

# An Action Plan for **Alberta's Screen Production Workforce**



**Developed by Nordicity**

December 2022

Talent is a critical driver within the city's economic development strategy. "Calgary in the New Economy" prioritizes adaptive, future-focused learning opportunities for Calgarians. This aligns with province-wide priorities to train, develop and supply skilled labor to the current and future in-demand labour market in the film and television industry in Alberta.

In response to anecdotal evidence of skills gaps across the screen industries, Calgary Economic Development, the Edmonton Screen Industries Office and the Government of Alberta engaged NGL Nordicity Group to finalize a film and television Labour Market Survey (LMS) defining the current film and television labor market landscape in Alberta. Immediately following the LMS, Nordicity, together with an engaged steering committee of industry stakeholders, entered the workforce planning phase to turn the LMS research into the co-development of an industry workforce development action plan.

The Alberta Film and Television Labour Market Survey and Workforce Action Plan recognize the importance of industry collaboration and partnerships to recruit, retain and grow the workforce in Alberta. We need to unite in future-proofing the workforce to ensure mentorship and training opportunities are available for the effective transfer of knowledge and expertise. We also need to establish new ways of recruitment to ensure the industry celebrates diversity, Indigenous ways of knowing, and is meaningfully equitable, inclusive and accessible to all Albertans.

Best Regards,



Luke Azevedo  
Vice President, Operations, Creative Industries and Film Commissioner



Edmonton Screen Industries Office  
Suite 343, 10045 156 Street NW  
Edmonton AB T5P 2P7

780-420-2990  
[info@edmontonscreen.com](mailto:info@edmontonscreen.com)  
[www.edmontonscreen.com](http://www.edmontonscreen.com)

The Edmonton Screen Industries Office supports the development, growth, and sustainability of the Edmonton Metro screen industries, including film and television. We seek to promote the industries and attract and develop a vibrant film and television scene within Edmonton. Part of this work includes understanding and responding to the needs of the industry in Edmonton and all of Alberta.

The Alberta film and television Labour Market Study is a comprehensive exploration of the industry and provides valuable information on the needs and challenges facing those in the sector. Further, with this foundation in place, we and all partners on this project have been able to co-develop the industry-led Workforce Action Plan. These two documents are crucial to our work and will help to guide and unify our work to support and grow the film and television industry in Alberta over the coming years.

We are pleased with the efforts of all on this important body of work. The survey and resulting action plan will provide a road map for all stakeholders to address the key needs, gaps, and challenges faced by the sector.

Sincerely,

Tom Viinikka  
Chief Executive Officer



Cultural Industries Branch  
140 – 4211 106 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T6J 6L7  
Canada  
Telephone: 780-422-8582  
[www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca)

The Alberta Film Commission and Cultural Industries Branch, within the Ministry of Culture, support the growth, sustainability, competitiveness and business attraction of Alberta's screen-based production industry. We aim to create, foster and cultivate strong relationships with partners and stakeholders to support the growth and investment into the film and television sector. As a result, we are pleased to partner with a variety of key industry experts in the province to produce the Alberta Labour Market Study and associated Action Plan for Alberta's Screen Production Workforce (Workforce Action Plan).

The Government of Alberta remains committed to job creation and strengthening Alberta's economy, as diversifying the province's economy through job creation ensures all Albertans and their families can prosper. This commitment aligns naturally with the Labour Market Study and the Workforce Action Plan in ensuring the film and television industry in Alberta is diverse, talented and future-proof.

Participating in this industry-wide, collaborative effort has been invaluable in understanding Alberta's current film and television labour market, and the outcomes of this study will continue to support the growth in the province's screen-based production sector. The ongoing work of the steering committee and Workforce Action Plan will support the Ministry of Culture's mandate to grow Alberta's screen-based production sector, focusing on Alberta-made productions and supporting Alberta producers and companies in developing Alberta content.

I look forward to continuing this partnership in an effort to create a skilled, talented and diverse workforce which supports Alberta's film and television industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Ham".

Mark Ham  
Executive Director and Film Commissioner  
Cultural Industries Branch

# Steering Committee

Tina Alford **Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists**

Luke Azevedo **Calgary Economic Development**

Lisa Beaudry **Government of Alberta Jobs, Economy, and Northern Development**

Disa Brownfield **Government of Alberta Jobs, Economy, and Northern Development**

Pat Butler **Alberta Post Production Association**

Amanda Clarahan **Government of Alberta Jobs Economy and Northern Development**

Michael Dunphy **Teamsters Local 362**

Connie Edwards **DOC Alberta**

Bill Evans **Alberta Media Production Industries Association**

Marie-France Guerrette **Women in Film & Television Alberta**

Mark Ham **Government of Alberta Culture**

Dave Hinger **University of Lethbridge**

Caleb Nienkirchen **Government of Alberta Advanced Education**

Erin O'Connor **Calgary Economic Development**

Jeslene Quinn **Government of Alberta Culture**

James Reckseidler **Canadian Independent Screen Fund**

Shivani Saini **Creatives Empowered**

Andrew Scholotiuk **Film and Video Arts Society**

Terry Sims **IATSE 210**

Brock Skretting **Keep Alberta Rolling**

Amanda Trimble **ICG 669**

Tom Viinikka **Edmonton Screen Industries Office**

Trisha Weeks **IATSE 212**

Lisa Pearl Whitten **Directors Guild of Canada**



# Contents

<b>1. Introduction to the Workforce Action Plan</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. Why Invest in the Screen Industries?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. Labour Market Insights</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4. The Action Plan</b>	<b>22</b>

A person with blonde hair, seen from the side, is wearing a large black headset with a microphone. They are operating a professional video camera mounted on a tripod. The camera has a viewfinder and various controls. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, yellowish light source in the background creating a bokeh effect. The person is wearing a light-colored t-shirt. The overall atmosphere is professional and focused.

