



Chief Development Officer

ORGANIZATION: Sundance Institute

POSITION: Chief Development Officer

REPORTS TO: Chief Executive Officer

LOCATION: Must be based in and reside within commuting distance to one of the following locations: Los Angeles, CA; Boulder, CO; or New York, NY. The role operates in a hybrid capacity. Extended hours will be required during key periods, including the Sundance Film Festival and programmatic milestones. Up to 35% travel is required for this role to support Institute events, donor engagement, and organizational priorities.

INFORMATION: sundance.org

TO APPLY: Please send cover letter and resume as one PDF to SundanceCDO@pbrsearch.com with title format “Last Name First Name – Letter Resume” and complete the Voluntary Self Identification [form](#). This will assist us in improving our hiring practices and ensuring equal opportunities. Participation is voluntary and will not affect your candidacy in any way.

BACKGROUND

Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the discovery, development, and support of independent artists and storytellers. Founded by Robert Redford, the Institute champions creative expression, fosters inclusive storytelling, and advances the cultural impact of independent film and media.

Through its renowned [Artist Programs and Labs](#), Sundance provides emerging and established artists with year-round support, mentorship, and resources to develop original work across film, television, and new media. These programs have helped launch and sustain generations of artists whose work shapes global culture.

The Institute is also the producer of the [Sundance Film Festival](#), one of the world’s most influential platforms for independent storytelling. Each year, the Festival convenes artists, industry leaders, and audiences to celebrate new voices and groundbreaking work.

Sundance Institute is currently entering a pivotal period of organizational evolution, including the transition of key operations to Boulder, Colorado. This move represents more than a geographic shift; it is an opportunity to reimagine how the Institute operates, engages its community, and sustains its mission for the future. The Chief Development Officer will play a central role in this moment, helping to build a modern, scalable fundraising model that supports sustainable growth and innovation.

At the core of Sundance Institute’s work are the Founder’s Principles established by [Robert Redford](#), which emphasize artistic risk-taking, independence, and the importance of supporting artists outside traditional systems of power and access. These principles continue to guide the Institute’s programs, partnerships, and approach to philanthropy.

POSITION

The Chief Development Officer will lead the transformation of the Institute's philanthropic revenue functions (individual, institutional foundations, and government), reimagining donor engagement, redefining the case for support, and building the capabilities needed to significantly scale contributed revenue beyond current levels. This role will also lead the strategy and execution of a significant capital campaign associated with the Institute's transition to Boulder, Colorado. The ideal candidate brings a proven record of driving transformative growth, leading change in complex organizations, and building modern, high-performing fundraising operations.

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the CDO serves as a key member of the executive leadership team and is accountable for setting the vision, strategy, and performance outcomes for these fundraising efforts. This role focuses on expanding the Institute's national and global donor base while strengthening major gift capacity and identifying new revenue opportunities aligned with the organization's mission.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Achieve and exceed annual fundraising targets while driving sustained year-over-year growth that aligns with the organization's values and strengthens donor relationships in ways that enhance the Institute's reputation and mission.
- Successfully execute a capital campaign supporting the Boulder transition, including achievement of campaign milestones and fundraising targets.
- Expand the donor base beyond historical benchmarks and increase average gift size.
- Strengthen board engagement and effectiveness in fundraising efforts.
- Build a scalable, high-performing development function through effective leadership of the Director of Development and the fundraising team.
- Broaden donor demographics and deepen engagement across giving levels.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership & Revenue Growth

- Lead a bold, multi-year development strategy to exceed the Institute's annual \$25M philanthropic revenue goal for operations while simultaneously planning for a multi-stage capital and endowment campaign. With a public phase anticipated to launch in 2027, this includes developing the campaign strategy and scale, strengthening board and donor engagement, and advancing major gift strategies across all sources of giving.
- Identify and pursue new revenue opportunities, including emerging donor markets, and stay abreast of innovations in the broader fundraising landscape.
- Build and expand a national and global major gifts strategy.
- Develop and deepen a strong presence in Los Angeles and key industry networks.
- Partner with the CEO and board to strengthen fundraising capacity and engagement.
- Uphold clear guidelines for values-aligned fundraising across the organization.

