

APPLICATION GUIDE

FONDS D'INITIATIVES NORDIQUES
2023-2028

Société du Plan Nord

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Promoter's Guide: Fonds d'initiatives nordiques

Should you have questions concerning the call for projects, please contact the Société du Plan Nord's advisors at the office closest to your community.

Côte-Nord	Caniapiscou / Golfe-Saint-Laurent Ms. Annie Bussières Phone: 418-960-1805, ext. 66454 Toll-free: 1-855-214-9807, ext. 66454 Email: annie.bussieres@spn.gouv.qc.ca Ms. Julie David Telephone: 418 960-1805, ext. 66457 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, ext. 66457 Email: julie.david@spn.gouv.qc.ca Manicouagan: Ms. Annie Bussières Phone: 418-960-1805, ext. 66454 Toll-free: 1-855-214-9807, ext. 66454 Email: annie.bussieres@spn.gouv.qc.ca	Sept-Rivières and Minganie Mr Joé Fontaine Telephone: 418 960-1805, ext. 66433 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, ext. 66433 Email: joe.fontaine@spn.gouv.qc.ca Ms. Soazig Le Breton Telephone: 418 960-1805, ext. 66482 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, ext. 66482 Email: soazig.lebreton@spn.gouv.qc.ca
Nord-du-Québec	Eeyou Istchee Baie-James Ms. Mélanie Leblanc Telephone: 418 781-2200, ext. 66466 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, ext. 66466 Email: melanie.leblanc@spn.gouv.qc.ca Ms. Alexandra Trudel Telephone: 418 781-2200, poste 66507 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, poste 66507 Email: alexandra.trudel@spn.gouv.qc.ca Ms. Joanie Gosselin Telephone: 418 781-2200, ext. 66496 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, ext. 66496 Email: joanie.gosselin@spn.gouv.qc.ca Ms. Charlotte Rullac Telephone: 418 781-2200, ext. 66558 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, ext. 66558 Email: charlotte.rullac@spn.gouv.qc.ca	Nunavik Ms. Joanie Gosselin Telephone: 418 781-2200, ext. 66496 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, ext. 66496 Email: joanie.gosselin@spn.gouv.qc.ca Ms. Alexandra Trudel Telephone: 418 781-2200, poste 66507 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, poste 66507 Email: alexandra.trudel@spn.gouv.qc.ca
Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean	Mr Serge Tremblay Telephone: 418 643-1874, ext. 66435 Toll-free: 1 855 214-9807, ext. 66435 Email: serge.tremblay@spn.gouv.qc.ca	

1. FONDS D'INITIATIVES NORDIQUES

The Société du Plan Nord's (SPN) mission is to contribute to the integrated and holistic development of Québec's northern territory guided by sustainable development practices. It does so according to government orientations and in consultation with relevant regional representatives, Indigenous communities, and the private sector.

As part of its mission, the SPN supports several financial tools that contribute directly to the government's objective of "Living in the North." These financial tools support various projects about entrepreneurship, the environment and conservation of the Territory, strategic infrastructure building, workforce training and food security. You can find more information on Québec.ca: <https://www.quebec.ca/gouvernement/politiques-orientations/developpement-territoire-nordique/aide-financiere>.

The SPN's Fonds d'initiatives nordiques (hereinafter "Fund") is a financial assistance program that seeks to recognize and support diversified economic, social, and environmental projects north of the 49th parallel. This financial tool is tailored to northern communities' needs. It is designed to support northern organizations and businesses while contributing to the Territory's sustainable development.

1.1. Objectives

With a focus on sustainable development, the Fund supports priority projects by partners to promote community development and well-being.

In keeping with the northern environment, the Fund aims to promote:

- Community development;
- Northern territory enhancement;
- Science-based solutions.

1.2. Eligibility criteria

1.2.1. Territory

The Program is intended for projects or initiatives in Quebec north of the 49th parallel, north of the St. Lawrence and north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence (hereinafter « Territory »).

In exceptional cases, projects outside the Territory may be supported if they benefit northern communities and businesses. Where applicable, promoters must demonstrate that the project's location is appropriate.