Section 1

# **Introduction to the Workforce Action Plan**

Given the increasing global demand for production services, Calgary Economic Development and the Edmonton Screen Industries Office, in conjunction with the Province of Alberta, commissioned Nordicity to assess the film and television labour market in Alberta (the Labour Market Survey, or LMS) and then develop a workforce development action plan based on the findings of the LMS as well as recommendations from the industry-led steering committee.<sup>1</sup>

As such, this Workforce Action Plan builds upon a robust, evidence-based approach to documenting any labour challenges or gaps currently present in Alberta's media production sector, as described in the LMS. It also outlines the overall case for continued investment in the sector, pointing out the significant economic impact that media production can – and does – have. At the same time, this Workforce Action Plan summarizes the key needs, gaps, and challenges faced by the sector along with the current actions being undertaken by industry stakeholders to address them. Finally, the Workforce Action Plan sets out the six key areas in which strategic action needs to be taken in order to supplement existing workforce efforts. These strategic directions form the basis of the Workforce Action Plan.

The recommended strategic directions and actions below are intended to help appropriately grow the production workforce in Alberta based on notable gaps and challenges that may constrain future growth. The Workforce Action Plan is intended to provide overall direction to the media production industry in Alberta by identifying the key areas that must be addressed for the sector (including pre- and post-production) to grow as efficiently, as effectively, and as sustainably as it can. To that end, the Workforce Action Plan does not provide a detailed implementation schedule to address the industry's workforce needs, but rather sets the agenda for what such a schedule should accomplish.

The **vision** for the Workforce Action Plan is **to create a future-proof, skilled, talented, and diverse workforce supporting the Alberta film and television industry operating in a way that works towards eliminating systemic racism and discrimination.**

