



Americas Competitiveness Exchange

April 27 to May 2, 2025



www.riacevents.org/ACE/illinois

Welcome to Illinois



Americas Competitiveness Exchange

April 27 to May 2, 2025

SUNDAY April 27, 2025

Reminder: All participants must carry a valid **passport ID** and wear **closed-toe shoes** at all times.

Hotel Royal Sonesta

 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Registration with coffee service

Royal Sonesta Penthouse Terrace (39th floor)

Sign in at the registration table to receive your badge and welcome materials.

 1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Welcome to ACE Illinois

Royal Sonesta Penthouse Terrace (39th floor)

Join us in the Royal Sonesta Penthouse to welcome you to the 20th Americas Competitiveness Exchange

 **Margo Markopolous**, Deputy Director for Trade and Investment, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

 **Jeannette Tamayo**, Associate Vice President for Workforce Development and Community Engagement/Executive Director, University of Illinois System

 **Cesar Parga**, Section Chief Section of Competitiveness, Innovation and Technology Department of Economic Development Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, Organization of American States

1:30 p.m. Presentation: "Promoting Rural Community and Economic Development through Public Sector Partnerships"

This presentation explores how Western Illinois University (WIU) – a rural, regional public university – promotes rural community and economic development. WIU offers an array of services, including community planning, entrepreneurship, rural internships, and cooperative development. However, it succeeds to the extent that it has strong relationships with local, state, and federal government agencies. Hence, this presentation will focus on strategies WIU adopts to connect the network of government agencies with rural communities. To provide some context, the presentation will also briefly discuss how WIU worked with Universidad Tecnológica de la Selva (UTS) a rural, regional public university in Ocosingo, Chiapas, Mexico. The relationship between WIU and UTS is a model that can be replicated to benefit rural and regional universities in the United States and in the countries of the Americas.

 **Chris Merrett**, Western Illinois University

 **Winthrop Phippen**, Western Illinois University

 2:30 p.m. Break

2:45 p.m. Presentation: "Human Centered-Design and Social Innovation / Entrepreneurship"

Human-Centered Design (HCD) is a problem-solving approach that uses design thinking methods and tools to identify the unmet needs of a population to collaboratively and iteratively develop solutions. Learn how to leverage this discipline's skill set in a 90-minute intensive led by the Director of the Siebel Center for Design at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

 **Rachel Switzky**, Siebel Center for Design, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

4:20 p.m.

Gather for bus departures

4:30 p.m. 

Transfer to Navy Pier

Historic Navy Pier is an iconic thread in the fabric of Chicago. As the world's largest public pier, it is a top-attended leisure destination in the Midwest, attracting more than 9 million guests a year. When they arrive, guests discover an exciting, ever-evolving "People's Pier" for the 21st century, featuring an array of arts, cultural, educational, entertainment, and special events programming that offers a uniquely Chicago experience. In honor of its 100th anniversary, Navy Pier unveiled dramatically reimagined, pier-wide enhancements, new dining options, and compelling landscape and design features that continue to elevate the Pier's status.

5:00 p.m. Walk to Group Photo Spot on Navy Pier

 5:30 p.m. Explore Navy Pier in small, guided tour groups led by a Navy Pier team member and discover the history and transformation of this iconic landmark into the Midwest's premier nonprofit tourism destination.

7:45 p.m. 

Transfer to Hotel



MONDAY

April 28, 2025

Breakfast will be served at the opening ceremony at the Royal Sonesta Penthouse Terrace (39th floor).

Attire: Business - **Reminder:** All participants must carry a valid **passport ID** and wear **closed-toe shoes** at all times.



8:00 a.m.

➤ Welcome Breakfast with Local Leadership

Convened by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United States Government, through the Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration) and the Department of State (Permanent Mission to the OAS). ACE Illinois is presented by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), the Greater Chicagoland Economic Partnership (GCEP), Intersect Illinois, Illinois Innovation Network, World Business Chicago, and the University of Illinois System.

Hear from key partners as they introduce you to their respective organizations and share information on the motivation and goals of ACE Illinois.

