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AGENDA



Americas
Competitiveness
Exchange
May 10-15, 2026



City of
MEMPHIS

OAS



EDGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
GROWTH ENGINE
FOR MEMPHIS & SHELBY COUNTY



START CO.

E.D.A.
U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION



**Americas
Competitiveness
Exchange**
May 10-15, 2026

Welcome to

MEMPHIS

SUNDAY May 10, 2026

Attire: Business Casual **Reminder:** All participants must carry a valid **passport or ID**

9:30 a.m. Gather for bus departure

9:40 a.m. 

Transfer to
 **Graceland**

10:00 a.m.

 **Freedom 250: Visit to Graceland (optional)**

Participants will have the opportunity to visit Graceland, the iconic home of Elvis Presley, offering insight into a landmark of American cultural heritage and its lasting impact on the creative economy. Participants interested in attending are kindly requested to register in advance.

2:20 p.m. Gather for bus departure

2:30 p.m. 

Transfer to
 **The Peabody Memphis Hotel**

3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

 **Registration of participants**

3rd floor reception area

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

5:20 p.m. Gather for Introductory comments and departure

5:30 p.m. 

Walk to
 **Beale Street**

7:00 p.m.

 **Dinner and Networking at B.B. King's Blues Club**

An evening of networking at the renowned B.B. King's Blues Club on Beale Street. Participants will engage in informal exchanges while experiencing live blues performances and Southern cuisine in one of Memphis' most vibrant cultural districts.

8:30 p.m. 

Walk to
 **The Peabody Memphis Hotel**



MONDAY

May 11, 2026

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



7:30 a.m.

Welcome Breakfast & Economic Development Forum

The Peabody Memphis Hotel

Hernando Desoto Room, Mezzanine - The Peabody Memphis Hotel

8:00 a.m. Opening Ceremony

-  **Paul A. Young**, Mayor City of Memphis
-  **H.E. Leandro Rizzuto**, Ambassador of the United States of America to the Organization of American States
-  **Barbara Kotschwar**, Officer in charge, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, Organization of American States

• Economic Development Forum

Representatives from the Economic Development Growth Engine (EDGE) and the City of Memphis will present key initiatives driving economic and community development in the region. ACE leaders will gain insights into the strategic use of public incentives, affordable housing initiatives, support for small businesses and entrepreneurship, and place-based development efforts in the urban core.

-  **Dr. Joann Massey**, CEO of EDGE
-  **Gwyn Fisher**, Chief Economic Development Officer
-  **Doug McGowen**, CEO of Memphis Light Gas & Water

• International Trade, Compliance, and Government Regulations

-  **Thaddeus McBride**, Bass Berry Sims

• Innovation Driven Economic Development & Setting Expectations for the Week

-  **Andre Fowlkes**, CEO Start Co.

10:30 a.m. Gather for bus departure

Mezzanine - The Peabody Memphis Hotel

10:40 a.m. 

Transfer to

FedEx Executive Headquarters

11:30 a.m.

Building Strategic Partnerships in Global Logistics: FedEx Executive Session

FedEx is one of Memphis' most important economic and innovation engines. From this global hub, the company coordinates transportation, logistics, e-commerce, and supply chain operations worldwide. In terms of innovation, FedEx continues to invest in technology to optimize operations, improve customer experience, and advance the future of supply chains. Its global scale and long-standing presence in Memphis have helped position the city as a major center for logistics, employment, and business growth.

• Presentation

• Site visit

• Group Photo

• Lunch

1:00 p.m. Gather for bus departure

1:15 p.m. 

Transfer to

University of Memphis

2:00 p.m.

University of Memphis - FedEx Institute of Technology

R&D and Commercialization Efforts

Participants will tour the FedEx Institute of Technology at the University of Memphis, a leading hub for applied research, innovation, and commercialization. The visit will highlight cutting-edge initiatives such as the Center for Electrified and Autonomous Trucking and the National I-Corps Program, among others.

This session will provide valuable insights into how academia, industry, and government collaborate to accelerate technological advancement, foster entrepreneurship, and translate research into market-ready solutions.

• Presentation

-  **FedEx Institute of Technology**
-  **Center for Freight & Logistics Efficiency with Electrified & Automated Trucking**
-  **National Science Foundation I-Corps Program**
-  **Crews Center for Entrepreneurship**

• Site visit

• Group Photo

4:05 p.m. Gather for bus departure

4:15 p.m. 

Transfer to

Orion Financial Rooftop

5:00 p.m.