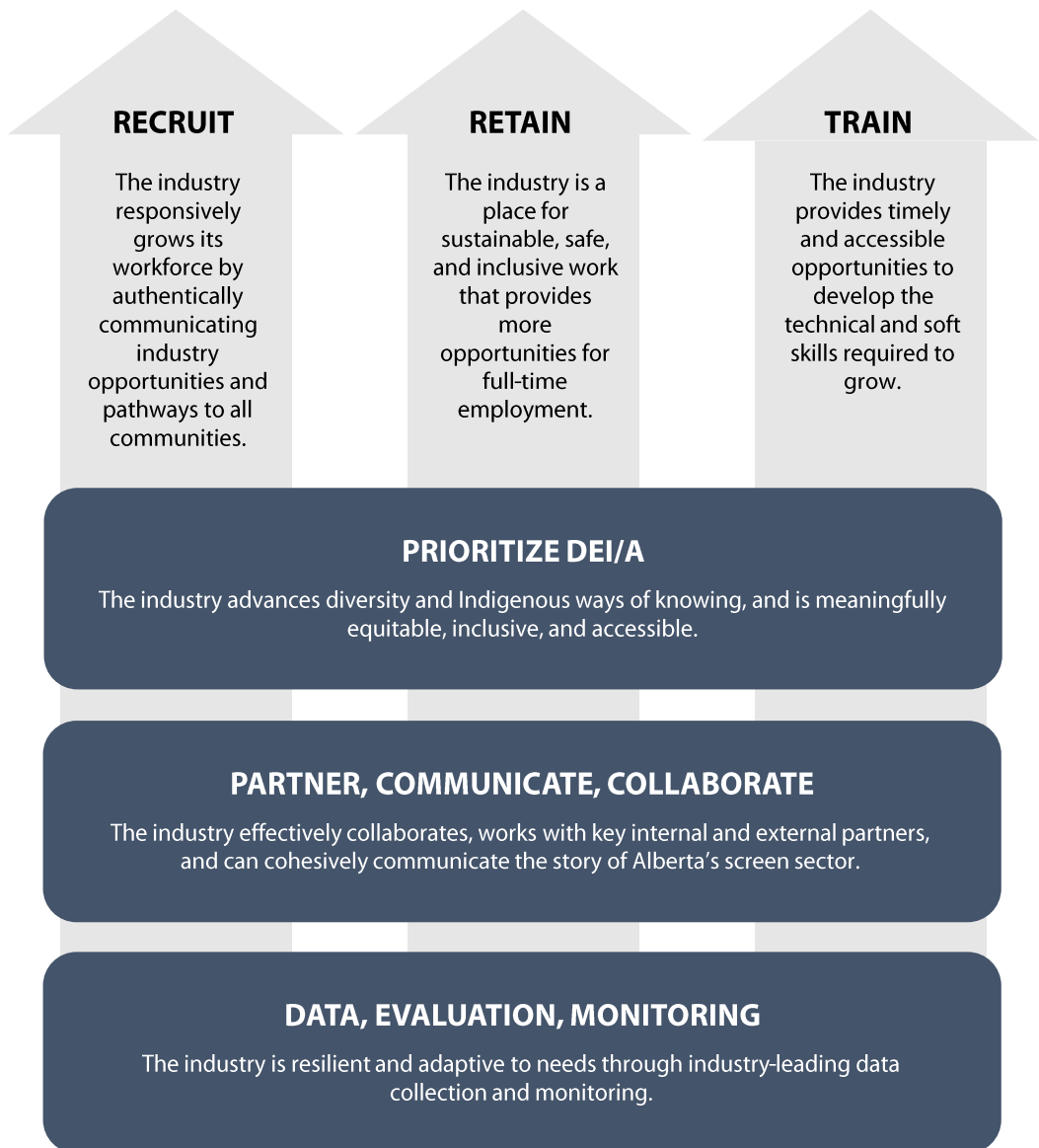
---

<sup>1</sup> In this context, "production services" is meant to include pre-production (project development, writing), production (filming, location services, etc.), and post-production.



Within this vision, the principal **goal is to increase and diversify Alberta’s film and television labour workforce through authentic and transparent workforce recruitment and retention programs and training.**

As visualized below, there are **six areas of strategic direction**. Three can be understood as “vertical” (i.e., operating at certain stages of workforce development) and three are “horizontal” (i.e., working across all stages of workforce development). These strategic directions are expanded on in Section 4 of this document.





Section 2

# Why Invest in the Screen Industries?

# Global Screen Sector Growth

The global film and television production industry is growing rapidly. While there are many factors at play, this growth is particularly due to an enormous influx of investment from streaming services in recent years. As more streaming services emerge and existing services vie for consumer attention and dollars in an increasingly segmented market, there is a consistent, high demand for original film and television content. The primary growth strategy of all streaming services is to produce exclusive content to attract viewers to their service, and the increasing number of providers demands new content, talent, and production facilities. This demand is overwhelming the supply abilities of some key film and television production jurisdictions, leading to significant production booms in alternative regions worldwide.

Based on available data, this production boom is expected to continue in the short and medium term, as streaming revenue and subscription growth continues to rise at a significant rate – although other forms of production (e.g., domestic television production) will continue to contribute to the overall production volume. This growth means that there is a strong opportunity for new jurisdictions to capitalize on demand overflowing from regions that have historically attracted the majority of film and television production, thereby reaping the economic benefits of housing this rapidly growing industry.

While COVID-19 presented a significant setback for the screen industry, the pandemic was also responsible for growth and innovation in film and television production. Increased use of technology like virtual production (which allows a production team to combine live footage and computer graphics in real time) has made it easier for independent production companies to compete with larger companies. Virtual production also requires less studio space and on-site shooting than traditional methods, meaning that smaller and more remote jurisdictions are better able to attract productions looking to use this kind of technology.

# Screen Sector Growth in Alberta

The Alberta screen sector has already been growing in recent years, with production volume in Calgary alone having doubled between the 2019/20 fiscal year and the 2021/22 fiscal year. This boom has been particularly driven by the introduction of a new Film and Television Tax Credit (FTTC) by the Government of Alberta in 2020, which has drawn a significant amount of foreign production to the province in addition to existing domestic production.

Alberta is already seeing the benefits of this industry growth. In 2021, the Alberta production industry amassed roughly \$560 million in overall production volume (i.e., the sum of all production budgets filmed in the province in that year). That activity supported the equivalent of 5,000 direct full-time jobs (FTEs) and a further 5,800 FTEs of spin-off employment (e.g., in supplier industries) – for a total of almost 11,000 FTEs.<sup>2</sup> In that same year, the industry contributed an estimated \$324.3 million in direct economic impact and a further \$483.3 million in spin-off impact.

As mentioned, the growth in demand is overwhelming the supply available in many key screen production hubs. Alberta has already begun to see the effects of this demand as the new tax credit draws studio developers to the province. Calgary's Fortress Studio and Fortress Support facilities (opened in 2021) as well as Rocky Mountain Film Studios mark a huge jump in the production capacity of the city. Multiple Albertan cities have the space and infrastructure to support further studio construction, meaning that a developing provincial screen sector would not be stifled by a lack of room to grow, as it has been in some other jurisdictions.

With increased production space and activity comes the need for a larger workforce of people with the necessary skills to support the sector. The screen sector employs workers across a wide range of jobs and skillsets, and a growing local screen industry boosts resident retention across those career

---

<sup>2</sup> These estimates are based on the methodologies used in the CMPA's annual *Profile* (see p. 97) and relate to production activity reported to Nordicity by Calgary Economic Development.



paths. Additionally, because screen sector work can range anywhere from the fine arts to the trades, it presents a strong opportunity for hiring unemployed or underemployed workers from a variety of other sectors without a significant time or financial cost for reskilling.

As illustrated in the Labour Market Survey, a significant portion of the individuals working on productions in Alberta in 2022 reside outside of the province, with roughly 1,900 workers coming to Alberta from elsewhere. There is thus some room for the industry to grow its workforce should production levels remain constant. At the same time, for every \$50 million of production volume beyond 2022 levels, the industry will need to add an additional 530 workers to the labour pool, across a variety of roles and levels of seniority. As such, should production volume grow by 10% (or \$56 million) in 2023, an additional 590 workers would need to be added to the production workforce in Alberta.

