

## Re: Re[2]: API Games Funding - initial results for Dark October

Sent:  Tuesday, September 4, 2018 7:00 PM

From: **BunBun3D** [bunbun3d@protonmail.com](mailto:bunbun3d@protonmail.com)

To: **Liam Routt** [Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)

CC: **Tess Ritchie** [Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au)

Hi Liam,

At this point, we have to argue the fact that we have not exaggerated our relationship with Sony Computer Entertainment (SCE). We had applied our business to be a PlayStation partner at <https://partners.playstation.net/> SCE had offered us with a GDPA contract that allow us to have development training, private/remote support and publishing through PlayStation Developer Network (<http://www.scedev.net/>), which only approved PlayStation partners can access through their respective business static IP address. Within the PlayStation Developer Network, we are given guidance, help and support to get to release, not just a permission to develop on the platform. This access is not granted for people with personal interest, educational or research purposes.

So, we have the resources directly from SCE to build our game development experience on PlayStation platform. Of course, there is a lot of work to do but we have secured the resources and support to get to release through PlayStation Developer Network. Because of this, we think it is unfair to pin that we have no experience in game development on console when SCE is willing to give us the experience, training and support, as well as getting into publishing through SCE. We understand that most developmental teams may not pass the evaluation criteria to get support from SCE, therefore, becoming a risk. But we had eliminated this risk. SCE apparently is more supportive of first-time indies than we had initially thought. Since then, we had focused our attention entirely on finishing what we had proposed to do. During the application, as stated, we are in prototype stage in which, you all had admitted is an impressive prototype.

Experience aside, we only ask for you and your panel to be open-minded, as we had indeed attained support from SCE and are willing to bring Dark October to release. If we had known that you have so much doubt about our relationship with SCE, we would have elaborated this further in our application documents.

Our business, Bun Bun Studios, had developed cutting-edge technologies that can speed up many development hurdles that may come, despite our limited man-power and scale of the project. Please feel free to look into many of our works online for full details.

We look forward to Film Victoria's response in regards to a proper feedback. At this stage, we may not consider to apply again due to the many facts present your feedback that was wrong about our application. And failure to confirm with us the details of our partnership/license agreement with SCE, which seemed to be the key factor that resulted in the decision of Film Victoria to not support our first-time indie game project on a console, which you all admitted that has an impressive prototype.

Regards,  
Siew Mai Bong  
Bun Bun Studios

----- Original Message -----

On 31 August 2018 2:54 PM, Liam Routt <Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au> wrote:

I am sorry that my responses have taken so long. I know that must be frustrating. I am not going to be in a position to give you a more complete response until I am back in the office next week.

--

Please understand that all of our applications examined by a panel comprised of experienced game developers (including myself). While you may disagree with their decision, and you may believe there to be inaccuracies in my response, be aware that experienced people with relevant skills have looked at your application, and the other 30+ applications in the round, and have decided which projects, as presented, they were comfortable to recommend for funding from our limited budget. Do not for a moment confuse problems in my recollection of those deliberations for any failing on the part of the panel or the process itself.

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In compiling my response for you, yesterday, I referred primarily to your Project Overview document, and not to your application form. The material I (re)read in there indicated, to my reading, that your work was focused on filling out the thirteen levels of the game. That document (as a whole) did not particularly indicate to me that you were focusing on a more limited prototype at this point, although that may well have been your intent. We would always hope that there is no room for ambiguity. Clearly, though, when writing a response to you I should have consulted all of the materials, and for that I apologize, as it appears to have confused the situation.

As to your target platform, that is definitely a detail that in my eagerness to finally respond to you I should have checked. It is not common for relatively inexperienced teams to focus on a console primarily, but I should have checked to be sure. That said, it is my experience that there is a significant difference between getting the permission to develop for a platform and having significant attention and support from the platform holder. While we have certainly seen local developers work closely with Sony and Microsoft and Nintendo, we have also seen a lot of relatively inexperienced developers believe their relationship to be more significant than it really is. There is nothing in what you've indicated in your application that led the panel to believe your situation is different from the usual level of general interest shown by a platform holder about a project early in its development.

I understand the nature of your prior experience, and we definitely give you credit for that work. There is a huge difference between that sort of work, though, and the effort required to fully complete a game for public release. And the work required to meet a console holder's requirements is still another level beyond that. By setting your sights on a console release, when you lack the practical experience with finishing any title and releasing it, sets off alarm bells for experienced developers. For an under-resourced, small developer without prior experience completing and releasing a game of this complexity to develop their first game for a console appears to be a risky proposition.

