



# Reel**A**ilities

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2025 - 2027**

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## A LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDERS

Dear Friends, Partners, and Stakeholders,

We are thrilled to share with you ReelAbilities' 2025–2027 Strategic Plan, a bold roadmap for advancing disability representation and fostering a more inclusive, accessible society through the transformative power of film.

Over the years, our success has been defined by the remarkable stories of disabled creators and the communities they represent. This plan reflects our unwavering commitment to amplifying these voices and redefining the narratives that shape our collective mission, message, and values.

The world of communication, advocacy, and representation is evolving rapidly, calling for innovative approaches that meet the challenges of today. At ReelAbilities, we see this as an opportunity to lead. The stories we champion are more than just tales—they are powerful calls to action, vivid reminders of the creativity, resilience, and strength within the disability community.

Our 2025–2027 Strategic Plan represents a renewed pledge to harness the transformative power of representation. It is a rallying cry to the disability movement, the film industry, and allies everywhere to join us in reimagining what is possible. The stakes are high. Disabled creators and their stories continue to face systemic barriers in policy, culture, and media. ReelAbilities is dedicated not only to advocating for inclusion but also to ensuring that these voices take the lead in shaping a truly inclusive future. This plan will serve as our compass, guiding us toward a world where disability is celebrated and authentically represented—both in front of and behind the camera.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Together, we will break barriers, shift perceptions, and create a more inclusive future. We look forward to building this vision alongside you.

With gratitude,

Isaac Zablocki & Anita Altman

- CHAPTER ONE -  
PAST AND PRESENT

*Celebrating **disability**,  
promoting **inclusion**,  
and advancing **accessibility** through film*

From left: Amy Smart, Pavar Snipe, Woopie Goldberg, Tony Goldwyn, William Fitzgerald. Opening Night, ReelAbilities 2024

## CORE VALUES

1.

### **HIGH CINEMATIC VALUE**

We celebrate and support inclusive cinematic work that innovates and excels across genres and styles.

2.

### **PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO DISABILITY**

We foster understanding and empathy by showcasing authentic and diverse perspectives and the intricacies of intersectionality, embracing the diverse array of racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and religious communities within the disability experience.

3.

### **BEYOND-TRANSACTIONAL ACCESSIBILITY**

We guarantee that our programs are accessible not only by providing a wide variety of accommodations, but also financially, geographically and virtually to communities and individuals wherever we screen, throughout North America, and beyond.

4.

### **MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AND CONVERSATIONS**

We foster meaningful, nuanced and necessary conversations that provide a space for the wider community to celebrate, discuss, and engage around topics explored in the films.

5.

### **CULTIVATING DIVERSE RELATIONSHIP**

Through partnerships, we reach far beyond our immediate constituencies and bring the ReelAbilities message of change far and wide, working with individuals, organizations, and other allies to be catalysts for further engagement and invitations-to-action.

## PAST & PRESENT

*What began as a NY-based annual festival, has evolved into a multifaceted organization championing inclusion, accessibility and disability representation through powerful storytelling.*

Founded in 2007 by the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan as a New York-based film festival, ReelAbilities has evolved into a dynamic, multifaceted organization championing inclusion, accessibility, and disability representation through storytelling. From its origins as a single festival, ReelAbilities now encompasses a wide range of programs, including the flagship festival, an affiliate network of festivals, Reel Education, ReelAbilities at the Workplace, ReelAbilities Stream, an Industry Summit, and numerous year-round initiatives. At its core, ReelAbilities is dedicated to fostering a more just, inclusive, and accessible society—both on and off the screen.

After 17 years of meaningful impact and sustained growth, ReelAbilities has reached a pivotal milestone: its transition to an independent 501(c)(3) organization. This moment provides a unique opportunity to reflect on our strengths and reimagine our potential for expansion and innovation. As societal attitudes toward inclusion and accessibility undergo significant transformation, ReelAbilities stands at the forefront of this movement. The challenges we face today demand creative, bold action and the courage to challenge outdated systems. Traditional advocacy strategies—centered on surface-level awareness—are no longer enough. To drive lasting change, we are committed to adopting innovative approaches that build trust within the disability community, expand meaningful engagement, and inspire systemic change at every level.

The ReelAbilities 2025–2027 Strategic Plan represents a bold vision to address these challenges and seize emerging opportunities. Over the next three years, we aim to reshape societal and media perceptions of disability, empower disabled creators by amplifying their voices and stories, forge transformative partnerships to ensure disability narratives are celebrated both in front of and behind the camera.

