



Americas Competitiveness Exchange

May 10-15, 2026

EXTENDED REPORT

ACE Memphis

May 10-15, 2026



Americas
Competitiveness
Exchange
May 10-15, 2026



OAS | SEDI



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SECTION 01

Introduction

ACE Memphis



ACE Memphis successfully delivered a productive week-long program that brought together 50 global and regional leaders from the Americas and beyond. The program took place in Memphis, Selmer, and Somerville within the state of Tennessee, United States from Saturday May 10th to Friday May 15th, 2026.

ACE Memphis participants connected with Memphis' globally renowned industries, including Logistics, Trade and Global Commerce, Advanced Mobility and Electrification, Artificial Intelligence and Frontier Technologies, Healthcare and Life Sciences, and Ag-Innovation and Food Systems.

Overall, 570 connections and business opportunities were reported, including amongst participants as well as between participants and Memphis sites. Collaboration opportunities include potential international trade partnerships, knowledge exchange or development for best practices and methodologies to strengthen industry clusters and entrepreneurial ecosystems, new university-led and industry-led Research and Development (R&D) projects, start-ups soft landing programs, and capital formation or placement.

Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE) is a powerful mechanism for fostering cooperation and forming new partnerships. According to data from the ACE Memphis final survey, 90% of the global and regional leaders expressed that ACE Memphis completely met or exceeded their expectations (38 participants out of 42 surveyed).

50

Global and regional
leaders

19

Countries
represented

570

Connections
and business
opportunities

90%

Completely met
or exceeded
expectations

SECTION 02

The ACE Program

Created in 2014, the Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE) program is jointly implemented and supported by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Government of the United States, through the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in coordination with the International Trade Administration (ITA), and the Department of State (Permanent Mission to the OAS). The commitment of the OAS and the United States Government to ACE extends from the design and implementation phases to evaluation, monitoring, and reporting in collaboration with host countries and regions. The ACE initiative fosters an environment for establishing long-term partnerships, cooperation opportunities, and new projects, making it a network of networks and a community of impact. With the implementation of 18th ACE Editions, ACE has evolved into a flagship hemispheric program, providing tangible long-term benefits to countries and communities involved.



SECTION 03

Welcome to Memphis

The ACE Memphis Agenda

The ACE Memphis Agenda

The ACE Memphis program took place in Memphis, Selmer, and Somerville in the state of Tennessee, United States. The high-level delegation connected with over 15 sites and 45 projects during the one-week program, to learn best practices and enhance collaboration opportunities on economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Daily videos with a summary of each day from the ACE Memphis agenda are available by clicking on the images below:



Day 1 · May 10



Day 2 · May 11



Day 3 · May 12



Day 4 · May 13



Day 5 · May 14



ACE Memphis Info-Center

Scan the code to access the full agenda, daily videos, presentations, and the ACE Memphis media kit.

riacevents.org/ACE/memphisinfocenter

Exploring Memphis with the ACE Delegation

DAY 01 Sunday, May 10



This day was designated as an Arrival and Welcome portion of the agenda, with an optional program prepared for delegates as they arrived in Memphis. The ACE Delegation began the day at Graceland, with opening remarks delivered by leaders from the U.S. Department of State, recognizing Freedom 250 and emphasizing how the arts and culture can develop strong creative economies.

Delegates then heard a fireside chat between Angie Marchese, Vice President of Archives & Exhibits for Elvis Presley Enterprises, Inc. and Kevin Kern, Vice President of Public Relations for Memphis Tourism. Speakers emphasized the importance of Graceland as an economic engine and community asset to preserve and share local history and culture. After the sessions, delegates enjoyed guided tours of Graceland, introduced themselves, and shared collaboration ideas over lunch.

DAY 02 Monday, May 11



The ACE Delegation began the day with the Opening Ceremony, where representatives from the City of Memphis, the Organization of American States, and the Government of the United States welcomed the delegation and underscored the importance of advancing competitiveness and cooperation across the Americas.

Mayor Paul A. Young's opening remarks highlighted Memphis as a city uniquely positioned to advance innovation, strengthen partnerships, and drive future growth across the Americas. U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, H.E. Leandro Rizzuto emphasized how the Western hemisphere should be defined not only by shared challenges, but by what leaders across the Americas can build together.

Local Memphis leaders and authorities held an Economic Development Forum, allowing ACE delegates to engage in discussions focused on key strategies and best practices driving growth in Memphis, including public incentives, infrastructure development, support for entrepreneurship, and place-based initiatives. Remarks and a panel allowed participants to hear from Andre Fowlkes, President of StartCo, Dr. Joann Massey, President & CEO of EDGE, Gwyn Fisher, Chief Economic Development Officer of the Greater Memphis Chamber, Doug McGowen, CEO of Memphis Light, Gas & Water, and John Zeanah, Chief Development & Infrastructure for the City of Memphis. Panelists introduced the "Memphis Model" in which multiple local organizations collaborate in stewardship for investment and growth opportunities, ensuring success and optimal economic impact.

During a session focused on International Trade, Compliance, and Government Regulations, the ACE Delegation heard from Thaddeus McBride, Attorney at Bass, Berry & Sims PLC and Brett Hughes, General Counsel at Buckham Laboratories. Panelists and ACE leaders engaged in informative discussions about current trade landscapes, including IEEPA dynamics, the return of Section 301 and Section 232, and FCPA enforcement.

The delegation then visited the FedEx Executive Headquarters, where participants examined how global logistics, innovation, and technology are shaping supply chains and positioning Memphis as a leading international hub. Delegates learned about the FedEx origin story, global operational scale, and economic impact, including a presentation of the company's use of AI to improve customer experience, and internal program to ensure AI upskilling and adoption companywide. Permanent Representative of Argentina to the OAS H.E. Ambassador Carlos Bernardo Cherniak presented a Certificate on behalf of the ACE Committee to Bonnie Harrison, Managing Director of Communications at FedEx, William Primeaux, Manager of Government Affairs at FedEx and the rest of the FedEx team to acknowledge and thank them for their participation as a host site for ACE Memphis.

