

# Photography Competition Guide

Photography competitions can elevate artists, inspire communities, and advance shared cultural and ecological goals. But they must be designed with fairness, respect, and professionalism at their core. This guide challenges organizers to uphold the highest standards and follow best practices, ensuring that competitions are ethical, accessible, and impactful.

## Purpose & Philosophy

A photography competition should:

- Uplift artists and respect their creative rights.
- Ensure accessibility, transparency, fairness, and professionalism.
- Prioritize ethical standards in every aspect of design and management.

## Artist Copyright & Usage Rights

- Artists retain full copyright over all submitted and winning images.
- Any usage rights granted to the organizer must be:
  - Non-exclusive, time-limited, and clearly defined.
  - Used solely for competition promotion (e.g., website, social media, press releases, exhibition documentation).
- Artists must always be credited when their work is displayed or published.
- License terms must be communicated upfront, e.g.:  
“By entering, artists grant [Organization Name] a non-exclusive license to display, promote, and archive the submitted work in relation to this competition for a period of [duration], with credit given.”
- Any further use beyond these stated purposes must be negotiated directly with the artist.

## Compensation & Recognition

- Winners must receive fair compensation, such as:
  - Cash prizes
  - Paid exhibitions
  - Publication stipends
- *Exposure alone is not compensation.* Rewards must honor the time, skill, and creativity of artists.
- Provide meaningful recognition:
  - Announce winners through official channels.
  - Fully credit selected artists across all platforms.
  - Optional: digital certificates or laurels (badges) for artists' portfolios.

## Submissions

- Limit to 3–5 images per artist to encourage thoughtful submissions and manageable judging.
- Accepted file formats: JPG (optionally PNG).
- Technical specifications:
  - Max file size: 5–10MB per image.
  - Minimum dimensions: 1200px on the shortest side.
- Metadata required:
  - Last name, first name, title, date of creation.
  - Optional: short description (≤100 words).

- If allowing photographic series:
  - Up to 3-5 images per series, counted as one entry.
  - Series must be visually and thematically linked.

### **Entry Fees**

- Avoid fees whenever possible to ensure accessibility.
- If fees are necessary:
  - Keep them minimal and explain their purpose clearly.
  - Offer full fee waivers upon request, no questions asked.
  - Consider sliding scale or pay-what-you-can models.

### **Eligibility & Accessibility**

- Clearly define eligibility:
  - Age restrictions (e.g., 18+).
  - Geographic scope (local, national, or international).
  - Professional status (student, emerging, mid-career, established).
- Remove barriers to access:
  - Use clear, plain-language instructions.
  - Accept mobile-friendly submissions.
  - Publicize broadly with inclusive outreach strategies.
  - Provide contact info for accommodations.

### **AI Policy**

- Clearly state the role of AI:
  - Prohibit fully AI-generated images.
  - Allow AI-assisted editing consistent with photography (e.g., retouching, exposure blending).
- Suggested policy:
 

“Submitted images must be based on original photographs created by the artist. AI-assisted editing is permitted within standard photographic practices. Fully AI-generated imagery is not eligible.”
- Require entrants to affirm compliance at submission.

### **Jury & Selection Process**

- Jury size: 3–5 members (an odd number is best).
- Build a diverse, qualified panel representing:
  - Artistic disciplines (photographers, curators, editors).
  - Racial, cultural, gender, and lived experience diversity.
  - Professional backgrounds (fine art, documentary, editorial).
- Include:
  - Working photographers
  - Curators/arts professionals
  - Community representatives (such as rangeland experts, especially for themed competitions)
- Conflict of interest: jurors must recuse themselves if relationships exist with entrants.

### **Selection Criteria & Deliberation**

- Define evaluation areas, e.g.:

- Artistic vision
- Technical skill
- Originality
- Relevance to theme
- Emotional/conceptual impact
- Use blind judging in early rounds.
- Adopt fair systems: 1–5 scoring or Yes/Maybe/No shortlisting.
- Encourage juror deliberation; resolve ties with discussion and final votes.

