

Next Wave,



Kickstart
EOI Guide
2026–27

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From the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nations, Next Wave is privileged to traverse the land and waterways of this continent of many nations – to share in the act of art making and culture building – grounded in values of justice, friendship, and care. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Cover image: Hannah Brontë (Yaegel), *FEMPRE\$\$*, 2016, Next Wave Festival, Blak Dot Gallery, Narrm/Melbourne. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Sarah Walker

About the Program Callout

Next Wave is seeking expressions of interest for Kickstart, our flagship creative development program for early-career artists, supporting the next generation of artists, producers and arts leaders to develop ambitious new work over an 18-month period.

In 2026–27, Kickstart celebrates 25 years of championing early-career artists, which has supported the early development of hundreds of now-prominent artists and art leaders who have gone on to shape Australia’s contemporary arts sector.

Early-career artists ready to take their practice to the next level are invited to apply for this iteration of Kickstart. The program will bring together a cohort of eight early-career artists from across disciplines to develop new work for public presentation, while building lasting creative networks and professional skills.

From the seed of an idea through to development and presentation, we support artists at all stages by offering guidance, advocacy, curatorial and production support, alongside dedicated opportunities for feedback, peer exchange, networking and professional development.

Next Wave’s home at Brunswick Mechanics Institute will act as a creative hub for workshops, conversations, testing and community engagement, reconnecting artists and audiences through shared creative experiences, and culminating in a public outcome at the end of the program.

As part of the 2026–27 program, two dedicated places will be reserved for artists who live, work or play in Wyndham City, and one dedicated place for an artist who lives, works or plays in Cardinia Shire.

Key Dates

EOI opens:	Wednesday 20 May, 2026
Online information session:	Wednesday 27 May, 2026
EOI closes:	Thursday 18 June, 2026
Artists selection confirmed:	Early July, 2026
Kickstart Launch Event at Next Wave:	Thursday 23 July, 2026

Information Sessions

Online information session: Wednesday 27 May, 5.30pm

Join us online to learn more about Kickstart and the EOI process. We'll share an overview of the program, what to expect across 2026–27, and how to approach your submission, followed by time for questions. This session is open to anyone thinking about applying, whether you have a clear idea or are still figuring things out. Please let us know if you have any access needs.

[Register for the Kickstart Online Information Session](#)

In-person drop-in session: Wednesday 3 June, 10am – 4pm

Drop in and have a chat and a cuppa with the Next Wave team.

Next Wave is [located at Brunswick Mechanics Institute](#), 270 Sydney Rd, Bulleke-bek (Brunswick), VIC 3056

If you can't make any of these sessions but still wish to speak to someone about your EOI, please reach out to Next Wave Associate Producer, Julia Croft, by emailing julia@nextwave.org.au

Eligibility

To be eligible for the 2026–27 Kickstart program, artists must:

Identify as early-career

Early-career is not strictly defined. Applicants who identify as being in the early stages of their practice (approximately within the first 10 years) are encouraged to apply.

Live or work in Victoria

The program is open to artists located anywhere in Victoria. Regular travel to Narrm/Melbourne will be required.

Have capacity to participate in a program of activities delivered between August 2026 – November 2027

Kickstart will involve a base commitment of approximately 16 hours per month in the first year, increasing in 2027 to include at least two-weeks of additional studio, rehearsal and development time in the lead up to the public outcome. We expect around 80% attendance but will be flexible around other access, work and family commitments as needed.

Be in the early stages of developing a new work or idea

Kickstart is designed for artists working across any discipline, including performance, visual art, moving image, and more. We do not expect you to have a finished project, but you will need to articulate the start of an idea or story that you are interested in developing and working towards a public outcome.



