



Annual Festival Report 2026

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Where to send your film.

A festival guide for independent filmmakers.

One hundred and nine festivals, read off their own rulebooks in one week. How premiere status works, what the Academy actually requires, what a campaign actually costs, and every deadline through June 2027.

Two halves. Sections one through seven are method and stay true from year to year. Sections eight through ten are dated, and they are designed to be replaced whole. Every figure in them was read on a festival's own page on September 5, 2026.



AUSTIN, TEXAS

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Where to send your film.

What this is.

This is the short version of a much longer document. It was built by reading festival rulebooks across roughly a hundred festivals in one week. The actual regulations, not the marketing pages. And then writing down what they say.

It is written for a filmmaker with a finished or nearly finished film who has to decide where to send it and what to spend. It assumes you are paying for this yourself.

Two halves. **The first is method.** How premiere status actually works. What the Academy actually requires. What a campaign actually costs. How to build a submission ladder in an order that does not destroy your own options. That part stays true from year to year.

The second is a calendar, and it goes stale. Every deadline and fee in it was read on a festival's own page on September 5, 2026. Deadlines move. Fees rise. It is stamped so you know what you are looking at.

How to use it.

Never submit on the strength of this guide alone. Open the festival's page and confirm before you pay. Not because the research is thin. Every figure here came off a primary source. But festival websites change without notice, and the single most consistent finding in the whole project is that festival websites are behind more often than anyone admits.

Every date is an edition, not a season. "October 21" means nothing. "Berlinale 77th edition, feature deadline, October 21, 2026" means something. This guide is written that way throughout, because that is where the mistakes happen.

This guide is on the festivals' side. Every one of them is somebody's year of mostly unpaid work, and the good ones vastly outnumber the difficult ones. Where a rule is strict, it is reported as a fact you need, not as a complaint. Where a page is out of date, that is reported because it protects your money.

What is not softened here: rules, fees, deadlines, and eligibility gates. Those are the things that cost filmmakers real money, and a guide that goes gentle on them is not doing anyone a favor.

What a festival does.

Four things, and no festival does all four.

It sells the film. A buyer sees it, wants it, pays. This happens at a small number of festivals and effectively nowhere else.

It builds the filmmaker. A programmer, a financier, a lab, or a producer sees the work and remembers the name. The film may go nowhere. The next one gets financed. This is the most undervalued outcome on the circuit and it is available at far more festivals than a sale is.

It creates a credential. An Academy-qualifying win, a cash jury prize, a laurel a grant panel recognizes. Mechanical and verifiable. You either won the specific named award or you did not.

It gives you a room. An audience, a real projection, a Q&A, and a night that reminds you why you made the thing. That is not a lesser outcome. It is a different one.

Decide which of the four you are buying before you spend anything. Most submission campaigns fail not because the film was rejected but because nobody decided what a yes was supposed to accomplish.

The tiers.

Festivals get ranked by prestige. Prestige is the wrong axis, because it tells you how a festival is regarded and not what selection there will do for you. This guide ranks by consequence.

Tier 1. Market-making. Selection changes the film's commercial life. Sales agents and acquisitions executives are present with mandates. Twelve festivals worldwide.

Tier 2. Career-making. Selection changes your access rather than the film's economics. Programmers scout here. Labs, funds, and co-production markets attach. This is where most working independents actually build a career, and it is the tier most submission strategies under-weight.

Tier 3. Credential-building. Selection produces a specific, verifiable asset. An Academy-qualifying award, cash, a named prize. The value is calculable in advance. This is where a shorts strategy lives, and where the best cost-to-value ratios sit.

Tier 4. Audience and community. Selection produces a room and a relationship. Cheap, warm, often regionally meaningful. The value is the night, and that is worth deciding you want before you submit.

The tiers are not a quality ranking. Some Tier 3 festivals are more rigorously curated than some Tier 1 festivals. The tier describes what happens to you.

One consequence worth stating plainly. **A film does not move up the tiers.** You do not play Tier 4 and get noticed into Tier 1. The traffic runs the other way. A Tier 1 premiere makes every lower tier available to you, and a Tier 4 screening can permanently close Tier 1.

Which is the next section, and it is the most expensive thing in this guide.

Premiere status.

Read this part twice.

Premiere status is an asset. You are issued exactly one of each kind, you cannot buy more, and you spend them in an order you choose or in an order that happens to you. Almost every serious mistake on the festival circuit is a premiere spent carelessly.

What the terms mean.

IDFA publishes the cleanest set, and these definitions are close to universal:

World premiere: the first screening ever, on any media, anywhere.
 International premiere: the first screening outside the country of production.
 European premiere: the first screening in Europe.
 National premiere: the first screening in that country.

SXSW runs the ladder down to the city and formally recognizes a Texas Premiere and an Austin Premiere as distinct statuses.

Now the term everyone misreads. **“International premiere” does not mean the first screening abroad in some loose sense. It means the film has not screened outside its country of production.**

For an American film, that has a consequence worth sitting with: **a full US festival run preserves international-premiere status.** It destroys world-premiere status and nothing else. That single fact opens more doors than anything else in this guide.

What actually destroys it.

The line is public ticketing, not audience size. Sundance, in its own rules:

“private, invite-only or ‘cast and crew’ screenings of your completed project are not considered to be ‘public theatrical exhibitions’”

And:

“If you hold a ‘work-in-progress’ screening of your project in order to raise completion funds, this does not count as public theatrical exhibition.”

A three-hundred-seat invite-only screening is private. A twenty-seat screening with tickets on Eventbrite is public. Filmmakers lose premiere status on the ticketing mechanism far more often than on the size of the room.

Trailers are safe. The film is not. Sundance again: “Posting minimal footage or scenes from your project does not affect its eligibility.”

Online availability is the trap that catches people who did everything else right. Tribeca states the test better than anyone:

“If the film/project is available online and someone in New York City can view it, we would consider it screened in New York City already.”

Availability, not screening. An unlisted link that anyone with the URL can open has screened everywhere on earth at once. Several European festivals disqualify films “available via VOD or any online platform” in their country, which for anything on the open internet means everywhere.

Password-protected links are fine, and are in fact the required submission format nearly everywhere. The risk is the privacy setting, never the platform.

One area is genuinely unsettled: market screenings. Almost no festival addresses whether an EFM or Marché screening counts as public exhibition. Clermont-Ferrand is the exception and says market screenings confer no premiere status. Everyone else is silent. Get the answer in writing from the festival you care about, and do not reason from Clermont’s rule to anyone else’s.

