



# Americas Competitiveness Exchange

**GATEWAY  
TO THE AMERICAS**

## **DEAR APPLICANT,**

The Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE) is going to Louisiana. The program will take place from March 26 to April 1, 2022, in the City and County of New Orleans, Acadia, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. We encourage you to apply and be part of this unique regional program designed for up to 50 top global and regional performers in economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurship. In ACE Louisiana, you will explore and engage first-hand with a diverse range of projects, strategic investments, public-private partnerships, and best practices from the region's innovation, economic, and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The State of Louisiana has long been home to adventurers, innovators, and tastemakers from across the globe. Louisianans also mean business and take pride in working as hard as they play, no matter what's thrown their way. Attendees of ACE Louisiana will visit and connect with innovation hubs, research centers, academic institutions, private sector partners, state and local governments, and nonprofit entities from key sites across the Gulf-coast State.

Created in 2014, ACE is the Premier Economic Development, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial Network of the Americas. It serves as a regional platform to boost international and regional partnerships, increase trade and investment, strengthen innovation and competitiveness, and foster inclusive economic development in the Americas and other regions.

The ACE is convened by the Organization of American States (OAS) as the InterAmerican Competitiveness Network (RIAC) Technical Secretariat; the Government of the United States, through the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) in coordination with the International Trade Administration (ITA); and the U.S. Department of State.

**Apply today to the #ACXchange!**

**The ACE Organizers**



## *TABLE OF CONTENT*

*// 01* THE AMERICAS COMPETITIVENESS EXCHANGE (ACE)

*// 02* THE ACE IN LOUISIANA

*// 03* PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS AND REQUIREMENTS

*// 04* LOGISTICS AND ESTIMATED BUDGET

*// 05* VISA INFORMATION

*// 06* SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

*// 07* WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION

*// 08* CONTACT INFORMATION



# 1. THE AMERICAS COMPETITIVENESS EXCHANGE (ACE) #ACXchange

The Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE) brings together up to 50 senior-level government, business, policy, and economic decision-makers from across the Americas and beyond to experience firsthand the diverse range of projects, strategic investments, public-private partnerships, and best practices from a particular region's economic, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

These top global leaders are selected to participate in the week-long program to visit and engage with innovation hubs, advanced technology centers, leading firms, educational and research institutions; explore local, regional, urban, and rural economic development models; share experiences and knowledge; build networks to enhance competitiveness in the Americas; promote sustainable and inclusive economic development; and increase trade and investment opportunities.

During the ACE, participants will travel on a charter bus through over 30 innovation hubs, research centers, top companies, and leading academic institutions. Each ACE visit offers a unique opportunity to explore local and regional economic development models, share experiences and knowledge, and build networks among the local and visiting stakeholders.

The immersive program includes hands-on demonstrations of next-generation technology, presentations, and interactive discussions, behind the scenes tours, and VIP networking events to create multidirectional collaboration channels designed for participants to explore mutually beneficial partnerships, investment opportunities, and the exchange of best practices on innovation and entrepreneurship between the hosts and fellow ACE leaders.

The ACE has been held thirteen times throughout different regions since 2014, including eight in the United States, one in Canada, three in Latin America (Mexico, Argentina, and Chile), and one Special Edition hosted jointly by Germany and Israel.





## The ACE is Leading Change!

More than 10,000 authorities/officials and experts have engaged in the ACE since its inception in 2014, including the globally selected, high-level delegates who have participated and benefited from it.

