The process for making a film often goes through a very specific timeline before it reaches production. This is called pre-production.

In pre-production, a director or producer will conceive an idea for a film, and they will take it to a production company. This idea can be an original one, or it can be based off source material, like a book, or a previous film, TV program, and even in some rare cases; a videogame.

At this point, the director and production company might pitch to get the funding they need to make the film, however the funding may already be in place because of another group, for example, the production company may already have the funding.

Once a project is green lit, and the production company have funding, they will begin to finalize roles and positions for the cast and crew, such as cinematographer, head cameraman, unit manager, and lead characters.

Getting a production company to back an idea is the hardest part, since first time directors will have a hard time making a film pitch which will impress long time professionals. It is also the hardest part since these people will have a say on what is involved in the film, such as what actors they want to see, and if there will be any product placement. To a lot of filmmakers, this is a highly distasteful procedure, because they see it as a way for the mainstream media to make its mark on their creative integrity.

After roles are finalised, the project will begin. Some of these roles include:

Concept artists:

Concept artists are particularly needed in sci fi, fantasy and action films, because they might feature intricate props or sets, which require a lot of thought to design and then to make. Concept artists work with the director to accommodate his or her vision for the film.

Set scouts:

Set scouts look for places that a film can be shot in, and work specifically to a criteria that the director asks for. They will tend to look for set locations, which are close to the production’s home, in an attempt to keep cost down, however if the budget is big enough, the crew will be able to travel.

Costume designers:

Costume designers work with the director to accommodate his or her vision for what kind of clothes the character will wear. Costume designers on television programs work much closer with the director in this section, because a character will have a certain style of clothing, which helps identify their character, and that is something that the director will have already defined.

Camera crew:

The camera crew records all the action, the character interactions, etc. the director will work closely with the camera crew to get the best representation of what the film looks like in their head, so all their ideas translate well on screen.

Sound crew:

The sound crew helps assist the camera crew with live sound, often with a boom or smaller microphones, but the sound crew may also be in charge of music and all sound effects too, which can have a great effect on the tone of the film, a task which the director is heavily involved in, so for this reason the director might work with the sound crew, but otherwise, his or her involvement is minimal compared to how much they are involved with all other aspects of the production.

Cinematographer:

The cinematographer is possibly the most important part of the filming crew, since they will help the director equate their vision on screen. The cinematographer will look for practical solutions to manipulate the image on screen, like adjusting the lighting to the directors liking, or if it’s not possible, they will try a different way, with a similar outcome. The director and cinematographer work very closely because of this.

After roles are affirmed, and all locations are found/constructed, production will begin.