – Arts Council Malta
MFC – Malta Film Commission
MFF – Malta Film Fund
NBC – National Book Council

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1.

INTRODUCTION



This summarised report presents several findings from the research commissioned by Arts Council Malta and conducted by Culture Venture, following the announcement in Budget 2024 to shift Creative Malta funding (formerly Screen Malta and the Malta Film Fund) to the Council. Whereas the ultimate scope of the research was to support ACM in rolling out the funding schemes for domestic screen production and assess realignment with existing programmes within the Council's portfolio and aligned to its priority areas and Strategy 2025, other aspects impacting the wider ecosystem of the domestic screen production were unveiled.

Since the establishment of the first film funding programme in 2008, a total of €8.4 million were disbursed through 5 different programmes across three different entities. The level of public investment towards domestic screen production over 15 years has been considerably low, making it very challenging for Malta's domestic industry to achieve a level playing field as a low-producing country. In addition, the policy bias towards film servicing and an ill-resourced public broadcaster have hindered further developments in the domestic sector.

Notwithstanding significant limitations, key industry professionals are optimistic about the funding shift to ACM and envisage this development as a new chapter in the domestic market for audiovisual works. The combination of both Kultura TV and Creative Malta scheme has created an expectation by industry professionals for the total funding allocation to reach €1.2 million, which is still short of the electoral pledge of €2 million. With an immediate need for the scheme to be published, minimal changes are recommended for the 2024 cycle; with minor revisions in funding allocations and the integration of Kultura TV and Creative Malta into one scheme.

Whereas funds for production should still be available with stronger attention to coproduction and minority coproduction, it is advisable for the immediate priorities to focus more on short films, screenwriting, and development. Of significant importance is the need for Maltese films to be classified as difficult films, due to the difficulty to raise money and commercialise any film or audiovisual project from Malta. Additionally, support measures for international participation, educational initiatives, and administrative support by ACM are proposed.

Medium-term goals emphasise coproductions, internationalisation efforts, coordination with international institutions, and the development of an educational framework for skills development in above-the-line roles.

Long-term objectives address increasing funding sources, enhancing coproduction agreements, and strengthening the role of the public broadcaster. The overarching aim is to facilitate immediate fund deployment while strategically plan for comprehensive improvements in Malta's domestic screen production industry over the next decade. The process must be contextualised within a longer-term vision and through an evidence-based strategy that is co-designed together with industry.

The future of Malta's domestic screen production is highly dependent on the collaborative strength between Arts Council Malta, the Malta Film Commission, the Public Broadcasting Services and industry representatives, and on the level of aid that will be provided to mobilise the sector to reach its aspirational goals on both national and international levels.



2.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH



2 | SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The scope of the research was to:

1. Review funded projects by making sense of the experiences of applicants, participants and beneficiaries
2. Analyse the impact and effectiveness of funded projects from a micro and macro approach to:
 - Evaluate the effectiveness on beneficiaries
 - Evaluate its wider impact on the industry
3. Assess the legacy of funded projects
4. Recommend systems, procedures and policy actions for future of film and TV funding mechanisms in Malta
5. Provide the basis for the development of the guidelines for the new funding programme based on the recommendations

The research held between February and May 2024 delves into the impact of the various editions of funding programmes for film and TV within the context of the overall state of play of the industry. Through a mixed research methodology, the team engaged in an extensive research and consultation process to provide sufficient evidence for ACM to develop a film and TV funding programme that addresses the opportunities and challenges within the film and TV sectors.

The report provides insights on fund management and selection processes and elicits in-depth knowledge and expertise of beneficiaries, stakeholders and policy makers who participated in the research. The study identifies how the funding programme can support and facilitate the advancement of film and TV concerning the existing economic, legal and social contexts that both impact and are in turn impacted by the audiovisual sector. The research outcomes and recommendations may inform the overall objectives and structure of the funding programme to be managed by ACM and additional actions that may be considered within a wider strategic framework for Malta's domestic screen production industry.