Five festivals give you one attempt, ever.

The Berlinale, IFFR, Venice, Hot Docs, and Hamptons all bar resubmission permanently. Berlin adds that the screener cannot be replaced with a newer version once sent.

The practical consequence is blunt. **Never send a rough cut to any of them to make a deadline.** You get one attempt with any given film, forever, and a screener you sent three weeks before picture lock is the attempt you used.

The hierarchy, strictest to loosest.

This ordering is the actual architecture of a campaign.

World premiere, no exceptions

Venice, the strictest rule in world cinema. It bars press screenings and screenings in the country of origin. • Sundance US features, world premiere, and forward-looking: nothing public anywhere before the festival. • Karlovy Vary open submission. • Tallinn Black Nights, every main competition. • Zurich after April 30, where the rule flips on a calendar date.

No screening outside the home country

Cannes Official Selection. • Cannes Critics' Week and Quinzaine, with an asymmetry written in. A non-French film may screen inside its own country and stay eligible. An American film can play American festivals and still submit. • San Sebastián. • Locarno.

World or international premiere

Warsaw International Competition. Read this one carefully: a US independent that has played Sundance or SXSW but nowhere abroad is still eligible. The moment it plays one foreign festival, that eligibility is gone.

Continental premiere accepted

Berlinale Panorama, Forum, Generation and Perspectives take a European premiere, so a US film can play a full US run and remain eligible. No other Tier 1 festival is this permissive. • TIFF accepts a North American premiere. • Warsaw Competition 1–2 and Short Films.

National premiere only. The workhorses of a long campaign.

Film Fest Gent, “only films not previously screened in Belgium.” · Göteborg · Mar del Plata · Tokyo · Guadalajara features · Jerusalem · Edinburgh · Marrakech, a regional MENA premiere, which Americans routinely misread as stricter than it is · IFFR features, where only a Dutch screening disqualifies.

Sub-national and city-level

Melbourne asks for a Victoria state premiere, the loosest rule at any festival of consequence anywhere. You can play Sundance, SXSW, Toronto, Berlin and Sydney and stay eligible · Hot Docs, Ontario for features · Cleveland, the city · DOC NYC, five boroughs · Big Sky, Montana · Waco Independent, the 254 area code.

No premiere requirement at all

Slamdance: “We consider films regardless of their premiere status.” That is the entire policy · Ann Arbor, at a festival carrying three Academy-qualifying awards · New Orleans: “No, NOFF does not require world premiere status.” · Palm Springs ShortFest, which accepts films already online · imagineNATIVE · AFI Fest shorts · Clermont-Ferrand · Heartland · Milwaukee · Flatland · Maine, where only a Maine screening disqualifies.

The compounding trap.

These rules interact, and the interaction is what ruins campaigns.

A US feature that world-premieres at Sundance in January has, in that one act, forfeited Cannes Official Selection, Venice, Karlovy Vary’s open door, Locarno, Tallinn and Zurich’s late window. It remains fully eligible for Berlin, Warsaw’s International Competition, TIFF, IFFR, Göteborg, Gent, Marrakech, Melbourne and every US regional festival outside Utah and Colorado.

That is not a disaster. That is a plan. The disaster is the version where nobody thought about it.

A film that plays one US regional festival with an international lineup in October has likely forfeited both Cannes and Sundance, for a screening that produced no press, no sale, and no relationship.

Three collisions to know before you build a list.

Dallas–Fort Worth. Dallas International requires a DFW premiere. Lone Star bars any prior screening in the DFW area. Oak Cliff strongly prefers one. A Texas film can realistically play one of the three. Sequence deliberately. Dallas first, since it is Oscar-qualifying and has the Texas Feature lane.

California. SFFILM requires a California premiere for competition features. Mill Valley bars any prior California screening, and any Bay Area screening for a month after their festival. You largely pick one.

Los Angeles. Beyond Fest, Screamfest, AFI Fest features, ABFF and LALIFF all want an LA premiere. Five festivals, one premiere.

The clause nobody reads.

Several festivals restrict what you can do after they screen you.

Mill Valley bars a Bay Area screening for a month afterward. Sidewalk bars a Birmingham-area screening for a week after. Milwaukee locks seven Wisconsin counties from January 1. Heartland says a confirmed film cannot drop from the lineup once the contract is signed.

Read the acceptance terms before you sign, not after.

Where the short/feature line falls.

There is no standard. The Academy's line is 40 minutes including all credits. 40:00 is a short. 40:01 is a feature. Most US festivals follow it. Enough do not that a film in the 25-to-70-minute band can find itself with no eligible category anywhere.

Festival	Short is	Feature is
Academy, all three short categories	40 min or less, incl. credits	over 40 min
SXSW, Tribeca, AFI, Slamdance, SIFF, Provincetown	40 or less	over 40
Cleveland	45 or less	45–150
Fantastic Fest	under 25	70 and up
Beyond Fest	25 or less	60 and up
Fantasia	under 22	61 and up (medium 22–61)
SFFILM	under 30	60 and up (mid-length 30–59)
Sitges	30 or less	60 and up
Ann Arbor	up to 60	60 and up
Melbourne	40:29 or less	40:30 or more
Cannes	under 15	over 60

Cannes does not accept films running 15 to 60 minutes at all. Fantastic Fest leaves a 25-to-70-minute dead zone. A 42-minute film is a short at Cleveland and a feature almost everywhere else. It could win Cleveland's Best Live Action Short award and still be categorically ineligible as an Academy short.

Two useful homes for an orphan runtime: **WorldFest-Houston's Long Short category, 41 to 69 minutes**, and **SFFILM's Mid-Length section, 30 to 59**. Beyond those, a mid-length film is a hard sell structurally, not artistically.

Academy qualification.

More nonsense is published about this than about anything else on the circuit. What follows is from the Academy's own rule documents for the 99th Academy Awards, published May 2026. Their own footer applies: all rules and dates are subject to change.

The mechanics are stable year to year. The dates are not.

The three routes for a short film.

Live Action, Animated and Documentary Short are structurally identical.

Route one, the theatrical run. A paid public run of at least seven consecutive days in one commercial theater in one of six qualifying US metro areas: Los Angeles County; the five boroughs of New York; the Bay Area; Cook County, Illinois; **Dallas–Fort Worth**; and Fulton County, Georgia.

