

Minutes of zoom meeting of EGTG committee held on 12 September 2020

Present: Angela Harkness-Robertson
David Grimes
Hannah Bradley
Claire Wood
Siobhan McGovern
Alma Forsyth
Alastair Smith

The meeting was called to discuss the proposed applications to the National Lottery and Creative Scotland for a festival of theatre to be held in spring 2021.

David, as treasurer, suggested that all payments relating to the proposed festival should be processed through the EGTG account, with appropriate ring-fencing. This was agreed.

Hannah explained to the committee the proposed organisational structure of the festival. There would be a steering committee composed of the representatives of participating local theatre groups, which would propose programme items for the festival. Decisions on which shows should be awarded slots and upon the running of the festival would be taken by the planning committee, which would be composed of members of the EGTG committee and the appointed producer of the festival. David noted that the EGTG committee was ultimately responsible for everything done under EGTG's name and suggested that it was therefore necessary for the full EGTG committee to have the final say. After discussion, it was agreed that the EGTG committee should have final veto power in relation to decisions relating to the festival, with decisions in relation to regulatory matters taken by a simple majority of the committee and vetos on creative grounds requiring a super-majority.

David queried what would be done with any surplus funds generated by the festival. Hannah explained that any underspend would have to be returned to Creative Scotland. Any surplus from the bucket collections to be held at the end of each performance would be split between the participating companies.

Alma asked what would happen if applications for funding were unsuccessful. Hannah stated that in that case, funding would be sought through sponsorship from Edinburgh-based businesses. David emphasised that the festival would need to be self-funding, with no contribution from EGTG funds. This was agreed.

The committee discussed the item in the draft festival budget for payment to participating professional companies. Was paying professional companies consistent with EGTG's status as an amateur theatre group and its charitable purposes? Hannah noted that Creative Scotland was focused upon supporting the professional creative sector in Scotland and that some professional involvement made securing Creative Scotland funding more likely. The committee explored the question of how this professional involvement could be squared with the charitable purpose of EGTG. David suggested that rather than being paid to perform, professional groups who wished to perform at the festival could be paid to provide workshops for participating amateur companies. This would promote the development of community theatre in Edinburgh, consistent with EGTG's aims, by providing both training and networking opportunities for those involved, while also providing a paid opportunity for the professional companies, contributing to Creative Scotland's aims. The committee agreed that payment should be for workshops rather than performances.

The committee went on to discuss particular aspects of the funding applications.

It was agreed that the national lottery application be amended to make it clearer that references to inclusion included diversity and the participation of under-represented social groups, and not merely the inclusion of different Edinburgh theatre groups. Adjustments would also be made to the draft equalities policy to set out an appropriate complaints procedure.

Some revision would be made to the risk assessment, removing entries for matters outwith the scope of the festival's responsibility (such as the risk of accidents on the train line behind the Princes Street Gardens venue) and clarifying the scope of some other entries (for instance, making clear that the risk of a perception of favouritism in the selection of festival entries applied to all those companies involved in the organisation of the festival and not simply to EGTG).

In relation to EGTG's participation in the festival, the committee agreed that it would be odd if a festival were to be held under EGTG's banner without EGTG putting on a show. It was not felt that it would be necessary or appropriate to require that a performance slot be reserved for EGTG however, since the committee was confident that any EGTG proposal would be of a sufficiently high standard to be awarded a performance slot on its own merits.

Hannah withdrew while the committee discussed the payment of some of those involved in organising the proposed festival. The committee recognised that the festival would require professional marketing and a dedicated producer, and considered that the sums allocated to these roles in the draft budget appeared reasonable. It had been proposed that Hannah should take on the role of publicist. David drew the committee's attention to the relevant OSCR provisions governing charities' employment of their trustees, noting that this would require the approval of the trustees as a body. It was agreed that Hannah had the relevant professional expertise, that the proposed payment was a reasonable one given the anticipated level of work, and that it would be acceptable for Hannah to take on this paid role in relation to the festival notwithstanding her position as a member of the EGTG committee. The committee stressed, however, that this was an exceptional circumstance relating to a particular project with (hoped for) external funding. The general rule remained that members of the committee contributed their expertise to EGTG on a voluntary basis.

In relation to both the publicist and producer roles, the committee agreed that there should be a written job description before payment was finally agreed.

Hannah rejoined the meeting and was informed of the outcome of the discussion. It was agreed that the planning committee should revise the application documents as discussed and that these should be circulated to the committee for agreement via email, allowing sufficient time to ensure that all members of the committee had the opportunity to give them proper consideration.