At the University of Memphis FedEx Institute of Technology, participants were welcomed by Executive In Residence, Dr. Jeff Brittain, and explored the role of research and development in advancing innovation. Presentations focused on commercialization efforts and collaboration

among academia, industry, and government. University of Memphis faculty and researchers pitched their startups and technologies, and Dr. Brittain shared resources on the University's and the Center's strong AI capabilities, cross-regional research partnerships and centers of excellent for logistics and transportation such as the Mid-South AI Resources Consortium and the Center for Transportation Innovation, Education & Research. After the presentations and pitches, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the OAS H.E. Ambassador Raul Alberto Florentin presented a Certificate on behalf of the ACE Committee to Dr. Jeff Brittain and FedEx Institute of Technology team to acknowledge and thank them for their participation as a host site for ACE Memphis.

The day concluded with a networking reception hosted by the Midsouth Latino Chamber of Commerce and Orion Financial, providing an opportunity for participants to strengthen connections and foster new partnerships.

DAY 03 Tuesday, May 12



The delegation began with a visit to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (St. Jude's), where participants learned about the institution's leadership in pediatric research and treatment, as well as its global efforts to advance cutting-edge science and improve health outcomes worldwide. Participants heard from Dr. James R. Downing, President & CEO of St. Jude, Dr. Carlos Rodriguez Galindo, Executive VP of St. Jude, and Sue Harpole, Sr. Fellow at American Lebanese Syrian Association Charities (ALSAC). The presentations focused on the history and trajectory of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, framing pediatric research as a source of shared medical knowledge and practical tools for hospitals and research institutions, sustained by the ALSAC philanthropic model and a culture where scientists, clinicians, and families share the same campus, cafeteria, and mission. U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, H.E. Leandro Rizzuto, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the OAS H.E. Ambassador Carlos Bernardo Cherniak, Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the OAS H.E. Ambassador Raul Alberto Florentin, and Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the OAS H.E. Edison Lanza presented a Certificate on behalf of the ACE Committee to Dr. James R. Downing and the St. Jude's team to acknowledge and thank them for their participation as a host site for ACE Memphis. Delegates received guided tours of the facilities and were able to engage with scientists.

The program continued with a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum, where ACE leaders heard remarks from National Civil Rights Museum President, Russell Wigginton, National Civil Rights Museum Director of History, Ryan Jones, and U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, H.E. Leandro Rizzuto. Participants were then given a tour of the museum guided by Historians, reflected on the historical foundations of the civil rights movement and engaged in discussions on its ongoing influence on economic mobility, community development, and opportunity. Officer-in-Charge, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and Director of Economic Development - OAS, Barbara Kotschwar provided President Russell Wigginton and the National Civil Rights Museum with a Certificate on behalf of the ACE Committee to acknowledge and thank them for their participation as a host site for ACE Memphis.

At Epicenter, participants explored Memphis' innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, gaining insights into how startups are supported through access to capital, partnerships, and ecosystem-building initiatives. Delegates learned about Epicenter's programmatic pipeline (Innovate Accelerate, Core Curriculum, the Opportunity Challenge, and 0 to 510) to empower Memphis-based founders. Participants were welcomed by Epicenter CEO Anthony Young and then sorted into interest-specific groups for workshops led by Epicenter Director of Programs, Nate Smith and Start Co. Co-Founder Andrew Fowlkes. Breakout conversations focused on healthcare, venture capital, and logistics allowed participants to exchange knowledge and offer collaboration opportunities between Epicenter and organizations in their regions. The site visit concluded with a networking hour with Epicenter team members and entrepreneurial ecosystem community leaders.

The ACE Delegation then headed to FedEx Forum for an Innovation Showcase organized by the Innovation Exchange Coalition (IEC). Participants had the opportunity to hear pitches from Memphis-based and ACE Network affiliated startup founders and innovation ecosystem builders during the Showcase presented by Co-Founder of IEC Natasha Main. Sweet Bio, PopCheck Technologies, Hera Health Solutions, Spreza Media, and Cityscan AI pitched their ventures and representatives from across the hemisphere - Cordoba Cluster, Altravia Ventures, Venture Builders Fund, Government of the State of Yucatan, Mexico - highlighted opportunities for cross-border collaboration. The program emphasized Memphis as an exemplary ecosystem and demonstrated that innovation can and should happen anywhere in the U.S. and across the Western Hemisphere.

DAY 04 Wednesday, May 13



The day began with an economic development site visit in downtown Memphis, where participants examined initiatives aimed at revitalizing the urban core through strategic investments, commercial redevelopment, and public space improvements. Downtown Memphis Commission CEO, Changell Ryan guided delegates sharing insights throughout a Beale Street economic investment and cultural walking tour and a Medical and EDGE Districts bus tour.

During a working lunch with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), ACE leaders heard from TVA team members Lativia Welch, Manager of Community Relations, Jennifer Call, Senior Program Manager of Environmental Compliance, and Eugene Johnson, Regional Economic Development Consultant. ACE Participants and panelists engaged in discussions on energy, regional partnerships, and infrastructure as key drivers of long-term economic growth.

In the afternoon, participants traveled to Lauderdale County to learn about Ag-Innovation, Food Systems, and rural economic development in the Memphis area. At their first stop at Rose Creek Farms in Selmer, the ACE delegation was welcomed by Rose Creek Farms founder Ray Tyler and his family alongside Pete Nelson, President & CEO and Margaret Oldham, Vice President of Innovation at AgLaunch. Participants learned about AgLaunch's Farmer-Centric Innovation model. AgLaunch leadership shared information on their framework to support farmers (Selection, Mentorship, and On-Farm Development) and their \$50M Innovation Fund. Delegates were able to sample farm produce and see a field trial for a robot in action. ACE participant and CEO of Cordoba Tech Cluster, Gonzalo Valenci presented Rose Creek Farms and AgLaunch with a certificate on behalf of the ACE Committee to acknowledge and thank them for their participation as a host site for ACE Memphis.

