



# PRODUCTION PLAYBOOK

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Scan this QR code to access a full list of resources referenced throughout this playbook.



# INTRODUCTION

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According to the [CDC](#) (2023), more than one in four American adults identifies as having at least one disability. Yet, disabled characters in media represent just 8.8 percent of total screen time and only 4.1 percent of programs feature disability themes ([Nielsen, 2022](#)). A 2024 study by the [Inevitable Foundation](#) found that 66 percent of all audiences were unsatisfied with current representations of disability and mental health in film and television.

Often, portrayals of disability in media are made without the input and lived experience of people with disabilities, leading to inauthentic representation and potentially inaccurate information delivered to audiences. Championed by the disability community, Move to Include™ holds firm to the principle of “Nothing About Us, Without Us”.

Authentic disability representation in original productions and featured programming validates an audience’s lived experience and supports the breakdown of conscious and unconscious biases. Diverse media representation fosters empathy and understanding among viewers and listeners of all backgrounds.

Inclusion is not limited to who appears on-air or on-screen, but also the people and talents behind the scenes. Part of inclusive production practice is ensuring that your sets, studios, edit bays, processes, and hiring practices are accessible for disabled content creators. This playbook will help you introduce inclusive planning and thought from pre-production through to final delivery. The Move to Include™ team also stands as a partner as you work to improve the accessibility and inclusion of your creative content.

Remember that these efforts are not about reaching a perfect and complete destination, but are rather a journey and continuous learning opportunity for your staff and stakeholders.

## INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

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The Move to Include™ [Station Playbook](#) includes foundational knowledge that public media professionals should consider before beginning their production efforts. This includes building cultural humility, identifying knowledge gaps/bias and connecting with your local disability community. In this companion Playbook, we'll examine production specific accessibility topics that you'll want to consider implementing from the onset of your production process all the way through your first post-production event.

Each section will be broken down into five learning elements:



**Wide-Angle:** These sections will give you the overall view of the topic and the important points to consider. Think about this information as the 30,000-foot view of a topic.



**Shot List:** These sections will provide you with concise action items to implement when planning your next project.



**Rough Cut:** This area will include questions or prompts for you to consider/answer with blank space for your notes and responses.



**Ancillary Rights:** These sections are where you can go to learn more about a specific section and any potential subtopics within that section.



**Zoom In:** Read more about how other public media professionals are implementing tactics from each section into their work through a variety of short case studies.

# PRE-PRODUCTION



## WIDE ANGLE

Accessibility planning starts on day one of any project. Survey your team early to assess the accessibility needs of everyone involved in the project. This includes talent, crew, consultants, and community partners. Consider physical and cognitive accessibility needs. Allow for flexibility in planning and budget to incorporate additional needs, as they may arise during the production process. Dedicate a specific line in your budget for accessibility and accommodations. This preplanning illustrates your commitment to inclusion and sets your team up for success throughout the production process. Accessibility is the priority; not an after-thought.



## SHOT LIST

- Involve local disability communities and partner organizations as early as possible in the process. Lean on their expertise and financially compensate any consultants.
- Develop a project-specific access statement that outlines your commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Share this statement with everyone involved on the project and consistently adhere to it. This is not a check box task, but an ongoing part of your production.
- Draft a comprehensive list of accessibility deliverables - subtitles, captions, audio descriptions, etc. Integrate these elements into your budget and schedule before production begins.
- Empower your team to promote inclusivity in all aspects of production, both on-set and beyond. Continue to check in with team members to ensure all access needs are being addressed. Foster an environment of awareness, growth, and accountability within your team.

# PRE-PRODUCTION CONTINUED



## SHOT LIST

- Ensure any dialogue or visual imagery is respectful. Use person-first or identity-first language as preferred by the community you are working with. If archival material is used or quoted in your production, provide an audience disclaimer for any outdated or offensive language.



## ZOOM IN

During their initial Move to Include™ engagement, Oregon Public Broadcasting found that state or municipal resources can vary in their ability to provide assistance. Seek out other organizations that have worked with state and municipal partners to ensure the right agencies and partners are involved in your project. Do not assume that size is directly proportional to a community partner’s ability to assist. Some large community partners can be unwieldy and not able to be agile on a project. This partner found that some smaller community organizations were able to support in a myriad of ways, despite their size.



## ROUGH CUT

What are three ways that we ensure that our project planning process addresses the diverse needs of all involved parties?

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# PRE-PRODUCTION CONTINUED



## ROUGH CUT

Outline two ideas for how our team can encourage continuous learning and accountability to break down stereotypes, unlearn harmful biases, and promote inclusivity throughout the pre-production process.

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## ANCILLARY RIGHTS

### 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act

Passed in 2010

<https://bit.ly/3PaGDmX>

### Communications, Video and Accessibility Act

Proposed

<https://bit.ly/41NITZX>

### FWD-DOC

Changing the Narrative of Disability in Documentary Film

<https://bit.ly/4fCMtZ0>

### Inevitable Foundation

The “Cost” of Accommodations Report

<https://bit.ly/4iMpvS7>

# STORYBOARDING AND SCRIPTING



## WIDE ANGLE

As your project begins to take shape, look closely at your scripts, storyboards, and character arcs to identify any potential for exclusionary practices or harmful stereotypes. This can help you shape a more inclusive and respectful narrative from the start. As you develop your visual narrative, consider how scenes will be audio described for low-vision viewers. This might influence your choices in production design, lighting, body language, and even the dialogue you use.

Rich audio descriptions can greatly enhance the viewing experience for blind and low-vision or neurodivergent audiences. By considering accessibility from the beginning, you have the opportunity to build out your scripts with vivid, detailed descriptions to fully convey the emotional and aesthetic intentions of your project.



## SHOT LIST

- Seek out a diverse range of perspectives throughout the storyboarding and scripting process. Consult with your subjects, community partners, and consultants early and often.
- Be open to their feedback and dialogue. Avoid becoming defensive when discussing potential areas for improvement.
- Avoid tokenism, [inspiration porn](#), and harmful tropes or stereotypes.
- Portray disabled characters with depth, complexity, authenticity, and humanity.



# STORYBOARDING & SCRIPTING CONTINUED



## ZOOM IN

WFYI in Indianapolis had great success with stories inspired by outreach to parents of kids in D/deaf schools, finding out how those schools were adapting during the COVID lockdowns. The outreach to the parents provided a unique perspective not included in the widely reported stories about schools adapting to remote schooling. The story also served as an important reminder for the production team during the storyboarding and scripting phases to include different perspectives.

At IOWA PBS, they found having a clear focus was crucial to success. The production team used the storyboarding and scripting process to ensure that they were not trying to address too many issues at one time. Focusing on one issue was far more successful and helped to provide real substance. It is also important to remember that these stories and issues reflect an entire community and do not speak to just one audience.



## ROUGH CUT

What are two ways that we might integrate rich audio descriptions or other accessibility options into our initial storyboarding and scripting phases to enhance the viewing experience for low-vision or blind audiences?

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# STORYBOARDING & SCRIPTING CONTINUED

How can we actively involve individuals with disabilities in the storytelling process? How will we ensure that their perspectives shape our narrative while promoting authentic and respectful representation?

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## ANCILLARY RIGHTS

### Move to Include Training: Inclusive Language

Slide Deck: <https://bit.ly/426Etwv>

Video: <https://bit.ly/49PJD1C>

### Move to Include Training: Amplifying without Overpowering

Slide Deck: <https://bit.ly/41MVaNe>

Video: <https://bit.ly/4ilso6t>

### Disability Language Style Guide

National Center on Disability and Journalism

<https://bit.ly/3QFkRsP>

# PRODUCTION & POST-PRODUCTION



## WIDE ANGLE

**Set Accessibility:** You'll want to ensure that the set is fully accessible for cast and crew with disabilities by providing clear pathways, ramps, and appropriate restroom facilities. Create quiet spaces for those who may need sensory breaks. Use multiple forms of communication, such as verbal, written, and visual, for directions and cues, and provide sign language interpreters or other communication aids as needed. Be patient and allow extra time for communication, and remain flexible with scheduling by planning for longer shooting days on set, incorporating regular breaks, and being prepared to adjust the schedule as necessary. Ensure compliance with local and international laws regarding workplace accessibility, such as the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) in the United States.

**Captioning:** As the use of streaming platforms has risen, so has the use of captions and subtitles. A 2023 [VITAC survey](#) found that nearly 90% of respondents opted for captions, citing unclear dialogue or watching in busy public spaces among other reasons for their choice. Captions are used by English language learners, neurodivergent individuals, as well as the D/deaf and hard of hearing community. In many cases, captioning is required by law and enforceable by the [Federal Communications Commission](#). Producers should make framing choices with the awareness that captions will be displayed simultaneously, ensuring that both the visual and textual elements of the film can be appreciated without interference.

**Music:** Knowing that music will be audio described, it's important to choose audio tracks that enhance the narrative and can be effectively conveyed to an audience relying on audio cues. Descriptions should capture the essence of the music and its role in the scene. Clearly distinguish between captions and other on-screen texts such as credits, info cards, or lower thirds. Use different fonts, colors, or positioning to clearly differentiate between dialogue captions and informational text, ensuring clarity and comprehension for viewers.

## PRODUCTION & POST-PRODUCTION CONTINUED

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**Audio Production:** When it comes to narration, choose voices that fit the cultural context of your story. The voice should complement the story you're telling, not distract from it, ensuring it resonates with your audience. This includes using clear and concise narration language to make content understandable for people with cognitive disabilities and ensure that audio descriptions are comprehensive. If you are using a voice actor for a non-verbal interview subject or character, allow the individual to participate in the selection process, whenever possible.



### SHOT LIST

- Accuracy and timing are of the utmost importance with captions and transcripts. Both should include non-verbal audio cues to indicate off screen sounds (such as a car door slamming) and environmental information (such as weather-related sounds).
- Audio descriptions should be included in your script from the beginning to ensure appropriate pacing and space. They should be straightforward descriptions of what is happening on screen and avoid excessive details.
- Include alt text for all video thumbnails.
- Continually test for accessibility and improve or keep pace with current technologies.

# PRODUCTION & POST-PRODUCTION CONTINUED



## ROUGH CUT

Describe two steps you can take to ensure that your audio descriptions and narration choices enrich the storytelling experience and are contextually relevant.

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How can you involve disabled viewers throughout the editing and production process, from providing feedback on rough cuts to ensuring set and communication accessibility?

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## PRODUCTION & POST-PRODUCTION CONTINUED



### ZOOM IN

Knowledge is power for your team. At Oregon Public Broadcasting, they found that helping make the production team more knowledgeable about accessibility and its value was key to their production success. When the entire team understood more about these kinds of issues, the same way it understood lighting, audio, and video, all productions began to make the same considerations.

Producing within the initial stages of COVID restrictions was a distinct struggle for WFYI, as they needed to shoot video safely and within virtual spaces, which offered various and increased logistical challenges for some disabled guests. However, it was this challenging time for the team that helped create new production practices, including adding ASL and strategic captioning to programs and, most of all, making sure that each production provided a welcoming space for all. The lessons learned from these challenges also inspired this partner to add a neurodivergent intern to its staff who provided invaluable perspective to the entire production team.



### ANCILLARY RIGHTS

#### **National Center for Accessible Media**

GBH

<https://bit.ly/4iQYfll>

#### **Described and Captioned Media Program**

Free resources

<https://bit.ly/3BxKVlf>

#### **Audio Description Project**

American Council for the Blind

<https://bit.ly/3VQD1dm>

# MARKETING & ENGAGEMENT



## WIDE ANGLE

Accessibility doesn't stop with post-production. All the accessibility features in the world won't matter if your audience can't find your work once its completed. As you begin marketing and promoting your content, consider all the ways in which you intend to share your messaging and the platforms you plan to utilize.

**Web:** Your website should already adhere to the latest [WCAG](#) (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). Audit your website for accessibility regularly and address any issues of concern. Add alt text or image descriptions to visual elements, including video thumbnails. Use high-contrast colors and sans serif fonts. If you've used a third party designer for your website, require testing by a human evaluator - do not rely on AI tools - and a certificate of accessibility, which you can display on your website. Do not use an [accessibility overlay](#).

**Social Media:** Many social media platforms already have accessibility features built into their creator tools. Caption all video or audio content, ensuring that captions are appropriately placed on the screen and contrasted against the background. This is not a one-and-done task, as each platform will display your content differently. Ensure that you are tailoring your accessible content for each individual platform. These change frequently and typically without notice, so you'll need to keep up on the latest features. If using static images or digital assets, be sure to include alt text and/or image descriptions.

**Language:** Always use inclusive and respectful language. Use person-first or identity-first language depending on the preference of the individual or community featured in your content. If archival material is used that includes out-dated or offensive language, include a disclaimer for your audience.

## MARKETING & ENGAGEMENT CONTINUED

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**Images and Photography:** Be inclusive in your choice of stock photography or b-roll footage for any and all projects. Avoid tokenism and inspiration porn. Consider that not all disabilities are apparent or “visible”. Add alt text and/or image descriptions to all images and photos.

**Outreach:** Share any promotional materials with your community partners and ask them to share within their networks to grow your audience. Research other communities or organizations in your area who might be interested in your content. Explicitly share the available accessibility features for your project. Always provide an opportunity for feedback on your finished project, whether via online surveys, in-person focus groups, or other mechanisms.