Reception

Hosted by Midsouth Latino Chamber of Commerce & Orion Financial

Delegates are invited to an evening reception featuring networking with Memphis-based business leaders and organizations. The event will take place on a rooftop venue overlooking downtown Memphis, offering a dynamic setting to foster connections and explore potential partnerships.

• Speakers:

-  **Ashley McDurmon**, CEO, Orion Financial
-  **Alex Matlock**, President, Mid-South Latino Chamber of Commerce
-  **Paul A. Young**, Mayor, City of Memphis

• Networking Reception

7:05 p.m. Gather for bus departure

7:15 p.m. 

Transfer to

The Peabody Memphis Hotel

• Dinner on your own



TUESDAY

May 12, 2026

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



- Breakfast on your own

8:00 a.m. Gather for bus departure

8:10 a.m.

Transfer to

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

9:00 a.m.

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Participants will visit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, a globally recognized leader in pediatric research and treatment. The visit will include a guided tour of the institution, followed by a discussion with leadership on advanced research initiatives and pathways to commercialization.

- Presentation by St. Jude Leadership

Opening Remarks & St. Jude Strategic Plan Overview

Dr. James R. Downing *President & Chief Executive Officer*

ALSAC Overview

Sue Harpole, *Senior Fellow (Former Chief Development Officer)*

St. Jude Global Overview

Dr. Carlos Rodriguez-Galindo, *Executive Vice President*

- St. Jude Visit & Applied Innovation Discussion

This session will highlight how cutting-edge science, innovation, and strategic partnerships contribute to breakthroughs in healthcare, offering valuable perspectives on translating research into real-world impact.

- Group Photo

12:20 p.m. Gather for bus departure

12:30 p.m.

Transfer to

National Civil Rights Museum

1:00 p.m.

National Civil Rights Museum

ACE leaders will tour the National Civil Rights Museum, gaining a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of the civil rights movement in the United States. The visit will be followed by a panel discussion exploring how these historical milestones continue to shape contemporary efforts in social justice and economic mobility.

- Lunch

Lunch discussion about social justice and economic mobility

Russell Wigginton, *President, National Civil Rights Museum*

- Guided Visit & Legacy Preview

- Lorraine Building visit

Civil Rights Movement overview & Dr. King's legacy

- Legacy Building sneak peek

- Group Photo

3:00 p.m. Gather for bus departure

3:05 p.m.

Transfer to

Epicenter

3:30 p.m.

Epicenter

Epicenter represents Memphis' startup and innovation ecosystem by connecting entrepreneurs with the resources they need to launch and grow high-impact businesses. Its work supports economic development by strengthening the region's pipeline of founders, improving access to capital, linking startups with industry customers, and building a more innovative economy. Through accelerators, pitch events, and ecosystem-building initiatives, Epicenter helps position Memphis as a growing center for entrepreneurship, technology, and job creation.

- Innovation & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Presentation

Epicenter Leadership will walk the delegation through the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Memphis region; specifically on their work in logistics, medical devices, and other emerging technologies as well as introducing the delegation to partners in the ecosystem.

Anthony Young, *CEO, Epicenter*

Nate Smith, *Director of Programs, Epicenter*

5:25 p.m. Gather for departure

5:30 p.m.

Walk to

FedEx Forum - Pinnacle Room

6:00 p.m.

Innovation Showcase

The Innovation Showcase offers a curated look at how innovation is being built across the Western Hemisphere. Featuring ecosystem leaders from multiple countries and founders from Memphis, the program explores how talent, capital, and collaboration come together to drive economic growth. By connecting global ecosystems with local innovation, the showcase highlights new pathways for cross-border partnerships and shared opportunity.

- Moderator:

Natasha Main, *Co-Founder, Innovation Exchange Coalition*

- Presenters:

Erika Dillard - *PopCheck Technologies, Inc., Memphis, USA*

Jillian Friot - *Venture Builders Fund, Memphis, USA*

Jee Vahn Knight - *Tourism, USA*

Gonzalo Valenci - *Córdoba Tech Cluster, Argentina*

Patrick Van Pelt - *Altravia Venture Studio, USA*

Mary Angelica Pérez - *Yucatán State Development Agency, Mexico*

- Networking

7:30 p.m. Gather for departure

7:35 p.m.

Walk to

The Peabody Memphis Hotel

- Dinner on your own



WEDNESDAY

May 13, 2026

Attire: Business - **Reminder:** All participants must carry a valid **passport or ID** and wear **comfortable shoes**.