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I can say that is always considerably more difficult to convince our panel to commit to early prototype projects, especially from relatively inexperienced teams. Where possible you are advised to reach a point in your development where you can clearly demonstrate the full scope of your player experience, your team's ability to complete a well-defined project, and a plan to ensure it will reach its target audience.

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Clearly I wasted both of our time by sending you a response yesterday, which was not my intent. A large part of the reason that we do not commonly give written feedback is that it is easy to focus on details that appear to have been overlooked. But, please understand that I was not trying to do anything other than help you to understand how your submission might appear to our panel of experienced developers. I am not saying that your work isn't worthy, and I'm not even saying that your team would not be up to the challenges you have ahead of you. I am just trying to help you understand why, given what you submitted, the panel was not able to recommend your project over the other applications in this round. I'm trying to help you to understand that your application communicates more than simply a set of details, and when taken as a whole may not appear as convincing as you intended.

Take care,

Liam

**Liam Routt**

Manager – Games and Digital Content

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----- Original Message -----

From: "BunBun3D" <[bunbun3d@protonmail.com](mailto:bunbun3d@protonmail.com)>

To: "Liam Routt" <[Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)>

Cc: "Tess Ritchie" <[Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au)>

Sent: 31/08/2018 12:50:35 PM

Subject: RE: API Games Funding - initial results for Dark October

Hi Liam,

Thank you for your email.

We believe there has been a huge misunderstanding. What we have presented and applied for in the application is a "**prototype**" and **no more than that** as stated in the application form. Because we are in "**prototype stage**". We are asking for funding **NOT** to go to "completion" or "release", but to move from "**prototype to production**". That is, we would like to ask for funding to continue the development of our game, to move our prototype to work towards completing levels. The plans on getting there is, of course, drafted and included

in the proposal.

We understand that you are familiar with the definition of a game prototype, if not, please read this page: <https://learn.canvas.net/courses/3/pages/level-5-dot-1-prototyping>

Included in our application, we clearly stated that we are going to Playstation and may consider Xbox. **We never mentioned PC as targeted platform** in our proposal. At the beginning of our project, we already got the interest of Sony Playstation and had become a licensed Playstation developer for game title "Dark October", allowing us to bravely put their logo on our works. We also have the rights to purchase and develop on the Playstation development kit with a free Unity game engine pro license. The contract with Playstation is already signed and it is confidential. We have included the confidential email confirming that Bun Bun Studios is a licensed Playstation developer in the submitted application. We do have the actual signed confidential contracts in our possession, which is an agreement between us and Sony that cannot be disclosed to other parties. So this means, we have already secured a developer and publishing license for this title on the Playstation platform, as long as, we can deliver a release of the game title that abides to requirements of the contract and the code of conduct - no offensive/sensitive content. As for Xbox platform being part of consideration, is mainly due to the Unity's broad range of supported platforms under one build, it is the engine's known selling factor and strong-suit. We had contacted Microsoft and they were very interested but as part of assessment, they would only agree to consider us after we submitted a "highly polished vertical slice" of the title. And they have agreed to wait for us till we can deliver that.

Furthermore, although this is the first time we attempted to build a game, we have engaged in game development before in the form of selling packages for games. We are aware of the time and effort required to put all the elements together to build a complete game. We are certain that we submitted a \$50,000 budget plan and not a \$30,000 one.

We feel like there are too many details that were completely wrong about our application in your feedback, and this makes it hard for us to accept the decision of the Film Victoria. If we are applying for funding to go further from prototyping, why were we expected to have proven the quality and standard of release? In simpler terms, how does one get funding from here if more is expected of them? Does it mean that when a project is at prototype stage, no funding will be provided to go further?

We hope there is no mix-up in our application, as we still have a copy of the application form, proposal and relevant documents that we had submitted for the funding our game from "prototype to production", NOT to "completion" or "release". Since we cannot get a refund, we would like answers to the aforementioned questions above in clarity.

Kind regards,  
Siew Mai Bong  
Bun Bun Studios

----- Original Message -----

On 30 August 2018 4:46 PM, Liam Routt <[Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)> wrote:

Please forgive me.