Alberta has already seen success in the screen production sector. The province has been home to a number of big-name blockbuster films such as *Interstellar* and *The Revenant*. Recently, the filming of the highly anticipated HBO series *The Last of Us* as well as the feature films *Ghostbusters: The Afterlife* and *Prey* has once again drawn attention to Alberta as a valuable location for film and television production. Particularly in the case of big-budget productions like these, the screen industry often sees a “positive feedback loop” effect, wherein the successful filming of a large production draws the attention of other producers, who in turn bring their own productions to the region.

To date, most of these larger foreign productions are not engaging Alberta-based companies to conduct post-production work, often citing capacity issues. Building a larger film and television post-production workforce would allow Alberta to capture significant revenue that is currently being left on the table. However, the gap between the size of the current workforce and what would be needed to take on a significant percentage of this post-production work is sizeable. To fully capitalize on the positive feedback loop of producer attention, the province needs to ensure that it is seen as a viable jurisdiction for end-to-end production services.

Alberta has the opportunity to build on the exposure that major productions like those listed above have generated and, with the correct supporting infrastructure, can reap the benefits of entering more fully into this rapidly growing industry.



### Section 3

# Labour Market Insights

As part of the Labour Market Survey Report, the current state of Alberta's film and television workforce was assessed and a series of critical needs was identified. Additionally, in order to assess current efforts in training and building up Alberta's film and television workforce, an audit of related programs and initiatives was conducted.

**The audit found that there are currently over 200 education and training programs offered at entry, intermediate, and advanced levels in urban regions of Alberta.** Furthermore, the programs cover a multitude of topics ranging from the basics of film production and best practices to industry safety, screenwriting, costume design, and more. There are currently at least 24 institutions in the province that provide training either as certificate and diploma courses, full university degrees, mentorships, and/or hands-on training experiences. The volume of programs offered through all of the film and television unions and guilds, post-secondary institutions, the Banff Centre, Film and Video Arts Society, Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers, Alberta Media Production Industries Association, Creatives Empowered, and DOC Alberta is significant. However, despite the number of education and training programs being offered, a coordinated and mapped approach may be required to outline career options and steps.

# Needs and Current Actions

By consolidating survey data, interviews, and roundtable feedback, several needs for Alberta's industry were identified. These needs not only relate to growth and expansion of the industry, but also to how the industry can improve working conditions and future-proof.

It should be noted that **unions/guilds, post-secondary institutions, non-profit training organizations, and other groups are working rapidly to meet demands and update curricula to equip the workforce to succeed.** Many stakeholders across the industry are working towards addressing current challenges and meeting needs in several different ways. Crucial needs have been grouped into the following broad categories:

## Increased volume of workers

It is estimated that roughly 6,000 additional workers are needed to appropriately staff productions in Alberta. Workers are needed across all departments, including creative workers (e.g., actors, writers, directors, editors) and technical/support workers (e.g., accountants, construction coordinators, transportation). Additionally, many roles that are needed are in more senior and/or supervising positions in pre-production, production, and post-production.

## New and specialized roles

As the industry rapidly evolves and technology changes the production process, new roles and niche specializations will be needed to ensure Alberta stays competitive with other jurisdictions. Skills need to be developed to navigate new technology and workflows, especially with the rise of virtual production and advances in VFX and post-production. Furthermore, the rising popularity of sci-fi, superhero/action films, and long-form series call for specialized skills (e.g., special effects hair and makeup, stunts, elaborate set design).

Additionally, workers will be needed to fill new roles that address the wellbeing, health, and safety of casts and crews (e.g., intimacy coordinators, COVID compliance officers, wellbeing facilitators).



## **Increased awareness, clear pathways, and realistic expectations**

There is generally a lack of public awareness of what is involved in working in the film and television industry. Additionally, there is a misalignment between what students and those entering the industry expect working conditions will be like and the realities of the industry. There is a need for increased awareness surrounding the many opportunities and career options available in the film and television industry, as well as a more widespread understanding of the realities of working in the industry. There is also a need for increased transparency on pathways towards a career in the industry and the steps and requirements to take to join a union or guild.

## **Considerations of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility**

Although true in many jurisdictions in Canada, there is a lack of diversity and transparent hiring practices in Alberta in the film and television industry for both on- and off-screen roles. There is a need for more concentrated efforts to reduce barriers for equity-deserving groups and create a welcoming and equitable environment to drive inclusion. Issues surrounding systemic racism and discrimination within the industry also need to be addressed and remedied.

## **Increased collaboration**

It is evident that there is a need for greater collaboration and coordination among industry stakeholders. Increased communication is especially needed among various postsecondary institutions, unions, and training providers to ensure there is no duplication of training initiatives and that there is standardization of training. Furthermore, there is a need for more interaction between producers/post-production producers and postsecondary institutions so skill development and training needs for the future of the industry are communicated clearly. Partnerships that allow for the pooling of resources and targeted efforts towards more effective training opportunities should be considered.

## **Retention efforts**

The nature of work within the film and television industry can produce burnout from long hours on-set or in-facility (in the case of post-production) as well as feelings of job insecurity due to seasonal work opportunities. There is a need to address prevalent feelings of burnout and insecurity in order to retain talent, especially those in senior roles, by focusing on workers' wellbeing and mental health.

## **Intermediate/senior professional development**

The lack of senior talent and workers across many roles and positions in Alberta points to a need for more opportunities and incentives for intermediate/mid-career workers to develop their skills and gain confidence and experience to take on more responsibility.

