Reframing Access:

A Best Practices Guide on Disability Inclusion in Canada's Screen Industry

DSO
Disability Screen Office

Document Contents

Part 3:

Part 4:

Part 5:

PART 6:

Part 7:

Part 8:

Appendix A:

DSO
Disability Screen Office

Reframing Access:

A Best Practices Guide on Disability Inclusion in Canada's Screen Industry

Part 1: Introduction

Welcome to *Reframing Access: A Best Practices Guide on Disability Inclusion in Canada's Screen Industry!* You may have opened up this guide because you work in the Canadian screen (i.e. film and television) industry. 27% of Canadians live with at least one disability[1], and that 27% includes many people who work alongside you in the Canadian screen industry, as well as many people who are interested in entering the field. Reading this guide is a great way to begin to learn how to make your work environment (whether that's on set, in the writers' room, in the production office, or in the post-production studio) accessible to the disabled creatives working on your project(s).

The purpose of the *Mapping Representation and Barriers to Participation by People with Disabilities in the Screen-Based Media and Broadcasting Sectors* project

This guide is a part of the Disability Screen Office's *Mapping Representation and Barriers to Participation by People with Disabilities in the Screen-Based Media and Broadcasting Sectors* research project. This research project is Canada's first-ever study on the participation of people with disabilities in the Canadian screen industry workforce and the barriers they face while working or trying to access work opportunities.

The *Mapping Representation and Barriers to Participation by People with Disabilities in the Screen-Based Media and Broadcasting Sectors* research project has been undertaken as part of the Government of Canada's Advancing Accessibility Standards Research Program. As we work towards a barrier-free Canada by 2040 under the Accessible Canada Act2, this research will inform Accessibility Standards Canada as they consider developing new accessibility standards. This research contributes to a greater understanding of the Canadian screen industry that will ensure that barriers to employment and equity are identified, prevented, and removed at a structural level.

1 Statistics Canada. New Data on Disability in Canada, 2022. 2023. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023063-eng.htm.

2 Government of Canada. Accessible Canada Act Summary. December 13, 2022. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada/act-summary.html.

Our goals with this project are to:

1. Map the current state of disability representation in Canada's screen industry at the workforce level;
2. Identify the barriers and opportunities to participation of people with disabilities in the screen industry, examining all roles in its ecosystem;
3. Identify the barriers and opportunities to the on-screen representation of people with disabilities in Canadian productions;
4. Supply recommendations on removing barriers to participation and representation;
5. Provide foundational data on disability representation in the Canadian screen sector;
6. Propose guidelines for disability representation and inclusion on and off screen (including how to increase disability representation and inclusion), aimed at the wider Canadian screen sector; and
7. Highlight the strategies that members of the industry are currently using to make the screen sector more accessible for people with disabilities.

This guide is one of two major components in our research project, and specifically addresses goals 2, 4, 6 and 7. The second major component is a research report (which will address goals 1, 3, 4 [in further detail] and 5), to be published in 2027.

While our research report will present data in more detail and provide policy recommendations about how to improve the accessibility of the screen sector as a whole, this guide is a resource and actionable document for individual screen industry employers. This guide will help the reader integrate accessibility practice into the way they work in the screen industry, remove barriers that exist in their workplaces, and make it easier for employees to access the accommodations they need.

About the Disability Screen Office

The Disability Screen Office (DSO) is a national, bilingual, disability-led and disability-staffed not-for-profit organization whose mission is to develop opportunities for disabled creatives and advocate for a more accessible Canadian screen industry. Through our partnerships and programs, we're setting a new national standard for inclusive screen-based storytelling.

The DSO has four key focus areas:

1. **Build** relationships with and foster connections among disabled creatives working and aspiring to work in the screen industry.
2. **Influence** those working in every stage of content production to remove barriers and create opportunities for disabled creatives.
3. **Advocate** for policies that support disabled creatives in the screen industry.
4. **Ensure** the long-term success of the Disability Screen Office for disabled creatives.

The DSO was originally incubated at Accessible Media Inc. (AMI), responding to the long-standing barriers in accessibility, employment, and meaningful disability representation in Canada's screen industry. In September 2022, the Disability Screen Office became an independent, autonomous organization, marking a historic moment where disabled creatives finally have an entity dedicated to amplifying their voices and advocating for their rights within the Canadian screen sector.

DSO's key programs are designed to address the challenges facing disabled creatives and foster a more inclusive Canadian screen industry. We're conducting research, gathering data across the sector to provide resources to break down systemic barriers, and offering clear guidance on making accessibility an integral part of industry practices and procedures. Together, we're building an inclusive and accessible culture where disabled creatives can fully participate, contribute, and thrive.

Methodology

Nordicity was engaged by the DSO to undertake a project as part of the *Mapping Representation and Barriers to Participation by People with Disabilities in the Screen-Based Media and Broadcasting Sectors* research project.

The DSO and Nordicity conducted research and collected data on the experiences of disabled creatives in the Canadian screen industry. This included an extensive literature review, desk research, and engaging industry stakeholders to identify best practices for inclusion both on and off-screen. Methods included nationwide focus groups, interviews, a survey, a StatsCan data order, and outreach supported by industry partners. Engagement sessions were held virtually and in person across Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Accessibility measures were integrated throughout the process, enabling participation from filmmakers, key creatives, industry professionals, and individuals with lived experience of disability. These engagements translated lived experiences into practical, actionable recommendations.

Approach and methods

In preparation for, and in support of, the Best Practices Guide, the research team employed a mixed methods approach. This included desk research, a national survey, focus groups, interviews, and the development of a KPI and data collection framework. Findings were triangulated across all methods to ensure robustness and validity. The research process included:

- A literature review of 50+ documents;
- A national accessible survey (Canada's Screen Industry Survey on Disability) with 872 responses;
- 14 focus groups across regions, languages, and industry segments, including participation from 105 individuals with lived experience of disability; and
- Consolidated analysis integrating qualitative and quantitative findings (including StatsCan Census data)

This section provides further details of how each stage of the research was conducted and analyzed.

Desk research and literature review

A targeted review of over 50 documents was conducted, including toolkits, best practices guides, roadmaps, checklists, white papers, benchmarking studies, and surveys. These sources focused on accessibility, disability inclusion, and representation within the screen industry and adjacent sectors.

Survey development and implementation

Canada's Screen Industry Survey on Disability was co-designed by the Nordicity research team, DSO staff, and the DSO's Research Project Working Group (a diverse group of disabled creatives working professionally throughout the screen sector) to capture the experiences, perspectives, and barriers encountered by individuals across the Canadian film and television industry, with a particular focus on disability and accessibility.

- The primary target population included individuals working in the Canadian screen sector who identify as having disabilities or who experience barriers related to physical, mental health, or learning conditions. This includes professionals across all stages of the production lifecycle, including development, production, post-production, and distribution;
- The survey also sought to include individuals who aspire to work in the Canadian film and television industry but have been unable to enter the sector due to accessibility barriers or disabling conditions; and
- In addition, participation was open to individuals who do not identify as having disabilities. These respondents were included to provide insight into their experiences working with colleagues with disabilities, as well as their perspectives on accessibility, inclusion, and workplace practices within the industry.

This purpose-built survey was informed by national statistical data to generate a more complete and nuanced understanding of disability, accessibility, and participation in the Canadian screen industry. This approach balances statistical rigor with contextual relevance by integrating sector-specific insights with established data sources. The survey was distributed via industry partners, remained **open for 4 months** from March to August 2025, and received a **total of 872 responses** across all categories of respondents.

Survey scope

The survey addressed critical data gaps related to disability representation and experiences in the Canadian film and television industry. The survey was structured to capture a broad range of subject areas related to participation in the Canadian screen industry, to support both descriptive and comparative analyses across subgroups within the industry. These included, but were not limited to:

- Employment characteristics (e.g., role, department, employment type, career stage);
- Demographic attributes (e.g., region, gender identity, age group);
- Disability identification and type, including physical, sensory, cognitive, and mental health-related conditions;
- Workplace experiences, including hiring practices, job retention, accommodations, and career progression;
- Barriers to entry and participation, particularly those related to accessibility, discrimination, and workplace culture;
- Experiences with and perceptions of inclusion, accessibility policies, and industry practices; and
- Aspirations, unmet needs, and recommendations for improving accessibility within the sector

Survey design and development

Existing national datasets do not adequately capture the population of disabled creatives in the Canadian film and television industry, particularly individuals working in freelance, contract-based, or production-specific roles. To ensure methodological alignment and comparability, the survey design was informed by:

- Statistics Canada's Census of Population (2021)
- Statistics Canada's Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)

These sources provided reliable baseline estimates and informed key design decisions. However, both datasets have limitations in this context, including:

- Underrepresentation of contract and gig-based workers due to industry classification constraints
- Limited sample sizes for disabled creatives within the screen industry

Accordingly, these data sources were used to:

1. Compare population characteristics (for example, population vs. sector-specific proportions re: income ranges, identity groups, employment type, etc.)
2. Identify critical data gaps (for example, the underrepresentation of certain demographics in the survey versus their presence in the Census)

Survey sampling

The survey frame was intentionally broad and inclusive, reflecting the diversity and complexity of the screen industry workforce. Key design considerations included:

- Defining core analytical variables (e.g., occupation, disability status, region);
- Establishing response targets (quotas) to support statistically meaningful subgroup analysis; and
- Including respondents both represented and not represented in official datasets

The sampling approach prioritized inclusivity over strict probabilistic sampling, recognizing the challenges of reaching underrepresented and partially undocumented populations. At the same time, alignment with national benchmarks enables structured comparison and calibration.

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire incorporated several methodological features to enhance analytical value:

- Linking questions aligned with Census and CSD variables to enable data integration and benchmarking;
- Conditional logic to collect more detailed information from specific respondent groups (e.g., persons with disabilities, those reporting barriers); and
- A targeted focus on novel data collection, minimizing duplication of variables already captured in national datasets.

Data quality and limitations

While the methodology strengthens both coverage and analytical depth, several limitations remain:

- Census data, while robust, underrepresents key segments of the screen industry workforce;
- CSD bridging data (questions that funnel Census respondents to the Canadian Survey on Disability) provides valuable cross-sector insights but includes relatively small samples for this specific industry;
- The non-probability sampling approach may introduce selection bias; and
- Overall accuracy depends on achieving sufficient response volume and diversity.

Focus groups

Willing industry members with lived experience of disability were invited to participate in thematic focus groups, each led by individuals with industry expertise and lived experience of disability. When interested participants were unable to attend the scheduled sessions, a 45- to 60-minute virtual interview was offered as an alternative.

Sessions were conducted in English or French and all participants received an honorarium in recognition of their time and contributions. Focus group invitations were public and distributed through established industry channels, as well as across the DSO network. All sessions included accessibility supports, such as ASL or LSQ interpretation and closed captioning. In-person sessions were also held in physically accessible venues.

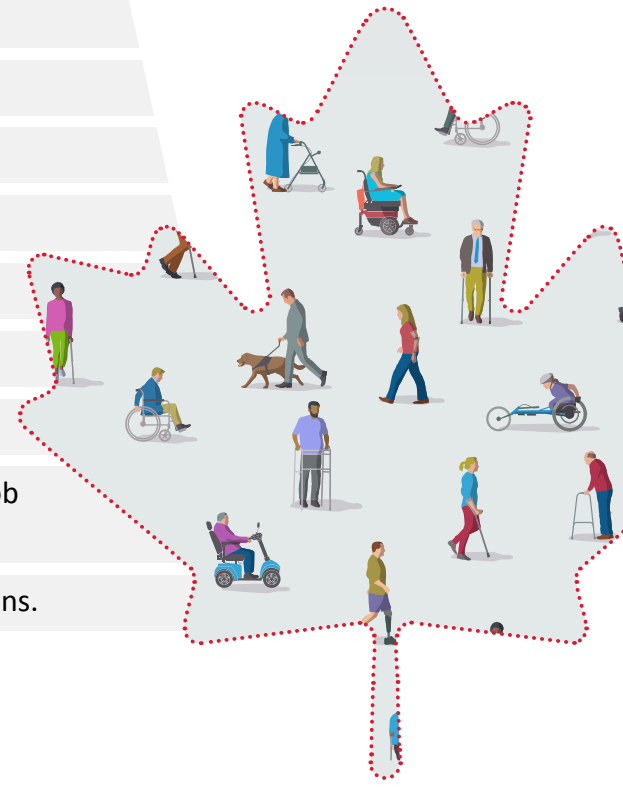
The themes, outlined below, along with the cross-country and bilingual approach, were designed to ensure inclusivity and to capture a wide range of experiences of people with disabilities in the Canadian screenbased sector. In total, **105 industry members** with lived experience of disability participated.

A total of **14 focus groups** were conducted between July and August 2025, including:

- 11 virtual two-hour sessions organized by subject area
- 3 in-person three-hour sessions held in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal

The thematic virtual focus groups were divided as follows:

- Actors with disabilities (union members);
- Actors with disabilities (non-union);
- Writers with disabilities;
- Directors with disabilities;
- Post-production workers with disabilities;
- Marketing and distribution workers;
- Membership and industry relations professionals;
- Children's and youth programming professionals;
- Individuals who have left the industry or experienced job interruption due to disability; and
- Individuals with chronic illness or degenerative conditions.



Additional in-person sessions included:

- **Toronto:** Crew members with disabilities across departments (including construction, wardrobe, electrics, grips, hair and makeup, lighting, camera, script, art department, set decoration, sound, effects, transport, and locations; union and non-union);
- **Montreal:** French-language workers with disabilities across sectors; and
- **Vancouver:** Producers and production management professionals with disabilities (CMPA members and non-members)

Data analysis

Survey and qualitative data from focus groups and interviews were consolidated and analyzed to identify key themes, barriers, and opportunities. Findings were triangulated with insights from the literature review to ensure consistency and depth.

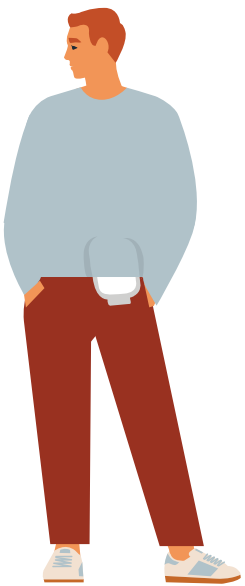
Part 2: About this guide

How to use this guide

If you are just learning about accessibility for the first time, begin by navigating to our section on definitions, Part 6: Definitions and terms. This section includes common terms used throughout this guide that you will want to be familiar with.

This guide was designed to help key creative or decision-making roles develop an accessible process to move through an entire production. Is it organized by production stages, so that you can easily find the information that is most relevant to your production, stage or particular accessibility challenge:

If you are not in a decision-making role (e.g. if you are an actor or a crew member), you may not be able to independently implement some of the suggestions proposed in this guide without buy-in from your supervisor.



If you are reading this guide because you are a disabled creative, also refer to the section on self-advocacy and discussing your accommodations with your employer in Part 7 and Appendix A about access riders to learn ways to open up conversations about accessibility with your employer to articulate and meet your access needs.

Why this guide

Advancing accessibility is key to a more sustainable Canadian screen industry. Disability is an equity group that one can join at any point in their life, and the longer one lives, the more likely they are to experience disability.

Through our research, the DSO discovered that having a disability broadly impacts access to work across the screen industry. **44% of our respondents to Canada's Screen Industry Survey on Disability indicated that their disability had been a barrier to getting a job in the industry, 41% of our respondents indicated that their disability had affected their opportunities for career growth and advancement, and 28% of our respondents indicated that their disability had affected their job retention or accessing consecutive hiring opportunities. Only 8% of our total respondents said that their disability did not affect their work in the screen industry.**[3]

The DSO dug deeper into these findings through focus groups, where many research participants indicated:

Encountering limiting beliefs about disabled creatives and what work they are capable of doing in the screen industry, including that only certain kinds of people (i.e. those without disabilities) are best suited for screen industry work;

Facing stigma, and hiding their disabilities in order to not be seen as difficult, less capable or lose work;

Losing priority and/or seniority in hiring and being relegated to specific roles after disclosing their disability; and

Being unable to get regular work within the film industry, keep work-life balance, or feel secure in employment compared to non-disabled colleagues.

3 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

In addition to attitudinal barriers about disability, disabled creatives in the Canadian screen industry sector are contending with inaccessible industry practices. Long hours, physical and psychological demands in screen industry work, inaccessible physical spaces, and limited availability of accommodations create barriers to full participation in casting, interviews, and on-set work. This guide will help you remove some of those barriers, retaining talented disabled creatives already in the industry and creating new opportunities.

This guide is for

This guide is best intended for:

1. Individuals, both disabled and non-disabled, who are currently working in the Canadian screen industry and are curious about how to support disabled creatives in their work environment or make changes to their processes that advance accessibility, but may not know where to start.

Who is a disabled creative?

Throughout this document, you will see us refer to *disabled creatives*.

A disabled creative is anyone who works (or has worked, or who wants to work) in the Canadian screen industry who meets the DSO's **definition of disability**, which is as follows:

> Disabled people or people with disabilities are those with actual or perceived impairments that may be physical, mental or learning conditions that have long-term, temporary, chronic, episodic or fluctuating effects. These impairments may be apparent or nonapparent.

Some common experiences of disability are listed here. Disabled people or people with disabilities may identify with one or more of the categories below, may identify as having an invisible or non-apparent disability, may identify as having mixed abilities, or may experience an episodic disability.

Experience	Examples
Pain-related	pain due to a long-term or chronic condition that has lasted or expected to last 6 months or more
Chronic condition, or health issue	
Flexibility	difficulty bending down, reaching objects
Mobility	difficulty walking, using stairs, using hands/fingers or doing other physical activities
Mental health-related	for example, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder or eating disorder
Hearing	d/Deaf or hard of hearing, difficulty hearing even if using a hearing aid
Seeing	blind, low-vision or partially-sighted, difficulty seeing even if wearing glasses or contact lenses
Learning	for example, dyslexia or dysgraphia
Dexterity	difficulty picking up objects, and/or grasping objects with fingers
Memory	ongoing memory problems or periods of confusion that limit your daily activities
Developmental	for example, Down Syndrome or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
Neurodivergence	for example, autism or attention deficit disorder like ADHD
Dwarfism	
Amputee, limb or facial difference	
Other	condition or health problem that has lasted or expected to last six months or more

Best practice for language about disability is constantly evolving. There are two common types of language used to talk about disability:

Person-first language (e.g. people with disabilities, person with Down syndrome, person with cerebral palsy). Some people prefer this way of talking about their disability because it can remind the person that they are speaking to that they are more than their disability.

Identity-first language, (e.g. disabled people, wheelchair user, blind person) - Some people prefer this way of talking about their disability because it shows the person that they are speaking to that disability is a key part of their identity and nothing to be ashamed of.

Both types of language are correct, and are influenced by cultural and historical differences due to the evolution of the disability rights movements across Europe and North America.

The DSO believes that each individual should feel free to choose the language that feels the best for them. When you interact with someone with a disability, it is important to ask if they prefer identity-first or person-first language. The DSO uses both person-first and identity-first language to refer to the disabled creatives we work with, based on their preferences. In this guide, the DSO will use "disabled" and "disabled creative" to refer to all creatives under the d/Deaf, hard of hearing, neurodivergent and Mad umbrella.[4]

The DSO recognizes that not everyone may feel included by the term "disabled creative," including those who are culturally Deaf and those who are Neurodivergent and/or Mad. Regardless of whether you would use the word "disabled" to describe yourself, if you find that our definition of disability applies to you, the DSO works to represent a range of different experiences and supports your choice to use whatever language feels appropriate for you.

2 Anyone who is in a decision-making role in the Canadian screen industry who is looking for guidance on the recruitment, hiring, onboarding and ongoing support of disabled creatives in all Canadian screen industry workplace environments (pre-development, development, on-set, production office, and post-production).

3 Canadian screen industry leaders, particularly those working within organizations and companies with established processes and procedures, who are looking to modernize their practices to support accessibility.

4 Mad and Deaf are capitalized, as per standard practice within the Canadian Deaf and disability arts community. More information here: Canada Council for the Arts. *Deaf and Disability Arts Practices*. https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/funding-decisions/decision-making-process/application-assessment/context-briefs/deaf-and-disability-arts-practices.

Part 3:
Disability-inclusive planning and process in development, financing, and pre-production

In this section, you will find information on disability-inclusive planning in:

- Development and creative ideation
- Budgeting
- Writing
- Casting
- Crewing up
- Scheduling
- Preparing to work with disability service providers

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of having disability representation in your production at all levels, including story, above the line and below the line;
2. Apply a variety of tools to plan for accessibility costs when budgeting;
3. Apply strategies to hire disabled creatives across a variety of roles, and promote their career development;
4. Explain the importance of working with disabled writers versus hiring disability consultants;
5. Create accessible audition in-person and virtual experiences;
6. Identify potential barriers for your team on set and on location;
7. Identify alternate methods of scheduling that can reduce barriers on your production; and
8. Identify key considerations for working with disability service providers.

Executive summary

Accessibility should be embedded from the outset of the development and creative ideation process, and should shape decisions including team composition and production planning. Disabled creatives must be able to contribute to work at all levels of production, and must be able to work on productions that reflect and value their lived experience of disability. When engaging disabled creatives, avoiding tokenism is critical; meaningful inclusion requires multiple disabled voices rather than a single representative.