Note Dallas–Fort Worth on that list. Texas is one of the six. That is a structural advantage almost nobody uses.

Route two, the festival award. Win a qualifying award at a festival on the Academy's published list, "regardless of any prior public exhibition or distribution by nontheatrical means."

Route three, a medal in the Academy's Student Academy Awards.

Four things almost every guide gets wrong.

Shorts need one screening a day, not three. This is the most widely mis-published rule on the internet. Shorts: "at least seven consecutive days, during which screenings must occur at least one time daily." Features and documentary features need three a day with an evening showtime. Guides that impose the feature rule on shorts overstate the cost of a qualifying run by roughly a factor of three.

The festival route exempts you from the online lockout. The theatrical route does not. A film already streaming can still qualify by winning a listed festival award. A film planning a theatrical qualifying run cannot have been online at all, beyond fifteen percent of its running time. Getting this backwards destroys eligibility permanently.

A documentary feature does not need a review. The rule says a film “may receive movie critic reviews.” Permissive, not mandatory. There is no named-publication requirement of any kind.

A qualifying run requires a DCP. 35mm, 70mm, or a SMPTE-conformant Digital Cinema Package. The Academy is explicit that Blu-ray, DVD, QuickTime, ProRes and MP4 do not satisfy it. A four-wall run projected from a ProRes file does not qualify, however correct the dates and the venue.

The single most important correction in this guide.

“Oscar-qualifying festival” is never a property of a festival. It is a property of specific named awards at that festival.

Every qualifying festival markets itself with the unqualified phrase. The Academy’s list names between two and five specific awards for each. Audience awards, honorable mentions, sidebar prizes, second prizes and jury special mentions confer nothing.

A worked example. Clermont-Ferrand runs four competitions and markets itself flatly as Oscar-qualifying. Two of its awards are on the Academy list. **A Labo Grand Prix winner has won a major prize at an Oscar-qualifying festival and is not Oscar-qualified.**

Another. Aspen Shortsfest’s qualifying awards are named by genre, not by Academy category: Best Animation, Comedy, Documentary, Drama, and Short Short. Three of the five map to no Oscar category by name. Aspen’s own site shows how it resolves. A Comedy jury prize produced a Best Live Action Short nominee. The mapping runs through the film’s nature, not the award’s name.

How to verify a claim, and why you have to.

Festival marketing is written once and lives a long time. Academy status can change, category names change, and a page written years ago is often still the page a filmmaker reads at the moment of payment. That is not anyone behaving badly. It is what happens to websites.

The Academy’s own list is the only authority, and it is public. Two documents, updated annually: a combined shorts list covering all three categories, and a separate documentary feature list. Both link from [oscars.org/oscars/rules-eligibility](https://www.oscars.org/oscars/rules-eligibility). Questions go to

qualifyingfestivals@oscars.org.

The check takes two minutes.

1. Open the current list for your award year. Confirm the festival is on it at all.
2. Read the specific awards named beside it. Those are the only ones that qualify.
3. Check that an award you could realistically win is one of them.
4. Check the eligibility window. The qualifying win has to land inside it.
5. If an award's name does not map to an Oscar category, email the Academy before building a plan on it.

Three things this catches, in this guide's own research. One festival's submission page carried a claim that no longer matches the current list. One organization's aggregator listing put the qualifying status on the wrong one of its two festivals, where the festival's own site had it right. And one festival's site names four qualifying awards where the Academy's list names three.

None of that is a reason to avoid those festivals. All three are worth submitting to. It is a reason to verify the specific award before you spend against it.

There is no feature-category route.

Except documentary. To be precise: 172 festivals qualify for the short film categories. 31 qualify for Documentary Feature, on a separate list.

Everything else, including Best Picture, has no festival route.

Qualification is theatrical.

Any source telling a narrative feature filmmaker that a festival win will Oscar-qualify their film is wrong.

One more thing worth knowing: **no US documentary festival appears on the Documentary Feature qualifying list.** For a doc feature, that route runs through Europe, Canada and Latin America.

The money.

Where a submission fee goes.

About fifteen percent never reaches the festival. Per FilmFreeway's own help center: festivals pay a 12% commission plus 3% and 30 cents in processing. You pay the posted fee; the festival nets roughly 85% of it.

That reframes two conversations. It explains why small festivals resist waivers they would otherwise grant. A waived fee costs them their net share and still costs them programmer hours. And it is worth knowing when a fee feels high.

What the fee buys, in a festival's own words. Atlanta: "Submission fees support competition cash prizes, festival travel for attending filmmakers, and the team of programmers that watch and assess thousands of submissions each year."

Refunds do not exist in practice. Non-acceptance is not a valid reason for one anywhere.

The ladder is the biggest cost you control.

The fee ladder is a deadline-pricing mechanism, not a quality signal. Sundance says so directly: submissions are handled identically regardless of which deadline you choose. The only difference is the fee.

The spreads are not trivial.

Festival	Early	Final	Increase
Chicago International, feature	\$90	\$200	122%
Frameline	\$35	\$100	186%
True/False, feature	\$35	\$95	171%
ABFF, all categories	\$30	\$75	150%
Overlook, feature	\$50	\$125	150%
Atlanta, narrative feature	\$50	\$105	110%
Brooklyn Horror, feature	\$43	\$88	105%

Submit to twelve festivals at the final deadline instead of the early one and you pay roughly double for identical consideration. **Calendar discipline is the single largest cost lever available to you, and it is free.**

What a campaign actually costs.

Every number below came off a published page.

Submission fees, one feature each. Free at Busan, Marrakech and imagineNATIVE. Around \$21 at Guadalajara, \$22 at Tokyo, €35 at Göteborg, Jerusalem and Warsaw early. \$20 at SCAD Savannah and Middleburg. \$45 at Denver and Montclair. €60 at Karlovy Vary. €65 at IFFR early. \$75 at SXSW, \$80 at Sundance. €175 at the Berlinale. €200 to €250 at Venice.

Cannes runs €90 to €420 depending on delivery format. **The video-file upload tier is €90 and the DCP-by-post tier is €360, for identical consideration.** Filmmakers routinely pay four times what they need to because they miss the cheap route.

The DCP, on acceptance. This is the cost that surprises budgets, because it lands after selection, on the festival's timeline, when rush pricing applies.