The research was conducted by Rebecca Anastasi, Toni Attard and David Pope, assisted by Graziella Vella. The research team extends gratitude to the invaluable support provided by the ACM research team, as well as to all participants who generously contributed with their time, insights and expertise.

This summarised report was compiled by **Arts Council Malta**.

3.

OVERVIEW OF FUNDING ALLOCATIONS



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OVERVIEW OF FUNDING ALLOCATIONS

In July 2005, approximately a year after Malta's accession to the European Union in 2004, Chapter 478, the Malta Film Commission Act, of the Laws of Malta, was passed, thereby establishing the structure by which the film industry was meant to be regulated.

According to the Act, the MFC was, and remains, responsible for: advising the Minister on policy matters in relation to the promotion, development and support for the Maltese screen industries; administering fiscal incentives; advising on how to structure local resources to promote Malta as a location for shot and services; advising on the signing of any international treaty, convention or bilateral agreement which would boost the sector; advising in the development of skills training; advocating for the educational importance of film and media literacy; supporting access to Maltese film history and culture; encouraging the use of new digital technologies; and determining which fiscal incentives would boost the sector.

Table 1 below captures the financial support launched in 2005, including Creative Malta and Kultura TV that have been the two main support mechanisms for local indigenous producers.

Table 1: Financial support since 2005

SUPPORT SCHEME (date & scheme type)	ENTITY	BUDGET ALLOCATION (as per 2024 Budget)	OBJECTIVES
Creative Malta (2008 - present) Grant	MFC (2008 - 2023) ACM (2024 -)	€900,000	To provide support for short, documentary, fiction and animation, as well as long-form, in the following areas: screenwriting, development, production, distribution and exhibition as well as film festival support. Aid intensity: up to 100%
Kultura TV (2014 - TBC) Grant	ACM	€300,000	To provide support for content which would appear on one of the Maltese private broadcasting stations. Aid intensity: 60% of eligible costs
Film Industry Incentives (Cash Rebate: 2005 - present) Refund on Eligible Expenses	MFC	€35,000,000	Principally used to attract international productions to shoot in Malta, the cash rebate offers eligible productions up to 40% rebate on eligible expenses, or, in the case of 'difficult' films, up to 50%.
Film Malta (dates unknown)	Unknown	€300,000	No information in available.

Table 1: Financial support since 2005 continued

SUPPORT SCHEME (date & scheme type)	ENTITY	BUDGET ALLOCATION (as per 2024 Budget)	OBJECTIVES
Television Production and Content Fund (2021 - present) Grant	Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government (previously under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister)	€500,000	To provide funding for the production of a film, mini-series, documentary, reality programme, game show, or children's/young people's programme. Aid intensity: 75%
Adaptation Fund (2019 - 2021; currently defunct) Grant	The National Book Council	€200,000	To promote Maltese literary works by financially supporting adaptation of National Prize winning or shortlisted novels. Aid intensity: 100%
Konkors Letterarju ta' Films Qosra (Literary ShortFilm Competition) (2014 - 2019; defunct) Grant	The National Book Council	€20,000 (an additional €1,000 for the purchase of rights)	To promote Maltese literary works. Aid intensity: 100%
Co-Production Fund (2014 - 2019) Public Equity	MFC	€1,000,000	



4.