Paying for accessibility does not have to be costly, especially when costs are proactively planned for in the pre-production phase through using flexible accessibility line items, budgeting using an accessibility contingency, and leveraging tools like access riders, access intake processes, and existing data about accessibility costs alongside thoughtful time budgeting that prioritizes sustainable schedules over long, inaccessible workdays.

Implementing effective hiring practices for disabled creatives requires removing systemic barriers to employment, leveraging industry resources to find disabled creatives across a variety of roles, complying with legal requirements when seeking out disabled creatives, and creating infrastructure that supports career progression (including ensuring effective onboarding and providing mentorship for your disabled creative hires).

In writing, authentic representation of disability is best achieved by hiring disabled writers with lived experience rather than relying on consultants. When casting, create accessible audition processes for in-person and virtual auditions, and ensure that you are familiar with specific practices that may need to be implemented for Deaf and blind/low-vision/partially-sighted performers. Inclusive casting processes also need to extend to background casting. Your crew should also be a place where disability inclusive hiring practices are prioritized, supported by emerging dedicated accessibility-focused roles to embed accessibility across all stages of production.

Production planning—including identifying sets and locations and preparing schedules and timelines—should anticipate diverse access needs, and producers should apply principles like "crip time" to create flexible, humane working conditions. Finally, working effectively with disability service providers like interpreters, personal support workers, and service animals requires early planning, clear communication, and appropriate resourcing, ensuring that accessibility is treated as a fundamental component of production rather than an afterthought.

Key findings from the DSO's research:

44% of disabled creatives who took our survey indicated that they had experienced difficulty getting a job in the industry due to their disability;

41% indicated that they had experienced limited opportunities for career growth and advancement due to their disability;

28% had experienced difficulties with job retention or accessing consecutive hiring opportunities due to their disability;

28% of disabled creatives highlighted the prevalence of inaccessible audition or work spaces (including sets), or a lack of accommodations associated with accessing audition or work spaces (including transportation and parking);

Focus group participants stated that standard screen production schedules of 8 hours or more were not designed with disability in mind. Participants noted a strong industry assumption that everyone can work long, physically demanding days;

Focus group participants feel that the Canadian screen industry glorifies long hours, working to short deadlines, and pushing through exhaustion; and

Many workplace accommodations do not require a financial investment, but instead require an investment of time.

Development and creative ideation

Accessibility should be a key component of your development and creative ideation process, whether or not your project is about disability.

Q: When should I start considering disability on your project?

A: At the beginning!

Questions to consider during development and creative ideation:

Who is your audience?

Disabled people are everywhere: they are in our families, in our friend groups, in our workplaces, and in our communities. 27% of all Canadian adults have a disability.

Media about disability, or media that features disabled people or disabled characters, allows for over a quarter of all Canadians to see themselves reflected in storytelling. Media representations of disability have often been restricted to stereotyped or tragic portrayals, but disability is an incredibly common human experience, and a majority of people will become disabled or experience disability at some point in their lifetime. Screen industry professionals, then, have the power

to change perspectives on disability, and accurately represent the world's largest minority group by including disability in their projects.

How is disability reflected in your team?

While you consider representing disability in your projects at the story level, also hire disabled creatives on your team, beginning at the creative ideation and development stage and from your earliest hires. Disabled creatives bring valuable contributions in both the creative and logistical planning realms of a project, and the addition of disabled perspectives can contribute to fresher, more interesting stories.

It is important for disabled Canadians to be represented in the Canadian screen industry, to contribute to work at all levels of production, and work on productions that reflect their lived experience.

Furthermore, it is important to have disabled creatives in positions of leadership and creative control. In our focus groups, many disabled creatives expressed concern about the lack of opportunities for career advancement for disabled creatives; facing a pervasive belief that disabled creatives cannot succeed in more senior and leadership-level roles in the sector.[5] However, this ableist belief encourages individuals to hide or mask disabilities when advancing into progressively more senior roles in the industry. We can create the conditions where disability is viewed as an asset and not a liability; disabled creatives can and do succeed in positions of leadership.

Disability-led productions

Screen industry professionals working for broadcasters and studios where development deals are done should remember to create space for disability-led productions. Disabled creatives should not always have to rely on opportunities to work on productions led by non-disabled creatives; disabled creatives are also eager to create and tell their own stories, including stories that have nothing to do with disability.

5 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

How will you avoid tokenism in development?

Tokenism is something that a person or organization does that seems to support a group of people who are treated unfairly in society, such as giving a member of that group an important or public position, but which is not meant to make changes that would help that group of people in a lasting way.[6] In development, this may manifest as having one person as the "token" individual who is asked to represent the views and concerns of an entire equity-seeking group. Disability is not a monolith, and one person's experience of disability can be very different from another's, even if those two individuals have the same disability.

Pitfalls of tokenism include:

1. Pressure on one person to represent concerns or viewpoints for a large group of people;
2. Loneliness associated with being the one person with a particular perspective or lived experience; and
3. Any story being told becomes tethered to one perspective: It becomes harder to advocate for broader social change if everything is relying on one person's advocacy or personal story.

When developing a project, expecting a single disabled person to speak on behalf of the disability community is bad practice, including expecting them to be able to tell how a portrayal of disability will be received at scale. In the same way that you should strive to avoid tokenism in all other areas of representation, strive to avoid tokenism in the development phase by ensuring that a variety of disabled voices are invited to contribute to a project's development. It creates a richer story.

6 Cambridge University Press. *Definition of Tokenism*. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus.

Budgeting

Accessibility is “one size fits one” rather than “one size fits all.” That is, two people’s accommodations can be vastly different even when those individuals share the same disability.

This can make budgeting a challenge, because this means that there are not standard accommodations, or standard accommodation costs. Then how do you determine appropriate budget amounts for accessibility?

Although there is no one tried and true formula to budget 100% accurately for accessibility, there are a variety of tools you can use to help you get closer to an accurate number and help avoid overages.

Principles of budgeting for accessibility

In the development stage, when you are creating a first draft of the production budget, it is important to include either line items that are specific to accessibility, or to begin by budgeting with an accessibility contingency, and as your production budget evolves, you can move costs into specific budget lines. Not only will this help your production avoid unexpected costs, this will also communicate to your funders that you are thinking about accessibility. Respondents to our survey consistently called for increased funding envelopes for accessibility costs in production in their open text responses[7], and this is a key area of the DSO’s ongoing advocacy on behalf of the disability community. However, it is crucial that producers include accessibility costs in their production budgets, as the more that funders see these costs, the more likely it is that funders will open new envelopes to cover accessibility costs.

7 Disability Screen Office. *Canada’s Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

Budgeting for accessibility can make producers nervous, as there is a misconception that accessibility is expensive. However, research done by the US-based disability advocacy organization the Inevitable Foundation, which supports disabled writers and filmmakers found that:

1. The average accommodation to support a disabled writer working in a hypothetical writers' room for a mid-budget show with a $2.9 million (USD) budget for a 24 week room increased the Writers' Room Budget by only 0.43% (or approximately $12,470 USD);

2. The average accommodation for a disabled crew member working on a hypothetical fully-union, 10 episode television series filming over 20 weeks in Los Angeles with a $47 million (USD) production budget increased the Production Budget by only 0.033% (or approximately $15,510 USD); and

3. Accommodating a 25% disabled crew on a $5 million (USD) production budget would increase the production budget by only 3.23% (or approximately $161,500 USD).[8]

However, it's not always necessary to protect approximately $20,000 CAD to ensure that you have enough money to provide effective accessibility measures for each disabled creative you work with on a project. Many accommodations are often low cost or no cost.

The Job Accommodations Network (JAN) out of the United States reported in 2025 that in the US workforce as a whole (i.e. beyond just the screen industry), "most employers report no cost or low costs for accommodating employees with disabilities," and that "33% reported that their accommodations incurred a one-time expense, with a median cost of $300 USD".[9]

For data that is more specific to the screen industry, the Inevitable Foundation hosts a crowdsourced database of common accommodations for screen industry workers with their associated estimated costs. We found that the median one-time cost for an accommodation in this database was $250 USD.[10]

8 Inevitable Foundation. *The "Cost" of Accommodations Report*. April 2022. https://www.inevitable.foundation/cost-of-accommodations-report#resources.
9 Job Accommodation Network. *Cost and Benefits of Accommodations*. September 17, 2025. https://askjan.org/topics/costs.cfm?csSearch=2546498_1#otherinfo.
10 Inevitable Foundation. *The "Cost" of Accommodations Database*. April 2022. https://www.inevitable.foundation/cost-of-accommodations-report#resources.

This data shows that often, the cost to accommodate disabled creatives on set will be low. However, when the cost is higher, there are further tools and strategies that you can use to mitigate those costs.

Leveraging access riders and access intake processes as a budgeting tool

When creating your production budget, you may find it useful to use access riders and access intake processes to understand what specific accommodations individual team members need, allowing you to adjust your budget for those needs. An access rider is a document an employee may bring to the table to share their access needs confidentially with you as a producer, whereas an access intake process governs how you, the producer, may develop mechanisms for gathering accessibility information from your employees. See Appendix A for more information on how they work and how to use them on your production.

While access riders and access intake processes are useful tools in budgeting for accessibility, using them requires you to know who you are working with, which may not be possible in the development stage if you are a line producer creating a first draft of the overall production budget.

Placement of costs

In our research, we found that disabled creatives often require flexible accommodations, as access needs can vary by day and by person.[11] To account for this, have a line item for accessibility in each section of the budget to allow for flexibility and contingency across a variety of departments and phases of production, especially if budgetary oversight and management is shared across a variety of roles. Contingency allows for flexibility to cover a variety of access needs across different departments and roles. Remember that individuals who need accommodations can come on board even late in the post-production process, and you do not want to end up without funds to support them.

Although many accommodations only require a one-time investment, some accessibility costs are ongoing or recurring, such as investing in note taking software on subscription for the length of a project. Others are one-time costs, which may be tied to a specific activity or location, like a wheelchair accessible car service to a one-day location shoot.[12] Some accessibility accommodations are either labour costs themselves (i.e. bringing on a sign language interpreter) or are directly related to labour, and therefore may be eligible for reimbursement under a provincial tax credit.

11 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability.* 2025.
12 Bahar, Robert. "*A Fresh 2025 Introduction to Documentary Budgeting and Scheduling (With New Templates!).*" International Documentary Association. December 19, 2024. https://documentary.org/online-feature/2025-introduction-documentary-budgeting-and-scheduling#partvi.

Tools and templates

Inevitable Foundation's 2022 Cost of Accommodations research also provides a variety of resources to help producers accurately budget for accessibility, including an interactive accommodations calculator that will help you determine your daily and total accommodations costs using some of the most common accommodations, as well as responsive budget templates that can help you estimate the costs of accommodations relative to all other line items in a budget. The International Documentary Association also provides a full budget template (including topsheet and full budget detail) with accessibility costs broken out as line items in each category of the budget. Please note that all of these resources are designed for a US audience and will display costs in US dollars—if you are using these resources for a Canadian production, the DSO recommends using them as references for line items, rather than direct references for the cost of items.

Although the DSO does not maintain a comprehensive directory of the costs (in Canadian dollars) of specific accommodations, the DSO does host the Industry Resource Hub,[13] a searchable online database of accessibility and disability-related resources, including a directory of service providers (from ASL/LSQ interpreters to CART captioners and beyond). This directory provides easily accessible contact information, so that you can find the provider that suits your needs and contact them directly for a quote, ensuring that you have the most accurate budgetary figures possible.

13 Disability Screen Office. Industry Resource Hub. 2026. https://dso-orphe.ca/hub.

Time budgeting

It's easy to think about budgeting in financial terms alone, but there are other ways to budget your resources to allow for accessibility. One of the greatest tools you have at your disposal to increase accessibility is time. Many accommodations do not cost any additional funds at all, they simply require an investment of time.[14]

Our research found that disabled creatives feel that the Canadian screen industry glorifies long hours, working to short deadlines, and pushing through exhaustion.[15] This culture leads to burnout, and can contribute to disabling factors for everyone, not just disabled creatives. Lengthening your production timelines is recommended by disabled creatives to make the film industry more accessible for all. However, the DSO recognizes that in the screen industry, time is not a net neutral resource, given the effects that adding additional time may have on your production budget.

When thinking about your timelines, consider:

- Can timelines be extended for a particular task?
- Can you shorten shoot days to allow for your team to rest more?
- Can you implement a 4-2-4 schedule, where your team works four hours on, takes a two-hour break, and returns for four more hours of work?
    - Under this model, your team would be encouraged to use their two-hour break in whatever way works best for them (including resting, completing a work task, or getting a head start on post-lunch break tasks) as long as at least one of the hours includes a meal.
- Can you split one day of work across two half-days?
- Can you work a 5-day work week instead of a 6-day work week, or a 4-day work week instead of a 5-day work week (with the total cost of engagement still scaled to the total amount of working days, i.e. 3 weeks of work spread out over a 4-week period is still paid at 3 weeks)?
- If you are considering working longer days, how will this affect your production budget?
    - Some crew members may have a preference for longer days and weeks because they will make more money in overtime. In addition to that practice being inaccessible to disabled creatives, overtime rates may also cost your production more.

All of these are examples of thinking about accessibility using scheduling as an additional tool to enable accessibility.

14 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability.* 2025.
15 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability.* 2025.

Hiring disabled creatives at all levels of production

Many senior-level disabled creatives feel pressure to downplay or mask their disability to advance in their careers. In our research, we found that:

- 44% of the disabled creatives who took our survey indicated that they had experienced difficulty getting a job in the industry due to their disability;
- 41% indicated that they had experienced limited opportunities for career growth and advancement due to their disability; and
- 28% had experienced difficulties with job retention or accessing consecutive hiring opportunities due to their disability.[16]

Remember that people can become disabled at any time, including becoming disabled by their screen industry work. **16% of disabled creatives who responded to our survey stated that their disability was a direct result of their industry activity. Those who did indicate disability onset from their screen industry work most often cited more long-term factors like high-stress environments (63%) and repetitive physical tasks (40%) as the cause.**[17]

To promote career development of disabled creatives, we can:

- Make an intentional commitment to hire disabled creatives at all levels of production and allow careers to progress;
- Allow people to keep their positions after becoming disabled, as their skills and experience have not changed; and
- Develop mentorship programs within productions, unions, guilds, and associations.

However, be mindful of what might not be possible for disabled creatives, or what could perpetuate a culture of inaccessibility within the screen industry, like promoting poor work-life balance, encouraging your team to do "whatever it takes" to succeed, encouraging practices like pulling 16-hour workdays to make tight deadlines, or encouraging behaviour like sleeping in cars after a long day on location.

16 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.
17 ibid.

Note: It is illegal under Canadian Human Rights Legislation to ask candidates to disclose disability or other marginalized statuses.

To navigate this while diversifying your team:

- Report on diversity policies and accessible practices within your production;
- Publicly share accessibility success;
- Encourage all staff to fill out access riders or participate in your access intake processes; and
- Make your onboarding practices transparent.

Each project, crew and disabled creative is different. For example, working with a Deaf creative requires different accessibility planning than working with someone with a physical disability. Even if you are working with two people with the same disability, they may have vastly different access needs. It takes time and continuous improvement to build an accessible work environment for a diverse team, or even one disabled creative. After each project, employ a feedback process all team members can participate in, asking:

- What could have been provided to make this process smoother or easier for you?
- What protocols or processes could change?
- What budget adjustments could be made to provide you with the things you need to succeed?
- Were timelines suitable?

For more information about what to ask to begin planning for access at the hiring stage, see Appendix A.

Where to find disabled creatives

The DSO hosts the Industry Resource Hub, a searchable online database of accessibility and disability-related resources. The Hub also contains listings for agents and managers who represent disabled talent, access consultants, Canadian disability-focused film festivals, and Canadian disability arts organizations and disability advocacy organizations.

Some of these stakeholders publish their own list of resources, including information about where to find disabled creatives across different areas of practice. Others may be willing to connect you directly to disabled creatives if you contact them directly with details about your project and who you are seeking (however, fees for this may apply).

Other resources for connecting with disabled creatives include:

- Contacting screen industry unions, guilds, and associations. Many of these organizations have internal disability affinity groups or committees (like ACTRA Toronto's Disability Alliance[18]) to leverage;
- Connecting directly with local agents, managers, and casting directors in your area, who may be able to push your casting call or posting out to their network via social media; and
- Connecting with local disability arts organizations, who may be able to put you in touch with disabled creatives within their program offerings.

> Note: Our survey and focus group data found that many disabled creatives face barriers in joining unions, similar to hurdles faced by other equity seeking groups in the industry.[19] If you are working on a unionized project, seeking out disabled creatives for your project may require looking for individuals who are not yet full members of a screen industry union. As a producer working on a unionized project, depending on the terms of the collectively bargained agreement applicable to your project and the role in question, remember that you may not have unilateral ability to choose to work with an individual who is not a union member, and that seeking out disabled creatives who are not unionized may require you to request a waiver from the appropriate screen industry union/guild/association in order to engage them.

18 ACTRA Toronto. Diversity & Inclusion Committee. https://actratoronto.com/committees/diversity-inclusion/.
19 Telefilm Canada. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. https://telefilm.ca/en/who-we-are/our-engagement/equity-diversity-and-inclusion.

Writing

Although the DSO's research did not investigate how disabled viewers feel about existing disability representation in Canadian media, it is nonetheless crucial to achieve more quality disability representation: research from the US-based disability advocacy organization the Inevitable Foundation indicated that "66% of [American] audiences are unsatisfied with current representations of disability and mental health in film and TV".[20] While similar data is not available specific to the Canadian market, this finding indicates that there is a lack of quality disability representation across film and TV, regardless of the country of origin of the production.

Authentic, quality portrayals of disability are often rooted in the work done by writers with lived experience of disability. Disabled writers are best positioned to accurately portray disability, as they can acknowledge the difficulties of living in an inaccessible world, while balancing and honouring the humanity of disabled people—and how their lives do not revolve entirely around disability.

The quality of disability representation is perhaps most improved when disabled writers have the opportunity to shape stories about disability, rather than using disability consultants. In their open letter to the screen industry in 2023, the Inevitable Foundation highlighted the problem with using disability consultants:

> *"The hiring of disability consultants is often done instead of—not in addition to—hiring disabled writers, directors and producers to lead these projects, which has significantly impeded the career advancement and earnings of disabled creatives. [...] This situation has created a paradox: Disabled writers, directors, and actors are rarely hired to work on projects that feature disabled characters because studios and production companies have prioritized hiring disability consultants. At the same time, the industry often sees disabled creatives as only worth considering for projects that have disabled characters, and they're rarely considered for projects that leverage their unique perspectives and life experience beyond their disability. This perpetual employment limbo leaves disabled creatives without agency over their own stories or careers."*[21]

20 Darnell, Saga. *Audiences Are Waiting for Hollywood to Greenlight Disability*. Inevitable Foundation. July 2024. https://docsend.com/view/a887kq8hx3m2c4ph.
21 Inevitable Foundation. *Letter to Hollywood*. March 2023. https://www.inevitable.foundation/press/letter-to-hollywood.

Furthermore, the reliance on disability consultants contributes to the devaluation of disabled expertise and disabled people's creativity: Disability consultants do not receive writing credits for their work on screen industry projects, and critically, credits are what enable people access to their next work opportunity. Disability consultants are also not paid at the scale negotiated by the WGC for its member screenwriters.

If a disabled creative takes a job as a disability consultant because they cannot get staffed as a writer, they are often doing so at a lower rate than what they would make as a disabled writer.

It is crucial to create more opportunities for disabled writers. Across 476 Canadian television series[22] in production between 2019 and 2023, TV writing jobs went to people with disabilities only 4.2% of the time, compared with making up 27% of the Canadian population.[23]

Questions to ask to find disabled writers

It is illegal under human rights legislation to ask a writer if they have a disability. Acknowledging this, the Media Access Awards' "Employing Disabled Writers: A Best Practices Guide" presents a few helpful suggestions for questions that you can ask in a hiring process to give writers an opportunity to self-identify as disabled:

1. Why do you think you are the right writer for this project?
2. What do you think you bring to the show?
3. What personal experience do you have that you find relates to the show or character?[24]

22 Data for film is not available.
23 Writers Guild of Canada. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Report. October 2024. https://www.wgc.ca/sites/default/files/2024-10/WGC_diversity%20report-Oct%202024.pdf.
24 Media Access Awards. *Employing Disabled Writers: Best Practice Guide.* 2021. https://www.wga.org/uploadedfiles/the-guild/inclusion-and-equity/maa_best_practices_for_hiring_disabled_writers.pdf.

Working with disabled writers

In 2022, disabled writer Ophira Calof led the Accessible Writers' Lab, a national program creating space for six disabled writers to experiment with what an accessible writing process could look like for them. In the case study report generated from the program, Calof provides a full suite of recommendations for working with disabled writers in accessible ways, generated from the following key research questions:

> How can we create access intimacy in the space, allowing everyone to bring their full selves to the process?

> How can we navigate capacity needs in real time?

> How do we navigate potentially conflicting access needs in collaborative processes?

> What are some better practices around working with access support staff (Ex. a notetaker, interpreters, etc.) in a creative, collaborative process?

> What are options to communicate lines that are meant to be performed, or are better understood or communicated through sign language(s)?