Vendor	2K rate	Minimum	90-min feature
Penguin DCP	\$4.50/min, 10-day	\$180	\$405
Pure DCP	\$5/min, 5-day	\$150	\$450
FilmFreeway / Cinesend	\$250 + \$5/min	n/a	\$700

Add media: a flash drive runs \$25 to \$50, a CRU drive \$135. Captions are \$50 at Cinesend.

Turnaround, not resolution, is the expensive variable. One vendor charges flat rush fees. Another escalates per minute. On a 90-minute feature a one-day rush is \$200 over base at one and \$630 over base at the other. Order early.

A festival badge, if you are not comped. An SXSW Film & TV badge is \$775. Selected filmmakers are frequently comped, so that is the wrong number for an invited filmmaker and the right one for someone attending a festival that did not select them.

A publicist. The largest line item and the only genuinely optional one. Two sourceable figures, both given with their dates, because every vague guide on the internet has merged them into an undated range.

A named publicist, quoted on Film Independent's blog in **September 2015**: "between five thousand and \$15 thousand per festival." That figure is eleven years old and it is the source of the range everyone repeats.

A currently published vendor rate card puts a **festival campaign at \$8,000 to \$25,000**, a boutique film publicist at \$5,000 to \$15,000, and a full Oscar campaign at \$150,000 and up. That is one firm's marketing page, not survey data.

What the two together honestly support: the festival-campaign figure has been roughly stable at \$5,000 to \$15,000 from 2015 to a published card in 2026, with that vendor placing a festival-scoped campaign at \$8,000 to \$25,000.

Publicists typically cannot start until the film has been accepted somewhere major.

Travel and lodging. Varies by city, dates and party size. No honest published figure exists, so none is offered here.

The sequencing point. The publicist line is larger than every other line combined. A filmmaker who cannot fund one has not lost the festival. A filmmaker who funds one before securing the DCP and the travel has sequenced wrongly.

Waivers, and what actually exists.

The headline finding contradicts the common assumption. Filmmaker-organization memberships do not buy festival submission waivers. All five major organizations were checked against their own sites. Every waiver benefit found is for that organization's own programs.

Film Independent at \$105 gives \$20 off its own Artist Development submissions and \$50 off Spirit Awards submissions. The Gotham at \$250 includes a free Project Market submission. Women in Film waives its own Fellowship fees. **Austin Film Society and SFFILM carry no submission benefit at any tier.** Worth knowing, since the assumption runs the other way.

The waiver routes that do exist:

Alumni status is the most reliable and the only one you can bank in advance. Cork, Atlanta, IDFA, Cleveland, AFI Fest, Provincetown, BendFilm and Sidewalk all publish one.

Payment-barrier hardship. Narrow and objective. Atlanta and IDFA publish it for sanctioned countries. IFFR grants waivers to residents of countries with international payment restrictions. True/False publishes three grounds including significant financial hardship.

Programmer outreach. Cork publishes both the procedure and the etiquette, and the tension between them is the point. They tell you to email with WAIVER REQUEST in the subject and explain why their festival specifically. In the same document they ask entrants not to appeal for waivers. Both are true. **A waiver request is a relationship instrument, not a discount coupon.** Volume requests damage standing.

Published discount codes. BendFilm publishes seven, including 75% off for female, trans and non-binary directors of color and 75% off for alumni. Waco Independent publishes a code for 20% off, openly, as a reward for reading the rules. Chicago offers 20% off for films with closed captioning, open captioning or audio description. Take it, and caption the film anyway.

Free or near-free entry, published: imagineNATIVE, which also pays screening fees to every programmed work. Marrakech. Busan. Houston Cinema Arts. Cannes La Cinef. Milwaukee, free for all Wisconsin filmmakers and all alumni. Heartland, free for Indiana categories and Horror at early bird. San Sebastián's four industry platforms.

What festivals pay you.

Three different things.

Screening fees. imagineNATIVE pays them for all programmed work. Ann Arbor pays \$50 for shorts and \$100 for features. New Orleans and Milwaukee pay them. Slamdance, BendFilm, Mill Valley and Kansas City publish that they do not.

Travel and lodging. Tallinn Black Nights publishes the most specific provision found anywhere: round-trip economy airfare and up to three nights at the partner hotel for competition directors. Marrakech publishes transportation and accommodation free of charge to a limited number of directors and lead actors.

Trade reporting adds Atlanta at up to \$750, Austin Film Festival at up to \$1,000 for category winners, RiverRun at up to \$500, Aspen Shortsfest at three nights plus local transport, and Chicago International covering airfare and lodging for feature filmmakers.

The pattern is worth saying plainly: the festivals that pay for filmmakers are overwhelmingly regional and mid-size. The largest and most prestigious are largely absent from that list. Selection at a top-tier festival typically costs you more, not less.

Third-party travel grants stack on top. These are state and regional film-organization grants, not festival money, and most filmmakers never file for them. Arkansas Cinema Society publishes \$250 for shorts and \$500 for features, for an Arkansan traveling to a competitive festival out of state, applied for before travel. Look for the equivalent where you live.

What festivals actually require. And what they do not.

Not E&O insurance. This was tested directly. Searching festival rules and acceptance terms surfaced insurance vendors and distribution articles, and no festival requiring E&O.

What they require instead is clearances and indemnity. Sundance's rules contain no insurance requirement and a full risk transfer: it is the applicant's sole responsibility to clear all content, and the applicant indemnifies the festival.

Festivals require clearances, not policies. E&O is a distribution requirement. A filmmaker who buys E&O to enter festivals has bought it too early. A filmmaker who has not cleared music has an exposure from the moment of submission regardless, because the indemnity is live.

Captions are increasingly not optional. Sundance requires them for English-language films, including audio-cue captions for films without dialogue.

Reading a festival's website.

This section exists because of a finding consistent enough to be a rule.

Across roughly a hundred festivals checked on a single day, **more than a quarter were displaying a stale cycle on their own website.** Not an old news item. The actual submissions page, showing an expired deadline in the present tense.

A partial list of what was live on September 5, 2026. One major European festival presented a deadline five months dead in the present tense. One US festival's submissions page said "closed" while its cycle was open and taking money elsewhere. One festival's call-for-entries page described an edition that had ended five months earlier. One printed a final upload deadline that preceded the opening of submissions. One parallel Cannes section's how-to page had carried a 2017 deadline for nine years.

The rule this produces.

The conventional advice, always check the festival's own website, fails on a large minority of festivals.

Check FilmFreeway for dates and fees. Check the festival's own site for rules and program structure. When they conflict on a deadline, believe FilmFreeway, then email the festival.