**SCREEN
PRODUCTION
BENEFICIARIES
2008–2022**

4

SCREEN PRODUCTION BENEFICIARIES 2008–2022

This research exercise considered the following funding schemes in its analysis of the funds available and disbursed, namely:

1. Malta Film Fund for the period 2008 to 2023, issued through a specific line vote and managed by the Malta Film Commission, Screen Malta (from 2020) and Creative Malta (launched in 2022 and issued in 2023)
2. Kultura TV Fund for the period 2015 to 2023, issued through a specific line vote and managed by Arts Council Malta
3. TV Production and Content Fund, issued for the period 2022–2023 by Arts Council Malta
4. Konkors Letterarju Ta' Films Qosra (Malta Literary Short-Film Contest) issued during the period 2014 to 2019 by the National Book Council
5. Fond għall-Adattament Ċinematografiku issued in 2019 and 2021 by the National Book Council

The total amount of funding received and available for disbursement and funding allocated for the period between 2008 and 2023 through different funding schemes can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Total funding between 2008 and 2023

Funding Organisation	Fund Name	Period	Total funding available per fund	Total funding disbursed per fund
NBC	Fond għall-Adattament Ċinematografiku	2019, 2021	€200,000	€200,000
NBC	Konkors Letterarju Ta' Films Qosra	2014 – 2019	€126,000	€126,000
ACM	TV Production & Content Fund	2022/2023	€468,291	€419,178
MFC/Screen Malta/Creative Malta	Malta Film Fund	2008 – 2023	€4,999,000	€5,655,900
ACM	Kultura TV	2015 – 2023	€2,160,000	€1,942,356
	TOTAL FUNDING	2008 – 2023	€7,953,291	€8,343,434

During the period 2008 to 2023 there were 127 unique beneficiaries who were awarded funding through one or more of the abovementioned funding programmes, as reflected in Table 3 below. One may note that 45% of the total funding allocated between 2008 and 2023 was awarded to 8% of unique beneficiaries between 2008 and 2023, amounting to €3,783,581 of the total funding allocated.

Table 3: Number of unique beneficiaries per funding range

	No of Unique Beneficiaries	Amount allocated	% of unique beneficiaries
€1,000 - €25,000	70	€830,446	55%
€25,001 - €50,000	17	€701,926	13%
€50,001 - €75,000	15	€957,996	12%
€75,001 - €100,000	4	€373,870	3%
€100,001 - €125,000	2	€220,788	2%
€125,001 - €150,000	3	€410,000	2%
€150,001 - €175,000	2	€307,404	2%
€175,001 - €200,000	4	€740,323	3%
€200,001 +	10	€3,783,581	8%
	127	€8,326,334	100%

Beneficiaries were reviewed individually to assess the funding allocations awarded to individual beneficiaries according to the different streams across the programmes. Overall, 259 beneficiaries were awarded different grants, with the amounts allocated per funding range seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Funding allocations to beneficiaries per grant

Funding range per grant	No of Grants Awarded	Total Grants Awarded	Total Grants Awarded %
€200,001+	3	€939,610	11%
€100,001 - €200,000	16	€1,860,000	22%
€50,001 - €100,000	20	€1,439,701	17%
€25,001 - €50,000	57	€2,100,263	25%
€25,000 - €1,000	163	€1,986,760	24%
	259	€8,326,334	100%

A subsequent detailed review highlighted the amounts awarded per funding scheme and strand, as can be seen in Table 5. Within the range of funding of €200,001 and over, three grants (13% of the global allocated funding) were allocated through the Malta Film Fund (MFF). All grants were allocated for Production purposes. Within the range between €100,001 and €200,000, 16 grants (25% of the global allocated funding) were allocated, 14 of which were funds allocated through the Malta Film Fund for Production purposes, whilst two grants were allocated through the National Book Council's Fond għall-Adattament Ċinematografiku, also for Production purposes.

Table 5 also reflects the funding allocated for the funding range between €50,001 and €100,000. Twenty grants were allocated within this funding bracket (19% of all funding), with 19 grants allocated for Production purposes between grants through the Malta Film Fund, Kultura TV and the TV Production & Content Fund and one grant allocated for Development purposes through the Malta Film Fund. Fifty-seven grants were allocated within the range of € 25,001 and € 50,000, with 43 grants allocated for Production Purposes through the Malta Film Fund, Kultura TV and the TV Production & Content Fund. Ten grants were allocated for Development and four grants were allocated for Script Writing purposes through the Malta Film Fund.