1.2.2. Eligible clientele

The Fund's eligible clienteles are:

- incorporated non-profit organizations (NPOs);
- cooperatives whose activities are like those of a non-profit organization;
- municipalities, regional county municipalities and municipal bodies¹;
- Indigenous communities and their band council;
- northern village corporations, northern villages, and Inuit landholding corporations;
- mutual organizations whose activities are like those of a non-profit;
- learning establishments recognized by the ministère de l'Éducation and the ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, only for projects supporting research and knowledge sharing;
- businesses that are legally established in Quebec or Canada, as well as cooperatives, whose activities are similar, only for social development infrastructure projects.

1.2.3. Eligible projets

A project is an initiative of limited duration, one-off and non-recurring nature. It differs from the organization's operational activities.

Eligible projects must fall within one of the following categories:

- Services for the population ;
- Environmental conservation and climate change mitigation;
- Socio-economic diversification;
- Knowledge acquisition or study;
- Education and worker training projects other than those eligible for the [Programme de formation de la main-d'œuvre en milieu nordique](#);
- Symposiums, specialty shows, conventions, conferences, or networking events;
- Research and knowledge-sharing initiatives in the northern territory:
 - Research projects must be strongly supported by communities and involve local organizations;
 - When a recognized educational establishment submits the project, projects must respond to needs identified by local organizations;

- Social development infrastructure:

Definition: A social development infrastructure is the set of structures that make up a permanent building or set of facilities. It must seek to reduce or alleviate social inequalities within the target community. By "social inequalities," we mean that the project could aim to improve the health and well-being of specific populations, alleviate poverty, provide quality education, promote gender equality, encourage social inclusion and develop or maintain essentials services in the community. A social development infrastructure targets a large segment of the population or must benefit local stakeholders.

For private businesses and cooperatives with similar activities, social development infrastructure projects should also increase access to local services and meet essential needs for the community or employees and promote corporate social responsibility.

When a project falls under a government department or body's purview, SPN's analysts will automatically request a notice of relevance from the appropriate department or body.

¹ In this document, the term regional county municipalities also includes l'Administration régionale Baie-James, the Kativik Regional Government, the Cree Nation Government, and the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government.

1.2.4. Ineligible projects

- Recurring projects: a project is deemed recurring if it has received funding in at least one of the three years prior to the application or if it lacks any innovation or novelty;
- Projects that run counter to government policy;
- Projects that were completed or launched before the application submission date;
- Projects of an individual person;
- Projects of organizations registered with the Registre des entreprises non admissibles aux contrats publics (RENA);
- Projects from applicants who have failed to meet their obligations after having been duly given formal notice in respect of previous financial assistance granted by a ministry or granting agency over the two years preceding the application for financial assistance;
- Municipal infrastructure²;
- Projects whose finance package already includes an SPN program;
- Festivals.

The Société du Plan Nord reserves the right to require the promoter to provide contract-awarding terms and conditions.

1.2.5. Eligible costs and expenses

Eligible expenses are the costs or expenses directly related to the project, for example:

- Required project operating costs, including salaries³ and other remuneration, as well as occasional rent;
- Equipment acquisition or rental costs;
- Professional fees;
- Capital expenditures;
- Plans and studies production costs;
- Travel and living expenses⁴;
- Administrative expenses⁵.

The Société du Plan Nord reserves the right to require the promoter to provide contract awarding terms and conditions. When the project calls for activities incurring professional fees, the SPN reserves the right to ask the promoter to submit at least two service offers (bids).

1.2.6. Ineligible costs and expenses

- Entertainment expenses, gifts, rewards and sponsorships;
- Expenses related to the purchase of any motor vehicle that can be registered;
- Expenses relating to a completed project;
- Expenses incurred before the project submission date;
- Reimbursed expenses eligible for another form of reimbursement, such as tax refunds;

² The entire array of equipment and facilities, such as roads and water and sewer systems, that are required for a municipality's basic mission.

³ The fringe benefits rate must be equal to or less than 17% for wages.

⁴ Subject to government rates.

⁵ Must not exceed 15% of the total project cost. Justification may be required.

- Expenses related to a project that runs counter to established government policy, legislation or regulations;
- Expenses intended to satisfy legislative or regulatory requirements;
- An organization or business's deficit or debt payment;
- Recurrent expenditure⁶;
- Working capital;
- Expenditure relating to renovation or improvement work of any kind linked to the routine or deficient maintenance of a building or existing infrastructure (e.g. roofing, doors and windows, exterior cladding, earthworks, etc.), except in cases where the project meets a fundamental and specific community need that is demonstrated by the promoter;
- Expenditure planned for after March 31, 2028.