The reasoning is structural, not reputational. FilmFreeway is the page that actually closes the window and takes the payment, so a festival has an operational reason to keep it current that it does not have for its own marketing site.

Aggregator listings outlive festivals.

Worse than a stale page is a live listing for a festival that is not running.

One Texas festival posted a closing notice on its own site after fifteen good years. **Its FilmFreeway page is still live**, still showing dates and a \$1,000 prize. A filmmaker researching from the aggregator alone would submit into nothing.

One well-known festival's domain now redirects to a movie theater's website. The nonprofit is alive and running that theater year-round. The festival is not running.

One festival changed its name. The old listing is frozen four cycles back and still live.

A listing is evidence that a listing exists, not that a festival does. Confirm on the festival's own domain that a next edition is announced before you pay.

Seven checks before you spend money.

1. Does the festival's **own domain** announce a next edition with dates? If it only says "coming soon," email first.
2. Does the **FilmFreeway deadline ladder** match the festival's own page? If not, believe FilmFreeway and email.
3. Read the **premiere clause verbatim**. Not the summary. The rules document, if one exists.
4. Check the **short/feature line** for that specific festival. It is not 40 minutes everywhere.
5. Check whether the festival **bars resubmission**. If it does, do not send a rough cut.
6. Check what **acceptance obligates you to**. A DCP at your cost, trailing exclusivity, contracts you cannot exit.
7. If a **qualification claim** is load-bearing for your decision, check it against the Academy's own list.

Building the ladder.

The order is not negotiable, because premiere status only flows one way.

One. Decide what a yes is for. Sale, career, credential, or room. Write it down. If the answer is a sale, your list is short and your premiere is expensive. If the answer is a credential, you are shopping for specific named awards and the prestige of the festival barely matters.

Two. Identify your single hardest premiere requirement and resolve it first. If Venice, Sundance US, Karlovy Vary, Tallinn or a late-window Zurich is genuinely on your list, everything else waits. You cannot submit to those after anything else. If none of them is realistic, and for most unrepresented American independents none of them is, you are freed to work the middle of the ladder hard. You should.

Three. Sequence by premiere geography, not by prestige.

1. **World-premiere targets.** One or two, submitted together, understanding that a yes locks the rest of the year.
2. **International-premiere targets.** These survive a US-only run. Submit after your domestic premiere lands.
3. **Continental-premiere targets.** Berlin, TIFF, Warsaw 1-2. These survive a full US run.
4. **National-premiere targets.** Gent, Göteborg, Tokyo, Mar del Plata, Guadalajara, Jerusalem, Edinburgh, Marrakech, IFFR. Cheap, numerous, uncorrelated. **This is the deep middle of a campaign and it is where most filmmakers under-submit.**
5. **Regional and city-premiere targets.** The US regional circuit. Nearly all of it survives anything you have already done, provided you have not played that city.
6. **No-premiere-requirement festivals.** Your safety net and your late-campaign home. A film in its second year with a dozen screenings behind it is still fully eligible at every one of them.

Four. Watch the collisions. Dallas-Fort Worth, California, Los Angeles, New York. Within each, pick one and mean it.

Five. Submit at early-bird or do not submit. The ladders roughly double.

Where the structural advantages are.

Some festivals are designed in ways that remove your competition rather than add to it. These are worth more than their prestige suggests.

Slamdance requires first-time directors and a budget under \$1M on features, and considers films regardless of premiere status. Those constraints are not obstacles. They are a filter that excludes exactly the financed, repped, star-attached films that crowd out newcomers everywhere else.

Marrakech reserves its Competition for international first and second features, charges no entry fee, requires only a regional premiere, and publishes travel support. For an unknown American feature director, that is the best risk-adjusted submission found anywhere in this research.

Berlinale Perspectives takes fiction feature debuts only, and defines debut generously. Prior documentaries, including feature-length ones, do not burn your debut status.

Cannes Critics' Week takes first or second features only, and explicitly permits a foreign film to have screened inside its own country.

Hamptons publishes its selection preferences, which almost nobody does: preference to emerging filmmakers, to films that have not shown in more than five US festivals, and to films that have not announced US distribution. That is a festival describing the exact profile of an undiscovered independent and saying it is looking for one.

Heartland runs roughly a thousand submissions against 86 slots, at a \$50 early-bird fee, with no premiere requirement and a \$20,000 top prize.

Also gating by career stage: **Göteborg's Ingmar Bergman Competition**, **IFFR's Tiger Competition** (first three features), **Miami's Jordan Ressler First Feature Award**, **Thessaloniki's International Competition**, and **Zurich**.

Nobody publishes acceptance rates.

Across roughly a hundred festivals, not one published an acceptance rate. Any figure you find in a blog is not sourced from the festival.

What some do publish is volume and slot counts. Sundance sends “over 15,000 notification emails.” San Sebastián receives “more than 2,500 films every year.” Telluride selects “approximately 25 shorts and 30 features”

from “hundreds of entries.” SFFILM: about 4,500 submissions, 58 selected. Ann Arbor: about 3,000 submissions, 100 to 145 shorts and 6 to 10 features.

And one figure more useful than any ratio. New Orleans publishes that “90-95% of films in our lineup come directly from submissions through FilmFreeway.” Most festivals of that stature program substantially from curation. That number is why New Orleans is worth submitting to.

Twelve rules, compressed.

1. **Decide what a yes is for** before you spend a dollar.
2. **Sequence by premiere geography**, top down. It only flows one way.
3. **Submit at early-bird**. The ladders roughly double and consideration is identical.
4. **Never send a rough cut** to Berlin, IFFR, Venice, Hot Docs or Hamptons. One attempt, forever.
5. **Keep the film off the open internet**. Availability, not screening, is the test.
6. **Private is about ticketing, not audience size**. Cast-and-crew screenings are safe.
7. **Read the premiere clause verbatim**, from the rules document, not the FAQ.
8. **Check the short/feature line** at each festival individually.
9. **“Oscar-qualifying” describes an award, not a festival**. Verify the specific award.
10. **Believe FilmFreeway on dates, the festival on rules**, and email when they disagree.
11. **Confirm the festival still exists** on its own domain before paying.
12. **Budget the DCP before you submit**, not after you are accepted.

The calendar.

Everything in this section expires.

Verified September 5, 2026. Every date and figure below was read on a festival's own page or its live submission listing that day. Deadlines move. Fees rise. Festivals fold without updating their pages.