The program has resulted in more than 2,000 collaboration opportunities, strategic alliances, and new projects. Global impact programs that have emerged as a result of the ACE program include the following:

- ✓ The creation of new advanced textile jobs in North Carolina, United States, by drawing attention to the Conover Global Textile Research Center creating new investment opportunities;
- ✓ The development of a strategic plan for the Logistics Sector of the State of Hidalgo, Mexico, through a collaboration with the Georgia Institute of Technology;
- ✓ The creation of new jobs in Wisconsin, United States, through the establishment of new trade networks with Argentina and Mexico;
- ✓ The consolidation of a \$10M research and development program to support innovation ventures between Brazil and Israel;
- ✓ The installation of The Ithaka Center of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Catholic University of Uruguay (UCU);
- ✓ A compatible cluster map of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, to better inform policymakers;
- ✓ The implementation of a “Seed Capital for Biotechnological Entrepreneurs” project by the National Agency for Research and Innovation of Uruguay, based on U.S. models and Economic Development Administration programs;
- ✓ The Launch of Haiti’s first Incubator Center for Technological Innovation (ALPHA Haiti) modeled after U.S. and Mexico incubators and supported by ACE leaders;
- ✓ The establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between Argentina and Germany for joint funding of research and development projects for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs);
- ✓ The establishment of 12 entrepreneurship clubs in Haiti’s high schools inspired by the Flagler County School District model from Florida, United States.

Many more results are available at the following [link](#)



## 2. THE ACE in Louisiana

The Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE) will take place from March 26 to April 1, 2022. in the cities of New Orleans, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, and their surrounding parishes.

### The Louisiana Edge

Since its birth, the State of Louisiana has been home of innovators, decision-makers, and adventurers from across the globe. Louisianans also mean business and take pride in working as hard as they play, no matter what's thrown their way. Despite several natural and climate disasters hitting the region, Louisianans continue to maintain their resolve and push forward to create novel solutions towards a brighter future for all. That's why participants will find Louisianans driving innovation within advanced manufacturing, port logistics, biosciences, water-management, energy and other increasingly valuable sectors. Additionally, the fact that Louisiana remains a global leader in exports by volume, as well as the only state in the U.S. where all six railroads have direct access tom major ports, demonstrate their resiliency and status as one of the most attractive places to do businesses.

ACE participants will swiftly realize that partnering with Southern Louisiana will open the door for extraordinary economic opportunities. Participants will have unique opportunities to experience Louisiana's lifestyle and business climate first-hand, and engage with the state's versatile workforce, entrepreneurial ecosystem, innovative leaders, world-class research and development facilities, cultural institutions, tourist pipelines, and more.

Louisiana's economy and dynamic institutions of higher edition are matched by diverse urban, suburban, and rural communities. The state has important natural resources that help fuel a wide range of industry, as well as one of the most resilient workforce in the nation. Louisiana is home to some of the world's finest chefs, musicians, and athletes who are able to thrive in the region's unique cultural landscape. The state's unique history, lifestyle, business-friendly climate, strategic location, and un-matched low cost of living provide a quality of life like none other - what is called the Louisiana Edge.

### Louisiana Culture

Whether you are seeking to set up your home or business, you will certainly find warmth, wonder, and a wholehearted welcome in Southern Louisiana. There's also a good chance you'll run tino one of the 400+ festivals that take place here each year - one of the many reasons why Louisiana is one of the happiest states in the U.S. according to Harvard University and Vancouver School of Economics researchers. Due to its unique geography and history, Louisiana is home to an incomparable variety of customs, dialects, and traditions. The consequent varieties of cultural heritage run like bright threads through many facets of the social, political, industrial, and artistic life of the state. A diverse and unique combination of music, food, clothing, religions, languages, architecture, art, literature, games, and sports create the colorful culture of Louisiana. The state has a large Cajun and Creole communities that greatly influence the food, language, and music. The state is laid back and unpretentious, with deep cultural roots that are protected and maintained with incredible fervor, especially on display in New Orleans.