A significant proportion of grants, namely 163 (27% of all funding allocated), were allocated in the range between €1,000 and €25,000, with 82 of such grants being allocated for Production purposes through the Malta Film Fund, Kultura TV, the TV Production and Content Fund and the National Book Council's Malta Literary Short-Film Contest. Forty-four grants were allocated for Development purposes through the Malta Film Fund, whereas 13 grants were allocated for Scriptwriting and through the Writers' Grant respectively, both of which issued through the Malta Film Fund. A few other grants were allocated for other purposes, including Marketing, festival visit reimbursements and short film production.

Table 5: Funding per funding range, scheme and number of grants awarded

Fund	Year	Grant Scheme	No of Grants Awarded	Grants Awarded	Total Grants Awarded	Total Grants Awarded %
Euro 200,001 +			3		€939,610	13%
MFF	2023	Production	3	€939,610		
Euro 100,001 - Euro 200,000			16		€1,860,000	25%
MFF	Various from 2011-2023	Production	14	€1,660,000		
Fond għall-Adattament Ċinematografiku - NBC	2019 & 2021	Production	2	€200,000		
Euro 50,001 - Euro 100,000			20		€1,439,701	19%
TV Production & Content Fund	2022/2023	Production	3	€225,000		

Table 5: Funding per funding range, scheme and number of grants awarded continued

Fund	Year	Grant Scheme	No of Grants Awarded	Grants Awarded	Total Grants Awarded	Total Grants Awarded %
MFF	Various from 2008-2023	Production	12	€910,737		
Kultura TV	2016, 2018, 2023	Production	4	€250,500		
MFF	2008	Development	1	€53,464		
Euro 25,001 - Euro 50,000			57		€2,100,263	28%
MFF	2021, 2023	Scriptwriting	4	€120,000		
TV Production & Content Fund	2022/2023	Production	2	€98,750		
MFF	2011, 2020, 2023	Production	4	€148,000		
Kultura TV	Various, 2015-2023	Production	37	€1,342,173		
MFF	Various, 2014-2021	Development	10	€391,340		
Euro 1,000 - Euro 25,000			163		€1,986,760	27%
MFF	Various, 2014-2019	Writers' Grant	13	€62,345		
MFF	2021, 2020	SMNS	2	€4,500		
MFF	2019	Short Film Production Grant	2	€39,979		
MFF	2020, 2021, 2023	Scriptwriting	13	€170,274		

Table 5: Funding per funding range, scheme and number of grants awarded continued

Fund	Year	Grant Scheme	No of Grants Awarded	Grants Awarded	Total Grants Awarded	Total Grants Awarded %
TV Production & Content Fund	2022/2023	Production	7	€78,118		
MFF	Various, 2008-2023	Production	45	€654,531		
Kultura TV	Various, 2015-2023	Production	18	€349,683		
Konkors Letterarju Ta' Films Qosra (Malta Literary Short-Film Contest)	Various, 2015-2019	Production	12	€126,000		
TV Production & Content Fund	2022/2023	Other	1	€17,310		
MFF	2019	New Talent Production Grant	2	€5,000		
MFF	2020	Marketing	1	€14,020		
MFF	2018, 2023	Festival Reimbursement	3	€2,500		
MFF	Various, 2009-2023	Development	44	€462,500		

5.

