

APPLICATION GUIDE



Americas Competitiveness Exchange

Sept 28 to Oct 2, 2026



ALCALDÍA DE
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U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

APPLY TO ACE BARRANQUILLA

Join a Premier Network of Leaders Driving Innovation and Competitiveness in the Americas

We invite you to apply to participate in the 24th Edition of the Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE), to be held in Barranquilla, Colombia, from September 28 to October 2, 2026.

ACE Barranquilla will bring together a select group of senior leaders from government, the private sector, academia, civil society, and international organizations from across the Americas and beyond. Through an immersive, week-long program, participants will exchange ideas, build strategic partnerships, and explore new opportunities for collaboration, investment, innovation, and economic growth.

As Colombia's leading Caribbean gateway to global markets, Barranquilla has emerged as one of the region's most dynamic centers for industry, logistics, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Its integrated ecosystem—combining world-class infrastructure, thriving business clusters, leading universities, research institutions, and a strong commitment to talent development—offers an exceptional platform for learning, collaboration, and investment.

Participants will engage directly with leading companies, universities, research centers, economic development organizations, and innovation hubs while gaining firsthand insights from public- and private-sector leaders into the city's priority industries, technological advances, and successful strategies for competitiveness, trade, workforce development, and sustainable economic transformation.

The 24th Edition of the Americas Competitiveness Exchange is convened by the Organization of American States (OAS) in partnership with the City of Barranquilla, with the support of the Government of the United States, through the Department of State – Permanent Mission to the OAS and the Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration.

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis by the ACE Selection Committee, and early submission is encouraged. The deadline to submit an application is August 24, 2026.

We look forward to receiving your application and welcoming you to Barranquilla for a week of discovery, collaboration, and partnership-building that will help shape the future of competitiveness in the Americas.

Sincerely,
The ACE Barranquilla Committee



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Apply now

Applications open
July 1 – August 24, 2026

TOP REASONS TO JOIN ACE BARRANQUILLA 2026

● **Experience a Strategic Gateway Connecting the Americas**

Gain firsthand insights into how Barranquilla leverages its unique location at the intersection of the Magdalena River and the Caribbean Sea to connect domestic and international markets through integrated port, road, river, and air infrastructure, serving as a platform for trade, investment, and regional integration.

● **Explore a Leading Nearshoring and Industrial Hub**

Learn how Barranquilla is attracting investment and strengthening its position in global value chains through a diversified industrial base, competitive business environment, and strategic access to regional and international markets.

● **Discover Opportunities in Energy Competitiveness**

Gain firsthand insights into one of Colombia's emerging energy hubs, creating new opportunities for innovation, investment, and economic development.

● **Learn from a Dynamic Innovation and Talent Ecosystem**

Explore how collaboration among government, industry, academia, and international partners is helping Barranquilla develop the workforce, digital capabilities, and innovation ecosystem needed to compete in a rapidly evolving global economy.

● **Experience a Model of Urban Transformation and Smart Infrastructure**

Explore how strategic infrastructure investments, riverfront revitalization, and integrated urban planning helped transform Barranquilla into a more competitive, connected, and attractive destination for business, tourism, and investment.

● **Discover the Power of Culture as a Driver of Competitiveness**

Experience how Barranquilla's rich cultural heritage, creative industries, sports ecosystem, and globally recognized Carnival contribute to tourism, entrepreneurship, international visibility, and economic growth.

● **Build Partnerships Across the Americas**

Connect with business leaders, policymakers, investors, universities, research institutions, innovation organizations, and economic development practitioners from across the hemisphere to exchange best practices, explore opportunities, and develop collaborations that advance competitiveness and prosperity.

WHAT SETS BARRANQUILLA APART?

● **A Strategic Gateway to the Americas**

At the crossroads of Colombia's main river and the Caribbean Sea, Barranquilla is a strategic gateway for trade, investment, and international business, linking regional production centers to global markets.

● **A Proven Story of Transformation**

Over the past two decades, Barranquilla has become a benchmark for urban and economic transformation in Latin America, combining significant improvements in quality of life, education, health care, and infrastructure with a proven ability to execute ambitious public- and private-sector development initiatives.

● **A Hub for Investment and Competitiveness**

An integrated ecosystem of industry, logistics, talent, and innovation positions Barranquilla as a strategic platform for growth, nearshoring, and investment.

● **People-Centered Growth**

Barranquilla has prioritized human capital development through investments in education, bilingualism, workforce skills, and global readiness, creating opportunities for long-term prosperity.

● **Innovation with Impact**

Collaboration among government, industry, academia, and communities supports the adoption of new technologies, enhances competitiveness, and drives economic opportunity.

● **A City Reconnected with Its Territory**

Strategic investments in the riverfront, and public spaces, and urban infrastructure have strengthened Barranquilla's competitiveness, making the city more attractive for residents, businesses, and investors alike.

● **A Vibrant Cultural Identity**

Rooted in a rich blend of Caribbean, European, Arab, and global influences, Barranquilla has built a culture defined by openness, creativity, and a strong entrepreneurial drive that continues to shape the city's dynamic business environment.

● **A Creative Economy with Global Reach**

The recognized Carnival of Barranquilla serves as the cornerstone of a thriving creative economy, generating opportunities across tourism, entertainment, cultural industries, and the broader experience economy.

● **Where Partnerships Create Opportunity**

Barranquilla brings together talent, infrastructure, culture, and ambition, creating an environment where ideas become action, partnerships flourish, and collaboration drives growth and impact.

● **A Forward-Looking Destination**

Building on its legacy as Colombia's gateway to the world, Barranquilla continues to strengthen its role as a strategic connector between Colombia, the Caribbean, and global markets.



