

ACE ILLINOIS REPORT



Americas
Competitiveness
Exchange

April 27 to May 2, 2025



OAS

More rights
for more people



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



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity

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Americas Competitiveness Exchange

April 27 to May 2, 2025

INTRODUCTION

ACE Illinois successfully delivered a productive week-long program that brought together over 65 global and regional leaders from the Americas and beyond. The program took place in Chicago, Champaign, Urbana, Joliet, Naperville and Peoria within the state of Illinois, United States from April 27 to May 2, 2025. ACE participants engaged with Illinois' vibrant industries, including Life Science, Quantum Computing, Energy Production, Advanced Manufacturing, Agri-Tech, Life Sciences, Transportation and Logistics.

Over 560 opportunities for collaboration were registered in the final ACE Illinois survey including potential trade and investment partnerships, new Research and Development (R&D) projects, start-up soft-landing, knowledge exchange, and business expansion, among others. Participants identified cooperation opportunities with Illinois' vibrant ecosystem and learned from good practices and models on economic development.

Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE) is a powerful mechanism for fostering cooperation and forming new partnerships. According to data from the ACE Illinois final survey, 95% of the global and regional leaders expressed that ACE Illinois exceeded or greatly exceeded their expectations (48 surveyed).

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), 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 20 ACE Editions, ACE has evolved into a flagship hemispheric program, providing tangible long-term benefits to countries and communities involved.



A circular inset image in the top left corner shows a large, diverse crowd of people gathered at an outdoor event, possibly a conference or festival. They are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire, and the background shows trees and other event structures.

WHAT IS ACE?

ACE is the premier economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurial network in the Americas, earning recognition as one of the OAS main high-level events. ACE operates as a core initiative of the Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC), with the OAS acting as the RIAC Technical Secretariat. RIAC is a regional platform that gathers high-level authorities and key stakeholders responsible for competitiveness, innovation, and economic development in all the active OAS Member States and the Organization's 71 Permanent Observers.

The Objectives

A circular inset image shows two men in business suits. The man on the left is handing a small, white, rectangular object to the man on the right. They are both looking at the object with interest.

Accelerate partnerships

The ACE Community is leading change towards innovation-driven and resilient economies

Expand knowledge

Identifying and sharing best practices in economic development

A circular inset image shows a woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored blazer, shaking hands with a man in a dark suit. They are both smiling, suggesting a positive interaction or agreement.

Boost job creation

Stimulating capital investment and job creation in the region

Nurture business development

Fostering an environment for innovative companies to startup and expand

Strengthen connections

Bringing together universities, industries, and governments to solve complex challenges

Advance initiatives

Facilitating commerce and trade

Support economic recovery

Promoting economic resiliency

A circular inset image shows a man in a dark suit standing at a podium, addressing an audience. The audience is seen from behind, seated in rows of chairs, listening to the speaker.

Empower communities

By enhancing opportunities for economic growth

ACE ILLINOIS

THE ACE ILLINOIS AGENDA

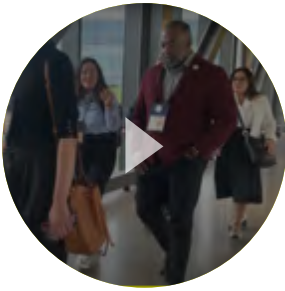
The program took place in Chicago, Champaign, Urbana, Joliet, Naperville and Peoria within the state of Illinois, United States from April 27 to May 2, 2025. The high-level delegation connected with over 20 sites during the one-week program to learn good practices and enhance collaboration opportunities on economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurship.



**Day 1, ACE Illinois,
Monday, April 28, 2025**



**Day 2, ACE Illinois,
Tuesday, April 29, 2025**



**Day 3, ACE Illinois,
Wednesday, April 30, 2025**



**Day 4, ACE Illinois,
Thursday May 1, 2025**



**Report,
ACE Illinois**

Discovering Illinois with the ACE Delegation



Monday, April 28

ACE Illinois commenced its highly anticipated program bringing together economic competitiveness leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs, from 20 countries of the Americas and beyond for a day of dialogue, knowledge-sharing and connection.



The day began with the opening ceremony led by Kristin Richards, Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Opening remarks from the University of Illinois System and the Organization of American States highlighted the essential role of public - private-academic partnerships in shaping the future of our cities, states, and countries through research, policy, and innovation.



The first stop of the program took delegates to the UIC Innovation Center, a space for interdisciplinary innovation and education. Its mission is to channel scientific research capabilities into actual solutions to improve health outcomes.

UIC fosters experiential learning for students, engages in close collaboration with private sector partners, and advances translational research efforts to generate human-centered projects with global reach.



