BSO

BLACK SCREEN OFFICE | **BUREAU DE L'ÉCRAN DES NOIRS**

being seen

Directives for creating inclusive and authentic content

Broadcaster & Funder Toolkit

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Introduction

Broadcaster & Funders Toolkit

This Toolkit is intended to help funders and broadcasters looking to implement the Directives contained in the _Being Seen_ suite of reports. It provides context, guidance, handy references and addresses commonly asked questions. For more information, please refer to the reports themselves.

Statement of Principles

It is important to understand where _Being Seen_ is coming from to fully understand what it is trying to accomplish.

No right or wrong answers

Screen content is a creative medium. Authenticity is subjective. Therefore there is no right or wrong answer in the search for authenticity. Each project, each creative team, each audience will have different concerns, standards or goals. _Being Seen_ encourages self-reflection, discussion and evolution and not a proscriptive list of do's and don't's.

Where Being Seen applies

Being Seen applies to all screen media including film, television and interactive digital media. It applies to scripted and unscripted content. The degree that the search for authenticity plays a role can vary depending on genre and story but at no time should it not be a consideration.

Identity

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Intersectionality

No one is just one identity. Intersectionality means that different aspects of a person's identity can be at play at different times or all at the same time. When one identity is addressed, other identities may still be actively oppressed. A checkbox approach to identity undermines seeing a person as their whole selves.

Systemic Barriers

Systemic barriers do not target one or two communities but multiple communities as they were created to favour straight, white, able-bodied people. There are other elements of privilege as well, not dealt with by *Being Seen* such as gender, socio- economic status, citizenship and religion. Communities need to work together to break down these systemic barriers so that Canadians have equal opportunity to fulfil their creative dreams and audiences see themselves in the screen content created in Canada.

Change

The ultimate goal of *Being Seen* is to create positive change that will result in a more diverse talent pool and better screen content.

Questions & ANSWERS

Q As a straight/white/able-bodied broadcast executive or funder, how can I assess that the creative of an underrepresented creator is authentic? How can I even ask the question?

A Take a look at the team that they have put together and the work that they plan to do to ensure authenticity. A well-crafted Community Engagement Plan (or equivalent) will provide confidence that they have a process in place that you can trust. Hire more people who do not share your background and encourage them to provide their perspectives. At the same time do your due diligence and ask the questions. Audiences will respond to authentic content and trust the broadcaster to ensure that authentic content is greenlit. If the content comes from a community other than your own, consider asking other staff or outside consultants to review. You may not have the knowledge necessary to assess authenticity.

Q If self-identification is so important, how can I question identity?

A Unfortunately, there have been a few people who have claimed identity that they do not have in order to respond to the greater interest in diversity or to apply for specific targeted funding. It is rare but seems to happen most frequently with claims to Indigeneity. Warning signs that suggest further investigation include seeing an identity on some projects but not on others, not seeing it in public biographies, and use of language like 'heritage' or 'background' and in the case of Indigenous identity specifically not referring to a nation or community to which they belong. See the Indigenous Screen Office's [Building Trust and Accountability: Report on Eligibility in the Indigenous Screen Sector](#) for examples of how the ISO assesses Indigenous Identity.

Q We had workplace training on anti-racism. Is there anything else that I need to do?

A Many organizations are providing staff with basic anti-racism, anti-oppression and anti-harassment training as they work towards creating safe and equitable work environments. Training is an ongoing process of self-discovery. It is not a one and done. Look for different programs, run programs more than once, find advanced learning and different teaching styles.

Q   I want to be a good ally. What does allyship look like while working at a broadcaster or funder?

A   Others can call you an ally after you support and advocate for them but self-identifying as an ally can be seen as performative. Allyship is taking active steps to advocate, break down barriers and provide opportunities. It is going beyond 'not being racist' to being 'anti-racist', in actions as well as thought. It is better to open doors for members of underrepresented communities and to invite them into the discussions than to have an ally speak for them. Hire them. Provide them with learning opportunities and the ability to advance in their careers. Listen to what they say they need and adapt your processes.