Confirm on the festival's own listing before you pay. Nothing here is a substitute for that.

Each row gives the deadline, the festival, and the part that matters most: **which edition you are submitting to**. A September 2026 deadline is almost always for a festival taking place in 2027.

September 2026.

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Sept 11	Atlanta Film Festival, Regular	50th, Apr 22 – May 2, 2027
Sept 14	Slamdance, Late	Feb 18–24, 2027
Sept 15	IFFR, final, 17:00 CEST	Jan 28 – Feb 7, 2027
Sept 15	SXSW, Second	Mar 15–21, 2027
Sept 15	True/False, Early Bird	Mar 4–7, 2027
Sept 18	Santa Barbara, Regular	42nd, Feb 3–13, 2027
Sept 20	Waco Independent, Early	Jul 15–18, 2027
Sept 21	Sundance, Late, features	Jan 21–31, 2027, Boulder
Sept 23	Provincetown, Early	29th, Jun 9–13, 2027
Sept 24	Clermont-Ferrand, International	49th, Jan 29 – Feb 6, 2027
Sept 25	Overlook, Early	Apr 15–18, 2027
Sept 25	Aspen Shortsfest, Regular	Apr 6–10, 2027
Sept 30	Cleveland, Regular	CIFF51, 2027
Sept 30	SFFILM, Early	Apr 22 – May 2, 2027
Sept 30	Ann Arbor, Late. This is the final deadline	65th, Mar 23–28, 2027

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Sept 30	Florida Film Festival, Earlybird	Apr 9–18, 2027
Sept 30	Academy: last day a short can win a qualifying festival award for the 99th	99th Oscars

October 2026.

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Oct 1	SXSW, Final	Mar 15–21, 2027
Oct 1	SIFF, Earlybird	53rd, May 13–23, 2027
Oct 1	ABFF, Early. The fee goes \$30 to \$75 after this date	May 20–23, 2027, Los Angeles
Oct 1	Clermont-Ferrand, National	49th
Oct 1	Sidewalk, submissions open	Aug 23–29, 2027
Oct 2	Big Sky, Late	24th, Feb 12–21, 2027
Oct 8	Academy: final submission deadline, all three short categories	99th Oscars
Oct 15	Göteborg	50th, Jan 29 – Feb 7, 2027
Oct 15	Denton Black, Regular	13th, Jan 27–31, 2027
Oct 15	Academy: final submission deadline, Documentary Feature	99th Oscars
Oct 16	Guadalajara, shorts	FICG 42, Mar 6–13, 2027
Oct 21	Berlinale, feature films	77th, 2027
Oct 29	Hot Docs, Early (opens Sept 23)	Apr 23 – May 2, 2027
Oct 30	San Antonio, Earlybird	33rd, Jul 20–25, 2027
Oct 30	Santa Barbara, Late	42nd
Oct 31	Guadalajara, features	FICG 42
Oct 31	Panic Fest, Early Bird	Apr 1–11, 2027
Oct 31	Sidewalk, Magic tier. One month only	2027
October	Annecy, 2027 submissions open (no closing date published)	Jun 13–19, 2027
mid-Oct	Melbourne, 2027 window expected to open	Aug 2027

November 2026.

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Nov 1	Palm Springs ShortFest, Earlybird	Jun 22–28, 2027
Nov 2	Visions du Réel, Early	58th, Apr 9–18, 2027
Nov 2	Miami, Regular	44th, Apr 1–11, 2027
Nov 2	Milwaukee, Earlybird	MFF27, Apr 29 – May 13, 2027
Nov 3	CPH:DOX film submission and CPH:FORUM application, same date	Mar 10–21, 2027
Nov 4	Berlinale, short films	77th, 2027
Nov 6	Provincetown, Regular	29th
Nov 6	Florida, Regular	2027
Nov 13	Dallas International, Fall	21st, Apr 22–29, 2027
Nov 13	Aspen Shortsfest, Late	2027
Nov 15	WorldFest-Houston, Late	60th, Apr 30 – May 8, 2027
Nov 15	Waco Independent, Regular	Jul 15–18, 2027
Nov 15	Flickers' Rhode Island, Earlybird	Aug 3–8, 2027
Nov 20	Frameline, Early Bird	Frameline51, Jun 16–26, 2027
Nov 20	Florida, Late	2027
Nov 27	Overlook, Regular	2027
Nov 30	Sidewalk, Early Bird	2027
Nov 30	Cleveland, Final	CIFF51
November	Heartland, 2027 cycle opens	Oct 2027
Nov 10–15	<i>American Film Market, Los Angeles</i>	market
Nov 30 – Dec 4	<i>Ventana Sur, Montevideo</i>	market

December 2026.

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Dec 1	True/False, Final, 8 p.m. CT	Mar 4–7, 2027
Dec 1	Fantasia, Earlybird	Jul 15 – Aug 1, 2027
Dec 2	Santa Barbara, Final	42nd
Dec 2	SFFILM, Final. Features and mid-lengths only; shorts closed Nov 11	2027
Dec 8	Camden, 2027 cycle possibly opens (unlabeled on their page)	Sept 2027
Dec 9	Florida, Extended	2027
Dec 10	Hot Docs, Regular	2027
Dec 11	Provincetown, Late	29th
Dec 15	Visions du Réel, Final	58th
Dec 15	Miami, Late	44th
Dec 15	Cleveland, Late	CIFF51
Dec 17	SIFF, Regular	53rd
Dec 31	Maine, Earlybird	Jul 9–18, 2027
December	Austin Film Festival, 2027 film and script competitions open	Oct–Nov 2027

January 2027.

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Jan 1	Lone Star, submissions reopen	21st, Nov 2027
Jan 1	Panic Fest, Regular	Apr 2027
Jan 4	Hot Docs, Late	2027
Jan 4	Overlook, Late. Their own site says Jan 24; work to Jan 4	2027
Jan 7	SIFF, Late. Their site prints “2026,” which is impossible; work to 2027	53rd
Jan 8	Miami, Extended	44th
Jan 10	Waco Independent, Late	Jul 2027
Jan 15	Dallas International, Regular	21st
Jan 15	Provincetown, Extended	29th

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Jan 19	Milwaukee, Late	MFF27
Jan 22	Frameline, Regular	Frameline51
Jan 24	ABFF, Final	May 2027
Jan 26	Berlinale, DCP delivery deadline for selected films	77th
Jan 29	HollyShorts, Early Bird	23rd, Aug 12–22, 2027
Jan 29	Overlook, Final	2027
Jan 31	Sidewalk, Regular	2027
January	Expected to open: Woodstock, BendFilm, NewFest, Edinburgh, Brooklyn Horror	various

February 2027 and beyond.