> How can marginalized writers be supported to write from lived experience in ways that don't feel tokenistic or exploitative?[25]

To view the full set of recommendations for working with disabled writers, read the report here.

25 Calof, Ophira. *Accessible Writers Lab Report*. 2022. https://dso-orphe.ca/images/pdfs/external-reports/AWL_Report2022_A11y%201.pdf.

Casting

In 2025, the Geena Davis Institute[26] analyzed 350 television shows that originated and aired in the US between 2016 and 2023 on the basis of their disability representation:

- 3.9% of television shows had a disabled character;
- Of those, 21% were cast authentically with the same or similar disability.[27]

Similar statistics are available for the Canadian market. In 2023, the UBCP/ACTRA and Geena Davis Institute conducted a study on equity and diversity in the film industry. The study analyzed 52 feature films, 303 episodes of TV shows, and 75 TV movies shot in British Columbia in 2018, 2019, and 2021 and found that:

- 3.3% of all feature films, episodes of TV shows, or TV movies had a disabled character;
- The percentage of characters with disabilities decreased from 2018 (4.0%) to 2021 (2.1%) across all production types.[28]

This study did not determine whether disabled characters were cast authentically with a disabled performer. It remains critical that Canadian productions authentically cast disabled actors for disabled roles, including in animated productions.

26 In partnership with The Ruderman Family Foundation

27 Conroy, M., C. Espinoza, and A. Romero Walker. *The State of Disability Representation on Television: An Analysis of Scripted TV Series from 2016 to 2023*. Ruderman Family Foundation and Geena Davis Institute. 2024. https://rudermanfoundation.org/white_papers/the-state-of-disability-representation-on-television-an-analysis-of-scripted-tv-series-from-2016-2023/.

28 Meyer, Michele, and Meredith Conroy. *Representation and Inclusion in Film and Television Produced in British Columbia*. UBCP/ACTRA and Geena Davis Institute. 2023. https://ubcpactra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/From-Real-to-Reel_Representation-and-Inclusion-in-Film-and-Television-Produced-in-British-Columbia.pdf.

In unionized productions in Canada, there are regulations governing how to approach casting a character with a disability:

In the current 2025-2027 Independent Production Agreement (IPA), the agreement between the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), and the Association Québécoise de la Production Médiatique (AQPM), Article A28(f) Auditions and Interviews "Equitable Engagement Opportunities for Performers with Disabilities" states:

> *A28 – AUDITIONS AND INTERVIEWS*
>
> *(f) The Producer shall provide accommodations to a Performer with a disability when required by applicable human rights legislation.*[29]

This language serves as a reminder to producers that they must provide accommodations for performers with disabilities as per applicable legislation.

Furthermore, in the current 2025-2027 Independent Production Agreement (IPA), the agreement between the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), and the Association Québécoise de la Production Médiatique (AQPM), Article A502(d) "Equitable Engagement Opportunities for Performers with Disabilities" states:

> *In respect of any available Roles that require a Performer to portray a person with a disability, the Producer will liaise with ACTRA prior to casting these Roles with a Performer who does not have a disability. The Producer will take appropriate steps to ensure that Performers with disabilities have a reasonable opportunity to audition for such Roles. The Producer will provide ACTRA with the information set out in Article A506(r).*

> *Casting or production facilities which are barrier-free for Performers with disabilities shall be used when such facilities exist and are available.*

29 ACTRA, CMPA, and AQPM. *Independent Production Agreement, 2025–2027.* 2025. https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ACTRA-CMPA-AQPM-Independent-Production-Agreement-2025-2027_OFFICIAL-COPY.pdf.

In respect of any Role that requires a Performer to portray a character with a disability, the Producer agrees to include these facts in the casting breakdown, if known, so as to enhance the opportunity for Performers with similar disabilities to audition for the Role.

The Producer shall provide accommodation when required by applicable human rights legislation.

> The "information set out in Article A506(r)" that a producer must provide to ACTRA is "any Roles that require Performers to portray characters with disabilities, the name of each Performer cast for such Role, and whether the Performer cast has a disability."[30]

Similar language exists in the agreement which governs unionized performers in British Columbia and the Yukon, in the current 2025-2028 BC Master Production Agreement (BCMPA), an agreement between the Union of British Columbia Performers/Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (UBCP/ACTRA) and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), under Article A402(c) "Equitable Engagement Opportunities for Performers with Disabilities" and A406 "Performers with Disabilities".

It is also best practice for non-union productions to seek out disabled actors to play disabled characters for the purposes of authentic representation. Authentically casting disabled actors in roles where the character has a disability allow productions to effectively avoid an inaccurate portrayal of the character's disability, as the actor can leverage their own lived experience of a same or similar condition.

Additionally, it is important to remember that disabled actors can and will audition for roles that are not specifically written for a disabled actor, in part because not all disabilities are visible and some actors may choose not to disclose their disability, and in part because disabled actors are capable of playing roles that have nothing to do with their disability. When casting, it's important to ensure that your accessibility measures are consistently available, and not just when you think disabled people are going to be auditioning—it's better to assume that you will always have disabled actors auditioning for your project.

30 ACTRA, CMPA, and AQPM. *Independent Production Agreement, 2025–2027.* 2025. https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ACTRA-CMPA-AQPM-Independent-Production-Agreement-2025-2027_OFFICIAL-COPY.pdf.

Planning for your auditions

Equity UK, the performing arts and entertainment trade union in the United Kingdom, published a Casting guide for deaf, disabled and neurodiverse dancers.[31] Many of their recommendations are broadly applicable to producers casting in film and television, and have been adapted here to be more specific to the screen industry:

- Actively encourage applications from performers who identify as disabled. Be clear with the role you are casting for. Is your project related to working with performers with a specific condition? Or is this role open to the range of people who identify as disabled?
- Think about your project. Could a disabled performer join your project, even if you didn't imagine this initially? What qualities are you actually looking for? Specifying physical attributes dissuades many disabled artists from applying.
- Include key dates in your audition notice or breakdown: when will performers be notified they have been invited to audition? When and how will you communicate if they've got the job?
    - For productions that may engage disabled actors who are minors, it is also important to list outside dates for the project, as parents and/or guardians will have to think about whether the project dates are feasible due to chaperoning requirements for minors or the effect that a booking may have on a child's school attendance.
- Make your casting call available in different accessible formats: Video with sign language (ASL or LSQ) and captioning, audio description, large print, plain language.
- Ensure your marketing is accessible (e.g. providing image descriptions on your pictures and video descriptions for any reels/video content).
- Offer a variety or combination of options for applicants to send you their information: headshot and resume, written submission, video, voice recording.

31 Equity (UK). Casting Guide for Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse Dancers. https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/casting-and-auditions/casting-guide-for-deaf-disabled-and-neurodiverse-dancers#the-audition.

- Keep language simple and clear, keep the materials you ask for streamlined, and eliminate industry-specific jargon where possible. Someone helping a disabled creative prepare an audition (e.g. a caregiver, a personal support worker) may not be familiar with industry terminology.
- Leave plenty of lead-up time for submissions. Short notice can be a barrier. Last minute requests or lack of lead time can also present additional barriers for disabled creatives who are minors (who may require a more structured established routine/ daily schedule) or disabled creatives who need assistance from a caregiver or personal support worker to prepare an audition. Where possible, offer any material (e.g. sides) in various fonts, font sizes and colours for those with visual impairment or/and learning disabilities.
- Actively ask invited performers about their access needs when you invite them to audition. Some performers use a personal access rider, and some don't. Be prepared to follow through on accommodations, and carry accessible practices all the way to the project's completion.
- Plan the timing of your audition in a supportive way, e.g, allow for enough time for toilet breaks, filling water, and rest. Some disabled performers may need more time for this. Be aware that long days or multi-day auditions can be a barrier for performers with fatigue and chronic pain conditions.
    - Remember that some performers may have less scheduling flexibility than others (e.g. disabled performers may have to coordinate auditions around energy levels or medical appointments, disabled minor performers have to coordinate their auditions around schooling, disabled minor performers cannot travel without a parent or guardian).[32]

Audition venues

28% of disabled creatives who responded to our survey highlighted the prevalence of inaccessible audition or work spaces, or a lack of accommodations associated with accessing audition or work spaces.[33]

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of performer auditions happened in-person. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of performer auditions are now conducted via self-tape (or virtual audition).

32 Equity (UK). Casting Guide for Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse Dancers. https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/casting-and-auditions/casting-guide-for-deaf-disabled-and-neurodiverse-dancers#the-audition.

33 Disability Screen Office. Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability. 2025.

Whether choosing an in-person or digital audition format, recognize that each option presents pros and cons for disabled actors (these pros and cons are further elaborated on in each section below).

In-person auditions

In 2019, ACTRA Toronto and the Casting Directors Society of Canada conducted a survey of audition facilities in Toronto.[34] The survey revealed[35] that common audition locations and casting director offices lacked key built environment (i.e. physical space) accessibility features, including:

1. Limited to no availability of on-site or accessible parking and/or accessible public transit access; and
2. Limited to no barrier-free access to the audition facility, and availability and access to accessible change rooms and washroom facilities.

If your audition venue is not accessible, disabled performers may not be able to attend their audition. So how do you find an accessible audition venue?

It is important to keep in mind that what is an accessible venue for one disabled creative may not be an accessible venue for another disabled creative, due to varying access needs (e.g. a wheelchair user may need a sink with clearance underneath to be able to roll their chair up to the sink, while a little person may need a sink that sits lower to the ground to be able to reach handles and taps, some physically disabled performers, whether they are minors or adults, may need access to a changing table or to a family washroom). It is important to ask performers if they have any access needs related to the space when you invite a performer to audition.

The DSO hosts the Industry Resource Hub, a searchable online database of accessibility and disability-related resources, including a directory of venues with accessibility features. On the DSO's Hub, you can search for venues that specifically meet some of the most common accessibility needs, allowing you to align your search with any specific needs that a performer (or their team, including an agent or support worker) may articulate.

Transportation is a crucial element to consider when inviting disabled performers to in-person auditions, with many disabled creatives surveyed as part of the DSO's research stating that they do not drive.[36] If you are inviting disabled performers to an in-person audition, it is best practice to offer to pay for accessible transportation to and from the audition location, acknowledging that many disabled performers may have to pay out of pocket for an accessible taxi to attend.

34 ACTRA Toronto. Audition Facility Accessibility Audit. May 2019. https://actratoronto.com/accessibility-audit-and-recommendations/.
35 This research was Toronto-focused and is not representative of all Canadian audition venues.
36 Disability Screen Office. Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability. 2025.

The scheduling of auditions should also be a key consideration for producers looking to hire disabled performers. Typically, when auditions are scheduled, the producer or casting director will give a performer a specific timeslot. Flexibility on this timeslot is often limited. This can be challenging for disabled performers, who can be:

- More reliant on transportation from family members or caregivers with limited time;
- Coordinating around existing immovable commitments such as work, school or medical appointments; and
- Contending with accessible transportation services (paratransit or accessible taxi company) that have unpredictable schedules and/or require advance planning to secure a booking.

To mitigate these barriers, recommended best practices include:

- Providing flexibility in the audition time rather than a set audition slot;
- Providing options and blocks of time for a disabled performer to choose from; and
- Giving audition options as far in advance as possible with a clear deadline for a response.

Self-taped and virtual auditions

Accepting self-taped or online virtual auditions remove built environment (i.e. physical space) accessibility barriers such as inaccessible audition venues or barriers associated with a lack of accessible transportation.

However, the process of preparing a self-tape or virtual audition can also present different accessibility barriers, including unclear expectations about how to prepare a self-taped or virtual audition, production value of the audition, or access to a reader.

To mitigate stress about any element of the self-tape or virtual audition process, casting may wish to provide helpful tips regarding:

- Space set up;
- Camera set up;
- The audition frame;
- Where the actor should be situated within the frame;
- Lighting needs;
- Where the reader should be positioned relative to the camera;
- Where the actor should place their eyeline;
- If it is a self-tape rather than a virtual audition, what the performer should include in their slate; and
- How the self-tape should be edited (i.e. if multiple takes should be included).

For Zoom or video conference auditions:

- Be clear about how much time an actor will need to be in the virtual "waiting room" before being called into the audition setting, and attempt to keep their wait time to a minimum;
- Provide clear communication regarding their call time within the sequence of the audition period, and how it will be communicated to them if there are delays or the audition day is running behind schedule;
- Where possible, provide a virtual audition monitor (similar to in-person auditions); and
- Alternatively, use the breakout room chat function to communicate about delays or timeline changes with those in the waiting room.

It is also important to remember that people with disabilities are almost twice as likely to live in poverty compared to their counterparts without disabilities, according to findings from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability.[37] Furthermore, regardless of disability status, poverty rates were higher among those who were employed part-time, unemployed, or not in the labour force compared to those employed full-time – and in the responses to our survey, only 15% of our disabled creative respondents had permanent employment arrangements, and only 13% were full-time by contract.[38]

37 Morris, Stuart. *Poverty among Working-Age Persons with and without Disabilities in Canada*. December 2025. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/research/poverty-working-disabilities.html.
38 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

This trend toward more precarious employment arrangements for disabled creatives, coupled with the higher poverty rate for disabled people in general in Canada, may mean that some disabled creatives may not have access to self-tape equipment that has become the industry standard for many actors to own (e.g. a smartphone with an HD camera, a backdrop, lighting).

If production value of an audition is a concern, consider bringing the talent into an accessible venue to tape the audition in-person. Refer to the In-person auditions section for key considerations about doing so.

Disabled performers also may not have access to a robust network of readers for self-taped or virtual auditions. Consider providing a reader, or offering to reimburse for the cost of hiring one (i.e. through paid reader services like WeAudition[39]). Alternatively, you could:

- Provide suggestions for finding a reader;
- Provide names and contact information for actors within your network who would be willing to act as a reader; or
- Suggest that disabled actors use an app like ColdRead[40] to be their own reader.

Guidelines for auditioning Deaf performers

"Deaf" is used specifically here to refer to members of the Deaf community, who are culturally Deaf and use sign language (in Canada, primarily American Sign Language, or ASL, and la langue des signes québécoise, or LSQ) to communicate. This is in contrast to Hard of Hearing (HoH) or deaf actors, who may have hearing loss but not sign or need interpretation. Ask the performer respectfully about their access needs before assuming which category they fall into.

Deaf etiquette tips:

- It is the producer or casting director's responsibility to coordinate and hire professional interpreters, as well as Directors of Artistic Sign Language (DASLs) or Artistic Sign Language Coaches;
  - A DASL or Artistic Sign Language coach translates sides and scripts from a text-based language to the visual language of sign language, selecting the appropriate signs for the Deaf performer to use and ensuring that the meaning of a moment is effectively captured in sign language;

39 WeAudition. https://www.weaudition.com/.
40 ColdRead. https://www.coldreadapp.com/.

- While best practice would be to ask the performer about their preferences for interpreters (as they may have people they are already familiar and comfortable working with), many interpreters book up quickly. With many auditions having a quick turnaround, the production should reserve an interpreter as soon as they are aware that one is needed. When the casting call goes out, the production should indicate who the reserved interpreter is. The production will attempt to engage an auditioner's preferred interpreter, but if they are not available, there will still be an interpreter available;
- Interpreters have specific niches: be sure the interpreter knows they are being engaged for a film/TV audition; and
- Send the interpreter sides and other relevant material sent to the performer no less than 48 hours in advance so they can prepare.

If the performer does not have a preference and you need to source a sign language interpreter, the DSO hosts the Industry Resource Hub[41], a searchable online database of accessibility and disability-related resources, including a directory of ASL and LSQ interpreters. This directory provides easily accessible contact information, so that you can find the provider that suits your needs and contact them directly for a quote.

Deaf actors noted in our research that auditions are hearing-centric: noting reliance on lip reading and verbal cues, rather than using ASL or providing other accommodations.[42] To mitigate this, ACTRA National's Diversity and Inclusion Committee created a practical guide of Tips for Auditioning Deaf Performers,[43] which are as follows:

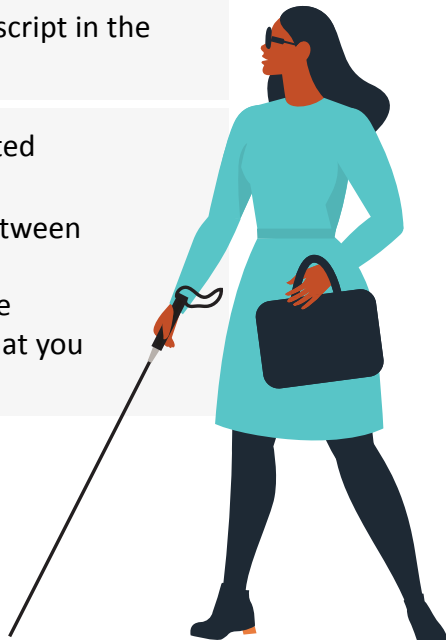
- Use a sign language interpreter.
- Speak directly with the Deaf actor, not the interpreter.
- Treat the interpreter as a professional: give breaks, make sure they are included in communication and conversations.
- Watch the lighting: the Deaf actor must see the interpreter.
- Camera framing: the Deaf actor's hands must be in frame so their language can be seen.
- Sign language interpreter and reader placement must be side-by-side, on the same side of the camera. The Deaf actor can then see both reader and interpreter, and does not have to cross frame to do so.

41 Disability Screen Office. *Industry Resource Hub*. 2026. http://dso-orphe.ca/hub.
42 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.
43 ACTRA. Tips for Auditioning Deaf Performers.
https://www.actra.ca/industry-resources/tips-for-auditioning-deaf-performers/.

Guidelines for auditioning blind, low-vision and partially-sighted performers

Equity UK, referenced earlier in this section, has also created a tipsheet of advice for visually impaired actors[44], which includes a variety of best practices for auditioning blind, low-vision, and partially-sighted performers, including:

- Introduce yourself with a self-description, and repeat your name every time you begin to speak (i.e. "this is [your name] speaking," before you begin your thought) and close your thought by saying "end of thought."
- Ask which method the actor would like to use to access scripts (iPads that enlarge text, screen readers, line-feeding – everyone has their own preference). Ensure that if you suggest these options, that you are prepared to provide the technology needed to deliver on this access measure.
- Provide text as far in advance as possible, as it can take blind, low-vision or partially-sighted actors longer to read through and get familiar with it.
- Cold reading a script is hard, but not impossible.
- Some blind, low-vision or partially-sighted actors may have a recording of the text, or may wish to have someone in the room to line feed.
- It's best never to send PDFs of scripts or sides, as they can't be altered and screen readers often can't access them. Word documents tend to be more accessible as the person can adjust the font, font size, contrast, etc. to meet their specific needs. It's best to ask upon initial contact what methods and formats the individual prefers to use.
    - When possible, watermarked scripts should not be provided to blind, low-vision or partially-sighted actors, as the watermark can interfere with their screenreader. When working on productions where individual copies of scripts need to remain traceable, consider putting a unique identifier for that copy of the script in the footer of the document rather than applying a watermark.
    - In auditions where movement is required, provide access to a sighted audio describer access worker (which producers ca Industry Resource Hub) to facilitate preliminary communication between casting/director/producer and actor. This is to remove reliance on physically demonstrative terms like 'over there/here' or 'we'll move around the space like this' and put it in language that describes what you expect the actor to do.



44 Equity (UK). Advice for Visually Impaired Actors. https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/casting-and-auditions/advice-for-visually-impaired-actors.

- Navigating to and from audition venues can be hard. Some disability arts organizations offer to send a sighted guide to collect an individual from a specific location if they don't know the area.
- Entering buildings and finding where you need to go is also difficult, and forewarning about the entry system or appearance of the building is appreciated, e.g. 'there will be a buzzer to push on the left hand side of a large blue front door', 'the building/ entrance is halfway down the street, it's a white-framed glass panel front door that you pull to open, reception is directly in front of you upon entry'.

Background casting

While this section focuses primarily on principal casting, it is important for producers and casting directors to include disabled performers as background performers, in order to represent disability as a fundamental part of the human experience across all areas of the production.

When casting disabled background performers, many of the same best practices outlined across this section continue to apply, with a renewed focus on the importance of providing clear instructions as to how a disabled background performer can submit for an opportunity.

Crewing up

Does your crew reflect the world of your film?

Talent and story are the most visible elements of disability inclusion in the screen industry, but it is also essential that all Canadian productions think about inclusion across all departments.

Despite misconceptions that crew work is too strenuous for disabled people, 71% of the respondents to our survey indicated that they work in crew roles, meaning that there can be crew members on your set who are experiencing disability as a result of their crew work.[45]

Where possible, it is important to recruit disabled crew members. While it is illegal to ask about disability status in the course of a hiring process, here are a few legal ways to seek out disabled crew members:

1. Disability-led talent acquisition and learning platform Making Space maintains an open call for disabled crew members based in Toronto.[46] Employers who are interested in accessing this talent pool should contact Making Space directly.

2. As previously mentioned, The DSO hosts the Industry Resource Hub[47], a searchable online database of accessibility and disability-related resources. At the end of 2026, the DSO will expand the Hub to include a directory of disabled creatives across all roles in the Canadian screen industry, allowing disabled creatives to create a profile and allowing producers to find the disabled above the line and below the line talent they are looking for for their productions.

Also consider giving potential crew members the opportunity to self-identify as disabled by re-wording some of the Questions to ask to find disabled writers, in this context reformatted as:

> Why do you think you are the right crew member for this project?