2024–25 Kickstart artists (and family) with Lead Program Producer Frances Robinson and Kickstart facilitator Lana Nguyen, 2025. Photo: Mae Hartrick

Artists Receive

- An 18-month structured development program, with clear phases of research, development and presentation
- \$10,000 artist fee (plus superannuation). Split into two instalments of \$5,000, across two-years.
- Regular one-on-one mentorship with Next Wave’s CEO and Associate Producer, alongside input from the Arts Advisory.
- Ongoing producing support, including check-ins, troubleshooting and practical project guidance
- Cohort-based model with practical workshops, studio visits and artist talks
- Opportunities to share work at different stages, including informal peer and industry showings
- Access to rehearsal and studio space at Brunswick Mechanics Institute
- Access to a hot desk at Next Wave for planning, writing and administrative work
- Production guidance during development and technical support and equipment for presentation
- Communications and marketing support
- Practical support with budgeting, timelines, contracting, collaborators and project planning
- Introductions to industry, potential presenting partners and pathways for future development, touring or presentation
- Final public sharing in 2027 at Next Wave or at one of our partner venues. This outcome may be take the form of a public performance, exhibition, installation, screening or hybrid presentation.
- Access support where required



Elham Eshraghian-Haakansson, *Anvár*, Kickstart, 2023, Next Wave, Yagen Square, Boorloo/Perth. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Aaron Claringbold

Expressions of Interest (EOIs)

What does the EOI form look like?

Next Wave is using Google Forms for the Kickstart EOI. You do not have to have a Google account to fill out the form. Your privacy is important to us and we will always handle your information with care. See [Next Wave's Privacy Policy](#). EOI form questions include:

About You

- Name and pronouns
- Age
- Contact details
- Identities (e.g. LGBTQIA+, First Nations, Deaf and/or person with disability)
- Location (postcode + suburb)

About Your Practice

- Primary practice area (multiple choice)
- Link to artist website/social media
- Short Bio (up to 1,000 characters)
- Tell us about your creative practice. What are you interested in exploring right now? (up to 1,500 characters)
- What ideas, questions or directions would you like to explore through Kickstart? This could be a project, a shift in your practice, a question, a hunch, a dream or something still taking shape (up to 1,500 characters)
- Why is this the right time for you to undertake a program like Kickstart? (up to 1,000 characters)
- What would be your ideal outcome at the culmination of this program? (up to 1,000 characters)
- Do you have any access needs? What might you need to enable full participation in the program?
- Anything else you would like us to know?

Support Material

- Artist CV (2 pages max)
- 3–5 examples of recent work (links or files). If you are submitting images as support material, we suggest that this is provided as a link to a PDF of up to 10 images

Tips for your EOI

When preparing your submission, you may wish to consider:

- What ideas, materials or questions you are exploring
- Why this is important to your practice right now
- How you might approach developing this work
- Who you are as an artist and what informs your practice

You do not need to have all the answers. We are interested in potential, curiosity and openness! Keep your responses clear and focused. Simple is good.

Accessibility

Next Wave welcomes EOIs from artists of all backgrounds, lived experiences, and access needs. We are committed to making the EOI process as accessible and flexible as possible.

Applicants are welcome to provide links to video or audio instead of written responses in the EOI form. If you would like additional support or to discuss alternative formats for your submission, you can arrange an in-person or online meeting with Next Wave Associate Producer, Julia Croft, by emailing julia@nextwave.org.au



Top: Georgia Lucy, *Gough & Margaret's Bull Clip*, Kickstart, 2025, Next Wave, Narrm/Melbourne. Courtesy the artists. Photos: Mae Hartrick. • Bottom: An.Other Collective, *Fieldnotes on Being, Together*, Kickstart, 2025, Dukkana, Narrm/Melbourne. Courtesy the artists. Photo: Nur Aishah Kenton

FAQs

What do you mean by ‘early career’?

Kickstart is a development program for artists who are in the early stages of their practice, but “early-career” is understood in a flexible way. It is not defined by age, formal qualifications, or a set number of years working as an artist. Instead, it focuses on where someone is in the development of their creative work and what kind of support would help it progress.

Who should apply?

The program supports artists who are establishing or reshaping their practice, developing new ideas, or experimenting with different approaches and methods. This can include people moving from study or emerging independent practice into a more sustained professional direction.

