STRATFORD DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT FUND CELEBRATES A DECADE OF SUPPORTING LOCAL ARTS AND CULTURE WITH A FOCUS ON SHOULDER AND WINTER SEASONS

For Immediate Release: March 18, 2025

(STRATFORD, ON) Now celebrating its 10th year, the 2025/26 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.

The Stratford Destination Development Fund launched 10 years ago with investment from Destination Stratford, Regional Tourism Organization 4 (RT04) and Downtown Stratford BIA to support and enable experiential projects that are shareable and leave a lasting impact on the destination.

"*Stratford is renowned as a cultural destination during the summer months, but the city also provides a rich array of exceptional experiences year-round*," said Zac Gribble, Executive Director, Destination Stratford. "*The Destination Development Fund is committed to unlocking fresh opportunities, particularly in the shoulder and winter seasons, that enrich the lives of both locals and visitors. We're excited to support our community's innovative ideas and projects that help elevate and celebrate Stratford's cultural scene*."

Selected projects must align with Stratford's cultural essence, enhancing experiences and storytelling opportunities for both residents and visitors. DDF partners have been inspired by the passionate and innovative applications received in previous years and are excited to review the upcoming submissions for 2025/26.

"*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 onto 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 2025/26 goals of the Stratford DDF include:

- Expanding the availability of sustainable and exceptional cultural experiences (prioritizing, but not exclusive to, the shoulder and winter seasons), including creative displays and rich programming.
- Creating opportunities for destination storytelling and content.

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, and/or storytelling (capturing of content – photo/video and/or social media).

This program has an emphasis on projects that are year-round or occur during the shoulder and winter seasons.

Applications are open now through to May 1, 2025 (and on a rolling basis thereafter if not fully allocated). The minimum fund request is $500, and the maximum is $10,000.

APPLICATION FORM LAUNCHING MARCH 18, 2025

Last year's 2024 DDF received a positive response with 24 applications of which 10 cultural projects were selected. The successful 2024 applications included:

- Stratford Summer Music – Side-By-Side Series
- Provocation Ideas Festival – City of Dreamers
- Stratford Arts and Culture Collective – A Stratford Christmas 2024
- SpringWorks Festival – PuppetWorks! Cultural Activations
- Playmakers! Theatre School – Lantern Festival: Labrinth of the Seasons
- Stratford Film Festival
- Stratford Walking Tours – Historic and Hospitality
- Gallery Stratford – Malcolm Pate Exhibition
- Stratford Winter Film Festival
- Stratford Country Club – Glow Curling

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

~ 30 ~

Media Contact:
Zac Gribble
Destination Stratford,
Executive Director
519-271-5140
visitstratford.ca