> What do you think you bring to the show?

> What personal experience do you have that you find relates to the show?[48]

45 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.
46 Making Space. *Production Crew Member (TV & Film)*. 2026. https://app.making-space.com/opportunities/making-space-production-crew-member-tv-film.
47 Disability Screen Office. *Industry Resource Hub*. 2026. https://dso-orphe.ca/hub.
48 Media Access Awards. *Employing Disabled Writers: Best Practice Guide*. 2021.

Emerging accessibility crew roles

In the US, the UK, Australia, and France, a new role has emerged in the production landscape: accessibility coordinator. Productions in these jurisdictions that hire disabled creatives also increasingly hire accessibility coordinators to identify and remove barriers and provide structural support to disabled creatives (i.e. not personal support; this role is not a support worker).

There are a limited number of individuals working as accessibility coordinators within the Canadian production landscape. Through our conversations with individuals who have worked with accessibility coordinators both in Canada and internationally, the DSO has discovered the following limitations of the accessibility coordinator role:

1. Accessibility coordinators are often brought on too late in the production process, when a project is already in production. This results in limited opportunities to change established structures, venues, timelines and budgets to enable better accessibility.

2. As a non-managerial level role, they often lack the authority to make changes to the budget or get approval for additional costs. This makes it difficult to provide and advocate for accessibility needs at all stages of the project, but particularly for late-added accessibility features or unforeseen needs.

Despite these shortcomings, in our survey and focus groups, the DSO found that many disabled creatives would like accessibility coordinators to be more prevalent on Canadian productions.[49]

To address both the shortcomings of the role and the relative lack of qualified accessibility coordinators working in Canada, the DSO is working to introduce a new role(s) to the Canadian screen industry beginning in 2026 as part of our ProdAccess initiative. [50]

49 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability.* 2025.
50 Disability Screen Office. *Production Accessibility Role Initiative – ProdAccess*. 2026.

Sets and locations: Who needs to be represented on site?

Disabled creatives who participated in our survey and focus groups stated that screen industry sets, transport and parking are not reliably accessible.[51] At the pre-production stage, you have the best chance of changing that.

In your pre-production process, think about:

- The actual or potential access needs of your crew (if known at this stage); and
- The actual or potential access barriers associated with each of your production locations (more easily evaluated, even if you do not know the specific access needs of your cast and crew).

While at this stage you may not know all of the access needs of your entire team, evaluate potential sets and locations for accessibility, taking into consideration:

- The physical and technical aspects of each building or location you will work in (or production location, including production vehicles like trailers and honeywagons);
- What you see on set, and what information isn't communicated to you if you are blind, low-vision, or partially sighted;
- What you hear on set, and what information isn't communicated to you if you are d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing;
- What you touch on set, and how different things may be out of reach to you if you have a mobility disability, are a wheelchair user, or are a little person; and
- What you understand on set, and what information doesn't appropriately reach you if you are a person with a cognitive or developmental disability on set.

This helps to choose spaces that are accessible to most people. The UK-based TV Access Project has created a variety of checklists for evaluating set and location access. Checklists for film studio accessibility, interior location accessibility, and outdoor location accessibility can be found here.[52] These checklists are designed for the UK context and to meet UK accessibility legislation; however, the same principles apply when determining your sets and locations and evaluating the accessibility of those locations.

For more on solutions to inaccessible environments, see our section on Accommodations.

51 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.
52 Creative Diversity Network. *TAP Access Description Checklist*. August 2024. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/tap-hub/

Scheduling

When determining a schedule for a unionized production, refer to the applicable collective agreement that governs regulation for scheduling and hours of work, including length of a standard work call, a standard workweek, provisions for shifting the workweek and when the workweek can be shifted, provisions for overtime, and turnaround time. However, it is important to consider that collective agreements have not been bargained to account for accessibility and crip time.

Crip time[53] is a term created by disability academic Alison Kafer in Feminist Queer Crip that suggests that "Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds." That is, crip time acknowledges that many disabled creatives have a different relationship to time and deadlines than non-disabled people, due in some cases:

- To different amounts of energy available to them;
- To inconsistency of energy and/or pain levels;
- To the different ways that some disabled people can experience and understand time (e.g. time blindness);
- To taking longer to move physically around (e.g. needing longer to get places, navigating with a cane or sighted guide); and
- To the barriers that disabled people experience that nondisabled people do not experience that may impact productivity (e.g. care schedules).

Whether you are working on a unionized or non-union production, our focus group participants stated that standard screen production schedules of 8 hours or more were not designed with crip time in mind.[54] Our research participants noted a strong cultural assumption on screen industry productions that everyone can work long, physically demanding days without breaks and push through to prove capacity and passion.[55]

53 Walsh, Kristina, "Cripping Time at Work." *Early Magazine*. March 30, 2023.
54 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.
55 ibid.

An 8-hour workday is one of the models explored in Designing a blueprint for a shorter working day in film and scripted drama, a feasibility study on reducing the length of a workday from 10 hours to 8 hours in the UK, conducted by flexible working experts Timewise[56] and BECTU Vision[57] supported by Screen Scotland, the BBC and the Film and TV Charity. This report also investigates a variety of other methods of scheduling, including:

- A four-day week with long days (10 hours + 1 hour unpaid lunch break);
- A five-day week with eight-hour days; and
- A five-day week with a variable pattern (e.g. 10 – 8 – 9 – 7 – 6 = 40 hours).[58]

This report also goes into detail about cost implications associated with shorter days, with analysis showing that costs did not substantively increase across shorter days, and there is significant potential for cost savings with more dedicated planning time, greater efficiency and lesser environmental impact.

The DSO recognizes that what is considered a "long" day in the UK production context at 10 hours is still shorter than many long days experienced here in the Canadian production context. In a case study about disability-led and disability-staffed CBC Gem miniseries You're My Hero prepared by ACTRA National, producer Meghan Hood presents some alternative scheduling suggestions:

- Shooting days were scheduled with an 11 hour workday (plus 1 hour meal break) instead of a 12 hour work day (plus 1 hour meal break) to help avoid burn-out for both the cast and crew;
- The disabled creator and actor Sean Towgood was scheduled for almost every single day of shooting. To accommodate his needs, he was scheduled to be brought in as late as possible, and was given as many breaks as possible;
- Ensuring the schedule was adjusted to prioritize performers who needed to limit the amount of hours worked in a day; and
- Scene order would be adjusted to prioritize the well-being of the cast as opposed to what might normally be easier for the crew. For example, the crew might do an extra move so that Sean would not have to change his wardrobe twice.[59]

The above case study focuses on disabled performers, but scheduling can be adjusted to prioritize all team members, not just actors. You may find it useful to navigate to the section on conflicting access needs, to determine a path forward for scheduling when crew and cast have different but equally important needs.

56 Timewise. https://timewise.co.uk/.
57 BECTU Vision. https://bectu.org.uk/bectu-vision/.
58 Timewise and BECTU Vision. *Exploring the Feasibility of a Shorter Working Day in the TV Industry*. February 2024. https://timewise.co.uk/article/exploring-the-feasibility-of-a-shorter-working-day-in-the-tv-industry/.
59 ACTRA. *Case Study: You're My Hero*. https://www.actra.ca/case-study-youre-my-hero/.

Preparing to work with disability service providers

Some disabled creatives require additional support from service providers such as personal support workers, sign language interpreters, captioners, and notetakers. Others may bring their service animal to set. What do you need to know about these service providers before they arrive on set?

Note: Many research participants noted that information about the workplace accommodation process was not proactively offered by producers, and many instead engaged in the practice of self-accommodating rather than requesting formal accommodations.[60] While disabled creatives' needs vary widely and many may not need disability service providers, clear communication around what providers you are prepared to engage on their behalf is key.

Where to find disability service providers

Best practice is to first ask the disabled creative more about their service provider needs and if there is a preferred person to engage. However, if they do not have a preference for their service provider and the production needs to source one, there are a few options:

1. The DSO hosted Industry Resource Hub, a searchable online database of accessibility and disability-related resources, including a directory of service providers (from ASL/LSQ interpreters to CART captioners to personal support workers to attendant care workers). This directory provides easily accessible contact information, so that you can find the provider that suits your needs and contact them directly for a quote.

2. If not available in the Hub, contact local disability organizations to ask for recommendations. Many disability organizations and disability arts organizations are also listed here.

60 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability.* 2025.

Types of providers and supports

Sign language interpreters

The Deaf community uses sign languages (in Canada, primarily American Sign Language, or ASL, and la langue des signes québécoise, or LSQ). Sign language interpreters facilitate communication between hearing individuals and Deaf individuals. Sign language interpreters will interpret sign language into the spoken language of the set and vice versa.

When working with Deaf creatives, interpreters should be booked by the production and are not the financial responsibility of the Deaf creative(s). When working with Deaf creatives, having sign language interpreters is essential, unless all hearing team members are fluent in the sign language being used.

There are key considerations to remember when planning to hire sign language interpreters on your project:

- Interpreters' expertise varies. Choose an interpreter that is comfortable interpreting in an on-set environment.
- There are a limited number of sign language interpreters in Canada depending on where you are in the country. Always ensure that you have the appropriate amount of interpreters for your Deaf creatives on set:
    - Two interpreters per Deaf creative is standard, so that interpreters can swap out over the course of a long session on set. On productions with larger amounts of Deaf creatives, consider hiring a Deaf consultant (see below) to determine the appropriate amount of interpreter coverage for your production.
- Recognize that in communities where there are fewer sign language interpreters, an interpreter's presence on your set may mean that interpreters are not available to the Deaf community at large that day for other things, such as medical appointments.
    - Only use the amount of sign language interpreters who are strictly necessary. Do not engage an interpreter if there are no Deaf cast/crew for that day, meeting, etc.
    - Scheduling is crucial to best use interpreter-budgeted funds and time.

Directors of Artistic Sign Language/Artistic Sign Language coaches

Furthermore, your production may also require the use of a Director of Artistic Sign Language (or DASL)/Artistic Sign Language coach (these terms are interchangeable). A DASL/or Artistic Sign Language coach will translate sides and scripts from a text-based language to the visual language of sign language, selecting the appropriate signs for the Deaf performer to use and ensuring that the meaning of a moment is effectively captured in sign language. Many DASLs/Artistic Sign Language coaches are Deaf and will also require the use of sign language interpreters while working on a production.

Deaf consultants

A Deaf consultant is a Deaf individual who provides training on Deaf culture, etiquette, and the use of sign language. They may be engaged for a variety of purposes, including reviewing scripts to provide notes to the writers on the accuracy of a rendering of a Deaf character (although this should not replace hiring a Deaf writer), checking sign language accuracy in the dailies or in post-production, advising on accessible production design systems with visual cueing, or providing input on which sign language interpreters should be hired to interpret for others on set. As Deaf individuals, these consultants will require the use of sign language interpreters while working on a production.

Personal support workers

People may require personal support workers (PSWs) who assist with daily functions. When working with disabled creatives who need PSWs, the PSW should be booked by the production and are not the financial responsibility of the disabled creative(s).

PSWs provide support with personal care needs like toileting, eating, or administering medication, or may assist with other needs like pacing and wayfinding.

When a disabled creative who requires a PSW is working in or near their home community, many disabled creatives will have a list of PSWs they work with regularly. However, if your production is shooting on location, the production may need to source an appropriate PSW for the disabled creative in that community, or include the disabled creative's desired PSW in travel costs for the production.

Service animals

Another type of disability service providers are service animals. The most common service animals are service dogs, but other service animals like service miniature horses also exist. Service animals are trained for particular tasks to assist their handler, including navigating public spaces and crowds, alerting to allergens, alerting for conditions like seizures, or providing assistance with bracing, applying pressure, or pulling doors open. Service animals on set are working animals and should not be touched or engaged with except as directed by the handler.

When preparing your set for a service animal, ensure that you plan to have a service clearly defined and known animal relief area to be used when needed and accessed at any time. It is also worthwhile to circulate a memo to crew about protocol around service animals.

Part 4: Accessible production processes on-set

In this section, you will find information on:

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

1. Identify who is required to take provincial accessibility training in your screen industry workplace and how to supplement provincially-required training with additional industry resources;
2. Ensure privacy for disabled creatives when implementing their accommodations;
3. Understand how assistive and adaptive technology providers and technicians can be leveraged on set to enable accessibility;
4. Evaluate sets, locations, transportation protocols and common spaces like trailers and honeywagons for built environment (i.e. physical space) accessibility, and develop protocols for working in inaccessible environments;
5. Implement best practices for working with disability service providers like sign language interpreters, personal support workers, and service animals on set; and
6. Implement best practices for working with disabled talent on set.

Executive summary:

This section begins by underscoring the importance of accessibility training for all team members. Productions are workplaces subject to accessibility legislation, making accessibility training—both compliance-based and industry-specific—essential to equipping teams with the knowledge that will allow them to identify barriers and apply best practices.

On-set accommodations should be proactively planned for during pre-production through onboarding, access riders and access intake processes, and budgeting, but during the production phase, these plans should remain flexible, as disability and access needs can evolve daily. Fostering the psychological sense of safety that many disabled creatives are in need of requires ongoing check-ins, clear communication processes, and respect for all requests regardless of when it occurs in the production process. Effective communication systems should enable continuous dialogue about and normalization of accommodations, while embedding disability inclusion into regular production processes and leadership discussions. However, maintaining privacy and confidentiality around accommodations are critical, with only the individuals who are necessary to put an accommodation in place receiving limited, task-specific information about accommodations.

The section further highlights the need for accessible workplace environments, encouraging collaboration across departments to identify and mitigate barriers across a variety of areas, including in-studio shoots, on location shoots, scheduling, transportation, trailers and honeywagons, common spaces like base camp/circus, and break and meal times.

It also outlines the critical role of assistive and adaptive technologies—from captioning and screen readers to gear like adaptive rigs and mouth switches—in enabling participation of disabled creatives. Furthermore, remote work is presented as a key accessibility tool that expands opportunities for disabled creatives across a variety of roles, though it requires the same sort of support, flexibility, and continued accommodation practices that are available to team members working in person.

The section also elaborates on the specific information that disability service providers such as interpreters, captioners, and personal support workers will need to effectively serve disabled clients on set, and that this process demands early coordination, clear expectations, and appropriate resourcing to ensure seamless integration into production processes.

Finally, the section acknowledges that no environment is fully accessible, and advocates for producers to provide transparency to their teams through sharing detailed accessibility information to allow their teams to prepare for, navigate, and address barriers effectively.

Key findings from the DSO's research:

57% of our survey respondents have a disability that is not apparent or immediately distinguishable upon initial interactions with others. Whether a disability is apparent or non-apparent, many disabled creatives have concerns about disclosing their disability at work, and many disabled creatives have concerns about what information their coworkers will have about their disability if they request accommodations.

Focus group data also shows that disabled creatives face stigma when disclosing their disability, and that many fear no longer getting work post-disclosure.

Across a variety of roles in the industry, participants in our focus groups stated that requesting accommodations or disclosing disability was often stigmatized, with many feeling a need to push through their work without requesting accommodations.

For those with fluctuating or dynamic disabilities, being able to request accommodations at any time and having the right accommodations available to them fosters a sense of psychological safety on set.

Participants in our crew-specific focus groups stated there were no physical supports available to them when setting up base camp/circus, with often a culture of one-upmanship and difficulty as a badge of honour existing in preparing sets and locations for shoot days.

The DSO's research found that shooting days of 10 to 12 hours are often not sustainable for many disabled performers and creatives, especially those with energy limiting conditions.

Accessibility training for production team members

A screen industry production is fundamentally a workplace, and workplaces are subject to provincial employment accessibility requirements. Depending on where your production is incorporated or shooting, you may have a provincial requirement to deliver accessibility training to your production staff (including contractors and volunteers). See our section on Provincial accessibility law for further details.

Regardless of whether you are bound by legislation to undertake provincially approved accessibility training, you may also want to have your team undertake complementary learning about how to enable accessibility in a screen industry setting, which is a non-traditional workplace.

The DSO offers the Accessibility and Disability e-Learning Series (ALDS),[61] an online, asynchronous e-learning program that teaches screen industry workers how to design and implement equitable and impactful processes and systems for people with disabilities on set and beyond and how to meaningfully include people with disabilities across the industry in various roles.

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- Identify common barriers to participation that may prevent people with disabilities from thriving within the sector;
- Provide guidance on applying accessibility best practices to remove those barriers; and
- Identify changes that can lead to improved disability inclusion in their own screen industry practices.

61 Disability Screen Office. *Accessibility & Disability e-Learning Series*. 2026. https://dso-orphe.ca/programs/accessibility-disability-e-learning-series.

Accommodations on set

In a perfect world, proactive planning has been done from the pre-production stage, and disabled creatives have immediate access to their accommodations when they arrive on-set for work. This can be accomplished by having formal onboarding processes for each hire, developing access intake processes for your production, and budgeting for accessibility (including having an accessibility contingency in the budget).

Even with excellent planning in the pre-production stage, it is important to understand that disability can fluctuate and evolve (even on a day-to-day basis). Disabilities are not always static, and can be episodic, chronic or dynamic and can be affected by a variety of factors. Furthermore, a person's feelings about and/or understanding of their disability can also change.

This means that accommodations can change throughout a project, or even throughout a day. Planned-for accommodations may not be needed and new accommodations needs may arise. This is why accommodations and meeting access needs require regular check-ins.

Regardless of whether a request for accommodation has been known to production since the pre-production phase or is brand new in the last days of production, all accommodation requests should be treated with the same level of respect and consideration. For those with fluctuating or dynamic disabilities, being able to request accommodations at any time and having the right accommodations available to them fosters a sense of psychological safety on set.[62]

Privacy for disabled creatives around accommodations

In our research, we found that 57% of our survey respondents have a disability that is not apparent or immediately distinguishable upon initial interactions with others.[63] Whether a disability is apparent or non-apparent, many disabled creatives have concerns about disclosing their disability at work, and many disabled creatives have concerns about what information their coworkers will have about their disability if they request accommodations. Focus group data also shows that disabled creatives face stigma when disclosing their disability, and that many fear no longer getting work post-disclosure.

It is crucial to remember that no one needs to reveal a diagnosis (either to their employer or to colleagues on set) to be entitled to accommodations. The reason for the accommodation should also be kept confidential between the employee and their direct supervisor.

62 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability.* 2025.
63 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

However, some disabled creatives are very public about their disability status and may want it to be shared with everyone as an advocacy tool. Some of these individuals may be people with visible disabilities, who often do not have the choice to disclose or not due to how their disability manifests. In these instances, allow the disabled creative to lead on what information is shared and with whom, and in the absence of their guidance, be as circumspect as possible.

Communicating accommodation needs with the crew

There are certain circumstances where a crew member may need to be looped into details about accommodations. For example, when working with a blind actor who uses a service dog, crew members will be in charge of creating and managing the service animal rest and relief area. A crew member may also need to know to bring a Director of Production who experiences chronic fatigue a chair to sit on between shots. However, in order to maintain privacy and confidentiality, it is important that crew members know about what to do in order to implement accommodations, but not why someone needs them. Specific information about providing accommodations should also be limited to only the crew members who will directly engage in the task of making the accommodation possible.

Additionally, allow disabled creatives to guide how they would like their accommodation needs communicated to others. Consider asking them for language that they would like to use when talking about their accommodations to others, and provide transparency to the disabled creative in question about who on the production will have access to this information.

To reduce stigma, be mindful of tone and language when communicating others' access needs. Talk about accommodations not as special treatment, but something available to everyone, similar to a break or access to craft services.

Evolving accommodations over the course of a project

As mentioned, accommodations may change for a disabled creative throughout a project. Some instances where this may be true include:

- Someone may feel more comfortable asking for accommodations after they have spent more time on the project;
- Conditions on the project may change that require modified or additional accommodations; or
- Some disabled creatives may only require accommodations under certain conditions, including conditions that may be difficult to foresee at the outset.

Some situations where accommodations may vary or evolve include:

- Night or early morning shoots, which may be more difficult for some depending on their energy level at certain times of day, or comfort working in environments with more or less light;
- Certain activities (e.g. high amounts of noise, high amounts of visual stimuli) may also exhaust or create an overstimulating (or, in certain scenarios) understimulating environment that can make it more difficult for some to focus or function; or
- Different setups have different energy costs, e.g. an action scene or a scene with stunts may require more exertion of energy from the disabled creative (whether they are cast or crew) over the course of takes.[64]

In our research, participants noted across roles in the industry that requesting accommodations or disclosing disability was stigmatized, with many feeling a need to push through without sick days or adjustments.[65]

In order to create a healthier on-set culture, create a process where people can communicate any changes in their access needs, or request new accommodations if they have not previously requested accommodations. On productions that have hired a dedicated accessibility role or team, this role/team will act as the primary point of communication for these conversations about accommodations. On productions that have not engaged this/these role(s), ensure that you create systems for this communication, whether it is documentation like an access rider that people can update at any time, or whether it is creating another formalized process to request accommodations for all production team members.

64 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.
65 ibid.

Regardless of production accessibility-specific staff, the availability of accommodations should be something that is regularly discussed by production staff in managerial-level roles. In the UK-based Creative Diversity Network and TV Access Project's The 5 As, which are guidelines for producers to adopt to ensure disability inclusion on-set,[66] suggests:

1. Disability inclusion should become a standing meeting point on agendas;
2. It is talked about at every stage of the production process;
3. Can be tied to other equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) key performance indicators;
4. Check-in regularly with disabled talent to receive feedback on access support provided; and
5. Adapt access plans, budgets and approaches, learning from each project.