A panel titled 'How Innovation Powers Health Progress' brought together experts to explore the intersection of healthcare, technology, and human-centered design. Top UIC researchers and program directors shared key projects related to health innovation where collaboration opportunities are possible with the ACE Delegation.



Interactive tours of the center offered delegates an inside look at innovative multi-disciplinary approaches shaping the future of health and wellness.

The second stop of the day was MxD—where manufacturing meets digital innovation. In partnership with the United States Department of Defense, the 22,000 square-foot future factory tests and demonstrates new technology, train workforce, and deploys cybersecurity tools for manufacturing businesses,





including small and medium-sized enterprises. This state-of-the-art center features some of the most advanced manufacturing equipment and resources in partnership with over 600 private sector partners.



Delegates were welcomed by Bernardino Baratta, CEO of MxD who offered insight into MxD's mission of equipping U.S. manufacturers with the tools and expertise needed to embrace digital transformation. Delegates then toured the facility to witness its smart manufacturing systems in action.



In the afternoon, the delegation visited 1871, Chicago's premier tech incubator located in the historic Merchandise Mart. 1871 is a non-profit featuring founders, visionary leaders, resilient innovators, and steadfast supporters in the tech community of Illinois. Offering programs for early stage, growth & late-stage startups, and corporate innovators, 1871 inspires, equips, and support tech businesses. Since its launch in 2012, 1871 has raised \$3.5B in venture capital and created over 15,000 jobs.



A panel moderated by Jaime Di Paulo, President & CEO of the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce centered on the role of community connectors, bridging industries and empowering local economies. One of the regional priorities to unlock Chicago and the Midwest's innovation potential as a global hub for investment and innovation is for the region to become the Quantum-capital of the United States.



Delegates also visited MATTER— a global healthcare startup incubator building innovation with impact. Matter mentors' entrepreneurs to accelerate their businesses and fast-forward solutions through technology and collaboration. Since its inception in 2015, MATTER has supported over 1,000 healthcare and life sciences startups, fostering a community of 60,000 entrepreneurs, executives, investors, and experts dedicated to improving health and healthcare. Collaborating with dozens of hospitals, health systems, universities, and industry-leading companies, MATTER accelerates innovation, advances care and transforms lives.



Day one concluded with a networking reception—offering an opportunity for delegates to reflect, connect, and share ideas sparked by the day's program.



Tuesday, April 29

Day two of ACE Illinois took delegates to the University of Illinois Research Park in Urbana-Champaign, where groundbreaking innovation, academic excellence, and industry partnerships intersect.



Immersive visits to the Integrated Bioprocessing Research Lab -IBRL-, the Food Science and Human Nutrition Pilot Processing Plant, and the iFAB Tech Hub—showcased how cutting-edge facilities support advanced research and commercialization in bioprocessing and agri-food systems. These pilot-scale facilities are designed to test and accelerate new technologies and solutions as part of the IFAB – Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing Hub. These leading initiatives provide advanced fermentation infrastructure to de-risk innovative ventures at a commercially relevant scale.



A panel discussion on ‘University-Driven Innovation and Entrepreneurship’ followed, highlighting the ways in which the University of Illinois is fueling talent development, startup creation, and economic transformation in the region.



ACE leaders explored the 88,000-square-foot facility that houses state of the art computing, networking, and data systems. This infrastructure and leading scientists are building cutting edge applications for AI and quantum technologies in collaboration with private sector and other research partners in Illinois and across the country. The facility offers top-flight physical and cybersecurity, including monitoring and tracking of network flows.



Researchers at the Center for Advanced Bioenergy and Bioproducts Innovation -CABBI-, shared projects advancing solutions for innovative fuels, resilience and advanced materials through plant biology and engineering.



CABBI is a collaboration between the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and 20 partner institutions. It integrates recent advances in agronomics, genomics, and synthetic and computational biology to increase the value of energy crops – using a “plants as factories” approach to grow fuels and chemicals.

In the afternoon, ACE delegation engaged with the Holonyak Micro and Nanotechnology Lab, one of the country’s largest and most sophisticated university facilities for conducting photonics,



microelectronics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology research. Leaders from the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park— Dr. Susan A. Martinis, Brian DeMarco and Harley Johnson—delivered an in-depth presentation on Illinois’ rapidly expanding quantum ecosystem, underscoring the state’s emerging leadership in quantum information science and advanced microelectronics.



The next stop was Distillery Labs, a vibrant new incubator in Peoria, a regional innovation hub supporting entrepreneurship through collaboration, technology, and community engagement.