What kind of work does Kickstart support?

Kickstart is designed for artists who are developing new ideas, testing creative approaches, or building sustainable independent practices. The program often supports work that is collaborative, experimental, culturally diverse, and engaged with contemporary social or political ideas.

Kickstart supports early career experimental art across a wide range of practices. These include:

- Performance / Live Art / Theatre
- Dance / Choreography / Movement
- Visual Art
- Installation
- Moving Image / Film / Video
- Sound / Music / Experimental Audio
- Digital / Interactive / XR / Games
- Writing / Text-based / Poetry
- Socially Engaged / Community-based Practice
- Curatorial Practice
- Interdisciplinary / Hybrid

Do I need to be based in Narm/Melbourne?

No. The 2026–2027 cohort is focused on artists based anywhere in Victoria. We encourage submissions from regional and outer-metro Victoria.

Much of the program will take place in person at Next Wave, located at Brunswick Mechanics Institute, 270 Sydney Rd, Bulleke-bek (Brunswick) VIC 3056.

If you are based outside of Victoria, we encourage you to sign up to our newsletter to hear about future opportunities for artists across Australia and beyond.

Do I need to have a finished project?

No. Kickstart is interested in artists who are actively shaping their practice and want space to explore, test, and refine their ideas. The program is designed around the artist's questions, interests, and ways of working. It supports people who are thinking through what their practice is becoming, or who are in a period of change, uncertainty, or expansion. This might include developing new approaches to making, deepening research habits, or exploring how different influences and experiences are informing their work.

You might be:

- developing a new body of work
- shifting your practice in a new direction
- looking for time, support and structure to test ideas

Are collectives or collaborations able to apply?

Yes. We welcome EOIs from collectives and collaborative practices, however, please note that the fee remains the same.

What is the time commitment for the Kickstart program?

For the 2026 round of Next Wave's Kickstart, the time commitment is approximately 16 hours per calendar month. In practice, this is generally structured across around two full days each month, with a small amount of additional time for occasional check-ins, preparation, or light program-related activity between sessions. It's designed to be a part-time commitment, so artists can continue their existing work or other responsibilities while participating.

Do I have to be available for the duration of the program?

To be eligible for the program, artists must have the capacity to participate in a program of activities delivered between August 2026 – November 2027.

The program is structured with the understanding that artists may have other commitments, so flexibility is built in. The general expectation is around 80% attendance, meaning you should aim to be present for most sessions, particularly the core program days. This helps maintain continuity for both your own development and the cohort experience.

How are artists selected?

EOIs are reviewed by the Next Wave's team and Arts Advisory. We consider both individual practices and the make-up of the overall cohort, including diversity of artforms, perspectives, ages and approaches.

We will also consider:

- strength and potential of the artistic practice
- openness to experimentation and risk
- willingness to engage in a cohort and shared learning
- diversity of practices and perspectives across the cohort
- how the proposed ideas or practice respond to current social, cultural or environmental contexts

When will I hear back?

Applicants will be notified of the outcome by July 2025. If you are shortlisted, you will be invited to an informal interview with Next Wave staff ahead of the final outcome.

Can I talk to someone before applying?

Yes, there are multiple opportunities to speak to the Next Wave team before applying. Join one of our information sessions:

Online: Wednesday 22 May, 5.30pm. [Register here.](#)

In-person drop in: Wednesday 3 June, 10am – 4pm at Next Wave, located at Brunswick Mechanics Institute, 270 Sydney Road, Bulleke-bek (Brunswick), VIC 3056

If you can't make either of these and still want to talk to someone please reach out to Next Wave Associate Producer, Julia Croft, on julia@nextwave.oirg.au

What if I need support with my EOI?

We're happy to help! If you would like additional support, you can arrange an in-person or online meeting with Next Wave Associate Producer, Julia Croft, by emailing julia@nextwave.org.au

I'm not sure if I'm 'ready', should I apply?