Guided by our unwavering commitment to diversity, accessibility, and intersectionality, we will implement strategic initiatives that broaden our reach, deepen our impact, and reinforce our position as pioneers in inclusive cinema. Through the power of film and storytelling, we remain dedicated to transforming representation and fostering an inclusive future.



# MILESTONES



MARLEE MATLIN  
ACTOR



ALTHOUGH I AM DEAF, WITH VOICES LIKE THOSE YOU WILL SEE IN THE REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL, EXCITING AND **NEW FACES FROM THE DEAF AND DISABLED ACTING COMMUNITY**, SILENCE IS THE LAST THING THE WORLD WILL HEAR FROM ME AND US.

ReelAbilities  
Film Festival  
Founded  
2007

ReelAbilities  
Launches  
Audio Description  
for Film Training  
2009

Introducing  
ReelAbilities  
Affiliate  
Festivals  
Program  
2010

OC, AD, CART,  
ASL Offered at  
All Programs  
2017

Reel-Ed  
Program  
Launches  
2019

ReelAbilities  
Goes Virtual  
2020

Inaugural  
ReelAbilities  
Industry Summit  
2021

ReelAbilities  
Stream  
Goes Live  
2023

ReelAbilities  
Becomes an  
Independent  
Nonprofit  
2024



THERE IS SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL ABOUT WALKING INTO REELABILITIES KNOWING **I WON'T NEED TO ASK TO BE INCLUDED**. AS A DISABLED PERSON, IT IS AN EXTREME LUXURY TO WALK INTO ANY ROOM CONFIDENT THAT I WILL HAVE WHAT I NEED TO PARTICIPATE WITHOUT ANY EXTRA STEPS.

Deaf audience member, 2024

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

# ReelAbilities

FILM FESTIVAL

**16**  
YEARS

**450**  
FILMS

**3K+**  
SPEAKERS

**5B+**  
REACH

**1M+**  
ATTENDEES

**15**  
CITIES



**97%**

Of our audience members rate the festival films, talkbacks and accessibility as very good or excellent.

**95%**

Of our audience members indicate that the festival positively influenced their perception of people with disabilities.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

# ReelAbilities

INDUSTRY SUMMIT

DISABILITY INCLUSION AND EQUITY IN FILM  
+ PERFORMING ARTS INDUSTRIES

**3K+**  
**INDUSTRY**  
**PARTICIPANTS**

**15**  
**SUPPORTED**  
**PROJECTS**

**89%** **OF SPEAKERS**  
**ARE DISABLED**  
**24%** **OF SPEAKERS**  
**ARE BIPOC**





BEING ABLE TO PITCH TO JUDGES FROM NBC UNIVERSAL AND AMC NETWORKS WHO HAD A PROCLIVITY FOR DISABILITY ISSUES WAS A **UNIQUE EXPERIENCE** THAT NEEDS TO BE REPLICATED IN MORE INDUSTRY EVENTS.”

Cameron Mitchell, filmmaker  
Industry Summit  
Pitch Program Participant 2024

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Reel**Abilities**  
**STREAM**  
ACCESSIBILITY ON DEMAND

THE LARGEST HUB OF FILMS MADE BY  
AND ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

**75**  
**FILMS**

**50+**  
**REEL TALKS**

**100%** CAPTIONS +  
AUDIO DESCRIPTION

[ReelAbilities.org/Stream](https://ReelAbilities.org/Stream)

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



BRINGING REELABILITIES TO THE  
CLASSROOM AND THE WORKPLACE

**22**  
**FILMS +**  
**DISCUSSION**  
**GUIDES**

**10K+**  
**CLASSROOM**  
**VIEWS**



**20**  
**CORPORATE**  
**SCREENINGS**  
**ANNUALLY**



**vimeo**

**Nielsen**



**ESTÉE**  
**LAUDER**  
COMPANIES





“

THE PROGRAM HAS **BROADENED OUR UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITIES** AND HOW OUR COLLEAGUES AND EMPLOYEES DEAL WITH THEM ON A DAILY BASIS IN A CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT.”

DEI Officer, Fortune 500 Company



## THEORY OF CHANGE

*ReelAbilities emphasizes the power of storytelling and representation in film to shape public **perception**, foster **inclusion**, and promote a more **equitable** society & Industry.*

### Activities

Film Screenings  
Workshops & Conversations  
Community Engagement  
Support of Disabled Filmmakers  
Industry training



### Outputs

Increased Representation  
Audience Reach / Exposure  
Media Coverage



### Outcomes

Attitudinal Shifts  
Increased Accessibility  
Empowerment of People with  
Disabilities



### Long-Term Impact

- **Cultural Change:** Over time, ReelAbilities aims to contribute to a cultural shift where people with disabilities are fully included, respected, and valued in all aspects of society.
- **Industry Shift:** ReelAbilities has a direct impact on the number of film projects made by disabled filmmakers and the way films are presented.
- **Policy Influence:** Through increased awareness and advocacy, ReelAbilities could indirectly influence policies related to accessibility, media representation, and disability rights.