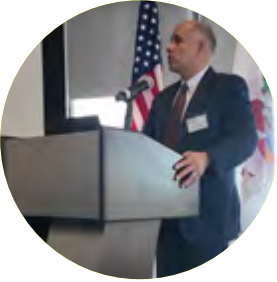
To conclude the day, the Innovation Exchange Coalition and Distillery Labs hosted an Innovation Startup Showcase, featuring eight startup companies: SmartCharts, Manuar, NXT7, Healp, PowerBox Technology, DigiFarmz, TredBase, and Humod.



Delegates engaged with founders and innovators, discovering how startups across Illinois are transforming ideas into scalable solutions that drive local and global businesses with impact.

Day 2 of ACE Illinois reinforced the state’s deep commitment to innovation at every level. As the week continues, so too does our shared pursuit of knowledge sharing, collaboration, and economic development.





Wednesday, April 30

Day three of ACE Illinois brought the spotlight to regional collaboration, workforce innovation, and economic planning—showcasing how local solutions can power global connections.



The day began with presentations from Winton & Strawn LLP, an international law firm headquartered in Chicago. Delegates participated in insightful discussions focused on doing business and investing in Illinois and the United States.



The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning –CMAP– is a regional government agency that works on behalf of the seven counties, 284 municipalities, and 8.6 million residents of Northeastern Illinois. Through the CMAP and its Data Hub, communities access data snapshots that inform their comprehensive planning to optimize the regional transportation infrastructure and maximize economic competitiveness drivers for today and tomorrow.



Panels on regional transportation and economic development strategies highlighted how cross-collaboration within counties has increased the visibility and positive outcomes for all. Panelists agreed on the benefit of working together to market as a region to reach a more impactful national and international scale.



Following the sessions, delegates were guided through the historic Old Chicago Post Office— an iconic symbol of urban revitalization, where history meets forward-looking redevelopment.



Next, at the Richard J. Daley Community College, an institution serving approximately 12,000 students annually, local leaders shared their main programs focused on workforce development for digital and manufacturing jobs.

ACE leaders learned about the “Make It In Illinois” statewide campaign aimed at growing the manufacturing workforce talent pool and increasing enrollment in training.



Dr. Janine Janosky, President of Daley College, presented collaboration opportunities and good practices building on the experiences of the college serving students through deep-rooted partnerships with community organizations and industries.



Delegates then engaged with tech teams at the state-of-the-art Manufacturing Technology and Engineering Center—also known as MTEC—a facility that exemplifies the future of technical education and workforce readiness. The MTEC trains with over 1,000 students annually. A Center of Excellence was designed to ensure a quality curriculum in high demands fields, such as advanced manufacturing.



Jim Longino of the Greater Southwest Development Corporation spoke about the role of community development organizations in fostering international engagement and cross-cultural partnerships.



The day concluded with a visit to The Hatchery, a non-profit food and beverage incubator located in Chicago's East Garfield Park neighborhood. It is dedicated to helping local entrepreneurs build and grow successful businesses. Through cutting edge commercial kitchen facilities, robust entrepreneurship curriculums, and partnership with corporate sponsors and foundations, The Hatchery supports local food and beverage entrepreneurs, cultivates local job opportunities, and accelerates local economic growth.



The Hatchery supports job creation, economic mobility, and culinary innovation in the city's West Side. Delegates had the opportunity to experience firsthand the innovation and community impact taking place within this collaborative space.



From economic planning, transportation policy, to workforce development and innovation. Day 3 of ACE Illinois emphasized the importance of community-driven approaches to fueling progress.



Thursday, May 1

On Day Four of ACE Illinois, delegates explored the dynamic intersection of logistics, sustainability, and community development.



The day began with a visit to the CenterPoint Intermodal Center at Will County, America's largest master-planned inland port. Located 40 miles southwest of Chicago, it is strategically positioned at the epicenter of the region's transportation infrastructure. This facility stretches over 6,400 acres and creates 20,000 jobs. The campus has warehouse and distribution center solutions, with rail access, interline, and carload services for international and domestic intermodal capacity featuring a Free Trade Zone. ACE leaders learned about the critical role of Will County in national supply chains and global trade.



At Joliet Junior College, delegates engaged in a discussion focused on 'Why Will County Works', –highlighting the region's strategic assets, workforce readiness, and collaborative approach to driving business success.

The delegation then traveled to Naperville, a community known for its blend of innovation, education, and quality of life.



Delegates visited Ecolab, a global sustainability leader offering water management solutions and services. Ecolab engages with more than 40 industries in 170 countries by providing comprehensive science-based solutions, data-driven insights, and world-class service to advance growth, maintain clean and safe environments, and optimize water conservation and energy use. During the visit, leaders from the Americas and beyond explored cutting-edge technologies that help minimize water usage while maximizing operational results.



