EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FILM EVENT ACCESSIBILITY SCORECARD IMPACT REPORT 2023

A Collaborative Initiative by Filmmakers with Disabilities (FWD-Doc), the Film Event Accessibility Working Group (FEAW), and the Film Festival Alliance (FFA)
why

For many years, disabled patrons, filmmakers, press, and other attendees have recounted anecdotes of overwhelming inaccessibility at film events and festivals. The Scorecard was created to address the urgent need for data on accessibility in film festivals and events.

“By failing to include disabled filmmakers, the entertainment industry is depriving itself artistically and financially. Not only does this eliminate the point of view of [an estimated] 20% of the world’s population, but it also has quantifiable business ramifications.
- Amanda Upson, Interim Executive Director, Filmmakers with Disabilities (FWD-Doc)
The Film Event Accessibility Scorecard (the Scorecard): a survey consisting of 70 questions ranging from demographics, event attendance experience, comments, and recommendations.

The survey was conducted through a virtual questionnaire form with questions using a five-option scale (strongly agree, agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, not applicable to me), with space for comments on what worked well, what could be improved upon, and general comments.

Between July 22, 2022 and November 20, 2023, 353 respondents provided feedback on 75 film festivals and film events internationally. You can find the full report here.
**key takeaways**

- **INACCESSIBILITY DOMINATES THE FESTIVAL LANDSCAPE**
  - 73% of disabled respondents experienced some form of inaccessibility in their film festival experience
  - 93% of reported-on festivals scored below the median

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility Area</th>
<th>Number Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venue Accessibility was Accurate on Website</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible Seating Process in Place</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteers Trained on Access Features</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Assistive Listening Devices Available</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel and Q&amp;As Moderated Accessibly</td>
<td>60%</td>
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- **FESTIVAL ATTENDEES INACCESSIBILITY**
  - 73%

- **REPORTED-ON FESTIVALS SCORED BELOW THE MEDIAN**
  - 93%

“‘I’m a quick learner and have a lot of experience. I would love to contribute more, but can’t because the other roles are not accessible.’
- Respondent #142 (Festival Volunteer + Attendee)

- **INCLUDE LIVE CAPTIONS FOR VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON PANELS AND Q&A’S**
  - 77% responded “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree” to the question: “Live Captions were available for the panels and Q&As (in-person)”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live Captions Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live Captions for Virtual</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Captions for In-Person</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Live Captions for Q&amp;As</td>
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“‘When the open-captioning [for panels] stopped being used on the last day...it made it feel like accessibility was an afterthought and that, when it became too much of a problem it was abandoned, rather than being fixed.’
- Respondent #27 (Attendee/Filmmaker)
MAKE A SEPARATE LOW-SENSORY SPACE AVAILABLE
68% responded “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree” to the question: “[t]here was a separate low sensory space available”

“Check in with people to ensure you understand their access needs - especially on the disability delegation. There should be sensory space for those of us who need it.” - Respondent #30 (Attendee/Industry Professional)

CLOSED CAPTIONING FOR FILMS, PANELS, AND Q&A’S THAT ARE AVAILABLE, FUNCTIONAL, AND HIGH-QUALITY
61% responded “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree” to the question: “Closed Captioning for the film, panel, Q&A was available, functional and high-quality (in-person)”

“Captiview is not the answer. This version of in-person CC is insufficient and dehumanizing. Open Captions are truly the only way to go for an in-person festival experience.” - Respondent #139 (Filmmaker)
key takeaways

- **PROVIDE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) OR APPLICABLE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER**
  51% responded “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree” to the question: “American Sign Language (ASL) or Applicable Sign Language Was Provided (in-person)”

  “It was really disappointing to have to tell cast members they could not attend festival events or accept invitations to dinners/parties because we were unable to provide an interpreter.” - **Respondent #140 (Filmmaker/Industry Professional)**

