



2024.7.20-7.28

**The 18TH FIRST International Film Festival
General Guidelines for
Competition Submission and Participation**



1. About FIRST International Film Festival

Since its inception in 2006, FIRST International Film Festival (abbr. FIRST IFF) has been a film festival-style service platform in China, focusing on discovering and promoting young filmmakers and their early works. FIRST IFF advocates youth film culture, enriches artistic creation, intervenes in the ecological cycle of the film industry, and preserves the memory of contemporary film history.

As an independent market-oriented platform with public responsibility, FIRST consistently injects fresh energy into the Chinese film industry, contributing to the sustainable development of the film ecosystem.

The 18th FIRST International Film Festival will take place from July 20, 2024, to July 28, 2024, in Xining, Qinghai Province, People's Republic of China.

2. Competition Sections

FIRST IFF presents three competition sections:

- **Main Competition**

FIRST IFF is dedicated to documenting the rich specimen of emerging Sinophone filmmaking landscape and offering an effective and fair evaluation standard for that matter through the format of Main Competition. FIRST IFF aspires to provide the explorers of cinematic art with the returning spirit of cinema and forward-looking guidance, encouragement, and accompaniment.

- **FIRST FRAME**



FIRST FRAME focuses on the diverse images of women in the works of emerging filmmakers in contemporary Sinophone cinema. It aims to encourage the creative depiction of female characters and themes and extend academic exploration of gender-related topics. For details, please refer to the *The 18th FIRST International Film Festival General Guidelines for FIRST FRAME Submission and Participation*.

● FIRST PIONEER

FIRST PIONEER promotes and encourages avant-garde and imaginative creativity in short films. This section expands beyond the Main Competition to explore bold aesthetics and structures, recognizing diverse cultural perspectives, unique thinking paradigms, and innovative cinematic expressions with experimental spirits. For details, please refer to the *The 18th FIRST International Film Festival General Guidelines for FIRST PIONEER Submission and Participation*.

3. Awards

MAIN COMPETITION	Best Narrative Feature	
	Best Documentary	The award is presented with a prize bonus of RMB 50,000 for the director.
	Grand Jury Prize	
	Best Short Film	
	Best Animated Short Film	
	Best Director	



	Best Screenplay	
	Best Performance	
	Best Artistic Originality	Honoring the filmmaker of a narrative feature who has made a significant contribution or breakthrough in the fields of cinematography, editing, sound, and production design.
	Spirit of Freedom	Presented to the director of a narrative feature film with avant-garde aesthetics, this award acknowledges self-consciousness, cultural value, and the integration of independent thinking with cinematic practice.
FIRST FRAME	Film of the Year	The award winner is In recognition of the diverse images of women in the works of emerging filmmakers and to encourage creative depiction of female characters and themes. The winning film shall break through the shackles of traditional narratives and issues regarding femininity with rich cinematic vocabulary, creative observations and depictions that are closely connected to contemporary life. The award is presented with a trophy, an award certificate, and a prize bonus of RMB 100,000.
	Short Film of the Year	The award winner is in recognition of the works that expand the visualization of female life experiences through the format of short film, to encourage the spiritual images of female creators, to explore the diversity of vivid female characters, and to focus on filmmakers who transcend gender narratives. The award is presented with an award certificate, and a prize bonus of RMB 10,000.
FIRST PIONEER	Best Short Film	Recognizing a short film excelling in all criteria with a pioneering spirit in aesthetic exploration, textual value, and technological innovation. The award comprises a trophy, certificate, and a cash prize of RMB 100,000.



	Jury Prize	Acknowledging a standout short film with unique artistic values, novel perspectives, diverse viewpoints, and humanistic concerns. The winning director will receive a certificate and a prize of RMB 20,000.
Other Awards	Audience Award	The winner is decided by the votes cast after screenings during the festival and is endowed with prize bonus.
	Outstanding Filmmaker of the Year	Presented to a backstage industry practitioner who actively transforms, leads, or advances the filmmaking and industry landscape for emerging filmmakers, independent, and arthouse cinema.

4. Submission Guidelines

4.1 General Regulations

- Only films that have been submitted and registered can be considered for selection.
- Film submission and registration are exclusively accepted online at www.firstfilm.org.cn/annual/main/competition.
- Submissions to FIRST IFF are open to narrative features (min. 60 minutes), documentaries (min. 60 minutes) and short films (max. 30 minutes incl. credits).
- Submitted film should be completed after January 1, 2023.
- For narrative features, the film should be among the director's first three Independently directed narrative features. In the case of co-directed work, each of the directors must fulfill the condition.



- Films that have already been theatrical/online released in mainland China or have scheduled the release before the FIRST IFF festival dates are not eligible.
- Films, including any updated versions, which have been submitted to or publicly screened at previous FIRST IFF may not be accepted again.

4.2 Eligibility

To be considered for participation, a film must meet one of the following conditions:

- The director must be a citizen of the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Taiwan). In the case of co-directed work, one director's qualification is sufficient.
- The majority of the film's dialogues must be in the Chinese language (including Mandarin, Cantonese, and other dialects). Dubbed foreign-language films are not eligible.
- A minimum of 50% of the filming locations must be situated within the borders of the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Taiwan).
- A minimum of 50% of the cast and crew, including the director, screenwriter, cinematographer, production designer, composer, editor, sound effects, main cast, and producer, must be citizens of the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Taiwan).

4.3 Submission Deadline and Fee



The 18th FIRST IFF calls for entries from January 1, 2024. All submissions are closed at 24:00 of April 28, 2024, UTC+8.

Films will only be considered for selection after the processing fee is received.

The processing fee varies according to the chosen deadline and film type.

