



Screen
Australia
budget
friendly

Australian Film Projects

Chart of Accounts

Quick Reference Guide



Prepared by:

ABOVE THE LINE
ACCOUNTING

*We look after the numbers
so you can focus on getting your stories told*

WHAT IS AN AUSTRALIAN FILM PROJECTS CHART OF ACCOUNTS?

A chart of accounts is used by accounting software to keep every type of production cost in the right place, from cast and crew to equipment, travel, insurance and post. It is the map that helps your financial information stay organised as your project proceeds.

For screen productions, a clear chart of accounts makes day-to-day work much easier. It helps your production accountant track spending, compare costs to budget, and keep your reporting aligned with funders' and auditors' expectations. Once you move into production, this structure becomes the backbone of accurate cost reporting.

Your chart of accounts also connects to the tools you already use, including your budget, accounting software, and Producer Offset application. When these follow the same structure, your financial workflow is smoother and far less stressful.

This guide is ideal for producers with a new project who want strong financial systems from the start. It will make every financial step straightforward from pre-production through to your final certificate. It can also be used for projects that have started production which may assist you to update an existing project's Chart of Accounts.

If you already work with a production accountant, they will set up most of this for you. Using this Chart of Accounts will save you time and give you a result in accordance with industry best practice. Once projects reach a certain size such as being an Offset project, a production accountant becomes an important member of the production team to free up the producer to produce.

The format of this Chart of Accounts is in alignment with Screen Australia's A-Z budget.



WHY DOES AN AUSTRALIAN FILM PROJECTS CHART OF ACCOUNTS MATTER?

Screen Australia issues an industry standard budget called the “A-Z” that funders, auditors and production partners are familiar with when reviewing film projects’ financial information. This Chart of Accounts is consistent with the A-Z drama format, but it can also be used for documentaries. It is built for the way Australian screen professionals are familiar with, from your first invoice to your final certificate.

Setting things up properly now means fewer adjustments later, especially when you reach final cost reporting or prepare your Offset documentation.

For producers, the biggest benefit is being able to report costs on time and accurately. An industry-specific chart of accounts keeps your team aligned through production, makes handovers easier, and saves considerable time during shoot, post and Offset preparation.

This Chart of Accounts also helps you accurately prepare your company tax return for the Australian Taxation Office.



HOW IT WORKS

A Chart of Accounts can look overwhelming because it is long, but the idea behind it is simple. It is a standard way of labelling every cost on your production so your accountant and your funders can clearly see how money was used.

Here's how it works in practice

The Chart of Accounts on the next page is a template that you import into your Xero accounting software. The production accountant will then update the Chart of Accounts to match your project's budget, tailoring the Chart of Accounts to your specific needs.

We recommend you do not delete accounts – you may need them in the future, even if the items are not in your original budget.

When you buy something, you choose the matching account from the list in your accounting software. For example, suppose you are producing a mid-tier drama and spend \$450 on wardrobe items for your lead actor. In that case, this is what happens in Xero:

You upload the receipt or forward the invoice to Xero. When coding the transaction, you search for Costume in your Chart of Accounts.

You will see accounts such as:

- F01-0020 Costumes Hire
- F01-0030 Costumes Purchase
- F01-0040 Accessories, including hats, shoes and jewellery

For a \$450 wardrobe shop, you would select F01-0030 Costumes Purchase because these are purchased items that stay with the production. Xero then applies the GST code, and the cost flows through to your budget actuals, the production cost report, and later to your QAPE review.

The important part is this: You do not need to learn all 500 accounts. You only need to choose the correct label when you spend money. The Chart of Accounts keeps everything organised in the background so your reporting stays clean and consistent.

CHART OF ACCOUNTS

You will only use a small handful of these codes in your day-to-day work.

This preview is here to show the level of clarity that accountants and funders expect. It's a small sample to show how the structure works.

Once this chart is loaded into your accounting software, it becomes much easier to search, select and use as you go.

*Code	*Name	Reporting Name	Description
A01-0010	Story & Script - Story Rights Australia	A01-0010 Story Rights Australia	Story & Script
A01-0020	Story & Script - Story Rights Overseas	A01-0020 Story Rights Overseas	Story & Script
C09-0020	Make-Up Crew - Assistant(s)	C09-0020 Assistant(s)	Make-Up Crew
C09-0030	Make-Up Crew - Make-up Staff - Casual	C09-0030 Make-up Staff - Casual	Make-Up Crew
C10-0010	Hairdressing Crew - Hairdresser	C10-0010 Hairdresser	Hairdressing Crew
C10-0020	Hairdressing Crew - Assistant(s)	C10-0020 Assistant(s)	Hairdressing Crew
G01-0010	Locations - Permits, Rentals, Fees Australia	G01-0010 Permits, Rentals, Fees Australia	Locations
G01-0020	Locations - Permits, Rentals, Fees Overseas	G01-0020 Permits, Rentals, Fees Overseas	Locations
G01-0030	Locations - Council Fee(s)	G01-0030 Council Fee(s)	Locations
J01-0030	Existing Footage, Overseas Copyright - Research	J01-0030 Research	Existing Footage,
J01-0040	Existing Footage, Overseas Copyright - Purchase rights	J01-0040 Purchase rights	Existing Footage,
J02-0010	Stock & Archival, Australian Copyright - Research: production	J02-0010 Research: production company	Stock & Archival,
L01-0070	Rentals & Storage - Cleaning & Rubbish Removal	L01-0070 Cleaning & Rubbish Removal	Rentals & Storage

This is a preview only. Download the full editable version on the next page.

START USING THE CHART OF ACCOUNTS

Step 1:

Scan the QR code or click the link to download the editable Excel file. You'll get the full chart of accounts, ready to use.

Step 2:

Import the chart into your Xero accounting software. [Xero's support pages](#) walk you through the upload process, and the same idea applies if you use another system.

Step 3:

When you record expenses, choose the matching code from your chart of accounts.

Step 4:

That's it. Your financials will be clearer for your accountant, funders and anyone working on your project, helping keep the numbers simple while you focus on telling stories.

Download the Excel file at:



or visit
abovethelineaccounting.au/chart-of-accounts

GLOSSARY

Chart of Accounts (COA)

A simple master list that groups every type of cost on your production. It keeps your budget, Xero and Offset reporting speaking the same language.

Account Code

A short number that labels each cost category. It helps your accounting software file every expense in the right place : whether it's wardrobe, cast, locations or travel.

Reporting Name

The easy-to-read name that appears on your cost reports. It's what producers, production managers and funders look at when checking how money has been spent.

GST on Expenses

Shows that the account is set up to treat the item as a normal business expense with GST. Xero uses this to calculate GST correctly in the background.

QAPE (Qualifying Australian Production Expenditure)

The part of your Australian spend that counts toward the Producer Offset. It's the basis for claiming the rebate at the end of your project.



Above The Line Accounting isn't your average accounting practice. Because we're also producers. With over 20 years' experience in film and tv production.

So, we genuinely understand your creative journey. We've walked in your shoes and lived your production challenges, from working on scripts with writers and applying for film funding, to losing locations on shoots. And we know how complicated and stressful filmmaking can be.

We're chartered accountants, who've worked on hundreds of productions providing specialist accounting services, supporting production companies and producers, just like you.

We 'get' what you need. And that's how we'll make a difference to you.

Need support with your next film?
Let us help you get your stories told.

Get in touch today:
0455 145 145
info@abovethelineaccounting.com.au
Or via our website:
abovethelineaccounting.au