



# SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL 2021

## RULES & REGULATIONS FOR SUBMITTING TO THE 2021 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

The following is an explanation of rules and regulations (“Rules and Regulations”) governing the submission of projects (hereafter referred to as “the Project”) to Sundance Institute (hereafter referred to as “Institute”) for consideration for the 2021 Sundance Film Festival (hereafter referred to as “Festival”), an event that may take place live, digitally, or any combination thereof over an unspecified period of time in or at locations to be determined. All information contained in this document shall supersede the contents of the FAQ document located at <http://www.sundance.org/submissions-faq>.

By agreeing to the Terms And Conditions located at [www.sundance.org/submissions-terms-and-conditions](http://www.sundance.org/submissions-terms-and-conditions), the entity submitting the Project (hereafter called the “Applicant”) acknowledges that they have obtained consent from any and all other persons or entities who have any ownership rights, licenses or interests (including, without limitation, intellectual property rights or distribution licenses) and/or other authorized representatives of the Project (collectively and separately hereafter called the “Project’s Owners”) whose consent is required to submit the Project to the Institute, and has read and understood the submission rules and regulations set forth below:

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## I. GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR SUBMISSION OF A FILM TO THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL:

**NOTE: The submission categories and program categories that are referenced and identified as capitalized terms in this Section I of these Rules and Regulations, and the eligibility requirements for each, shall be understood as having the definitions and descriptions assigned to them in Sections II and III of these Rules and Regulations below.**

- 1) If 50% or more of the Project's financing originated from sources within the United States, the Project may only be submitted in one of the following categories: U.S. Narrative Feature Films, U.S. Documentary Feature Films, U.S. Short Films, New Frontier Projects, or Episodic Content. Institute reserves the right to consider the Project for any Festival program, regardless of the submission category selected.
- 2) If more than 50% of the Project's financing originated from sources outside of the United States, the Project may only be submitted in one of the following categories: International Narrative Feature Films, International Documentary Feature Films, International Short Films, New Frontier Projects, or Episodic Content. Institute reserves the right to consider the Project for any Festival program, regardless of the submission category selected.
- 3) If the Project's final running or exhibition time is projected to be 50 minutes or more, the Project may only be submitted in one of the following categories: U.S. Narrative Feature Films, U.S. Documentary Feature Films, International Narrative Feature Films, International Documentary Feature Films, New Frontier Projects, or Episodic Content.
- 4) If the Project's final running time is projected to be less than 50 minutes, the Project may only be submitted in one of the following categories: U.S. Short Films, International Short Films, New Frontier Projects, or Episodic Content.
- 5) U.S. Narrative and U.S. Documentary Feature Films that have been or will be released to the general public in their current form, whether via theatrical exhibition, television broadcast, digital download or streaming, or release via any home video or other public distribution platform prior to February 1, 2021 are **not** eligible for open submission to the Festival.
- 6) Incomplete versions of U.S. and International Narrative and Documentary Feature Films that have been or will be screened as "works-in-progress" still retain Festival eligibility.
- 7) U.S. and International Narrative and Documentary Feature Films that have been or will be exhibited theatrically at one or more **private** screenings for which tickets were not available to the general public retain eligibility for submission to the Festival in **all** categories.
- 8) U.S. and International Narrative and Documentary Feature Films that have been or will be released via any home video or public distribution platform (including, but not limited to, Blu-ray, DVD, digital download, streaming, or video on demand) or broadcast on television in any country prior to February 1, 2021 are not eligible for submission to the Festival unless the version submitted is significantly different from the version that was previously made available to the general public. The Institute shall have the sole authority and discretion to determine whether a Project that was previously released via any method described above has been changed significantly from the previously released or broadcast version. The Institute reserves the sole and exclusive right to determine a previously released or broadcast project's eligibility, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, based on

the content of the submitted version of the Project as compared with the previously released or broadcast version.