## TARGET CLUSTERS

Sites on tour will feature the following targeted themes and sectors:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Port Logistics
- Biotech and Life Sciences
- Energy
- Agribusiness
- Healthcare
- Entertainment
- Water management and energy
- Business Creation and Development
- Economic Planning and Stability
- Strategic investments



## OBJECTIVES

**The ACE general objectives are the following:**

- Promoting long-term multilateral commercial, trade, and investment partnerships;
  - Identifying and sharing best practices in economic development, including public-private partnerships, building local assets that grow businesses, cluster development, promoting entrepreneurship, and coordinating regional economic development strategies;
- Stimulating capital investment and job creation in the region;
- Fostering an environment for innovative companies to startup and expand;
- Bringing together universities, industries, and governments to solve complex, multi-sectoral challenges that business could not address on their own;



- Facilitating commerce and trade; Promoting economic resiliency; and,
- Enhancing opportunities for underrepresented populations

**Some of the specific objectives of ACE Louisiana are to:**

Showcase examples of best practices, practical innovation and entrepreneurship-related initiatives in Louisiana’s economic, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem;

- Familiarize participants with the business-friendly environment in Louisiana to stimulate more significant multilateral trade and strategic investment opportunities;
- Actively promote collaborative relationships with and among participants to forge new partnerships and create new projects or joint-initiatives;
- Promote academic exchange, peer-to-peer learning, joint research, and public-private partnerships in Louisiana;

**THE ACE PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

During the six-day program, ACE participant will engage with the vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem and variety of thriving industry clusters within the Greater New Orleans region – ranked #1 in Forbes’ “America’s Biggers Brain Magnets” and described in KPMG in the “Guide to International Business Location Costs” as the most economical city. Participants will also explore any array of foreign trade zones, global business hubs, and unique cultural sites located throughout the Baton Rouge, Acadiana, and Lafayette regions. These communities and their partners are primed for international collaboration, which access to newly developed international airports, expansive domestic and international port networks, highly ranked workforce development programs, and cutting-edge research facilities. The spirit of resiliency and innovation found in the region has propelled Louisiana to rise as a global competitor across a variety of sectors.

More details to be included soon.



## 3. PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS & REQUIREMENTS

### WHO IS INVITED TO APPLY?

This high-level program invites critical decision-makers who drive inclusive economic development in their countries, institutions, and communities including Ministers/Vice Ministers or equivalent; Ambassadors and other diplomat-rank officials, Presidents and Vice Presidents of Chambers of Commerce Chief Executive Officers; Trade and Investment Officers; CEOs or High-level private sector representatives; Mayors or senior leaders from cities or provinces; Chancellors, Presidents, and Vice Presidents of colleges and universities; Presidents of Competitiveness and Innovation Councils; Directors of Innovation; Economic Development Leaders; International Officials; and top entrepreneurs.

**The ACE program strives to obtain diverse representation from the public, private, and academic sectors and aims for geographical, sectoral, and gender balance amongst its participants, when possible.**

### WHAT ARE THE PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS?

- Have a professional and academic background that facilitates inter- and intra-country based development such as foreign direct investment, trade, exports, supply chain linkages, shared technology, etc.
- Be able to allocate resources, propose and adopt critical policies, and possess the necessary connections to make identified priorities and actions possible within their country and in collaboration with other countries.
- English fluency. All activities of the 14th ACE will be carried out only in English.
- Have a valid visa (if necessary) to enter the United States and be able to provide visa, passport, photo, and other necessary information to complete travel procedures.
- Ability to participate in the entire six-day program. Partial participation will not be allowed.
- The ability to cover the cost of airfare and hotel accommodation will be an essential point of consideration for the ACE Selection Committee.
- Have health insurance coverage for the duration of the program



Once your application is received, the ACE Committee reserves the right to reach out to the applicant to clarify information for the application processes.

Former participants are welcome to join the ACE in Louisiana. They would need to demonstrate concrete results of their participation and have responded to the mid-year consultation.

## **4. LOGISTICS & ESTIMATED BUDGET**

### **REGISTRATION**

The Organizing Committee offers the ACE program to the participating countries with no registration or participation fee.

If chosen, candidates will have a maximum of two weeks to confirm their participation by signing the official Commitment to Attend form. Proof of airfare tickets and reservations at the ACE selected hotels will need to be submitted no later than three weeks after receiving the acceptance letter.

Those who do not confirm and provide the requested documentation promptly could lose their spot on the program.

