NZ On Air Digital Content Partnership Fund

Project Review

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Brenda Leeuwenberg

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Background.

In December 2007 the first RFP was issued for the new Digital Content Partnership Fund ("the Fund") set up by NZ On Air when additional, specific funding was made available by Government ($1 million a year for four years). The purpose of the Fund was to provide for the creation of new or adapted multi-format audio/visual New Zealand content - taking advantage of non-broadcast platforms.

- Initial thinking was that the Fund could be available for a variety of digital content products such as:
    - Enhancements to traditional broadcasting programmes for additional digital and interactive content online and/or on other mobile devices.
    - Creation of unique digital content not for traditional broadcast (eg, games, storytelling web projects, mobile content development, webcast).
- The idea was that this would attract some interesting new players to the table with multi-format projects.
- Alongside this NZ On Air developed a short digital strategy which enabled the establishment of the new platform NZ On Screen, which focused on existing content.
- With NZ On Air's mission "To tell the unique stories of New Zealand identity and culture; our songs, our stories, our selves... a tatou korero, a tatou waiata, koina tatou" the stage was set for the Fund; something to allow producers, directors and designers to experiment with new and innovative content design with existing and new intellectual property.

In its first year the Fund was targeted to projects relating to youth and children. In subsequent years audiences for proposed projects were not specified.

In the first year of the Fund the amendment to the broadcasting Act was not yet passed when the RFP was issued. So although the revised Broadcasting Act now allows NZ On Air to consider applications for funding content not solely for broadcast, there was still a broadcast outcome requirement on proposals for the Fund in 2007. This requirement was removed for subsequent years but was still strongly encouraged through the application criteria.

The Fund has now run for four years, awarding approximately $1M of funding each year to a total of sixteen diverse projects. Numbers of applications each year continue to be manageable: 22 proposals (2008), 49 proposals (2009), 49 proposals (2010), 43 proposals (2011).

In many respects the Fund has to date been a well managed and structured experiment from which many people have learned valuable lessons and a number of new and exciting programmes have been created.

With this paper we review the projects awarded funding in the past four years, and evaluate them against a series of questions. We also look at the Fund overall - how it has operated and provide a brief overview of what other countries are doing in this space.

The environment.

In the four years since the Fund has been operational there have been significant improvements to NZs internet infrastructure resulting in increasing numbers of people being online and having decent broadband connections. That said there is still room for improvement - in a recent statement from US-based content streaming provider Netflix it said it had no plans to enter the NZ market due to low internet data caps and problems obtaining content.

With each passing year the internet has become a larger and more integral part of more people's lives. There are more ways to access online material than ever before and many at an affordable level for most people.

Ondemand viewing of videos is increasing all the time and broadcasters such as TVNZ and TV3 are constantly reviewing and upgrading their offerings in this space to keep up with demand and with international standards. Certainly having the option of catchup TV is a big crowd pleaser for people who want to watch what they want, when they want it and on their own terms and devices.

People have moved from being amazed and impressed at the range of possibilities available to them online, to being annoyed when it's not good enough, frustrated when their user experience is not perfect, and intolerant of bad content.

Services like YouTube are on the verge of launching more than a hundred niche curated channels, effectively YouTV. According to Forrester Research, by 2016 half of all households (in the US) will have Wi-Fi-enabled devices on their televisions, which will bring all those new channels into the living room, resulting in an even greater audience fragmentation than currently.

A recent Nielsen/McKinsey study demonstrated a strong correlation between online buzz and television ratings throughout a TV show's season. Networks are looking to capitalize on this by creating social TV experiences that keep fans talking longer, consuming more content and providing valuable insight into the shows.

Termed the 'advent of the second screen' according to Yahoo/Nielsen, 86% of web users in the US access the internet via a mobile device while watching TV. Viewing television is no longer a 'sit back' experience but one in which people are constantly looking for more, interacting with the content and/or each other while they watch.

Second screen apps as an integrated part of the entertainment experience offer fans a place to talk about their favourite shows and also connect with talent, get access to behind-the-scenes content, participate in games etc.

In terms of social media the trends for measuring success are moving away from quantitative (pure numbers of fans or followers), towards more qualitative measures, an emphasis on engagement - comments, shares, endorsements.

References

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Some general observations are included here.

