

Disability Screen Office

# Annual Report

APRIL 2023 - MARCH 2024



# Table of Contents

Message from our chair .....	1
Message from our Executive Director ...	2
Disability in numbers .....	3
Our Vision, Mission and Goals .....	4
Our Story .....	5
Board and Leadership .....	6
Our Programs .....	7
DSO Highlights .....	9
Financial Summary .....	11
Partnerships and Support .....	12
Looking Ahead .....	13

# Message from our Chair

2023-24 was the DSO's first full fiscal year as an incorporated Not-For-Profit! It is hard to believe how much was accomplished in our first year.

We are so grateful to Andrew Morris for his amazing work in standing up the DSO in 2022-23, recruiting some excellent Board members, and securing initial funding. We would also like to acknowledge the wonderful contribution of Line Gendron from AMI. Line provided expert guidance and helped establish a secure foundation for the DSO.

As a Board, our focus was on establishing the DSO as the primary organization in Canada dedicated to removing barriers to participation and improving representation of disabled people in the Canadian Screen industry.

Our first permanent Executive Director, Winnie Luk, joined us in June 2023. Winnie had to hit the ground running, and she kept running! Winnie has done a wonderful job in building partnerships and raising the DSO's profile. All that hard work has paid off and now the DSO is poised to deliver some exciting projects designed to benefit our community, starting with a major research initiative.

I want to recognize the amazing work done by the Board of Directors, who played such an important role in our first year's success. Sasha Boersma, Ken Fredeen, Anna-Karina Tabuñar, Prasanna Ranganathan, Rachel Desjourdy and Rayhan Azmat were all willing to jump in and contribute to so many aspects of DSO operations. It really has been a terrific partnership. We are fortunate to have such a talented team!

Finally, I want to thank the community of disabled people currently working, and those hoping to work, in the Canadian screen industry. You are the reason we exist and you are the motivation that drives us to do everything we can to transform this industry and make it better through your participation.

**Yazmine Laroche**  
DSO Board Chair

# **Message from our Executive Director**

Reflecting on the past year, I feel deeply grateful and proud of all the DSO has accomplished. It has been a remarkable time of growth, fostering relationships, and laying the foundation for even more impactful work ahead. We've made significant strides in securing sustainable funding, strengthened our industry connections, and developed programs positioned to create meaningful change for disabled creatives.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated Board of Directors—Yazmine Laroche, Sasha Boersma, Prasanna Ranganathan, Rachel Desjourdy, Rayhan Azmat, Anna-Karina Tabuñar, and Ken Fredeen—for their unwavering support and guidance. My gratitude also goes to our partners and funders, whose contributions have made our achievements possible. Additionally, I want to thank AMI and Andrew Morris for their vision and dedication in incubating and setting up the DSO during its early stages.

To the community of disabled creatives, thank you for being at the heart of our mission. You drive everything we do, and we remain steadfast in advocating for your representation and success within the industry. Your creativity and stories fuel our work, and we are committed to breaking down barriers, fostering inclusion, and amplifying your voices in the Canadian screen sector. Together, we will continue to shape a more accessible and equitable future.

**Winnie Luk**  
Executive Director

# Disability in numbers

**16%**

of the global population lives with a disability\*

**1 in 4**

Canadians aged 15 and over live with one or more disabilities as of 2022.\*\*

\*[World Health Organization](#)

\*\*[Canadian Survey on Disability](#)

\*\*\*[Smith, S. L., & Jones, A. B. \(2024\). Inclusion in Popular Films: An Analysis of Diversity in Cinema. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.](#)

## However...

- **Only 2.2%** of speaking or named characters were depicted with a disability across the 100 top films of 2023 in North America\*\*\*
- 73% of characters with disabilities had a physical disability, with only 26% communicative and 23% cognitive disabilities.\*\*\*
- **42 of these films did not feature a single character with a disability\*\*\***

2023 Celebrating Accessibility - CBC





DSO panel at TIFF 2023

## Our Vision

Realize a Canadian screen sector that is fully inclusive and accessible.

## Our Mission

Eliminate accessibility barriers and foster authentic and meaningful disability representation throughout the sector.

## Our Goals

1. **Advocating** for people with disabilities by influencing policies and removing barriers.
2. **Educating** industry players by providing tools and programming.
3. **Creating awareness** by fostering authentic representation of people with disabilities in the media.

\*In October 2024, the DSO updated its mission, vision and priority areas.

# Our Story

## 2022

Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) takes a significant step by incubating the Disability Screen Office (DSO), responding to the long-standing barriers in accessibility, employment, and meaningful disability representation in Canada's screen industry. Under the direction of interim Executive Director Andrew Morris, the DSO recruits its first board members and starts to structure its operations. By September, the DSO transitions into a fully independent not-for-profit 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.

## 2023

April 2023 heralds the start of DSO's first year of autonomous operations. In June, Winnie Luk is appointed as the DSO's inaugural Executive Director, taking the lead on expanding and strengthening the organization's impact and vision for an inclusive and accessible screen industry.