Next, the ACE delegation headed to Somerville where participants were welcomed by Somerville Mayor Skip Taylor alongside community and business leaders in the historic downtown area. The Mayor shared the story behind Fayette County Square's revival to become a record-occupancy retail core, highlighting a community-first grants strategy and building a new high-tech rural hospital. Delegates were then invited to shop and network with locals throughout downtown businesses. The day underscored the importance of fostering participatory economic development by strengthening connections between urban centers and rural regions.

DAY 05 Thursday, May 14



The delegation visited Crosstown Concourse, a leading example of adaptive reuse and integrated development, where participants explored how a former industrial facility has been transformed into a hub for health services, education, business, and the arts. ACE Participants toured a 1.5M Sq. Ft. former Sears Roebuck & Co. Distribution center that sat vacant for 20 years before being reborn through a \$200M investment as a 'Vertical Urban Village', guided by Todd Richardson, President & CEO, Erin Shelton, Director of Marketing & BD, and McLean Wilson, Co-Founder of Crosstown Arts. Delegates engaged in discussion with Crosstown Arts leadership during a panel after touring the site. ACE Participant, Professor and Researcher at Tec de Monterrey, Dr. Ernesto Stein presented the Crosstown Arts team with a Certificate on behalf of the ACE Committee to acknowledge and thank them for their participation as a host site for ACE Memphis. ACE Participants from the University of New Brunswick in Canada, ESEN in El Salvador, JBDC in Jamaica, and the U.S. Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States in The Bahamas presented their plans to engage in Letters Of Intent for innovation and knowledge exchange collaborations to strengthen R&D and develop the workforce of the future.

The program continued with participation in the Memphis in May International BBQ Festival, providing ACE leaders with a unique opportunity to experience a key cultural and economic asset while engaging with local entrepreneurs and community stakeholders.

Memphis Mayor Paul Young hosted the delegates for lunch at his tent, where he provided remarks highlighting the festival as a foundational piece of local identity and a testament to communal spirit. He encouraged ACE participants to now consider themselves "Memphis ambassadors" and tell the region's story in their communities and the world. Ireland was recognized as the Honored Country for Memphis in May 2026. At the tent, ACE delegates were able to engage directly with regional organizations across Memphis during an International Office Hours program led by Start Co. A series of curated meetings with community leaders and local companies fostered dialogue to identify opportunities for collaboration across different industry sectors and countries.

Day 4 showed how Memphis' culture drives talent attraction, tourism, and global connection—proving culture isn't a side story, but a true economic engine.

DAY 06 Friday, May 15



The final day of ACE Memphis focused on strengthening community-driven economic competitiveness and advancing innovation with long-term impact. The Program began with a bus tour led by President & CEO of The Works, Roshun Austin. The tour showcased multiple economic transformation projects throughout Memphis including urban farms, community orchards, affordable housing developments, and local farmers markets. The tour culminated at the Northside High mixed-use development where delegates learned how the Works rebuilds, restores, and renews Memphis neighborhoods through innovative and community-led financing, program development, and infrastructure strategy. Participants were able to engage with Code Crew and learn about their unique partnerships driven model to collaborate with leading universities and local corporations to provide youth with training opportunities and create the workforce of the future. Code Crew CEO Meka Egwueke described the program to the ACE delegates in the location for their future headquarters in the Northside High project.

At the Orgill Innovation Center, ACE leaders explored opportunities to expand international trade and nearshoring initiatives. Delegates enjoyed a working lunch with Orgill leadership and heard about the company's history and global footprint from Orgill Innovation Center CEO Boyden Moore, Orgill EVP of Marketing and Communications, Greg Stine, and Orgill VP of International Sales, Francisco Ferraud. Lunch was followed by a guided tour of offices and collaboration and testing facilities, showcasing the working backbone of the world's largest independently owned hardlines distributor. ACE Participant and Director of Strategic Projects for the Mexico Business Council, Fausto Gurrea presented the Orgill Innovation Center team with a Certificate on behalf of the ACE Committee to acknowledge and thank them for their participation as a host site for ACE Memphis.

The day concluded with the closing ceremony of ACE Memphis, featuring remarks from Mayor Paul Young, officials from the U.S. Department of State and the Organization of American States, and CEO of EDGE Dr. Joann Massey. The delegation signed 110 Letters of Intent aimed at advancing partnerships among Memphis stakeholders and ACE leaders.

These agreements outlined commitments to promote collaboration among 17 countries in Technology and Innovation, Trade and Investment, Entrepreneurship and SME Development, Cross-Border Knowledge Exchange, Sector-Specific Industry Partnerships, and Creative Economy initiatives. Certificates were presented to participants and organizers in recognition of their invaluable contributions to the success of ACE Memphis.

The ceremony also included the announcement of Barranquilla, Colombia, as the next host city for ACE. ACE Memphis concluded with a renewed spirit of collaboration and a strong foundation for continued regional engagement.

By the Numbers

570

overall connections and business opportunities reported

50

leaders were part of the ACE Memphis delegation, including participants, special guests, and ACE Committee Members

19

countries represented

50+

speakers shared their knowledge and offered opportunities for collaboration

15

sites and 45+ projects were featured in ACE Memphis

100%

of survey respondents would recommend the ACE program to other leaders

95%

of participants reported coming across opportunities that they did not anticipate by participating in ACE Memphis

90%

of survey respondents reported that ACE Memphis completely met their goals

SECTION 05

Memphis Overview: Key Clusters and Economic Landscape

ACE Memphis Clusters

01

Logistics, Trade, and Global Commerce

02

Advanced Mobility and Electrification

03

Artificial Intelligence and Frontier Technologies

04

Healthcare and Life Sciences

05

AgInnovation and Food Systems

ACE Memphis Host Sites



SECTION 06

Partnership Opportunities

ACE Delivered

ACE Memphis connected the delegation with some of the most innovative companies and institutions in Memphis. Global and regional leaders:

Expanded their knowledge of Memphis economic development ecosystems, especially in the Health & Life Sciences, Agricultural Innovation & Food Systems, and Trade & Global Commerce industry clusters.

