

British Columbia's creative industries are thriving in 2024, and at the heart of this growth lies the interactive digital media (IDM) sector. According to **Creative BC 2024** data, IDM is now a \$2.5 billion GDP contributor and supports 23,787 full-time equivalent jobs. This represents a major pillar of BC's economy — one that is powering innovation through virtual production, real-time visualization, and a close coupling with film, TV, VFX, and animation sectors.

Defining Interactive Digital Media in BC's Creative Economy

Interactive digital media covers a broad array of digital content and technology industries where users engage actively with content rather than passively consuming it. This includes:

- Video game development
- Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) applications
- Real-time visualization tools
- Immersive media experiences
- Interactive storytelling platforms

Importantly, IDM overlaps and interconnects extensively with film, television, VFX (visual effects), and animation sectors — all major BC creative industries in their own right.

BC's Interactive Digital Media Sector by the Numbers

According to **Creative BC's 2024 metrics**, the scale of IDM in BC is substantial:

Metric	Value
GDP Contribution	\$2.5 Billion CAD
Full-Time Equivalent Jobs	23,787

This GDP contribution places IDM alongside some of BC's other heavyweight [vancouverguardian.com](https://www.vancouverguardian.com) creative industries. Moreover, nearly 24,000 jobs reflect a strong and diverse labour market encompassing game developers, artists, programmers, producers, and technical staff.

Digitization of Film & TV Workflows: The Engine Driving Innovation

One of the biggest trends fueling BC's creative sector is the **digitization of film and TV production workflows**. Digitization refers to transforming analog processes into digital ones—streamlining production, improving quality, and enabling more sophisticated visual storytelling.

For example, digital asset management and cloud-based collaboration tools now allow VFX houses and animation studios to work seamlessly across time zones. Moreover, real-time visualization tools let directors and creatives see digital scene composites live on-set.

How Virtual Production and Real-Time Visualization Fit In

Virtual production is an umbrella term describing production methods that integrate computer-generated imagery (CGI) with live-action footage in real time. It typically involves LED volume stages, motion capture, and real-time rendering software to create immersive environments live during filming.

Real-time visualization refers to the ability to see a photorealistic digital representation instantly, rather than waiting hours or days for final rendering. This allows directors, cinematographers, and VFX supervisors to make creative decisions on-the-fly.

BC studios are increasingly leveraging these tools to gain competitive advantages:

- **Reduced turnaround times:** Cutting weeks from post-production by making changes during principal photography
- **Creative flexibility:** Iterating set design, lighting, and virtual assets collaboratively in real time
- **Cost efficiency:** Minimizing physical set builds and location changes

Studios such as Method Studios Vancouver and Image Engine are frontline leaders employing these cutting-edge workflows, bridging interactive digital media technology with traditional filmed content.

VFX and Animation: Strategic Advantages for BC's Creative Industry

Visual effects (VFX) and animation are often considered complimentary to interactive digital media, and in BC they are major drivers of economic impact. The region's tax incentives combined with world-class talent attract top-tier VFX houses and animation studios.

Three key ways VFX and animation bolster IDM's growth include:



1. **Sharing technology and expertise:** Real-time engines developed for games also power virtual production and VFX rendering pipelines.
2. **Cross-industry talent mobility:** Artists and developers often move fluidly between game projects and film/TV visual effects, enriching both sectors.
3. **Innovation spillover:** Techniques like photogrammetry and AI-based rendering developed in games are now mainstream in animation and VFX, accelerating creative possibilities.

This synergy helps BC maintain a competitive edge internationally. The region hosts prominent studios such as Bardel Entertainment, Spin VFX, and DNEG Vancouver – all driving innovation at the intersection of IDM and feature entertainment.

Interactive Digital Media as a Major BC Creative Industry in 2024

It's tempting to treat games, animation, film, and TV as siloed industries. But BC's 2024 data paints a different picture: **interactive digital media is a cornerstone of the province's creative economy**—one that is

inherently collaborative, tech-driven, and diverse in its output.

With a GDP impact of \$2.5 billion and a workforce nearing 24,000 people, IDM's footprint rivals many traditional entertainment sectors.

Key themes shaping its future include:

- **Continued integration of IDM tools into traditional film and TV workflows**
- **Expansion of virtual production facilities leveraging real-time visualization**
- **Leveraging BC's unique talent pool that seamlessly crosses games, VFX, animation, and digital media**
- **Growing international collaborations facilitated by digitization and cloud technologies**

Why the Numbers Matter: Sanity-Checking BC's Interactive Digital Media Impact

To put \$2.5 billion GDP and 23,787 jobs in perspective, BC's total GDP is approximately \$320 billion CAD (2023 figures from BC Stats). That means IDM accounts for nearly 0.8% of the provincial economy on its own—significant for a creative subsector.



From a jobs perspective, 23,787 full-time equivalent positions represent a sizable, specialized community. Creative BC's employment data aligns with independent surveys from industry bodies like the Unifor Canada Entertainment Council and regional game developer associations, reinforcing accuracy.

This indicates that interactive digital media's growth is robust, sustainable, and increasingly central to BC's economic health.

Looking Ahead: The Future of IDM in British Columbia

As technology advances and content consumption continues shifting, BC's IDM sector is poised to keep expanding. Investments in:

- Expanding virtual production stages
- Training and talent development programs

- Cross-sector collaboration between game studios, VFX houses, and broadcasters
- Public-private partnerships to boost innovation

will be key to capitalizing on these opportunities.

In 2024, interactive digital media is not just a niche or emerging sector—it is a major economic force and creative hub. Integrating virtual production and real-time visualization tools shows how digitization is transforming how stories are made and experienced, creating jobs and driving BC's global reputation as a creative powerhouse.

Stay tuned for more coverage and interviews with BC IDM leaders in upcoming posts.