- 9) International Narrative and Documentary Feature Films that have been or will be released theatrically, broadcast on television, or screened at up to two festivals **within** their country of origin prior to February 1, 2021 are eligible for open submission to the Festival in their respective categories of submission.
- 10) International Narrative and Documentary Feature Films that have been or will be released theatrically, screened at festivals, broadcast or streamed on television or the Internet **outside** of their country of origin prior to February 1, 2021 are not eligible for open submission to the Festival.
- 11) Short Films do **not** need to retain any sort of premiere status. U.S. and International Short Films do not forfeit their eligibility for submission to the Festival if they were previously released theatrically or via any home video platform, made available for digital download, broadcast or streamed on television or the internet, or screened at any number of festivals anywhere in the world.
- 12) Episodic Content Projects originating from within the United States are not eligible for the Festival if the entirety of the submitted content has been made available to the general public in any form, including theatrical exhibition, television broadcast, home video, internet streaming, or digital download prior to February 1, 2021.
- 13) Episodic Content Projects originating from outside of the United States remain eligible if the any of the submitted content has been released **only** within their country of origin or not released at all via any platform (broadcast television, Blu-ray, DVD, streaming, VOD, etc.) prior to February 1, 2021.
- 14) U.S. and International Narrative and Documentary Feature Films that have previously been theatrically exhibited at a “work-in-progress” screening at which tickets were available to the general public are only eligible for submission to the Festival if the version submitted is significantly different from the version previously screened. The Institute reserves the right to determine a previously screened project’s eligibility, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, based on the content of the submitted version of the Project as compared with the previously screened version.
- 15) Projects completed prior to January 1, 2019, are not eligible for submission to the Institute for 2021 Sundance Festival consideration.
- 16) Projects that have been submitted for Festival consideration in previous years are eligible for re-submission for 2021 Festival consideration **only** if the content of the submitted Project has changed significantly since the previous year in which the Project was submitted. The Institute shall have the sole authority and discretion to determine whether a Project that was previously submitted has been changed significantly from the previously submitted version. The Institute reserves the right to determine a previously submitted Project’s eligibility, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, based on the content of the newly submitted version of the Project as compared with the previously submitted version.
- 17) It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to secure authorization and permission from the copyright owner(s) of any and all copyrighted content or materials included within the submitted Project. The Institute expressly disavows any responsibility for, and will not be held

responsible for, any unauthorized inclusion of any copyrighted content or materials within or relating to the submitted Project, including any content or materials that are or may become the basis for any third party claims for copyright infringement. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any Project with any unauthorized inclusion of copyrighted content or materials. In the event that any claim, dispute, action or proceeding shall be brought or asserted by any person or entity that alleges that the Project makes unauthorized or unlawful use of any copyrighted content or material, Applicant shall fully indemnify and defend the Institute, the Festival, and each of their representatives and affiliates from any liability in connection therewith and from any fees and expenses, including but not limited to attorneys' fees, that any of them may incur in connection therewith.

- 18) It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to secure authorization and permission from the owner(s) of any and all trademarked content or materials included within the submitted Project. The Institute expressly disavows any responsibility for, and will not be held responsible for, any unauthorized inclusion of any trademarked content or materials within or relating to the submitted Project, including any content or materials that are or may become the basis for any third party claims for trademark infringement, trademark dilution or unfair competition. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any Project with any unauthorized inclusion of trademarked content or materials. In the event that any claim, dispute, action or proceeding shall be brought or asserted by any person or entity that alleges that the Project makes unauthorized or unlawful use of any trademarked content or material, Applicant shall fully indemnify and defend the Institute, the Festival, and each of their representatives and affiliates from any liability in connection therewith and from any fees and expenses, including but not limited to attorneys' fees, that any of them may incur in connection therewith.
- 19) It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to clear all content of the Project from any and all actual or potential legal claims and issues, including, without limitation, claims based upon theories of libel, defamation, invasion of privacy, violation of rights of publicity, theft of trade secrets, breach of confidence, breach of confidential relationship, and breach of express or implied contract ("Third Party Claim(s)"). The Institute expressly disavows any responsibility for, and will not be held responsible for, any unauthorized inclusion of any content or materials within or relating to the submitted Project that are or may be the basis for any Third Party Claims based upon any of the foregoing legal theories or others. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any Project that is or may become the subject of any Third Party Claims. In the event that any Third Party Claim(s) shall be asserted by any person or entity, Applicant shall fully indemnify and defend the Institute, the Festival, and each of their representatives and affiliates from any liability in connection therewith and from any and all fees and expenses, including but not limited to attorneys' fees, that each of any of them may incur in connection therewith.
- 20) Applicants submitting Projects that contain significant non-English spoken dialogue must provide on-screen English subtitles. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any Project that contains significant non-English spoken dialogue that does not include accompanying on-screen English subtitles. Applicants may submit Projects that contain some non-English spoken dialogue without on-screen subtitles as an artistic choice.
- 21) Video files for all Projects submitted to the Institute for Festival consideration must be via direct digital upload or by providing either a Vimeo or YouTube link entered directly on the