The DSO recommendation is that managers go further, regularly checking in with all members of your production staff. Ensure they all know that their work can be adjusted and that accommodations are always available.

66 Creative Diversity Network. *The 5 As: Guidelines for Disability Inclusion in UK Television Production*. June 2023. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/The-5-As_FINAL_230822_0.pdf.

Accessible and safe sets and locations

Safety of sets and locations is a key area of consideration in productions. Accessibility should be included as a conversation point with the: health and safety team, accessibility team and locations department.

Questions to ask when scouting for locations include:

- What barriers are present? Who would this not be accessible to?
- What might be difficult for all members of the crew to accomplish in this setting?

Participants in our crew-specific focus groups stated there were no physical supports available to them when setting up base camp/circus, with often a culture of one-upmanship and difficulty as a badge of honour existing in preparing sets and locations for shoot days.[67]

For more information on what factors should be considered when scouting for locations (whether they are in-studio or on-site), see Sets and locations.

Access considerations for shooting on location versus in-studio

Location shoots can often be more inaccessible than shoots done in-studio. When shooting on location, more barriers can be present:

- Uneven terrain, stairs, gravel, ice;
- Inadequate wayfinding tools (versus an in-studio location where there are more opportunities for signage);
- Difficulty controlling temperature for those who are sensitive to heat and cold;
- Lack of shade;
- Difficulty associated with sourcing accessible vehicles (trailers, honeywagons); and
- Transportation challenges for those who need accessible transportation to and from the location, especially when shooting in areas that have fewer accessible transportation resources.

Click here for a list of accessibility considerations to keep in mind specific to shooting on location, prepared by the TV Access Project in the UK.[68]

67 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.
68 PACT UK. TAP *Toolkit: Accessibility – Spaces and Locations.* https://www.pact.co.uk/resource-hub/diversity-equity-inclusion/tap-toolkit/tap-accessibility-spaces-locations.html.

Shooting in-studio generally provides a more accessible experience in the built environment, with more factors able to be controlled by the production, especially once on set. However, producers must consider the accessibility of the whole studio facility, including:

- Accessible arrival and drop-off locations;
- Appropriate wayfinding tools;
- The availability of accessible parking on-site; and
- The accessibility of the path to and through the building including:
  - Handrails on steps;
  - The availability of ramps throughout;
  - The width of hallways and doors;
  - The availability of automatic door openers;
  - The quality of the floor surfaces;
  - How one changes levels throughout the building by ramp or elevator; and
  - The accessibility of washrooms.

The TV Access Project has also created a variety of checklists for evaluating set and location access. Checklists for film studio accessibility, interior location accessibility, and outdoor location accessibility can be found here.[69] Although these checklists are designed for the UK context and to meet UK accessibility legislation, you can apply the same principles when checking the accessibility of your locations.

These checklists also include a variety of considerations for creating inclusive environments for neurodivergent creatives. Although location accessibility is often most considered for those with physical disabilities, there are a variety of built environment (i.e. physical space) factors that can make locations less accessible for disabled creatives who are neurodiverse, including but not limited to:

- Obtaining information about the space prior to visiting (i.e. if there is a visual story available for the space);
  - A visual story, sometimes known as a social story, is an access tool that uses simple images and words to guide people through what they can expect at a place. Think of it as a step-by-step picture guide: how to get there, what the space looks like, what will happen, and any rules or routines in place.[70] There are several examples of visual stories written for a variety of contexts here.
  - Emergency exits and safety plans to ease anxiety;
  - Quiet rooms or calming spaces availability;
  - Floors and walls in distracting, busy patterns or colours; and
  - Outdoor or green space availability.[71]

69 Creative Diversity Network. *TAP Access Description Hub*. August 2024. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/tap-hub/.
70 SICK AF Collective. *Visual Story Access*. https://sickaf.com.au/accessibility/visual-story-access/.
71 Creative Diversity Network. *Production Buildings Audit Checklist*. April 2025.

Finding accessible locations using the DSO's Industry Resource Hub

The DSO hosts the Industry Resource Hub, a searchable online database of accessibility and disability-related resources, including a directory of venues with accessibility features available for rental in both the production and screenings contexts. While not every venue in this directory is completely barrier-free, this resource allows you to search venues by location and by some of the most common built environment (i.e. physical space) accessibility barriers. This directory provides easily accessible contact information, so that you can find the venue that suits your needs and contact them directly for a quote.

Leveraging local film commissioners

The film commission in the city in which you are producing or filming the project has a vested interest in you filming there. Local film commissioners can help source a location (either a studio location or an on-site location) that meets the access needs of the full team and know their cities best. Consider contacting the applicable local film commissioner for suggestions of accessible locations.

Assistive or adaptive technology providers and technicians: an overview

Assistive and adaptive technology can help meet the access needs of many disabled creatives in production. Common tools that can be leveraged in production to create more accessible environments include:

- Captioning, whether integrated into an online platform like Zoom or Google Meet, or
  - Free captions integrated into platforms are becoming more accurate, but in the largest study of English human and AI-based broadcast captions in three countries (the U.S., U.K. and Canada) over four years (2018 to 2022), human caption accuracy was significantly higher, achieving 98.9% to 99.4% accuracy compared to ASR's 95.7% to 96.3%.[72]
  - Increasingly, CART captioning is executed without the need to bring the captioner into the space, provided that a clear audio feed of the room is available.
- Screen readers, which allow blind, low-vision, and partially-sighted individuals to have web pages and documents read out loud to them.
  - This technology relies on documents and webpages being prepared for accessibility. Accessibility Standards Canada has a guide to creating accessible documents[73] that should inform the way you are providing written communication to all of your team members.

72 Romero-Fresco, Pablo, and Nuria Fresno. "Accuracy of Automatic and Human Live Captions in English." Linguistica Antverpiensia 22 (2023): 114–133.
73 Accessible Standards Canada. *Guidelines for Creating Accessible Documents.* November 13, 2025. https://accessible.canada.ca/guidelines-creating-accessible-documents.

- On set, audio describers can also assist blind, low-vision, and partially sighted individuals by describing what is happening around them.
- Notetaking tools like Otter.AI and Read.AI make it easier for people to participate in meetings without splitting their focus between taking notes and listening and speaking in the meeting.
    - Before using AI tools, remember to check whether there are limitations in your collective agreement with a screen industry union/guild/association that may prevent the use of AI tools, or whether there are employer policies that govern your production that may prevent the use of generative AI.
- Increasingly, large language learning models like Claude can assist disabled creatives or anyone with tasks like writing emails and creating templates for documents.
    - There may be copyright ramifications associated with feeding industry documents like scripts into a large language model. Ensure that you read the terms and conditions of use before employing these tools.
- Everyday tools like texting, voice notes, and video chat can also be leveraged for accessibility, depending on the situation and the communication preferences of the disabled creative in question.

The DSO hosts the Industry Resource Hub, a searchable online database of accessibility and disability-related resources, including a directory of accessible technology providers. This directory provides easily accessible contact information, so that you can find the provider that suits your needs and contact them directly for a quote.

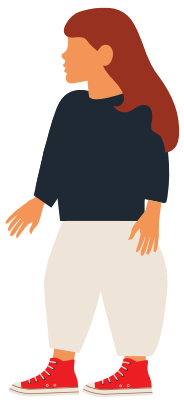
Using assistive technology on set

Assistive technology extends to adaptive equipment or tools that people can use alongside common pieces of film industry equipment. The Disabled Photographers' Society lists a variety of specific adaptive gear[74] that can be brought into the screen production context. Some examples include:

1. Rig equipment for cameras that can make it easier to carry cameras or to attach them to alternate parts of the body or a mobility device (e.g. a wheelchair); and
2. Switches that can make it easier to operate camera controls using the mouth or tongue.

Other assistive technology you can leverage on set includes:

- Additional lighting for wayfinding, especially for low-vision and partially-sighted creatives on-set;
- Floor markings and cable mats to ensure that cables are properly marked and taped down to avoid tripping hazards;
- Movable ramps with appropriate notice given to everyone on set as to when the ramp will be moved, if moved mid-shoot;
- Audio cues (e.g. a bell) to alert blind, low-vision, and partially sighted creatives; or
- Visual cues (e.g. a cue light or a traffic light system) to be used for calling cues like "quiet on set" for d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing creatives equal access to on-set information.



74 Disabled Photographers' Society. *Adaptations*. https://www.the-dps.co.uk/adaptations-2/.

Using assistive technology to enable remote work

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of voiceover work took place in-studio. Now, the majority of voiceover work is conducted in home studios across the country, making it possible for actors to have a fulsome creative career while working remotely. There are other circumstances to participate in film and television production without being present on-site, which may make for a more accessible environment for a variety of disabled creatives:

- See our section on Writing for more information about Zoom writers rooms in the Accessible Writers' Lab case study report.
- Directors can direct remotely using software like Zoom, OpenReel, or Riverside to have visibility of what is going on on set.
- Members of the camera department (like digital imaging technicians) may be able to work remotely, especially if post-production work is being conducted remotely.
- See Part 5 on Accessible Post-Production for more information on remote work within post-production.

Although remote work will not be possible in every circumstance, consider if everyone needs to be physically present on set in order for the work to be done.

Remote work is an accommodation in and of itself, but other accommodations may also be needed or work may need to be adapted for remote work to be effective. For example, remote workers may need to work asynchronously on projects to align with when someone has the most energy available to them or may need specialized software provided to them. When a worker is remote, regular accessibility check-ins are still required. Research participants in our post-production specific focus groups (where workers are more likely to work remotely) noted a lack of accessible workplaces and flexible work structures and long hours.[75]

> The DSO encourages you to provide equity of experience wherever possible: if your production is paying a crew kit fee or providing meals for those working in person, best practice is to provide those things to your remote workers as well.

75 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

Best practices for working in inaccessible environments

There is no such thing as "fully accessible," even in locations that are designed to be barrier-free. People can encounter barriers to access anywhere. To prepare your team for the relative accessibility or inaccessibility of an environment, provide an accessibility information pack ahead of time about each production location to the full team. This allows everyone to best prepare for inaccessible elements, problem solve, or request accommodations. The information pack should contain as much information as possible, including:

- Photos of key areas on site;
- A video walk-through of the location;
  - Include parking or bus stops people may use;
- A complete map of locations (ideally designed to be plain language and Easy Read);
- Photos of key personnel who will be on site that a disabled creative can go to with questions about site accessibility;
  - This could be the location manager or a dedicated accessibility-focused crew member.
- Include accessibility checklists for the site and any relevant notes;
- Include details on anything that isn't accessible, such as number of stairs, details about uneven terrain, naturally lit or dark spaces, or locations with a large degree of walking time, etc; and
- Times of shooting, and transportation options pre- and post- shoot. This should also be included on the callsheet.[76]

Note: If some accessibility measures cannot be provided in an inaccessible environment (such as accessible trailers, door to door transportation, accessible rest areas, etc.), it is important to be transparent about that as early as possible. This transparency prevents assumptions being made, promotes open communication and fosters opportunities to find solutions.

76 Creative Diversity Network. *TV Access Project: Exterior Location Access Guide*. April 2025. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/TAP-Exerior-Location-Access-Guide-230425.pdf.

Accessible transportation

Over half a million Canadians with a mobility disability consider themselves housebound; 19.7% say it is because accessible transportation is not available.[77] Especially when working with disabled creatives with mobility disabilities, considering how disabled creatives will get to and from set is a key part of enabling accessibility.

Many forms of accessible transportation (including public transit, paratransit, and even private accessible taxi companies) have issues with reliability and punctuality. Public transit and paratransit also may only be available at particular hours. Accessible transit and paratransit may not always take a disabled creative from door to door, leaving them to navigate the "last mile" independently. Finding the right accessible transportation solution may require connecting with the local disability community, and may also require that the production rents and operates an accessible vehicle and staffs a driver to provide accessible transportation.

The TV Access Project also provides some key considerations for accessible parking practices, to serve those who are driving a vehicle to and from set:

1. Check that there is parking available at the location and accommodation;
2. Check that the parking lot is well-marked, and that the accessible parking spaces are easily identifiable;
3. Accessible parking spaces should ideally be on firm level ground, rather than on gravelled or sloping surfaces;
4. Offer to have staff on hand to assist people from their cars to the entrance, especially if the parking lot is not on a level surface;
5. There should ideally be clearance at the end of each accessible parking space to allow access to the trunk and any wheelchair ramps or hoists associated with the vehicle; and
6. Confirm with the location management that they will monitor the use of accessible parking spaces to make sure they're not used by people who do not need them.[78]

For those working on unionized productions, ensuring accessible transportation is not just best practice, it is required. In the current 2025-2027 Independent Production Agreement (IPA), the agreement between the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), and the Association Québécoise de la Production Médiatique (AQPM), Article A1709 "Travel and Expenses" states:

77 Statistics Canada. *Canadians with a Mobility Disability*. 2020. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2020085-eng.htm.
78 PACT UK. *TAP Toolkit: Accessibility – Spaces and Locations*. https://www.pact.co.uk/resource-hub/diversity-equity-inclusion/tap-toolkit/tap-accessibility-spaces-locations.html.

> *"Suitable and appropriate transportation (e.g., a production vehicle or taxi) will be provided to Performers who require accommodation for a disability or if circumstances warrant the provision of such transportation."*[79]

Similar language exists in the agreement which governs unionized performers in British Columbia and the Yukon, in the current 2025-2028 BC Master Production Agreement (BCMPA), an agreement between between the Union of British Columbia Performers/Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (UBCP/ACTRA) and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), under Article A1703 Transportation Provided Under Certain Conditions:

> *"When the Producer requires a Performer to travel within the Studio Zone, the Producer will be obligated to ensure that public or private transportation is available. If such public or private transportation is not available and subject to prior approval by the Producer, cost of taxi transportation from location to residence within the Studio Zone shall be paid by the Producer. Transportation shall be provided by the Producer if travel by the quickest means of surface public transportation exceeds one (1) hour each way. Suitable and appropriate transportation (i.e., a Production vehicle or a taxicab) will be provided to Performers who require accommodation due to a disability."*[80]

Accessible trailers

Ensure that you are speaking to your trailer and honeywagon (portable toilet) rental providers about accessible honeywagons and trailers, i.e. those that do not have steps up to enter, have accessible bathrooms and counters, common areas, etc. Although these vehicles are in limited supply throughout North America, they are available and should be budgeted for if required.

Where possible, have accessible trailers for craft services, wardrobe and hair and make-up – everyone can use the same facilities. If not possible, source an alternative accessible space that can be used.[81]

79 ACTRA, CMPA, and AQPM. *Independent Production Agreement*, 2025–2027. 2025. https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ACTRA-CMPA-AQPM-Independent-Production-Agreement-2025-2027_OFFICIAL-COPY.pdf/.

80 UBCP/ACTRA. 2025-2028 *British Columbia Master Production Agreement*. 2025 https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2025-2028-UBCPACTRA-BCMPA.pdf.

81 Creative Diversity Network. *TV Access Project: Exterior Location Access Guide*. April 2025. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/TAP-Exerior-Location-Access-Guide-230425.pdf.

Working with disability service providers on set

As a producer, ensure that information about set basics and etiquette is shared with disability service providers, who may not be aware of where to go, what to do, who to speak to, and how a set operates. Make no assumptions that people just know what's happening and understand. Check in with providers regularly, and understand that miscommunication may still happen if it's someone's first time on a set. This has an additional accessibility benefit: learning to communicate clearly for service providers or brand new people on set makes the information more clear for everyone (including emerging creatives and neurodivergent creatives who may benefit from additional explanations).

Sign language interpreters

Be sure to provide preparatory materials for sign language interpreters ahead of time, including full scripts and a list of screen industry jargon or terms. Scripts should be provided as soon as possible to the interpreters, but no less than 48 hours in advance. Ensure that you communicate ahead of time when the interpreter will receive the day's call sheet.

While interpreting, interpreters will need to be well-lit and to be in sight of the Deaf person. For where to position the interpreter when working with Deaf actors, see our section on Guidelines for auditioning deaf performers. These guidelines that can be applied to on-set practices. Interpreters will interpret everything that is being said. Loud environments or a lot of cross-talk means it is difficult for the interpreter to provide equitable communication to the Deaf person.

The Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters provides general best practices for working with sign language interpreters, including:

- Speak at a normal pace;
- Speak directly to the Deaf person, not to the interpreter;
- Permit time for the interpretation process;
- If the interpreting team includes a Deaf Interpreter (DI), allow time for the process to complete before continuing;
- Understand that everything you say will be interpreted;
- Avoid speaking slower or louder than you normally would;
- Don't say 'tell him' or 'tell her'; just talk directly to the Deaf person;
- Don't say 'don't interpret this part'- the interpreter will interpret everything you say;
- Don't hold the interpreter responsible for what is or is not said; the interpreter is the medium not the source of the message;
- It is best to avoid the use of expressions; they rarely translate well into another language;
- Present your ideas clearly;
- Avoid changing your idea mid-sentence; and
- Try not to ask multiple questions at the same time.[82]

82 Ontario Association for Sign Language Interpreters. *Working with an Interpreter*. 2026. https://www.oasli.on.ca/index.php/interpreters/when-to-use-an-interpreter.

Personal support workers

When working with a PSW for a disabled creative on production, ensure that:

- The disabled creative is centered and has agency and consent throughout the process;
- You include the disabled creative in the process of choosing the PSW; and
- You include the disabled creative in any meetings you have with the PSW.

Before bringing the PSW on set, meet to discuss what kinds of tasks the PSW will be providing support for, including wayfinding, social support, changing clothing or toileting, medication administration and meal support, and allow the disabled creative and PSW to ask questions about how these tasks will occur.

Make sure details of the care remain confidential between the disabled creative and the PSW. Either the PSW or the disabled creative should be in conversation with the production about where and when certain tasks can and should occur for greater ease such as:

- If more frequent breaks are needed in order to enable better bathroom access;
- If mealtimes need to be at a certain time to line up with a medication schedule;
- If collaboration with the wardrobe team is needed in order to help the disabled creative change; and
- If there are certain tools needed on set like bendable straws being made available at craft services.

As with sign language interpreters, be sure to provide the PSW with preparatory materials like full scripts and a list of screen industry jargon or terms. Scripts should be provided as soon as possible to the PSW, but no less than 48 hours in advance. Ensure that you communicate ahead of time when the PSW will receive the day's call sheet.

Service animals

Some disabled creatives may come with their own service animal. Service animals will need:

- A place to relieve themselves;
- Space to rest close to their handler; and
- A watering dish or place to get water.

Communicate directly with the disabled creative to understand what the crew should know about their service animal.

A reminder: service animals are allowed where their handler goes, are protected by law, and are considered a medical device and not a pet. Inform your team at large when working with a service animal so that you can navigate others' needs (e.g. allergies, fear of animals). Education may also be needed. Remind everyone on set that service animals are working animals who should not be interacted with while working.

Working with disabled talent

Call sheet & paperwork

Before a disabled performer arrives on set, they will need to read the call sheet to determine when to arrive. Call sheets also need to meet stated access needs. Common accessibility modifications to the call sheet include:

- Providing the call sheet in an alternate format;
  - PDFs are not typically an accessible format for those who use screen readers;
  - Call sheets are typically written with tables. Tables are not generally accessible to those who use screen readers, unless they have been remediated. A non-tabled format is suggested;
- In a large-print version;
- In an Easy Read or plain language version;
- Written with a dyslexia-friendly font;

The BBC's Creative Diversity department has developed a collection of Easy Read production templates,[83] including an easy read call sheet that you can adapt for your production.
On the call sheet, provide:

- A map of designated disabled parking spots, taxi and bus stops and directions to base camp/circus;
- A glossary of any abbreviations used for the benefit of those who may be on set for the first time; and
- An easy read map of base camp/circus.

UK-based film and TV access consultancy organization Brazen Productions has developed a template of how to create an easy read map of your base camp/circus[84] (referred to here as a unit base, the UK term).

83 British Broadcasting Corporation. "Easy Read Templates for Productions." *Creative Diversity*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/creativediversity/templates.
84 Brazen Productions Inclusive Practice & Production Consultancy. *Templates.* https://www.brazenproductions.co.uk/resources.

Trailers and associated private spaces

After arriving on set, performers typically head to hair, makeup and wardrobe. These typically occur in trailers. Know your performers' access needs before asking them to use a standard trailer with step access. Depending on your performers' access needs, you may need to rent a specialized accessible trailer for production, or use another step-free space for hair, makeup, and wardrobe.

Be sure to also consider the accessibility of your washroom facilities. For unionized productions, In the current 2025-2027 Independent Production Agreement (IPA), the agreement between the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), and the Association Québécoise de la Production Médiatique (AQPM), A2001 "Dressing Room and Sanitary Provisions" states:

> *(a)(vii) Clean, accessible and working toilets and washrooms that are within a reasonable distance from set, taking into account location logistics, and subject to the Producer's duty to accommodate in accordance with applicable human rights laws.*
>
> *(viii) With respect to the facilities described in subparagraphs (a)(i) to (a)(vii) above, the Producer shall provide accommodation to a Performer with a disability when required by applicable human rights legislation.*[85]

Similar language exists in the agreement which governs unionized performers in British Columbia and the Yukon, in the current 2025-2028 BC Master Production Agreement (BCMPA),[86] an agreement between the Union of British Columbia Performers/Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (UBCP/ACTRA) and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), under Article A2001 Dressing Room, Holding Area and Sanitary Provisions.

