



Gather Here Sponsorship Fund

APPLICATION GUIDE



GatherinGuelph.com

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Table of contents

Background	2
Program objectives	2
Priority objectives	2
Eligibility and applicants	3
Eligible projects	3
Ineligible expenses.....	3
Funding structure	4
Application process	4
Funding decision.....	4
Reporting requirements	5
Definitions	5
Supporting documentation	6
Contact information	6

Background

On February 28, 2022, Guelph's City Council voted to implement the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT), [legislated by the Provincial Government](#), on local short-term stay accommodations. These accommodations include hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and shared accommodation providers like Airbnb. Implementing the MAT was a priority outlined in the [2022-2026 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy](#).

The MAT is used to enhance Guelph as a destination for visitors by providing funding and education support to tourism industry stakeholders, infrastructure upgrades that address visitor needs, and in marketing to support increased sport, group, and conference tourism activity in the City of Guelph.

The Guelph Chamber of Commerce is the not-for-profit Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and operates under the name Destination Marketing Guelph (DMG). DMG will develop and implement a robust destination marketing plan to support the goal of making Guelph a premier place to travel for work and leisure.

Tourism industry support funding is a direct outcome of the 2022-2026 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy highlighted in priority 1.2 Support industry-led tourism product development and priority 5.3 Enhance placemaking throughout the city.

The Gather Here Sponsorship Fund is a funding stream that encourages the attraction of larger-scale events in Guelph that would be a one-time event versus consistent community events. Qualifying events would need to demonstrate a focus on visitor appeal versus local appeal. Events would be required to report of a minimum rooms/night at accommodations collecting the MAT in Guelph during the duration of the festival or event.

All funds are subject to the requirements and processes laid out in the [Municipal Accommodation Tax Administration Policy](#).

Program objectives

The Gather Here Sponsorship Fund is a joint initiative between Tourism and Destination Development and Destination Marketing Guelph to provide funds directly to conference, sport, festivals, and events to enhance Guelph's destination reputation year-round. The main objective of the fund is to attract new conference, sport, and event properties to Guelph.

Priority objectives

The staff committee will prioritize projects that demonstrate:

- Collaboration with local and regional partners
- A focus on accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Attracting visitors for overnight stays at accommodations
- Increased brand awareness for Tourism Services, Destination Marketing Guelph, and the Guelph community
- Advancing Downtown attraction
- Increasing or enhancing sport and event offerings
- Increasing and enhancing Guelph's visitor brand and reputation
- A strong visitor-oriented value proposition

The committee will be looking for applications that clearly demonstrate how they will provide Guelph with a 2:1 return on investment (ROI). This means that applicants must show how their proposed event will generate economic and marketing benefits for the City that are at least twice the amount of the grant received. Applicants should provide detail plans and evidence on how they will achieve this ROI.

Eligibility and applicants

- Local organizations bidding on regional, national, or international events
- Travelling events that have identified Guelph as a host community
- Conference and meeting organizations and associations hosting professional industry events in Guelph

All applicants must be in good standing with the City of Guelph.

Eligible projects

All projects must positively contribute to the growth of Guelph's tourism economy by:

- Having a goal of attracting 30% visitor demographics, with the provincial definition of a visitor being from 40 kilometres or more away
- Promoting Guelph as a must-see visitor destination to travel for work and leisure

Eligible projects include but are not limited to:

- Professional conferences hosted in Guelph
- Significant game, sporting, and Esport events hosted in Guelph
- Travelling sizeable events and festivals hosted in Guelph
- New or enhanced local events and festivals hosted in Guelph
- Professional industry events hosted in Guelph

Ineligible expenses

Ineligible expenses include:

- Donations
- Legal, audit, or interest expenses
- Lottery licenses
- Operating expenses (i.e. staff salaries and staff wages)
- Political contributions
- Pre-existing deficit funding (grant or loan)
- Alcohol purchase, distribution, and licensing
- Individuals or unincorporated entities

Funding structure

The Gather Here Sponsorship Fund is a funding allotment made available each calendar year to support event attraction. Eligible projects can receive up to \$25,000 or a portion thereof, to support their event. Please note that the request for funds cannot account for more than 15% of the total project or event budget. Successful applicants must be able to demonstrate a minimum return on investment of 2:1 for requested funds.