Perhaps this will help: your application, like many others, shows the core mechanics in a playable form - in your case the ability to move a character around and use physical and magical combat to overcome foes - but the panel isn't clearly shown enough to have confidence in the gameplay that surrounds those key aspects, and provides the player with the motivation to play on. Those aspects are mentioned in your presentation, but only in passing. While the core combat mechanics are obviously important to the success of a game

such as Dark October, filling out the experience with the exploration, quests, clues, and mysteries you mention is a significant undertaking. We routinely see such elements referenced, but not proven, in applications, and the panel often finds it hard to support such projects.

A simpler game (perhaps mobile puzzle game, or an arena fighter) can afford to focus in on the core gameplay experience which will be the focus of the player's time with the game, although often the panel finds that it wants to understand more about the developer's approach to motivating the player to return to play again, or purchase in-game items, than an inexperienced developer is able to present this early in their work. Such details feel like they will fall into place, but end up occupying a huge amount of design effort, and leading to the creation of many assets and "additional mechanics". Unless the panel has confidence that the team has the experience to understand these challenges and plan for them, they can find it hard to support projects with such scope without a more complete picture.

Additionally, you have presented your project as being developed for PC and consoles. In reality, given the scope of what you are setting out to create, it would make a lot more sense to the panel if you were aiming at a single release platform at this stage. Getting the attention of Sony or Microsoft can feel like a lot of the work is done, but in reality it is a significant undertaking to deliver on a console in addition to the PC, and one which makes a lot more sense if you have the support of a publisher to help take advantage of the range of opportunities the platforms provide. Getting an appropriate publisher past the "interesting" stage, to the "signed contract" stage is a major undertaking which make take upwards of a year, and require a lot of dedicated time and networking to achieve, quite apart from the skills and time required to work on the game itself. When a team who has not done these things (in a fully released game) before presents itself as working towards release on a console, the panel has to question whether they fully understand the implications of their intentions, and are equal to the task, especially as the skills required are often quite different from the creative and technical skills needed to complete the project.

Perhaps the best solution to these problems, for a team in your position, is to focus in on a smaller target. Your application says that you will take our funding and go from a single level (which we really only have seen as a combat prototype which would require refinement to be considered ready even on that level) to thirteen levels, along with all the story, clues, player development, and everything else to make it a complete game. And for more than one platform. Instead, focus on a more modest target: perhaps you will create a fully fleshed out single level (or a couple, if needed to show the full scope of the game) where you will provide a "vertical slice" that shows near-final level gameplay, art, and player experience - the scope of the exploration, clues, and other elements will be clear, the animations and models will demonstrate what the experience will look like, etc. From such a sample a player will be able to fully understand what you are creating, and why they would play it, and more importantly a potential investor or partner (like a publisher, or a funding body) would be able to determine that the game would have an audience, and that your team would be able to complete the project. And your team would have a

very clear picture of where the unexpected work will be required, what external resources you will need to engage, and how much effort will be required not just to make thirteen levels, but to make a full game with those elements. Plan to deliver this on a single platform, and perhaps hope to then be in a position to assess the work required to move onto another platform if the opportunity is right.

When presenting such a project to us, you want the panel to see you as carefully proving your idea will work before committing to the bulk of the development. You want them to understand that you are walking before running, which gives them confidence that they are not expecting you to work miracles. They want to see you clearly identify a reasonable goal that isn't too far away, and will leave you with a useful result in your hands, that you can take and use to take the next step.

Further, when you break down all that you have to do in order to fully populate your level with all of the extras that will bring the game experience to life, you will likely find that there is a bunch of work. Working out what external assistance you might require (sound? music? narrative? marketing consultation? Etc.), and how much time you will donate, you may well find that just that one part of your game, done to a near-final level, will consume a bunch of effort. Perhaps you are still asking us for \$30,000 (or less or perhaps more). But you are going to use that money to invest in ensuring that you fully understand how to build the game out from that point. Perhaps you find that you have to adjust your vision of the game at that point, but you haven't found that out when you have half of the game partially built - you've found it out when you have a portion of it built, and you understand the effort required to complete it. A change at that point is not hard to make, and you are still in a good position to make a case to get the assistance you need to finish the whole task. Indeed you are using our money to get you to a point where you could return to us and make a solid pitch to use more of our money to build the rest.