Applicant's FilmFreeway Project page. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from Applicant, any Project that is not submitted to the Institute using one of the above-mentioned formats.

- 22) It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that any Project submitted to the Institute for Festival consideration is viewable in its entirety. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any Project that is not viewable due to any technical issue, whether the fault of the Applicant or any third-party system.
- 23) It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that their project's submission status on is listed as "In Consideration" on FilmFreeway.com no later than 11:59pm on the final day of the current deadline window. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any and all submissions that are not complete at that time. Applicant may re-submit the same project another deadline window, if applicable.
- 24) In the event that the Applicant remits an updated version of the Project to the Institute after having submitted a previous version of the Project to the Institute during the same calendar year, the Institute is under no obligation to view any or all of the updated version of the Project.
- 25) In order to be considered by the Institute for The Festival, the Applicant must complete the submission form located at <http://www.sundance.org/submit> or at <https://www.filmfreeway.com/sundance>. The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any Project that is not submitted or delivered via one of the above-mentioned links.
- 26) The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any Project with a submission form that is considered to be delinquent due to the non-payment of any or all submission fees. The Institute may attempt, but is under no obligation, to contact the Applicant using the contact information provided on the submission form in an effort to bring the payment status of the account up-to-date. The Institute disavows any responsibility for, and will not be held responsible for, any failure to contact the Applicant and inform the Applicant of any payment delinquency or other deficiency of a submission form.
- 27) The Institute reserves the right to disqualify, without refund of any or all submission fees previously collected from the Applicant, any Project received by the Institute before May 15, 2020 or after October 2, 2020 without prior written consent from an employee of the Institute.
- 28) Upon completion of the Festival selection process, the Institute will attempt to contact the Applicant using the contact information provided on the submission form to notify the Applicant of the Project's acceptance status. The Institute disavows any responsibility for, and will not be held responsible for, any failure to contact the Applicant using the contact information provided on the submission form. It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that the contact information provided on the submission form is correct throughout the entirety of The Festival selection period (May 15, 2020 – December 6, 2020).
- 29) The Institute is under no obligation to provide to the Applicant or any other representative of the Project any comments or feedback regarding the submitted Project, any information relating to the manner in which the Project is, will be, or was reviewed; any views that the Institute or any reviewers of the Project may hold concerning the Project; any reasons why the

Project, should it not be accepted for exhibition at the Festival, was not accepted; or any other information relating to the Festival's review, consideration and/or selection process regarding the Project specifically or submissions generally beyond the information set forth in these Rules and Regulations. The Institute disavows any responsibility for, and will not be held responsible or liable for, the contents of any internal comments or feedback regarding any submitted Project that are or may be obtained by the Applicant or any other representative of the Project; any communications by any representative of the Institute or the Festival relating to the Project or The Festival selection process; the manner in which the Project shall be, is or was considered and reviewed; the identity or identities of any specific reviewers of the Project; and/or any failure on the part of the Institute or the Festival to provide the Applicant or any other representative(s) of the Project with information concerning the Institute's consideration and/or review of the Project.