Identified trade and investment opportunities and explored academic and research partnerships.

Learned best practices for economic development and enhanced their skills to communicate and partner with international stakeholders.



Projects, agreements, and partnerships are moving forward

ACE is a powerful mechanism that fosters cooperation and creation of new partnerships to strengthen economic development in the Americas.

570

Overall connections and business opportunities reported

240

with Memphis sites

330

with ACE delegation

New Partnerships

Category	Quantity
Trade, Innovation and Productive Development	50
Technology & Innovation	25
Entrepreneurship & SME Development	15
CrossBorder Knowledge Exchange & Ecosystem Building	7
Cultural & Creative Economy	7
Mining, Energy & Industrial Development	6

A total of 110 Letters of intent were signed

Participant Experience: Highlights

100% of ACE Memphis participants would recommend participating in ACE to their networks.

90% of participants reported that their goals for ACE Memphis were completely met, and within that group 37% pointed out that their goals were surpassed.

95% of participants reported coming across opportunities that they did not anticipate by participating in ACE Memphis.

70% of all participants reported that they developed or improved capacities to communicate and partner with international stakeholders and enhanced their skills in economic development due to participating in ACE Memphis. Within this same group, 97% of participants noted that these capacities were developed or improved “A great deal”.

All participants gained new knowledge across all sectors with an average response rate of 0% for “None”, representing a decrease of -16% against PreSurvey responses for this category.

91% of participants gained a “Medium to High” level of knowledge across all themes, representing an improvement of more than 2X against PreSurvey responses where this level of knowledge across all topics averaged 42%.

Top 3 sectors where participants gained higher knowledge throughout ACE Memphis are listed in Exit Survey results as follows: 1) Healthcare & Life Sciences (+63%), Agricultural Innovation & Food Systems (+49%), and Trade & Global Commerce (+45%).

As a result of the ACE Memphis program, participants:

42 Increased visibility with international partners or investors

41 Strengthened positioning in international markets

41 Improved recognition from government agencies or policymakers

42 Have greater legitimacy when pursuing international partnerships

New skills developed by ACE Memphis

41 Communicate with international partners or stakeholders

40 Pitch ideas or proposals to diverse audiences

41 Understand different markets or economic ecosystems

41 Collaborate across sectors (government, industry, academia)

37 Develop materials for international audiences (presentations, marketing, etc.)

41 Enhance skills in economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurship

Cooperation or partnership opportunities across the Memphis ecosystem reported as a result of ACE



Alba Sanchez – Deputy Director of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, El Salvador

The team at El Salvador will hold a workshop with Epicenter to explore partnering for knowledge exchange and softlanding programs to strengthen innovation ecosystems bilaterally. We will also connect with Memphis Tourism to explore partnerships between tour operators across both regions. We will connect with the University of Memphis FedEx Institute of Technology to explore R&D initiatives that can enrich knowledge exchange with El Salvador, to then allow us to share access to knowledge with multiple countries in the Western Hemisphere. We will evaluate potential collaboration between St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and Hospital Nacional de Ninos Benjamin Bloom to strengthen medical research and specialists' development.



Yill Otero – General Secretary, ProPanama, Panama

The team at ProPanama will continue conversations with the City of Memphis team to host a Memphis delegation in Panama, and exchange best practices and further explore bilateral collaboration focused on key industry sectors and regional assets that represent common strengths. We have facilitated an introduction between the Crosstown Concourse leadership team and a top communitydriven developer in Panama to allow them to explore potential collaborations.



Dr. Ernesto Stein – Distinguished University Professor in Public Policy, Tecnologico de Monterrey, Mexico

The School of Social Sciences and Government will explore collaboration with EDGE and the Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce to benchmark their regionwide model and explore application for capability upgrading of Mexican state level investment attraction agencies. I will also work with Epicenter to evaluate collaboration with my institution's Distrito Tlalpan for entrepreneurship and placemaking.



Mikhail Bullard – Minister Counsellor/Alternate Representative, Permanent Mission of the Bahamas to the OAS, The Bahamas

Our team will explore a collaboration framework with the University of Memphis to facilitate knowledge exchange and R&D between the Acre Institute and The Bahamas Agricultural Institute.



Ramon Colina – President & CEO, Colina Group, Panama

I discussed my interest in building a student exchange program with the University of Memphis and look forward to setting up a meeting with their International Relations department.



Dave Eyerly, CoFounder, AcceleratePV – United States

I intend to establish a structured softlanding program between my organization and innovation ecosystems internationally and will stay in touch with Epicenter and Start Co. to exchange knowledge and best practices.



**Patrick Van Pelt, Venture Studio Founder & Fiduciary Steward, Altravia
Venture Studio – United States**

I discussed potential collaboration with the Tennessee Valley Authority to map intersections between healthcare finance, infrastructure, and enterprise value creation. I also had a conversation with the Greater Memphis Chamber to explore opportunities between the Houston and Memphis business ecosystems, starting with supporting PoPCheck to strengthen and build investment and partnership connections in Houston, with a focus on the Texas Medical Center. I would like to facilitate introductions to investors focused on warehousing for Suzanne Drumwright, Founder of Limber Robotics. I talked to BOPA Precision Agriculture about exploring a collaboration in which we can exchange and build best practices for rural economic development and agricultural ecosystems. Connected with Memphis Light, Gas, and Water Division to explore benchmarking excellence in residential and lightcommercial resilience infrastructure, including battery backup systems. I will also follow up with connections made at Orgill to explore how Orgill supports small businesses and local economic resilience and gather best practices relevant to communitybased hardware and supply ecosystems. With Epicenter, I will explore the opportunity to develop an analysis of which regions and organizations Memphis is primarily buying from and selling to across key industry sectors.



**Ignacio Cazana – Alternate Representative for Permanent Mission of
Paraguay to the OAS, Paraguay**

I would like to establish a cooperation channel with St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and explore a Framework Collaboration Agreement to connect St. Jude's worldclass medical and research capabilities with healthcare and academic institutions in Paraguay. This vehicle will focus on knowledge transfer, pediatric oncology research partnerships, and capacity building for Paraguayan medical professionals.