For unionized productions working with minors, remember that minors who are older than 15 days of age and younger than 2 years of age must be provided with *"a separate, sanitary room for the care and rest of Infants employed. This will include a crib, a changing table, and a private, quiet, and warm room where the Infant may be fed and may rest without being held. Infant accessories provided by the Production company, such as bassinets, cribs, and changing tables must be sanitized at the time of delivery to set and on a regular basis."*[87] Minors between the ages of 3 and 5 years of age and under must be provided with *"a separate, cheerful playroom, complete with basic toys and games, where practicable."* Care should be taken to ensure that these spaces are accessible as well.

85 ACTRA, CMPA, and AQPM. *Independent Production Agreement*, 2025–2027. 2025. https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ACTRA-CMPA-AQPM-Independent-Production-Agreement-2025-2027_OFFICIAL-COPY.pdf.

86 UBCP/ACTRA. 2025-2028 *British Columbia Master Production Agreement*. 2025. https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2025-2028-UBCPACTRA-BCMPA.pdf.

87 ACTRA, CMPA, and AQPM. *Independent Production Agreement*, 2025–2027. https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ACTRA-CMPA-AQPM-Independent-Production-Agreement-2025-2027_OFFICIAL-COPY.pdf.

Wardrobe

Share performers' access needs regarding wardrobe with the department (when appropriate) ahead of time. This will allow for appropriate preparation time and so that performers can be given appropriate costuming for their needs, which can include:

- Fabric that is safe for their sensory sensitivities;
- Seamless and/or tag-free base layers and underwear;
- Pieces that do not restrict their range of motion;
- Pieces that do not get caught on their mobility aids;
- Pieces that are easy for them to get in and out of independently to use the washroom (or for minors, with the assistance and supervision of their chaperone/parent/guardian, Since they must be present when the child is being dressed or handled); and
- Shoes that they feel comfortable walking in.

If a performer will be provided with a mobility aid to use, make sure proper measurements are taken for the mobility aid beforehand, as improperly fitted mobility aids can cause pain and injury. If the performer will be using their own mobility aid on set, discuss it with the performer (or for minors, their parent or guardian) beforehand.

Additionally, background performers are also often asked to bring their own clothing options to set. Many disabled background performers may be limited in what they can bring due to their mobility aids or transportation. They may not be able to carry a bag with them. Those working on unionized productions should also keep in mind that requiring additional clothing options may incur fees, and they should contact their union representative for more information.

Craft services and meal breaks

Check that production has documented all of the performers' dietary restrictions and allergies and provides food for each individual in line with these access needs. Label food according to all crew needs. Consider counter and table heights for those using mobility aids or those with different statures, like little people.

Shooting

The DSO study found shooting days of 10 to 12 hours are often not sustainable for many disabled performers and creatives, especially those with energy limiting conditions.[88] Consider alternate schedules (see Scheduling for further details). For unionized productions working with minors, work hours, breaks from set, meal breaks, tutor requirements and ability to work overtime are noted in the applicable collectively bargained agreement for minors by age group.

When shooting Deaf performers who communicate using sign language, remember that sign languages are visual languages with meaning that is communicated through facial expressions and body language. It is important to frame shots to capture both facial expressions and hand movement (whenever possible) to communicate the full extent of the sign language communication.

When a disabled performer will be separated from their own personal mobility aid when shooting (e.g. when that mobility aid is not period-appropriate), the mobility aid should be taken from them as close as possible to the beginning of shooting, and returned to them as quickly as possible whenever appropriate (e.g. between takes, between scenes). The production should create and communicate a safe place on set where the mobility aid should be stored.

If a crew member needs to touch a personal mobility aid, give them appropriate training about how to handle the mobility aid to the right people in order to prevent damage. Mobility aids can be seen as an extension of someone's body and should be treated as such. While the disabled performer may have preferences about how the mobility aid is handled that should be respected, the onus should not be on the disabled performer to provide specific, lengthy training about how to handle their mobility aid. Productions can secure training on handling mobility aids through accessibility consultants listed on the DSO's Industry Resource Hub. These accessibility consultants can also help productions formulate a plan for what to do if a performer's mobility aid incurs damage on-set.

Production typically operates with a series of called verbal/audible cues (e.g. the 1st Assistant Director calling action). However, these cues may not be able to be heard by all disabled performers, especially d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing performers. Be aware of your performers' access needs around hearing, and consider developing alternate systems (like using cue lights or traffic light systems) to call cues if that meets the access needs of your team.

88 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability.* 2025.

Downtime, breaks and rest areas

Have appropriate seating arrangements that match your performers' access needs, including background performers, who often have a significant amount of downtime between scenes. Some seating considerations to remember include (but are not limited to):

- Spaces with appropriate clearance for wheelchair users to sit (especially sitting in front of tables);
- Chairs at a variety of seat heights, including for little people;
- Extra seating for disabled performers may have support workers or attendant care with them on set; and
- A variety of seating or resting options, including chairs with and without armrests.

A disabled performer may need to sit down or rest between takes more often than a nondisabled performer. This additional time can be built into the schedule. Consider having a dedicated rest area on set.

Similarly, a disabled performer may take longer to use the washroom, require it more often, or require attendant care. Plan for this and plan your honeywagon trailers appropriately to guard against washroom emergencies. Adjust your schedule to allow for more frequent bathroom breaks as needed.

For unionized productions working with minors, work hours, breaks from set, meal breaks, tutor requirements and ability to work overtime are noted for minors by age group in the appropriate collectively bargained agreement. Note that an infant room or access to one with a washing facility to clean up would be desirable, if they are not near their trailer (in the case of satellite holding, during downtime or short breaks from set).

Part 5: Accessible post-production

In this section, you will find information on:

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

1. Identify key differences in creating accessible work environments for in-house post-production professionals and third party post-production professionals;
2. Implement common physical and temporal accommodations for your post-production professionals; and
3. Identify assistive technology that may be of use to post-production professionals in the editing suite.

Executive summary:

Implementing accessibility in post-production varies significantly depending on whether work is conducted in-house or through third-party contractors. In-house arrangements allow producers to directly ensure ergonomic workspaces, flexible lighting, adjustable desks, and other accommodations that support physical and sensory access needs, as well as needs that support neurodiversity, such as quiet spaces and private work areas. Third-party arrangements offer less direct control over these conditions, but still require proactive communication to ensure accessibility, specifically around work hours and reasonable deadlines.

Across both models, temporal accommodations like clear, realistic schedules, asynchronous workflows, and task-based deadlines all help mitigate stress and allow post-production professionals to work with their access needs met. Assistive technology also plays a critical role in enabling access in this phase of production, through screen reader-compatible software, captioning or audio description tools, and hardware adaptations for motor or sensory support, ensuring that disabled creatives can fully participate in all aspects of post-production work.

Key findings from the DSO's research:

Research participants in our post-production focus groups noted unreasonably tight deadlines, no latitude for sick days, or a culture of being expected to make up for delays experienced elsewhere in production.

A key opportunity to improve accessibility is in the post-production environment. In our research, disabled creatives working in post production often commented that they struggle with inaccessible workspaces, as well as inflexible and long work hours with no breaks to meet tight deadlines. Post-production staff also are at risk for repetitive stress injuries and ergonomic issues due to long hours spent at a desk and in front of a screen. Research participants in post-production noted unreasonably tight deadlines, no latitude for sick days, or a culture of being expected to make up for delays experienced elsewhere in production.[89]

89 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

Differences between styles of post production arrangements

Depending on the style of post-production arrangement, you can create more accessibility (in the case of in-house post-production) or advocate for more accessibility (in the case of third party post-production).

In-house

"In-house" post-production means engaging the post-production professionals directly as the production. In that case, producers should consider the ergonomics and built environment (i.e. physical space) accessibility of post-production workspaces (whether the professionals are working from an in-person workspace or working from home).

The UK-based TV Access Project has created a variety of checklists for evaluating set and location access, including a checklist for production buildings that includes considerations for the post-production environment listed below:[90]

- Are there adjustable height desks available?
- Are there also desks of different sizes available for use?
- Is there a variety of seating available, including some with arms, some without; seating of different heights?
- Is there desk space for two wheelchairs to be next to each other; also for someone to have their support worker or interpreters with them?
- Is there space for an assistance dog out of the path of travel?
- Is there a turning space by the desk for a wheelchair user?
- Is there flexible lighting provided, including a balanced-arm lamp?
- Is there a variety of hardware e.g. ergonomic keyboards / mouse types / screen sizes available?
- Has appropriate software been provided for the user?[91]

Although these checklists are designed for the UK context and to meet UK accessibility legislation, you can apply the same principles when evaluating the accessibility of your post-production environment.

90 Creative Diversity Network. *TV Access Project Production Buildings Access Description Checklist*. April 2025. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/TAP-Production-Buildings-Audit-Checklist-04-2025-1.pdf.
91 Creative Diversity Network. *Production Buildings Audit Checklist*. April 2025. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/TAP-Production-Buildings-Audit-Checklist-04-2025-1.pdf.

In the in-house context, producers should also consider how post-production employees who will be engaging with visuals and sound could want ear protection, like noise-cancelling headphones, or eye protection, like software with dark mode capabilities.

Also consider the pace of work in post-production, encouraging healthy breaks and rest periods, even when working on deadline.

Third party

"Third party" post-production means contracting out your post-production to an external company, which gives you as the producer less control over working conditions and the accessibility measures adopted within someone else's private business (including many of the ergonomic factors listed in the previous section). However, that does not mean that you can't make accessibility part of how you work with contractors, particularly when it comes to asking third-party companies about what their team needs regarding:

- Communications styles;
- Working hours; and
- Necessities to reach deadlines without overwork.

Working with disabled post-production professionals

Physical accommodations

It's best to let anyone who is in a computer-heavy role to be in control of how their work station is set up, to allow their set-up to respond to their own access needs through:

- The orientation of their desk (e.g. seated desk vs. standing desk);
- Monitor set up;
- Type and positioning of chair; and
- Availability and quality of light sources (including dimmable lights, blinds and window coverings), etc.

When working with post-production professionals, acknowledge that a finely-tuned workstation is of utmost importance, and that this degree of specificity is less possible to achieve when someone has to work in a hot-desking or desk-sharing scenario.

Additionally, hot-desking, drop-down desks, or having their desk used as storage can be a source of stress for neurodivergent workers, as can open-plan office settings. Quiet spaces and closed doors allow for privacy, ease sensory load, and promote focus. Some of these accommodations can be most easily achieved in private homes; consider whether your team needs to work in-office at all in order to do their best work.

Temporal accommodations

The post-production landscape is known to experience very long days and pushes towards very tight deadlines. Best practice is to communicate deadlines at the beginning of an engagement (whether the post-production is being done in-house or third-party), managing expectations and fair workloads. There should be a clearly established process for how changes in deadlines will be communicated to the post-production team at large. It is not best practice to have the post-production team striving to "make up" time that was lost in the pre-production or production phases; develop a realistic schedule for the post-production phase and allow your team of professionals to use that full amount of time to complete their work.

Consider allowing post-production workers the flexibility to set their own schedules to suit their lifestyles, caregiving responsibilities, conditions, or energy levels. As opposed to other areas of film production, it is more possible for post-production workers to work asynchronously across timezones, working to task-based, pre-determined deadlines with clearly communicated check-in points.

In order for these accommodations to succeed, create clear communication channels that provide information in writing alongside a variety of other formats, and allow those that need time to process conversations time to come back to ask questions and receive clarification. Determine preferred or needed methods of communication, such as providing recordings of video meetings, followed up by an itemized email summary. This allows disabled creatives, including those who are neurodivergent, those with learning disabilities or memory loss, or those who experience brain fog to rely less on memory to absorb information, and to return to key conversations as many times as they need to.

Assistive technology in the editing suite

It is important to remember that if the editor is blind, low-vision or partially-sighted, clips may need to be audio described. Similarly, d/Deaf or hard of hearing editors may need clips captioned for them to piece together the story. Additionally, specific headers or organization methods within video editing software may need to be adapted so information isn't only provided in a visual or audio format.

There are a variety of technological tools that can make post-production more accessible. Although some of the most industry-standard editing tools like Avid Media Composer and Davinci Resolve do not have in-built support for some of the most common computer-based access needs (e.g. support for screen readers, ability to use the software one-handed), editing software like Adobe's Final Cut Pro and Premiere Pro and media management software like Alteon.io[92] provide native accessibility support.

Machine learning-assisted tools can also make the post-production environment more accessible to disabled creatives, including blind, low-vision and partially-sighted disabled creatives, who may be able to edit using software such as AVscript[93] (which allows them to navigate and edit videos via screen readers), and Descript[94] (which allows editors to edit video by editing a text transcript).

Before using AI tools, remember to check whether there are limitations in your collective agreement with a screen industry union/guild/association that may prevent the use of AI tools, or whether there are employer policies that govern your production that may prevent the use of generative AI. There may also be copyright ramifications associated with feeding industry documents like scripts into a large learning model. Ensure that you read the terms and conditions of use before employing these tools.

Additional assistive technology that may make the editing suite more accessible include Apple's Switch Control feature,[95] and keyguards to reduce unintentional key presses for editors who may experience challenges with motor control like Clearkeys.[96]

92 Alteon. https://alteon.io/.
93 Mina Huh, Saelyne Yang, Yi-Hao Peng, Xiang "Anthony" Chen, Young-Ho Kim, and Amy Pavel, "AVscript: Accessible Video Editing with Audio-Visual Scripts," in *Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (CHI '23), April 23–28, 2023, Hamburg, Germany (New York, NY: ACM, 2023), 17 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3544548.3581494.
94 Descript. https://www.descript.com/
95 Apple. Use Switch Control to Navigate Your iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch. March 2025. https://support.apple.com/en-ca/119835.
96 Clearkeys. https://altproducts.com/clearkeys-low-vision-keyboard-high-contrast/.

Part 6: Definitions and terms

DSO's definition of disability

Pain-related	pain due to a long-term or chronic condition that has lasted or expected to last 6 months or more
Chronic condition, or health issue	
Flexibility	difficulty bending down, reaching objects
Mobility	difficulty walking, using stairs, using hands/fingers or doing other physical activities
Mental health-related	for example, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder or eating disorder
Hearing	d/Deaf or hard of hearing, difficulty hearing even if using a hearing aid
Seeing	blind, low-vision or partially-sighted, difficulty seeing even if wearing glasses or contact lenses
Learning	for example, dyslexia or dysgraphia
Dexterity	difficulty picking up objects, and/or grasping objects with fingers
Memory	ongoing memory problems or periods of confusion that limit your daily activities
Developmental	for example, Down Syndrome or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
Neurodivergence	for example, autism or attention deficit disorder like ADHD
Dwarfism	
Amputee, limb or facial difference	
Other	condition or health problem that has lasted or expected to last six months or more

Disabled people or people with disabilities are those with actual or perceived impairments that may be physical, mental or learning conditions that have long-term, temporary, chronic, episodic or fluctuating effects. These impairments may be apparent or nonapparent.

Some common experiences of disability are listed here. Disabled people or people with disabilities may identify with one or more of the categories below, may identify as having an invisible or non-apparent disability, may identify as having mixed abilities, or may identify with the experience of having episodic disability.

This definition of disability was created in collaboration with the DSO's Research Project Working Group, a diverse group of disabled creatives working professionally throughout the screen sector. The framing of the definition was established based on existing definitions of disability, both legally-recognized definitions of disability (such as the Accessible Canada Act definition of disability[97] or the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act definition of disability) as well as definitions of disability used in other disability arts contexts, such as the Canada Council for the Arts' definition of disability.

Models of disability

There are different ways to think about disability:

Medical model of disability: Disability is seen as a problem resulting from a condition and often diagnosis. Disability is something that needs to be "fixed" or "cured", typically by a medical professional, and disability is something that happens to a single person.[98]

Social model of disability: Disability is not a deficit that lies within the individual. Barriers in society, not the medical condition, are what is disabling and limit the access of people with disabilities to fully participate. It is a societal responsibility to remove these barriers to ensure social inclusion for all.[99]

97 Government of Canada. *Accessible Canada Act Summary*. December 13, 2022. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada/act-summary.html.
98 George Brown College. "Disability and Variability." *Universal Design for Learning: Inspiring Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education*. https://udlontario.georgebrown.ca/engagement/equity-education-and-anti-oppressive-frameworks/disability-and-variability/.
99 ibid.

Rights-based model of disability: The human rights-based model of disability builds on the social model. It recognizes that people with disabilities have rights, and asserts that the state and others have a responsibility to respect those rights. The model comes from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This model says that the barriers in society are in fact discriminatory, and gives disabled people routes through which they can assert their rights and complain when they encounter those barriers. The human rights model also acknowledges that disability is a natural part of human diversity and a part of identity, and therefore, they are entitled to the same rights, opportunities, and privileges of persons without disabilities.[100]

Ableism

Ableism is a belief system analogous to racism, sexism, or ageism, that sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others. Ableism may be conscious or unconscious, and may be embedded in institutions, systems or the broader culture of a society. It can limit the opportunities of persons with disabilities and reduce their inclusion in the life of their communities. Ableist attitudes are often based on the view that disability is "not normal," rather than an inherent and expected variation in the human condition. Ableism may also be expressed in ongoing paternalistic and patronizing behaviour toward people with disabilities.[101]

Accessibility

A general term for the degree of ease that something (e.g., device, service, physical environment and information) can be accessed, used and enjoyed by persons with disabilities. The term implies conscious planning, design and/or effort to make sure something is barrier-free to people with disabilities. When something is accessible, it does not have obstacles for people with disabilities, e.g. something that can be easily reached or obtained; a facility that can be easily entered; information that is easy to access.[102]

Barriers to accessibility

Anything that prevents a person from fully taking part in all aspects of society, including physical, architectural, information or communications, attitudinal, economic and technological barriers, as well as policies or practices.[103]

100 Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health. "Models of Disability." *Accessibility & Accommodations Toolkit.* https://campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/accessibility-and-accommodations/disability/models-of-disability/.
101 Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Policy on Ableism and Discrimination Based on Disability*. https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability.
102 Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Appendix 1: Glossary of Human Rights Terms*. https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/teaching-human-rights-ontario-guide-ontario-schools/appendix-1-glossary-human-rights-terms.
103 ibid.

Accommodations

Workplace accommodation is any change in the work environment or the terms and conditions of employment that allows a person with limitations in their abilities, or who faces barriers from the standard rules and conditions of work, to perform their job. Accommodation is necessary to ensure that persons experiencing disability have equal opportunities, access and benefits.[104] Seeking accommodations is protected in labour law and human right legislation.

Duty to accommodate

Employers and service providers have an obligation to adjust rules, policies or practices to enable employees to participate fully. This obligation applies to needs that are related to the grounds of discrimination. This obligation is called the duty to accommodate. The duty to accommodate means that sometimes it is necessary to treat someone differently in order to prevent or reduce discrimination. It refers to the legal obligation that employers and service providers have to make changes to either physical spaces or policies to ensure that everyone can be included. For example, asking all job applicants to pass a written test may not be fair to a person with a visual disability. In such cases, the duty to accommodate may require that alternate arrangements be made to ensure that a person or group can fully participate.[105]

Access needs

Access needs are those things that are needed in order for someone to fully participate in a space or activity, which can include wheelchair access, scent-free space, ASL interpretation, etc. In a disability justice context, access needs are seen as universal—every person has needs, not just disabled people.[106] Access needs are informal, and everyone has them. Accommodations are legal obligations, and to receive accommodations, you may need to provide supporting medical information.

Access friction or tangles

Access friction or access tangles describes a situation in which people have seemingly conflicting access needs. An example might be a situation in which one person works with a service dog and another person has a serious dog allergy. Creating a space that is accessible to both these people will present access friction.[107] Access friction can also exist with cultures or institutional needs, such friction with working hours or being outside for long periods of time.

104 Canadian Association for Supported Employment. *Accommodation*. https://www.supportedemployment.ca/hrtoolkit/accommodations/.
105 Canadian Human Rights Commission. *Duty to Accommodate.* https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/individuals/human-rights/duty-accommodate.
106 Rooted in Rights. *Accessibility / Access Needs.* https://rootedinrights.org/stories/blog/topics/accessibility/.
107 Silverman, Sarah. "Navigating 'Access Friction' in Teaching." *Beyond the Scope.* May 23, 2024. https://beyondthescope.substack.com/p/navigating-access-friction-in-teaching.

Part 7: Accommodations

In this section, you will find information on:

- Introduction to accommodations
- How accommodations work
- Accommodations and the law

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

1. Identify common myths and misconceptions about accommodations;
2. Name different types of accommodations and provide specific examples;
3. Understand when the duty to accommodate must be met;
4. Understand how to begin a conversation with a disabled creative about accommodations;
5. Implement an accommodation in a way that respects the privacy and dignity of the disabled creative who needs an accommodation; and
6. Navigate conflicting accommodation needs between team members.