➤ Official Opening Ceremony

➤ Welcome Remarks and introductions

- **Kristin Richards**, Director, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
- **Jay Walsh**, Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation, University of Illinois System
- **Kim Osborne**, Executive Secretary for Integral Development at the Organization of American States

9:30 a.m.

➤ Gather for bus departures

9:40 a.m. 🚌

Transfer to

📍 UIC Innovation Center

The UIC Innovation Center is a space for interdisciplinary innovation and education, reflecting its dynamic mission through its frequent changes to meet the needs of projects and classes. The Innovation Center gives students a chance to learn through experience with continuous collaboration, learning, making, and remaking. Corporate and university partners engage with the center to generate human-centered solutions focused on deep research and exploratory development.

➤ 10:00 a.m. Spark Talks: *How Innovation Powers Health Progress*

The UIC Innovation Center is proud to highlight celebrated researchers and program directors and to share examples of and discuss current topics related to health innovation. In addition, key partners in the UI Health system will join us to share real-world examples of how health innovation is changing the lives of community members.

➤ 11:00 a.m. Interactive Tours of the UIC Innovation Center

➤ 11:30 a.m. Group Photo 📷

11:35 a.m.

➤ Gather for bus departures

11:40 a.m. 🚌

Transfer to

📍 MxD

Manufacturing x Digital advances economic prosperity and national security by strengthening U.S. manufacturing competitiveness through technology innovation, workforce development, and cybersecurity preparedness. In partnership with the Department of Defense, MxD convene an ecosystem to solve critical manufacturing challenges. MxD is also the National Center for Cybersecurity in Manufacturing as designated by DoD.

➤ 12:00 p.m. Welcome and Overview Remarks by MxD leadership

- **Bernadino Barratta**, CEO, MxD
- **Jela Trask**, Vice President, Membership and External Relations

➤ 12:30 p.m. Lunch

➤ 1:30 p.m. MxD Facility Tour

Attendees will tour the facility to experience demonstrations at the Discrete Testbed (a manufacturing line equipped with sensors for data collection), the Cyber Wall (a simulation of cyber-attacks on factories), the Wireless Demonstration Testbed, and augmented reality training programs.

➤ 2:30 p.m. Group Photo 📷

2:35 p.m.

➤ Gather for bus departures

2:40 p.m. 🚌

Transfer to

📍 1871

1871 is a private collective of trailblazing founders, visionary leaders, resilient innovators, and steadfast supporters in tech. Immerse in our programs, resources, and community uniquely designed for growing a vibrant tech ecosystem.

➤ 3:15 p.m. Welcome from **Betsy Ziegler (CEO, 1871)** and **Jaime Di Paulo - Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce - IHCC**

IHCC stands as a dynamic and influential force, empowering over 15,000 Hispanic entrepreneurs and businesses throughout Illinois.

➤ 3:45 p.m. Interactive Panel "Chambers of Commerce as Community Connectors"

Learn how the IHCC is able to connect Hispanic businesses to non-Latino markets, and connect non-Hispanic businesses to Latino markets. As the largest Midwest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, IHCC is a crucial connector in the community and business sectors. Alongside remarks from IHCC representatives, attendees will hear directly from an IHCC member who has directly benefited by their services and incorporated new strategies for growth.

➤ 4:35 p.m. Group Photo 📷

4:40 p.m. 🌀 Walk to 📍 **MATTER** within Merchandise Mart

MATTER supports healthcare startups at all stages of growth by creating access to learning and development opportunities, capital and customers, and a dynamic community. From Fortune 500 companies to non-profit health systems and academic institutions, we empower industry-leading organizations to source and co-develop solutions, build innovation capacity and solve complex problems.

➤ 4:45 p.m. Welcome and Overview: "Meet Matter" by Matter CEO Steven Collens (TBC)

5:20 p.m. 🌀 Walk in groups back to 📍 **1871**

➤ 5:30 p.m. Networking Reception

6:30 p.m.