- CHAPTER TWO -  
INTO THE FUTURE



AS A DEAF FILMMAKER, I HAVE ATTENDED AND SHOWN FILMS AT 30+ FILM FESTIVALS AND VERY FEW HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MATCH THE STELLAR EXPERIENCE I HAVE HAD AT THE REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL DUE TO THEIR **UNPARALLELED SUPPORT, ACCESSIBILITY**, RESOURCES, VENUES, REGIONAL **MARKET IMPACT**, AND AUDIENCE RECEPTION.

Delbert Whetter, Producer

## STRATEGIC GOALS

*In the next 3 years, ReelAbilities will focus on the following strategic goals:*

**1.**

### **Strengthen Organizational and Financial Capacity**

Establishing a firm, sustainable foundation for growth is crucial for enabling ReelAbilities to thrive long-term. This involves creating the infrastructure, partnerships, financial stability, and strategic planning necessary to ensure ReelAbilities can continue to grow, adapt, and expand its impact over time.

**2.**

### **Improve Industry Impact & Positioning**

Solidifying ReelAbilities as a thought leader and “go to” organization at the intersection of inclusion, accessibility, film, and the arts involves establishing the festival as a primary source of influence, knowledge, and inspiration within these fields. As a thought leader, ReelAbilities can spearhead important conversations about the portrayal of disability in media, setting new standards for accessibility and representation.

**3.**

### **Expand Audience Reach & Engagement**

The growing recognition of the ReelAbilities brand and its programs, along with the diversification and expansion of our audience base, is essential for maximizing our impact. As awareness of ReelAbilities increases, our programs can attract new audiences who may not have previously engaged with disability-focused content, including those from different cultural backgrounds, age groups, and geographic regions.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE

### 1. Strengthen Organizational and Financial Capacity

By the end of 2027, ReelAbilities will enhance financial, program and operational efficiency by:

- Establishing a governance board with at least 12 members from diverse expertise areas, meeting quarterly to provide strategic oversight.
- Securing new funding, including corporate sponsors and philanthropic organizations, to increase annual program budgets.
- Improving data collection and analysis to track and measure program impact and funding efficiency.
- Implementing staff learning and development programs to strengthen organizational culture and staff retention.



## HOW DO WE GET THERE

### 2.

### Improve Industry Impact & Positioning

By the end of 2027, ReelAbilities will improve its industry impact & positioning by:

- Establishing an industry advisory board, comprising key representatives from leading film festivals, industry organizations and disability-focused groups.
- Maintaining and expanding strategic collaborations with leading Film Festivals and industry organizations (The Academy, TCM and WB, rep-organizations, etc.).
- Expanding the Industry Summit to include broader program, direct sponsorships, and a steering committee to guide strategic priorities.
- Launching a fiscal sponsorship and regranting program to provide financial support and mentorship for disabled filmmakers
- Publishing an Annual Report on Disability in Film to track progress, spotlight trends and set industry benchmarks.
- Offering Consulting services to film organizations, festivals and creators on disability inclusion and accessibility.
- Developing new funding, development, production and distribution partnerships to increase the number of film projects by and about people with disabilities.

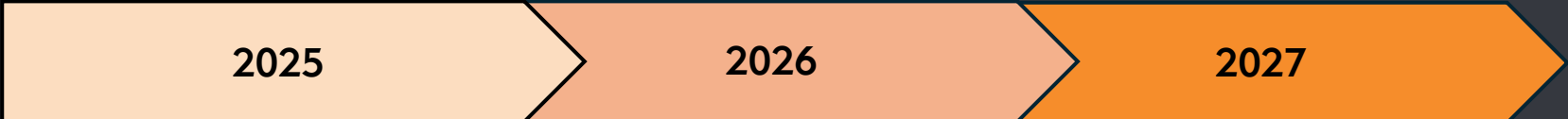
## HOW DO WE GET THERE

### 3. Expand Audience Reach & Engagement

By the end of 2027, ReelAbilities will expand its audience reach and engagement by:

- Completing a brand re-fresh & website rebuild to improve SEO and enhance the user experience, including emerging audiences and partners.
- Establishing year-round community outreach partnership to strengthen strategic, inclusive community engagement.
- Leveraging our streaming platform and national affiliates to maintain continuous brand awareness and audience engagement year-round.
- Curating and producing high-quality original content to drive site traffic, deepen audience connections, and showcase disabled creators and creatives.
- Launching a structured membership program to encourage sustained engagement, increase revenue and leverage assets.
- Increasing the marketing, PR and advertising budget to support expanded promotional activities, audience growth and media sponsors and partnerships.