You are in a hard position. You have an interesting idea, but the distance between an interesting idea and a released game is large. You may feel you have the measure of the task, but experienced developers will caution you that they walked in those shoes and they will not want you to set out without the right amount of preparation. No one wants to dampen your enthusiasm, instead they want to make sure that when they are able to grant you funding you will be in a position to use it to your own best advantage. Especially when the competition for funding is tough, as it has been this year, the panel tries to ensure that it is making the best choices it can, and is providing funding where it will most help. We've love to see your project blossom, and would be happy to help you reach your goals.

Hopefully this will give you some insights into not only how the panel sees what you present to them, but also practical ways that you can adjust what you show them, tell them, and ask for. Try to assess what you intend to present by stepping back and considering things from their view point, using the sorts of ideas I've mentioned, and hopefully you will be able to create an application they will be much more easily able to support.

Take care,

Liam

**Liam Routt**

Manager – Games and Digital Content

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**From:** BunBun3D [mailto:[bunbun3d@protonmail.com](mailto:bunbun3d@protonmail.com)]

**Sent:** Thursday, 30 August 2018 3:43 PM

**To:** Liam Routt <[Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Tess Ritchie <[Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: API Games Funding - initial results for Dark October

Hi Liam,

It has been two weeks since we last contacted. Could you advise when you could get back to me?

Kind regards,  
Siew Mai Bong  
Bun Bun Studios

----- Original Message -----

On 17 August 2018 2:11 PM, BunBun3D <[bunbun3d@protonmail.com](mailto:bunbun3d@protonmail.com)> wrote:

Hi Liam,

Thank you for informing me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,  
Siew Mai Bong  
Bun Bun Studios

----- Original Message -----

On 16 August 2018 6:59 PM, Liam Routt <[Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)> wrote:

I'm sorry to say that I am still overwhelmed, and have been unable to find the time to phone you to talk this through. I'm hoping for some clear air when I'm in next week, but I am not in the office until Wednesday. I am very sorry to make you wait even longer.

Take care,

Liam

**Liam Routt**

Manager – Games and Digital Content

Film Victoria

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**From:** BunBun3D [<mailto:bunbun3d@protonmail.com>]

**Sent:** Tuesday, 14 August 2018 5:44 PM

**To:** Liam Routt <[Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Tess Ritchie <[Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au)>

**Subject:** RE: API Games Funding - initial results for Dark October

Hi Liam,

Thank you for informing me, I look forward to hearing from you.

Cheers,  
Siew Mai Bong  
Bun Bun Studios

----- Original Message -----

On August 14, 2018 4:55 PM, Liam Routt <[Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)> wrote:

Siew Mai,

Please be aware that I only work Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday at the moment, which limits how quickly I can respond. I've been unable to properly get back to you today, but I will try to do so tomorrow. Thank you for your patience.

Just quickly, though, I am sorry to say that at this point it is impossible for us to offer any refund of your application fee. If you had been in a position to withdraw your application within the first week after submission it might have been possible, but by this time it simply isn't.

Take care,

Liam

**Liam Routt**

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**From:** BunBun3D [<mailto:bunbun3d@protonmail.com>]

**Sent:** Monday, 13 August 2018 8:00 AM

**To:** Liam Routt <[Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)>

**Cc:** Tess Ritchie <[Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Re: API Games Funding - initial results for Dark October

Dear Liam and Tess,

At the time of submission, we were unaware of the severity of the problem and dismissed it as a small technical problem that could be resolved right away. After a long time conducting a careful and thorough investigation into the problem, we realised that hackers from the Internet has compromised our computers, which was completely unexpected for us being first-time game developers.

There was some form of virus or malware that was undetectable by top brands of anti-virus software. As a result, we've suffered heavy hardware losses and some data losses. There were significant delays in acquiring replacement parts and some new hardware to bolster the security and integrity of our systems. In addition, we've encountered significant delays in changing our ISP, but we eventually came through as soon as the NBN is available at our address in July.

As a result of these unexpected technical problems, the demo that we've intended was lacking in both graphics and sound effects as well as a lot of elements, such as story progression, cutscenes, quests, items, equipments, upgrades, bosses, and easter eggs.

However, with changes to our systems and ISP, the technical problems we have faced so far has been resolved and our development has been smoothly progressing. Summing up the delays due to these technical problems, we estimate that the development of Dark October will be delayed by 6 to 12 months. As our Playstation license auto renews, there will be no issues for us to keep the license.