**Virginia Avila, Secretary of State of Foreign and Business Affairs, Government of
the Province of Tucuman, Argentina**

I connected with The University of Memphis' department of Biomedical Engineering and the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. Researchers highlighted interest in exploring opportunities for human clinical trials and we briefly discussed the advantages for regulatory efficiency and patient recruitment for this work in Argentina. I will continue to explore collaborations with them, and I will also evaluate potential growth and connection opportunities for Sweet Bio in Argentina.



**Carlos Fernando Villacreces – Director of Planning and International
Cooperation, Government of Tungurahua, Ecuador**

ACE Memphis allows me to deepdive into urban revitalization, drawing inspiration from and benchmarking models presented to us by The Works, Crosstown Concourse, and the Downtown Memphis Commission. I intend to leverage my AI expertise to streamline and boost the efficiency of community support initiatives. The visit to Orgill represents an opportunity to explore collaborations to connect western market suppliers with their specific material demands and strengthen supply chains.



Roberto Chevarria – Vice President for the Andean Region, FIJE – IberoAmerican Federation for Young Entrepreneurs, Peru

As Andean Vice President of the IberoAmerican Federation of Young Entrepreneurs (FIJE), my objective is to translate the discussions from ACE Memphis into a dynamic operational framework that facilitates bidirectional internationalization. To achieve this, we will explore establishing framework agreements with key entities such as the MidSouth Latino Chamber of Commerce, EDGE, and the City of Memphis to jointly design and validate soft landing programs that reduce entry barriers for young entrepreneurs from the Andean region looking to expand into the U.S., and vice versa. This includes access to coworking spaces, localized legal and tax advisory, and guided networking agendas for businesses entering the market, and promoting a matchmaking vehicle where tech startups and service companies from the Andean region can partner with local Memphis businesses to jointly apply for innovation funds, technology transfer, or bilateral procurement opportunities.



Photo

Bernardo Guillamon, Consultant, InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB)

We discussed potential partnerships with St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and the University of Memphis focused on knowledge exchange and innovation for healthcare. We discussed potentially leveraging an upcoming visit St. Jude's has planned to D.C. in September to set time for a presentation with IDB healthcare teams and explore potential synergy to aid their reach for countries where they want a higher penetration or they are monitoring specific challenges, including potential for expanding efforts against child cancer with IDB support. Similarly, with University of Memphis Lab, we discussed potential partnership areas for Latin America: 1) Expanding access to health services and exploring medical trials, 2) Branding plans for specific countries and cities, and 3) Facilitating a connection to IDB's fund Fontagro (integrated by 10+ national agricultural research institutions) to explore innovative agricultural solutions.



Adriana Bonilla – Assistant Director of Business Development, Arlington Economic Development, USA

The Orgill team will visit Arlington for a regional sites and assets tour in the coming months.



Nicolas QuinteroFandino – Business and Investment Specialist, ApexBrazil, Brazil

I have extended an invitation to Orgill to visit Brazil for a customized trade mission organized by ApexBrazil.



Harold Davis – CEO, Jamaica Business Development Corporation, Jamaica

I am particularly interested in partnering with Crosstown Concourse to explore establishing a similar ecosystem for Creatives in Jamaica, and with Epicenter to exchange knowledge and benchmark their model for adaptation to strengthen our entrepreneurial programs in Jamaica.



Jillian Friot – CoFounder, Venture Builders Fund (VBF), USA

We will partner with AgLaunch and Epicenter to coevaluate startups for investment readiness and share those opportunities with VBF's investor network. We are interested in partnering with FedEx, the University of Memphis FedEx Institute of Technology, the City of Memphis, and the Downtown Memphis Commission on a challengedriven scout model. FedEx, the Institute, and City teams can share their most pressing challenges for logistics, transportation, or civic and operational issues, and VBF can scout and match startups capable of solving them and facilitate pilot opportunities.



Fausto Gurrea – Director of Strategy, Mexican Business Council, Mexico

I would like to explore facilitating a collaboration between St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and Casa de la Amistad in Mexico City, to exchange knowledge and improve best practices, benchmarking the ALSAC model to build robust fundraising capabilities.

Partnership Opportunities Among ACE Memphis Participants

Dr. Ernesto Stein

Distinguished University Professor in Public Policy,
Tecnologico de Monterrey, Mexico

- Fausto Gurrea
- Fabiola Murrieta
- Radin Rahimzadeh
- Jillian Friot
- Alma Vanessa Peralta
- Mary Angelica Perez
- Erika Apunte
- Ignacio Munyo

Alma Vanessa Peralta

International Trade & Investment Specialist,
City of Tucson/Arizona District Export Council

- Octavio Arzate
- Gonzalo Valenci
- Dr. Ernesto Stein
- Fabiola Murrieta
- Erika Dillard
- Ramon Colina
- Mary Angelica Perez

Dave Eyerly

CoFounder, AcceleratePV, USA

- Luis Daniel Ramirez
- Gonzalo Valenci
- Jillian Friot
- Nicolas Quintero-Fandino

Fabiola Murrieta Peralta

Strategic Partnerships & Govt. Affairs Coordinator,
Penoles Industries, Mexico

- Mary Angelica Perez
- Roberto Cheverria
- Alma Vanessa Peralta
- Gonzalo Valenci
- Dominic Blakely
- Dr. Ernesto Stein
- Fausto Gurrea
- Maria Jose Nichols

Fausto Gurrea

Director of Strategy, Mexican Business Council, Mexico

- Dr. Ernesto Stein
- Gonzalo Valenci
- Maria Jose Nichols
- Venki Mandapati
- Dominic Blakely
- Pedro Rincon
- Roberto Cheverria
- Fabiola Murrieta
- Linda Teiyen
- Carlos Alberto Martinez Cortes
- Mary Angelica Perez
- Ignacio Munyo