Executive summary:
This section explains that accommodations in the screen industry are grounded in both federal and provincial disability rights legislation, obligating employers and service providers to ensure equitable access and participation for all workers. Misconceptions about accommodations, such as that they are costly or provide preferential treatment, are countered with evidence showing that most accommodations are low-cost or no-cost and benefit the work environment as a whole by fostering flexibility and inclusivity.

Accommodations can be physical (e.g., ramps, ergonomic furniture, sensory-friendly lighting), sensory (e.g., sign language interpreters, audio description, quiet spaces), temporal (e.g., flexible hours, clear deadlines, asynchronous workflows), technological (e.g., screen readers, assistive technology, AI-based tools), and social or neuroaffirming (e.g., transparent communication, accessible networking events, clear social expectations).

This section highlights that effective implementation of accommodations relies on open communication between employers and employees. Employees are encouraged to advocate for their needs, and know their legal rights, including protection from discrimination and the right to accommodations throughout recruitment, employment, and contract-based work.

Federal legislation, including the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Accessible Canada Act, as well as provincial human rights codes and accessibility standards, guide these obligations, setting frameworks for employment, communication, built environments, and systemic barrier removal. These principles, while legally binding for federally-regulated organizations, provide best-practice guidance applicable across the industry to create a fully inclusive and accessible workplace culture.

Shattering myths and misconceptions about accommodations

Myth: Accommodations are expensive to implement

Fact: The Job Accommodations Network (JAN) out of the United States reported in 2025 that in the US workforce as a whole (i.e. beyond just the screen industry), "most employers report no cost or low costs for accommodating employees with disabilities," and that "33% reported that their accommodations incurred a one-time expense, with a median cost of $300,"[108] or just $500 in Canadian dollars.

Myth: Giving an employee accommodations is preferential treatment

Fact: Accommodations aren't special treatment, they're tools that equalize the work environment so that everyone can do their best work. Even if someone receives accommodations, they must be able to accomplish the essential duties of their job.

Myth: The only people who need accommodations are disabled people

Fact: Many people need accommodations to navigate needs. Common ones include ergonomic setups to avoid workplace injury and strain, or work hours that adapt to childcare needs.

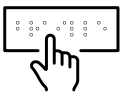
108 Job Accommodation Network. *Cost and Benefits of Accommodations*. September 17, 2025. https://askjan.org/topics/costs.cfm?csSearch=2546498_1#otherinfo.

Accessibility benefits everyone by creating a culture where everyone is empowered to ask for what they need, and many people may develop new and creative ways of working thanks to their accommodations that can benefit their whole team.

Types of accommodations

Physical accommodations

When most people think of accommodations, they think first of physical accommodations. These are often for those who use mobility aids—ramps, elevators, and railings all are included in the category of physical accommodations. Physical accommodations can also be having chairs present to allow people to sit while on site for their breaks, or proper shoes for standing on long days. There can be overlap between physical accommodations and sensory accommodations, like dimmable light switches, high-contrast tape at the edge of stairs or platforms, or having smoke alarms that also blink with a visual signal.



Sensory accommodations

Sensory accommodations are accommodations that are specific to disabilities that affect the senses (such as being blind, low-vision, partially-sighted, or d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing). Common sensory accommodations can include providing communications in large print, braille, or an auditory method, having audio description available in meetings, or having a sign language interpreter for all communications. Other sensory accommodations support people who are neurodivergent, such as providing a quiet space for breaks with dimmed lighting, or allowing people to wear headphones while working to block out sound and focus.

Temporal accommodations

Temporal accommodations are adjustments to the timing of tasks or activities. People may need more time to navigate fluctuating energy levels, those who process information at a different rate, and those who need further support to communicate and make decisions. Temporal accommodations are not just for those who need extra time; temporal accommodations are also for people who may need less time. Some people need more time to process information, emotions, or complete tasks, while others move more quickly than the average. Some minds also process information differently, or may experience memory or executive functioning issues.

Temporal accommodations could look like:

- Having clear deadlines and processes for check-ins;
- Allowing people to set their own hours;
- Permission to be task-based rather than work set hours;
- Having clear meeting minutes and action items;
- Providing a recording of any meetings, including via video or transcript; and
- Having multiple check points or mediums of communication to communicate the same thing in live time (e.g. a shared online calendar of deadlines, a shared online task list with clear deadlines and collective project progress, perhaps accomplished through project management software).

Technological accommodations

Technological accommodations use technology to create more accessible environments and processes. Some technological accommodations have become mainstream, such as voice commands on smartphones, live captions available on platforms such as Zoom, AI summaries and transcription available post-meeting, enlargement of documents through photo zoom, voice memos and notes, and texting. Others fall under the realm of assistive technology, including screen reader software or augmentative and alternative communication devices like a speech-generating device or app. Large language models have also become promising tools for accessibility, allowing users to talk to the interface and have it complete tasks with increasing accuracy. Technological accommodations can also help assist with other types of accommodations (such as temporal accommodations) by providing different methods of completing tasks, scheduling, and sharing documents, and tracking project progress.

Social accommodations, or neuroaffirming accommodations

In the DSO's research, over half of all respondents (51%) to our survey responded that they have a mental health-related disability, and 44% of all respondents reported that they are neurodivergent.[109] Participants noted needing to mask their neurodivergency and overcompensating. Masking is a strategy used (consciously or unconsciously) to appear less disabled in order to be socially accepted. Masking can look like:

- Making small talk about the right topics;
- Making eye contact;
- Controlling facial expressions;
- Making sure tone of voice or cadence is upbeat or appropriate; and/or
- Being hypervigilant and continually adjusting how one expresses themself in order to anticipate or respond to the reaction of others.[110]

While not all people under these categories need social or neuroaffirming accommodations, it is important to note that respondents overwhelmingly reported that there is a significant "hidden curriculum" present in the Canadian screen industry, or unspoken norms that you are expected to subtly pick up on without them being expressed to you directly. DSO research found not following these social norms can lead to disabled creatives losing out on networking opportunities, contracts, and opportunities for career advancement, or in more extreme situations, can lead to disabled creatives experiencing bullying, harassment and gaslighting.[111]

Examples of the hidden curriculum in the screen industry include:

- Knowing to become friends with colleagues and to socialize with them outside of work hours to be recommended for other projects;
- Knowing to attend formal and informal screen industry events;
- Knowing how to ask for mentorship at networking events;
- Knowing how to ask for new work opportunities and referrals; and
- Knowing when a contract may be exploitative.

109 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.
110 National Autism Society (UK). *Masking*. https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/behaviour/masking.
111 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

Providing social accommodations or being neuroaffirming strips back the hidden curriculum. This can look like:

- Being transparent and upfront in communication;
- Using verbal and written forms of communication (and not relying on one method alone);
- Allowing people time to think about their answer before providing a response;
- Having patience for questions and for additional follow-up questions as people seek to understand context; and
- Providing clear information, for instance:
  - About networking events and their importance;
  - About why people get the jobs they do; and
  - About conflict resolution strategies.

Strong, internally-accessible HR policies that are public and transparent policies allow all workers to feel supported by the organization and understand recourse, expectations, etc.

Many social and neuroaffirming accommodations can be applied to event design and not just internal HR processes. More neuroaffirming networking events may look like:

- Providing the address and a visual story for the venue ahead of time;
  - A visual story, sometimes known as a social story, is an access tool that uses simple images and words to guide people through what they can expect at a place. Think of it as a step-by-step picture guide: how to get there, what the space looks like, what will happen, and any rules or routines in place.[112] There are several examples of visual stories written for a variety of contexts here.
- Providing information about how long an event is (not just the start time);
- How long someone is expected to attend;
- Providing information about what will be spoken about;
- If food or alcohol will be available, and if the event will be loud or have quiet spaces; and
- Spelling out social expectations or possibilities can create psychological safety, allowing people to show up as their best selves.

112 SICK AF Collective. *Visual Story Access*. https://sickaf.com.au/accessibility/visual-story-access/.

Accommodations and the law

All employers and service providers have an obligation to adjust rules, policies or practices to enable everyone to fully participate at work. This is called the duty to accommodate. However, the solution/accommodation may not always be the employee's preferred option.

For employers: How to engage in the accommodations process

There are two ways to begin an accommodations process: either the employer or employee can initiate a conversation about accommodations.

What to say and how to say it

An inclusive screen industry work culture starts by providing people with what they need to thrive as close to the beginning of engaging someone (either as an employee or as a contractor) as possible. This includes providing appropriate accommodations for interview processes. Job postings should include information on how to request accommodations for the application process.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission provides some excellent guidance for employers on opening up conversations with employees about accommodations:

- When having the initial conversation(s) about a worker's disability-related accommodation, the employer will need to know:
  - Whether the worker has a disability or medical condition that requires an accommodation
  - What the worker's functional limitations relevant to their job are
  - What the worker's accommodation needs are.
- Employers are not entitled to know:
  - The worker's specific diagnosis or details about their treatment plan.[113]

Collecting this information in the film industry can look like:

> Asking everyone their accommodation needs, singling no one out;

> Providing examples regarding accommodations and answers to frequently asked questions or share possibilities. This allows people to see what is possible and imagine what could work for their particular work needs;

> Providing check-boxes for common accommodations you are prepared to provide; or

> Using the access rider and access intake processes as detailed in Appendix A.

113 Canadian Human Rights Commission. *Workplace Accommodation: A Guide for Federally Regulated Employers*. May 10, 2024. https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/resources/publications/workplace-accommodation-guide.

The DSO recommends that employers do not ask employees for medical documentation by default, as not all people experiencing disability have a formal diagnosis, and not all Canadians have access to a family doctor or do not have access to their diagnosis paperwork. Under most circumstances, employees and employers can implement accommodations without needing formal documentation from a medical professional.

In Workplace accommodation - A guide for federally regulated employers, the Canadian Human Rights Commission suggests:

- Where possible, limit requests for supporting medical information from physicians. This avoids putting unnecessary strain on the health care system, and it also is mindful of the fact that, despite their best efforts, some workers may not have access to a regular family physician.
- When supporting medical documentation is necessary, be open to accepting medical information from other health care providers such as occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, nurse practitioners, chiropractors, or midwives.
- Consider using other assessments such as an ergonomic assessment to determine what specifically the worker requires to enable them to work productively.[114]

Disability-led Accommodations

The disability community maxim of “nothing about us without us” should apply to accommodations as well. Invite disabled employees to share what they need before assuming, even if you have worked with someone with the same or a similar disability before. Respect that the person asking for an accommodation is an expert on their experience, their body, and their mind. However, people who are newly experiencing disability may not know what works best for them yet. When brainstorming accommodations with or for an employee, consider tapping into the disability community (while respecting the confidentiality of your employee) before connecting with medical practitioners to envision possibilities for accommodations that are guided by lived experience.

114 ibid.

Accommodations and team work

While the accommodations process should always be a private and confidential process between an employee and their employer, there may be times when additional team members will need to be involved to implement the accommodation. For example, the Wardrobe department knowing an actor has an insulin pump impacts costuming.

Always let the employee know who else is going to be participating in the implementation of their accommodation, and where possible, allow the disabled employee to lead in what information about them is shared.

Access friction and conflicting access needs

In any situation, team members may have conflicting access needs. This can look like a team member who needs bright overhead lighting to be able to take a meeting, while someone else needs a more dim environment to prevent migraines.

Think creatively: what ways could both access needs can be met?

In the case of the first example, this can look like holding your meetings in a room big enough to have the lights on in half the room and the lights off in the other half, or providing your team with a remote attendance option.

While you are bound by the duty to accommodate, employers should also consider:

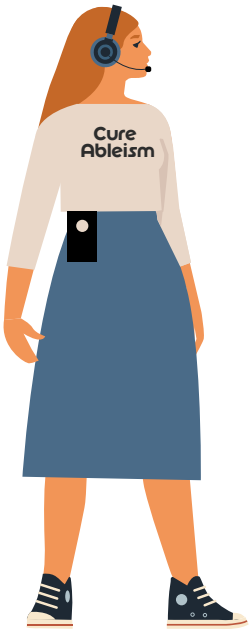
- Who gets their needs met regularly;
- Who gets their needs more "perfectly" met;
- Who needs to adapt; and
- Who is offered less than ideal accommodations solutions.

For employees: Self-advocacy and discussing accommodations with your employer

The first step to effective self-advocacy is to understand your own disability and your own needs. It's okay to think of yourself as disabled. It's okay to think of yourself as disabled even if your disability is mild, temporary, or new. If your disability is affecting your quality of life or how you do your work, it's okay for you to request accommodations. Sharing that you have a disability and requesting accommodations for that disability doesn't mean that you are taking away resources from other disabled people. Accommodations are something that everyone is entitled to by law, and by requesting yours, you're helping to normalize the process and make it easier for the next person to request their accommodations.

Needing accommodations isn't a sign of failure and isn't a sign that you can't do your job well. In fact, it's the opposite: it's admirable to be forthright about your needs, and your accommodations will help you succeed in your role. By asking about the availability of accommodations, you center yourself in the accommodations process: you open up a formalized space where you can ask questions about your role, better understand the expectations of your job, and brainstorm creatively with your employer about the best solutions for you.

It's a good idea to mention your access needs and any accommodations you might need at the beginning of a process. Some people will request accommodations during the recruitment stage, some people will wait until they have signed their contract, and some people will wait until their first day of work. However, it's okay for you to ask for your needs to be met at any time throughout your employment. Your employer has a legal duty to engage in an accommodations process with you no matter when you ask for accommodations. If your employer doesn't have a formalized process for you to request accommodations, you may want to use the access rider template in Appendix A to do so. You can also connect with your applicable union, guild, or association(s) for their support. They are there to advocate for your needs, uphold your rights and ensure your safety. Your union/guild/association(s) may also have affinity groups for other disabled creatives to connect or networking specific opportunities.



It might feel risky or vulnerable to share your needs, especially if you are not used to it. Disclosure can become easier with time, especially as more industry leaders are disclosing their own disabilities and creating space for their teams to share their access needs. The industry at large is changing, as is our global perspective on accessibility. You belong in our industry, and your work, your talent, and your stories matter.

Know your rights

Disability is a protected ground of discrimination in Canadian human rights legislation at both the provincial and federal level. You have the right to be free from discrimination at all stages of your employment, including pursuing employment, applying for a job or attending an interview. This right applies to every kind of employment relationship, including employment arrangements that are common in the screen industry:

1. Contract work;
2. Internships;
3. Apprenticeships or placements; and
4. Volunteer (i.e. unpaid) positions.[115]

Employers are bound by the duty to accommodate, but it is the employee's responsibility to make an accommodation request through the process established by your employer. This request has to go to the person with the appropriate authority to put the accommodation in place. This may or may not be your direct supervisor, depending on your workplace.

In most cases, your employer is only allowed to ask for necessary medical information. In most cases, this will be information about how the accommodation is needed due to your disability. Remember, you are not required to share information about your diagnosis or about any treatment you are receiving unless that information is strictly necessary to put an accommodation in place.

Sometimes, your employer may ask you for a doctor's note explaining any disability-related limitations. Your employer is allowed to ask for this, but the DSO does not recommend it as best practice for employers. Not all people experiencing disability have a formal diagnosis, and not all Canadians have access to a family doctor or their diagnosis information. In Workplace accommodation - A guide for federally regulated employers,[116] the Canadian Human Rights Commission suggests:

- Where possible, limit requests for supporting medical information from physicians. This avoids putting unnecessary strain on the health care system, and it also is mindful of the fact that, despite their best efforts, some workers may not have access to a regular family physician.

115 ARCH Disability Law Centre. *Fact Sheet: My Rights at Work: Requesting Disability-Related Accommodations in Ontario*. November 16, 2025. https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/resource/fact-sheet-my-rights-at-work-requesting-disability-related-accommodations-in-ontario/.

116 Canadian Human Rights Commission. *Workplace Accommodation: A Guide for Federally Regulated Employers.* May 10, 2024. https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/resources/publications/workplace-accommodation-guide.

- Be open to accepting medical information from other health care providers such as occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists, nurse practitioners, chiropractors, or midwives.
- Consider using other assessments such as an ergonomic assessment to determine what specifically the worker requires to enable them to work productively.

Your accommodations and team work

If you are concerned about privacy, know that your accommodations are legally required to be kept confidential, and that the only people who will know about the details of your accommodation (not your diagnosis or your medical information) will be the people who are participating in putting it in place. This can sometimes include colleagues, if they need to help make an accommodation possible. Your employer should let you know who is required to know about your accommodation.

How accommodations work within Canadian law

Federal law

Under federal law, federally regulated industries (which, in the screen industry, includes radio and television broadcasting) are governed by the Canadian Human Rights Act.[117] If you work for a federally-regulated employer, your employer is bound by the duty to accommodate under that piece of legislation.

Your employer may also be bound by the Accessible Canada Act,[118] a new piece of legislation that aims to make federally-regulated industries barrier-free by 2040. Under this legislation, federally-regulated employers must:

1. Consult people with disabilities;
2. Publish accessibility plans about how they are finding, removing and preventing barriers;
3. Set up ways to receive and respond to feedback about accessibility; and
4. Publish progress reports about how they are following their accessibility plans.

117 Government of Canada. *Canadian Human Rights Act*. 1985. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/page-1.html.
118 Government of Canada. *Accessible Canada Act*. 2019. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-0.6/page-1.html.

The Accessible Canada Act aims to remove barriers in these key areas (some of which have overlap):

- Employment;
- The built environment (physical spaces);
- Communication;
- Information and communication technologies;
- Procurement (buying and renting things and places);
- Programs and services; and
- Transportation.

The DSO's work on our Mapping Representation and Barriers to Participation by People with Disabilities in the Screen-Based Media and Broadcasting Sectors research project will help the federal government create new accessibility standards specific to the telecommunications industry that will ensure that barriers to employment and equity are identified, prevented, and removed at a structural level. Although these standards will only apply to federally-regulated employers, it is our hope that these best practices will be adopted industry-wide.

Even if you are not a federally-regulated employer, a variety of policy documents created for federally-regulated employers provide an excellent scope of care for you to refer to while developing your own accessibility policies, including the Directive on the Duty to Accommodate,[119] which "provides direction to managers and heads of HR on their obligations with respect to duty to accommodate, with the objective of developing an inclusive, barrier-free workplace in which all persons have equal access to opportunities" and the Accessibility Standards Canada standard on Employment,[120] which was created by and for people with disabilities to "help organizations identify, remove, and prevent barriers at every stage of employment."

119 Government of Canada. *Directive on the Duty to Accommodate*. July 16, 2021. https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32634.
120 Accessibility Standards Canada. CAN-ASC-1.1:2024 *(REV-2025) – Employment*. May 2025. https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards/can-asc-112024-rev-2025-employment.

Provincial employment law

Most workplaces in Canada are not governed by the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Accessible Canada Act, but by individual pieces of provincial legislation. Each province and territory has a human rights code, and disability is a protected ground of discrimination across all 13 provinces and territories. The duty to accommodate exists and binds employers in all 13 pieces of human rights legislation in Canada.

Many provinces in Canada also have provincial accessibility legislation. All of the provinces that have adopted accessibility legislation provide accessibility standards in the area of employment.

To read your province's accessibility legislation and to ensure that your workplace follows provincial accessibility standards:

- Quebec[121]
- Ontario[122]
- Manitoba[123]
- Nova Scotia[124]
- British Columbia[125]
- Newfoundland and Labrador[126]
- Saskatchewan[127]
- New Brunswick[128]

At the time of writing, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut do not have provincial accessibility legislation.

121 Legis Québec. *Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of Their Rights*. 2004. https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/document/lc/E-20.1.
122 Government of Ontario. *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. 2005. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11.
123 The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*. 2013. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/b026e.php.
124 Nova Scotia Legislature. Accessibility Act. 2017. https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/62nd_3rd/3rd_read/b059.htm.
125 British Columbia Legislature. *Accessible British Columbia Act*. 2021. https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21019.
126 126 NL Assembly. Accessibility Act. 2021. https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/a01-001.htm.
127 Government of Saskatchewan. *The Accessible Saskatchewan Act*. 2023. https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/121340
128 Government of New Brunswick. *Accessibility Act. 2024*. https://laws.gnb.ca/en/document/cs/2024,%20c.27.

Part 8: Conclusion

While many of the best practices listed in this guide are actionable by individual producers or single productions, there needs to be consistent accessibility across all areas of the Canadian screen industry. A collective effort will be required from a variety of parties, including law and policymakers, screen industry funders, broadcasters, and unions, guilds, and associations.

As a national advocacy organization, the DSO actively continues to advocate for the needs articulated by the disability community to make the screen industry a more accessible and less disabling industry to work in.

Some of the needs articulated by our community through the research undertaken to prepare this guide include:

1. The need for equitable, flexible, and accessible financial resources to support disabled creatives, including dedicated funding streams to support disabled filmmakers, funding for accessibility costs, and barrier-free funding application processes;
2. The need for systemic changes to hiring practices to ensure equity, including an increase in accessibility roles on productions and hiring incentives to increase disability representation at all levels;
3. The need for sector-wide disability literacy and inclusion training;
4. The need for mechanisms and resources to support structural and cultural change, including government-backed standards or legislation to support increased accessibility in screen industry workplaces, outreach and retention programs to track why disabled workers leave the industry, research and data collection on disability representation and retention within the industry, and collaborative education among screen industry funders, broadcasters, unions, guilds, and associations to normalize that everyone has access needs that should be met;
5. The need for support and mentorship from unions/guilds/associations, and industry leaders; and
6. The need for diverse leadership in the screen industry.[129]

The DSO will continue to work in partnership with stakeholders across the industry and across all levels of government to articulate these needs, create systems that solve these problems, and enact real change for disabled creatives.

