



FILM PERMIT FEES – COUNTY OF EL DORADO

NEXUS STUDY

September 12, 2025

Planning & Building Department
El Dorado County

Purpose

This nexus document demonstrates the reasonable relationship between the proposed Film Permit Fee Schedule and the costs incurred by the County of El Dorado in processing, reviewing, and administering film permits. The analysis is based on the Time Study (2025) prepared by the Planning and Building Department and supports the staff report recommending adoption of the fee resolution. This framework reflects the County's collaborative agreement with the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) through Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) #9756, which designates the Chamber and Film Office as the primary administrators of the Film Program.

Legal and Policy Framework

On August 19, 2025, the Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance 5236 (Ordinance), requiring a film permit for motion pictures, television, digital media, and commercial still photography on public and private property within El Dorado County. The Ordinance directed staff to develop a fee schedule to recover the County's direct and indirect costs.

In enacting the Motion Picture, Television, and Commercial Industries Act of 1984, the Legislature encouraged local governments to establish uniform film permitting procedures and to charge fees that do not exceed the reasonable costs of providing services. The California Film Commission's Model Filming Ordinance was also considered by the County in the adoption of Chapter 58 of Title 5 (Filming Permits) of the El Dorado County Ordinance Code.

Under Section IV of the MOU, the County, Chamber, and Film Office share responsibilities for developing and maintaining the fee schedule, coordinating reviews, and conducting joint annual evaluations of the Film Program. This shared responsibility ensures that fee levels remain tied to actual costs, consistent with State law.

California law further requires that fees charged by a public agency must not exceed the estimated reasonable cost of providing the property or services. The proposed Film Permit Fee Schedule satisfies this requirement by aligning fee levels with cost estimates from the time study, while not unduly burdening filming activities.

Methodology

As outlined in the MOU, administrative oversight and fee management responsibilities are jointly undertaken by the County and Film Office to ensure consistency, transparency, and compliance with County policy.

The nexus between proposed fees and County costs was established through the following steps:

1. Billing Rate Development

- County Labor Billing Rate
 - Labor costs (salary and benefits) for staff across departments (Planning, Building, Parks, Sheriff, and Transportation) were compiled.
 - Non-labor overhead costs were allocated proportionally across functions.
 - The combined fully burdened hourly billing rates established by Department Resolutions and Ordinances were used to calculate cost recovery needs.
- Film Office Billing Rate¹
 - Labor costs (salary and benefits)
 - Non-labor overhead costs were allocated proportionally across functions.

Cost Allocation to Each Function / Activity		
Cost Element	Direct Services	Total
Labor	88,942.50	88,942.50
Recurring Non-Labor	27,135.00	27,135.00
Overhead	12,060.00	12,060.00
Chamber Admin	22,612.50	22,612.50
Division Total	\$ 150,750.00	\$ 150,750.00
Cost Recovery Targeted from Fees	100%	100%
Amount Targeted for Consideration in Billings/Fees	150,750.00	150,750.00
Amount Requiring another Funding Source	-	-
FULLY BURDENED HOURLY RATE		\$ 85.00

2. Time Estimates

- Staff time per permit activity was estimated in hours across divisions: application intake, safety review, coordination, inspections, and administrative support.
- For example, the Application Fee reflects approximately 3.25 hours of staff time across multiple divisions.

	Film Office	Planning	Building	Parks	Sheriff	Transportation	Total
Application Fee hours	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.25	3.25

3. Cost per Service Calculation

- Estimated hours were multiplied by billing rates to calculate per-activity costs.

¹ Fully burdened rate is based on 1,770 working hours per year.

- The results were consolidated by service type:
 - Application Review
 - Daily Film Oversight
 - Prep/Strike Oversight
- 4. Fee Rounding and Comparison
 - Costs were rounded to whole dollars for administrative ease.
 - A comparison to nearby jurisdictions (City of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado Irrigation District, etc.) confirmed that proposed fees fall within regional norms and are defensible.

Nexus Findings

1. Application Fee

The purpose of this fee is to recover administrative costs of reviewing applications, coordinating with departments and agencies, and issuing the permit. It reflects staff time across Planning, Building, Parks, Sheriff, Transportation, and Film Office.

