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The implementation of this initiative is made possible through the financial contribution of the Government of Québec, via the Ministère du Tourisme.



Promoter's guide

Development of maritime cruises to Québec

April 2026





Mandate and objectives

The purpose of this guide is to present the terms and conditions for submitting a business partnership proposal to organizations interested in contributing to the development of direct maritime links to Québec.

Mandate entrusted to the Alliance

The Ministère du Tourisme (MTO) has entrusted the Alliance de l'industrie touristique du Québec (Alliance) with the mandate to support the development of direct maritime links to Québec.

Term

Until March 31, 2028

Collaboration

As part of this mandate, Alliance works in close collaboration with **the Cruise the Saint Lawrence Association**.

Objectives

1. Increase competitiveness and tourism-related economic benefits;
2. Support sustainable and better-distributed growth;
3. Mobilize the ecosystem and partners.

Expected actions

Alliance must, among other things:

- Support the development of business plans intended for maritime carriers;
- Support outreach and business development activities with maritime carriers;
- Support the implementation of promotional campaigns aimed at marketing cruises sailing directly to Québec ports;
- Implement incentives aimed at increasing the attractiveness of maritime services offered to Québec ports;
- Implement incentives aimed at ensuring the maintenance and recovery of maritime links from non-Québec destinations experiencing difficulties.



Program objectives and general approach



PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Support the development of new cruises based on an analysis of tourism potential.

Increase the development of new cruises based on tourism potential analysis

Increase the operating period of existing cruises

Increase passenger capacity through the deployment of new vessels

Increase the frequency of existing cruises



Types of possible interventions

1



Support for the **development of a business plan** aimed at prospecting new cruise services, stabilizing or consolidating the volume of existing cruise operations.

This component is intended for ports.

2



Support for the establishment of a **business risk management fund** for cruise companies.

This component is intended for cruise companies, in collaboration with participating ports.

3



Support for the establishment of a **marketing fund** dedicated to launching new cruises (or stabilizing existing seasonal cruises).

This component is intended for a consortium of partners co-financing the market launch of a new cruise



A



How to submit a project & eligible promoters

Submission of a business proposal

Promoters must submit an electronic presentation document (PDF) via the project submission form.

Eligible partners

To be eligible, the promoter or group of partners must:

- Be an actor in the maritime tourism sector (e.g., ports, cruise companies);
- Offer or plan to offer an international maritime service to or from Québec ports;
- Be legally constituted.

Alliance reserves the right to refuse any proposal from a partner or group that has failed to meet previous partnership commitments.

Non-eligible partners

Not eligible for support under the program :

- Québec or Canadian government ministries and agencies;
- Companies controlled directly or indirectly by a provincial or federal government;
- Companies majority-owned by a Crown corporation;
- Companies under creditor protection or bankruptcy legislation;
- Companies registered in the Register of Enterprises Ineligible for Public Contracts (RENA);
- Companies that have defaulted on obligations related to prior financial assistance in the past two years





Three components for project submission

B

Call for business partnerships through project hosting

Projects may be submitted year-round; spontaneous business opportunities will be assessed using the same selection criteria.

Component 1

Business plan development

Intended for ports

Support for preparing business plan for soliciting cruise companies

Support rate :
50 % | maximum 25 000 \$

Component 2

Risk management fund

Intended for cruises companies, in collaboration with ports

Funds for actions such as guaranteeing minimum revenue (not profit) or incentives to increase the number of cruises in Québec's ports.

Support rate : determined following full analysis of the business proposal

Component 3

Marketing fund

Intended to a partner consortiums (cruise companies, ports, DMOs, etc.)

Support for launching new cruises (or stabilizing seasonal cruises)

Support rate : up to 40 % or 200,000 \$ based on a multi-partner financial arrangement

A business partnership project may combine all three components.





General business rules of the program



Eligible business partnership projects

may cover :

- the development of new cruises
- the extension of the operating period of existing cruises
- the deployment of new vessels to increase the capacity of passengers
- increase in the frequency of existing cruises

Types of funding

- Funding is available for the three types of initiatives listed in section B.
- A project may apply to all three components.