CONSULTATION PROCESS



5 | CONSULTATION PROCESS

5.1 Methodology

The research adopted a mixed methodology through 4 different tools:

- Individual in-depth meetings with 21 participants
- Desk research
- Focus groups bringing together 26 participants in 4 sessions
- Online survey capturing 78 responses

5.2 Main Reflections

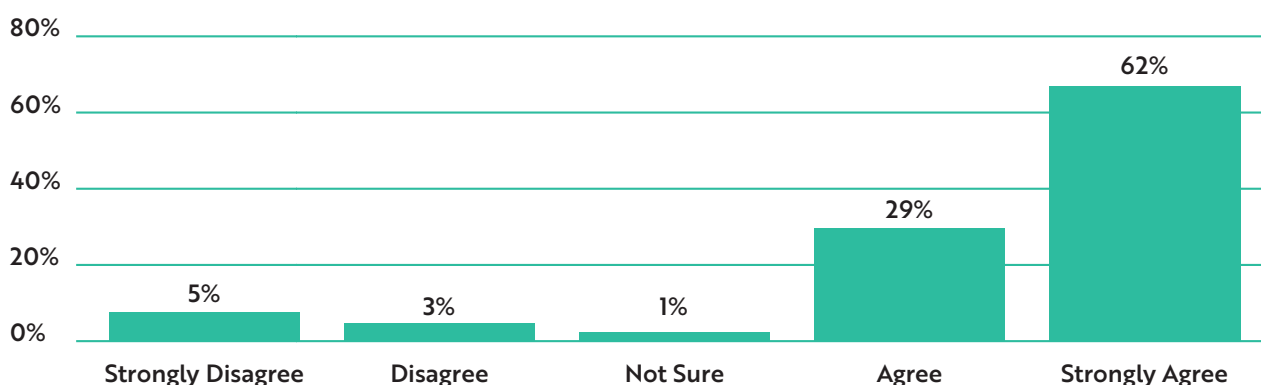
Film and TV policies, funding and strategies

Participants in the research affirmed the role of the Government to finance screen projects. From a policy perspective, the shift of funding for film from MFC to ACM raised concern by participants who were unclear on which entity will now be responsible for film policy, strategy and funding. Most participants were in favour of ACM taking on a more strategic role in domestic screen policy due to two distinctive reasons.

1. The first is due to the level of trust by participants in fund management by Arts Council Malta. This was evidently expressed mainly by Kultura TV beneficiaries and the negative experience of fund management with other entities. Participants expressed confidence in Arts Council Malta and highlighted the Council's experience to develop standard operating procedures and clear guidelines within an already established fund management process which has, as minimum, a set calendar and a structured selection and monitoring process. Some questioned the lack of expertise within ACM to address the specificities of the industry and called for this specificity to be addressed within the structure of the Council.

2. The second reason in favour of ACM's strategic role in film and TV is to counterbalance the predominant focus of film servicing by the MFC – a long-standing issue which participants felt hindered the focus on domestic production. In addition, the tensions between the MFC and representatives of the industry, due to various issues that emerged in recent years and as regularly reported in the media, have exacerbated the urgency for national policy on domestic screen production to fall under the remit of a different entity.

Figure 1: Survey response: Government grants are instrumental to finance Maltese screen projects





Internationalisation

In the surveys, focus groups and interviews conducted, a major theme emerged time and time again: the need to focus on co-production as key to internationalising the Maltese screen product and, therefore, in boosting the industry.

Some of the more experienced respondents in our research decried the suspension of the Coproduction Fund and called for it to be reinstated. "Coproduction is the only way forward," a respondent insisted, saying that "Maltese producers need to be recognised as co-producer, majority or minority." In addition, the respondents to whom we spoke have sounded the alarm on the repercussions of not internationalising Malta's screen product, with one saying that: "If there isn't a structure in the next five years to international[ise], I don't see much scope in working further in the sector locally. ACM, TVM etc need to get together with international experts to devise a strategy for the internationalisation of local work."

Indeed, respondents highlighted the need for Malta to solidify a reputation as a partner country, rather than simply a country where international shows can film (in other words, rather than as solely a filming location). Currently, "we're not seen as a coproduction partner since we're not even known to make films," a participant asserted. Several participants highlighted the need, in this respect, for Malta to participate in international marketplaces, with a stand or a similar presence at the major European and global film markets, which would promote the Maltese screen product in the international marketplace: "It's important that we are present in the main markets, like all other European countries."