➤ Gather for bus departures

6:45 p.m. 🚌

➤ Transfer to Hotel

➤ Dinner on your own



Boxed Breakfast will be served on the bus

Attire: Business - **Reminder:** All participants must carry a valid **passport ID** and wear **closed-toe shoes** at all times.

7:00 a.m.

Gather for bus departures

7:10 a.m. 

Transfer to University of IL Research Park

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Research Park is an innovation hub for technology commercialization with a unique environment that cultivates startups and increases capabilities for established companies. Located on campus, Research Park has more than 120 companies and growing, employing over 2,100 people in high-technology careers.

10:30 a.m. Welcome and Round Robin Tours

 **Dr. Beth Conerty**, Associate Director of Business Development IBRL, Regional Innovation Officer iFAB Tech Hub

Integrated Bioprocessing Research Lab - IBRL

The IBRL is a pilot-scale bioprocessing product research and development facility that bridges the gap from basic discovery to commercialization of bioproducts. The facility serves as an invaluable asset to the bioenergy and bioprocessing companies by partnering them with the human and equipment capabilities of the university.

Food Science and Human Nutrition Pilot Processing Plant

The Food Science pilot plant, is a newly renovated modern, flexible facility built to meet the needs of students, researchers, and the international food industry. Plug-and-play utilities, large equipment selection, and a product development kitchen provide an ideal environment for hands-on learning opportunities, new product or process development, and small-scale food production.

iFAB Tech Hub

In 2024, iFAB was awarded just over \$51M by the U.S. Economic Development Administration and designated as one of 31 inaugural Regional Innovation and Technology Hubs. The iFAB consortium, led by the University of Illinois' Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory (IBRL), comprises over 30 partners from academia, industry, government, and nonprofits from across Illinois. iFAB drives growth in the precision fermentation and bioprocessing industry by linking assets, addressing gaps, and connecting infrastructure with wraparound programming to transform the region into a globally competitive precision fermentation lab-to-line ecosystem.

11:45 a.m. Group Photo

12:00 p.m. Lunch and Panel - Illinois Conference Center, Illinois Ballroom "University-Driven Innovation and Entrepreneurship"

 **Kim Kidwell**, Associate Chancellor for Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives (moderator)
 **Gerald Wilson**, Director of Entrepreneurship, Enterprise Works
 **Mike Tai**, Co-Founder, Boston Bioprocess

12:40 p.m. Alternating tours:

 **Tour of the Center for Advanced Bioenergy and Bioproducts Innovation** greenhouse (advanced phenotyping and growing bioenergy crops). Speakers: Andrew Leakey, CABBI Director, Celine Young, CABBI Program Manager.

 **Tour of the National Petascale Computing Facility and discussion of NCSA's work in AI and quantum**
Santiago Nunez-Corrales, Quantum Lead Senior Research Scientist, National Center for Supercomputing Applications

1:40 p.m. Gather for bus departures

1:45 p.m. Transfer to Holonyak Micro and Nanotechnology Laboratory

2:00 p.m. Presentation: "Illinois' Rapidly Growing Quantum Ecosystem"

Quantum technologies have the potential to tackle many of the biggest challenges in healthcare, energy, transportation, financial services, agriculture and national security. Illinois has quickly become a leader in the emerging quantum computing industry thanks largely to University research efforts and state investments including the recently announced Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP).

Welcome remarks:

 **Dr. Susan A. Martinis**, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation
 **Harley Johnson**, Chief Executive Office and Director, Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park
 **Brian DeMarco**, Chief Technology Officer and Director, Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park

2:45 p.m. Private Demonstration: "Drone-Based Quantum Communication Links"

2:50 p.m.

Gather for bus departures

3:00 p.m. 

Transfer to Distillery Labs

Distillery Labs is a proud member of the Illinois Innovation Network and serves as the region's premier innovation hub in downtown Peoria, Illinois. We support entrepreneurs and startups by providing space, mentorship, and connections to capital, talent, and industry partners. Our mission is to inspire, connect, educate, and motivate the next generation of innovators.