Since we didn't make it this round, we are planning to apply again in the first round next year with a better demo. If it's not too much to ask, could we have our application fee refunded? It would help us with the little finance we have left after ordering much hardware to continue our development.

Yours sincerely,  
Siew Mai Bong  
Bun Bun Studios

----- Original Message -----

On August 9, 2018 7:14 PM, Liam Routt <[Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)> wrote:

Siew Mai,

The size of this round of funding has resulted in longer than intended delays in informing all applicants of the results. While I would normally call everyone, individually, that process is taking way too long, and I am now passing on initial results via email so that you know where you stand.

I fully intend to follow this up with further feedback, if you require it – please send me a message if you would like me to discuss your project further.

I am sorry to report that the panel did not support your application for this funding round.

As noted above, this was far larger than we've ever had, which affected what we were able to fund.

Briefly, I can pass on that while the panel are impressed with what you have created, at this stage, in the current competitive funding climate, they would need to see if developed further before they could commit to support the project. While the current demo shows off some aspects of the game, it does not clearly demonstrate how the player will be drawn through the experience, as it focuses solely on combat. I can try to provide you with some more feedback, if you need it. Please contact me via email.

Take care,

Liam

**Liam Routt**

Manager – Games and Digital Content

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 5 files attached

 **image004.jpg** (7.73 KB)  **image001.jpg** (1.35 KB)  **image002.jpg** (1.34 KB)

 **image003.jpg** (1.35 KB)  **image004.jpg** (7.73 KB)

# Feedback on Dark October application

Received:  **Thursday, September 6, 2018 5:26 PM**

From: **Liam Routt** [Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Liam.Routt@film.vic.gov.au)

To: **BunBun3D** [bunbun3d@protonmail.com](mailto:bunbun3d@protonmail.com)

CC: **Tess Ritchie** [Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au](mailto:Tess.Ritchie@film.vic.gov.au)

At the outset, let me reiterate that we rarely give detailed feedback, and most often avoid written feedback. I am hopeful that by breaking both of these precedents I can help you to understand the reception your application for funding received. Please accept that I am trying to explain what the panel sees, based on your application.

It bears repeating that this was a highly competitive round that well-exceeded our limited resources; there were more applications than we had received in a single round previously, and the overall quality was high. As a result, this was one of the toughest rounds we've had in recent years. However, competition for funding is always fierce, as there are a lot of talented developers (at different points in their careers) competing for limited funding.

## Confusion over development stage

The Application form identifies the project is currently in "prototype", and that funded work will see the project into the "Production" stage. The work outlined, in both the application form and the project overview, should allow you to "work towards completing all thirteen levels" (and "move ... to the production stage, where we build all thirteen levels"). Together these indicated to the panel your intention was to take your existing prototype and begin to build out your entire game. The panel was not certain how far you expected this funding would take you, as there is little real detail in the application form or project overview about precisely what work you intended to do. There was no clear statement of where the project would be at the end of this funded period, nor what work you expected exactly to do during this funded period.

## Scope and scale of project

The game is described as a third-person 3D action RPG, like Fable or The Witcher. There are references to quests which require solving mysteries, finding clues, and talking to NPCs, there are boss battles for each area, there are also side-quests, an in-game currency that is used to purchase items, four main weapons with progress during the game, a combat system which includes combos, dodging, blocking, and spellcasting (with four elements). Creating a game with that many parts is not a simple undertaking, and in the opinion of our panel it would be a major undertaking for even a moderate-sized, experienced, indie studio. The Witcher and Fable were created by sizable teams with the benefit of significant experience. Once you reference projects of that size your readers will assume you intend the same scale unless you are clear about a more reduced scope.

## Previous experience

Your team is small, and would appear to have good skills Your Unity work demonstrates that you are able to create well-targeted, modular assets, and your submitted demo shows that you can pull together the basics of the movement and combat which will form the foundation of your game. What

you lack, however, is any concrete experience putting together a complete game, and actually finishing it. That experience is key to planning and delivering a completed game project of any scale. The lack of detail when explaining the work you intend to do, and the ambitious scope of (currently) unimplemented features underscores to the panel that you have all the enthusiasm and intention, but does nothing to convince them that you fully understand the complexities of realizing a project to delivery.