Gonzalo Valenci

Executive Director, Cordoba Tech Cluster, Argentina

- Alma Vanessa Peralta
- Mary Angelica Lopez
- Erika Apunte
- Dave Eyerly
- Jillian Friot
- Linda Teiyen
- Carlos Fernando Villacreces
- Fausto Gurrea
- Fabiola Murrieta

Jillian Friot

CoFounder, Venture Builders Fund (VBF), USA

- Harold Davis
- Jorge Gentle
- Dr. Ernesto Stein
- Juliana Ceballos
- Dave Eyerly
- Dominic Blakely

Carlos Alberto Martinez Cortes

CEO, TechBA LatAm, Mexico

- Jorge Gentle
- Erika Apunte
- Roberto Cheverria
- Luis Daniel Ramirez
- Fausto Gurrea
- Carolina Rosales
- Daniela Gutierrez

Maria Jose Nichols Alvarez

President, CACIF Youth, Guatemala

- Ramon Colina
- Fabiola Murrieta Peralta
- Luis Daniel Ramirez
- Radin Rahimzadeh
- Octavio Arzate
- Fausto Gurrea
- Mary Angelica Perez
- Erika Apunte
- Carolina Rosales

Dominic Blakely

Innovation & Entrepreneurship Strategist, J Herbert Smith
Centre for Technology Management and Entrepreneurship
at University of New Brunswick, Canada

- Jillian Friot
- Harold Davis
- Mikhail Bullard
- Juliana Ceballos
- Fabiola Murrieta

Carolina Rosales

Executive Director, Invest in Cartagena, Colombia

- Maria Jose Nichols
- Carlos Alberto Martinez Cortes

Luis Daniel Ramirez

Executive Director, Yo Empendedor, Costa Rica

- Jorge Gentle
- Juliana Ceballos
- Carlos Alberto Martinez Cortes
- Maria Jose Nichols
- Dave Eyerly

Juliana Ceballos

Software Engineer & Digital Business Dean,
ESEN, El Salvador

- Luis Daniel Ramirez
- Jillian Friot
- Radin Rahimzadeh
- Dominic Blakely

Ignacio Munyo

CEO, CERES, Uruguay

- Dr. Ernesto Stein
- Fausto Gurrea
- Linda Teiyen

Linda Teiyen

Director, Chamber of Commerce and Services
of Ciudad del Este, Paraguay

- Harold Davis
- Ignacio Munyo
- Gonzalo Valenci
- Fausto Gurrea
- Mary Angelica Perez

Venki Mandapati

CoFounder, UpSquad, USA

- Ramon Colina
- Harold Davis
- Jorge Gentle
- Fausto Gurrea

Radin Rahimzadeh

Founder & CEO, CityScan AI, USA

- Jorge Gentle
- Juliana Ceballos
- Maria Jose Nichols
- Dr. Ernesto Stein

Mikhail Bullard

Minister Counsellor and Alternate Representatives
for Permanent Mission of The Bahamas to the OAS,
The Bahamas

- Mary Angelica Perez
- Dominic Blakely
- Ignacio Cazana

Ramon Colina

President & CEO, Colina Group, Panama

- Alma Vanessa Peralta
- Maria Jose Nichols
- Venki Mandapati

Harold Davis

CEO, Jamaica Business Development Corporation,
Jamaica

- Linda Teiyen
- Venki Mandapati
- Mary Angelica Perez
- Dominic Blakely
- Jillian Friot

Erika Apunte

Chief Commercial & Growth Officer, Kruger Corporation,
Ecuador

- Maria Jose Nichols
- Dr. Ernesto Stein
- Octavio Arzate
- Carlos Alberto Martinez Cortes
- Gonzalo Valenci

Jorge Gentle

Manager, Small Business Development Centre,
BELTRAIDE, Belize

- Venki Madapati
- Carlos Alberto Martinez
- Cortes Mary Angelica Perez
- Radin Rahimzadeh
- Roberto Cheverria
- Luis Daniel Ramirez
- Jillian Friot

Octavio Arzate

CEO, Luhulaa Tradiciones de Mexico S.A. de C.V., Mexico

- Erika Apunte
- Roberto Chevarria
- Maria Jose Nichols
- Alma Vanessa Peralta
- Mary Angelica Perez

Roberto Chevarria

Vice President for Andean Region, FIJE – IberoAmerican
Federation of Young Entrepreneurs, Peru

- Luis Daniel Ramirez
- Fabiola Murrieta Peralta
- Fausto Gurrea
- Octavio Arzate
- Carlos Alberto Martinez Cortes

Mary Angelica Perez

General Director, Yucatan State Development Agency,
Mexico

- Mikhail Bullard
- Jorge Gentle
- Harold Davis
- Fausto Gurrea
- Alma Vanessa Peralta
- Octavio Arzate
- Maria Jose Nichols
- Linda Teiyen
- Fabiola Murrieta Peralta
- Dr. Ernesto Stein
- Gonzalo Valenci

Erika Dillard

CEO, PopCheck Technologies, Inc., USA

- Alma Vanessa Peralta

Ignacio Cazana

Alternate Representative, Permanent Mission of
Paraguay to the OAS, Paraguay

- Mikhail Bullard

Carlos Fernando Villacreces

Director of Planning and International Cooperation,
Government of the Province of Tungurahua

- Gonzalo Valenci

Pedro Rincon

Coordinator, Ministry of Entrepreneurship,
Micro and Small Enterprises of Brazil, Brazil

- Fausto Gurrea

Nicolas Quintero-Fandino

Business and Investment Specialist, ApexBrasil, Brazil

- Dave Eyerly

SECTION 07

The ACE Memphis Delegation

ACE Delegation

50

Delegates

19

Countries

+30

Sites and Promising
Practices

The ACE Memphis delegation includes participants, special guests, local organizers, and ACE Committee Members.