The RFPs

- The RFP has not changed significantly across the four years of the Fund, apart from the removal of a requirement to have a broadcast outcome in 2007. In 2007 it specified a preference for projects that pertained to children and youth. In subsequent years, the criteria was kept wide.

  The RFP has been deliberately open in terms of inviting a broad range of applicants. A preference is stated for projects which have a broadcast outcome but it is not a requirement.

- The main criticism of the RFP is with the Budget Summary Sheet.

  The Budget Summary Sheet is very heavily skewed towards the standard television production budget. Accordingly the various elements of web or digital development budgets don't quite fit the template and are often covered as a single line item or buried in the details. This has a dual effect of making it difficult to assess the budget for any digital elements, but also gives a misleading impression that the audiovisual content creation is the primary aspect - as that is what all the budget line items and terminology relate to.

Proposals

- In the breakdown of budget and scope of the projects, the funding requested is frequently tagged for content production and the digital (web) aspect is covered by other funding (from TVNZ for example) or relatively negligible. This is likely to be a factor of the way the budget template is structured and the clear emphasis put on content (rather than website production).

- Budget breakdowns are usually skewed towards content production and web costs often included as a single line item. Web costs are also frequently underestimated for the original scope and plan of the project.

- Costs of marketing and promotion and the assessment of effort or expertise involved are almost always underestimated (aside from TVNZ-backed projects).

- Success criteria are rarely specified in the proposals nor are they reported against. As the digital realm is distinct from television not only with regard to the possibilities for what can be done but also how things can be measured, it would be useful to take advantage of this. Not just for individual projects but also to aid the overall assessment of the Fund's effectiveness.

- The process of meeting with short-listed applicants to discuss their proposals, resulting in revised scope or approach, works well to clarify understanding on both sides. The 2011 Music Manager project is an example of this approach, where NZ On Air has been working with the producers to ensure the project outcomes are achievable. Even though this has resulted in a delay to the project launch it is likely to lead to a more realistic project scope and approach.

- The amount of funding sought by applicants varied considerably, and until the 2011 projects, those with higher budgets tended to apply that funding to a more elaborate or extensive content production (more episodes, more complex stories) rather than to any particularly innovative technology.

Success

The success of these projects can be measured in a variety of ways. However as there is no consistent measure of success offered throughout the process, it has been hard to determine which projects could be deemed successful vs. not.

- Suggested measurable criteria for projects include:
    - numbers of visitors / unique visitors to a website
        - information about visitors - countries, duration of visit, numbers of pages viewed/visit
        - tie ins between events and visitor numbers/behaviours - screening on tv, competitions etc
    - numbers of viewers of video material - and to what extent (e.g. what proportion of viewers watch something all the way through vs dip in and out)
    - levels of interaction: comments, favouriting, sharing, tagging
    - numbers of uploads or user-generated contributions (if relevant)

Audience size is certainly a potential measure, and if level of investment vs. numbers of viewers or people interacting is to be monitored, then the statistics indicate that high levels of investment don't necessarily lead to high audiences or more interaction. Some lower cost ventures such as *The Big Sing* can deliver strong results, particularly for niche audiences.

> *The Big Sing*, for example - an audience of 36,000 for an investment of $20,500.

> *The Hub.tv* - an audience of 600,000 unique viewers for an investment of $85,000.

> *Reservoir Hill 2* - an audience of 38,000 views across multiple episodes for an investment of $449,400.

However this direct comparison does not take into account the different contexts or rationale for these shows and is potentially misleading if taken as a pure measure.

Supporting projects which build a community of avid supporters (e.g. *Auckland Daze*, *Reservoir Hill*, *Hub.tv*) is great for NZ On Air. Assessing what is a 'good' level of support however, is not so clear cut. Aside from the viewer numbers digital projects can be measured according to the level of engagement with their audience. This is one area that has not been well reported, but could certainly be improved to provide value in the future through inclusion of some of the measures noted above.

By its very nature the Fund encourages projects or ideas that are pushing digital boundaries. NZ On Air has sought projects that are innovative, different, more than just a website for a programme. In doing so it's possible some of those projects have been ahead of their time. The interactivity required of *Reservoir Hill* was not widely utilised and put off some people, the understanding required for *Mash Pit* may have proven to be a

deterrent to the audience. So the projects succeeded on some levels, but not strictly according to the numbers.

