



BSO CEO talks international outreach, momentum in 2025

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Black Screen Office CEO Joan Jenkinson discusses efforts surrounding the long-term sustainability and momentum of the organization.

Fresh off its second annual **Symposium** at the Toronto Region Board of Trade on April 1, the Black Screen Office (BSO) is hoping to put the momentum from the event toward a number of initiatives for the rest of 2025 and beyond.

Chief among those is the BSO's international outreach, focusing on collaboration and international coproductions.

"Surprisingly, there is no other organization in the world that's like the BSO, and not even in the U.S. [or] the U.K.," BSO CEO and co-founder Joan Jenkinson (pictured) tells *Playback Daily*. "There's a lot of goodwill and a lot of interest in partnering and collaborating and being in a space of innovation, as opposed to falling back on anything that is conventional."

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Jenkinson singled out the British Film Institute and the Motion Picture Association as organizations the BSO has already partnered with as part of that outreach. Jenkinson mentioned conversations the BSO had been a part of regarding a treaty coproduction with Nigeria as well as one "officially in the works" with Jamaica.

Despite the ongoing economic turmoil originating from the U.S., she does not intend to let it impact momentum on the BSO's international outreach, noting positive conversations the BSO has had with producers stateside who are not "supportive of any kind of protectionism for the United States when it comes to the screen industry."

She spoke of continuing efforts around the sustainability of the BSO, including creating an official membership as well as shaping programs to focus on business development and entrepreneurship for Black professionals. To that end, Jenkinson says the organization is planning to hire an outreach coordinator, bringing its full-time staff to six, supported by two part-time positions.

Jenkinson also discussed the BSO's anti-Black racism framework for the screen industry, which was announced at the Symposium with a planned release at the end of the month.

The framework, which will have 28 recommendations across a variety of topics, received funding from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. Jenkinson says the organizations have expressed interest in working with the BSO to adapt the framework to other aspects of the cultural sector.

Part of the framework's impact, she hopes, is to cement its practices in the industry so that they are able to move beyond certain initial conversations.

"We don't want DEI to be the centre of the conversation for the next Symposium. We want to be more focused on the work that's coming out, on the fact that we're not having to reinvent the wheel every time we talk to broadcasters or funders," says Jenkinson. "That there will be a real understanding of why we exist and what the barriers are, and [they will] have tools to overcome those barriers that are baked into their organizations."

As for future editions of the Symposium, the BSO team and board of directors are already talking about ways to expand, including the possibility of making it a week-long event.

Image courtesy of the Black Screen Office