Applications that qualify as a major event with funding asks greater than \$25,000 will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and may require separate Council direction and approval. Requests of this size must be made at least 180 days in advance of the event date.

Application process

Applications for the Gather Here Sponsorship Fund will be accepted through ongoing intake. It is recommended that for larger events, applicants consider applying to this fund at least two years in advance. Funding awards will be made until the full amount allotted to the fund has been filled each year. An announcement will be made on the website when the funding allotment is at capacity. Applicants are encouraged to apply again when the funding reopens. Applications must be submitted online through the applicant portal. If requested, the City of Guelph will accept written applications.

The staff committee will review applications in full before making funding award decisions based on a pre-established rubric. All funding must be for projects that haven't occurred.

Applicants are encouraged to book an appointment with the Economic Development Officer—Tourism prior to submitting their application to ensure they meet the eligibility for the program.

Funding decision

A staff committee will review all applications as they are received. Funding awards will be announced on an ongoing basis. Successful applicants will be contacted directly with award notifications.

Applications approved for funding through the Gather Here Sponsorship Fund will require the successful applicant to enter into a legal funding agreement with the City of Guelph and Destination Marketing Guelph. The agreement will outline provisions on how sponsorship funding will be provided and the reporting requirements.

If reporting requirements are not met within three months of the final day of the event's official program, the full amount of the funding award must be paid back.

All successful awards will be subject to the [Municipal Accommodation Tax Administration Policy](#).

Applicants are not permitted to apply for the City's Community Grant Program and the Gather Here Sponsorship Fund for the same project. Applicants who apply to both funding streams will be disqualified for funding for that year.

Reporting requirements

Successful applicants will be asked to report on the following within 3 months of the event:

- How funds were spent (including copies of receipts and proof of payment)
- New partnerships created or existing partnerships enhanced
- Hotel room bookings as a result of the event. Goals for hotel stay metrics will be based on the amount of funding granted.
- Visitor reach (40km or further from Guelph)
- Overall attendance
- Feedback received from the event(s)
- Success stories from the project including photos

To ensure transparency and proper use of the grant funds, the applicant must submit detailed reports along with invoices that clearly outline how the funds were spent on the project. These reports should provide a comprehensive breakdown of all expenditures. Misuse of funding or utilizing funding on ineligible expenses will result in disqualification from future funding and applicants may be required to paid back the funding.

Definitions

For-profit business: A for-profit organization is one that operates with the goal of making money.

Major event: An event deemed to have a substantial visitor, economic, and reputational impact on Guelph may be given additional consideration for higher levels of funding, above and beyond the maximum \$25,000 offered through the Gather Here Sponsorship Fund. All major event applications must be submitted a minimum of 180 days prior to the start of the event. A major event must meet the following criteria:

- Open to the public, accessible, and welcoming
- Ability to reach audiences nationally or internationally;
- Generates an audience of a minimum of 5,000 in-person attendees and participants;
- A demonstrated visitor (40km or further) audience of 50% or more;
- Generates a minimum 750 room/nights at accommodations collecting the Municipal Accommodation Tax in Guelph during the duration of the festival or event;
- Increases the reputation of Guelph through significant media coverage and economic benefits;
- Financially sustainable and does not rely on funding solely for event success;
- And the event must have been in operation for at least two years.

Major events will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Note: Meeting the criteria above is a minimum threshold for being considered a major event and as a result, not all events that meet the criteria are guaranteed funding.

Non-profit organization: A non-profit organization, also known as a non-business entity, or nonprofit institution, is a legal entity organized and operated for a collective, public or social benefit, in contrary with an entity that operates as a business aiming to generate a profit for its owners.

Tourism event: An event that is focused on attracting 30% or more of its overall attendance to be visitors from 40 kilometres or further away.

Specialty visitor-focused retail: A business or organization that offers a product that is not readily available in all communities. Examples include but are not limited to: wedding dresses, thrift stores, souvenir shops, etc.

Tourism product: A tourism product is considered any product, service, event or offering that appeals to a visitor.

Visitor: A visitor is considered anyone who visits Guelph from more than 40 kilometers away who is not making a routine trip.

Supporting documentation

Destination Animation Fund Application Form

Appendix A – Budget document

Appendix B – Attestation Cover Letter

Contact information

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