NZ On Air's values focus on projects that encourage diversity, are innovative and that provide value for money. Based on the information available the following table breaks each project down into these categories. Projects that are not yet completed have not been included.

Overall this table does tend to imply that those projects that received less funding had the best results in terms of value for money but were probably less innovative than those which received more funding. Most projects addressed a diverse audience.

Values assessment

Project	Funding	Innovation	Diversity	Value for Money
The Pod	$69,655.26	✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓
AEF 360	$399,491.00		✓	
Mash Pit	$339,595.00	✓	✓	
Louis Vuitton Pacific Series	$118,900.00	✓ ✓		✓
Rattle Ya Dags	$164,997.00	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Nah Zullan / I Am Simon Peter	$513,000.00	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓
Reservoir Hill	$316,143.00	✓ ✓	✓	✓
The Hub.tv	$85,258.00		✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Snort	$298,100.00		✓	
Reservoir Hill 2	$449,400.00	✓	✓	
Auckland Daze	$356,520.00		✓	✓ ✓
The Big Sing 2011	$20,550.00		✓	✓ ✓

Reporting

- Reporting standards vary. The reports rarely include statistics that are relevant or measured against anything or are regularly updated. An exception to this is with the smaller projects: *The Big Sing, The Hub.tv*. The final statistics report for *Nah Zullan* also provided a clear breakdown of visitors and behaviours.

- Contracts do not specify reporting against success criteria that are standardised across projects. Numbers of visitors is left open to interpretation (and it can be interpreted in a variety of ways) and in some cases statistics are poorly represented in reports. This aspect is important for digital projects to get right; broadcast projects have relatively easily accessible and consistently measured Nielsen data whereas digital reporting is more complex and variable.

- The Fund would benefit from some standardised report formats, or at least clear expectations around reporting requirements. Consistent reporting would make it easier overall to track projects relative to each other and the amounts invested, and to assess success against standard criteria.

- Reports are expected throughout the project development but these tend to be heavily focussed on the production process and once the project is live, reporting is a lot more ad hoc, or non-existent.

Marketing and Promotion

- Many projects did not give adequate consideration to an effective marketing and promotions plan. Mention of "we will use Facebook and Twitter" was a frequent theme but without any details about 'how' or 'how much'.

- Underestimating the time required to do social media properly is a consistent problem.

- Realisation that social media marketing and maintaining a presence is a manual and time-intensive task but also requires some smart writing/thinking is a lesson learned for all the projects.

- Those projects aligned with a major broadcaster or distributor were able to be a lot more successful with marketing and promotion.

- *Nah Zullan / I Am Simon Peter* reported that their social media success was far greater when they tapped into existing communities - such as for the 48 Hour Film Festival and the Centaurian game. It was much easier to create a buzz in these communities than to create new ones from scratch through social media or other channels.

- It would have been useful in some cases to have an experienced media company work with successful applicants to help them establish a viable media strategy - not just for social media but also with publicity and promotion in general. Even a basic review of their planned approach with some constructive advice would be useful.

Broadcaster requirements

- For some projects problems maintaining broadcaster commitment (*AEF360*, *Mashpit Comedy*, *Rattle Ya Dags*) meant all requirements could not be fulfilled. This aspect, being relatively out of the control of the applicants, proved a frustrating experience for some.

Archiving / Beyond the project

- None of the funded projects addressed the archival requirements of the audiovisual content created - in terms of its longevity online, potential inclusion on NZ On Screen or depositing masters with the Film Archive.

- Those projects with a TVNZ or TV3 broadcast outcome have continued to exist through the respective Ondemand services.

- In many cases the online conversations through Facebook pages and the like have been lost once the pages became non-current or were switched off.

On making the applications...

I found the application process to be thorough and straight forward. Some of the documentation was out of date and needs to be updated to reflect new media projects (instead of TV projects).

The fund is fantastic. I think it needs to be managed more closely. Currently there doesn't appear to be a dedicated Digital Content project manager and I think to get the most out of the funding there needs to be one.

[James Coleman]

Would like to see proactive consultation around what NZ On Air is considering and have the opportunity to actually pitch the ideas, particularly those which may be a bit more complex.

NZ On Air should engage with producers earlier and better.