- Breakfast on your own

9:00 a.m.

Economic Development Site Visit

Hernando Desoto Room at The Peabody Hotel

Get an inside look at how the Downtown Memphis Commission is bringing the Downtown Action Plan Vision to life. Explore how investments in public safety, cleanliness, and beautification are helping reclaim Main Street as the primary pedestrian corridor of Downtown. Learn how strategic support for commercial redevelopment is revitalizing key catalytic sites, restoring energy to underutilized properties, and attracting new investment. Hear directly from developers who are transforming historic buildings and overlooked assets into vibrant, productive spaces

- **Downtown Memphis Commission Overview Presentation**

 **Chandell Ryan, CEO, Downtown Memphis Commission**

9:30 a.m. Gather for bus departure

9:35 a.m. 

Transfer to Downtown

- Beale Street Economic Investment & Cultural Tour
- Medical & EDGE District Bus Tour

11:30 a.m. 

Transfer to The Peabody Memphis Hotel

12:00 p.m.

Lunch & Executive Discussion with the Tennessee Valley Authority

Hernando Desoto Room at The Peabody Hotel

Delegates will engage in a working lunch featuring a panel discussion with representatives from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The session will highlight TVA's strategic initiatives across energy, environmental sustainability, and economic development. Discussion will provide valuable insights into the role of integrated infrastructure and public utilities in supporting regional competitiveness, resilience, and long-term growth.

 **Latrivia Welch, Manager, Government & Community Relations, Tennessee Valley Authority**

 **Jennifer Call, Senior Program Manager, Environmental Compliance, Tennessee Valley Authority**

 **Eugene Johnson, Regional Economic Development Consultant, Tennessee Valley Authority**

12:45 p.m. Gather for bus departure

1:00 p.m. 

Transfer to

 **Selmer, Tennessee**

2:00 p.m.

AgInnovation & The Rural Economy in the Delta

Participants will travel to Lauderdale County to explore innovative practices shaping the future of agriculture in the Delta region. This session will showcase advancements ranging from agtech applications in the field to the transition toward high-value specialty crops.

The visit will also provide insight into the broader rural economy that supports these developments, highlighting opportunities for investment, value chain integration, and sustainable growth in agricultural communities.

- **Rose Creek Farms Visit & Field Trials**

A human-powered, no-till farm located in Selmer, TN that grows and harvests from real soil 52 weeks a year. Using techniques developed over 12 years of farming, we strive to grow and harvest the most nutrient-dense produce possible.

- **Group Photo**

3:50 p.m. Gather for bus departure

4:00 p.m. 

Transfer to

 **Somerville, Tennessee**

4:30 p.m.

AgInnovation & The Rural Economy in the Delta

Networking session with Somerville Mayor and local business owners.

- **Ripley Town Square Experience**

- **Midsouth Development District, AgLaunch, The State of Tennessee**

6:00 p.m. Gather for bus departure

6:10 p.m. 

Transfer to

 **The Peabody Memphis Hotel**

- Dinner on your own



THURSDAY

May 14, 2026

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



- **Breakfast on your own**

8:50 a.m. Gather for bus departure

9:00 a.m.

Transfer to

Crosstown Concourse

9:30 a.m.

The Crosstown Experience

One of Memphis' most distinctive examples of innovation through adaptive reuse and community-centered development. Built in the former Sears distribution center and reopened in 2017, it brings together health services, education, arts, small businesses, housing, and collaborative workspaces in a single mixed-use "vertical urban village." It contributes to the local economy by supporting jobs, entrepreneurship, neighborhood revitalization, and long-term investment, while also reinforcing Memphis' broader ecosystem of creativity, wellness, and economic development.

- **Presentation**

- **Featured Stops and Program Highlights**

- **Talk with**

- Todd Richardson**, *President & CEO of Crosstown Concourse*

- **Site visit led by**

- Erin Shelton**, *Director of Marketing and Business Development*

- **Group Photo**

11:30 a.m. Gather for bus departure

11:40 a.m.

Transfer to

Memphis in May International BBQ Festival Lunch

12:30 p.m.

Lunch hosted at Mayor Paul A. Young's Tent

Catered by Rendezvous BBQ

1:30 p.m.

International Office Hours

- **Curated speed networking meetings with regional economic and community organizations and companies**

4:00 p.m.

