

Opening
Shot



Filmmaker Application Guidelines



THE
NATIONAL
LOTTERY

SCREEN SCOTLAND
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Opening Shot: Short Films - Application Guidelines

WHAT IS OPENING SHOT?

Opening Shot is a brand-new national short film development and production programme run by Astar Media in partnership with Intercultural Youth Scotland, for **first-time filmmakers in Scotland**. It's a space for complete beginners to take their first step into filmmaking.

Four applicants will be selected to take part in structured workshops and receive production funding and support to make their short film. Opening Shot helps you turn an idea into a film of around five minutes in length. You'll get hands-on support through every stage - from developing your story to screening your finished work at a community cinema screening.

Applicants must be 16+ and not currently enrolled in any formal education. No previous filmmaking experience is required, and you're never too old to give it a go! We particularly encourage applications from people who experience racial marginalisation, as we are keen to address the lack of diversity both in front of and behind the screen in Scotland.

WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We want to hear from people with bold, original ideas for short films. These could be live-action, animation, or experimental works. (Documentary ideas are not eligible for this opportunity - other Screen Scotland programmes support those.)

You don't need to own a camera or know how to write a script - we'll help you with all of that. What matters most is your story and your enthusiasm to bring it to life. We are actively looking for people who have great ideas but who have never made a film before.

WHAT KIND OF STORIES ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

In short - there's no set formula. We're open to all kinds of ideas, whether your project is a piece of fiction or something more experimental.

Good stories make people feel something - whether that's joy, fear, heartbreak, curiosity, or a new perspective.

Our short films are designed to be made on a smaller budget - a chance to let creativity thrive within simple setups and intimate stories. Think about ideas that work beautifully with just a few characters and locations. But don't worry, we don't expect you to know how much anything costs, so if your idea excites us, we'll help you craft it into a shape that's realistic to shoot within the allocated budget - that's the magic of filmmaking.

WHAT YOU'LL RECEIVE

If your project is selected, you'll receive:

- A £1,500 participation fee - we know that taking part might mean taking time off work for workshops, filming, or editing, and we want to make sure no one is left out of pocket for the time they dedicate to the programme.
- A series of practical filmmaking workshops covering storytelling, scriptwriting, visual style, production planning, and working with crew.
- Mentoring from experienced filmmakers.
- Support and guidance throughout every step of the process.
- A community screening event of your completed film.
- A production budget of £3,000 to cover all the costs related to your shoot.

KEY DATES

Application Dates

18th January at Midnight – Application Deadline.

22nd & 23rd January – Shortlisted Filmmaker interviews.

30th January 2026 – Selected Filmmakers notified.

WORKSHOP DATES

All selected filmmakers will take part in a series of workshops led by our Programme Director. Most of the workshops will take place in Edinburgh. If you live in an area with poor public transport links and you're worried about getting there, we can help arrange transport to ensure you are able to take part in person. We can also help with childcare or other access costs that help enable participation.

The sessions will introduce you to the fundamentals of filmmaking, while giving you space to explore and experiment with your ideas in a supportive environment.

Saturday 7th February – Introduction to the programme and story crafting skills.

Sunday 15th February – Turning ideas into scripts.

Saturday 21st February – Making a schedule and budget (online class)

Sunday 8th March – Camera skills Workshop

Saturday 28th March – Editing workshop.

Shooting / Editing / Delivery:

Film Shoot and Editing Period: April – May 2026 (your film shoot and edit period will take place at a time that suits you within this period).

Film Screening: Saturday 6th June 2026.

LEARNING AND MAKING TOGETHER:

Each of the four selected filmmakers will write and direct their own short film, but you'll also work as part of each other's crews. That might mean helping out with props, holding a boom mic, or even making the sandwiches on someone else's shoot. This hands-on collaboration is a key part of the experience - it gives you a full picture of how filmmaking works and shows just how essential teamwork is. Think of all those names that roll past in the credits of a film or TV show - filmmaking is a collective effort, and that's part of what makes it so rewarding.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

You can apply if you meet the following criteria:

- Are aged 16+.
- Are not a current student in formal education.
- Have an idea for a short film you'd like to develop and make.
- Have not yet had the chance to make a funded film.
- Can make yourself available for the workshop dates.

We especially encourage applications from people who experience racial marginalisation, and those who have had access to opportunities like this before.

HOW TO APPLY

The application form can be filled in [online via this link](#), or you can pick up and drop off hard copies at IYS in Edinburgh.

Applying is simple - we want the process to be as easy and accessible as possible. You can apply by answering the questions in writing, or by submitting your application in another form if that's easier for you. Instructions are available via the [online application form](#).

All we need from you is:

- A short summary of your film idea. Tell us what happens and who the main character is / characters are.
- A few sentences about you and why you'd like to take part.

That's it - you don't need a script or **any** filmmaking experience to apply.

If you have any questions or need help to complete your application, please reach out, we're happy to support you at any stage.

Contact us: openingshot@astarmediascot

OUR FUNDER

Opening Shot is directly funded by Screen Scotland, using funds from The National Lottery in partnership with The Scottish Government. Opening Shot is an integral element of Screen Scotland's Strategy 2030/31. The programme services Screen Scotland's key objective of content origination, continuing to develop Scotland-based talent and increase the number of financed projects that are originated and owned in Scotland.

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Astar Media Ltd
www.astar.scot/openingshot
openingshot@astarmediascot

@openingshotscot on Instagram / Facebook / X



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