Due to the lack of volume in senior workers, many are being promoted prematurely. There is a need not only for further support in professional development and career advancement, including proper training and guidance, but also for the development of soft skills, such as leadership, for individuals to succeed.

## **On-set/in-facility training opportunities**

On-set or in-facility training and experience are crucial for the development of skills in the film and television industry. Due to the pandemic, there have been fewer opportunities for students and those looking to enter the industry to get the hands-on training they need to truly advance and start their careers. There is a need for more on-set or in-facility training and learning opportunities for new and early entry as well as mid-career talent to succeed in both on-set and post-production roles.

## **Mentorship and networking opportunities**

Mentorship opportunities or job shadowing programs are especially important in the development of skills and experience for emerging talent, as hands-on experience is invaluable in the film and television industry. Additionally, for those already in the industry looking to advance their careers and skills, networking, knowledge sharing, and guidance from peers and senior workers are incredibly important. There is a need for increased mentorship and network opportunities, both formally (i.e., offered through institutions such as postsecondary institutions and unions) and informally.

## **Increased training opportunities with skilled trainers**

Many of those with long-term experience that have the ability to train new and emerging workers and talent are often busy working or do not want to work extended hours to facilitate training. There is a need for more qualified trainers who are available to work with those looking to hone their skills and work their way up in the industry.

# Summary of Remaining Needs

Despite the current effort, the needs outlined previously are not fully addressed and further actions are required to foster growth and develop a highly skilled workforce.

Although the audit of training programs found there are many dedicated efforts in addressing the industry's training needs, it also found that there are several areas where needs are not currently being addressed:

- The majority of training programs being offered are “off-set” as opposed to highly valuable hands-on training.
- Most programs are offered in Calgary and Edmonton.
- Most of the programs are entry level, indicating more opportunities are needed for those established in the industry looking to upskill or move into more senior positions.
- The most common programming theme was “general,” indicating there is more of a need for department-specific, specialized, and niche training.
- There are very few post-production and VFX dedicated training and education opportunities within the province.

In general, there needs to be a higher volume of training, recruitment, and retention programs and activity with more buy-in and collaboration across the sector in order to ensure efforts are maximized and sustainable.

Specific unmet needs that require action are outlined in the table below. It should be noted that **not one single entity or stakeholder alone can address these needs – the collaboration of multiple stakeholders will be required to elicit actions.**

Broad Need Categories	Needs that Require Further Action
Increased volume of workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Campaign to recruit workers from other industries with transferable skills.</li> <li>▪ Campaign to recruit new workers and workers with transferable skills from underrepresented communities.</li> <li>▪ Campaign to repatriate skilled workers who have left Alberta to other jurisdictions.</li> <li>▪ Campaign to recruit new workers from postsecondary institutions.</li> <li>▪ Transparent and accessible resources on how to enter the industry.</li> </ul>
New and specialized roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training opportunities and updates to curricula that consider new job roles needed and specializations required.</li> </ul>
Increased awareness, clear pathways, and realistic expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development of standardized training pathways and career milestones.</li> <li>▪ Development of digital resource platform with direct links to province-wide training and industry opportunities.</li> </ul>
Considerations of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DEI/A strategic actions and goals for the entire industry that focus on building and retaining the workforce.</li> <li>▪ Incentives and/or mandatory requirements for DEI/A training across departments.</li> <li>▪ Standard HR guidelines that pertain to all activities within the industry.</li> <li>▪ Build authentic bridges to underrepresented communities and deliver work readiness programs.</li> </ul>

*Continued on next page*



Broad Need Categories	Needs that Require Further Action
Increased collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A body/association that facilitates collaboration and networking of industry stakeholders to ensure cohesion and standardization.</li> <li>▪ Collaborative communications strategy that attracts new workers and demystifies the industry and the career opportunities within for the public.</li> <li>▪ Processes in which postsecondary institutions/training non-profits can communicate with unions/industry to ensure collaboration and more opportunities for students.</li> </ul>
Retention efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design and employment of dedicated training for wellbeing and health roles specific to casts/crews.</li> <li>▪ Widely disseminated and accessible information pertaining to workplace safety, job security legislation, employee inclusion, expectations for careers, etc.</li> <li>▪ Creation of a centralized authority on workers' wellbeing that can field and address concerns across the industry.</li> </ul>
Intermediate/senior professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased micro-credentials/training programs that focus on upskilling and soft skills.</li> </ul>
On-set/in-facility training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased volume of on-set and in-facility training opportunities.</li> </ul>
Mentorship and networking opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incentives for senior workers and productions to consider mentorship opportunities on-set for students/entry-level workers.</li> </ul>
Increased training opportunities with skilled trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduction of standardized course instruction by certified instructors.</li> <li>▪ More programs offered outside of Calgary and Edmonton.</li> </ul>

A silhouette of a person holding a camera, set against a bright, hazy background. The person is positioned in the lower half of the frame, facing left. The camera is a professional-grade DSLR with a large lens and a flash unit attached. The background is a bright, circular light source, possibly a sun or a large studio light, creating a strong backlight effect. The overall color palette is dark with a teal or blue tint, and the lighting is dramatic, emphasizing the shapes of the person and the camera.