Kickstart is designed for artists who are still figuring things out and want support to develop their practice. You do not need to have the answers! Just the questions.

Do you prioritise any applicants?

We are committed to supporting artists who face systemic barriers to accessing opportunities in the arts sector. This includes (but is not limited to) First Nations artists, artists from culturally diverse backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ artists and artists living with disability.

Still have questions?

If you're unsure about anything, we'd love to hear from you. You can reach out to reach out to Associate Producer, Julia Croft, on julia@nextwave.org.au

[Submit an EOI for Kickstart 2026–27 via our online form](#)



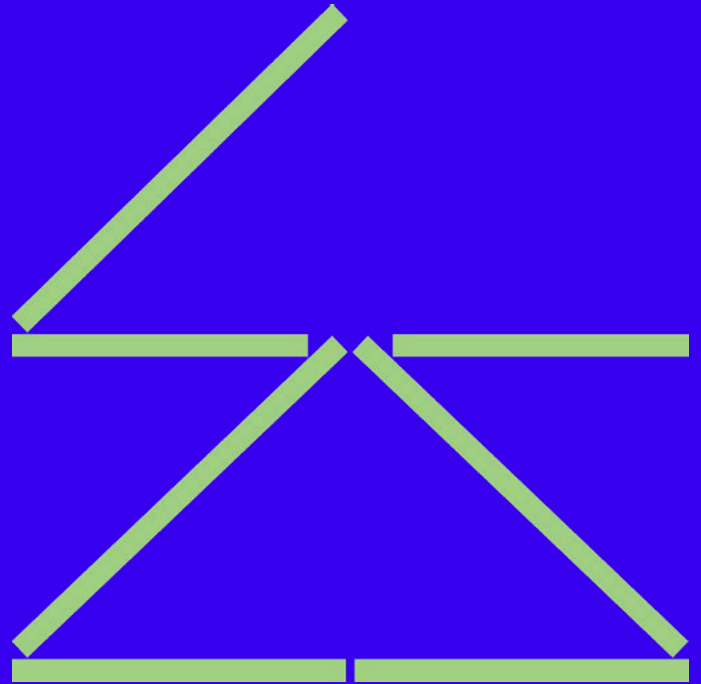
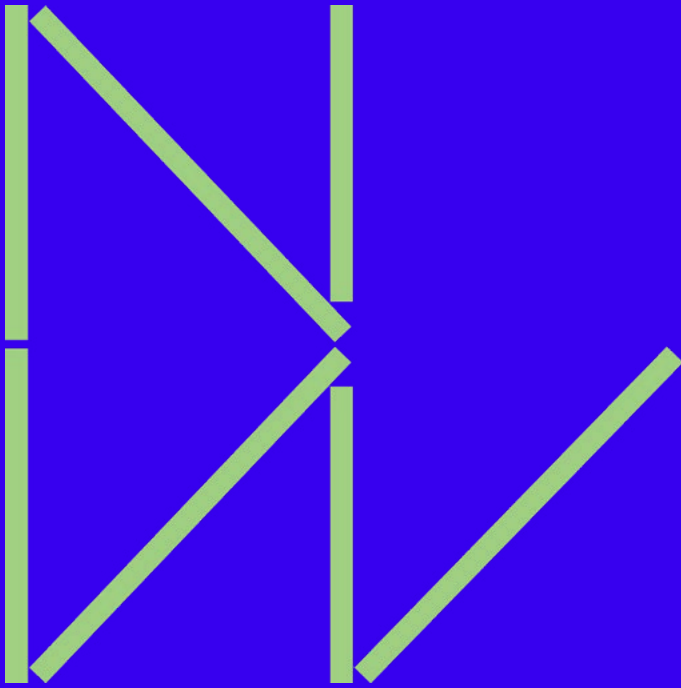
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Next Wave,

Office

Brunswick Mechanics Institute
270 Sydney Road,
Bulleke-bek (Brunswick)
VIC 3056

Get in touch

nextwave@nextwave.org.au
nextwave.org.au

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