Other thematic areas of importance

Other important areas addressed included market audience in terms of distribution, exhibition and domestic festival development; fund management based on expertise and that adopts a long-term, sustainable perspective of the sector; and the importance of nurturing skills, competencies and film education.



6.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are structured in short-term, medium-term and long-term timeframes, as follows:

- Due to the urgent nature of the fund, and the need for this to be issued without delay, the fund should possess minimal changes in this round (2024), as recommended by several of our interviewees.
- More fundamental changes should be implemented as from next year (2025) in order for there to be enough time to get State Aid approval for the new guidelines. Table 6 below provides an overview of the recommendations.

Table 6: Recommendations for 2025 onwards

STREAM	MAXIMUM GRANT	AID INTENSITY	RECOMMENDED ALLOCATION	APPLICANT
Short Film Programme	Up to €50,000	Up to 100% of the eligible costs subject to the established maximum support.	Up to €200,000	Up to €30,000, can be an individual; over €30,000, applicant needs to be a company
Screenwriting Programme	Up to €20,000	Up to 100% of the eligible costs subject to the established maximum support.	Up to €100,000	Applicants do not need a producer attached. For short and the medium-term, applicants need to work with an approved script editor.
Development Programme	Up to €50,000	Up to 100% of the eligible costs subject to the established maximum support.	Up to €200,000	Applicant needs to be a production company.
Production	€400,000 (for fiction and documentary), for majority Maltese-productions) €50,000 (for minority coproductions) €30,000 (for cultural programmes intended for local broadcasting)	Up to 50% of the eligible costs, up to 60% in the case of co-productions which involve more than one EU Member State and up to 80% in the case of difficult audiovisual works, subject to the established maximum support.	Up to €500,000	With the exception of cultural programmes, applicants need to be a production company. For cultural programmes, applicants can be an individual.

Table 6: Recommendations for 2025 onwards continued

STREAM	MAXIMUM GRANT	AID INTENSITY	RECOMMENDED ALLOCATION	APPLICANT
Support for International Festival Submissions	€2,500 (€500 for short films).	Up to 50% of the eligible costs, up to 60% in the case of co-productions which involve more than one EU Member State and up to 100% in the case of difficult audiovisual works, subject to the established maximum support.		Applicant needs to have received funding for the project through the other streams.
Promotional Support	€20,000; €40,000, in case the film is selected (and in competition) at an 'A' festival;	Up to 50% of the eligible costs, up to 60% in the case of co-productions which involve more than one EU Member State and up to 100% in the case of difficult audiovisual works, subject to the established maximum support.		
Support for participation at International Festivals	€1,000 for participation with a selected film (not in competition), selected short film (only if in competition) or participation at a market (on condition that the applicant has been selected); €5,000 if the selected film is in competition; €10,000, in case the film is selected (and in competition) for an 'A' festival;	Up to 50% of the eligible costs, up to 60% in the case of co-productions which involve more than one EU Member State and up to 100% in the case of difficult audiovisual works, subject to the established maximum support.		

7.

CONCLUSION



7 | CONCLUSION

The research commissioned by ACM provides a detailed insight into the local, indigenous film and TV sector. The analysis provides the basis for the ensuing recommendations.

As noted, short-term action needs to build on efforts made to date in order to consolidate areas that have yielded positive results and address others where results have been lacking.

Medium-term support should prioritise both majority and minority coproduction, particularly the latter, in order to instil a spirit and practice of reciprocity and collaboration on an international level. A calendar for the fund needs to be published at the beginning of every year, with minority coproduction, promotional work, and development in a rolling call. All the other streams should be offered as fixed calls, open twice a year. Confirmation of acceptance for minority coproduction should be offered with a 30-day turnaround.

Long-term initiatives should benefit from a significant, sustained increase in funding, enable greater synergies among national stakeholders, support further projects utilising the Maltese language, and allow short films, animation and documentary co-financing with an aim to access national broadcasting.



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