

Announcing the 2022 Reelworld Black Entrepreneur cohort

A future generation of casting directors, agents, managers and film producers.

Toronto, April 21, 2022 – Reelworld Screen Institute introduces the first cohort of Canada's next **casting directors, agents, managers and film producers**, who are part of the **Reelworld Black Entrepreneurs Program**. This project is funded through a non-repayable investment of \$1.4 million through the Government of Canada's [Black Entrepreneurship Program Ecosystem Fund](#) through the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario](#) (FedDev Ontario).

Fifteen Black entrepreneurs will be embarking on a new journey creating the next generation of casting directors, agents, managers and film producers in Ontario. They will be training for the next eight months; participating in virtual workshops with notable Canadian industry professionals, engaging in mentorships through some of Canada's leading organizations, incorporating, building their business plans, apprenticing and building their networks to support their businesses by connecting with industry peers through affiliated Reelworld programs. At the end of the program, participants will have paved paths to success for their businesses.

"Congratulations to the first Reelworld Black Entrepreneur cohort! Through the Black Entrepreneurship Program Ecosystem Fund, Reelworld is providing critical support, services, and mentorship to Black entrepreneurs in the film industry," said the Honourable Helena Jaczek, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. "This important investment is another example of the Government of Canada's commitment to diversity and inclusion while working to address systemic racism."

"When considering our programs at Reelworld, we look for gaps in the ecosystem of our Canadian screen industry in regard to our mandate of diversity and inclusion. These four areas of our industry are key gatekeeper positions, which will be vital to enhancing that 'inclusion' we are all concerned with currently. For talent to thrive they need the support of these pillars, and it is key that those pillars reflect that diverse talent they are guiding to success."

Casting Director Participants – [Cara Douglas](#), [Tscholo Khalema](#) and [Rachel Osbourne](#) will be learning how to successfully cast for film and series from some of the top casting directors in Canada. They will also gain insight into the infrastructure and various avenues of casting as a business; union and non-union productions, commercials and more.

Agent Participants - [Gregory Henderson](#), [Jennifer Irons](#), and [Tsenu Zelleke](#) will work on building a roster of actors and literary talent. They will also learn about contract negotiation and deals in order to successfully book and provide their talent access to the best opportunities in the market.

Manager Participants - [Abby Ayoola](#), [Jessica Carter](#), [Jae Leacock](#), and [Katrina Lopes](#) will master how to manage and nurture a career in the Canadian film industry, and how to network and create relationships with clients and industry professionals.

Film Producer Participants - Mid-level producers [Audra Gray](#), Louis Mercier, [Chibie Okoye](#), [Keda Edwards Pierre](#) and [Sheldon Shaw](#) will collaborate with a number of creatives including writers, directors and actors to help shape their stories while receiving instruction on how to access funding and create strong pitch packages. They will also learn how to expand their audiences internationally – meeting the buyers and acquisition executives seeking new content.

Support for this program has been widely received from organizations like **Telefilm Canada, ACTRA and Shaftesbury**. In addition to these organizations who have made financial commitments of support, the Reelworld Black Entrepreneurs Program has over 20 organizations and many industry professionals on board offering services and training to support entrepreneurs who want to break into the Canadian screen industries.

List of contributors

Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television (ACCT)

Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA)

Afroglobal Television

Banff World Media Festival

Black Screen Office (BSO)

Black Academy

Casting Directors Society of Canada (CDC)

Channel Zero

Freddie Films Inc

Government of Canada, through Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario)

Independent Media Producers Association of Creative Talent (IMPACT)

Independent Production Fund (IPF)

Meridian Artists (MA)

Oya Media Group (OYA)

Playback

Shaftesbury

Telefilm Canada

Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)

Confirmed mentors and consultants at the time of this release

Casting Directors

Jason Knight Casting - (*Transplant, Titans, American Gods, Ginny and Georgia, See*)

Ilona Smyth at Smyth Casting - (*FatMan, House At The End Of The Street, February, Lifetime and Hallmark Networks*)

Jesse Griffiths Casting - (*EZRA, I am Syd Stone, Far Cry 6, Blues Clues & You*)
Andrew Deiters at Groundglass Casting - *Commercial casting (Indeed, Tim Hortons, TD Bank, RBC, Air Canada, KIA Motors)*
Millie Tom Casting - (*Kim's Convenience, Flashback, Far Cry 6, Life with Derek*)
Gordon Middleton at Jules Casting - Casting Associate

Agents

Stefan Hogan - *Oscar Abrams Zimel and Associates Inc.*
Jessica Martins - *Hero Artists Inc.*
Julia Schneider and David Ritchie - *Ambition Talent Inc.*
Ralph Zimmerman - *Great North Artists Management Inc.*

USA Agents:

Halle Mariner - *APA Agency*
Ari Brown - *APA Agency*
April King - *ICM Partners*

Managers

Mustafa El Amin - *Universal Music Group*

USA Managers:

DaVida Chanel Smith - *Stride Management*

Producers

Hayden Baptiste - Producer
Brendan Mcneill - Above The Line Media

Reelworld Screen Institute

Reelworld was founded in 2000 by award winning actress and producer Tonya Williams to advance opportunities for Canadians who are Black, Indigenous, Asian, South Asian, and People of Colour in the screen industries by providing professional development and advocating for racial equity in Canadian content and production. Reelworld Screen Institute, a non-profit, provides training programs and presents the acclaimed Reelworld Film Festival, which celebrates stories by racialized Canadians. Providing access to opportunities is core to Reelworld, and Access Reelworld is Canada's leading hiring platform for racialized crews and talent. Reelworld Foundation, a registered charity, is transforming the industry by creating mechanisms that hold systems accountable for greater equity.

About FedDev Ontario

For more than 12 years, the Government of Canada, through [FedDev Ontario](#), has worked to advance and diversify the southern Ontario economy through funding opportunities and business services that support jobs, innovation and growth in Canada's most populous region. The Agency has delivered impressive results, which can be seen in southern Ontario

businesses that are creating innovative technologies, improving their productivity, growing their revenues, and in the economic advancement of communities across the region. Learn more about the impacts the Agency is having in southern Ontario by exploring our [pivotal projects](#).

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