[Tom Cotter]

Overall the New Media Fund has been a frustration to those who work in the area. It has basically been unobtainable. It has been geared towards old media practitioners and it seems most of the awards have been to the old school.

In general the fund system works too slowly and is too unwieldy ... [for smaller scale projects].

[Richard Naylor]

On the Fund overall...

The Fund is highly regarded by the production community as an avenue to do things a bit differently. It is a fantastic opportunity for people to experiment, to take calculated risks and to see how things work, what does or doesn't work, to determine what is possible.

The Fund fits perfectly into NZ On Air's remit to provide content for different spaces and opens up many options for content generation alongside the standard broadcasting model.

While the removal of a broadcaster requirement opens the Fund up to a more diverse set of applications, having a broadcaster on board gives more promotional opportunities to projects. Making a splash in the already over-saturated pool of promotions around online projects is increasingly difficult. Certainly having a broadcaster or other significant media player behind a project can make a big difference.

There is a feeling that material should continue to be made that reflects the country, in this 'new' space.

The Fund has allowed talent to be created and fostered - not just among cast and crew, but also in the digital realm. Opportunities for projects of the scale and nature of *Reservoir Hill* are rare, and the designers and developers from KHF have benefited hugely from the chance to work on this project.

Having the appropriate technology is important, having room to work out what's required is fantastic.

> *For Mash Pit, with hindsight, we would have been better to just use YouTube than to set up a whole new video upload and voting system. It's important to go where the users are.*
>
> [Bevin Linkhorn, Gibson Group]

Projects such as *Auckland Daze* have allowed cast and crew to raise their game. The ability to introduce and trial a new format in a relatively low risk context gives space for everyone to learn.

In addition, not having so many eyes on the project (e.g. *Auckland Daze*) and not having to make it part of a schedule has meant that shows can depart significantly from the mainstream and take chances they would otherwise not have available to them.

> *We look forward to the RFP being issued. It's a rare chance to think differently.*
>
> [Tom Cotter, TVNZ]

> *... in NZ there is little investment available for original, non-advertorial based content. This is why schemes such as the Digital Content Partnership Fund are such an exciting development.*
>
> [proposal from Resn for *Nah Zullan*, 2009]
>
> *Having a blank canvas, no restrictions ... is great but it is also dangerous.*
>
> [Jonathan Hawke, Resn]

It should be noted that the experience of working and interacting with Glenn, Naomi and Benedict was always positively commented on. The team administering the Fund to date has provided a professional and useful support structure for applicants.

Context

> Our audience of 18 to 35 year old males and females expect to source and discover their entertainment via multiple platforms... Many do not watch TV, choosing to view content online, via streaming or peer to peer download. A sense of ownership is created with the audience, who will go on to share their discoveries with trusted friends (via their own personal networks).
>
> [proposal from Resn for Nah Zullan, 2009]

This comment highlights a key consideration for the Fund. The projects created provide ways to reach an audience that may not be currently watching live TV.

It is important to note that being multi-platform is not just about making the same content accessible across different devices. This is certainly an option, but there is an opportunity to make the experience even better, to create content that is appropriate to each device and that uses the context of each type of screen or access point to deliver a different (tweaked) experience.

Based on the review of existing projects and interviews with producers the following points are offered for consideration in a discussion of the future of the Fund.

The process

The process to date has been well managed yet relatively hands off in terms of having much to do with the direction of the actual projects. NZ On Air has had some input into the larger more recent projects (Music Manager, Mixtape) which are not yet completed, but mostly its involvement has been in making sure projects are on track and operating to budget.

The following elements could be considered for any future Fund rounds.

- Creation of supporting materials to ensure applications are clear and appropriate, as well as providing templates or examples of budgets, proposals, reports and project structures to applicants.

- Input or assistance (from an external source) to shortlisted applicants to help refine their proposals into realistically achievable projects before the final consideration.

- Clear direction on reporting expectations and standards.

- Stronger requirements for post project reporting against success criteria and with statistics.

- Once a project is successful a percentage of the budget could be allocated to refining the proposal or scope of the project. This would need to be clearly highlighted at the outset - a line item for "refining and scoping the project".

- Requirement for a clear marketing and PR plan to ensure this is done well.

