



Stratford Destination Development Fund Celebrates 11 Years - Applications Now Open for Arts & Culture Initiatives

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(STRATFORD, ON) Now entering into its 11th year, the 2026/27 Stratford Destination Development Fund (DDF) will prioritize impactful and innovative destination development projects in Stratford with an emphasis on initiatives that are year-round or occur during the shoulder and winter seasons. Eligible projects will take place from April 1, 2026 through March 31, 2027.

The Stratford Destination Development Fund was established with investment from [Regional Tourism Organization 4 \(RT04\)](#), [Downtown Stratford BIA](#) and [Destination Stratford](#) to enable and support experiential projects that are highly shareable and have high impact on the destination. The selected projects directly align with Stratford's cultural DNA and will strengthen the experiences and storytelling opportunities for both residents and visitors.

"Stratford's story is one that evolves with the seasons, offering new reasons to visit, explore, and connect year-round," said Zac Gribble, Executive Director of Destination Stratford. *"Through the Destination Development Fund, we're investing in bold ideas and creative experiences that animate our streets, celebrate our culture, and draw visitors beyond the traditional peak months. By supporting year-round activity, we're not only enriching quality of life for residents, but also strengthening our local economy and shaping a more vibrant, resilient future for Stratford."*

Selected projects must reflect Stratford's distinct cultural identity while enhancing meaningful experiences and storytelling opportunities for both residents and visitors. The DDF partners continue to be inspired by the creativity and passion demonstrated in past applications and look forward to reviewing the innovative proposals for 2026/27.

“The Destination Development Fund is an important avenue to help kickstart activations, installations and events for residents and visitors to Stratford to share unique experiences, during the quieter times, when our local economy can use a bit of bolstering,” said Jamie Pritchard, General Manager, Downtown Stratford BIA. Pritchard went on to say *“during these times of tariffs and uncertainty it is very important to focus on building the local economy and this funding will help achieve that goal.”*

“The Stratford Destination Development Fund demonstrates what’s possible when partners align around a shared vision for sustainable, year-round tourism,” said Andrea Gardi, Executive Director, RTO4. *“By investing in innovative projects that reflect Stratford’s cultural identity and extend visitation beyond peak seasons, we’re helping to build a more resilient local economy and a destination that continues to thrive for residents and visitors alike.”*

The goals of the Stratford DDF include:

- Increase the number of high-quality visitor-focused experiences during the shoulder and winter seasons (may also include creative displays during Lights On Stratford).
- Provide opportunities for destination storytelling and visitor generated content creation.
- Strengthen the network of destination stakeholders taking an active role in our tourism future.

Organizations eligible for funding include:

- Tourism enterprises and businesses (as individual organizations or as a consortium) with interests in arts & culture, heritage, agri-culinary, sports, meetings & conventions, etc.

- Festivals and Events.
- For-profit or non-profit organizations.

Applicants can apply for a range of support for new tourism-related experiences, enhancements to existing tourism-related experiences (in-person or digital, projects that improve the visitor experience), and/or storytelling (capturing of content – photo/video and/or social media).

Individual applications can apply for funding from \$500 to \$10,000. Applicants are welcome to submit multiple applications for different projects.

The successful 2025 applications and projects included:

- Stratford Arts and Culture Collective – A Stratford Christmas 2025
- The Boathouse Stratford – Avon After Dark
- Stratford Winterfest – Stratford Winterfest 2026
- Stratford Film Festival – Film Festival & Monthly Film Series
- Stratford Concert Choir – The Big Sing Thing: The Music of The Beatles
- Stratford Summer Music – “Off-Season” Programming
- Stratford Perth Museum – Creatures of Light
- DigiWriting, Blue Moon Publishers and Heidi Sander – Poetic Art on the Move

[Applications are open until March 1, 2026 at 5:00 P.M.](#)

For more DDF details and to apply, please see visitstratford.ca/ddf.

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For more details contact hello@visitstratford.ca