**Section 4**

# **Action Plan**

## DIRECTION 1

# RECRUIT

## workers to the industry to meet market demand

**OUTCOME:** The industry responsively grows its workforce by authentically communicating industry opportunities and pathways to all communities.

Growing the workforce is important to the future of the industry as it will allow the industry to develop and produce more content locally and attract and fulfill more foreign service productions. The workforce will require additional labour from other sectors, outside jurisdictions, and new outreach and pathways for post-secondary graduates and youth. Workforce growth will allow the industry to create more Alberta-based IP (e.g., by training more local producers) and generate more jobs and economic impact from big-budget foreign productions looking to locate in Alberta. In short, a larger workforce in Alberta will allow the sector to create more impact and further integrate within the local community.

Stakeholders noted the important opportunity to develop a sector that attracts workers from traditionally underrepresented groups as another key direction for the industry (more in Direction 4). Authentically sharing the prospect that the film sector in Alberta provides will also be a key opportunity to expand the workforce and create further economic and social impact in Alberta. This will include dedicated communications and partnership initiatives (see Direction 5) as well as more information and resources to learn about careers in film and television for all audiences.

### Potential actions and examples

- Develop an accessible and trusted portal for interested people to learn about career pathways, training opportunities, and jobs in Alberta's film and television sector.
  - This initiative could take lessons from the [City of Toronto's Screen Industry Pathways Career Guide](#) or [Creative BC's Creative Pathways](#) which provide localized career info. Nationally, [ReelCanada](#) and,

internationally, [ScreenSkillsUK](#) provide similar services. It would allow interested job seekers to understand opportunities in different segments of the sector (e.g., production, post-production).

- Build on the Alberta is Calling campaign to attract workers from other provinces, including those who used to live in Alberta and pursued film and television careers elsewhere.
  - Additional details could be added to the campaign specifically regarding the opportunity in Alberta's film and television industry such as adding high-earning opportunities to the [Alberta is Calling careers page](#). Other jurisdictions have also used marketing campaigns to draw in more labour, such as [Nova Scotia](#) which developed a \$2.5 million marketing campaign to attract both immigrants and Canadian residents from other provinces.
- Define target sectors (e.g., transportation, accounting, landscaping) where there may be opportunities to retrain workers into film and television roles.
  - Training and incentives could be provided to attract and deploy labour from other trades or related jobs. For example, the [More Opportunity for Skilled Trades \(MOST\) program](#) in Nova Scotia attempts to address the labour gaps in the film and video industry by incentivizing skilled labour from other industries.

Indicators for successful implementation will include growth in the number of Alberta-sourced workers in the industry (from a baseline of ~4,000). Other indicators will include increased interest (e.g., number of inquiries) in joining the industry and the range of individuals interested (e.g., from different sectors, geographies, and social backgrounds) in learning more about industry pathways. It will attract and retain skilled workers to meet the industry's demand.



## DIRECTION 2

# RETAIN existing workers

**OUTCOME: The industry is a place for sustainable, safe, and inclusive work that provides more opportunities for full-time employment.**

Providing careers that are sustainable will be critical to ensure those in the industry can continue to work in film and television and not prematurely leave the industry. Managing expectations for work in the industry while providing the opportunity for balanced careers with full-time equivalent (FTE) earnings are key for sustainable growth.

Stakeholders noted that burnout can be a challenge for long-term careers in the industry due to seasonality and long hours. Opportunities for workers to grow into more senior roles are required to sustain the industry and maximize the amount of Alberta-based labour. Efforts within this direction will help both with recruitment as well as retaining and growing existing workforces.

### Potential actions and examples

- Publish information about workplace safety, job security legislation, employee inclusion and expectations for careers.
  - The [Government of Ontario](#) and [WorkSafe BC](#) provides information on safe work practices for film and television production in BC. Career expectations (e.g., to manage earning projections) could dovetail on the career pathways portal described in direction 1).
- Create an industry-led production-sector ombudsperson who can be the focal point for concerns regarding workplace safety and working conditions, including turnaround allowances, overworking, and social inclusion considerations.
  - The [British Film Institute](#) introduced Wellbeing Facilitators on all funded films in order to tackle issues with mental health and bullying, which is common in the film industry. This initiative will help facilitate positive work culture. In addition, the [Film and TV Charity](#) in London, UK, provides a step-by-step toolkit to creating a

mentally healthy production and supports workers at each stage of the production process to ensure a safe and healthy workspace.

- Develop recommendations for productions to have dedicated health and wellbeing roles focused on ensuring a safe and inclusive work environment.
  - This role could include/evolve from COVID-related positions and build on health wellbeing practices implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations can include providing counselling services, offering job flexibility, implementing team-building activities, accommodating different individuals' needs, and promoting a balanced work environment.

Indicators could include monitoring the number and type of incident reports and/or complaints over time. Other measures of success will include the establishment of standards for on-set health wellbeing and the deployment of a dedicated province-wide role focused on safe and sustainable workplaces.

### DIRECTION 3

# TRAIN

## the current workforce to meet demand

**OUTCOME:** The industry provides timely and accessible opportunities to develop the technical and soft skills required to grow.

Providing opportunities to develop required skillsets in the film and television industry will be beneficial to sustain a long-term successful workforce in Alberta. Through strong partnerships with postsecondary institutions, unions, and guilds, Alberta will be able to strengthen its local workforce. As a sector, film and television relies heavily on hand-on training to develop its workforce. To address this need, formal and informal on-the-job training opportunities will be required, especially through mentorship and on-set experience.

