



16 July 2020

## **Update on COVID-19 Relief Fund for Artists and Athletes:**

The Department would like to further update Free State Artists and Athletes, as well as stakeholders and the general public regarding the COVID-19 Relief Fund for Artists and Athletes in the Free State.

With this update, the Department also want to correct some of the incorrect impressions that seems to be perpetuated particularly on social media platforms.

As per the media update issued on 03 July 2020 the Financial Relief Fund for Artists and Athletes in the Free State has been finalized by the Department following an exhaustive process of adjudications and compliance checks that had to be done over applications received. As communicated in that update, **the payment of Financial Relief funds to the successful applicants will be affected before end of July 2020.**

It is important to address the apparent confusion about the nature of this Relief Fund which seems to be currently unfolding on social media platforms. There are **two main parts to the COVID-19 Relief Fund** for Athletes and Artists in the Free State. The first part of the Fund relates to **FINANCIAL SUPPORT** that will be provided to Artists and Athletes. It

is this Relief Fund that the Department has indicated that it will be paid to qualifying artists before end of July 2020.

As stated before, this part of the Relief Fund is handled in accordance with the Framework and Criteria that was adopted together with structures representing artists and athletes: **Creative and Cultural Industry Federation of South Africa (CCIFSA)** and the **Free State Sport Confederation (FSSC)**. The two structures were not only centrally involved in the development of the Framework and Criteria, but were also centrally involved in the process of adjudication of applications.

The second part of the Relief Fund is in the form of **SUPPORT VOUCHERS** that will be provided to qualifying Free State Artists. This specific form of relief was also proposed by and agreed upon with CCIFSA as a federation of artists, as well as the **South African Arts and Culture Youth Forum/Federation (SAACYF)** as a structure representing the youth in the creative sector. The purpose of this relief measure is to serve as an emergency intervention for local Artists in view of the pressing and immediate challenges that Artists are faced with at this juncture.

It must also be noted that the **Voucher Support Relief is additional to the Financial Support Relief** which is itself payable before end of July 2020, and that this is a measure being implemented only in the Free State province following a request by the aforementioned artist structures themselves.

The bottleneck around this specific relief measure relates to the submission of a **credible database of Artists from the Artists structures themselves**. It must further be stated that the Department has been confronted with a

difficult dilemma where the two structures contested each other's lists of artists as submitted to the Department for the implementation of the Voucher Relief measure.

Since the Department deals with public funds and has to **comply with laws and regulations that regulates** management of public funds, a credible database, of all individuals (artists) who are the intended beneficiaries of this Voucher Relief fund, has to be in place. It is for this reason that a **call-out has been made to ALL Free State Artists** to directly and individually apply for the Voucher Support Relief Fund. It should be a given and accepted norm by everyone, that public funds cannot just be dispensed without following due processes and ensuring accountability standards. These standards are used by the Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA) in auditing compliance.

As communicated previously, with the Financial Support Relief Fund, the Department came across a lot of **discrepancies** that had to be eliminated before the process could be finalized. These discrepancies included the following, amongst others:

- 1) Individuals submitting **multiple applications using different names** (these could be detected using a verification check through the applicant's official Identity Number).
- 2) **Applications being received from other Provinces** while the Relief Fund is meant for Free State artists.

These and other discrepancies clocked up the system and caused delays in the efforts of the Department to timeously and speedily process the applications. Because of these discrepancies it is apparent therefore that it

is necessary for these processes to be handled with due diligence for accountability purposes while also understating the urgency of the pressing challenges faced by artists.

Having communicated the above facts to stakeholders before, it remains a matter of mystery and a matter of grave concern to the Department that there continues to be endless and misleading social media posts about the Relief Fund process in the Free State. The Department would like to state in no uncertain terms that those **social media statements are devoid of truth.**

It is also disheartening that some artist structures and/or individuals, who have been party to the decisions and processes that relates to the Relief Fund are themselves spearheading and/or sustaining the spreading of incorrect information. We want to stress that the Department has not deviated an inch from the agreed upon approaches and decisions as agreed upon with these structures.

It is the view of the Department that **established platforms and channels** should have been used by the artist structures to address whatever concerns they might be having about the process. The MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation in the Free State, Mrs Limakatso Mahasa, has created an open communication channel with Artists structures such as CCIFSA since her appointment into this portfolio, a matter which has been openly acknowledged by the structure itself. It would have been prudent to use this channel to communicate whatever concerns there might be.

"While the Department appreciates the anxiety and impatience around the Relief Fund, caused by the unprecedented effects of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of artists and athletes, it is proper that matters are handled

professionally and with due regard to the agreed upon frameworks and in compliance with regulations. It should further be noted that the Free State is not the only Province that has had to deal with what can be described as a tedious process of ensuring relief to Artists and Athletes. As a matter of fact, the Free State has fared well in managing this tedious process, comparatively speaking", stated MEC Limakatso Mahasa.

The **understanding and support of all concerned** will therefore be appreciated as we draw closer to finalizing this process for the benefit of Artists and Athletes in our Province.

**All the names of Artists and Athletes who have been assisted through the above Relief measures will be published on the Department's website.** For those who were not successful in their applications, an **Appeal mechanism** has been instituted as part of the entire process and they will thus be able to appeal for the reconsideration of their applications.

END.

**Issued by the Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation (DSACR)**

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