



Summary of Amazon MOU

Background

Amazon announced in September 2019 that it would be locating its production of the much-anticipated *The Lord of the Rings* television series in New Zealand. The series, which began production in Auckland in early 2020, will be over multiple seasons, and is expected to explore new storylines that occur before the events of the “*The Fellowship of the Ring*”. As the exclusive production location, the development of this new series is a valuable opportunity for New Zealand to revitalise and extend the already longstanding legacy and relationship with Tolkien’s stories.

In recognition of the potential economic benefits to New Zealand of this relationship, Amazon Studios was granted provisional approval of an additional 5% New Zealand Screen Production Grant (NZSPG) on top of the existing 20% that the production already qualifies for.

Two Memoranda of Understanding were signed in December 2020 following negotiations between Amazon and the government agencies: the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC); Tourism New Zealand (TNZ); and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). An overarching Series MOU was signed to establish the key principles and obligations under the 5% Uplift, and a Season MOU is in place to relate specifically to the required activity relating to Season One of the production. Subsequent Season MOUs will be negotiated for each future season.

The MOU’s three pillars:

1. NZ branding activities to promote NZ internationally (led by TNZ)

This provides the opportunity for New Zealand to strengthen its international brand, with a campaign to promote New Zealand as the home of the series, timed to coincide with the airing of the first season on international screens. This will involve access to key cast and crew, location footage and behind-the-scenes clips. The timing of this promotional work will likely coincide with the reopening of international borders for leisure travel purposes and will create a timely vehicle to keep New Zealand’s brand alive in the minds of future international travellers.

2. NZ screen sector training and promotional activities (led by NZFC)

Amazon will work with the NZFC to stimulate business and skills growth in the screen sector. This includes a focus on supporting the growth and capability of New Zealand’s screen sector workforce through placements and internships on Amazon Studios’ *The Lord of the Rings* series production, workshops, and masterclasses. The placement and internships are underway, focused on production management, directing, production accounting, Lighting, Dolly Grip, Editorial, and Location management.



New Zealand's success in securing this large scale and multi-season production is a significant boost to the local screen industry, creating jobs at all levels and exposure to world-leading production techniques and skills. Through the MOUs, Amazon is committed to growing and nurturing the talent/skills base of the New Zealand screen sector, to support business development within the New Zealand screen sector and to grow the New Zealand screen sector's infrastructure base.

The partnership will also develop a marketing programme to profile the growing New Zealand screen sector with a specific focus on an ongoing pipeline of mixed-scale productions through the showcasing of New Zealand's:

- highly skilled and growing talent base;
- expanding infrastructure offering;
- accessible and diverse region locations;
- post-production offering; and
- screen sector creativity and innovation.

3. Innovation programme to create openings into Amazon (led by MBIE)

The purpose of the innovation programme is to:

- Build a wider relationship between New Zealand and Amazon;
- Leverage New Zealand's relationship with Amazon;
- Profile New Zealand businesses, innovations and R&D opportunities to a global audience; and
- Advance mutually-beneficial R&D opportunities.

Innovation programme commitments include:

- Delegation of businesses/teams from Amazon to visit New Zealand each Season, or participate virtually, for an innovation summit, speaker series or other events; and
- Exploring strategic opportunities to invest in and advance:
 - STEM programs and donations for primary and secondary education;
 - Innovation challenges;
 - Academic research and fellowships; and
 - Innovation internships.

Amazon and MBIE will work together to establish agreed-upon themes that align Amazon's and New Zealand's goals on a Season-by-Season basis. Potential themes include, but are not limited to, technology and innovations that will be used in the production of the series. These themes may explore specific R&D focus areas, and the parties agree to work together to explore additional or alternative opportunities as they may arise.