	Early Bird (January 1 to February 15)	Standard (February 16 to April 15)	Delayed (April 16 to April 28)
Narrative Feature & Feature-length Documentary	RMB 300	RMB 580	RMB 980
Short Film	RMB 200	RMB 380	RMB 780

- For entrants choosing offline mailing of screeners, kindly factor in the delivery time. The submission time is based on the arrival of all submission materials, including online submissions, and mailed materials, at the festival office. Failure to meet the chosen deadline will incur an additional fee.
- No submission fee will be refunded if a film fails to complete submission or is withdrawn from the competition.
- Once the submission deadline has passed, withdrawal of submitted films from the competition is not permitted.

4.4 Preview Screener

To finalize the submission process, FIRST IFF mandates a preview screener in the following format:



- MOV or MP4 in H.264 encoded video file.
- File size limited to 3G for feature-length films and 1G for short films.
- Chinese and English subtitles must be embedded.
- The only acceptable watermark is "FIRST Preview" in the upper right corner of the frame. Kindly refrain from adding any other watermarks to ensure a proper film review by the jury.

The screener can be submitted through one of the following methods:

- By Uploading (Recommended)

The file may be uploaded directly to the FIRST encoded server through the submission form.

- By Post

Please send your screener (in USB disk, hard drive, etc.) to the following address:

FIRST INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Yard No.7, Huitong Office Park,

Yaojiayuan South Road,

100025 Beijing, CHINA

Tel: 86-010-85564221

To ensure timely delivery to the festival committee, use a trackable and signed delivery service. Label the package with "no commercial value" and "cultural use only."



Submission screeners will not be returned. Submitters are responsible for all shipping and insurance costs related to the transportation of films and press materials to the festival. FIRST IFF retains the right to reject packages with submission materials that require payment on delivery.

The festival accepts work-in-progress preview copies with a minimum requirement of being picture-locked (no editing adjustments). The preview copy of the work-in-progress film must explicitly indicate incomplete parts at the beginning (e.g., pending music replacement, no color grading) using subtitles or intertitles. If selected, a screening version is required before July 1, 2024.

4.5 Material Replacement

If replacement of information or material is needed after the submission, please contact submission@firstfilm.org.cn. At the discretion of the festival, submission materials can be replaced **ONLY ONCE** before the submission deadline. Please note, once the review process initiates, no replacements will be accepted.

4.6 Declaration of Copyrights

Applicants must ensure the film's originality, affirming legal licensing for music, sound, archival footage, and texts from right holders. Permission for documentary footages from filmed individuals is essential. The applicant is solely responsible for any legal disputes related to copyright or filming permission.

FIRST IFF reserves the right to reject films from competition in case of copyright infringement.



5. Review Process

The Selection Committee and the Shortlist Committee will decide the Official Selection films. The ultimate winners will be awarded by the respective section juries.

Juries will be appointed by the festival committee. Participants of submission films (based on the film's official screen credits) may not assume jury responsibility for the section in which their films are competing.

5.1 Selection Committee

The Selection Committee consists of the Narrative Feature Selection Committee, Documentary Selection Committee and the Short Film Selection Committee, who will review the submitted titles in corresponding categories. The film will be informed via email of the pre-selection results no later than late May 2024. The pre-selection results will not be publicly announced.

5.2 Shortlist Committee

The Shortlist Committee will determine the finalist line-up for the Official Selection of Main Competition, FIRST FRAME and FIRST PIONEER. All the Official Selection will be announced before late June 2024 and screened during the festival. Submitters will receive a notification email and must promptly acknowledge it.

5.3 Jury



Jury will decide the award winners among Official Selection films in different competition sections, and the award results will be revealed during the film festival.

6. Guidelines for Official Selected Films

6.1 Screening Copy

A screening copy (standard DCP) of the selected film is mandatory. Except for sound mixing, color tuning, and subtitles adjustment, the screening copy must match the submitted screener. No replacements are allowed during the review process. FIRST IFF, as a platform promoting new films and filmmakers, does not provide screening fees for selected films.

6.2 Participants' Obligations

No film may be withdrawn from the festival program after its participation has been publicly announced. During the festival, no participating film may be screened outside the festival venues prior to its official presentation at the festival.

Participation in the festival necessitates unconditional adherence to all regulations outlined in these guidelines. Producers, distributors, and other individuals or organizations submitting a film must ensure that any third parties associated with the production agree to its participation in the festival.



FIRST IFF reserves the right to rule on any cases not provided for in these guidelines.

6.3 Screening Schedule

Selected films will have two public and two exclusive screenings for accredited professionals during the festival, with scheduling at the discretion of the festival.

The schedule is subject to written notice from the festival team.

6.4 Presence in Xining

The key cast and crew of shortlisted films should attend film presentations, Q&As, the awards ceremony, red carpet, and other related events during the festival. FIRST IFF provides subsidies for travel expenses and accommodation.

6.5 Required Publicity Materials

Information and materials from selected films will be utilized on online media (websites, apps, and social media channels) and print products (festival publications), as well as by third parties for editorial coverage of FIRST IFF. The festival team has the right to edit and publicly use this information. Participants are obligated to submit any incomplete information or materials upon selection.

6.6 Festival Laurels and Logo

The filmmakers, producers and distributors of all films selected undertake to make mention in their publicity and advertising materials of the selection of the film for FIRST IFF, by featuring the official laurels and logo which will be supplied by the festival after the film is selected or awarded. The laurels and logo must



not under any circumstances be modified or altered without the prior permission of the festival.

* Participation in FIRST International Film Festival by submitting the work and/or accepting FIRST's invitation implies acceptance of the rules and regulations by the filmmaker, producers, and rights holders. The festival committee reserves the right to amend the rules and regulations and will announce them in due course. The Chinese text of these rules and regulations is the authentic and binding version.