The next stop was Naper Settlement and the Birck Family Innovation Gateway, a vibrant space where history informs and inspires community innovation.



ACE leaders were greeted by Mayor Scott A. Wehrli, who highlighted the values and community-driven economic development approach of the City of Naperville.



A featured presentation, ‘Understanding the Naperville Riverwalk’, showcased the transformative power of civic engagement and the visionary planning that transformed the Riverwalk into a celebrated destination.

The day concluded with a networking reception, where delegates reflected on the insights gained and continued to build meaningful relationships and achieve important results in ACE Illinois.



Day Four of ACE Illinois highlighted the depth of regional leadership—and the collective momentum shaping the future of economic growth.



Friday, May 2

Day Five of ACE Illinois began with a celebration of international partnership and diplomacy. Hosted at the Consulate General of Canada in Chicago, delegates were welcomed by Consul General Madeleine Féquière for a morning of dialogue and collaboration—affirming the enduring ties between nations through economic diplomacy and shared innovation goals.



The next stop took the delegation to the Discovery Partners Institute, a transformative initiative of the University of Illinois System. DPI is a hub for cultivating tech talent, advancing applied research, and strengthening Illinois' innovation economy.



Venkat Venkatakrishnan, Director of Research, welcomed the ACE delegation and opened a series of compelling presentations. Sessions explored The Value of Data in Evidence-Based Policy Making and a forward-looking Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy—underscoring the importance of informed decision-making in shaping resilient economies.



Delegates then visited mHUB, Chicago's premier innovation center for physical product development and advanced manufacturing. Guided tours showcased mHUB's brand-new 80,000 square foot facility—opened in 2023—designed to anchor the revitalization of Chicago's near West Side and serve as a catalyst for job creation and economic development.



To finalize the week, delegates gathered at the Metropolitan Club for a formal closing ceremony—reflecting on the highlights and shared discoveries of ACE Illinois.



The event concluded with the official transition to the next host of the Americas Competitiveness Exchange. ACE Belem, in the Brazilian state of Pará, was announced as the next host of ACE in Fall 2025—continuing the legacy of regional collaboration and innovation exchange.



BY THE NUMBERS¹

560+ Opportunities for cooperation registered in the final survey.

65 Leaders were part of the ACE Illinois Delegation, including participants, special guests, local organizers, and ACE Committee Members.

20 Countries: 17 OAS Member States and 3 OAS Permanent Observers.

40+ Speakers shared their knowledge and offered opportunities of cooperation.

35+ Sites and Projects were featured in ACE Illinois.

100% of survey respondents (48 participants) would recommend the ACE program to other leaders.

95% of survey respondents (47 participants) said that ACE exceeded or greatly exceeded their expectations.



1. Data reflects information extracted from responses to the Final Survey received as of June, 2025. Out of the 48 total participants surveyed, 48 responded to the Final Survey, which accounts for 100% of participants.

ILLINOIS OVERVIEW: KEY CLUSTERS AND ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

What Sets Illinois Apart?

The State of Illinois offers an unparalleled opportunity at the epicenter of North America. Illinois provides companies with a world class business environment, a central location with easy access for any operation, a well-educated and experienced workforce, and an opportunity to be an integral part of the second most economically powerful region in the country.

Illinois is also one of the world's most culturally vibrant states and has become a magnet for the country's brightest minds. Businesses can benefit from low corporate taxes and tax-free personal property that help make Illinois one of the most business-friendly places in the nation.

#1 State in the Midwest for business creation

#1 Metro for new & expanding companies

#1 State for sustainable development

#5 Highest GDP in the nation

#18 Largest economy in the world



FEATURED INDUSTRY CLUSTERS



Advanced Manufacturing



Life Sciences



Quantum Computing, AI, and Microelectronics



Next Generation Agriculture, Agriculture Tech and Food Processing



Energy Production and Manufacturing



Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Advanced Manufacturing

Illinois has a long history in manufacturing, including infrastructure, workforce and Research and Development (R&D) capacities.

Fast-growing sectors include inputs for vehicles, airplanes, drones, energy, and life sciences, including machinery manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, robotics, and advanced materials, including nanomaterials.

ACE Illinois offered opportunities to advance collaboration and new partnerships with:



RICHARD J. DALEY
CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO



Manufacturing x Digital (MxD)

22,000 square-foot future factory is used to test and demonstrate new technology, train workforces, and demonstrate the need for cybersecurity in manufacturing. A state-of-the-art innovation center features some of the most advanced manufacturing equipment in the world working with large corporations and small businesses.