Virginia Avila

Secretary of State of Foreign and
Business Affairs
Government of Tucumán
Argentina



Gonzalo Valenci

Executive Director
Córdoba Tech Cluster
Argentina



Jorge Gentle

Manager, Small Business
Development Centre Belize
Belize Trade and Investment
Development Service (BELTRAIDE)
Belize



Nicolas Quintero-Fandino

Business and Investment Specialist
ApexBrasil
Brazil



Dominic Blakely

Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Strategist
J Herbert Smith Centre for Technology
Management and Entrepreneurship
(University of New Brunswick)
Canada



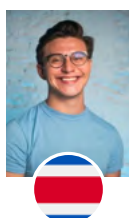
Daniela Gutiérrez

Business Climate Manager
ProBarranquilla
Colombia



Carolina Rosales

Executive Director
Invest in Cartagena
Colombia



Luis Daniel Ramírez

Executive Director
Yo Emprendedor
Costa Rica



Erika Apunte Aguirre

Chief Commercial & Growth Officer
Kruger Corporation
Ecuador



Carlos Fernando Villacreses

Director of Planning and
International Cooperation
Government of the Province
of Tungurahua
Ecuador



Alba Sánchez

Deputy Director of Economic
Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
El Salvador



Hersson Vargas

Specialist in Multilateral
Organizations and Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
El Salvador



Juliana Ceballos

Software Engineer and Digital
Business Dean
ESEN
El Salvador



María José Nichols Álvarez

President
CACIF Youth
Guatemala



Yonnick David

Executive Director
Fusion Hospitality Inc
Guyana



Harold Davis

CEO
Jamaica Business Development
Corporation
Jamaica



Fabiola Murrieta Peralta

Strategic Partnerships &
Government Affairs Coordination
Peñoles Industries
Mexico



Carlos Alberto Martínez Cortes

CEO
TECHBA LATAM
Mexico



Dr. Ernesto Stein

Distinguished University
Professor in Public Policy
Tecnológico de Monterrey
Mexico



Octavio Arzate

CEO
Luhulaa Tradiciones de Mexico SA
de CV
Mexico



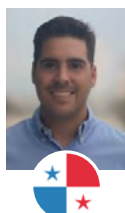
Mary Angelica Pérez López

General Director
Yucatán State Development
Agency
Mexico



Fausto Gurrea

Director of Strategy
Mexican Business Council
Mexico



Ramon Colina

President and CEO
Colina Group
Panama



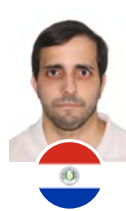
Yill Otero

General Secretary
PROPANAMA
Panama



Linda Taiyen

Director
Chamber of Commerce and
Services of Ciudad del Este
Paraguay



Ignacio Cazana

Alternate Representative
Permanent Mission of
Paraguay to the OAS
Paraguay



Daniel Ybarra

Secretary General
AJE Peru
Peru



Roberto Chevarría

Vice President for the Andean
Region
FIJE - Ibero-American Federation
of Young Entrepreneurs
Peru



Morgan Gilbert

Director of Strategic Planning &
Innovation
Ministry of Economic Affairs,
Government of The Bahamas
The Bahamas



Mikhail Bullard

Minister Counsellor / Alternate
Representative
Permanent Mission of
The Bahamas to the OAS
The Bahamas



Nicole Colette Griensewic

Executive Committee Chair
University of Minnesota Center for
Transportation Studies Executive
Committee
United States



Alma Vanessa Peralta

International Trade & Investment
Specialist
City of Tucson / Arizona District
Export Council
United States



Radin Rahimzadeh

Founder, CEO
City-Scan AI
United States



Ido Sarig

Director, Technology
Commercialization
University of Memphis
United States



Adriana Bonilla

Assistant Director of Business
Development
Arlington Economic Development
United States



Patrick Van Pelt

Venture Studio Founder &
Fiduciary Steward
Altravia Venture Studio
United States



Mark Wells

Director of Global Trade and
Investment
Oklahoma Department of
Commerce
United States



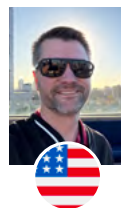
Venki Mandapati

Co-Founder
UpSquad
United States



Jillian Friot

General Partner
Venture Builders Fund
United States



Dave Eyerly

Co-Founder
AcceleratePV
United States



Bryan T. Daniels

President & CEO
Blount Partnership
United States



Steve Galbraith

CEO
Tappy
United States



Erika Dillard

CEO
PopCheck Technologies, Inc.
United States



Ignacio Munyo

CEO
CERES
Uruguay



Stephen Hayton

General Partner
Venture Builders Fund
United Kingdom



Samuel Moreno González

Senior Specialist
Inter-American Development
Bank



Bernardo Guillamon

Consultant

Inter-American Development Bank



Santiago Pastrana

Consultant

Inter-American Development Bank



ACE Committee Members

Government of the United States



Julianna Aynes-Neville

Development Counselor

Permanent Mission of the
United States to the OAS

U.S. Department of State



Andrew Stevenson

Alternate U.S. Representative and
Senior Democracy & Human Rights
Advisor

Permanent Mission of the
United States to the OAS
U.S. Department of State



Mitchell Harrison

ACE Program Coordinator

Economic Development

Administration

U.S. Department of Commerce



Organization of American States (OAS)



Barbara Kotschwar

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



Cesar Parga

Section Chief

Section of Competitiveness,
Innovation and Technology
Department of Economic
Development



Organizers

City of Memphis



Andre Fowlkes

President

Start Co.



Leann Grabski

Program Director

Start Co.



