



SIFF 2026 Film Submission FAQ

In 2026, the Seattle International Film Festival will be celebrating 52 years of presenting the best in international and independent films from around the globe. Running in-person May 7-17 at SIFF Cinemas and other Cinemas throughout the region, the 2026 Festival will spotlight new voices alongside established directors, films from more than 70 countries, sensational hit independents, and films that have yet to break through to the US audiences.

Please contact entries@siff.net if you have any questions about the festival. We look forward to hearing from you.

01 **WHEN ARE THE SUBMISSION DEADLINES FOR SIFF 2026?**

Early Submission Deadline:

Thursday, October 2, 2025 at 11:59PM PST

Regular Submission Deadline:

Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 11:59PM PST

Late Submission Deadline:

Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 11:59PM PST

PLEASE NOTE: Submissions must be uploaded by this date. No exceptions.

02 **WHAT ARE THE ENTRY FEES?**

If your film is 40 minutes or less, the fees are:

Received by October 2, 2025: \$60

Received by December 18, 2025: \$80

Received by January 8, 2026: \$100

If your film is 41 minutes or more, the fees are:

Received by October 2, 2025: \$75

Received by December 18, 2025: \$100

Received by January 8, 2026: \$125

03 **ARE THERE ANY ENTRY FEE WAIVERS?**

Yes, we do waive the entry fee for films with 50% or more of the film footage shot in Washington State. Please email entries@siff.net to inquire about approval for a local waiver. Films approved for a local waiver must submit through FilmFreeway. **NO OTHER WAIVERS OR EXCEPTIONS WILL BE GRANTED.**

04 DO YOU GIVE OUT AWARDS?

Yes. Every year, we give out the Golden Space Needle Audience Awards for Best Narrative Film, Best Documentary Film, Best Director, Best Performance, and Best Short Film, and the Lena Sharpe Award for Persistence of Vision (presented by Women in Film Seattle, this audience award is given to the feature film by a woman director that receives the most votes in our Golden Space Needle balloting).

In addition, we sponsor nine (9) juried awards in the below categories, awarding over \$30,000 in cash prizes:

Official Competition: The SIFF Official Competition celebrates some of the year's most accomplished films, ranging from first-time directors to established masters. A cash prize of \$5,000 will be awarded to the winner of this competition.

New Directors Competition: The New Directors Competition features a selection of directors who are clearly emerging as major talents. SIFF programmers choose films from around the world, a debut or second feature by the selected director, each chosen on the basis of its original conception, striking style and overall excellence. The films must also be without US distribution at the time of selection. A cash prize of \$5,000 will be awarded to the winner of this competition.

New American Cinema Competition: The New American Cinema Competition features a selection of US films which are clearly emerging as showing considerable vision, a unique voice, and promising future. The films must also be without US distribution at the time of selection. A cash prize of \$5,000 will be awarded to the winner of this competition.

Ibero-American Cinema Competition: The Ibero-American Cinema Competition features a selection of films from Ibero-America who are firmly expressing issues, styles, and talent from the area. The films must also be without US distribution at the time of selection. A cash prize of \$5,000 will be awarded to the winner of this competition.

Documentary Film Competition: A selection of exceptional non-fiction films will be judged by an international panel of jurors who will choose the documentary they feel best illuminates and captures the human spirit, pursues the search for truth, and feeds our insatiable hunger to learn. The films must also be without US distribution at the time of selection. A cash prize of \$5,000 will be awarded to the winner of this competition.

Short Film Competitions: Approximately 100 shorts are selected to play before features or in one of our SIFF ShortsFest programs. This is a popular and exciting section of SIFF that has launched the careers of many writers and directors. All shorts selected for the Festival are eligible for this prize. Three cash prizes of \$2,500 each will be awarded in the categories of Live Action, Animation, and Documentary. SIFF is an Academy Award® qualifier in all three short film categories.

FutureWave Features Competition: A selection of films curated for young adults will be judged by youth aged 13-18.