## **II. SUBMISSION CATEGORIES & ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

**Projects submitted to the Institute for consideration for The Festival may apply in one of eight submission categories. The Institute reserves the right to determine the eligibility of any Project for any Festival program or submission category. The following is a description of each submission category, along with eligibility requirements for each:**

### **U.S. Narrative Feature Films:**

Any narrative or non-scripted work of fiction originating from within the United States with a running time of 50 minutes or more. In order to qualify as a U.S. Narrative Feature Film, the submitted project must be either scripted or improvisational fiction, or a fictionalization of actual events, and at least half of the project's financing must originate from within the United States. Only films retaining world premiere status are eligible for open submission to this category. Completed films that have been or will have been exhibited theatrically or otherwise made available to the general public, either for free or for purchase, prior to February 1, 2021 are not eligible to submit to this category. This includes, but is not limited to, public theatrical exhibition (festival or otherwise), television broadcast, home video, or any digital platform. Films that were previously invited to but did not participate in other festivals or events (live or digital) are still eligible to submit to this category.

### **U.S. Documentary Feature Films:**

Any nonfiction film originating from within the United States with a running time of 50 minutes or more. If your documentary contains re-enactments or other fictionalized depictions of actual events, you may submit it to this category, but we will ultimately decide which of our Festival programs is best suited for your project, if accepted. In order to qualify as a U.S. Documentary Feature Film, at least half of the submitted project's financing must originate from within the United States. Only films retaining world premiere status are eligible for open submission to this category. Completed films that have been or will have been exhibited theatrically or otherwise made available to the general public, either for free or for purchase, prior to February 1, 2021 are not eligible to submit to this category. This includes, but is not limited to, public theatrical exhibition (festival or otherwise), television broadcast, home video, or any digital platform. Films that were previously invited to but did not participate in other festivals or events (live or digital) are still eligible to submit to this category.

### **International Narrative Feature Films:**

Any narrative or non-scripted work of fiction originating from outside of the United States with a running time of 50 minutes or more. In order to qualify as an International Narrative Feature Film, the submitted project must be either scripted or improvisational fiction, or a fictionalization of actual events, and at least half of the project's financing must originate from outside of the United States. Only films retaining international premiere status are eligible for open submission to this category.

Completed films that have been or will have been exhibited theatrically (festival or otherwise) outside of the film's country or countries of origin prior to February 1, 2021 are not eligible for open submission to this category. Films that have been or will have been made available to the general public in a non-theatrical form, either for free or for purchase, prior to February 1, 2021 are not eligible to submit to this category. This includes, but is not limited to, television broadcast, home video, or any digital platform in any country or countries. Films that were previously invited to but did not participate in other festivals or events (live or digital) outside of their country or countries of origin are still eligible to submit to this category.

### **International Documentary Feature Films:**

Any nonfiction film originating from outside of the United States with a running time of 50 minutes or more. If your documentary contains re-enactments or other fictionalized depictions of actual events, you may submit it to this category, but we will ultimately decide which of our Festival programs is best suited for your project, if accepted. In order to qualify as an International Documentary Feature Film, at least half of the submitted project's financing must originate from outside of the United States. Only films retaining international premiere status are eligible for open submission to this category.

Completed films that have been or will have been exhibited theatrically (festival or otherwise) outside of the film's country or countries of origin prior to February 1, 2021 are not eligible for open submission to this category. Films that have been or will have been made available to the general public in a non-theatrical form, either for free or for purchase, prior to February 1, 2021 are not eligible to submit to this category. This includes, but is not limited to, television broadcast, home video, or any digital platform in any country or countries. Films that were previously invited to but did not participate in other festivals or events (live or digital) outside of their country or countries of origin are still eligible to submit to this category.