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Feb 1	Milwaukee, Last Call	MFF27
Feb 5	Dallas International, Late	21st
Feb 10	Fantasia, Late	2027
Feb 12	Frameline, Late	Frameline51
Feb 15	Cannes La Cinef. Film schools only, no fee	80th, May 11–22, 2027
Feb 17	Dallas International, Final	21st
Feb 19	Panic Fest, Extended	Apr 2027
Feb 26	San Antonio, Late	33rd
February	Expected to open: Sitges, Fantastic Fest, Beyond Fest, Hamptons	various
Mar 1	Frameline, Extended	Frameline51
Mar 5	Maine, Late	Jul 2027
Mar 7	Waco Independent, Final	Jul 2027
Mar 10	Fantasia, Extended	2027
Mar 31	Zurich, Earlybird. Swiss-premiere-only window. The rule flips to world-premiere-only after April 30	2027
Apr 2	HollyShorts, Regular	23rd

Deadline	Festival	For which edition
Apr 4	Indy Shorts. This is Heartland Film’s Oscar-qualifying event	Jul 20-25, 2027
Apr 5	Maine, Extended	Jul 2027
Apr 15	Fantasia, Last Chance	2027
Apr 15 – Jul 1	Telluride, the entire window. “NO EARLY OR LATE SUBMISSIONS CAN BE ACCEPTED”	2027
Apr 30	Zurich, Premiere-Restricted. After this, world premieres only	2027
Apr 30	San Antonio, Extended	33rd
May 7	HollyShorts, Late	23rd
May 15	Warsaw, Earlybird, €35	43rd, Oct 2027
mid-May	Hamptons, Extended. Note how early this closes for an October festival	HIFF35
Jun 1	HollyShorts, Extended	23rd

Shortlists.

Festivals with no premiere requirement.

The spine of a long campaign. A film in its second year with a dozen screenings behind it is still fully eligible at every one of these.

Slamdance · Ann Arbor · New Orleans · Palm Springs ShortFest · Clermont-Ferrand · imagineNATIVE · Heartland · Milwaukee · Flatland · Big Sky, which accepts films of any completion date · Maine, where only a Maine screening disqualifies · AFI Fest shorts · Denver shorts · Sun Valley · WorldFest-Houston · Beyond Fest shorts · Overlook, which has no geographic premiere clause at all · Kansas City, which uses a dated local window instead

Free or near-free to enter.

Free: imagineNATIVE, which also pays screening fees to every programmed work · Marrakech, which also publishes travel support · Busan · Houston Cinema Arts · Cannes La Cined · Milwaukee, for all Wisconsin filmmakers and all alumni · Heartland, for Indiana categories and Horror at early bird · Denton Black, for Texas high-school shorts · San Sebastián's WIP Latam, WIP Europa, Co-Production Forum and Ikusmira Berriak

Under \$25: Clermont-Ferrand at roughly €14, the cheapest serious shorts submission anywhere · Guadalajara at about \$21 · Tokyo at about \$22 · SCAD Savannah at \$20 · Middleburg at \$20

Festivals that pay you.

Screening fees: imagineNATIVE, all programmed work · Ann Arbor, \$50 shorts and \$100 features · New Orleans · Milwaukee, most selected films

Travel and lodging, published by the festival: Tallinn Black Nights pays round-trip economy airfare and up to three nights for competition directors · Marrakech provides transportation and accommodation for a limited number of directors and lead actors

Reported by trade press: Atlanta up to \$750 · Austin Film Festival up to \$1,000 for category winners · RiverRun up to \$500 · Aspen Shortsfest, three nights plus local transport · Chicago International, airfare and lodging for feature filmmakers · SFFILM, airport transfers, accommodation and badges

Where the deep money is.

Published cash prizes, largest first.

Heartland, \$20,000 narrative feature and \$20,000 documentary feature · Denver, \$20,000 documentary finishing grant · Edinburgh, £50,000 Sean Connery Prize, world premieres only · Edinburgh, £15,000 Thelma Schoonmaker Prize, world premieres only · Hamptons, \$10,000 each across three thematic awards · Denver, \$10,000 Maglione Award · Mill Valley, \$10,000 Mind the Gap Prize for first- or second-time women and non-binary feature directors · Heartland, \$10,000 each across two Clowes Awards · Ann Arbor, \$6,000 Ken Burns Award · Maine, \$5,000 Tourmaline Prize · SFFILM, \$5,000 across three Golden Gate Awards · Austin Film Festival, \$5,000 each for the Drama and Comedy feature screenplay awards · Nantucket, \$5,000 for the Tony Cox feature screenplay, judged blind

Best structural odds for an unknown.

Festivals whose eligibility rules remove your competition rather than add to it.

Slamdance, first-time directors and sub-\$1M budgets only · Marrakech, international first and second features, free, with travel support · Heartland, roughly a thousand submissions against 86 slots, no premiere requirement, \$20,000 top prize · Berlinale Perspectives, fiction debuts, where prior documentaries do not count against you · Cannes Critics' Week, first or second features · Hamptons, which publishes a preference for films with fewer than five US festivals and no distribution · Miami's Jordan Ressler Award, debut features only · Göteborg's Ingmar Bergman Competition, first and second-time directors · IFFR's Tiger Competition, first three features · Thessaloniki's International Competition, first and second features from anywhere

Academy-qualifying, with the caveat that matters.

The qualification attaches to specific named awards, not to the festival.
Check the Academy's own current list before spending against any of this.