05 DOES MY FILM NEED TO BE A PREMIERE AT SIFF?

At minimum, we require films to be Western Washington State premieres in all categories and give preference to films that have not yet been presented in the Pacific Northwest, either in person at a cinema, or as part of a Virtual Festival. World, North American, and US premieres are preferred for competition categories. Short films that have been presented online are eligible for consideration, though may not publicly screen in Western Washington State prior to May 31, 2026. Films (in all categories) that have been televised (broadcast) or available as VOD in the US prior to the Festival dates are not eligible for consideration. Films may appear outside of Washington State at other film festivals or theatrically prior to SIFF screenings.

06 WHAT ARE THE FESTIVAL PROGRAMS?

African Pictures: Showcasing a selection of the best filmmaking happening in and about Africa today, African Pictures features a wide range of new films from across the continent.

Alternate Cinema: Alternate Cinema is films that explore and shatter the boundaries of conventional filmmaking—creating new styles, genres, techniques, and new ways of looking at movies themselves.

Asian Crossroads: This program presents a selection of original voices in contemporary Asian cinema, showcasing the diverse filmmaking talents of the region.

Contemporary World Cinema: This wide-ranging overview of contemporary cinema provides a sampling of essential new films from around the world. Films in this section will provide a richer and more comprehensive sense of cinema in the 21st century.

Culinary Cinema: A program of internationally curated films on food, drink, and the people that create those experiences.

Documentary Films: SIFF's documentary film selections highlight the range of experiences—intimate portraits, personal expressions, political investigations, explorations of cultural currents, and re-examinations of history.

Face the Music: Shedding light on the lives, stories, and struggles between the notes, SIFF's Face the Music program includes a selection of new music documentaries that travel the globe capturing extraordinary performances in addition to headlining live music events, concerts, and programs that further explore how music and film are integrally linked in the creative process.

Films4Families: A program for the whole family to celebrate the culture and art of the moving image through filmmaking and film-going experiences, showcasing seven of the best films from around the globe for modern family units.

FutureWave: An international selection of films aimed at the teen filmgoer, this program celebrates the future of filmmakers and filmgoers.

Gala and Spotlight Presentations: An invitation-only category of gala film presentations and special events.

New American Cinema: Centering on the newest in US independent filmmaking, the films in the New American Cinema section span a range of genres, focusing on new voices, original visions, and up-and-coming talent.

Northwest Connections: Incredibly diverse, Northwest Connections spotlights and supports our strong Northwest film scene.

ShortsFest: An astounding collection of short films of all formats and genres—more than 100 were presented in 2025. From animation to live-action, experimental to narrative, fiction to documentary, we consider films that can fit any conceivable category, genre, or taste. A good short film must seduce, captivate, enthrall, and most of all entertain its audience all in less than 40 minutes—no easy task. SIFF is an official Academy Award® qualifying Festival.

WTF: A series of spine-tingling, booty-booting, hair-raising features chock full of mischief and mayhem, shot straight from the Forbidden Zone into the backs of your blood-shot eyes. These wild, terrifying, and fantastic films are guaranteed to keep you awake long after your bedtime.

07 DO I GET TO PICK THE PROGRAM I WANT TO SUBMIT TO?

No. If your film is selected for the Festival, our programming staff will determine which program best suits the project. The important thing is to complete the application in its entirety so we have all the information we need, as eligibility changes for each program. Gala presentations are by invitation only.

08 WHEN DOES THE 2025 SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL TAKE PLACE?

The 52nd Seattle International Film Festival will take place in-person May 7-17, 2026. Screenings and programs will be both in-person and online presentations.

