

Guelph, Ont., Friday, February 22, 2018 – Regional Tourism Organization 4 Inc. (RTO4) partnered with the City of Guelph Culture, Tourism and Community Investment department are co-investing six projects totaling \$10,000 through the 2018 Guelph Destination Animation Strategic Co-investment Project. The 2018 Guelph Destination Animation Strategic Co-investment Project encouraged Guelph businesses, organizations and tourism stakeholders to apply for matched co-funding to create new or enhanced experiences for visitors and residents. The program focuses on enabling projects that are highly shareable and have high impact for Guelph.

A selection committee, comprised of local tourism stakeholders, was thrilled with the enthusiastic and creative responses and selected to co-invest six projects from a total of 13 applications submitted by festivals and events, tourism enterprises and local businesses.

“Creating shareworthy, high quality cultural moments throughout Guelph helps uncork visitor stories through word-of-mouth, and more importantly through social media” said Andrea Gardi Senior Project Manager at RTO4.

Over the past 18 months a group of engaged stakeholders have met in Guelph to work together to grow Guelph’s tourism economy through the DestinationNEXT process. The group of Guelph community leaders, tourism stakeholders, and municipal employees has aligned around the four priorities: stewarding the Guelph story, strengthening Guelph’s festivals and events reputation, building a downtown Guelph destination and investigating opportunities in sport tourism.

Aligning with the priorities and results of the strategy, the Destination Animation Strategic Co-Investment Opportunity was created to encourage Guelph businesses, organizations and tourism stakeholders to create new experiences for both visitors and residents.

“Investing in this project is such a win for our community,” said Stacey Dunnigan, Manager of culture and tourism for the City of Guelph. These new and exciting programs are good for tourism and good for our city.”

The successful applications selected for co-investment include:

Laughter is a shared experience that creates strong bonds. That is why The Making-Box is implementing the **Beyond Fun Run** project, an event guaranteed to bring laughter and togetherness for both residents and visitors participating in the 10 unique laps around the downtown core. Each circuit encourages the racers to move in unique ways, such as running a lap as if you are being chased by zombies or while singing your favourite 90’s pop song. This is the first race not to be judged on athleticism, but enthusiasm!

Guelph Film Festival and the County of Wellington's Taste Real program will stage **TasteReel**, a series of three food and film events taking place through the fall of 2018. Each month a film screening will take place at a restaurant thematically connected to the content of the film and the chef will speak before the film to discuss what they have prepared and how it relates to the film they are about to watch.

Taste Detours and Taste of Craft have developed **Eat Street: A Brewers Feast** project, which leverages Guelph's agricultural and culinary position to feature an al fresco five course dinner for 100, inspired by local craft breweries, cideries and distilleries, coupled with local chefs and local foods. Each curated dinner course and pairing will be introduced along with the stories of the inspiration, local food sources and enticing stories of Guelph culinary scenes.

Exhibition Park Neighbourhood Group's (ENPG) **Story Trail** project focuses on Guelph's rich history of contribution to the fabric of children's stories. In this project, the pages of a beautifully illustrated and thought-provoking children's book will form a path through Exhibition Park. You are invited to walk into the story, then create your response to it guided by the story's author/illustrator Garth Laidlaw. This, and other family friendly activities and entertainment, will be part of the EPNG's annual Creativity Picnic.

Silence and the Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory's **Art of Butterflies** project is a full-day event celebrating the butterfly featuring workshops, presentations, art exhibitions and a unique sensory experience by artist Nik Herron. Nik will animate a butterfly and through sound reactivity, allow viewers to animate the patterns on the wings.

Soulphyr Art's **Guelph Street Art Walk** experience is a series of interactive walking tours in Guelph's vibrant Downtown. Professional Urban Artist, Arthur Kerrey shares his experience to shed light on and tell the story of urban, street and found arts. Participants will also search for hidden gems, make statements, leave messages and try their hand at graffiti of the legal kind, including a take home art piece.

The experiences and events will be launched throughout 2018.

For more information, and the application visit <http://animationfund.ca>

For questions or more information, contact Andrea Gardi at andrea@rto4.ca or by phone at 519-271-7000 ext. 205.