# COMMITMENT FRAMEWORK



	2025	2026	2027
<b>Organization</b>	+ 3 FTE Form a Governance Board	+ 2 FTE	+ 2 FTE
<b>Fundraising</b>	\$960K	\$1.2M	\$1.5M
<b>Program Expansion</b>	Develop Stream + Summit	Expand Reel-Ed	Restructure Affiliate Festivals
<b>Marketing</b>	Brand Refresh + Website Rebuilt SEO + PPC Campaigns	Industry + Educational Guides & Resources	Strategic National Community Partnerships And Engagement
<b>Industry</b>	Form an Industry Board Launch a Fiscal Sponsorship Program	Provide Direct Distribution Support Offer Stream Channel On OTT Platforms	Expand Summit Into A Standalone Event Provide Direct Production Support To Disabled Creators

# IMPACT GOALS

## CHALLENGE SOCIAL ATTITUDES BY AMPLIFYING DISABILITY STORYTELLING

Host **150 film screenings**, paired with conversations & workshops, to amplify stories that reflect diverse disability experiences.

**60 workplace programs** to foster workplace awareness and inclusion.

### Success metrics:

- **+25%** Rise in audience reach
- **+10%** in employment of PWD among participating orgs.
- **+90%** in positive attitudinal shifts captured through post-event surveys

## INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY & EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

By the end of 2027 ReelAbilities will:

Host **45 week-long festivals** and at least **36 Taste of ReelAbilities** programs, enabling disabled individuals to fully access and enjoy film & performing arts, and participate fully in these social and cultural gatherings.

Produce **captions and audio descriptions for at least 40 feature films**, and make this accessible content available for other festivals, streaming platforms, theatrical & TV releases.

### Success metrics:

- **+20%** Disabled filmmakers & speakers
- **+30%** Accessible films available to stream year-round.
- **+15** Fully accessible films at A-list festivals and theatrical releases supported by ReelAbilities.

## LEAD AN INDUSTRY SHIFT IN REPRESENTATION AND ACCESSIBLE PRESENTATION

Directly support at least **50 disabled filmmakers** through mentorship programs, funding opportunities, and distribution support

Establish at least **50 cross-industry partnerships** focused on promoting accessibility.

### Success metrics:

- **+20%** Increase in films by disabled creators.
- **+25%** Increase in disability film initiative and accessibility practices among partner organizations.



## CONCLUSION

ReelAbilities' 2025–2027 Strategic Plan is built on our unwavering commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible society, empowering disabled creators, and advancing authentic disability representation both in front of and behind the camera. We leverage the power of film as a tool for education, advocacy, and community-building—shaping societal attitudes and influencing policy for lasting change.

In fulfilling our mission, we not only aim to showcase works by and about disabled communities but also to serve as a resource for other film presenters and create pathways for disabled creators through funding, mentorship, networking, and distribution opportunities.

While maintaining our ongoing programs, this strategic plan will drive innovation, expanding ReelAbilities' influence in the film and arts industry. By growing our community and forging meaningful partnerships, we will amplify our impact, extend our reach, and further our mission.

Each year, we will conduct comprehensive audits to measure progress and share outcomes with our stakeholders. In 2027, we will provide a full evaluation of this plan, identifying achievements, challenges, and opportunities for growth as we look ahead to crafting the next phase of our strategic vision for 2028–2030.


A photograph of three individuals in wheelchairs sitting together and smiling. The person on the left is a woman with long blonde hair wearing a white hoodie. The person in the middle is a woman with dark hair wearing a patterned top. The person on the right is a man with glasses wearing an orange jacket, looking at a tablet. They are in front of a backdrop with logos for 'ReelAbilities' and 'Marjorie Meyerson JCC'.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

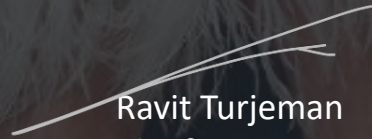
Developing this plan was a collaborative effort to ensure that our strategic framework was not only ambitious, but realistic regarding our ability to achieve the goals we have set out for our organization.

We are grateful to all our stakeholders for providing their thoughts, ideas and input during the process and we look forward to moving full speed ahead on this journey as we grow and evolve.

We are deeply grateful to the ReelAbilities Advisory Committee, team members, partners, advisors and supporters who dedicated their time and energy to the development of this strategic plan.



Isaac Zablocki  
Founder & CEO



Ravit Turjeman  
Chief Operating Officer