Stakeholders noted that developing and implementing leadership, management, and soft-skills training for mid-level career workers is also crucial to increase full-time employment positions. When given the right opportunities, the local workforce talent will become the backbone of development in the film and television industry and will position Alberta to become a competitive film industry in Canada.

### Potential actions and examples

- Create incentives and mechanisms for mentors to transfer knowledge to workers on-set/in-facility.
  - A mechanism could include the expansion of the [Alberta Producer Accelerator Program](#), which offers both training and mentoring to producers. The program could be expanded both in scope (e.g., beyond producers) and in depth (i.e., to include more than 10 participants). The same logic could be applied towards the development of an agile Talent Accelerator Program with training focus prioritized by industry.

- Incentives could be expanded to include on-set training costs within production budgets or the ability to directly compensate mentors through another incentivized program. Mechanisms could include programs that focus on specific roles, such as production (e.g., [Alberta Producer Accelerator Program](#)), or types of workers, such as the [Women in Film Television \(WIFT\) Vancouver](#), which provides actor guidance for women and gender diverse people. Similarly, a program like [ScreenSkills' Trainee Finder](#) could offer paid placements across a range of roles in film and television production. As another example, the FTTC and the Alberta Made Production Grant could be leveraged to incentivize on-set training. Within that, mentorship specifically could be incentivized by assessing mentor and mentee labour costs at a higher rate. Develop micro-credentials or training programs focused on film management skills such as production finances and accounting, leadership, project management, and communication.
- Training programs with this focus will aid in the growth of Alberta's film industry by providing more courses that strengthen skill sets in high demand for more senior positions in the industry. For example, North Island College (BC) offers [accounting for film and television](#) and the European School of Economics offers a course in [film industry business management](#).
- Develop standardized training pathways to enable easier understanding of required aptitudes or definitions for promotion/advancement.
  - Ensuring there is consensus on best practices across the industry will require further collaboration from various stakeholder groups to establish levels of standardization. For instance, [Film Training Manitoba](#) (FTM) views film training and professional development as a continuum where workers can start at the entry level and progress through their careers. FTM provides career counselling to guide local talent from start to finish, works closely with industry and unions to identify skills gaps and training needs, and devises training programs accordingly. FTM illustrates a streamlined approach where they provide crew training and professional development for the local industry. In addition, the British Film Institute's [10-point Action Plan](#) recommended "a suite of new apprenticeship standards" to streamline the process for companies to hire apprentices.

- Such standardization could also include the development of a consistent set of terminology (e.g., role and seniority definitions) to be used by the sector.

Indicators for successful implementation will include an increase in the number of training programs and an increase in interest and registration numbers in these programs by those in the industry. In addition, with more accessibility to such programs, there will be an increase in the number of diverse workers that are now able to participate fully in Alberta's film and television industry and refine their newly acquired soft skills.



#### DIRECTION 4

# PRIORITIZE DEI/A efforts through all attraction, retention, and training efforts

**OUTCOME:** The industry advances diversity and Indigenous ways of knowing, and is meaningfully equitable, inclusive, and accessible.

Fostering a workforce that is diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible to a wide range of participants will be critical for sustainable growth of the industry. Acknowledging and working to address systemic racism and other barriers will be a critical first step for the industry. Mitigating other barriers includes taking actions to Indigenize the sector, prioritize gender equity, celebrate linguistic diversity, and support official language minority communities. To maximize impact from this strategic direction, diversity in the industry will be both behind and in front of the camera as well as at executive levels.

This strategic direction provides social impacts (e.g., increased representation) but is also key for broadening the potential pool of workers to address workforce shortages, as new communities will see themselves represented in the industry. In addition, it was widely noted by stakeholders that a more inclusive industry is also a much more attractive and competitive industry.

## Potential actions and examples

- Develop DEI/A and Reconciliation Strategy focused on attraction, retention, and training efforts, led by experts with lived experience.
  - Given the importance and dedicated, expert focus required for this subject, it was noted that the broader Workforce Action Plan was just a starting point. A more detailed plan, such as the [SAFC Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#), could build on local efforts such as [Creatives Empowered](#) and [Old Sun College](#). Importantly, it would be developed to further understand current barriers and systemic racism in the sector and include key recommendations for authentic communications to underrepresented groups. The process should closely engage any/all communities included in the strategy.

- Create incentives or requirements for workforce training in anti-racism and DEI/A specifically for the film and television industry.
  - This could include adding required components (e.g., workshops) to existing set etiquette courses and broader micro-credential-style training (such as that currently being developed). For example, [British Independent Film Awards and ScreenSkills](#) announced equality, diversity, and inclusion training programs that include unconscious bias training, anti-bullying and harassment, and fair recruitment and inclusivity in the workplace training. The training programs help build a more inclusive industry and improve leadership, judgement, and decision-making skills.
- Develop and publish guidelines for consistent, transparent, and equitable human resource practices and processes for sharing learnings from those practices.
  - Such practices would include hiring from outside the province (e.g., standards to understand why), but also how evaluations are made for hires within the province. For example, the British Film Institute shares various [resources regarding inclusive practices](#).
  - It is likely that such guidelines would extend beyond inclusive practices to touch upon issues including nepotism in hiring and other barriers that may be limiting access to Alberta's screen sector workforce.