Executive Oversight of Development Function

- Build, develop, and lead a high performing Development team, ensuring all team members have access to opportunities, portfolio assignments, and career growth.
- Provide strategic leadership to the Development team through direct management of the Director of Development.

- Establish clear goals, performance expectations, and accountability measures across all development functions (individual, institutional foundations, and government).
- Ensure alignment of team structure, resources, and priorities to support revenue growth.
- Foster an inclusive, collaborative, and high-performing team culture.

Major Gifts & External Engagement

- Personally manage a portfolio of high-capacity donors and prospects, with a focus on gifts of \$100,000+.
- Partner with the CEO, senior leaders, and board members to identify, cultivate, and solicit high-net-worth donors and pace-setting leadership gifts.
- Serve as a key external ambassador for the Institute, strengthening relationships with donors, partners, and stakeholders.
- Exercise sound judgment in donor engagement and solicitation strategies, balancing revenue goals with long-term mission alignment and reputational integrity.

Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

- Develop and implement fundraising strategies that expand and diversify the Institute's donor base and prospect pipeline, with a focus on engaging historically underrepresented and emerging philanthropic communities.
- Champion culturally relevant donor engagement practices that cultivate authentic, values-aligned relationships and sustain long-term relationships with donors.
- Ensure fundraising narratives authentically reflect the communities served and advances the Institute's commitments to diverse voices and perspectives.

Cross-Functional Leadership

- Partner with the Chief Financial Officer and Finance team to build and maintain accurate revenue forecasts, track and analyze fundraising pipeline performance, and ensure data-driven alignment between development strategy, budgeting, and financial reporting.
- Work in partnership with the General Counsel to ensure government funding strategies are aligned with the Institute's broader government relations, advocacy, and compliance priorities.
- Collaborate with key program leaders to develop and activate a compelling Institute-wide case for support and fundraising narrative, including program-specific storytelling that advances institutional priorities and deepens donor engagement.
- Ensure integration across development channels to maximize donor engagement and lifetime value.
- Contribute to organizational strategic planning and long-term financial sustainability efforts.

Data, Performance & Infrastructure

- Evaluate, implement, and optimize an integrated CRM ecosystem to support donor data management, conversion tracking, portfolio management, reporting, compliance, and consistent stewardship practices.
- Define and monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) for fundraising success, including pipeline growth, donor retention, and revenue diversification.
- Partner with leadership to establish and track metrics related to donor demographics and engagement using insights to inform strategy and continuous improvement.
- Ensure the Development function leverages data, systems, and analytics to inform strategy and decision-making.

- Support investments in infrastructure, systems, and talent needed to scale fundraising outcomes.

QUALIFICATIONS

- 15+ years of progressive leadership experience in fundraising, development, or revenue generation.
- Demonstrated experience leading fundraising and development strategy within an arts, culture, or creative-sector organization.
- Demonstrated experience navigating complex donor relationships with authenticity and values-based decision-making.
- Proven success securing and closing major gifts and leading high-performing fundraising teams with film, arts, or culturally driven organizations.
- Demonstrated success designing and executing growth-oriented fundraising strategies, that are grounded in the Founder's Principles of Sundance Institute.
- Strong financial and analytical acumen, with experience using data to inform strategy and decision-making.
- Exceptional communication skills, with the ability to engage and inspire.
- Authentic and highly collaborative relationship builder, with demonstrated success partnering across executive leadership, staff, boards, and external funders.
- Commitment to fostering a culture of belonging.
- Passion for the arts and alignment with Sundance Institute's mission; a deep understanding of the creative process, independent artists, and the cultural impact of the arts.

COMPENSATION

- Anticipated salary range is \$250K to \$280K, commensurate with qualifications and experience; the salary of the finalist selected for this role will be set based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to departmental budgets, qualifications, experience, education, licenses, specialty, and training. The above hiring range represents Sundance Institute's good faith and reasonable estimate of the range of possible compensation at the time of posting.
- Comprehensive benefits package, including medical, dental, and vision insurance and generous paid time off

Frequently cited statistics show that women and people from underrepresented groups apply to jobs only if they think they meet 100% of the criteria. If you meet many but not all the criteria and feel you may be a good fit for the role, Sundance Institute encourages you to apply.

Sundance Institute is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, national origin, ethnic origin, citizenship status, disability, race, religion, creed, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law in its employment policies. Sundance Institute will provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities.