

# Leading practice for making accessible deliverables

“Accessibility can no longer be considered as a **specific problem** of people with disabilities [but of] society at large.”<sup>25</sup>

The provision of access features like captions and audio description has historically been connected to disability. However, there is a strong movement towards a **wider, more universalist** view of media and film accessibility. To better reflect this broader perspective, an underlying **philosophy of accessibility** should be ingrained into our film efforts (NB: ‘efforts’, because it is about more than just a film itself). Below are four areas of **excellence** we can incorporate into our practice.



Image Description: Jim LeBrecht, a white man with curly hair, glasses and a goatee beard, sits smiling in a power chair in front of a sound mixing console with multiple computer screens. His t-shirt is bright red and the text on it reads "The future is accessible".

## 1) Technical considerations for accessible filmmaking

While filmmakers often have questions about technical specifications, terminology and delivery materials in relation to accessible filmmaking, these answers can be found easily online and from exhibitors, broadcasters and post-production houses (and several are mentioned in this document). For example, Netflix provides extensive information about the technical requirements for delivering [subtitles](#), [captions](#) and [audio description](#), and these formed part of the *Crip Camp* producers' **deliverables checklists** on the film's journey to accessibility.

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## 2) Fundamental considerations for accessible filmmaking

In addition to understanding technical details such as 'how many characters-per-line' in captions or the relative volume of audio description, there are fundamental considerations for filmmaking overall that should be a part of our overarching processes. This is the **'philosophy of accessibility'**:

- Include audio description and captioning as a **standard part** of every filmmaking process, not a one-off nor **limited** to films about D/deafness or disability.



Image Description: In a darkly-lit home filmmaker Holly Hardman, a white woman with long silver hair, stands next to her film participant Geri Burns, a white woman with red hair. They're looking intently at a table full of photographs while behind them J Weintraub, a young Asian man, films them with a camera on his shoulder.

- **Budget** and **schedule early** for making high-quality captions and audio description, on final deliverables and also rough cuts, trailers and screeners. This means ensuring that filmmakers spend time crafting the scripts with the captioners and audio describers; these scripts are every bit as important to the creative process as the film script that captures what hearing and non-blind audiences experience.
- Plan to create them from the outset and this will enable you to **respect them as a core part** of the filmmaking process, prevent them being a **stressful add-on** at the end of post-production, ultimately **save you time and money** (e.g. multiple parties won't have to produce them in a rush during distribution) and will enable you to engage with **wider audiences and greater sources of revenue**.
- Remember that **culturally sensitive** captioning and audio description that conveys your values and intentions – and doesn't introduce racist, sexist, ableist or homophobic perspective to your work – is key to the role of filmmaker.
- Ensure that as a filmmaker you are part of **creating** the accessible deliverables – get in the studio with your captioners and audio describers and complete your storytelling. Captioning and audio description are part of the **art of storytelling** and the **language of your film** (including representation), and shouldn't be left to someone who doesn't make editorial decisions. [The Accessible Filmmaking Guide](#) details the practical step-by-step process and **costs** of working with captioners and audio describers.
- Don't wait until you're in distribution – at this point, there is **no creative control** and you lose involvement in a crucial editorial facet of your work.
- Remember to budget and schedule for accessibility features on **trailers, rough cuts, test screening cuts, festival screeners** and **awards screeners**. Without these, you are excluding potential D/deaf and disabled colleagues across the industry – including awards voters – from engaging with you and your film.
- Request (contractually where possible) that your distributors and exhibitors (including festivals) **hold screenings that actually use the accessibility features** you've provided. **Advertise** those screenings and D/deaf / disabled audiences will come.