4:45 p.m. Tour Distillery Labs

5:10 p.m. Group Photo

5:15 p.m. Dinner and Presentation by the Innovation Exchange Coalition (IEC) at Distillery Labs

The Innovation Exchange Coalition (IEC) supports global innovation and entrepreneurship by providing mentorship, market access, and technical expertise to tech entrepreneurs seeking to expand their networks, scale manufacturing, and accelerate commercialization. During this session, eight companies will deliver rapid-fire presentations showcasing their solutions and exploring potential partnerships.

Welcome Remarks

 **Doug Cruitt**, Executive Director Distillery Labs

Event Host

 **Natasha Main**, Co-Founder, MP IEC

Highlights

 **Susana Lau Hou**, Founder and CEO- EtyaLab | IEEE Entrepreneurship VP

 **Ryan Ramkhelawan**, Co-Founder, MP IEC

IEC Delegate Founders

 **SmartCharts** - Corinne Vargas  **Manuar** - Julia Proto Curi Hallal

 **NXT7** - Danielle Moraes  **Healp** - Elizabeth Tikoyan

Illinois Startup Delegation

 **PowerBox Technology** - Oscar Azofeifa Castillo  **DigiFarmz** - Alex Chequim  **TredBase** - Emmanuel Ojedele  **Humod** - Matt Dylewski

6:45 p.m. Farewells and Individual Q&A

6:55 p.m.

Gather for bus departures

7:05 p.m. 

Transfer to Hotel



WEDNESDAY

April 30, 2025



Breakfast will be served at the Royal Sonesta Penthouse Terrace (39th floor) **Attire:** Business - **Reminder:** All participants must carry a valid **passport ID** and wear **closed-toe shoes** at all times.

8:00 a.m.

➤ Breakfast & Panel at Royal Sonesta Penthouse with Winton & Strawn

Winston & Strawn LLP is an international law firm headquartered in Chicago. It has more than 975 attorneys spread across ten offices in the United States and five offices in Europe, Asia, and South America.

➤ **Talbert Navia, Partner**, Chair, Latin America & Caribbean

➤ **Ricardo Ugarte**, Partner, International Arbitration Practice

➤ **Mariana Pendás**, Of Counsel, International Trade Practice, Government Investigations, Enforcement & Compliance

8:50 a.m.

➤ Gather for bus departures

9:00 a.m.

Transfer to

📍 The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning - CMAP

The CMAP is a regional metropolitan planning organization that works on behalf of the 7 counties, 284 municipalities, and 8.6 million residents of northeastern Illinois. Through planning, policy research and analysis, and data services, CMAP supports economic growth, prioritized investments, and regional resilience.

➤ 9:30 a.m. Panel: "Transportation and Economic Growth"

CMAP staff will provide an overview of the agency's transportation planning and policy work and how these initiatives support economic development in the northeastern Illinois region. Staff will discuss the agency's long-range planning objectives, policy research and development work, and technical assistance offerings to communities.

➤ 10:30 a.m. Panel: "Regional Economic Competitiveness"

The Greater Chicagoland Economic Partnership (GCEP) is a united strategy facilitated by the seven counties of northeastern Illinois (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Will) and the City of Chicago to work together to drive economic development. GCEP represents the region's combined assets, including its extensive freight infrastructure, talent, strong exporting industries, and world-class institutions of innovation, research, and culture.

➤ 11:15 a.m. Guided Tours: Old Chicago Post Office and Group Photo

The Old Chicago Post Office was originally completed in 1921, but underwent a monumental expansion in 1932 to meet Chicago's unprecedented postal needs. The meteoric rise of the mail-order industry, spearheaded by the Chicago-based Montgomery Ward and Sears catalogs, transformed the city into the distribution center of the nation nearly overnight. In its postal heyday, the property was the largest of its kind in the world, capable of shuttling an astonishing 19 million pieces of mail daily. Recent renovations have shifted the post office to a mixed-use building.

11:50 a.m.

➤ Gather for bus departures

12:00 p.m.