1.2.7. Complementarity with existing programs

The financing offer must be complementary to community contributions and other existing programs. The applicant must demonstrate that a search for complementary funding has been carried out. The term "complementary funding search" refers to a minimum approach to at least one of the relevant federal or provincial departments and agencies offering a program that allows the project to be eligible, as well as to at least one local or regional organization.

2. FUNDS AVAILABLE AND FUNDING LIMIT

2.1. Financial commitments

Financial commitments will be limited to the allotted budget and subject to available annual appropriations.

- Maximum authorized financial assistance is \$100,000, except for social development infrastructure projects, for which the maximum authorized financial assistance is \$500,000.

2.2. Calculating public funding

The maximum public financial support rate⁷ is:

- 50% of private projects' eligible costs;
- 90% of public projects' eligible costs.

The applicant or community must contribute at least 10% of eligible costs. Contributions in kind are accepted, subject to submitting a justifying rationale for said contribution.

⁶ Expenses, excluding salaries, that the organization must pay for its basic operations, regardless of the volume of its activities (e.g. rent, Internet, telephone).

⁷ See Appendix A for additional information.

3. PROJECT SELECTION

3.1. Required information for application review

Every received project will first be screened for eligibility. This analysis covers both the applicant and the project. The following criteria must be met:

- Applicant must detail the project's needs and provide all required information for application review;
- The project must be submitted before the application submission deadline;
- All required documents must be included in the application;
- All mandatory sections of the form have been completed;
- The promoter is included in the eligible clientele;
- The project has never received funding under an SPN program;
- The combined government assistance authorized by the Fund is observed;
- The demonstration of a search for additional funding, which includes at least a minimal approach to engaging with one local or regional governance structure and a federal or provincial ministry or agency;
- The application complies with the maximum financial assistance authorized;

Projects that do not meet all these criteria will be deemed ineligible.

Additionally, the application must include at least the following information:

- Applicant's contact details, including the name and number entered in the Quebec Enterprise Register (NEQ) if applicable,
- Project location, address and contact details of the project contact person,
- Justification for the project's location if it is taking place outside the Territory,
- Written evidence demonstrating the search for complementarity (see section 1.2.7.),
- Project costs and funding breakdown, including details of planned funding sources,
- Copy of the applicant's most recent financial report.

Projects that do not meet all these mandatory criteria will be deemed ineligible during the analysis.

3.2. Project selection criteria

A selection committee will assess eligible projects according to the Program's analysis and sustainable development criteria (the economic, social, and environmental sections) stipulated in **Appendix B**.

As part of the implementation of the [Politique d'intégration du bois en construction](#) (Policy for the use of wood in construction), the Société du Plan Nord works in collaboration with the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts to promote the use of wood in the construction of buildings and civil engineering structures and addition to these for which it provides financial support. Accordingly, the grille d'évaluation de l'utilisation du bois (wood use evaluation grid) in the preliminary phase must be sent to the Société prior to the recommendation for the promise of financial support for the project. Since this attestation is produced at the project planning stage, it does not need to be submitted at the time of application.

For projects using a wooden or hybrid (wood and other materials) main structure, the professional responsible for designing the plans and specifications must certify that the project will be carried out using such a structure.

A comparative assessment of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the manufacture of the building's structural materials, using the Gestimat tool, is required at the preliminary stage and at the completed project stage if the project is accepted.

4. PROJECT PRESENTATION AND SUBMISSION

4.1. Application Form

Promoters must complete the financial assistance application form, signed and dated. It is available on Québec.ca : <https://www.quebec.ca/en/government/policies-orientations/northern-territory-development/financial-support/northern-initiatives>.

4.2. Project submission

The following documents must be submitted to the SPN:

- Financial assistance form, completed, signed and dated;
- Copy of the most recent financial report of the applicant organization;
- Copy of the resolution of the board of directors authorizing the applicant to submit projects and to sign agreements;
- Written evidence of the search for complementarity (see section 1.2.7);
- Commitment letters from project partners, when applicable;
- Any other document deemed to be relevant to the project's assessment.