- **CONTENT RELATED TO ACCESSIBILITY WAS EASY TO FIND ON THE WEBSITE & EVENT STAFF IS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE ACCESS ADVERTISED**
  30% of respondents responded with “Somewhat Disagree” or “Disagree” to the question: “Content Related to Accessibility Easy to Find on the Website”

  “This year, accessibility features were not publicized (or even available upon request) until after ticket sales, meaning people with disabilities were left behind entirely.” - **Respondent #19 (Attendee/Press)**
the five most accessible festivals

The scoring is based on ratings from five main sections: Website Accessibility, In-Person Venue Accessibility, In-Person Session and Film Accessibility, Virtual Accessibility and Overall Event Accessibility. In order to be considered for inclusion as a top-rated festival, the festival had to receive at least 5 responses. The top scoring festivals in order are:

• Superfest Disability Film Festival (Superfest)
• BlackStar Film Festival (BlackStar)
• International Queer Women of Color Film Festival (QWOCMAP)
• Access:Horror Film Festival
• New Orleans Film Festival (NOFF)
takeaways from top-rated festivals

2/5 are specifically focused on disability (Superfest and Access:Horror)

All 5 are also led by women and/or historically underrepresented groups.

2 are specifically focused on makers of color (BlackStar and QWOCMAP).

The budget range for these festivals was between $30,000 and $3,000,000, with four out of five festivals coming in under $1,000,000.

FESTIVAL LENGTH

- New Orleans Film Festival: 6 days in-person + virtual
- BlackStar: 4-day in-person + virtual
- QWOCMAP: 3-day in-person + virtual
- Access:Horror: 3-day virtual only
- Superfest: 2-day in-person + virtual

FESTIVALS THAT COMMITTED TO ACCESSIBILITY EARLY AND ENCOURAGED ATTENDEES TO SUBMIT THE SCORECARD RECEIVED THE MOST FEEDBACK

“Attendee feedback is very informative to us, and having real input from the festival goers helps us either confirm our practices or shift us into pivoting to different tools and approaches. It also shows us if we’re making progress...Having this information year to year will help us understand what areas we are making an impact on and what areas we’re not, and it will guide us in making financial and operational decisions around accessibility. It's great to have such a comparison tool with factual data points to reflect on.”

- Monika Leska, Managing Director of NOFF
FWD-Doc, FEAW and FFA invite film festivals and film events to continue to investigate their accessibility practices and engage with disabled filmmakers and communities. We welcome organizations’ efforts to increase accessibility and encourage organizers to engage with the free online tools our organizations have provided.

“\[We invest in accessibility, even without specific funding. And that’s the key. Because of that commitment, we’ve been able to bring in support from funders and donors for accessibility. And we’re building on that, securing more accessibility-specific funding - just as we build each year on accessibility - so that it is fully supported in the future.\]” - T. Kebo Drew, Managing Director (QWOCMAP)

**HELP US FUND THIS WORK**

The Scorecard team is seeking funding to improve the Scorecard and develop version 2.0. In addition to creating a simplified version 2, the team hopes to hire a year-round data analyst, create a marketing plan to expand the Scorecard to additional festivals/events and create informational materials that will assist organizers in marketing the Scorecard. Most importantly, funding will ensure the future of this important work. Those who have comments or suggestions on the next iteration should e-mail info@feaw.org. Additionally, if you would like to help support the Scorecard financially to continue and expand this important work, please contact us at hello@fwd-doc.org, info@filmfestivalalliance.org and info@feaw.org

**recommendations**

- COMMIT TO PROGRESS THROUGH MEASURABLE GOALS AND BUDGET ALLOCATION
  - Include Live Captions for Virtual and In-person Panels and Q&As
  - Make a Separate Low-Sensory Space Available
  - Incorporate Closed Captioning for Films, Panels, and Q&A’s that are Available, Functional, and High-Quality
  - Provide American Sign Language (ASL) or Applicable Sign Language Interpreter
  - Ensure Content Related to Accessibility is Easy to Find on the Website & Event Staff is Knowledgeable About the Access Advertised