	Film Commission	Planning Division	Building Division	Parks	Sheriff	Transportation	Total
Application Fee	\$85.00	\$123.50	\$83.50	\$29.74	\$70.00	\$29.61	\$421.35

2. Daily Film Fee

The Daily Film Fee is structured to account for the varying levels of the Film Office's resources required based on the size and scale of a production crew. Productions are generally categorized as low, medium, or high impact depending on the number of crew members, vehicles, equipment, and the extent of County-Owned property use.

- Low-impact productions (small crews, limited equipment, minimal disruption) require less staff coordination and oversight.
 - Film Low: 1 – 20 crew size
 - Commercial Still Photography Low: 1 – 10 crew size
- Medium-impact productions (moderate crews, multiple locations, some community impacts) involve additional coordination among County departments and external agencies.
 - Film Medium: 21 – 50 crew size
 - Commercial Still Photography Medium: 11 – 20 crew size
- High-impact productions (large crews, road closures, significant set construction, or special effects) place the greatest demand on County resources and community infrastructure.
 - Film Medium: 51 – 100 crew size
 - Commercial Still Photography Medium: 21 – 50 crew size

The Daily Film Fee recovers the County's costs for services provided each day of filming, which increase as crew size and production complexity grow. These costs include the Film Office's expanded role in coordinating permit reviews, providing lodging and business referrals, assisting with marketing, and facilitating vendor and crew connections. Larger productions also require more communication, logistical oversight, and in some cases, safety monitoring.

By linking fee levels to production size, the County ensures that fees remain proportionate to actual service demands and that film productions, rather than taxpayers, cover the costs of County staff time and resources. The fees are based on the Film Office hourly rate and time required for each level of permit.

Film Permit	# of People on Set	Fee
Daily Film Permit Rate Low	01-20 people	\$255.00
Daily Film Permit Rate Medium	21-50 people	\$510.00
Daily Film Permit Rate High	51-100 people	\$1,615.00

Commercial Still Photography	# of People on Set	Fee
Daily Photography Permit Rate Low	01-10 people	\$168.30
Daily Photography Permit Rate Medium	11-20 people	\$336.60
Daily Photography Permit Rate High	21-50 people	\$1,065.90

3. Prep/Strike Fee

The fee is set to recover costs associated with each day of preparation or site strike-down (removal of sets, equipment, or other temporary uses) associated with filming on County-Owned property. This fee ensures that time spent by production crews outside of actual filming is also accounted for, as such activity can limit access, create traffic or safety concerns, and place burdens on County staff and community resources. The fees are based on the Film Office hourly rate and time required for each level of permit.

Film Permit	# of People on Set	Fee
Prep/Strike Rate Low	01-20 people	\$127.50
Prep/Strike Rate Medium	21-50 people	\$255.00
Prep/Strike Rate High	51-100 people	\$807.50

Commercial Still Photography	# of People on Set	Fee
Prep/Strike Rate Low	01-10 people	\$84.15
Prep/Strike Rate Medium	11-20 people	\$168.30
Prep/Strike Rate High	21-50 people	\$532.95

Comparison

The fees set by the County align with comparable jurisdictions while ensuring County resources are not subsidized by the General Fund.

Film Fee Comparison			
Jurisdiction	Application	Daily Fee	Prep/Strike Fee
El Dorado County	\$421	\$168 - \$1,615/day	\$84 - \$808/day
City of South Lake Tahoe	\$197	\$676/day	N/A
EID	N/A	\$300 - \$2,000/day	\$150 - \$1,000/day
City of Placerville	N/A	\$0 - \$1,000/day	N/A

Financial Impact

Adoption of the proposed fee schedule ensures that costs of administering film permits and Film Office services are borne by the film industry rather than County taxpayers. Revenue will offset administrative and operational expenses currently funded by the General Fund.

Consistent with Section VIII of the MOU, both the Chamber and County will provide quarterly and annual reports on revenue and activities, ensuring accountability and transparency in the use of collected fees.

Conclusion

The time study establishes a direct nexus between the proposed Film Permit Fee Schedule and the County's actual costs. The methodology demonstrates compliance with cost recovery principles under California law and the Motion Picture, Television, and Commercial Industries Act of 1984, which expressly authorizes local governments to recover costs for the use of public property and employee services.

The proposed fees are reasonable, regionally comparable, and consistent with Chapter 58 of Title 5 of the El Dorado County Ordinance Code, which requires permits for filming activities and establishes exemptions, insurance, and liability provisions. The Film Permit Fee Schedule is necessary to ensure that El Dorado County can support film

activity while safeguarding public resources and promoting economic development in alignment with MOU #9756.