Q   I want to support new talent and help to diversify our sector but there is a lot of money at stake here. We cannot risk large sums of money on unproven talent. We look for experienced underrepresented talent with a track record and there just aren't enough of them so we end up working with a lot of the people we have worked with before. But we try.

A   Consider how your systems might be perpetuating barriers to entry. It is understandable that as a broadcaster or funder you do not want to risk large sums of money, but consider if there are different ways to produce that might reduce risk while still supporting new talent. Can you support more short form content or lower budget content and help build capacity? Can you provide or require mentorship in different roles?

Glossary

Many people in the industry have asked for a glossary or vocabulary list that would help them understand what are the right terms to use and what each one means. This is a challenging problem because terms are evolving and at times divisive. Many organizations have definitions that they have worked hard to develop, yet as there are no industry standards they differ from the definitions that others have developed. People are also looking for advice on what is ok to see in informal situations. Our attempted solution is to present a live document that can be updated and will provide context. The *Being Seen Glossary* provides guidance on usage as well as in some contexts definitions of terms. Readers can provide other perspectives and suggest other terms to be included through the submission form included in the document.

Tips for BROADCASTERS AND FUNDERS

The following tips for BROADCASTERS AND FUNDERS were generated by focus group consultations with broadcasters and funders and with underrepresented producers and creators.

1   Incorporate authenticity into your brand rather than as an add on to ensure that it is woven throughout every decision and consideration.

2   Share *Being Seen* or at least the standalone Directives and Toolkits with staff, outside evaluators and through social media channels to producers you may be working with.

3   Consider including a reference to Being Seen (often side by side with the ImagineNative On Screen Protocols and Pathways) in guidelines, evaluation grids (as part of the review of content and/or team or a standalone consideration) and/or contracts. Some funders have included discussions of the two guides in application clinics.

4   Provide guidance to development and production executives on implementing *Being Seen* in their content reviews and greenlight decisions.

5   Provide guidance to evaluators on implementing *Being Seen* in application reviews. Each funder might assess authenticity differently and put differing emphasis on the considerations. Note that authenticity can be an element of assessing the team (right people engaged for the story), the content (avoids stereotypes and tokens, engages with the community) and marketing (knows the audience). Consider adapting the Guidelines for Evaluators on Authenticity and Identity (Appendix 'D') to the specific parameters of your fund.

6   Increase diversity of representation among the decision-making team to increase the likelihood that members of the team understand the story and storytelling coming from underrepresented creators. Is there a way to engage with internal Employee Resource Groups to solicit their input or perspective. This could be of particular value in assessing challenging themes (e.g., slavery, gender transition, police brutality) which might need to be addressed with added sensitivity.

7   Empower staff from underrepresented communities so that their perspectives are heard and can make a difference.

8   Setting a condition of a minimum percentage of underrepresented in key crew or creative team forces producers to broaden their scope as well as helping them to justify to other funders and broadcasters the need to provide opportunities to emerging talent.

9   Consider engaging the *Being Seen* team at BSO to provide a tailored workshop to staff and/or evaluators.

10   Provide more training opportunities for staff in anti-racism, anti-Black racism, anti-harassment, oppression and unconscious bias. Some broadcasters require producers to provide diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training opportunities for cast and crew as a condition of greenlight. DEI training is an ongoing process of self-discovery and implementation and requires regular upkeep.

11   Support teams that are trying to grow the skilled talent pool through paid mentorship or new opportunities for underrepresented talent. Keep in mind that requirements for prior experience can create systemic barriers. These barriers can be overcome by less experienced talent appropriately supported by team members.

12   Emphasize providing authenticity feedback at pre-development and development stages where changes in teams and/or content can be more easily made and will have less financial impact.

13   If a funder, provide feedback to applicants if their insufficient consideration of authenticity negatively impacted their evaluation so that they can learn and improve.

14   Use Community Engagement Plans to assess a producer's engagement with relevant communities and steps taken to ensure authenticity. Community Engagement Plans can be formal documents or relate to questions embedded in an application or contract.

