



Americas Competitiveness Exchange

GATEWAY TO THE AMERICAS

APPLICATION GUIDE



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Americas Competitiveness Exchange

GATEWAY TO THE AMERICAS

DEAR APPLICANT,

The State of Louisiana is Open for Business and Ready to Partner with YOU.

Louisiana is preparing to receive the next ACE Global and Regional Leaders cohort. The 1-week exchange will feature New Orleans, Acadia, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge in the State of Louisiana, from March 26 to April 1, 2022.

ACE is offered by the Organization of American States (OAS) as the Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC) Technical Secretariat, with support from the Government of the United States, through the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of State/ Permanent Mission of the United States to the OAS. During a week-long program, top decision-makers from the public, private, and academic sectors and NGOs will learn from Louisiana's successful models and strategies to advance business development, trade, investment, and partnership opportunities.

Over 30 sites in Louisiana from New Orleans, Lafayette and South Louisiana, and Baton Rouge will present outstanding opportunities for economic collaboration, a diverse range of projects, strategic investments, public-private partnerships, and best practices from Louisiana's economic, innovation, and entrepreneurship ecosystem. Participants will move by bus from city to city and site to site, taking in the unique ecosystems that Louisiana has to offer. The ACE Committee welcomes applications from public, private, and academic sector leaders, entrepreneurs, women, and other underrepresented groups.

The program strives for geographical, sectorial, and gender balance when possible. Applications from underrepresented and diverse groups are highly encouraged.

The enhancement of economic inclusion will be at the core of the program.
Requirements to apply:

- Have a professional and academic background that facilitates inter-and intra-country 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 ACE Louisiana 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.
- The ability to participate in the entire week-long ACE program will be considered. Partial participation is not allowed.
- The ability to cover the cost of airfare and hotel accommodation is an essential point of consideration for the ACE Selection Committee. Limited financial support is available for specific requests presented to the ACE Committee for consideration.
- Proof of health insurance coverage for the duration of the program.

Who is invited to apply?

- Ambassadors / Diplomat-rank officials and High-Level Representatives
- Trade & Investment Officers CEOs or High-Level Private Sector Representatives
- Academic and Researchers
- Directors of Innovation
- Economic Development Leaders International Officials (multilateral organizations)
- Top Entrepreneurs

Early bird applications will be given priority consideration.

The ACE Organizers



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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 first-hand 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 two charter buses 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 nine 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.

Some featured results are available at the following [link](#)

2. THE ACE in Louisiana

The upcoming ACE program will take place from November 6-12, 2021, in the City and County of New Orleans, Lafayette and South Louisiana, and Baton Rouge in Louisiana.

ACE Louisiana will focus on the following industries:

Life Sciences

From breakthrough diabetes treatments to innovative genome sequencing, Louisiana's cutting-edge life sciences sector is impacting lives across the globe and strengthening the economy at home. Additional information is available [here](#).

Water Management

Louisiana has become a water management hub with world-class think tanks, laboratories, and research leveraging its proximity to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Additional information is available [here](#).

Agribusiness

Louisiana is a booming center for agricultural and food processing growth and innovation — especially for business. Its rich agricultural history, when joined with higher education, ensures companies access to a highly skilled labor pool. Additional information is available [here](#).

Transportation

Louisiana's strategic location combined with a superior transportation infrastructure, provides companies access to nearby major markets. Louisiana is home to six railroads, six interstate highways, six deepwater ports, and seven primary airports. Additional information is available [here](#).

Other themes and sectors include:

- Business Creation and Development
- Economic Planning and Stability
- Strategic investments



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 to major ports, demonstrates their resiliency and status as one of the most attractive places to do business.

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 education are matched by diverse urban, suburban, and rural communities. The state has important natural resources that help fuel a wide range of industries, 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 into 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.



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 Biggest Brain Magnets' and described by 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. Their communities and their partners are primed for international collaboration, with 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.



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 ACE Louisiana 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
- Being fully vaccinated by March 26, 2022, and ability to provide proof of vaccination before the start 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, the Delta, and Omicron string's challenges worldwide, these items will be required for all those who are selected to participate and will be adjusted as circumstances evolve:

- Sites will be tiered based on risk and many have been adjusted for additional airflow, distancing, etc.
- All participants will be fully vaccinated by March 26 and provide proof of vaccination before the start of the program.
- Three step testing protocol for participants: required and free COVID-19 tests will be administered before the start and at the end of the program
- Daily health screening consultations will be conducted and required for all participants to complete before the first event of the program.
- The use of masks over the nose and mouth will be mandatory indoors and highly encouraged outdoors for selected participants, organizers, hosts, and speakers except when actively eating or drinking for the general group or addressing the group for speakers and organizers.
- The ACE Committee will provide all selected participants with standardized personal protective equipment (PPE), including N95 masks and hand sanitizers.
- Before attending the ACE event, participants will be asked to read and sign a standard Acknowledgment of Risk form.



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	Tuesday, December 7, 2021
DEADLINE TO APPLY	February 25, 2022
ACCEPTANCE LETTERS WILL BE SENT TO ACCEPTED CANDIDATES	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



www.facebook.com/riacnetorg



www.flickr.com/photos/89835551@N02/sets



www.youtube.com/user/riacnetorg/videos



www.linkedin.com/company/the-americas-competitiveness-exchange-ace/?viewAsMember=true

#ACXchange

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

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