- Evaluation of and possibly input to overall strategic direction, project planning and management processes, particularly for new or less experienced teams. This would most likely be addressed through an external 'expert' - in broadcast terms the Executive Producer role would address this throughout the project.

- Potentially for beyond the RFP stage of the project, it would be useful for NZ On Air to provide a range of supporting documentation to applicants. Alongside revising the RFP documentation to better reflect digital initiatives, application documentation could be revised once projects are selected in order to better define achievable projects.

- Online projects stay around a lot more than broadcast programming. This means that any project should have a plan for what happens at the end of it:
  - how is the community that has been created managed?
  - will the content have any kind of currency?
  - will user uploads or discussion carry on - who will monitor this?

The content

- It could be said that music needs digital more than television does - music is moving more online and away from radio, people are already there, discovering music online. Furthermore the internet gives music more opportunities for distribution than ever before, it will certainly be interesting to see how the current set of music-based projects succeed.

- The content supported by the Fund to date can be categorised by type as:

  - new audiovisual content (Music Manager, *Auckland Daze*, *Reservoir Hill* Mash Pit, *Rattle Ya Dags*, I Am Simon Peter)

  - aggregating existing content (Mixtape, Snort)

  - ancillary online material (*AEF360*, *The Hub.tv*)

  - live streaming / event coverage (Louis Vuitton, *The Big Sing*)

- For now at least television is where the majority of people go for audiovisual content. Certainly the proportion of people accessing content online and through Ondemand services is increasing but the largest audience for content will be through television.

  However, also increasing (and supported by search and site statistics all over the world), is the number of people accessing the internet **while** they watch TV. This presents some interesting opportunities for interactive content that is alongside or closely associated with broadcast programmes.

- Not a lot is known about audiovisual audiences outside of Nielsen's broadcast surveys. A tighter definition of target audiences would be useful in determining the strategic approach for projects.

- Being associated with a big distributor or broadcaster is highly desirable. It is also the best way of promoting online content. However there is a risk inherent in this approach - that your project or content gets lost in the plethora of content being offered by the larger organisation.

Fund Structure

A stream for small projects

The Big Sing represents a 'quick win' type of project, one which is relatively low budget but adds tremendous value to niche audiences. This type of approach, which is not tied to any broadcast outcome, but which essentially films and streams an event to an online audience, could be applied to any number of events or occasions (sports, performance, conferences, education etc).

However this type of project does not fit entirely within the criteria of the Digital Content Partnership Fund, and perhaps represents a stream of content that is to be treated differently. A "DCPF Lite" approach that is less administration intensive in terms of applications and decision-making.

If such an approach appeals to NZ On Air, it certainly meets a need that is currently not being adequately fulfilled in society, then it would be worth considering as an allocation of part of the overall fund. A simpler approach could be defined and quicker decisions could be made regarding the projects.

A predetermined pool for larger initiatives

Each year TVNZ puts forward about four ideas, hoping to get one. A lot of work goes into the proposals they put forward and potentially each of the four ideas is good. While it is clear and understood that public funding is contestable, they feel that there could be a more efficient way of managing some of the digital fund - at least from their perspective.

TVNZ suggest that around $500K of the Fund is pre-allocated to TVNZ-backed projects. They would then manage the proposals for this amount themselves. They would shortlist and NZ On Air could get involved in the selection process if required.

In this way there would be less call on NZ On Air resources to review and administer the various applications, and TVNZ would have some certainty around funding levels which would allow them to focus their energies more on projects they are willing to back. As well this would put clear boundaries around the funding they would get, thus allowing them to consider and plan their own contributions.

This approach would likely cause some issues around contestability with other platforms.

Mixing it up

In keeping with the theme of having a stream for the small projects and a larger pool for bigger projects available through the Fund, one option could be to fix the amount of funding available per project and tailor the process and requirements accordingly.

For example, a fund for projects between $5,000 - $50,000 gives applicants the opportunity to undertake smaller projects (a la The Big Sing) or to prototype ideas before investing larger amounts in a bigger project. The application process for this smaller pool could be considerably more lightweight than currently but with clear criteria for project acceptance and reporting requirements up front.

Alongside this a fund for projects between $50,000 - $200,000 (for example) is available, with a more stringent application process and requirements for proof of experience in the team, understanding of reporting and budgeting, marketing and promotion plans and ideally additional funding partners or sponsors.