Transfer to

📍 Daley College

Located on the southwest side of Chicago, Daley College serves approximately 12,000 students annually across our two campuses through credit, Adult Education, and Continuing Education programming.

➤ 1:00 p.m. Lunch at Richard J. Daley College & Make It In Illinois Campaign

Make It In Illinois is a statewide digital marketing and grassroots engagement campaign aimed at growing the manufacturing workforce talent pool and increasing enrollment in training

programs. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Innovation Network partner on this effort with Richard J. Daley College to position manufacturing as a lifelong, family-supporting career pathway open to all.

➤ 2:30 p.m. Welcome and Presentation

"Serving Students and Community Organization Partnerships" by Dr. Janine Janosky (President of Richard J. Daley College)

➤ 3:00 p.m. Tour of the new Manufacturing Technology and Engineering Center - MTEC

This new facility spans 52,000 sf and is fully equipped with a high-bay space and ten engineering and manufacturing labs that provide students with hands-on training on professional equipment for highly specialized, technology-oriented careers in manufacturing.

➤ 3:50 p.m. Group Photo

➤ 4:00 p.m. Local Community to Global Connections: "How local community development organizations in Chicago can assist in developing international relationships" by Jim Longino of the Greater Southwest Development Corporation (Beatty Theater)

The Greater Southwest Development Corporation works to create, attract, retain, and expand commercial and manufacturing businesses on Chicago's Southwest Side and is uniquely positioned to assist businesses through a variety of development services that include access to capital, business and marketing plan assistance, international trade, procurement, certifications, and licensing.

5:00 p.m.

➤ Gather for bus departures

5:15 p.m.

Transfer to

📍 The Hatchery

The Hatchery Chicago is a non-profit food and beverage incubator dedicated to helping local entrepreneurs build and grow successful businesses. Through cutting edge commercial kitchen facilities, robust entrepreneurship curriculums, and partnership with generous corporate sponsors and foundations, The Hatchery supports local food and beverage entrepreneurs, cultivates local job opportunities, and accelerates local economic growth.

➤ 5:45 p.m. Presentation and Tour

Join rotating tours of The Hatchery's new incubator space. KOVAL (A Chicago-based organic spirits distillery) will provide tastings from their line of distinct spirits. Garrett's Popcorn will provide their handcrafted gourmet popcorn made in Chicago. World Business Chicago will provide an assortment of Illinois beers and beverages.

➤ **Jason and Erica London**, The Chef and the Baker

➤ **Brad McConnell**, Allies for Community Business

➤ **Mary Fran Riley**, Allies for Community Business

➤ 6:50 p.m. Group Photo

➤ 7:00 p.m. A Taste of Chicago with World Business Chicago

Includes attendance from Hatchery leadership and participating businesses. World Business Chicago will provide additional remarks.

8:20 p.m.

➤ Gather for bus departures

8:30 p.m.

➤ Transfer to Hotel



THURSDAY

May 1, 2025



Breakfast will be served at the Royal Sonesta Penthouse Terrace (39th floor).

Attire: Business - **Reminder:** All participants must carry a valid **passport ID** and wear **closed-toe shoes** at all times.

8:00 a.m.

Hotel Breakfast

8:50 a.m.

Gather for bus departures

9:00 a.m. 

Transfer to Will County Inland Port

10:30 a.m. Panel / Presentation(s): "America's Largest Inland Port Bus Tour"

The inland port in Will County, Illinois—centered in Joliet and Elwood—is one of North America's largest intermodal logistics hubs. Spanning 6,000 acres and developed by CenterPoint Properties, it combines rail, road, and warehouse infrastructure to efficiently move goods throughout the Midwest and beyond. Anchored by BNSF and Union Pacific rail terminals, it handles international shipping containers arriving from coast to coast. These containers are quickly transferred to massive adjacent distribution centers serving companies like Amazon, Walmart, and many more. The port's layout minimizes trucking distances, reduces congestion, and supports a growing logistics workforce. A tour showcases this high-efficiency industrial landscape, including sprawling warehouses, cranes, and active rail operations.