### **U.S. Short Films:**

Any film or video project originating from within the United States with a running time of less than 50 minutes, including credits. This includes scripted or improvisational fiction, nonfiction or documentary, experimental film or video, animation, music video, or any other short-form film or video project. In order to qualify as a U.S. Short Film, at least half of the submitted project's financing must originate from within the United States. Short films have no premiere requirements or prior screening restrictions that impact Festival eligibility and may have been screened at any number of festivals or other public theatrical exhibitions, broadcast or streamed on television or the Internet, and/or released via any home video or other public distribution platform anywhere in the world.

### **International Short Films:**

Any film or video project originating from outside of the United States with a running time of less than 50 minutes, including credits. This includes scripted or improvisational fiction, nonfiction or documentary, experimental film or video, animation, music video, or any other short-form film or video project. In order to qualify as an International Short Film, at least half of the submitted project's financing must originate from outside of the United States. Short films have no premiere requirements or prior screening restrictions that impact Festival eligibility and may have been screened at any number of festivals or other public theatrical exhibitions, broadcast or streamed on television or the Internet, and/or released via any home video or other public distribution platform anywhere in the world.

### **Episodic Content:**

Any live-action, documentary/nonfiction, or animation project presented in or intended to be presented in a multi-episode format. This includes pilots, pilot presentations, webseries, docuseries, limited series, anthologies, or any other film or video project that was created to unfold over multiple episodes. Episodic projects may originate from anywhere in the world and you may submit single or multiple episodes of the same project, as long as all episodes play continuously in one single video

file for digital upload and do not exceed 10GB in size. We accept both short-form and long-form content, with no restrictions regarding minimum or maximum episode or series length. Projects originating from within the United States are not eligible to submit to this category if the submitted content has been or will be made available in its entirety to the general public via any public theatrical exhibition or any broadcast, home video, or digital platform prior to February 1, 2021. Projects originating from outside of the United States remain eligible if any or all of the submitted content has been released only within the project's country or countries of origin or not released at all. If some but not all of the episodes have been exhibited theatrically or made available via any other public platform, you may only submit episodes that have not been exhibited theatrically or otherwise released to the public. For example, if the first season of your series is available online, you may only submit episodes from a subsequent season that have not been released to the public in any form.

### **New Frontier Projects**

A wide range of innovative works and immersive experiences will be considered for the Festival's New Frontier program. These works may include VR/AR/MR/XR projects created for a variety of platforms, media installations, live cinematic performances, custom digital platforms, or any combination of those elements. We request that you provide documentation that outlines any specific logistical, spatial, or equipment needs for your project. Specific instructions for submitting different file types are contained within the application. We encourage the diverse creative community of storytellers and technologists to submit inventive works of fiction, documentary, and interactive projects for consideration. Projects may have previously been exhibited or performed at other festivals, industry trade shows, and/or events/conventions and still retain their eligibility for submission to this category. However, we do take premiere status into consideration in the final selection process. If your project includes immersive, interactive, or live performance elements, you should select the "VR / XR / Immersive" category when you create your project page on FilmFreeway. If your experimental film or video project does not include any of these elements, please select one of the feature or short film categories listed above.

### **III. FESTIVAL PROGRAMS & ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

**Please be advised that the information listed below is subject to change at any time, as our Festival programs may vary from year to year. Projects accepted by the Institute for inclusion in the Festival will be placed, at the sole and absolute discretion of The Festival Programming department, in one of our Festival programs. Open submissions to our U.S. Feature Film categories must be world premieres, while open submissions to our International Feature Films categories must be international premieres. However, we reserve the right to select Projects for some out-of-competition programs that do not meet these requirements. Applicants may not submit their Projects directly to any specific program. The following is a description of each of our Festival program:**

#### **U.S. Dramatic Competition:**

This program offers audiences a first look at groundbreaking new voices in American independent film, guaranteed to leave a lasting impact on the next generation of cinema. Our U.S. Dramatic Competition consists of films submitted to us in the U.S. Narrative Feature Films category, which are subject to the eligibility requirements listed in Section II. Films selected for this program will compete against one another for jury prizes and an audience award.