The documents can be submitted:

- By email: fin@spn.gouv.qc.ca
- by regular mail:*

Fonds d'initiatives nordiques
Société du Plan Nord
900 René-Lévesque Boulevard East, suite 720
Québec (Québec) G1R 2B5

The postmark will serve as evidence of the submission date.

4.3. Call for projects calendar

Call Calendar	Call for project launch	Project submission deadline
1 st call for projects	Close	Close
2 nd call for projects	Close	Close
3 rd call for projects	Close	Close
4 th call for projects	Close	Close
5 th call for projects	August 19, 2026	September 16, 2026

*** This calendar is subject to change. Please refer to the most up-to-date version of this guide on Québec.ca.**

5. AGREEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A financial assistance agreement between the SPN and the promoter will detail obligations created by the Act. The agreement will detail disbursement procedures, financial assistance grant terms and conditions, and the accountability process.

For each payment, the promoter must produce an activity and utilization report in keeping with the deadlines stipulated in the financing agreement.

A report must be submitted containing at least the following to receive final payment:

- A detailed description of the project and the activities carried out through the financial assistance including royalty-free photos (if applicable);
- Project total cost, including each of its activities;
- The sources of funding as well as the amounts received and to be received for the full implementation of the project;
- Total jobs created when applicable;
- An appendix containing supporting documents for authorized expenses and a detailed financial report on project expenses);
- A report on the project's impact vis-à-vis stated sustainable development criteria.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The SPN is subject to the Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and protecting personal information (CQLR, chapter A-2.1).

The financial assistance agreement between the SPN and the promoter will specify the obligations created by the Act.

The SPN may use all provided information for research, evaluation, study, inquiry, statistical or cost forecasting purposes.

Appendix A: Calculating public funding

The total financial assistance amount, whether direct or indirect, received from Québec and Canadian government departments, agencies and Crown corporations, including tax credits, as well as from municipal entities that are not direct beneficiaries of the Program, must not exceed 90% of eligible expenses for public projects and 50% for private projects.

To calculate the public financial assistance stacking rate, the term "municipal entities" refers to the municipal bodies included in section 5 of the *Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information* (CQLR, chapter A-2.1).

The assets referred to in subparagraph 1 of the first paragraph of section 89 of the *Act to establish the regional government of Eeyou Istchee Baie-James* (R.S.Q., chapter G 1.04) are not considered in this standard's cumulative rule.

For aggregation calculation purposes, all financial assistance granted by a public body must be calculated at 100% of its value, whether repayable or not.

When the public financial assistance cumulative rate amounts to less than 100% of eligible expenditure, a minimum contribution from the beneficiary or a non-public partner is required to ensure that the government's financial assistance does not cover the project's entire eligible expenditure.

In addition, financial assistance from the Business Development Bank of Canada, Farm Credit Canada and the Financière agricole du Québec will be considered private contributions if they offer no advantage, i.e., when agreed on market terms.

Appendix B: Sustainable development criteria

Possible initiatives are provided for each sustainable development criterion for information purposes and to help you target those that apply to your project. Please contact the Société du Plan Nord's advisors if you have questions concerning the criteria.

Economic Section	
Criterion 1: Generates economic returns for northern communities	
Possible initiatives	- Enhances collective wealth and promotes commercial businesses as well as local services creation and maintenance - Supports local procurement and sound business relationships - Enhances job quality or promotes job creation
Criterion 2: Supports entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship	
Possible initiatives	- Involves stakeholders in project management - Encourages entrepreneurial action within the organization - Promotes an entrepreneurial culture within the organization and at the regional level - Promotes organizational improvement in management and administration capacity - Promotes innovation as well as local and regional economic diversification
Criterion 3: Promotes innovation and local and regional economic diversification	
Possible initiatives	- Optimizes the innovation potential, diversifies options and promotes innovative solution implementation - Allows for the development of an area of activity that is promising for the community - Aims to diversify, modernize and innovate - Enables the region, the organization, or the business to access or develop new markets - Supports emerging, innovative and sustainable economic models, such as circular economy, green economy, low-carbon economy, fair trade and social economy
Criterion 4: Demonstrates economic viability and sustainability	
Possible initiatives	- Demonstrates budget control and control of project-related risks - Considers costs and impacts throughout the product life cycle (e.g. manufacturing, processing, transport, sale, disposal) - Demonstrates the project's long-term profitability and viability and, where appropriate, the revenue that it will generate
Criterion 5: Makes provision for partner and funding complementarity from a financial leverage perspective	
Possible initiatives	- Enables the pooling of available financial resources and optimizes their utilization - Limits the project's repercussions on competing local businesses by fostering complementarity in terms of activities, industries, circuits, or businesses