### **COVID-19 MITIGATION PROTOCOLS**

Kindly note that due to COVID-19 and the Delta string's challenges worldwide, we would like to share the health and safety protocols we are putting in place for all selected participants for ACE Louisiana. These items will be required for all those who are selected to participate and could be adjusted depending on current conditions:

- Sites will be tiered based on risk and many have been adjusted for additional airflow, distancing, etc.
- All participants will have to be fully vaccinated with a US CDC-recognized vaccine.
- Required and free COVID-19 tests for the participants will be administered before the start of the event.
- Daily health screening consultations will be conducted and required for all participants.
- The use of masks over the nose and mouth will be mandatory indoors and highly encouraged outdoors for all selected participants.



- The ACE Committee will provide all selected participants with standardized personal protective equipment (PPE), including different masks for different settings (cloth, disposable ply, and N95 masks), hand sanitizer, gloves, and wipes.
- Before attending the ACE event, participants will be asked to read and sign a standard *Acknowledgment of Risk* form.
- Per the new [guidance and requirements](#) from the OMB Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, the White House, and the CDC, the ACE Committee requires that everyone attending ACE from Louisiana communities follow social distance and masks indoors for everyone's health and safety.
- As a result of this new guidance and requirements, we will ask that those boarding the bus or engaging in close contact with the group in separate networking settings are fully vaccinated and/or have a current negative COVID-19 test. If helpful, we will have a limited supply of rapid tests on site that we can make available to those interested.

## ESTIMATED BUDGET

The Program Organizers will provide the following to selected participants at no cost:

- Local transportation throughout the program from site to site and city to city by bus;
- VIP access to sites and experts;
- Most meals; and
- Preferential rates at the ACE selected hotel.
- Access, advisory support, and facilitators from the U.S. Government and Organization of American States.

Selected participants will be responsible for:

- Booking and paying for their airfare;
- Booking and covering the cost of their hotel accommodations for the duration of the program in the ACE selected hotels;
- Arranging their transportation airport-hotel-airport; and
- Covering the remaining cost of meals outside of the program and other miscellaneous items.



## 5. VISA

Information about Visa requirements can be found at the following link:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/visit.html>

Please note that the ACE organizers are unable to facilitate visa issuance.

## 6. SELECTION PROCESS & CRITERIA

The selection process will take place as follows:

OPEN CALL FOR APPLICATIONS	Dates to be determined
DEADLINE TO APPLY	Dates to be determined
ACCEPTANCE LETTERS WILL BE SENT TO THE FIRST POOL OF ACCEPTED CANDIDATES	Rolling basis
ACCEPTANCE LETTERS WILL BE SENT TO THE SECOND POOL OF ACCEPTED CANDIDATES	Rolling basis
ACCEPTANCE LETTERS WILL BE SENT TO THE THIRD POOL OF ACCEPTED CANDIDATES (If space available)	Rolling basis

**Important notice:**

Official letters will only be sent to accepted participants.

The RIAC/ACE Coordinating Committee shall consider the following criteria for selecting the maximum of 50 participants, in no particular order:

- Diplomatic Rank/Diplomatic protocol
- Public, private, and academic sector senior leadership
- Prior ACE hosts and participants who have shown ACE-related results, including in Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF) and the Group of Experts on Subnational Competitiveness (GTECS)
- Diversity: geographical, sectoral, and gender balance
- Capacity to cover the cost of their participation
- Ability to create long-term economic connections
- Top entrepreneurs and innovators
- Economic development system representatives

Kindly note that if a candidate is accepted into the program and he/she is unable to attend, the selected candidate cannot independently select an alternative candidate. The nomination is NOT transferable.

## 7. WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION

<https://riacevents.org/ACE/louisiana/>

 [www.twitter.com/riacnetorg](http://www.twitter.com/riacnetorg)

 [www.facebook.com/riacnetorg](http://www.facebook.com/riacnetorg)

 [www.flickr.com/photos/89835551@N02/sets](http://www.flickr.com/photos/89835551@N02/sets)

 [www.youtube.com/user/riacnetorg/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/riacnetorg/videos)

**#ACXchange**