

New fund launches to support screen sector workers affected by the pandemic

A number of donors have contributed towards a support fund established to provide direct financial relief for screen sector workers whose livelihoods are affected by the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown.



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Donors include Sony Pictures Entertainment (through the Sony Global Relief Fund), the National Arts Council and the National Film and Video Foundation.

The Fund, called the South African Screen Sector Support Fund (SASSSF), will specifically address the needs of individuals, SMMEs and organisations affected by the lockdown – which has had a significant impact on audio-visual content production in South Africa and on the many companies whose goods and services support that production activity.

The Screen Sector Support Fund is the initial project of the newly established South African Screen Sector Support Initiative (SASSSI), which has been set up jointly by The South African Screen Federation (SASFED) and the Independent Producers Organisation (IPO), with programme and technical support from Gray Global Advisors LLC (GGA). SASSSI's aim is to preserve screen sector jobs and the sector's ecosystem in the wake of the pandemic and, in the medium term, to work with key stakeholders to support and encourage inward and local investment, the creation of sustainable jobs, skills development and transformation to deliver significant growth.

The screen sector encompasses all activity related to the production and distribution of film, television, visual and special effects, animation, advertising, and short-form and online video content. It covers everyone involved in creating, performing in, producing and distributing work intended to be viewed on screen. Eligibility criteria are published as different tranches of funding become available – and it is SASSSI's hope that individuals and groups from as many areas of the sector as possible can be helped this year.

"SASSSI's immediate objective is to harness collective action in order to support the screen sector community adversely affected by the lockdown," says SAFED executive officer and lobbyist, Unathi Malunga. "The intention is also to secure the screen sector so that it can be revived, revitalised and developed once the Covid-19 crisis has passed.

Sony Pictures Entertainment is contributing \$250k to the Screen Sector Support Fund (around R3.8m) through the Sony Global Relief Fund, the National Arts Council is contributing R570k, and the National Film and Video Foundation is contributing R100k – all to help to provide much-needed relief to South Africa's screen sector. This new SASSSI-established Fund will sit alongside the Covid-19 Film and Television Relief Fund that was established in collaboration with Netflix last year and funded with an initial \$500k donation from Netflix. Those initial Netflix funds have been administered and disbursed already to over 550 below-the-line workers in the creative industry.

"We are so grateful for this extraordinary level of support for the local screen sector," says the IPO's Trish Downing. "It's a testament to international producers' confidence in our local sector and will go a long way towards preserving its value at this critical time."

As with the Netflix-funded Covid-19 Film and Television Relief Fund, all applications to and disbursements from the new SASSSI Screen Sector Support Fund will be administered by Tshikululu Social Investments, the country's oldest and leading social investment management company. As South Africa's leading social investment fund manager and adviser, Tshikululu has vast experience in providing end-to-end fund management solutions, a service offering particularly relevant over the past year.

"In order to assist those hardest hit by the pandemic within the film and entertainment industry, Tshikululu Social Investments has been appointed to manage the fund," says Sibonakaliso Mavuka, manager: Special Projects at Tshikululu. "The final decision regarding fund allocation will be conducted by independent selection committees nominated by representatives of the local screen sector and Gray Global Advisors – and confirmed with the key donors."

In addition to inviting new applications for some key categories, a portion of the funds will be used also to assist qualifying Industry Organisations that represent those who work in the screen sector.

The window for applications for grants from the Fund from individual applicants will open at 9am on Thursday, 11 March 2021 and will close at midnight on Friday, 19 March 2021.

For applications for grants from Industry Associations/Organisations, the window opens also at 9am on Thursday, 11 March and the deadline is Midnight on Monday, 5 April 2021. Specific details of eligibility criteria and application forms are available on SASSSI's website www.sssi.co.za.

"Through this important initiative, we wish to help support the skills pool and supporting ecosystem that makes up the South African screen sector - which, apart from Hollywood, is the oldest in the world," says Justin Gray of GGA. "The sector, which provides a wide range of services to both local and international companies – and brings important foreign investment into the country – is a significant contributor to the economy and job creation. It's vital that we preserve it and support its further development to position it as a key component of South Africa's post-Covid recovery."

You can help too!

In order to reach and to help as many individuals and sector-focused organisations as possible, SASSSI is calling for contributions to the Sector Support Fund from individuals, companies and others committed to securing the sustainability of the country's screen sector. The initial focus on relief for screen sector workers and organisations will continue as long as funding donated for that purpose is available. In addition, SASSSI will utilise any funding designated specifically for recovery and development programmes - with a focus on transformation, workforce and supplier development and on the infrastructure that will help to drive the sector forward.

Individuals, companies or organisations interested in contributing to the Screen Sector Support Fund are invited to visit the [SASSSI website](#) or to contact info@sssi.co.za for further information.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>