Eligible ports

- The funding is available to ports receiving international cruises.
- The ports must have the capacity to receive the cruises.

Target clients

- Eligible partnerships aim to develop leisure and business tourism to Québec.
- Projects without a significant inbound component (e.g., “sun destinations” or transit-only routes) are not eligible.

Multi-port cruises

- For comparable proposals, projects offering multiple port calls in Québec will be prioritized

Sustainable development

Business partnerships will aim, among other things, to:

- Support cruise services with long-term viability;
- Improve accessibility to Québec regions;
- Stimulate year-round tourism across Québec;
- Demonstrate consideration for potential greenhouse gas (GHG) compensation

Existing and Profitable Routes

- Any proposal must clearly demonstrate that the contribution of the fund is necessary for the realization of the business project, given the level of potential risk involved.
- Business partnership proposals for routes that have already been implemented, or that would be implemented regardless by the cruise company without financial support from the fund, will not be accepted.
- Cruise services that are already profitable are not eligible.

Project submission – cruise potential

- Business partnership proposals submitted must demonstrate the potential of the proposed cruise, including a supporting rationale and an analysis of the proportion of potential tourists.





General business rules of the program



Other Considerations

- Any cruise company, whether Canadian or foreign, may submit a business partnership project.
- For comparable proposals, projects submitted by promoters whose head office is in Québec will be given priority, based on the indirect and incremental economic benefits generated for Québec.

Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses are those incurred directly by promoters to fulfill the commitments set out in the business partnership agreements. Eligible expenses include:

- Compensation for personnel directly associated with project implementation, including employee benefits;
- Professional fees paid to legal or natural persons for specific tasks or services related to project delivery;
- Expenses directly related to promotion, packaging and commercialization activities of the targeted tourism offering under the agreement;
- Costs related to acquiring and developing knowledge as part of the activities covered by the agreement

Non eligible expenses

Expenses not eligible for use of the grant include those that are not necessary or directly related to the completion of the project, namely:

- Compensation for regular staff performing routine activities;
- Capital expenditures, such as infrastructure development, acquisition of rolling stock or real estate, or building renovations;
- Administrative expenses related to the partner's regular activities or general operations;
- Any actions already funded under an agreement concluded between the Government of Québec and the partner.

Alliance-promoter contractual agreement

Once selected, all business partnerships with Alliance will be formalized through an agreement, which will include, where applicable, the following obligations:

- Assume agreed-upon responsibilities and measure project outcomes in accordance with the parameters set out in the agreement concluded with the Alliance;

- Collaborate with the Alliance's team to create synergies in marketing and commercialization efforts;
- Use the Bonjour Québec brand, where applicable, in compliance with guidelines issued by the Minister through Alliance;
- Work with the Destination Québec Offices (DQOs/BDQ), whose services are retained by Alliance in markets outside Québec;
- Provide Alliance with any information required in connection with concluded business partnerships to meet its reporting obligations. Reporting requirements are detailed in the agreement concluded between Alliance and its partners.

The partner or group of partners will be subject to all obligations set out above, and written acceptance of these obligations is required to conclude a business partnership agreement.



D



Consideration of sustainable development principles

Stratégie de croissance durable du Tourisme
2025-2030

Sustainable Development Measures

The promoter must demonstrate that they have considered the major principles of sustainable development, in addition to acting in a manner consistent with the orientations of the Sustainable Tourism Growth Strategy 2025–2030.

This may include, among others:

1. Reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions

- For example, all other factors being equal, the program will favour a route operated by a vessel with lower fuel consumption.

2. Water Protection

The promoter may provide information on wastewater treatment systems onboard the vessel used.

3. Regional economic development and seasonality

- The economic contribution generated by international tourist spending must benefit Québec regions more broadly, and Québec must continue to develop year-round tourism;
- For example, cruise services operated on an annual basis will be given priority;
- For comparable proposals, the program will give priority to projects that offer complementary cruise connections to Québec regions.

4. Long-term viability of cruises

- The long-term viability of cruises developed under the program will be an important sustainable development criterion considered during the analysis.



Contact information



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