



## FILM COMPETITION RULES

*The following rules govern all film submissions to the Austin Film Festival (“AFF” or the “Festival”)*

**Please Note:** Austin Film Festival does not waive entry fees. AFF believes waiving entry fees hurts the integrity of the competition. The same rules and entry fees should apply to all applicants so no one film is favored over another. In a similar respect, AFF does not invite films to be in competition. Only films that are submitted will be considered for competition.

### GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

1. Submissions must be accompanied by the applicable submission fee PER ENTRY and a completed online entry form. All films must be in English or have English subtitles at the time submitted.
2. Submissions must be submitted as an online streaming video via a participating submission platform (FilmFreeway), or a password-protected streaming URL. DVD submissions are no longer accepted.
3. In the event of a password change or link change after submitting, you must email the Festival at [programming@austinfilmfestival.com](mailto:programming@austinfilmfestival.com) immediately with that change so we may update your record. If the Festival is not notified of the change and the link is found to be inactive or the password to be incorrect, the submission may be deemed ineligible.
4. AFF screens films as digital files during the Festival and does NOT screen films on Blu-Ray, HD-CAM, or DCP. If you are unable or unwilling to provide us your film as a digital file for exhibition, DO NOT SUBMIT your film.
5. Films must have been completed after **January 1, 2025**. Films must be available for screening during the Austin Film Festival, October 29 – November 5, 2026.
6. Films that have been submitted to AFF in previous years are eligible to be resubmitted, provided they are eligible according to all of AFF’s current rules.
7. Films with US distribution (obtained prior to being selected for AFF screening) or films produced, financed or initiated by a major film studio or television network are ineligible for competition, but may be considered for a special screening. Selection for screening will be determined no later than one month prior to the festival. Films that have screened on US network or cable television or distributed to theaters prior to the festival dates are also ineligible for competition.
8. Short Films that have played in Austin in a theatrical setting to a public audience prior to October 29, 2026 are not eligible to compete at Austin Film Festival. This includes Shorts

Night, ATX Film Showcase, Austin Under the Stars, SXSW, Fantastic Fest and other festivals or public film events.”. *This includes online screenings through festivals based in Austin.* The ONLY exception is that a short may play as part of a class screening for an accredited university’s film program. We prefer that shorts be at least Texas premieres.

9. Short films that are publicly available online prior to the Festival may be considered for exhibition during the Festival, but will be ineligible for Jury Awards. We prefer that shorts not be publicly available online. *Online, private screenings through a festival’s online program do not count as publicly available online.*
10. Feature films must be at least a Texas premiere. AFF will not screen features in competition that have played at other Texas festivals or screened publicly in a theater in Texas (including a one night only screening in a rented space) prior to October 29, 2026. We prefer World, North American, and US premieres and all things being equal, will often opt to program the film that has not yet had a release over one that has played at several festivals. *If a film is screened online as part of a festival’s program that will count as a local premiere to the physical address of the festival played through.*
11. Private invite-only screenings (for instance for cast and crew or donors) do not affect a film’s eligibility.
12. AFF reserves the right in its sole discretion to reject or disqualify any ineligible entries, without a refund.
13. Films that are selected to screen at the Festival may not necessarily be selected to be “in competition” for awards purposes. Notifications regarding potential selection for competition status possibly may occur subsequent to notifications of acceptance for exhibition.

#### **ORIGINALITY AND PERMISSIONS; INDEMNITY**

1. Films must be the original work of the applicants. If a film is based upon another person’s life or upon a book or other underlying work, applicant(s) must secure any necessary rights to make such adaptations. However, it is not necessary to submit the adaptation rights agreements to the Festival. Neither the Festival nor its jurists investigates or attests to the authenticity of an applicant’s statement of authorship or rights secured. By entering the competition, you represent that you have secured all necessary rights.
2. Applicants are solely responsible for obtaining all necessary rights and permissions for third-party materials included in their films, including but not limited to music, trademarks, logos, copyrights, and other intellectual property rights. AFF expressly disclaims all liability or responsibility for any violations of the foregoing.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

1. Films that have not received a full color edit, or sound edit are eligible for submission. AFF prefers picture-locked submissions for the consideration process. AFF’s focus is on story, technical changes such as color or sound will not affect the final decision of any film.

Should the film be accepted to play during the Festival, the filmmaker will have the opportunity to supply the Festival with their most recent version.

2. Filmmakers who are unsure whether to enter their film into the Narrative Feature Category or one of the genre categories (Dark Matters or Comedy Vanguard) should select the genre category so the film will be watched with that in mind. Austin Film Festival reserves the right to switch the entry category or otherwise assign a category to fit programming needs and interests, and films will not be penalized for the original submission selection.
3. Once an entry payment has been received we cannot provide a refund. If a payment is disputed by an entrant for any reason, the entrant may be subject to any transaction fees or similar amounts incurred by AFF in connection with the dispute.
4. You **MUST** include your physical address either in your entry or in your cover letter. Please do not submit a film without giving us your address, which we need for our records.
5. Payments made with a check are subject to our Bounced Check Policy: If we receive a returned check from our bank for a payment you made, you will be invoiced for the original amount of the check plus a \$50 bounced check fee. The payment of the invoiced amount will be due within 30 days of invoice date. We will not re-submit the original check, nor will we accept another check for repayment. Repayment must be made by money order or cashier's check.
6. Please include in your cover letter if your film was SHOT IN TEXAS (include locations) or made by TEXAS FILMMAKERS. We don't want to miss your film.

#### **SELECTED FILMS AND WINNERS**

1. AFF has no obligation (other than as stated in these rules or on our website) to disclose any of the following information: i) identities of screeners or judges; ii) notes, feedback, or information relating to the submitted project; and/or iii) details regarding the submission review or selection process.
2. AFF explicitly disclaims any liability or responsibility for any comments, notes, or opinions expressed about a submission, whether by AFF or by its volunteers.
3. Winners will be announced on October 31, 2026. The judges' decision is final.
4. Winners receiving cash prizes are solely responsible for payment of all applicable local, state, and federal taxes.
5. In an effort to create a more accessible environment for our audience, AFF reserves the right to require programmed filmmakers to provide Closed-Caption and/or Subtitle files with their films. All accepted filmmakers will be notified in a timely manner.

#### **RETURNS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

- DVDs and press materials will not be returned under any circumstances. Include a self-addressed, stamped postcard for each submission if you wish acknowledgment of the receipt of your entry.