Qualifying in all three short categories: Ann Arbor · Atlanta · Austin Film Festival · Chicago International · Cleveland International · Dallas International · Florida · HollyShorts · Indy Shorts · Nashville · New Orleans · Palm Springs ShortFest · SFFILM · Santa Barbara · Woodstock

Qualifying in specific categories: AFI Fest, Grand Jury winners · Aspen Shortsfest, five genre-named awards · Big Sky, documentary shorts · Clermont-Ferrand, the two Grand Prix only · DOC NYC, documentary shorts · Hamptons, narrative and documentary shorts · Hot Docs, **both documentary categories** · Provincetown, including **Best Queer Short Film** · Sitges · SXSW, shorts only · Slamdance · Tribeca · ABFF, via the HBO Short Film Award · LALIFF, US Latino live action and animated shorts · imagineNATIVE · Cannes, Berlinale, Venice, TIFF, Sundance, Locarno, Melbourne, Warsaw, Guadalajara

Two to keep straight. Heartland Film's qualifying status belongs to **Indy Shorts**, its shorts festival, not to the Heartland International Film Festival. And several festivals, Tribeca and Hot Docs and Slamdance among them, carry qualifying awards without advertising it. **Check the Academy's list, not the festival's homepage, in both directions.**

Regional lanes, and how to find yours.

Almost every regional festival runs a category, an award, or a discount restricted to filmmakers from its own state or county. **These are the highest-probability entries on the circuit, because the field is narrowed before a juror ever looks.** Almost nobody hunts for them systematically.

We are based in Texas, so here is our home state as a worked example of what to look for.

Lane	Festival	Eligibility, as published
Texas Short Screenplays	Denton Black	“The primary writer must be a current Texas resident,” proved with a utility bill
Texas Feature	Dallas International	Flat fee at every deadline tier; a Panavision package published at “\$30,000 or more”
Texas Short	Lone Star	“any film that completes one or more of the film’s production in Texas: pre-production / scriptwriting, principal photography, post-production.” A one-of-three test
Hecho en Tejas	Cine Las Americas	Films “made by Latines filmmakers or about Latines subjects that are filmed in Texas”
Made in Waco Grant	Waco Independent	“50% of your film must be shot in McLennan County.” A \$5,000 production package
Texas High School Shorts	Denton Black	Free at the first two tiers
Bexar County	San Antonio	Films made in Bexar County

Now the transferable part. **Look for four things wherever you are.**

A restricted category. Nashville has three Tennessee-only lanes. Milwaukee’s Cream City Cinema is free to enter for seven counties. Heartland has two Indiana feature categories, free at early bird. Kansas City has three Missouri-and-Kansas lanes.

A discount rather than a category. Sidewalk publishes 30% off for Alabama films. Atlanta publishes 50% off for Georgia-shot films by Georgia-resident directors. SFFILM prices Bay Area filmmakers at the student rate. Maine halves the fee for Maine productions.

An alumni discount, which is not regional and which anyone can earn. Sidewalk publishes 40% off for anyone who has played there before. BendFilm publishes 75% off. Cleveland, Cork, Atlanta, IDFA, AFI Fest and Provincetown all publish alumni waivers. **Play a festival once and you have a discount there for life.**

A definition looser than you assume. Lone Star’s Texas test counts scriptwriting or post alone. A film shot elsewhere but written or finished in-state qualifies. Read the definition before you rule yourself out.

And one that is not a lane at all but is worth more than most of them. Dallas–Fort Worth is one of the Academy’s six qualifying metro areas for a theatrical short run. So are Los Angeles, New York, the Bay Area, Cook

County and Fulton County. If you live in one of those six, a seven-day run at one screening a day in a commercial theater qualifies a short for the Academy Awards. It is the least-used route in this guide.

Confirm before you submit.

Festival status changes, and aggregator listings outlive festivals. As of September 5, 2026, these were worth a call or an email before sending money. Several are simply between cycles, and some will be back.

Los Angeles Film Festival no longer runs. Film Independent lists no such event among its current programs. Several unrelated events use similar names, so confirm who is asking if you get an invitation under it.

Traverse City now operates as a year-round cinema rather than an annual festival. The nonprofit is alive and running the State Theatre. For a Michigan filmmaker that is a booking conversation, not a submission.

Hill Country Film Festival in Fredericksburg, Texas closed after fifteen years, on its own announcement. Its aggregator listing is still live and still shows dates and a prize.

Nightstream ran twice, in 2020 and 2021. Its four partner festivals all still run independently and all take submissions: Boston Underground, Brooklyn Horror, North Bend and Overlook.

AFI Docs. AFI's documentary activity now runs through AFI Fest, whose documentary short category is Oscar-qualifying and open to submission.

Deep in the Heart Film Festival is now the **Waco Independent Film Festival**, running and taking submissions. The old listing is frozen at the 2020 cycle and still live.

Outfest now operates as a year-round platform. The submitting entity is OutfestNEXT, a shorts and episodic showcase in its first year, with no feature category published. If you have a finished queer feature, Frameline's cycle is fully published and takes features.

Full Frame has not announced a next edition as of the research date, and no closure has been announced either. Historically one of the most important US documentary festivals. Worth an email to Duke's Center for Documentary Studies before budgeting for it.

Thin Line in Denton has not announced a next edition. It is an all-volunteer, free-admission festival, where a quiet website in September means much less than it would for a staffed organization.

Portland Film Festival. Its own site and its listing disagree on the current edition. Both were reachable; they do not agree. Confirm in writing.

Newport Beach is running, but its guidelines and submit pages were showing prior cycles, so the premiere cutoff published on the site does not match the current edition. Submit from the current listing and confirm the cutoff.

BFI Flare is running. No next-cycle call has been posted and the BFI's pages are running behind. Email them directly.

What we left out.

This is the short version. The full report runs to about 47,000 words and carries an entry for each of 109 festivals. What it programs, its premiere rule quoted verbatim, what selection there is actually worth, and who publishes a contact.

It also carries the parts that did not fit here: the markets and what a badge costs, the project markets and works-in-progress platforms that are free or nearly free to enter, deliverables and DCP specifications, and an address book of published festival contacts.

If that would be useful, say so and we will send it.

. . .

Who made this.

Goldsmith Production Services is a production services and work-for-hire company in Austin, Texas. Nick Barr directed the feature *Odie*, shot in Texas. We are the Texas producer of record for productions that aren't from Texas, and the system that runs them.

We made this guide because we needed it. It is national because a filmmaker's actual campaign is national. It runs through Boulder, Berlin, Atlanta and Chicago as much as through Austin. It is written from Texas because that is where we work.

Corrections. If a festival tells you something in here is wrong, email us. The online edition gets corrected, with your name on the correction if you want it there. Everyone holding this guide gets the corrected page.

Next edition: August 1, 2027, with a short update the following February. August is deliberate. Roughly four out of five consequential deadlines fall between September and January, and the early-bird tiers, where the money is, close in July and August. A guide that arrives in November arrives after the decisions.

If the film is not finished yet, that is the part we do.

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