2022 - Meeting to discuss the initial steps for establishing the DSO. Photo by AMI.

# Board of Directors and Leadership



**Yazmine Laroche**  
Chair



**Rayhan Azmat**  
Treasurer



**Kenneth Fredeen**  
Secretary



**Prasanna Ranganathan**  
Director



**Sasha Boersma**  
Director



**Rachel Desjourdy**  
Director



**Anna-Karina Tabuñar**  
Director



**Winnie Luk**  
Executive Director

# Our Programs

In 2023-2024, the DSO continued to advance three projects that aim to break down barriers and promote authentic representation of disabled professionals in the screen industry. They are:

1

## **Mapping Representation and Barriers to Participation by People with Disabilities in the Screen-Based Media and Broadcasting Sectors**

The DSO is leading Canada's first-ever study on the participation of people with disabilities in the Canadian screen sector and the barriers they face in the labour force. This multi-year project will culminate in a research report and a foundational document outlining standards and guidelines for disability representation and inclusion on and off-screen, in both the Anglophone and Francophone markets.

The first phase identified key issues such as the need for greater awareness of accessibility, addressing systemic barriers, improving engagement with disabled talent, and establishing industry-wide accessibility training. Phase 2 is currently underway, mapping the state of disability representation and offering recommendations for improvement.

**Supported by: Accessibility Standards Canada, the Canada Media Fund, Shaw Rocket Fund, Ontario Creates, Creative BC, and the Bell Fund.**

# 2

## Industry Resource Hub

In 2025, the DSO will launch the Industry Resource Hub, a searchable database featuring a variety of accessibility and disability-related resources for professionals and new entrants in the Canadian screen industry. This comprehensive, user-friendly platform will make it easier than ever to access essential information and support for accessibility and disability inclusion.

The Hub will include listings for accessible venues, accessibility service providers, and other resources designed to make productions and workflows more inclusive. Users will be able to search by industry role, service type, disability category, region/province, language, and more.

**Supported by: Canada Media Fund, Ontario Creates, Shaw Rocket Fund, and Creative BC.**

# 3

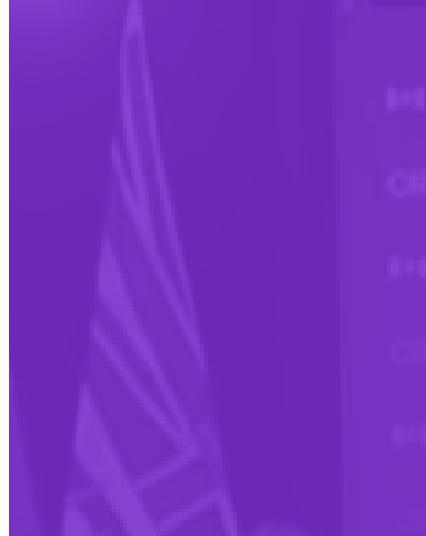
## Screen Festival Accessibility Program

Festivals are a cornerstone of the Canadian screen industry. They serve as hubs where professionals connect, relationships flourish, deals are made, and audiences passionately engage with films and filmmakers. However, there are currently no guidelines to ensure accessibility at these events, meaning that most remain inaccessible to people with disabilities.

Through this multi-year initiative, the DSO will set Canadian standards to make industry events accessible for all. We will work closely with festivals across the country to pilot and refine these standards through community engagement, research, training, and the publication of a best practices guide.

**Supported by: Telefilm.**

# DSO Highlights



## First Meet and Greet **September 2023**

Nearly 200 attendees had the opportunity to meet Executive Director Winnie Luk, the Board of Directors, and learn about the DSO's ongoing initiatives and strategic priorities.



## CRTC Hearings **November 2023**

Executive Director Winnie Luk and Board Chair Yazmine Laroche represented the DSO at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) hearings addressing the Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2023-138, "The Path Forward – Working towards a modernized regulatory framework regarding contributions to support Canadian and Indigenous content."



## Events

In 2023-2024, the DSO participated in and presented at several high-profile events, including the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and Canada's Top Ten Industry Forum, the Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF), Prime Time, Berlinale and European Film Market, Playback Film Summit, Disability and Work in Canada Conference, among others.



## Delegation

In January 2024, the DSO supported a delegation of seven disabled industry professionals to attend Prime Time 2024, in Ottawa, sponsored by Warner Bros. Discovery Access Canada.



## Industry Partnerships

Acting as a partner and consultant to the CBC program, **AccessCBC** supports Deaf and disabled creators with training and mentorship, for scripted, unscripted, and kids screen-based content. In partnership with the National Screen Institute and Women in View, the **Disabled Producers Lab** fosters the growth of disabled producers marginalized by gender.