#### Target platform

The panel agreed is more difficult to develop for consoles than for PCs, which increased the complexity of what you were attempting to make. Your communications with Sony and Xbox made it clear that you were capable of getting access to their developer services, which is not uncommon for indie studios. It was noted that you were intending to use our funds to obtain devkits, which is outside of our terms of trade (such a purchase is, technically, a capital expenditure, which we can't permit – terms of trade 1.1.3), but you could swap that expense with other line items, if needed, so that wasn't a big deal.

#### Demo

Your project scope covered a lot of aspects, as noted above. If your demo had supported that scope by demonstrating most of them, even roughly, that would have helped the panel to accept that you had begun to engage with the multitude of challenges, and given them confidence that you would be able to overcome them. Instead the demo showed a largely un-populated area, with a few enemies, and demonstrated the basics of the combat and magic. While this is a significant aspect of the game, with such an ambitious project it helps immeasurably if the panel can see implemented the path the player will follow (in this case we would have wanted to understand the nature of the quests, in particular). The demo was a reasonable technology demonstration, but did little to clarify the nature of the intended game, nor address the concerns over scope.

#### Funding request

A request of \$50,000 is at the top end of what we recommend that inexperienced developers request. Given the competition for funds at the moment, it is always wise to ask for a modest sum, perhaps to achieve a (clear) modest milestone. A risky proposal which only requires a modest investment is far easier for the panel to agree to fund than one which asks for more and doesn't cover all the bases clearly and strongly on paper.

#### Overall presentation

As noted above, there is little detail provided about the specific work you are intending to do. When the panel is uncertain about the scope of a project and the experience of the team, it helps immeasurably to have provided them with a clear plan – it addresses the scope concerns by clearly listing everything you intend to do, and it addresses experience by demonstrating an ability to plan. Such information could have been included on the application form, when we ask how you intend to use the funds, or where we ask you to describe the stage of development you will be working on. It can also be covered in the project overview, which should be focused on describing the project and your plans. It can also be reflected in the budget spreadsheet, by breaking down the allocations to some extent by tasks (although not many people choose to do this). Without such detail about the work you are planning to do, a relatively inexperienced team aiming to take on a large scope, appears unprepared.

Your presentation, across all of the materials you present, needs to engage and inspire the panel, but it also needs to provide them with confidence that their funding will be used to good effect. That impression is built from the details you decided to present, the way you present them, and the overall professionalism of your entire submission (including your demo and all written materials). The panel is serious about its responsibility in recommending the allocation of public funds; they

weight up all aspects of the applications and try to identify where they are most confident that funding will result in definite positive outcomes. They want to help foster new teams, but they weigh this against their confidence in the teams, based on the presentations they are given.

In summary, this was a round where it was always going to be particularly hard to convince the panel to commit funds. Your project has a scope that experienced developers believe is difficult to execute. Additionally, your team does not yet have experience delivering a game project to completion, much less for a console platform. Taken together, and supported by a demo that didn't sufficiently address their concerns, these elements made it difficult for the panel to recommend supporting Dark October, based on the materials they had in front of them.

Should you apply again?

This is a question only you can answer. The game you are creating has a scope that many experienced developers will be nervous about your being able to execute. You would need to alleviate their fears in order to be successful. You could do that by:

Proposing a more limited scope for the purposes of developing a limited vertical slice which incorporates your most important elements;

Dropping some features from your plans altogether to focus on a more manageable concept for a small team;

Getting the support of an experienced team, or mentor, who can help to review your plans, and help you to frame a feasible plan as part of your proposal, or even commit to working with you.

And I'm sure there are other options. In the past, for example, some teams have put their ambitious project on the back burner to make something more manageable first. While that isn't an approach that works for everyone, I have seen it work in some situations.

If you do not want to compromise on the game itself, perhaps if you focus on a clear, concrete, small milestone, you might be able to convince the panel to grant you a smaller request. You would not be able to achieve as much, but it would be easier to convince the panel to take the chance to see what you can do. But even in that case you need to be aware that the burden is on you to present your project in a way that gives the panel confidence. Because we have seen an application from you, you are also advised to ensure that any application for the same project should show progress, and we would expect the application materials to be more refined, based on what you have learnt from this experience.

But it is possible that applying for our funding does not feel like a reasonable gamble to you at this point. If that is the case, keep an eye on our offerings and decide whether they are a better fit for this project, or another one, in the future.

Take care,

Liam

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 4 files attached

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