129 Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

Thank you & contributors

Project supporters

Thank you to the funders of this project who made the *Mapping Representation and Barriers to Participation by People with Disabilities in the Screen-Based Media and Broadcasting Sectors* research project and this Reframing Access: A Best Practices Guide on Disability Inclusion in Canada's Screen Industry publication possible:

This project has been made possible in part by

Accessibility Standards Canada

Canada

Canada Media Fund / Fonds des médias du Canada

With additional support from

Ontario Creates

Rocket Fund Canada

Creative BC | British Columbia

Bell Fund

PictureNL Newfoundland and Labrador

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Ontario Creates or the Government of Ontario. The Government of Ontario and its agencies are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

Thank you

We would like to thank AMI, Michael Marlatt, Meagan McAteer, Vanessa Pfaff, and Andrew Morris for their work on the earliest stages of this project; Angelica Alejandro, George Alevizos, Michelle Asgarali, Ophira Calof, Kat Germain, Joanne Latimer, Jason Lee, Tereza Olivero, Jenn Paul, Sean Porter, Luisa Alvarez Restrepo, Christine Rutherford, Toria Summerville, Sean Towgood, and Alexia Vassos for their review and contributions; and Nikitha Gopal, Daniella Jaramillo, Peter Lyman, Nicole Matiation and Charlotte Panetton for their work on behalf of Nordicity on this project.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the accessibility service providers who provided their services for our focus groups, including those at Ai Media, Still Interpreting, SETTE, SIVET, and TSLIS. Furthermore, without the work of the Research Project Working Group, chaired by DSO board member Rachel Desjourdy and made up of disabled creatives Angela Chalmers, Heather K. Dahlstrom, Kaila Hunte, Katia Shannon, Julia Skikavich, and Anaïsa Visser, this guide would not exist. Thank you for the extensive contributions to each element of this project.

Finally, our deepest gratitude to the disabled respondents to Canada's Screen Industry Survey on Disability and the disabled participants in our associated focus groups.
Our work is for you.

Suggested citation

How to cite this guide: Disability Screen Office, Alethea Bakogeorge and Brooke Leifso. *Reframing Access: A Best Practices Guide on Disability Inclusion in Canada's Screen Industry.* Disability Screen Office. 2026.

References

Accessibility Standards Canada. *CAN-ASC-1.1:2024 (REV-2025) – Employment*. May 2025. https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards/can-asc-112024-rev-2025-employment/.

Accessible Standards Canada. *Guidelines for Creating Accessible Documents*. November 13, 2025. https://accessible.canada.ca/guidelines-creating-accessible-documents.

ACTRA. *Case Study: You're My Hero*. https://www.actra.ca/case-study-youre-my-hero/.

ACTRA. *Tips for Auditioning Deaf Performers*. https://www.actra.ca/industry-resources/tips-for-auditioning-deaf-performers/.

ACTRA, CMPA, and AQPM. *Independent Production Agreement*, 2025–2027. 2025. https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ACTRA-CMPA-AQPM-Independent-Production-Agreement-2025-2027_OFFICIAL-COPY.pdf.

ACTRA Toronto. *Audition Facility Accessibility Audit*. May 2019. https://actratoronto.com/accessibility-audit-and-recommendations/.

ACTRA Toronto. *Diversity & Inclusion Committee*. https://actratoronto.com/committees/diversity-inclusion/.

Alteon. https://alteon.io/.

Apple. *Use Switch Control to Navigate Your iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch*. March 2025. https://support.apple.com/en-ca/119835.

ARCH Disability Law Centre. *Fact Sheet: My Rights at Work: Requesting Disability-Related Accommodations in Ontario*. November 16, 2025. https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/resource/fact-sheet-my-rights-at-work-requesting-disability-related-accommodations-in-ontario/.

Bahar, Robert. "A Fresh 2025 Introduction to Documentary Budgeting and Scheduling (With New Templates!)." *International Documentary Association*. December 19, 2024. https://documentary.org/online-feature/2025-introduction-documentary-budgeting-and-scheduling#partvi.

BECTU Vision. https://bectu.org.uk/bectu-vision/.

Brazen Productions Inclusive Practice & Production Consultancy. *Templates*. https://www.brazenproductions.co.uk/resources.

British Broadcasting Corporation. "Easy Read Templates for Productions." *Creative Diversity*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/creativediversity/templates.

British Columbia Legislature. *Accessible British Columbia Act*. 2021. https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/21019.

Calof, Ophira. *Accessible Writers Lab Report*. 2022. https://dso-orphe.ca/images/pdfs/external-reports/AWL_Report2022_A11y%201.pdf.

Cambridge University Press. *Definition of Tokenism*. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus.

Canada Council for the Arts. *Deaf and Disability Arts Practices*. https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/funding-decisions/decision-making-process/application-assessment/context-briefs/deaf-and-disability-arts-practices.

Canadian Association for Supported Employment. *Accommodation*. https://www.supportedemployment.ca/hrtoolkit/accommodations/.

Canadian Human Rights Commission. *Duty to Accommodate*. https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/individuals/human-rights/duty-accommodate.

Canadian Human Rights Commission. *Workplace Accommodation: A Guide for Federally Regulated Employers*. May 10, 2024. https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/resources/publications/workplace-accommodation-guide.

Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health. *"Models of Disability." Accessibility & Accommodations Toolkit.* https://campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/accessibility-and-accommodations/disability/models-of-disability/.

Channel 4. *Template Access Rider.* 2021. https://assets-corporate.channel4.com/_flysystem/s3/documents/2021-12/Access%20Rider%20Template_November2021_0.pdf.

Clearkeys. https://altproducts.com/clearkeys-low-vision-keyboard-high-contrast/.

ColdRead. https://www.coldreadapp.com/.

Conroy, M., C. Espinoza, and A. Romero Walker. *The State of Disability Representation on Television: An Analysis of Scripted TV Series from 2016 to 2023*. Ruderman Family Foundation and Geena Davis Institute. 2024. https://rudermanfoundation.org/white_papers/the-state-of-disability-representation-on-television-an-analysis-of-scripted-tv-series-from-2016-2023/.

Creative Diversity Network. *The 5 As: Guidelines for Disability Inclusion in UK Television Production*. June 2023. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/The-5-As_FINAL_230822_0.pdf.

Creative Diversity Network. *Production Buildings Audit Checklist.* April 2025. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/TAP-Production-Buildings-Audit-Checklist-04-2025-1.pdf.

Creative Diversity Network. *TAP Access Description Checklist.* August 2024. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/tap-hub/.

Creative Diversity Network. *TAP Access Description Hub.* August 2024. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/tap-hub/.

Creative Diversity Network. *TV Access Project: Exterior Location Access Guide.* April 2025. https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/TAP-Exerior-Location-Access-Guide-230425.pdf.

Darnell, Saga. *Audiences Are Waiting for Hollywood to Greenlight Disability*. Inevitable Foundation. July 2024. https://docsend.com/view/a887kq8hx3m2c4ph.

Descript. https://www.descript.com/.

Disability Screen Office. *Accessibility & Disability e-Learning Series*. 2026. https://dso-orphe.ca/programs/accessibility-disability-e-learning-series.

Disability Screen Office. *Canada's Screen Industry Survey and Focus Groups on Disability*. 2025.

Disability Screen Office. *Industry Resource Hub*. 2026. https://dso-orphe.ca/hub.

Disability Screen Office. *Production Accessibility Role Initiative – ProdAccess*. 2026. https://dso-orphe.ca/programs/production-accessibility-role-initiative-prodaccess.

Disabled Photographers' Society. *Adaptations.* https://www.the-dps.co.uk/adaptations-2/.

Equity (UK). *Advice for Visually Impaired Actors.* https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/casting-and-auditions/advice-for-visually-impaired-actors.

Equity (UK). *Casting Guide for Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse Dancers.* https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/casting-and-auditions/casting-guide-for-deaf-disabled-and-neurodiverse-dancers#the-audition.

Etchells, Daneka. *How to Ask for What You Need: Building an Access Rider for Disabled, Deaf and Neurodivergent Theatre Professionals.* 2023.

George Brown College. "Disability and Variability." *Universal Design for Learning: Inspiring Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education.* https://udlontario.georgebrown.ca/engagement/equity-education-and-anti-oppressive-frameworks/disability-and-variability/.

Government of Canada. *Accessible Canada Act.* 2019. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-0.6/page-1.html.

Government of Canada. Accessible Canada Act Summary. December 13, 2022. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada/act-summary.html.

Government of Canada. Canadian Human Rights Act. 1985. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/page-1.html.

Government of Canada. Directive on the Duty to Accommodate. July 16, 2021. https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32634.

Government of New Brunswick. *Accessibility Act*. 2024. https://laws.gnb.ca/en/document/cs/2024,%20c.27.

Government of Ontario. *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. 2005. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11/.

Government of Saskatchewan. *The Accessible Saskatchewan Act*. 2023. https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/121340/.

Huh, Mina, Saelyne Yang, Yi-Hao Peng, Xiang "Anthony" Chen, Young-Ho Kim, and Amy Pavel. "AVscript: Accessible Video Editing with Audio-Visual Scripts." *In Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '23)*, Hamburg, Germany, April 23–28, 2023, 17 pages. New York: ACM, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1145/3544548.3581494.

Inevitable Foundation. *The "Cost" of Accommodations Database*. April 2022. https://www.inevitable.foundation/cost-of-accommodations-report#resources.

Inevitable Foundation. *The "Cost" of Accommodations Report*. April 2022. https://www.inevitable.foundation/cost-of-accommodations-report#resources.

Inevitable Foundation. *Letter to Hollywood*. March 2023. https://www.inevitable.foundation/press/letter-to-hollywood.

Job Accommodation Network. *Cost and Benefits of Accommodations*. September 17, 2025. https://askjan.org/topics/costs.cfm?csSearch=2546498_1#otherinfo.

Legis Québec. *Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of Their Rights*. 2004. https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/document/lc/E-20.1/.

Making Space. *Production Crew Member (TV & Film)*. 2026. https://app.making-space.com/opportunities/making-space-production-crew-member-tv-film.

Media Access Awards. *Employing Disabled Writers: Best Practice Guide*. 2021. https://www.wga.org/uploadedfiles/the-guild/inclusion-and-equity/maa_best_practices_for_hiring_disabled_writers.pdf.

Meyer, Michele, and Meredith Conroy. *Representation and Inclusion in Film and Television Produced in British Columbia*. UBCP/ACTRA and Geena Davis Institute. 2023. https://ubcpactra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/From-Real-to-Reel_Representation-and-Inclusion-in-Film-and-Television-Produced-in-British-Columbia.pdf.

Morris, Stuart. *Poverty among Working-Age Persons with and without Disabilities in Canada*. December 2025. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/research/poverty-working-disabilities.html.

National Autism Society (UK). *Masking*. https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/behaviour/masking.

NL Assembly. *Accessibility Act*. 2021. https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/a01-001.htm/.

Nova Scotia Legislature. Accessibility Act. 2017. https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/62nd_3rd/3rd_read/b059.htm/.

Ontario Association for Sign Language Interpreters. *Working with an Interpreter*. 2026. https://www.oasli.on.ca/index.php/interpreters/when-to-use-an-interpreter.

Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Appendix 1: Glossary of Human Rights Terms*. https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/teaching-human-rights-ontario-guide-ontario-schools/appendix-1-glossary-human-rights-terms.

Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Policy on Ableism and Discrimination Based on Disability*. https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability.

PACT UK. *TAP Toolkit: Accessibility – Spaces and Locations*. https://www.pact.co.uk/resource-hub/diversity-equity-inclusion/tap-toolkit/tap-accessibility-spaces-locations.html/.

Romero-Fresco, Pablo, and Nuria Fresno. *"Accuracy of Automatic and Human Live Captions in English*." Linguistica Antverpiensia 22 (2023): 114–133.

Rooted in Rights. *Accessibility / Access Needs*. https://rootedinrights.org/stories/blog/topics/accessibility/.

SICK AF Collective. *Visual Story Access*. https://sickaf.com.au/accessibility/visual-story-access/.

Silverman, Sarah. "*Navigating 'Access Friction' in Teaching." Beyond the Scope*. May 23, 2024. https://beyondthescope.substack.com/p/navigating-access-friction-in-teaching.

Sivani-Merrigan, Meghan. "Section 3: *Access Riders." Better Backstages: Accessibility Toolkit For Music and Arts Spaces*. 2025. https://www.accessibilityproject.ca/3-access-riders.html.

Statistics Canada. *Canadians with a Mobility Disability*. 2020. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2020085-eng.htm.

Statistics Canada. *New Data on Disability in Canada*, 2022. 2023. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023063-eng.htm.

Telefilm Canada. *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*. https://telefilm.ca/en/who-we-are/our-engagement/equity-diversity-and-inclusion.

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*. 2013. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/b026e.php/.

Timewise. https://timewise.co.uk/.

Timewise and BECTU Vision. *Exploring the Feasibility of a Shorter Working Day in the TV Industry*. February 2024. https://timewise.co.uk/article/exploring-the-feasibility-of-a-shorter-working-day-in-the-tv-industry/.

TV Access Project. *Access Passport*. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.screenskills.com%2Fmedia%2Fp0ucr2oe%2Faccess-passport-talent-version-2804.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

TV Access Project. *Access Passport (Easy Read)*. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.screenskills.com%2Fmedia%2Fs3wgnaw5%2Ftap-easy-read-talent-ap.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

UBCP/ACTRA. *2025-2028 British Columbia Master Production Agreement*. 2025. https://www.actra.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2025-2028-UBCPACTRA-BCMPA.pdf.

Unlimited (UK). *Creating Your Own Access Rider*. https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/creating-your-own-access-rider/.

Walsh, Kristina. "Cripping Time at Work." *Early Magazine*. March 30, 2023. https://www.earlymagazine.com/articles/cripping-time-at-work.

WeAudition. https://www.weaudition.com/.

Writers Guild of Canada. *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Report*. October 2024. https://www.wgc.ca/sites/default/files/2024-10/WGC_diversity%20report-Oct%202024.pdf.

Appendix A: Access riders and access intake processes

What is an access rider?

An access rider is a voluntary document that anyone, disabled or nondisabled, can use to articulate their access needs to their employer. It also guides what is shared with others, how, and when, so that the disabled creative doesn't have to continually re-explain their needs.[130]

How is an access rider different from access intake processes?

An access rider is an access document that an individual prepares themselves that is typically not created specific to any individual production, as it is designed to be modified for a variety of engagements. In contrast, access intake processes are production-specific human resources procedures that allow producers to collect information about their employees' access needs, and define the mechanisms by which that information will be collected.

Even if an individual provides an access rider to a production, it is still important for a production to have access intake processes. This is because producers will have more specific knowledge of elements that may present barriers on their production, and can tailor their access intake procedures to ensure that the right information is collected from their employees to mitigate potential barriers. For example, a disabled actor who has been hired on a production may not know that a production is going to use a fog machine on set, which can cause shortness of breath and lung/eye irritation in some individuals, but production can ask targeted questions about employees' sensitivity to fog and haze.

For employers: How to create access intake processes

Access intake processes will vary and should be responsive to the specifics of each production. While many productions will choose to conduct their access intake in survey format, other productions may choose to have an onboarding session about access as a one-on-one conversation between employee and manager, or have access check-ins at regularly scheduled intervals. Whatever format you choose for your production, remember to be transparent with employees about who will have access to employees' personal accessibility information and how employees' privacy will be maintained.

For organizations looking for a list of suggested questions for an access intake survey, the UK-based organization the TV Access Project has prepared this template for employers.[131] It also exists in easy read format.[132]

---

130 Unlimited (UK). *Creating Your Own Access Rider.* https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/creating-your-own-access-rider/.

131 TV Access Project. *Access Passport*. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.screenskills.com%2Fmedia%2Fp0ucr2oe%2Faccess-passport-talent-version-2804.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

132 TV Access Project. *Access Passport (Easy Read)*. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.screenskills.com%2Fmedia%2Fs3wgnaw5%2Ftap-easy-read-talent-ap.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

Depending on your production, the timeline of when you engage in access intake processes with your employees and contractors to fill out may vary. While it is always best to have information about employees' access needs as soon as possible, acknowledge that many employees will not feel comfortable sharing their access needs until:

1. After they have signed a contract;
2. After they have begun work;
3. After they have developed relationships with a supervisor;
4. After they have passed their probationary period; or
5. After they have experienced a barrier or an issue.

However, the DSO continues to recommend that employers engage in some sort of access intake process with employees at point of engagement, as it signals that you as an employer are thinking about accessibility at the organizational level, and that you want to participate in shifting the culture around access.

For employees: How to make an access rider

It can be difficult to figure out what your access needs are, especially if you are new to the industry, new to a particular role, or new to your experience of disability. Use the following questions to start thinking creatively about accessibility as it relates to you and about the barriers you may experience:

- Think about an environment where you do your best work. What were some of the elements that made that environment a place where you could succeed?
- What adaptations would you make to this hypothetical environment to make it even better for yourself? This can be anything you can think of.
- Think about a work situation where your needs weren't met or where you had a difficult time completing your task. What made it difficult, and why?
- What would you have changed about the above work situation to make it easier for yourself if you had been in charge?[133]

133 Etchells, Daneka. *How to Ask for What You Need: Building an Access Rider for Disabled, Deaf and Neurodivergent Theatre Professionals. 2023.*

For example: A disabled writer who is sensitive to temperature may find it difficult to continue writing if they are too cold in the writers' room. There are a couple potential solutions: the temperature can be turned up in the room (if that does not affect others' access needs), or they can be provided with a personal space heater or heating pad.

Write down your barriers and potential solutions, and organize these statements into whatever format works best for you. Some people like to organize their access riders by putting their most important access needs first, whereas other people like to organize their access riders by associating each access need with specific areas of their job. There are a variety of templates made for access riders that can help you organize your access needs:

- Unlimited provides both an in-depth guide to creating your access rider, as well as a variety of templates[134]
- Channel 4 has created an access rider template that is specifically designed for the screen industry[135]
- As part of the Better Backstages: Accessibility Toolkit For Music and Arts Spaces, Apex Arts Access has created an access rider template informed by their work with Canadian arts organizations[136]

Your access rider doesn't need to be in document format. You can also create it as a video, as a slideshow, or whatever format is best for you.

Additional elements

In addition to barriers and solutions, you may also want to include additional elements in your access rider, including:

- Some disabled people may want to include information about their disability, including typical symptoms they experience;
  - Remember that this is optional and sharing your diagnosis is never required.
- The name and contact information of an emergency contact;
- What to do in case of an emergency that may relate to your disability;
- The name contact information for support workers you work with frequently, and protocols around including them in communications (e.g. should they be included on every email to you?).

134 Unlimited (UK). *Creating Your Own Access Rider.* https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/creating-your-own-access-rider/.
135 Channel 4. *Template Access Rider*. 2021. https://assets-corporate.channel4.com/_flysystem/s3/documents/2021-12/Access%20Rider%20Template_November2021_0.pdf
136 Sivani-Merrigan, Meghan. "Section 3: Access Riders." *Better Backstages: Accessibility Toolkit For Music and Arts Spaces*. 2025. https://www.accessibilityproject.ca/3-access-riders.html

When and how to share an access rider

Depending on what you include in your access rider, you may feel uncomfortable sharing this document. It can feel very vulnerable to express your access needs, especially if you don't know how the person who is receiving your access rider is going to respond. You may also have concerns about your privacy, particularly if your access rider contains sensitive information like a diagnosis.

Remember that you do not always have to share your entire access rider. If you're working on a project where certain elements of your access rider do not apply, you can copy only the parts of your larger access rider that are relevant to that contract, task, or situation, and share just those parts.

You can also create permissions within your document that state who is allowed to see your access rider, and when your access rider should be deleted, like:

- You have my permission to share this document internally with anyone I'll be working directly with.
- Please think carefully if it is necessary before sharing this document, as it contains personal information.
- Please do not share this document without my permission.
- Please delete this document at the end of my contract.[137]

In your work in the screen industry, you may work on productions that ask for an access rider or ask about your access needs at the point of offer. However, it is your right to have a conversation about accommodations in the workplace (for the first time or to revisit a conversation) at any time. That means that you can share your access rider at any time with your employer, including:

- Once you've been contracted;
- If your needs have changed, or you're experiencing new barriers;
- If the project scope or your role scope changes; and/or
- If your needs are not being met.[138]

Sharing an access rider does not necessarily mean that you will receive all of your accommodations as detailed in your rider, as under Canadian human rights law, employers must provide reasonable accommodation, but not necessarily the preferred accommodation outlined in your access rider. However, sharing an access rider is an excellent way to ensure that your request for accommodation(s) is properly documented, including your preferred solution.

137 Unlimited (UK). Creating Your Own Access Rider. https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/creating-your-own-access-rider/.
138 ibid.

This project has been made possible in part by

Accessibility Standards Canada

Canada

Canada Media Fund / Fonds des médias du Canada

With additional support from

Ontario Creates

Rocket Fund Canada

Creative BC | British Columbia

Bell Fund

PictureNL Newfoundland and Labrador

DSO Disability Screen Office

dso-orphe.ca