

REQUEST FOR SUBMISSIONS

Between the Lines: A Short Documentary Film on the Spirit of Soccer in Houston's Neighborhoods

Budget: \$22,000

Deadline: May 15, 2026

To submit, visit [SUBMITTABLE](#).

Only applications sent via Submittable will be considered.

Summary

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA), in partnership with the Houston Cinema Arts Society (HCAS), invites Houston-based filmmakers to lead the creation of a 20–30-minute documentary film or a series of short films that explore how soccer shapes neighborhood life and community connection across Houston.

This project will document soccer's role as a cultural and social gathering point in Houston neighborhoods, capturing the lived experiences of players, families, coaches, and residents whose daily lives are connected to the sport. It will reflect the city's rich cultural life, shared traditions, and community pride.

We are seeking a filmmaker whose artistic vision and documentary storytelling practice can bring depth, authenticity, and cinematic excellence to this community-centered project.

One filmmaker will be selected through this open call process. This project is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and administered through the Houston Arts Alliance.

Project Overview

Soccer is deeply woven into the daily life of Houston's neighborhoods—from public parks and school fields to informal gathering spaces where families, players, coaches, and residents come together.

The selected filmmaker will lead the creative development and production of a documentary that explores how soccer shapes life across Houston's neighborhoods. The film will examine themes of neighborhood identity and pride, intergenerational participation in sport, and the shared rituals and traditions that emerge around match days. It should highlight how soccer fosters community gathering and a sense of belonging, activates public spaces as sites of connection and celebration, and reflects the dynamic intersection of art, culture, and athletics in Houston.

Filming should take place in selected Houston neighborhoods where soccer is a visible part of everyday life.

The completed documentary will be professionally edited and finalized during the grant period, culminating in a polished final film ready for public presentation. As part of the project, the film will be presented at one free public screening, creating an opportunity for community members to gather and engage with the work collectively. Following the screening, the documentary will be hosted online for free, ongoing public access, ensuring broad and continued availability to audiences across Houston and beyond. The screening will also be accompanied by a post-screening community conversation designed to deepen dialogue around the film's themes and the role of sport in neighborhood life.

The selected filmmaker will serve as the Lead Filmmaker and primary creative lead for the project, with full responsibility for conceiving, directing, and delivering the documentary from initial concept through final completion.

The Lead Filmmaker will originate and refine the project concept, develop the overall narrative approach, and shape a community-based storytelling framework that authentically reflects participants' voices and experiences. They will direct all aspects of production, including planning and conducting interviews, overseeing principal photography, and establishing the project's visual and audio aesthetic.

The Lead Filmmaker will have primary creative authority over the project, in alignment with Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) and Houston Cinema Arts Society (HCAS) goals and approval processes.

The Lead Filmmaker will be responsible for assembling and managing the project team, including hiring and supervising editors, cinematographers, and other key creative and technical personnel as needed. They will oversee the full post-production process, including editing, narrative development, and sound design.

Final deliverables will include a professionally produced 20–30-minute documentary or, alternatively, a series of short films, depending on the agreed-upon project scope.

In addition, the Lead Filmmaker will participate in regular planning meetings with HAA and HCAS and, as applicable, will collaborate with and help guide emerging creatives engaged through workforce development opportunities tied to the project.

Eligibility

Eligibility is open to all artists and artist teams living or working in the Greater Houston Area and over 18 years of age.

- Currently residing within the Greater Houston Area: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, or Waller counties

Applicants should be Houston-based filmmakers with demonstrated experience in documentary filmmaking, narrative nonfiction, or community-based storytelling. The selected artist or team must be able to collaborate with community members and project partners throughout the development and production process.

Applicants must also be available for the full project timeline outlined below and prepared to engage in both the planning and implementation phases of the work. Filmmakers whose practice includes community storytelling, cultural documentation, sports-centered narratives, or neighborhood-based work are especially encouraged to apply, as this project seeks to authentically reflect the lived experiences and cultural fabric of Houston's communities.

Applications that do not meet all eligibility criteria or application requirements will be withdrawn from consideration.

Budget

The selected filmmaker will receive a project budget of \$22,000.

The final contract amount will be determined during the scope development phase and may include support for the creative fee or artist stipend, production expenses, equipment and crew costs, post-production services, sound design and final finishing, and limited mentorship and participation in workforce development activities associated with the project.

The production support budget will be outlined in the final contract. The payment schedule will be milestone-based and tied to:

- Contract execution (40%)
- Completion of principal photography (30%)
- Final delivery and screening readiness (30%)

Application Requirements

Please submit the following materials via Submittable.

Letter of Interest (*Written Submission up to 500 words, or a Video Submission under 5 minutes*)

Describe your interest in the project, including what draws you to this opportunity and why the subject matter resonates with your artistic practice. Include your documentary storytelling approach, your connection to Houston communities, and

your vision for telling this story in a way that authentically captures the spirit, voices, and lived experiences of the neighborhoods involved.

Resume / CV

Include relevant professional experience, exhibitions, screenings, festivals, and awards.

Artist Biography (*Written Submission up to 250 words, or a Video Submission under 2 minutes*)

A summary of your artistic background, practice, and key achievements, providing context for your work and career.

Preliminary Creative Approach (*Written Submission up to 500 words, or a Video Submission under 5 minutes*)

Provide a brief narrative outlining how you would approach key elements of the project, including community interviews, visual storytelling, the atmosphere and character of the neighborhoods, the representation of sports and movement, and your approach to sound and pacing. This response is intended to offer insight into your creative process and storytelling sensibility and is not expected to be a full treatment.

Work Samples

Submit **2–3 film samples** via links (Vimeo, YouTube, personal website, etc.). Samples should demonstrate documentary, community-centered, or narrative nonfiction work.

Additional Relevant Documents (Optional)**References (Optional but encouraged)**

Up to 2 professional references.

Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of arts and community representatives.

Criteria – Scoring Rubric

Artistic Quality (30%)

Demonstrated excellence in cinematography, narrative structure, editing, and storytelling.

Project Feasibility (25%)

Demonstrated capacity to complete the work within the proposed timeline.

Storytelling Vision (25%)

Ability to translate the themes of community, sport, and place into compelling documentary form.

Community Practice (10%)

Evidence of ethical, respectful, and collaborative engagement with communities.

Local Relevance (10%)

Understanding of Houston's neighborhoods, cultural life, and community dynamics.

Contracting

This project will be covered by a single contract with the Houston Arts Alliance. The selected artist must be able and willing to sign the contract.

Project Timeline

**Timelines are subject to change*

- April 30, 2026 – Call for Submissions released
- May 15, 2026 – Submission deadline
- May 18–22, 2026 – Panel review and finalist selection
- May 26, 2026 – Selected filmmaker notified
- June – August 2026 – Principal photography
- September – December 2026 – Post-production, public screening, and online release
- December 2026 – Project closeout

Contact

For more information, send questions to Grace Zuniga at the Houston Arts Alliance at grace@haatx.com with the subject line "Request for Submissions – Filmmakers."