

Company: General Directorate of Identity & Foreigners Affairs-Dubai- United Arab Emirates
Company Description: The General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs - Dubai is the agency of the Dubai Government that regulates the residency of foreign nationals and the entry and exit of international travelers to and from the Emirate of Dubai. GDRFA has more than 5000 employees spread across 8 main sectors all of them aiming to deliver specific objectives for the organization.

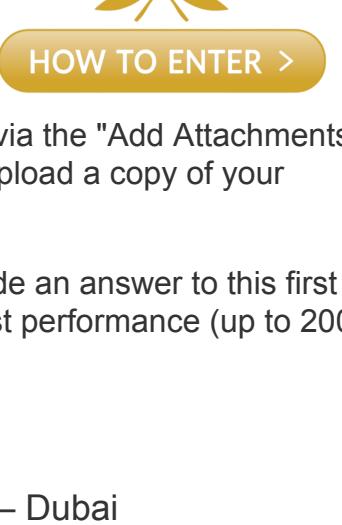
Nomination Category: Achievement Categories

Nomination Sub Category: Achievement in Collaboration and Partnership - Best Public-Private Partnership

Nomination Title: Transforming Maritime Entry Operations through the Digital Maritime Agent (AI Wakeel Al Malahi) Project.

1. Which will you submit for your nomination in this category, a video of up to five (5) minutes in length about the achievements of the nominated organization since 1 January 2023, OR written answers to the questions for this category? (Choose one):

Written answers to the questions



HOW TO ENTER >

2. If you are submitting a video of up to five (5) minutes in length, provide the URL of the nominated video here, OR attach it to your entry via the "Add Attachments, Videos, or Links to This Entry" link above, through which you may also upload a copy of your video.
3. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this first question: Briefly describe the nominated organization: its history and past performance (up to 200 words):

Total 186 words used.

The General Directorate of Identity and Foreigners Affairs – Dubai (GDRFA Dubai) is a leading government entity responsible for managing residency, entry, and exit services in the Emirate of Dubai. With a legacy rooted in innovation, security, and customer-centric service, GDRFA has consistently embraced cutting-edge technologies to enhance border control operations and streamline immigration procedures.

One of its most impactful initiatives is the Digital Maritime Agent (AI Wakeel Al Malahi) project, developed to address longstanding challenges in managing maritime crew entry—particularly for traditional wooden vessels. Many crew members, often elderly and non-digitally literate, faced difficulties with communication and manual documentation. The absence of formal maritime entry protocols further complicated the process.

Through strategic partnerships with private maritime agents and key government entities—including Dubai Customs, National Security, and the Ports & Free Zone Authority—GDRFA Dubai pioneered a smart, secure, and collaborative system. This initiative introduced automation, advanced pre-arrival screening via APIs, multilingual translation tools, and tailored visa types, drastically reducing paperwork and enhancing compliance.

Today, the system stands as a model of digital transformation and partnership, positioning Dubai as a global leader in smart maritime border management.

4. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this second question: Outline the organization's achievements since the beginning of 2022 that you wish to bring to the judges' attention (up to 250 words):

Total 235 words used.

Since early 2023, GDRFA Dubai has implemented a major digital transformation in the maritime sector through the full rollout of the **Wakeel Al Malahi (Maritime Agent) System**. Originating from internal insights and developed in the Innovation Lab, this project aligns with UAE national strategies and has transformed how wooden ships and their crews enter Dubai—a process once manual, paper-based, and high-risk.

Today, all data related to the vessel, captain, and crew is submitted electronically **72 hours before arrival**. Through **API integration**, **National Security** performs early data clearance, and approvals are issued **prior to docking**. Final permits are distributed digitally by the agent.

Notable achievements:

- **Visa diversity** supporting various types:
 1. 96-hour transit (Type 15)
 2. 180-day multi-entry for yachts (Type 14) and tourist crews (Type 17)
 3. Government missions (Types 89, 90, 19)
 4. Specialized work permits (Types 7 & 2)
 5. Cruise visa (Type 62)

- **Processing time cut** from 45+ days to <15

- **Full automation:** 5 pilot cases completed without manual steps

- **Digital MoU signed** with Ports, Customs, and Free Zone Authority

- **72 staff trained and certified** on the system

- **Customer satisfaction** improved from 88% (2022) to 96% (2023)

- **Infrastructure expanded** with new wooden vessel docks in Deira and Shindagha

Strategic partnerships activated:

1. **Wakeel Malahy** – data coordination

2. **Dubai Customs** – permits/inspections

3. **National Security** – data vetting

4. **Border Guard** – frontline clearance

This project created a scalable smart-port model while preserving the cultural and operational realities of maritime trade.

5. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this third question: Explain why the achievements you have highlighted are unique or significant. If possible compare the achievements to the performance of other players in your industry and/or to the organization's past performance (up to 250 words):

Total 241 words used.

What makes this initiative truly unique is that Dubai is the first in the region and possibly globally to fully digitize the maritime entry process for wooden vessels and their crews through a pre-arrival smart system. This alone sets the project apart from standard global practices, where manual processes, document stamping, and physical inspections still dominate. Compared to neighboring countries, where vessel crews are processed through multiple disconnected checkpoints (offloading, customs, and immigration handled separately), Dubai has created a unified journey handled through Wakeel Al Malahy as a single digital entry point from data submission to permit issuance and security clearance. This centralized model drastically reduces congestion, time, and risk. Operationally, GDRFA implemented: Magnetized ID cards for crew instead of paper visas. Pre-arrival approval via API to National Security well ahead of global best practices. Paperless, audit friendly systems, improving transparency and sustainability. Continuous system updates post-launch, based on real time feedback. Performance metrics prove the model's excellence: Time-to-process reduced by over 60%. Customer satisfaction rose to 96%. Partner satisfaction reached 100%. Yearly transactions increased beyond 100,000. Beyond security and efficiency, the project contributes to environmental sustainability, by eliminating paper, reducing waiting fuel emissions, and optimizing port movement. It enhances economic sustainability by attracting more maritime traffic and streamlining trade entry. Ultimately, GDRFA has established itself not only as a regional leader but as a global reference for maritime digital transformation.

6. You have the option to answer this final question: Reference any attachments of supporting materials throughout this nomination and how they provide evidence of the claims you have made in this nomination (up to 250 words):

Attachments/Videos/Links:

[Transforming Maritime Entry Operations through the Digital Maritime Agent \(AI Wakeel Al Malahi\) Project.](#)

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