BBQ Festival Experience

Enjoy exclusive access to BBQ Alley at the International BBQ Festival, featuring a curated tasting experience with up to five competing pitmasters. This immersive session offers a unique opportunity to engage directly with culinary entrepreneurs and event organizers, while experiencing one of Memphis' most iconic cultural industries.

Participants will also have the opportunity to connect with festival organizers and representatives from this year's honored country, Ireland, fostering informal exchange and cross-cultural dialogue.

Option 1: - 5:30 p.m. **Gather for bus departure**

Option 2: - 6:30 p.m. **Gather for bus departure**

Transfer to

The Peabody Memphis Hotel

- **Dinner on your own**



FRIDAY

May 15, 2026

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



- Breakfast on your own

7:20 a.m. Gather for bus departure

7:30 a.m.

Transfer to
The Works

8:00 a.m.

The Works Facility Visit & Community Development Dialogue

Join The Works, Inc. for an immersive, guided bus tour showcasing their transformative work across Memphis communities. This experience will highlight a range of place-based initiatives focused on economic development and community revitalization. Participants will visit key sites including urban farms, community orchards, affordable housing developments, and local farmers markets, gaining insight into The Works' holistic approach to neighborhood investment. The tour will culminate with a visit to the Northside High mixed-use development, offering a closer look at innovative strategies for creating vibrant communities.

- **Presentation:** *Moving communities to housing secureness, food stability, health equity, financial empowerment, and regenerative solutions*

Roshun Austin, President & CEO of The Works

- **Presentation:** *Code Crew Introduction*

Learn about Code Crew's efforts to expand access to high-quality STEM education. This session will highlight Code Crew's work in building pathways for both youth and adults into careers in engineering, data science, artificial intelligence, and other in-demand technology fields, with a focus on equity, workforce development, and long-term economic opportunity.

Meka Egwuekwe, CEO of Code Crew

- **Site visit**

- **Group Photo**

10:30 a.m. Gather for bus departure

10:40 a.m.

Transfer to
Orgill Innovation Center

11:30 a.m.

Orgill Innovation Center for Retail Collaboration & Testing

ACE leaders will visit the Orgill Innovation Center, a leading facility supporting independent retailers across the full spectrum of retail development. The site visit will highlight collaborative approaches to product testing, merchandising, and innovation within the retail sector.

The session will include a working lunch with Orgill leadership, offering insights into the operations and strategy of the world's largest independently owned hardlines distributor, as well as opportunities for partnership and knowledge exchange.

- **Welcome Remarks and Presentation**

Boyden Moore, CEO, Orgill Innovation Center

Greg Stine, EVP of Marketing & Communications, Orgill Innovation Center

- **Site visit**

- **Group Photo**

- **Lunch**

1:25 p.m. Gather for bus departure

1:30 p.m.

Transfer to
Bass Pro Pyramid

2:30 p.m.

Bass Pro Pyramid

Explore, Shop, Relax & Take Pictures at this 535k square-foot Bass Pro Shop located in the Memphis Pyramid. Offering a retail experience like no other, this store features 100-foot tall cypress trees and two floors of immersive retail space. With over 600,000 gallons of water, 36 varieties of fish native to the Mississippi River can be seen throughout the store.

3:50 p.m. Gather for bus departure

4:00 p.m.

Transfer to
The Peabody Memphis Hotel

5:30 p.m.

LOI Signing

The Peabody Memphis Hotel

The Forrest Room

6:00 p.m.

Closing Ceremony

The Peabody Memphis Hotel

The Forrest Room

- **Closing Remarks**

Dr. Joann Massey, CEO, EDGE

Julianna Aynes-Neville, Development Counselor of the United States of America to the Organization of American States

Barbara Kotschwar, Officer in charge, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, Organization of American States

Paul A. Young, Mayor, City of Memphis

- **ACE Memphis Highlights**

- **Announcement of the Next ACE Edition**

- **Presentation of Certificates**

- **Reception**



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**THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS**



Orion
FINANCIAL



St. Jude Children's
Research Hospital

**NATIONAL
CIVIL RIGHTS
MUSEUM**
AT THE LORRAINE MOTEL

EPICENTER

**ROSECREEK
FARMS**

**CROSSTOWN
CONCOURSE**

ORGILL

**THE
WORKS**
rebuild. restore. renew.

**BASS
BERRY
SIMS**

**AG
LAUNCH**

**DOWNTOWN
MEMPHIS
COMMISSION**

TVA

TENNESSEE
VALLEY
AUTHORITY

Ford

TENNESSEE
EXPERIENCE HIGH VOLUME

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