Destination Animation Fund

APPLICATION GUIDE

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Background

On February 28, 2022, Guelph's City Council voted to implement the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) on short-term accommodations such as hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and platforms like Airbnb. This initiative supports the 2022–2026 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. The MAT funds tourism infrastructure, stakeholder education, and marketing efforts to increase sport, group, and conference tourism in Guelph. Destination Marketing Guelph (DMG), operated by the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, leads destination marketing efforts. The Destination Animation Fund supports consistent community events and tourism product development. One-time major events should apply to the Gather Here Sponsorship Fund. We thank all applicants for taking the time to apply. Funding is limited and not every applicant who applies will receive funding.

Program Objectives

The Destination Animation Fund provides financial support to eligible organizations to enhance the City's year-round destination appeal. It encourages partnerships and the development of new or improved tourism products.

Priority Objectives

Projects will be prioritized if they:

- Collaborate with local or regional partners
- Promote accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Attract overnight visitors
- Increase brand awareness for Tourism Services, DMG, and Guelph
- Enhance Downtown attraction
- Expand sport and event offerings
- Provide strong visitor value

Eligibility and Applicants

To be eligible for this program, applicants must be:

- Be located within Guelph city limits
- Be a non-profit or for-profit organization
- Contribute at least 10% of the requested funding (up to $5,000)
- Be in good standing with the City of Guelph

Eligible Projects

Eligible projects:

- Support the development of new tourism experiences in the City.
- Appeal to at least 30% visitors from 40+ km away

- Be achievable within the 2027 calendar year
- Have a plan for collecting visitor information to be shared with Guelph Tourism

Eligible Costs

The Destination Animation Fund supports costs that help create and enhance visitor experiences. Funding is intended for soft causes that animate public spaces and engage audiences—not for operating expenses. Examples include:

- Equipment, purchases or rentals
- Venue rental costs
- Materials and supplies
- Signage and wayfinding

Your budget document must reflect how you will use the funds for eligible costs. Any ineligible costs will not be considered.

Ineligible Costs

- Alcohol-related expenses
- Awards, prizes, raffles
- Permit fees
- Donations
- Legal, audit, or interest expenses
- Lottery licenses
- Staff salaries or wages
- Political contributions
- Deficit funding
- Marketing and advertising
- Website or app development
- Individuals or unincorporated entities

Funding Structure

The Destination Animation Fund is an annual fund with a maximum award of $5,000. Applicants must contribute a minimum of 10% of the requested funding. Example: $2,000 request requires a $200 contribution from the participant.

Application Process

Applications open November 2, 2026 and close November 27, 2026. Submit via the online portal or request a written application. A staff committee will review applications using a rubric based on fund objectives. Late applications will not be received. Please contact Guelph Tourism should you need additional support.

Funding Decision

Decisions will be announced in March 2027. Successful applicants receive 50% of funds within 30 days of award notice. The remaining 50% is provided upon submission of the final report. Projects must be completed by December 31, 2027. Reports are due by December 31, 2027. Should your project take place in the winter of 2027, an extension for the report will be granted. Applicants cannot apply to both this fund and the Community Investment Grant Program for the same project. Failure to meet requirements may result in repayment of the full award.

Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants must report by December 31, 2027. Applicants will be given a report template to complete which will require grantees to plan ahead to collect visitor information. Collecting visitor information is essential to help Guelph Tourism advocate for the tourism industry and demonstrate its economic impact. While this may be challenging, submitting postal codes and other relevant visitor data is required. Failure to make a reasonable effort to collect and report visitor information may result in ineligibility for future Guelph Tourism funding.

Misuse of funds or spending on ineligible expenses will result in disqualification from future funding opportunities.

Definitions

For-profit business: Operates to generate profit

Non-profit organization: Operates for public or social benefit

Tourism event: 30%+ attendees from 40+ km away

Tourism product: Any tourism offering or experience appealing to visitors

Visitor: Non-routine traveler from 40+ km away

Specialty visitor-focused retail: Unique products not widely available (e.g., wedding dresses, thrift stores)

Major Event Criteria:

- Open, accessible, and public
- National/international reach
- 5,000+ attendees
- 50%+ visitors from 40+ km
- 1,000+ room nights booked
- Significant media and economic impact
- Financially sustainable
- Operating for 2+ years

Supporting Documentation

- Destination Animation Fund Application Form
- Appendix A – Budget Document
- Appendix B – Attestation Cover Letter

Contact Information

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For more information, please contact visit@guelph.ca.