09 CAN I SUBMIT MY FILM AS A "ROUGH CUT"?

Though we always prefer to preview a completed product, "rough cuts," including those with "temp track" or "scratch music" will be accepted. We receive hundreds of rough cuts every year. You should always list directly on the preview copy which elements of your film are missing, or if you are planning to screen a different cut of your film, so that the programmers can

make the most fully informed decisions. A "final cut" should be provided upon selection, but if it is still incomplete, it will be at the festival's discretion to present or replace your series. **Once a submission link has been received, we cannot guarantee that subsequent updates will be viewed.**

10 **CAN I RE-SUBMIT MY FILM FROM LAST YEAR?**

You may re-submit a previously submitted film, with the proper entry fee, only if the film has been significantly altered, re-edited or re-made since the initial submission. We will treat the submission as an entirely new project. Please note that a project's premiere date must be on or after January 2025, and that preference will be given to new projects.

If you have questions about your eligibility to re-submit, please contact entries@siff.net.

11 **CAN I ARRANGE A SCREENING FOR YOU OF MY FILM?**

No. We screen everything via secure online links (i.e. FilmFreeway entry, Vimeo, etc).

12 **HOW MANY FILMS CAN I SUBMIT?**

We welcome all submissions. However, each submitted film must have its own secure online link, completed submission form, entry fee, and supplemental materials.

13 **DO YOU ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS ON DVD/BLURAY?**

No, we no longer accept DVD/BluRay screeners as standard submissions. All submissions should be sent to us as secure online screener links. If you have questions please contact entries@siff.net.

14 **HOW WILL I DELIVER MY FILM TO YOU?**

Once your film is accepted, SIFF will reach out to you with instructions for sending your film to us, including upload instructions for our Cinesend portal. We will send the technical details to accepted projects, and provide assistance for uploading and technical support.

15 **IF MY FILM IS SELECTED, WILL YOU DO A TECHNICAL SCREENING OF MY FILM?**

Every film undergoes a thorough inspection process by our Quality Control team. If there is a specific issue with your film you feel we should be aware of, please let us know right away. Any requests for a technical screening for in-person presentations is subject to availability and you will be charged a fee of \$100. Due to the volume of films screened during the festival, it is not feasible to guarantee a technical screening.

16 **IF MY FILM IS NOT CHOSEN, MAY I SPEAK WITH A PROGRAMMER FOR NOTES OR FEEDBACK?**

Unfortunately, no. With many films submitted each year, we don't have the ability to speak or correspond with you individually about your film.

17 **WHEN WILL I FIND OUT IF MY FILM WAS SELECTED?**

We will contact you via email no later than April 10, 2026. Please make sure that the email address you provide will be operational at that time. We will not track you down. If your contact email changes after your submission, please let us know.

18 **WHERE DOES MY SUBMISSION FEE GO?**

The fee is used to assure that all films are viewed and considered equally, and covers the administrative cost of processing all film entries. We watch every single submission in its entirety. In addition, more than \$30,000 in cash prizes are given back to the filmmakers in our Festival competitions (see question 4).

19 *IF I SUBMIT MY INFORMATION ONLINE VIA FILMFREEWAY, AND THEN DON'T UPLOAD A LINK, WILL MY FEE BE REFUNDED?*

SIFF will only receive your entry fee from FilmFreeway once you have uploaded your link or entered your Vimeo link. Once you have submitted your online screener to SIFF, your entry fee is non-refundable. Should you NOT send us your submission, please contact FilmFreeway to discuss entry fee refunds.

20 *WILL THE SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL CONFIRM RECEIPT OF MY SUBMISSION?*

FilmFreeway will send an automated confirmation email once you have properly submitted your film with all required information and fees.

21 *SHOULD I PROVIDE YOU WITH PRESS/PUBLICITY MATERIALS AT THE TIME OF MY SUBMISSION?*

It is not necessary to provide us with press materials at the time of submission. Should your film be accepted, we will ask you to provide us with the necessary press/publicity materials at that time. However, any additional materials you include with the submission become the property of the Seattle International Film Festival, and will not be returned to you - please do not ask. Take this into consideration when deciding which, if any, materials to include with your submission.

**If you need further assistance after reading the information above,
please email entries@siff.net.**