To Be or Not to Be ...

Some consideration must be given to the two main possible scenarios for the future of the Digital Content Partnership Fund from NZ On Air: the Fund is discontinued, or the Fund stays.

Discontinuing the Fund

Pros

- In the current economic climate a saving of around $1 million per year may help NZ On Air adjust its priorities.

- Less resource requirement for NZ On Air to administer the Fund

- NZ On Air can focus on a broadcast outcome for proposals - stick to its knitting as it were

- NZ On Air can consider applications that wrap digital into standard proposals without separating it into a different category

Cons

- A valuable source of funding for this dynamic and current stream of potential content would be lost

- A key opportunity for NZ's content creation community to grow and explore within a relatively low risk environment would be gone

Continuing the Fund

Pros

- The Fund is about supporting innovation and new ideas. There are few other opportunities for this to happen anywhere. The core work of NZ On Air is becoming arguably more mainstream in the productions it supports; this Fund provides a creative and non-mainstream outlet.

- The platform from which NZers can win a Digital Emmy continues, providing opportunities for global success and recognition to more people

- NZ content creation expertise continues to grow and diversify, allowing NZ to play with digital peers on a world stage

- NZ On Air stays current and in front of a wider-than-broadcast audience

- Increasing numbers of people do not watch live television. This Fund allows producers to create projects that reach these 'turned off' communities, with good quality audiovisual local content that appears in the places they are.

- The opportunity to explore different ways of doing things through digital will flow through into more efficient ways of doing 'the usual'. Resulting in constructive learning for all involved.

- A broad(er) group of people have the opportunity to learn to tell stories through the digital narrative approach, albeit not necessarily a linear path. Alongside this people develop professionally and learn new business skills in addition to

audience and technical understanding they may not have previously had. This has benefits not just for digital but also for broadcast and in fact any content production industry.

Cons

- NZ On Air will need to potentially invest more resource into the projects than it has to date - more project management and monitoring, potentially advisory mentoring of some sort, as well as creation of suitable resources for successful applicants.
- Some projects will fail. Publicly.

What other countries are doing.

It is surprisingly difficult to navigate through the majority of international film or television funding agency websites to find information relating to anything other than film production funding.

In many cases there is information about Innovation funds or Talent Creation funds, but it relates to 2008 or 2009 and there is no follow up about what happened or whether it was closed down, or whether it was considered a success.

Many countries support game development in the same breath as film, but few specify a fund such as the Digital Content Partnership Fund to explore opportunities for extending the broadcast outcomes into new platforms or alternative media.

Certainly Australia and Canada have the strongest programmes established to fund digital development alongside film or television production. Both having not only clear outlines of the funds and what they represent, but ample online resources to support applicants.

Australia

Screen Australia has recently established a "Digital Ignition" programme. Seeking to ignite digital understanding, expertise and activity within the Australian screen content sector, the fund looks for innovative, non-linear, interactive storytelling or game content that has a significant narrative component.

The funding begins with up to $50,000 per development stage and Screen Australia provides a lot of support for applications, with example templates for all required documents, workshops to facilitate relationships between traditional screen practitioners and digital media experts, and clear guidelines for applicants.

The focus may be on projects that stem from the film or television industry and wish to extend into digital interactivity, however overall the aim to strengthen expertise in digital storytelling culture is strongly articulated.

http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/funding/allmedia/ignition.aspx

Canada

There are two main streams of funding provided by the Canada Media Fund (CMF) towards digital-based projects:

Convergent Stream - supporting multi-platform Canadian projects, content must be provided on at least two distribution platforms, one of which is television. The CMF supports the creation of television shows and related digital media content in key genres. Digital Media component must be rich, interactive content and can include games, interactive web content, on-demand content, podcasts, webisodes and mobisodes, for example.

Experimental Stream - encourages the creation of leading-edge, interactive, digital media content and software applications. Projects funded through this stream are to be developed for commercial potential by the Canadian media industry or public use by Canadians.

Extensive resources to support applicants are available through the CMF website.

http://www.cmf-fmc.ca/index.php?page_mode=create

Scotland

In 2009 Creative Scotland appeared to administer two funds relating to digital media and screen culture:

Vital Spark - awards of between £20,000 - £100,000 to encourage work that goes beyond the boundaries of creative disciplines and supports collaboration between artists, filmmakers, practitioners and producers across disciplines. These awards (£1 million to distribute) reward experimentation, radical new work and innovative approaches to engaging with audiences.