### SHOT LIST

- Provide talking points for internal and external partners that respectfully address the disability themes in your content and call out the accessibility features available. Include these points in press materials, as well.
- Share “behind the scenes” content to showcase your accessibility and inclusion efforts on set and behind the camera.
- Create viewing guides or develop supplementary material to expand on the themes represented in your content. These can also be shared with other communities through PBS LearningMedia.
- Collaborate with your development team to provide opportunities for sponsorship or feature in donor communications.



# MARKETING & ENGAGEMENT CONTINUED



## ZOOM IN

It is natural for initial listening sessions with a community to be productive and feature expansive brainstorming covering many issues. However, it's important to remember to manage expectations and avoid the temptation to over-promise what a production project can deliver. Public Media maintains some of the highest levels of trust among institutions in the country. Because of that trust, when you engage with communities, people will take you at your word.

IOWA PBS warns against making initial listening sessions so important that you inevitably disappoint audiences during the critical engagement phase. If listening sessions are made to be too important, audiences will expect more action. When communicating with community stakeholders, always provide measured and realistic expectations at each step of the process.



## ROUGH CUT

What is one way we might feature diverse representations of disabilities in our promotional materials without resorting to stereotypes or inspirational tropes?

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# MARKETING & ENGAGEMENT CONTINUED

What two mechanisms can we implement to gather and track feedback from viewers/attendees with disabilities on our marketing and engagement efforts?

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## ANCILLARY RIGHTS

### Section 508

Accessible Social Media

<https://bit.ly/4iNFMGq>

### Accessible Social

Free resources

<https://bit.ly/4fw3Hr1>

### Decoding WCAG, Section 508, and ADA

A 11y Collective

<https://bit.ly/4gRFAUR>

# EVENTS



## WIDE ANGLE

Film screenings, listening sessions, and community events are a great way to promote your content. Just as with every other step on the production journey, accessibility should be a key consideration when planning these gatherings, whether in person, online, or hybrid. Remember that ADA compliance is the first step, not the ultimate destination, when it comes to accessibility efforts.

As with the production itself, begin planning for accessibility from the beginning, allowing flexibility in your budget and timeline to identify and arrange for any accommodations you'll need to implement. Create the most inclusive environment from the beginning and adjust or revise as audience or community members request specific services. We've provided some considerations to get you started in the Move to Include™ Station Playbook.

Throughout the event planning process, consult with your partners on how best to provide a warm and welcoming environment for the communities that they serve. Allocate funds in your budget to cover the cost of a venue assessment by a member of the disability community. Do not rely on the venue's own assessment or assessments made by someone non-disabled. Provide training for any staff who will be working the event to ensure that they are physically, emotionally, and technically prepared to provide assistance to attendees.

Be specific and comprehensive in your promotional materials for the event on what accessibility considerations are already in place - such as ASL interpretation, open captions, audio description, flexible seating, or quiet spaces - so your audience knows what to expect. Always provide an opportunity during the registration process for attendees to request additional accommodations or provide further information for event planners.

Be prepared to think quickly and solve any access issues that may arise during the event itself. Provide an opportunity for attendees to give feedback on the accessibility and inclusivity of your event, whether through online surveys, point of contact email, or other mechanisms. Remain humble and open to learning from each experience. Remember that accessibility and inclusion is a journey, not a destination.

## EVENTS CONTINUED



### SHOT LIST

- Ensure that all staff, vendors, and partners are aware of the accessibility features and accommodations available for the event and adhere to their implementation. Train any personnel as needed prior to the date of the event.
- Consider hosting virtual or hybrid events, rather than relying solely on in-person gatherings, to expand your potential audience.
- Work with your development team to identify opportunities for sponsorship or donor support, i.e. a local hearing center may sponsor ASL interpretation for the event.
- Provide opportunities for your community partners to share their work with your audience, i.e. adding their literature to your materials table or swag bag.
- If your station is participating in third-party community events, request information on accessibility considerations and accommodations. Call out any gaps in service and, if possible, offer to assist in resolving them.



### ZOOM IN

While it is tempting to consider town hall events or production screenings as production-focused events, it is important to include experienced event planners and disability experts who can consider both the technical aspects of the production and the accessibility of the event itself.

Identify and utilize venues that are well-established in hosting inclusive events with the disability community. Your community partners are great resources for recommendations. Ensure that your planners and staff work directly with your community partners or other disability organizations to provide access and accommodations for the specific group you'll be hosting.

## EVENTS CONTINUED



### ROUGH CUT

What are three ways that we can guarantee that our event venues are fully ADA compliant and accessible with clear signage, adequate seating options, and properly trained staff and volunteers?