Social Section	
Criterion 6: Improving northern communities' health and quality of life	
Possible initiatives	• Leads to a change in lifestyle habits and behaviour • Helps improve communities' quality of life by reducing poverty, improving health and increasing access to local services • Improves individual and community safety by mitigating risks
Criterion 7: Includes targeted public engagement and involvement and support from local, regional or government bodies	
Possible initiatives	• Complies with local planning documents, territorial orientations, or needs expressed and the community's distinctive nature • Enhances collaboration and the development of regional strengths • Relies on community adherence to the project or enhances its social acceptability • Fosters stakeholder participation by clearly determining when participation must and can occur • Demonstrates local governance
Criterion 8: Promotes equity, inclusion and social solidarity and meets a local need	
Possible initiatives	• Creates means to foster newcomers' cultural integration • Reduces repercussions on certain vulnerable social groups, mainly by providing broader access to certain services • Promotes involvement and highlights personal and collective achievement • Fosters social cohesion by bolstering the values of respect, solidarity, and openness through group activities in developing collective projects • It is designed to promote intra- and inter-generational equity
Criterion 9: Preserves or highlights cultural heritage	
Possible initiatives	• Promotes the North's diversity in terms of cultures and attractions, such as cultural sites and built heritage • Considers repercussions on local cultures and, where appropriate, proposes mitigation measures. • Promotes availability, accessibility, diversity, or development of cultural heritage, such as heritage and natural sites, traditions, and ancestral knowledge • Highlights cultural practices • Promotes cultural expression and the use of traditional languages • Promotes cultural contact for as many people as possible
Criterion 10: Fosters knowledge through research, experimentation and knowledge acquisition and sharing	
Possible initiatives	• Plans to make available to other organizations knowledge acquired throughout the projects • Integrates monitoring and research activities to continuously improve projects • Bolsters knowledge and skills acquisition by involved stakeholders • Disseminates outcomes in plain language • Improves access to quality educational processes

Environmental Section	
Criterion 11: Reduce waste production and manage reusable consumption	
Possible initiatives	• Promotes pooling for optimal resource utilization • Apply the 4-R approach (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover) • Reduces landfill waste • Limits pollutants (land, air, water, light, noise) • Utilizes environmentally-friendly resources
Criterion 12: Promotes environmental protection and biodiversity conservation	
Possible initiatives	• Describes the project's impact on land, agricultural, forest, maritime, and riparian environments • Preserves essential life-sustaining resources without damaging the ecosystem (carrying capacity of the environment) • Positively impacts local ecosystems • Promotes environmental and biodiversity conservation • Protects rare, threatened, endangered and symbolic species • Uses a methodology that is tailored to northern environments (research projects)
Criterion 13: Provides for mitigation measures and monitoring mechanisms to offset repercussions on biodiversity and ecosystems	
Possible initiatives	• Implements remedial or risk and impact mitigation measures • Includes a project environmental risk management plan • Possesses the organizational reaction capacity to reduce risks or remediate damage • Takes preventive action in the event of a known or potential risk • Applies the polluter pays principle • Makes provision for rehabilitating and preventative measures costs
Criterion 14: Incorporates climate adaptation and mitigation measures	
Possible initiatives	• Adopts the best short-, medium- and long-term climate change adaptation practices • Strengthens community resilience to climate change • Quantifies and reduces greenhouse gases (GHGs) • Offsets GHGs by increasing carbon sinks through voluntary or regulatory action, such as tree planting, buying emission credits on carbon markets, etc. • Adopts energy sources, technologies, processes, and logistics chains that generate the least pollution and GHG • Favours wood materials
Criterion 15: Carries activities according to the best environmental practices and promotes sustainable development initiatives	
Possible initiatives	• Enhances formal sustainable development initiatives • Purchases goods and services that improve employees' working conditions • Reduces energy consumption • Improves waste management • Raises awareness and educates the public on the critical relationship between people and the environment