### **Artist Communications**

- Notify all applicants, not just winners.
- Example rejection note:  
“Thank you for the time and energy you put into sharing your photographs with us. Although your submission was not selected this year, it was an honor to view your work.”
- Provide clear timelines for submissions, notifications, and exhibitions.

### **Data Privacy**

- Artist contact info must be used only for competition administration.
- No selling or sharing with third parties.

### **Documentation & Archiving**

- Maintain a professional digital archive of submissions.
- Respect licensing agreements when archiving.
- Archive communications and agreements systematically for transparency.

## **FM dR Call for Artists**

**[Competition Name] – Photo Competition**

**Presented by [Organization Name]**

**Submission Deadline: [Deadline Date]**

### **Overview**

[Organization Name] invites photographers to submit original work for the inaugural [Competition Name] Photo Competition.

This is an open call to celebrate contemporary photographic practices and the unique perspectives of artists at all stages of their careers. There is no fee to enter.

Artists retain full copyright of their submitted work and will be credited in all uses. Selected photographers will receive [Prizes — e.g., cash awards, exhibition opportunities, publication features].

### **Theme (if applicable)**

[Theme Title or "Open Theme"]

[Description of theme if needed.]

### **Eligibility**

- Open to [Eligibility Details — e.g., photographers aged 18 and older worldwide].
- Submitted images must originate from original photographic works created by the submitting artist.
- Fully AI-generated images (created solely through text prompts or synthetic processes) are not eligible.
- AI-assisted editing (e.g., exposure correction, retouching) within traditional photography practices is permitted.

### **Submission Guidelines**

- Artists may submit up to [Number] images.
- Accepted file formats: [e.g., JPG, PNG] with a maximum file size of [Size — e.g., 5MB per image].
- Each submission must include:
  - Artist's full name
  - Image titles and dates (year) of creation
  - Brief description of each work (optional)
  - Confirmation of compliance with the Terms and Conditions

### **Key Dates**

- Submission Deadline: [Date]
- Notification of Winners: [Date]
- Public Announcement and/or Exhibition: [Date]

### **Awards**

- First Place: [Award — e.g., \$2,500 cash prize and feature exhibition]
- Second Place: [Award — e.g., \$1,000 cash prize]
- Third Place: [Award — e.g., \$500 cash prize]
- Honorable Mentions: Recognition and inclusion in the online exhibition

### **Important Information**

- All selected works will be credited to the artist whenever published, exhibited, or promoted.
- No entry fee is required.
- All submitted work remains the intellectual property of the artist.
- Selected entries will be licensed to [Organization Name] for limited promotional use related to the competition, as outlined in the Terms and Conditions.
- Any additional use of submitted works beyond these stated purposes will be negotiated directly with the artist.

### **How to Submit**

Please [upload your work at submission portal/link] or email submissions to [submission email address] with the subject line: “[Competition Name] Submission – [Your Name]”.

## **Questions?**

For questions or assistance, please contact: [Contact Email Address].

---

## **Terms & Conditions**

(Include copyright, usage rights, submission requirements, eligibility, judging process, and data privacy statement.)

## **Language Options for Entry Fees**

- Flat/Low Fee:  
“There is a submission fee of [\$] per artist, which covers jury and administrative costs. Full waivers available on request.”
- Sliding Scale / Pay-What-You-Can:  
“Submissions accepted on a sliding scale from [\$0–\$25]. No artist will be turned away for inability to pay.”

## **Extra Pro Tips**

- Publish a clear timeline for submissions, judging, notifications, exhibitions.
- Honor all submitters—respect and thank them.
- Provide juror bios for transparency and credibility.
- Archive thoughtfully with respect for rights.
- Celebrate winners publicly—interviews, features, exhibitions.