The primary success indicator for this strategic direction will be the existence of a widely accepted and celebrated DEI/A and Reconciliation Strategy. Ideally, this strategy will guide many of the other actions within this direction (i.e., training specifics and hiring needs). The strategy will also ensure that DEI/A activities are grounded in the realities of underserved communities the plan seeks to include. Other indicators could include the number of participants registering for training courses and organizations using more inclusive HR practices.

## DIRECTION 5

# **PARTNER, COMMUNICATE, and COLLABORATE** to implement the strategy and remain nimble

**OUTCOME:** The industry effectively collaborates, works with key internal and external partners, and can cohesively communicate the story of Alberta's screen sector.

Collaboration between key stakeholders and cross-sectoral partnerships will be important enabling factors for sustainable growth of the film and television workforce. Developing relationships, deepening engagement, and establishing partnerships between multiple stakeholders, as well as improving collaboration between geographies (e.g., between Edmonton and Calgary) and underserved communities, will be key to success. Building inclusive networks in the film and television industry will be crucial as networking events and industry discussions often lack diversity and inclusion.

Authentic and strategic communications will improve the likelihood of success for the Workforce Action Plan by ensuring the benefits of the sector are known to local stakeholders and the Alberta advantage is clearly illustrated to foreign producers.

### **Potential actions and examples**

- Develop a plan and terms of reference for the formation of a cross-sectoral industry association (e.g., "Screen Alberta" or equivalent).
  - The association would include representatives from industry and industry associations, public agencies, industry vendors and service providers, postsecondary institutions, unions, and guilds. Lessons could be gleaned from [Film Ontario](#) with a focus both on advocacy and creating opportunities for networking and collaboration. Networking events should include involvement from underserved communities and guest speakers and mentors from diverse

backgrounds. The association will also prioritize and steward parts of the Workforce Action Plan, ensuring industry and career information is relevant and up to date.

- Create a comprehensive communications plan to “tell the story” of film and television in Alberta to government, local residents, and international stakeholders.
  - In addition to and aligned with the work of the three Alberta film commissions, the communications would focus on Alberta as a great place for productions and highlight the important benefits for the province. For instance, the [Vancouver Economic Commission](#) promotes Vancouver as one of the world's competitive production environments and showcases key statistics, sector highlights, and government tax credit incentives for film and television productions. The [City of Toronto](#) has a similar strategy illustrating the benefits to Toronto and the region.
- Develop structured means for postsecondary institutions to work with industry, associations, and unions to maintain relevant curriculum and to maximize the amount of industry experience for students.
  - Collaborative initiatives could include more common “industry days,” incentivizing guest lectures from industry professionals and accessible opportunities for industry experience. For instance, [xoTO Schools](#) creates interactive educational opportunities for students through co-op placements. Students work with industry professionals, providing them with on-the-job training in different areas of the film industry, including in-facility post-production experience.

The first indicator of success will be the establishment of an industry association with key articles of incorporation and a clear vision and mission outlining its role and scope of operations. Other success measures will include increased awareness of the sector through communications initiatives and improved collaboration between postsecondary institutions and industry.

## **DIRECTION 6**

# **Establish the DATA, EVALUATION, and MONITORING practices needed to ensure that the strategy is effective**

**OUTCOME: The industry is resilient and adaptive to needs through industry-leading data collection and monitoring**

It will be crucial to ensure that the actions undertaken to develop the production workforce in Alberta be periodically measured on an ongoing basis. Doing so will help the industry to see what programs and investments are paying dividends – and which may need to be re-examined. For example, changes in the use of the Post-Production, Visual Effects, and Digital Animation Grant program could be used to gauge the impact of actions related to Alberta’s post-production sector.

At the same time, it is important to recall that the production industry is one that evolves. As new techniques (like Virtual Production) and new positions emerge, the data collection and monitoring systems will need to be robust enough to adapt to these changes.

Any approach to workforce data collection and reporting will need to be undertaken in a collaborative, coordinated manner (following the ethos of the broader strategy). By establishing such partnerships, the industry will be able to conduct its own, real-time evaluations, rather than relying upon less frequent, larger engagements.

### **Potential actions and examples**

- Establish a data working group within an industry association empowered by their respective organizations to change data collection practices.



- Such an organization could play a similar role to [ScreenSkills](#), which (among other things) provides a common, industry-wide means of identifying current and future skills gaps in the UK's screen sector.
- Create a set of common terms (such as role definitions) and data standards across all entities participating in the Workforce Action Plan. This step is required for the industry to develop a comprehensive picture of its growth and would naturally align with TRAIN actions (as described above).
- Form and agree upon clear performance measurement guidelines for all initiatives triggered by this Workforce Action Plan. These guidelines would include (but not necessarily be limited to) a set of key performance indicators that outline the actions' intended outcomes, standards for the collection of data (e.g., frequency, format, responsibilities), and the methods by which performance is shared.

The principal performance indicator for this strategic direction is likely to be the mere existence of a data pipeline that enables monitoring. That said, the creation of regular, cost-effective reports on industry workforce growth (that can, in turn, be used as marketing materials) would also be a good indicator of success. Finally, if the data collection process is effective, there should be evidence of industry stakeholders using the data provided to plan, adjust, and/or expand training and professional development programs.



The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services