Mairi Albertson

Chief of Staff

City of Memphis

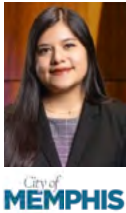


Penelope Huston

Chief Communications
Officer

City of Memphis





Vanessa Delgadillo
Special Assistant to
Mayor Young
City of Memphis



Queen Keskessa
Community Outreach
Manager, Multicultural
Affairs
City of Memphis



Gremesha Session
Chief Marketing
Officer
EDGE



Trey Moore
Small Biz Specialist
EDGE



Beth Wilson
PR and
Communications
Consultant
EDGE



Terri Harris
Neighborhood
Development
Specialist
EDGE

Organization of American States (OAS)



Cristina Solís
Coordinator, ACE Program
Section of Competitiveness,
Innovation and Technology
Department of Economic
Development



Effy Gómez
Research, Design and Content
Development Assistant,
ACE Program
Section of Competitiveness,
Innovation and Technology
Department of Economic
Development

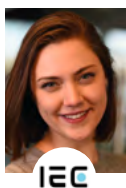


Juan Sebastián Fonseca
Multimedia Designer, Web & Video
Production, ACE Program
Section of Competitiveness,
Innovation and Technology
Department of Economic
Development



Cynthia Carrillo
Strategic Partnership Advisor
Section of Competitiveness,
Innovation and Technology
Department of Economic
Development

Innovation Exchange Coalition (IEC)



Natasha Main
Co-Founder
Innovation Exchange Coalition



Ryan Ramkhelawan
Co-Founder
Innovation Exchange Coalition

SECTION 08

Participant Testimonials

"Memphis opened our eyes to how global connectivity and softlanding tools serve as vital engines to boost both corporate tourism and startup internationalization, successfully turning traditional industries into platforms for collaborative innovation."

Roberto Chevarria, Vice President for Andean Region, FIJE – IberoAmerican Federation of Young Entrepreneurs, Peru

"Participation in ACE Memphis provided an invaluable opportunity to analyze and benchmark economic development models grounded in Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI). The experience offered deep insights into how to articulate these three pillars to drive territorial competitiveness and generate sustained growth."

Carolina Rosales, Executive Director, Invest in Cartagena, Colombia

"One of the most valuable outcomes was gaining direct access to innovation ecosystems that are actively integrating logistics, advanced manufacturing, entrepreneurship, and technology commercialization in ways highly relevant to Yucatán's strategic projects. The experience created opportunities to explore collaborations not only in economic development, but also in supply chain innovation, port competitiveness, industrial corridors, and talent development."

Mary Angelica Perez, General Director, Yucatan State Development Agency, Mexico

"What we didn't expect was how quickly conversations moved from introduction to intention. Within five days, we left with at least five genuine invitations to visit another country and collaborate on their startup ecosystems, and partnership conversations across at least eight countries. As someone who recently made Memphis home, I also didn't expect to learn as much as I did about Memphis. Seeing it through the eyes of delegates from across the Western Hemisphere gave me a different lens on the place I'd chosen to build from. That was a gift."

Jillian Friot, CoFounder Venture Builders Fund (VBF), USA

ACE in Action



SECTION 10

Media

Media Coverage



LINKEDIN

+2.974

Impressions

INSTAGRAM

+3.000

Visualizations

+540

Views from reels and posts

272

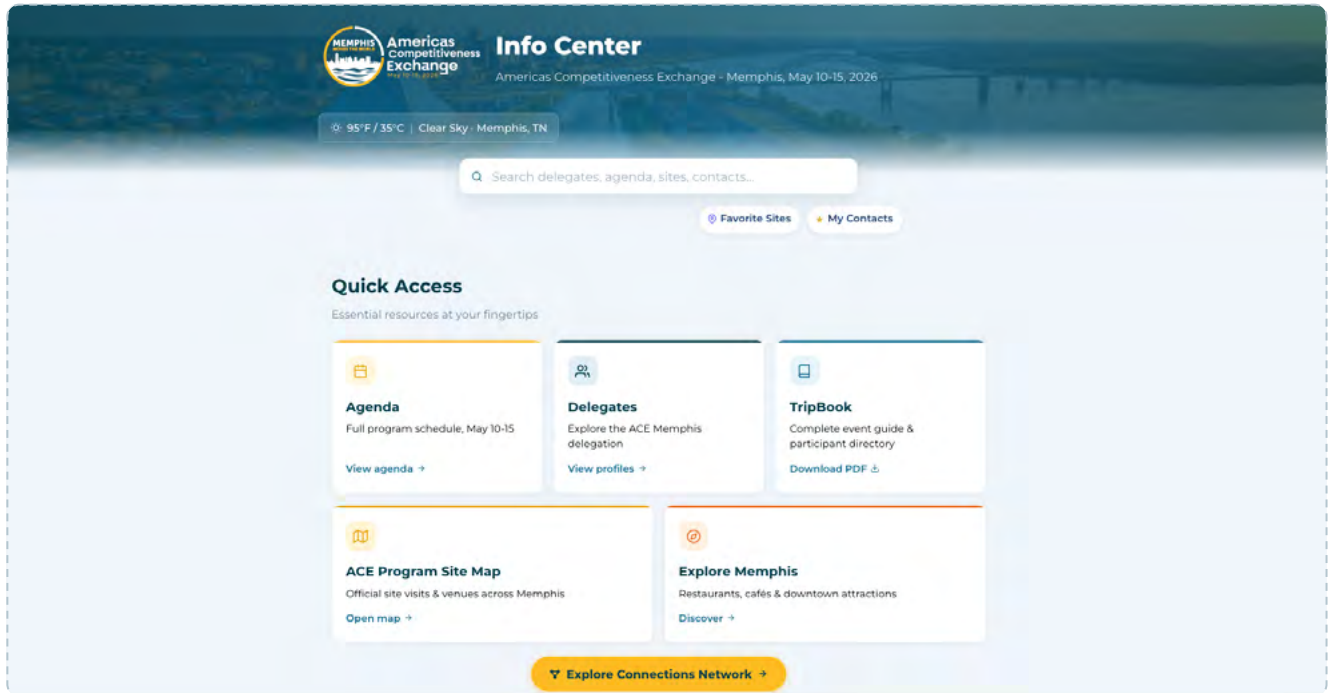
Followers

74%

Views from nonfollowers

ACE InfoCenter

All ACE Memphis materials – agenda, daily videos, presentations, photo galleries, and the media kit – are available at the ACE Memphis InfoCenter.



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Next stop: Barranquilla, Colombia



Americas Competitiveness Exchange

Sept 28 to Oct 2, 2026