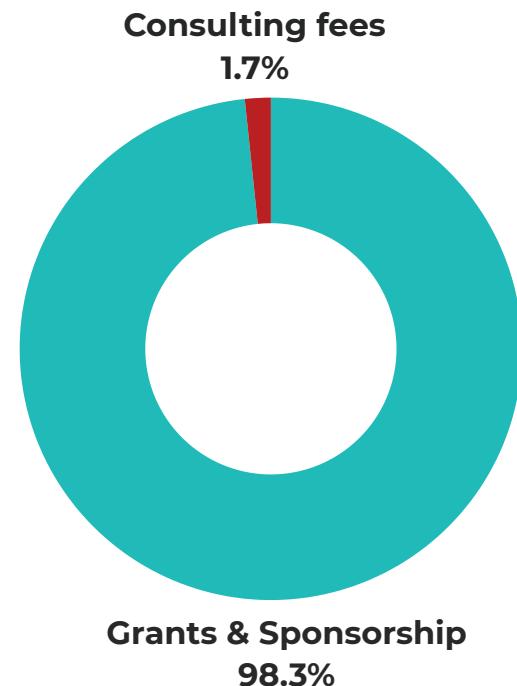
Additionally, our work with **Coalition M.É.D.I.A.** on the "Mapping Representation and Barriers to Participation" project enhances outreach in Quebec, helping us connect with the Francophone disability community and engage with industry professionals.

# Financial Summary

## Revenue

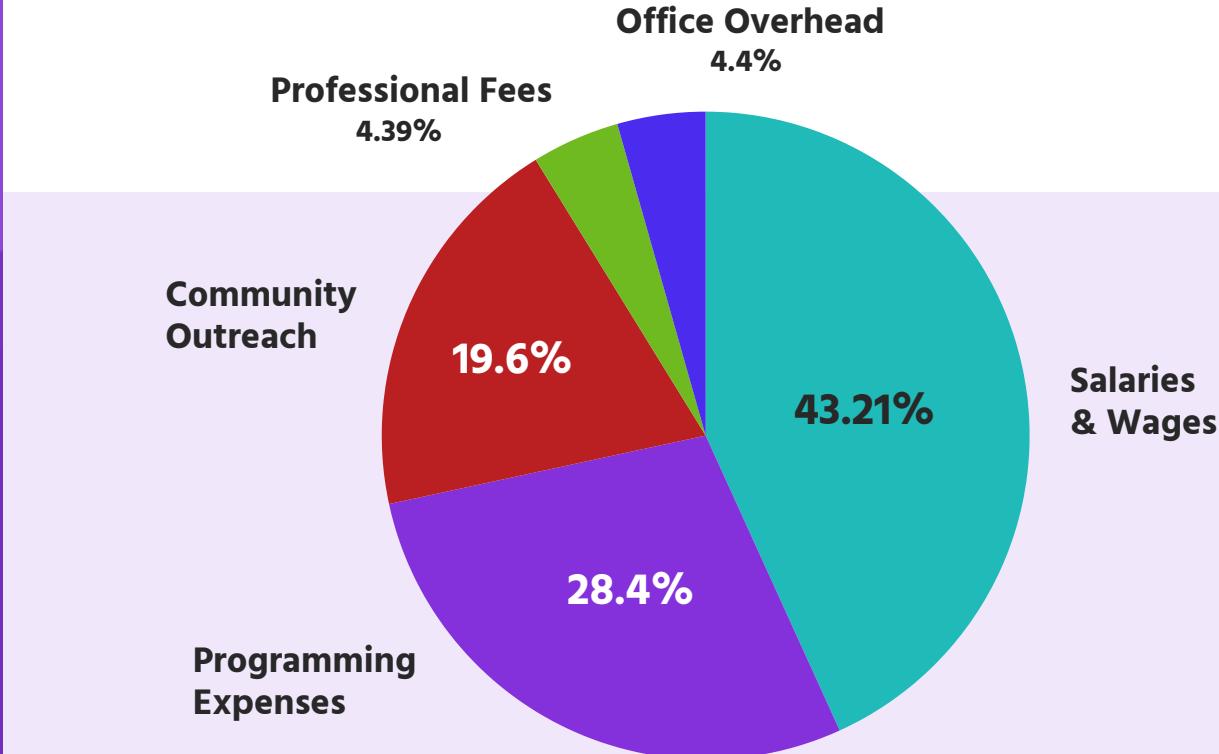
The DSO secured funding through grants from both federal and provincial government bodies, as well as support from sponsorship and consulting fees.

**Total Revenue: \$389,735**



## Allocation of Expenses

**Total investments: \$277,857**



# Partnerships & Support

The incredible progress made by the DSO over the past year has been made possible thanks to the essential support of our sponsors and partners.

## Organization Supporters

Employment and  
Social Development CanadaEmploi et  
Développement social Canada

## Program Supporters



# Looking Ahead

The 2023-2024 fiscal year has been a critical time for establishing the groundwork for our future goals. We've concentrated on creating a solid, sustainable framework and are energized by the work that lies ahead.

Moving forward, we will continue to focus on our key priorities: strategic growth, staying deeply connected with our community, and ensuring disabled creatives remain at the heart of everything we do.

The future is bright, and we are thrilled to move forward with renewed energy and determination.



Winnie presenting at Berlinale EFM Industry Session  
Germany, February 2024

