DEPARTMENT CONCEPTUALISES PHASE 3 OF COVID-19 RELIEF FUND DISTRIBUTION

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The Covid-19 relief fund has accorded individuals and organisations in the sports, arts and culture sector to enter into the third phase of distribution, Portfolio Committee on Sports, Arts and Culture has heard.

The Deputy Minister of the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, Ms Nocawe Mafu, told the committee that the third phase distribution was being conceptualised. “We are not at an implementation phase yet,” she said.

Ms Mafu led a strong delegation from the department to brief the committee on the department’s 2019/20 annual report. The committee also received a briefing from the Auditor-General South Africa on the 2019/20 audit outcomes of the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture and its entities

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Beauty Dlulane, asked the delegation to clarify the reasons behind the shifting of funds for Covid-19-related programmes as the reason was not reflected in the report. “The department was not able to fulfil some of its responsibilities because money was moved to Covid-19-related programmes. Where is the information about that?” she asked.

Committee member, Mr Sindile Madlingozi, said the sector was technical and difficult to distribute funds to. “How far is the third phase going, especially for the artists who need the funding the most? Theatres have been closed for all of last year, young black artists and performers are struggling.”

He sought clarity on what plans the department has in availing books and having children learn in their mother tongues. Committee member, Mr Tshepo Mhlongo, said it was preferable that the department first accounts for the distribution of phases one and two, before it could implement phase three of the Covid-19 relief fund distribution.

The committee heard that the department received an unqualified audit opinion with findings for the 2018/19 financial year.

**By Sibongile Maputi**
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