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### ANCILLARY RIGHTS

#### Event Accessibility Considerations

Disability Belongs

<https://bit.ly/3ZSV9o6>

#### Film Event Accessibility Working Group

FEAW

<https://bit.ly/3DrqSoV>

#### What is a Sensory-Friendly Environment?

SensoryFriendly.net

<https://bit.ly/4gk7Zmx>

#### ASL Interpreting 101 for Hearing People

Andrew Tolman and Lauren Tolo

<https://bit.ly/3BxfxTZ>

# CONCLUSION

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Creating inclusive and accessible media requires commitment, collaboration, and an openness to continuous improvement. By integrating the principles and practices outlined in this playbook, public media professionals can play a pivotal role in shaping a more inclusive media landscape.

**Inclusion:** Commit to upholding the principle of “Nothing about us, without us” in your original content, programming, and engagement. Gather in, rather than call out.

**Accessibility:** Building accessibility features into your content opens up your work to expanded audiences and promotes a culture of “you belong”. Implementing universal design practices and accessible production equipment provides workforce opportunities for people with disabilities in public media.

**Representation:** Authentic disability representation enriches storytelling, fosters empathy, and contributes to a more equitable society.

**Collaboration:** The Move to Include™ initiative is an intentional community of practice for disability inclusion and accessibility in public media. The national team is here to provide training, resources, and other opportunities to expand upon the themes and practices explored in this playbook.

## QUESTIONS:

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# APPENDIX

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## CREATE A STATEMENT OF INCLUSION

Creating a Statement of Inclusion is essential for ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or abilities, feel welcomed, and valued. This guide provides a step-by-step formula to help public media stations develop a comprehensive and project-specific Statement of Inclusion and Accessibility.

**Step One:** Define your purpose and explain the importance for disability inclusion and accessibility at your station.

- *Example: "The purpose of this Statement of Inclusion is to affirm our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values diversity. We recognize the importance of inclusivity in creating media that reflects and serves all members of our community."*

**Step Two:** Clearly define what disability inclusion and accessibility means for your organization.

- *Example: "Disability Inclusivity means ensuring that our content, work environment, and engagement strategies are welcoming and accessible to all individuals."*

**Step Three:** Outline your station's core commitments to disability inclusion and accessibility. Using this playbook, address areas such as content creation, employment practices, community engagement, and accessibility.

- *Example: "We commit to ensuring our platforms and events are accessible to individuals with disabilities."*

**Step Four:** Put your statement pieces together and provide contact details for individuals to inquire or provide feedback about the Statement of Inclusion and Accessibility.

By following this formula, your station can create a comprehensive and tailored Statement of Inclusion that promotes disability awareness and accessibility across all projects and initiatives.

# APPENDIX

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## PRE-PRODUCTION DELIVERABLE CHECKLIST

### General Accessibility

- Ensure all workspaces and production locations are accessible (ramps, wide doorways, accessible restrooms).
- Provide ergonomic furniture and assistive technologies as needed.

### Content Accessibility

- Plan for subtitles and captions for all video content, including:
  - Rough cuts
  - Trailers
  - Screeners
  - Final versions
- Include audio descriptions for all visual content, covering:
  - Rough cuts
  - Trailers
  - Screeners
  - Final versions

### Communication and Documentation

- Create accessible versions of all scripts and documentation (large print, braille, digital formats compatible with screen readers).
- Provide clear, concise instructions and use multiple forms of communication (visual aids, written materials).

### Staffing and Training

- Conduct sensitivity and disability awareness training for all staff.
- Hire or consult with accessibility experts to review and advise on production practices.
- Ensure sign language interpreters or other communication aids are available for team members who need them.



# APPENDIX

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## **Scheduling and Breaks**

- Allow for flexible work hours and telecommuting options.
- Schedule adequate breaks, particularly for those who may need more frequent rest.

## **Technology and Tools**

- Ensure all software and tools used in production are accessible.
- Utilize assistive technologies such as screen readers, voice recognition software, and other adaptive tools.

## **Emergency Procedures**

- Include people with disabilities when developing and communicating inclusive emergency evacuation plans
- Assign buddies or establish a support system to ensure safe evacuation for all.

## **Project-Specific Considerations**

- For live events or broadcasts, provide:
  - Sign language interpretation
  - Real-time captions
  - Accessible seating arrangements
- Ensure all promotional materials (trailers, posters, social media content) are accessible (alt text for images, accessible PDFs, etc.).

## **Feedback and Continuous Improvement**

- Establish channels for open communication where crew and audience members can provide feedback on accessibility.
- Regularly review accessibility practices and policies and update based on feedback or new technologies.

By following this checklist, stations can ensure a more inclusive production process that accommodates the needs of individuals with disabilities at every stage, from pre-production to the final release.