

NZGDC Scholarship Programme

What is the outcome we're looking for from providing scholarships to NZGDC?

NZGDC has grown immensely in the past few years and has become a premier event in this region's game development calendar. We are providing scholarships as part of our vision of industry equity for first time attendees, removing cost barriers and helping provide guidance so that early career developers can help derive the most value in contacts community and learning at the event.

Attending your first game development industry conference may be a daunting prospect if you are looking at the ticket price, accommodation and travelling to the venue from across Aotearoa, let alone what to do at the actual event.

Who might you be?

Maybe you are a student in your last year of your degree/diploma or a recent graduate in a game development-related discipline. Or you could be a self-taught developer with a history of making and shipping small games looking to broaden your horizons as to the actual industry. In any case, you will be looking to form connections in the game development industry in Aotearoa New Zealand (and beyond) for the purposes of starting or growing your career. Note: We will be observant of developers from Māori or Pasifika backgrounds as well as those from under-represented groups in the industry.

Who are we not looking for?

Hobbyists who are seeking to attend NZGDC for their own interests but are not serious about a full time career in game development. Anyone who has attended NZGDC before in any capacity and could otherwise fund their own way to the event. Developers who are simply interested in a fun weekend without any objectives of growing their knowledge or contacts for the benefit of their careers. People from outside the video game development industry seeking this as their first foray into the game development community (there are other, more appropriate pathways).

What can I apply for?

The scholarships CODE are offering consist of a combination of the following:

- An included ticket to the event, “Bootcamp Workshop” and NZGDC official side events.
- A hotel booked within walking distance to the venue as provided by CODE. (We will provide a group booking for the accommodation in an appropriate business-level hotel, for the event, allowing for travel in and out of the expo days. If you wish to take extra days, we will work with you on flights.)
- Airfares or travel costs as appropriate. This can include approximations of taxi/rideshare fees or airport parking fares.
- The first day of your attendance will include a “Boothcamp Workshop” where you will get to meet CODE staff, others in the CODE Scholarship cohort and friendly developers who will be attending the show and you can ask questions and they will be happy to support you if you need help during the event. Attending this session will be compulsory for accepting the Scholarship as it is key to setting you up for success during the actual event. It is expected that you will be able to make your own way to and from the provided accommodation (which will be within walking distance) and that you are at the conference or conference-related activities for the duration of the event.

Note: If you are local to the city NZGDC is currently being run in and do not need us to cover travel costs or accommodation, you can still apply for us to cover your ticket price, but let us know we do not have to cover these costs. We will not be preferencing local applicants over those who have to travel.

What is not included?

- Food and entertainment costs.
- Entry to non-NZGDC affiliated functions, E.G. AMG or GDoW-organised side events.
- Incidental costs such as airport coffees or meeting expenses while at the event (E.G. you meet a more experienced developer for lunch).
- Items like business cards or any giveaway products.

Note: Anyone who has been to NZGDC before regardless of who has provided the pathways or budget is automatically excluded from this programme on the basis they would likely have the mechanisms to get themselves there. This scholarship is available once per successful applicant and is intended on helping early career developers overcome barriers to their physical participation. This scholarship is only open to applicants resident in Aotearoa New Zealand. Any applicants must be over 18 at the time of travel.

How do I apply?

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

The Full Application will not require the same level of detail we would expect to see from other CODE applications, including travel grants as we would not expect to see the same form of business planning. However we will need to see your contact details and location, your previous history in demonstrating your interest in the game development industry and any qualifications of coursework you have completed or have in progress.

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. Unlike regular CODE applications, this will be curated via our staff as we recognise there may be a need to demonstrate knowledge that you may have been present at various game development-related events (including meetups and game jams) and our staff may already have built up rapport with you.

What criteria will I be assessed on?

Demonstrated Interest

- What formal study have you entered into? Provide details of what coursework and to what level you have completed. If you have access to games you have worked on as part of your coursework and are able to share them, that is definitely a bonus. Have you completed your diploma or degree and where has that lead? Have you completed online courses (E.G. Udemy or Unreal Engine courses)?
- Do you have personal projects you can share? A history of game jams, a portfolio page, or an itch.io presence? Or even if you have finished a personal project and put it on Steam or any other storefront.
- Have you attended local game development events before and regularly? These can be any combination of events like meetups (AMG, Game Developers of Wellington, CGDA, game jams, university or educational institution events etc.).

Professional Bearing

- Is your LinkedIn page ready to go and has a good summary of your education and abilities?
- What are your plans around the types of people you would like to connect to? (The answer isn't "anyone who could get me a job", what discipline are you in and what specific roles are you looking for?) If you are an indie developer, looking to connect with other indie developers perhaps with more experience, do you have examples of locally made games of whom you would like to connect with the teams behind?

Overall Approach

- Are you demonstrating key focus at looking at a pathway into game development or are you really just exploring?
- Are there any topics that you would like to go to lectures or workshops on if they were available?
- Are there any other reasons why we should select you to go? (“I’ve loved games and wanted to work in games all my life” is a bit of a cliché and we are looking at more specific reasons.)

All applications must include

- A completed application form, including your contact and address details for our records.
- A comprehensive description of your studies to date and what you intend on completing if you are part the way through.
- Links to any materials you may have worked on, with details of your role in the work. This may be via a Steam or itch.io page, a portfolio link or a direct download from your own private drive or Dropbox link etc.
- An abbreviated one page CV, showing the key highlights of your studies and career to date.

If it is noted that you accept the offer from CODE and do not show adequate participation for the event or are otherwise unable to make it, we reserve the right to rescind the offer at any time before the show. We may initiate cost recovery if you travel to the event and do not adequately take part without a very good reason (E.G. COVID-19 infection).

Persons and Entities

- CODE Funding Programmes are explicitly limited to Aotearoa New Zealand-based ventures.
- The Principal applicant must be over 18 and based in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 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.

Prohibited spending

- Capital equipment: computers, permanent software licenses, furniture and so on.
- Overheads: rent, utilities, cleaning, shared facilities.
- Any non-project-related costs.