Digital Media IP Fund - designed to maximize the creative, cultural and commercial opportunities presented by new and emerging technologies (£3 million including contribution from Scottish Enterprise)

The fund was run for two years but it is not clear whether it still exists, nor is there any information on its success or otherwise to date.

http://www.creativescotland.com/arts-screen-and-creative-industries/creative-scotland-innovation-fund

EU

Until 2013, MEDIA 2007 is a funding programme offering financial support to the European audiovisual industries for a range of projects. One area of this programme is the "Development - Interactive Projects" fund. Aimed at companies that have produced at least one previous interactive project recently and wish to invest in the development of another interactive project which complements an audiovisual project. Grants of €10,000 - €150,000 per project are available.

The criteria seem quite open, though there is a statement that "works in which the end-user navigates through existing content without the ability to affect it are not considered interactive".

http://www.mediadeskuk.eu/funding/funding-schemes/producer-s-support/development-interactive-projects/

Denmark

Established in 2003, New Danish Screen is a talent development subsidy scheme providing support for fiction and documentary films.

According to the English site version around €15 million euros have been allocated to the scheme between 2011-2014. The scheme supports new generations of filmmakers and gamemakers to push their limits and create new experiences for cinema and TV audiences.

However according to the site in Danish, the fund closed early 2010 and was replaced by a completely separate gaming fund.

http://www.dfi.dk/Service/English/Funding/New-Danish-Screen.aspx

Summary

The Digital Content Partnership Fund was established in 2007 to provide for the creation of new or adapted multi-format audio-visual New Zealand content, particularly on non-broadcast platforms. Now, after four years and four million dollars, the Fund has been applied to sixteen diverse projects.

This paper presents an evaluation of each of those projects against a set of criteria, as well as an overview of the way the Fund has been used, the experiences of the successful applicants and a brief look into similar opportunities in other countries. The paper also presents a set of points for consideration in any discussion about the future of the Fund.

The Digital Content Partnership Fund has been a wonderful foray into new territory for NZ On Air. A wide variety of projects, ranging from a niche $20K event screening to a $500K+ online smorgasbord of comedic construction, have been launched on the NZ public with mixed and generally positive response.

The last four years have been a deliberate 'hands-off' (relatively) experiment on the part of NZ On Air and many lessons have been learned by staff as well as producers and practitioners.

There have been no major failures of funded projects and in fact some excellent successes (e.g. the Digital Emmy for *Reservoir Hill* and Webby Honoree for *I Am Simon Peter*). However there has not emerged a clear vision for a way forward for this NZ fund. Perhaps reassuringly nor has any other country got a clear and appropriate solution to this area.

The consistent view of the industry is that the Fund has been an excellent opportunity for people to dip their toes into new waters, to take risks and try new things in a relatively safe context, and to extend their skills and understanding of the digital realm.

It is the opinion of this reviewer that the Fund should continue, but that some changes to the way it is set up, administered and monitored should be implemented.

Furthermore it is the opinion of this reviewer that the mixed stream approach referred to above be given some consideration as a way forward.

Any continued Fund should include:

- Standardised report formats for key elements of the projects to allow for effective analysis and evaluation. The sheer diversity of projects means there is no benchmark for this area, but some standards include:
    - provision of consistent site statistics and the terminology used to describe them
    - reporting against clearly defined success criteria
- Clearly defined objectives in the RFP for each funding round.
- A revised budget and contract template to reflect the different project structure inherent in digital platforms.
- A requirement for a clear and effective marketing and PR plan to be included.
- Post delivery monitoring of the project. A project exists online far longer than when broadcast but to date no information about its ongoing state is provided.

The implications of continuing the Fund, regardless of the final format, are that NZ On Air will have to put more resource into establishing the process and monitoring the progress of the successful projects than it has to date.

It may also be beneficial to have some strategic input in the projects when they start, not just from a technical or media perspective, but application templates need to address the relevant questions such as "where is your audience and how will you reach them"? This will help to kickstart projects in the right direction.

In conclusion, if NZ On Air wishes to continue to support content innovation the Digital Content Partnership Fund is a relatively low cost and safe way to do so.