#### **U.S. Documentary Competition:**

Illuminating the ideas, people, and events that shape the present day, our U.S. Documentary Competition is made up of films submitted to us in the U.S. Documentary Feature Films category, which are subject to the eligibility requirements listed in Section II. From human rights to popular

culture, these films provide a window into the subjects that define our time. Films selected for this program will compete against one another for jury prizes and an audience award.

**World Cinema Dramatic Competition:**

These films from emerging filmmaking talents around the world offer fresh perspectives and innovative styles. Comprising films submitted to us in the International Narrative Feature Films category, films must meet the eligibility requirements listed in Section II in order to be eligible for this program. We present these exceptional works as a way to honor the independent spirit in filmmakers everywhere. Films selected for this program will compete against one another for jury prizes and an audience award.

**World Cinema Documentary Competition:**

Made by some of the most courageous and extraordinary filmmakers working today, these films offer a global perspective, examining issues that range from the personal to the universal. Our World Cinema Documentary program is made up of submissions to the International Documentary Feature Film category and are subject to the eligibility requirements set forth above. Films selected for this program will compete against one another for jury prizes and an audience award.

**NEXT:**

Pure, bold works distinguished by an innovative approach to storytelling populate this program that shapes the next wave of cinema. By nature, they embody the spirit of indie filmmaking. The NEXT program may consist of films submitted to any of our U.S. and International Feature Film categories, both Documentary and Narrative. As such, they are subject to the eligibility requirements listed in each of those four categories above. Films selected for this program will compete against one another for the NEXT Innovator Award and an audience award.

**Short Film Competition:**

Driven by innovation and experimentation, our Short Film program showcases filmmaking's most unique and original voices with cutting-edge animation and the best in short form dramatic and documentary cinema. All short films are selected from the U.S. and International Short Film submission categories and are subject to the eligibility requirements above. Short films may play before features or in one of our shorts programs, and all accepted short films are eligible for the Short Film Grand Jury Prize. Short films also compete for jury prizes within their respective categories and genres (U.S. Fiction, International Fiction, Nonfiction, and Animation).

**Premieres:**

Showcasing some of the most highly anticipated feature-length fiction and nonfiction films of the coming year, this program allows audiences to catch the latest work from established directors and renowned documentarians. Acceptance into this out-of-competition program is by invitation only and selected films must maintain world premiere status until February 1, 2021.

**Spotlight:**

Regardless of where these impressive films have played throughout the world, Spotlight is a tribute to the cinema we love. We are confident you'll love them too. Acceptance into this out-of-competition program is by invitation only and do not need to retain any sort of premiere status in order to be selected for this program.

**Midnight:**

An eclectic mix of horror, sci-fi, over-the-top comedy, explicit animation, and bizarre stories that defy categorization. These unruly films will keep you edge-seated and wide awake. Films accepted into this out-of-competition program may include selections from the four U.S. and International Narrative and Documentary Feature Film submission categories and are subject to the eligibility requirements listed in Section II.

**New Frontier Exhibitions and Performances:**

This experimental and exploratory section of the festival showcases out-of-the-box imaginations and bleeding edge technologies, and features a wide range of immersive and multi-faceted works that engage with cinematic storytelling within the realms of spatialized media (VR/AR/MR/XR), multiplatform storytelling, emerging media installations, custom digital platforms, or any combination of these elements. Accepted projects to this out-of-competition program are culled from submissions to the New Frontier Projects category and subject to the eligibility requirements listed in Section II. Questions regarding this program should be directed to [newfrontier@sundance.org](mailto:newfrontier@sundance.org).

**Kids:**

An out-of-competition program created to reach the youngest generation of independent film fans, showcasing films that will appeal to young and old alike. Accepted projects may include selections from the six Feature and Short Film categories listed in Section II and must meet the eligibility requirements for each. Programmed in collaboration with Utah Film Center's Tumbleweeds, Utah's premier film festival for children and youth.

**Indie Episodic:**

Continuing our history of supporting episodic creators and storytellers, this program highlights both fiction and nonfiction stories extending across multiple installments. To be considered for this program, projects must meet the eligibility requirements set forth for the Episodic Content category of submission listed in Section II.