 **Doug Pryor**, President & CEO, Will County Center for Economic Development

 **John Greuling**, Founder, JEG 360, LLC

11:30 a.m. Panel / Presentation(s): "Why Will County Works? Regional Assets Driving Business Success"

This presentation will explore the key assets that make Will County an ideal location for business attraction and growth. Attendees will gain insight into the region's strategic advantages, including its central location, strong infrastructure, diverse workforce, and vibrant industry base. Hosted at Joliet Junior College, the session will highlight how regional collaboration and investment continue to position Will County as a leader in economic development.

 **Doug Pryor**, President & CEO, Will County Center for Economic Development

 **John Greuling**, Founder, JEG 360, LLC

12:10 p.m.

Gather for bus departures

12:15 p.m. 

Transfer to Naperville

1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:50 p.m.

Gather for bus departures

2:00 p.m. 

Transfer to Ecolab

Ecolab is a global sustainability leader offering water, hygiene, and infection prevention solutions and services that protect people and resources. Customers in more than 40 industries choose Ecolab's comprehensive science-based solutions, data-driven insights, and world-class service to advance food safety, maintain clean and safe environments, and optimize water conservation and energy use.

2:00 p.m. Presentation and Tour: Water University

A unique, high-tech learning environment, Water University is dedicated to developing expertise of customers and associates to minimize water usage, maximize results, and optimize total cost of operations. Our facility is home to more than 200 researchers assisting customers from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies solve water challenges and improve their bottom line.

3:15 p.m. Group Photo

3:20 p.m.

Gather for bus departures

3:25 p.m. 

Transfer to Naper Settlement

The Birck Family Innovation Gateway is the new "front door" to Naper Settlement, welcoming guests with an engaging introduction to Naperville's 20th- and 21st-century history. This dynamic space will feature a digital exhibit where visitors can explore state and national narratives alongside local stories—and even contribute their own photos, files, and memories.

3:35 p.m. Presentation: "Understanding the Naperville Riverwalk"

Learn more about the decades of work the city and community have undergone to make the Riverwalk a thriving destination.

 **Mayor Scott A. Wehrli**, Mayor, City of Naperville

 **Bill Novack**, Director of Transportation, Engineering, and Development, City of Naperville

5:00 p.m. Group Photo

5:10 p.m. Networking Reception: The Birck Family Innovation Gateway

Considered the "Crown Jewel" of Naperville, the Riverwalk is a place of beauty and tranquility along the West Branch of the DuPage River. Created in 1981 to honor Naperville's 150th anniversary, the Riverwalk features 1.75 miles of brick paths, fountains, bridges, meeting and event spaces, outdoor sculpture and artwork, recreation facilities, and celebratory memorials.

6:05 p.m.

Gather for bus departures

6:15 p.m. 

Transfer to Hotel

Dinner on your own



8:00 a.m.

➤ **Gather for departure**

8:15 a.m. 🚌

**Walk in groups to
Consulate General of Canada
in Chicago**

➤ **8:30 a.m. Breakfast at Consulate General of Canada in Chicago**

In the spirit of international cooperation, Consul General of Canada in Chicago Madeleine Féquière welcomes the ACE delegation for a breakfast and discussion on the Canadian diplomatic mission.

9:25 a.m.

➤ **Gather for bus departures**

9:30 a.m. 🚌

**Transfer to
Discovery Partners Institute**

The Discovery Partners Institute (DPI), an initiative of the University of Illinois System, is a Chicago-based hub that cultivates tech talent, conducts applied research, and fosters business development to strengthen the state's innovation economy. DPI was created to train people for high-demand tech jobs, conduct applied research and development, and build businesses, and that vital work continues. It was also designed to be nimble and move quickly to serve the people of Illinois.

➤ **10:10 a.m. Welcome and Overview from Discovery Partners Institute**

Learn more about how DPI's collaborative approach—with universities, industry, and government—positions Illinois as a national leader in innovation and workforce transformation.