STRATEGIC AREAS



Smart Infrastructure and Strategic Investments

Barranquilla demonstrates how urban planning, land management, and infrastructure development can drive competitiveness by integrating environmental restoration, tourism growth, and real estate value creation into a model that offers valuable lessons for cities across Latin America.

The city's built-environment ecosystem is supported by more than 10,000 companies and 65,000 jobs spanning residential, commercial, industrial, and logistics activities. Its approach emphasizes energy-efficient and resilient urban development while advancing solutions aligned with global trends in future-ready cities. Barranquilla's strategic location, industrial capabilities, and sustained urban expansion continue to strengthen its position as a competitive platform for real estate, infrastructure, and urban innovation.

Digital Services, Advanced Technologies, and Workforce Development

Barranquilla is advancing a strategy focused on strengthening human capital and expanding the skills required for a digital and globally connected economy. Efforts to enhance digital competencies and bilingual capabilities are helping address workforce gaps while supporting the needs of priority sectors.

Collaboration among industry, academia, and workforce development institutions supports the adoption of advanced technologies and the preparation of talent for emerging economic opportunities. This approach supports greater productivity, competitiveness, and readiness for digital transformation.





Industrial Value Chains, Nearshoring, and Trade Integration

Barranquilla is strengthening its role as a nearshoring destination in the Americas by leveraging its logistics infrastructure, industrial base, and connectivity to regional and international markets.

The city's export-oriented industries, together with its strategic location and trade infrastructure, support investment attraction and integration into global value chains. These conditions create opportunities for companies seeking efficient access to markets while enhancing the region's industrial and trade competitiveness.

Energy Competitiveness

Energy transition is increasingly integrated into Barranquilla's competitiveness agenda, supporting the development of resilient infrastructure and new economic opportunities. The city is emerging as one of Colombia's leading energy hubs, with more than 2,000 companies participating across the energy value chain.

Barranquilla has developed a modern and diversified energy mix. Barranquilla has also been recognized by Germany's Fraunhofer Institute as a potential hub for low-carbon hydrogen and Power-to-X solutions, reinforcing its potential as a hub for large-scale clean energy production, transformation, and export.





Culture, Sports, and the Creative Economy

Barranquilla leverages its cultural identity and sports infrastructure as assets that contribute to international visibility, tourism, and economic development.

The city's creative and cultural ecosystem supports talent development, entrepreneurship, and the growth of creative industries. Together with sports-related assets and events, these strengths contribute to a broader strategy that advances competitiveness, innovation, and economic growth.

WHO IS INVITED TO APPLY?

- Ministers and Vice Ministers / Permanent Secretaries
- Ambassadors / Diplomat-rank Officials and Commercial Attachés
- Secretaries for Economic Development and Trade and Investment Officials
- CEOs, Executive Directors and other High-Level Private Sector Representatives
- Presidents/Vice Presidents of Chambers of Commerce and Competitiveness Councils- Presidents/Vice Presidents of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Agencies
- Presidents/Vice Presidents of Universities
- Directors of Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Academics and researchers focused on economic and business development, competitiveness, and innovation
- Promising and visionary entrepreneurs
- International officials (including multilateral organizations)
- Presidents of NGOs
- Economic development leaders and institutions at the national, state and local levels

REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY

- Possess a professional and academic background relevant to economic development, competitiveness, trade, foreign direct investment, exports, innovation, supply chains, or related fields.
- Be in a position to influence, develop, or implement policies, initiatives, or partnerships that advance economic development and competitiveness within their country or in collaboration with partners across the Americas.
- Be fluent in English.
- Hold a valid passport and, if required, a valid visa for entry into Colombia, and be prepared to provide passport, visa, photograph, and other information required for travel and security procedures.
- Be available to participate fully in the entire ACE Barranquilla program; partial participation is not permitted.
- Be prepared to cover the cost of airfare and hotel accommodations. The ability to do so is an important consideration for the ACE Selection Committee. Limited financial assistance may be available upon request and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Provide proof of health insurance coverage for the duration of the program.
- Previous ACE participants are welcome to apply. To be eligible for selection, returning participants must demonstrate tangible outcomes from their previous ACE participation and have completed all required post-program surveys and consultations in a timely manner.

LOGISTICS AND BUDGET

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

- Local transportation by bus between program sites in the City of Barranquilla.
- VIP access to sites and experts.
- Meals during official program hours of ACE Barranquilla.
- Preferential rates at the official ACE Barranquilla hotel.
- Access to advisory support and facilitators from the City of Barranquilla, stakeholder institutions and authorities, as well as OAS officials.
- Logistical support and dedicated support from the ACE Committee for the duration of the program.

Selected participants will be responsible for:

- Airfare to and from Barranquilla, Colombia
- Booking and covering the cost of their hotel accommodations in Barranquilla for the duration of the program in the ACE selected hotels.
- Airport-hotel transportation and hotel-airport transportation
- Meals outside of program hours
- Other miscellaneous expenses



VISA REQUIREMENTS

Information for entering Colombia

Please refer to the following link to review information on how to obtain a visa if needed:

www.cancilleria.gov.co/atencion-y-servicio-al-ciudadano/tramites-y-servicios/visa/tipos-de-visa

FIND ACE ONLINE

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

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Barranquilla

Strategic Areas

Top reasons to join

Who is welcomed to apply

About ACE

Apply now

SAVE THE DATE

The Americas and the Caribbean will meet in **Barranquilla**

Colombia’s Golden Gate hosts the Americas Competitiveness Exchange — five days of innovation, investment and collaboration where the Magdalena River meets the Caribbean Sea.

Sept 28 – Oct 2, 2026

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Barranquilla, Colombia

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