15   Some broadcasters have formal community consultations to hear what the communities they serve are looking for and get responses on content produced. Others rely on social media responses from the audience. Recognize that as a broadcaster you won't always get it right. Learn from feedback and adapt.

16   Share case studies of successes so everyone can learn and adapt to their own projects.

Additional RESOURCES

Through consultations the participants asked for a number of resources which would either make using the Directives easier or would make implementing authenticity protocols easier. Some of these resources were created and can be found in the Appendices. They include:

1. Glossary (see above)

2. Develop a list of questions to consider that can be added to contracts or shared with producers. See Appendix 'A'.

3. Infographics to communicate the messages of Being Seen briefly and visually. See Appendix 'B'.

4. Guidelines for evaluators on authenticity and identity. See Appendix 'C'

Appendix 'A' - AUTHENTICITY GUIDE

Being Seen Authenticity Guide for Producers

The following questions are reminders of what to do and ask yourself to signify whether a project is authentic. The guide will lead to further reflection and work to ensure authenticity of the content.

- Have you read *Being Seen* and *ImagineNative On-Screen Protocols and Pathways*?

- Have you reviewed the *Being Seen Considerations for Community Engagement Plans*?

- Can you explain your connection to the community(ies) portrayed in the story or explain your plan to ensure authenticity of the story?

- Do you have a plan to ensure diversity within your <u>creative</u> team?

- Do you have a plan to ensure diversity within your <u>production</u> team?

- Have you budgeted money and scheduled time for cultural consultation or community engagement?

- Have you discussed strategies for authentic casting with your director and casting director?

- Have you budgeted for interns or job shadowing to help build the diversity of the talent pool?

- Will you be implementing anti-racism, anti-harassment, anti-oppression training for your production team? Will you be tracking who on your team has previously taken such training?

- Do you have contingency plans should any of your diversity or authenticity plans not be successful? For example, if you cannot find a screenwriter from a specific community, what is your plan to ensure authenticity?

- Have you planned for reflection and possible reporting on the success of your diversity or authenticity plans?

Appendix 'B' - INFOGRAPHICS

Accents
Not all Black and People of Colour have accents. Accents should be normalized and not used to signal character traits. If you're going to have a character with an accent, get it right.

Who Can Tell A Story?
There is no one answer to this question. Whether you are from the community or outside, make sure you have done the work to ensure authenticity.

Avoiding Black Stereotypes
Understand the complexity of the Black communities including ethnic or cultural origin, intersectional identities, socio-economic status and location within Canada.

Avoiding Asian Stereotypes
Understand the complexity of the Asian communities including ethnic or cultural origin, intersectional identities, socio-economic status and location within Canada. Be sensitive to the stereotypes that reinforce the hypersexualization of Asian women and desexualization of Asian men.

Avoiding 2SLGBTQIA+ Stereotypes
Avoid stereotypes unless you're subverting them or adding complexity to the character or story. Review content with an eye to unconsciously promoting stereotypes.

Avoiding Disabilities Stereotypes
Understand that there are visible and invisible disabilities and a wide range of experience and characteristics within each disability.

Parents of Child Performers
Being familiar with the Directives can help parents and guardians become better advocates for child performers.

Working with Consultants
In some situations authenticity can be ensured by engaging a cultural consultant. However, sometimes that is not enough.

Why Authenticity?
Authenticity isn't just a feel good thing we should do because we are good citizens who care about our communities. There is an economic imperative behind authenticity.

Appendix 'C' - GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATORS

Guidelines for Evaluators on Authenticity & Identity for Applicant

The following guidelines for evaluators are general concepts that should be adapted to the evaluation criteria of each fund. Consistent with *Being Seen* they address only Black, People of Colour, 2SLGBTQIA+ and Persons with Disabilities identities. For insight into Indigenous eligibility please see the resources developed by the Indigenous Screen Office.

Many questions on authenticity and identity require a subjective analysis, which is part of the work of evaluation. Evaluators will bring their own lived experience and identity to the analysis. The impact of the analysis on the evaluation will depend on the evaluation grid of the applicable fund.

