



5900 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 800, Los Angeles, CA 90036
1825 Three Kings Dr., Park City, UT 84060
180 Varick Street, Suite 1330, New York, New York 10014

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Media Contacts:

Jason Berger
435.658.3456

jason_berger@sundance.org

John Tracey
646.751.1291

sciencesandbox@simonsfoundation.org

Nine Independent Projects Unite Art and Science

Sundance Institute and Science Sandbox Celebrate Innovative Nonfiction Storytelling With Expanded Tailored, Multifaceted Support

Park City, UT — Sundance Institute, in collaboration with **Science Sandbox**, an initiative of the **Simons Foundation**, announced the expansion of the **Science Sandbox Nonfiction Initiative**, alongside the initial nine science-focused independent projects selected for support this year. The initiative, first introduced in 2018, aims to elevate the voices of independent artists working at the intersection of science and nonfiction storytelling, as well as to encourage critical thinking, promote educated discourse and highlight the overlap of science and art.

Following the initiative's successful inaugural year, nine projects have been thus far selected for support in 2019, a cohort co-curated by the Institute and Science Sandbox. The selected projects will receive non-recoupable grants, totaling \$400,000, and access to Sundance Institute's year round continuum of support, which can help address creative, financial and production issues. In addition to this tailored project support, the grantees will receive opportunities for engagement events where they can connect with Sundance's network of alumni and creative advisors and Science Sandbox's roster of renowned scientists, as well as enthusiastic audiences.

Tabitha Jackson, Sundance Institute Documentary Film Fund and Program Director, said, "The filmmaker and the scientist are both engaged in trying to understand the world. They use different methodologies but both share a sense of wonder; both seek to ask the right question and both need to be supported to carry out their work as part of an informed and progressive society. We are delighted by the breadth of cinematic language and the range of scientific endeavors that are represented in this partnership, which gets stronger every year."

The nine current recipients of the grants are *Edge of Time*, directed by **Stephanie Spray**; *The Eyes to See*, directed by **Ian Cheney** and **Sharon Shattuck**; *Fathom*, directed by **Drew Xanthopoulos**; *The Last Kidney Donor*, directed by **Penny Lane**; *Missing Microbes*, directed by **Steven Lawrence** and **Sarah Schenck**; *Raising Khan*, directed by **Melissa Lesh** and **Trevor Frost**; *Red Heaven*, directed by **Lauren DeFilippo** and **Katherine Gorringer**; *Untitled Black Hole Film*, directed by **Peter Galison**; and *Users*, directed by **Natalia Almada**. More info on each of these projects can be found below, with additional projects expected to be selected for support later in the year.

Greg Boustead, Director of Science Sandbox, said "There's no one way to tell stories about science. This cohort of projects demonstrates the myriad ways scientific ideas can be transformed into relatable and inspiring narratives — whether through emotion, persuasion, edification, or provocation."

Project Grants:



Edge of Time

Director and Producer: Stephanie Spray

Time stands still as a scientific drilling ship retrieves sediment cores from the seabed at the equator. A work of ethnographic sci-fi, *Edge of Time* intertwines Jorge Luis Borges' meditations on immortality with scientists' reflections on oceanography, time, and extinction.



The Eyes to See

Directors: Ian Cheney, Sharon Shattuck

Producers: Ian Cheney, Manette Pottle, Sharon Shattuck

The Eyes to See chronicles the groundswell of researchers who are writing a new chapter for women scientists.



Fathom

Director: Drew Xanthopoulos

Producer: Megan Gilbride

Fathom follows the world's most immersed whale researchers to explore their groundbreaking work and how a life among whales has shaped them personally.



The Last Kidney Donor (Working Title)

Director: Penny Lane

Producer: Gabriel Sedgwick

Director Penny Lane's decision to donate her kidney to a stranger leads into an exploration of organ transplantation – past, present and future. Part scientific drama and part humorous personal essay, the film shows how scientists made organ transplantation possible, and now aim to make it a thing of the past.



Missing Microbes (Working Title)

Directors and Producers: Steven Lawrence, Sarah Schenck

Facing an international public health crisis - the disappearance of our microbes (the 'good bugs' that live in us and are passed down from mom to baby) – two globetrotting scientists race to save our health, while four patients with life-threatening diseases triggered by this loss fight for their lives.



Raising Khan

Directors and Producers: Melissa Lesh, Trevor Frost

After returning from Afghanistan with severe depression and PTSD, Harry Turner went to the Peruvian Amazon to end his life. There, he met conservationist and scientist Samantha Zwicker, and through their work together raising orphaned wildlife he is finding a reason to live.



Red Heaven

Directors and Producers: Lauren DeFilippo, Katherine Gorringer

Six people live for one year in a NASA psychological experiment, simulating the first human habitat on Mars.



Untitled Black Hole Film

Director: Peter Galison

Producers: Peter Galison, Chyld King

Follow as a team of theorists – including Stephen Hawking – seeks to resolve the greatest paradox in physics; as philosophers grapple with the meaning of a tear in reality itself; as the Event Horizon Telescope links telescopes around the world trying to see, for the first time, a black hole.



Users (Working Title)

Director: Natalia Almada

Producers: Elizabeth Lodge Stepp, Josh Penn

Is technology an expression of our humanity or is technology destroying our humanity? As our society moves increasingly towards a "technopoly" civilization, this visual essay documentary will explore the unintended and often dehumanizing consequences of our society's embedded belief that technological progress will

lead to the betterment of humanity.

For more information about the partnership go to sundance.org/science-sandbox. For more information about Science Sandbox go to sciencesandbox.org.

Sundance Institute

Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, and media to create and thrive. The Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences to artists in igniting new ideas, discovering original voices, and building a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as *Sorry to Bother You*, *Eighth Grade*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, *Hereditary*, *RBG*, *Call Me By Your Name*, *Get Out*, *The Big Sick*, *Top of the Lake*, *Winter's Bone*, *Dear White People*, *Brooklyn*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *20 Feet From Stardom*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *I'm Poppy*, *America to Me*, *Leimert Park*, *Spring Awakening*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Fun Home*. Join [Sundance Institute](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

Science Sandbox

Science Sandbox is an initiative of the Simons Foundation dedicated to inspiring a deeper interest in science, especially among those who don't think of themselves as science enthusiasts. We support and collaborate with programs that unlock scientific thinking in everyone. Funded projects include media productions, informal education experiences, live science events and awareness campaigns. Our funding criteria reflect our belief in the positive effects of infusing the culture with scientific thinking. More info at sciencesandbox.org.

Sandbox Films

Sandbox Films is a mission-driven documentary studio that champions excellence in science storytelling. Through co-productions and co-financing opportunities, we collaborate with production partners and visionary filmmakers around the world to tell new stories about science. We seek to illuminate the pursuit of discovery, in all its beauty and sometimes messiness, with stories that humanize science in relatable ways for diverse points of view. Sandbox Films, LLC is a registered affiliate of the Simons Foundation. More info at: sandboxfilms.org

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