➤ **Venkat Venkatakrishnan**, Director of Research, Discovery Partners Institute

➤ **10:20 a.m. Presentation: "The Value of Data in Evidence-Based Policy Making"**

EDA has funded an interdisciplinary economic research center at Argonne National Laboratory (Argonne), The National Economic Research and Resilience Center (NERCC). Hear from NERCC Director about how they provide innovative and transparent economic data access, research, and analysis to support and strengthen economic development and resilience in communities across the nation.

➤ **Iain Hyde**, Director, National Economic Research & Resilience Center, Argonne National Laboratory

➤ **11:00 a.m. Presentation: "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)"**

CEDS contributes to effective economic development in America's communities and regions through a place-based, regionally driven economic development planning process. Economic development planning – as implemented through the CEDS – is not only a cornerstone of EDA programs, but successfully serves as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration.

➤ **Kevin Lindenman**, Illinois Association of Regional Councils and North Central Illinois Council of Governments

➤ **11:20 a.m. Group Photo** 📷

11:25 a.m.

➤ **Gather for bus departures**

11:30 a.m. 🚌

**Transfer to
mHUB**

mHUB is an innovation center for all things HardTech. Through prototyping labs, industry partnerships, and a commitment to U.S. manufacturing, the mHUB ecosystem is designed to remove barriers and increase the probability of building a sustainable business to commercialize new physical products.

➤ **12:00 p.m. Welcome and Panel: "Building the HardTech Ecosystem: Partners and Players"**

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is driven by the intersection of digital and hardware innovation, and Chicago leads R&D breakthroughs in advanced technologies including batteries, quantum and edge computing, electronics and sensors, cybersecurity, nanotechnology, AGTech, and MedTech.

➤ **1:00 p.m. Lunch**

➤ **2:00 p.m. Guided Tours of mHUB + Quantum Freezer**

Attendees will tour the new 80,000 sf innovation center led by mHUB leadership. This new facility on the city's near West Side opened in 2023 and helps anchor the revitalization of a neighborhood immediately outside of downtown Chicago, bringing opportunity and job creation to this Chicago community.

➤ **2:40 p.m. Group Photo** 📷

➤ **2:45 p.m. Presentation: "Hard Tech Startups"**

mHUB leadership will moderate a group conversation on implementing HardTech solutions in different settings. Learn how to access mHUB facilities, partnerships, and ecosystem to augment and support your own ecosystem development, gain insights on best practices, and failsafe strategies.

3:10 p.m.

➤ **Gather for bus departures**

3:20 p.m. 🚌

➤ **Transfer to Hotel**

➤ **3:45 p.m. Break for all attendees**

Use this time to dress for dinner or check out of the hotel if you will not be staying past Friday.

5:05 p.m.

➤ **Gather for bus departures**

5:15 p.m. 🚌

**Transfer to
Metropolitan Club**

➤ **Farewell Reception & Dinner with Intersect Illinois**

➤ **5:30 p.m. Networking**

➤ **7:15 p.m. Closing Remarks**

➤ **Casimir Peters**, Chief of Business Attraction and Development, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

➤ **Christy George**, President & CEO, Intersect Illinois

➤ **Jay Walsh**, Associate Vice President for Workforce Development and Community Engagement, University of Illinois

➤ **Juliana Aynes-Neville**, Development Counselor Permanent Mission of the United States to the OAS, U.S. Department of State

➤ **Kim Osborne**, Executive Secretary for Integral Development, Organization of American States

➤ **7:35 p.m. ACE Illinois Highlights**

➤ **7:45 p.m. Official Announcement and Transition Ceremony of the next ACE Fall 2025 Host**

➤ **7:55 p.m. Certificates of Recognition for Participants**

➤ **8:15 p.m. Dinner, Networking, and Farewell**

9:30 p.m.

➤ **Gather for bus departures**

9:40 p.m. 🚌

➤ **Transfer to Hotel**



Americas Competitiveness Exchange

April 27 to May 2, 2025



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OAS SEDI



EDA
U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

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Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
J.B. Pritzker, Governor