Track Record of the Applicant Company

If the company says that it is supporting underrepresented voices, review the projects and teams (staff and those engaged for the project) to assess whether it appears that they are supporting and mentoring underrepresented talent or if there is no evidence to support the statements. Are underrepresented talent only in junior positions or engaged as outside consultants or are they advancing into positions of authority? Companies must be taking active steps towards increasing representation and not making vague statements and/or promising future hires.

Consider the ownership structure if it is an experienced mainstream company working with less experienced underrepresented talent. There are many potential ownership structures but assess whether the experienced company is providing the less experienced company with mentorship and opportunities to benefit from success or whether the less experienced company is giving up the rights to the project without sufficient tangible or intangible benefit.

The Team

- Promises to engage unnamed people from underrepresented communities should not be sufficient to trigger a positive analysis as applicants are generally not held accountable for failing to engage the promised talent. Funds will determine the level of commitment required (contract, letter of commitment, letter of interest, list of identified talent) to support a positive analysis.

- Consider whether key communities or identities are represented in the key creative team or if there is a plan to include external inputs. If a community is significant to the story and characters (e.g., a story about the historic Black community of Halifax), assess more value to coming from that community (e.g., a showrunner from the Black Halifax community) and less to an adjacent community (e.g., a screenwriter from the Black Jamaican-Canadian community in Toronto) or unrelated community (e.g., a white screenwriter who has researched the community or engaged a consultant).

- Assess more value to members of key communities being in positions of authority (e.g., showrunner, co-writer) rather than positions without authority where their perspective could be ignored (e.g., outside consultant).

- For secondary communities and identities, assess the value of having a plan to incorporate perspectives in the creative through research, junior roles, outside consultants or engaging with and listening to performers from those communities.

- Consider whether key communities or identities are represented in the key creative team or if there is a plan to include external inputs. If a community is significant to the story and characters (e.g., a story about the historic Black community of Halifax), assess more value to coming from that community (e.g., a showrunner from the Black Halifax community) and less to an adjacent community (e.g., a screenwriter from the Black Jamaican-Canadian community in Toronto) or unrelated community (e.g., a white screenwriter who has researched the community or engaged a consultant).

- If there is not enough representation from relevant communities due to a shortage of qualified talent, are there plans to mentor or provide learning opportunities to junior talent to help build the talent pool while also accessing their perspectives.

- Are the community members directly aligned with the community they are said to represent or is there anything in their bio to suggest a wider experience. For example, if the story is about a Hindu Indo-Canadian then a Muslim Pakistani-Canadian may not have the necessary lived experience depending on the story and how they relate to it.

- Self-identification is an important concept but keep an eye out for red flags that suggest that the identity may not be accurate. For example, identities that shift depending on the content in different projects or not publicly disclosing identity could be reason to explore further. Identity can be fluid and evolving. Some identities, particularly 2SLGBTQIA+ and Persons with Disabilities, have a history of hiding to avoid bias. Failure to self-identify on a past project does not mean talent cannot now identify as a member of an underrepresented community. However, occasionally talent will claim membership in a community where the ties are tenuous. For those funds where evaluation points are granted based on the participation of underrepresented identities, false or misleading identity could lead to funds being inappropriately allocated.

The Content

- If the story is being told by someone from outside a community, consider whether it is too sensitive for an outside storyteller, even with research or consultants. There is a short list of topics, generally surrounding trauma, that are considered by communities to be off limits to storytellers from outside a community. Examples include slavery and gender transition.

- Other topics might be acceptable for an outside storyteller provided that they demonstrate an awareness of the sensitivities and have a plan to manage them. For example, a story of mental health in immigrant communities would need input both from mental health experts and members of those immigrant communities.

- Does the plan have consultants or subject matter experts engaged early enough in the development to be able to impact the content or is there an appearance that they are to be brought in at a later stage to rubber stamp or fix 'minor' errors. Are they included in the budget and the schedule?

Community Engagement Plan

- If the fund has asked for a formal or informal Community Engagement Plan, many of the issues raised above should be addressed by the applicant in the Community Engagement Plan.

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