Develop a Festival Submission Plan

No one can know how great of a director you are if you don’t show them. Film festivals are where many directors get their first break and recognition.

There are many festivals and they are not all equal. You must research the festival circuit to find the ones that best fit your film or project. Below are some questions to ask when building your own festival plan.

- Map out submission and festival dates to avoid conflicting submissions. Some festivals do not allow previously screened work, some do.
- **Film Festival Database** is a great tool for building a festival submission plan.
- **FilmFreeway** also offers a festival browser tool and is the submission platform for most festivals.
- What type of film are you submitting? What films have done well or won awards at the festival? There are many festivals for short films, documentaries, niche interests, identities, genres, and more. Your film may fit better in certain festivals.
- Do you have any connections to the festival staff? If you’ve met someone through a class you’ve taken or at a networking event, contact them when you submit. It doesn’t hurt to get your film to someone who is familiar with you or other works you have made.
- Does the festival have other film making programs?
- What are the awards or prizes? A festival with more prominent awards offers more validity, but there is also more competition.
- What are the festival fees and how much do you have budgeted for them? Tip: Always ask the festival if they waive fees for student projects. Many will say yes.
- Consider smaller festivals where you may have a better chance of success.