Richard J. Daley College

Serves approximately 12,000 students annually across our two campuses through credit, Adult Education, and Continuing Education programming. The Manufacturing Technology & Engineering Center (MTEC) trains students with insight from industry partners to ensure a quality curriculum and certifications in high demands fields, such as advanced manufacturing.



Incubators and Accelerators for Start Ups and SMEs



1871 is an accelerator for startups and corporate innovators, which provides mentorship, inspires, equips, and support extraordinary tech businesses. Since its launch in 2012, this has raised \$3.5B in venture capital and created over 14,500 jobs.

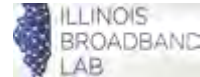
Distillery Labs is a Community Hub providing critical resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses in Peoria, Illinois. It features makerspace, offices, commercial teaching kitchen, podcast studio, coworking sites, conference rooms, and special event space.

The Hatchery Chicago, through cutting edge commercial kitchen facilities, robust entrepreneurship curriculums, and partnership with corporate sponsors and foundations, The Hatchery supports local food and beverage entrepreneurs, cultivates local job opportunities, and accelerates local economic growth.

mHUB is an innovation center for all things HardTech. It offers prototyping labs, industry partnerships, and services designed to remove barriers and increase the probability of building a sustainable business to commercialize new physical products. This leading innovation center is embedded within the most comprehensive manufacturing economy in the U.S. with 12,000+ local manufacturers, generating annually \$10 billion and employ over 565,000 people.



Life Sciences



The UIC Innovation Center is a space for interdisciplinary innovation and education. Corporate and University partners engage with the Center to generate human-centered solutions focused on deep research and exploratory development for local and global health challenges.

MATTER is a global healthcare startup incubator, community nexus and corporate innovation accelerator headquartered in Chicago. Since its inception in 2015, MATTER has supported over 1,000 healthcare and life sciences startups, fostering a community of 60,000 entrepreneurs, executives, investors, and experts dedicated to improving health and healthcare.



Agri-Tech and Food Processing



The Center for Advanced Bioenergy and Bioproducts Innovation (CABBI), is a collaboration between the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and 20 partner institutions. CABBI integrates recent advances in agronomics, genomics, and synthetic and computational biology to increase the value of energy crops – using a “plants as factories” approach to grow fuels and chemicals.

Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory (IBRL) and its sister facility, the Food Science Human Nutrition Pilot Processing Plant, are pilot-scale facilities designed to help technologies in biomanufacturing, bioprocessing, and food processing de-risk at a commercially-relevant scale. Since opening in 2018, the facilities have worked with over 130 companies on their biomanufacturing technologies and successfully operate as a self-supporting model on the University of Illinois campus.

iFAB Tech Hub, 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



Quantum Computing, AI and Microelectronics

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 become a leader in the emerging quantum computing industry thanks largely to the local Universities research efforts and state investments including the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP).



**National Petascale
Computing Facility**



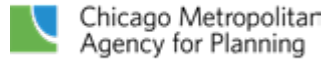
University of Illinois Research Park Urbana-Champaign: Research Park is an innovation hub for technology commercialization with a unique environment that cultivates startups and increases capabilities for established companies. Research Park has more than 120 companies and growing, employing over 2,100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

National Petascale Computing Facility, this 88,000-square-foot facility houses computing, networking, and data systems that benefit researchers. Offers top-flight physical and cybersecurity, including monitoring of all exit bandwidth, deep packet inspection and tracking of network flows. All equipment in the facility must comply with cybersecurity and operational standards.

Holonyak Micro and Nanotechnology Lab, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign HMNTL is one of the United States' largest and most sophisticated facilities for conducting photonics, microelectronics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology research.



Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics



CenterPoint Intermodal Center. America's largest master-planned inland port. Positioned at the epicenter of the region's transportation infrastructure. The campus has available warehouse and distribution center solutions, with rail access, interline service, and carload service for international and domestic intermodal capacity, including Free Trade Zone savings.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning - CMAP is a regional government agency that works on behalf of the seven counties, 284 municipalities, and 8.6 million residents of Northeastern Illinois. Through the CMAP and its Data Hub, communities access data snapshots on a variety of demographic, housing, employment, land use, freight, traffic, climate, and quality of life studies that inform its comprehensive planning to advance the regional transportation system for today and tomorrow.

Naper Settlement: Naper Settlement is an award-winning, outdoor history museum offering visitors 13 acres of educational programs, exhibits, guided tours, and special events. Whether watching the blacksmith at the forge or sitting down for a lesson in our one-room schoolhouse, visitors are immersed in history as they learn about the past and how it relates to the present.



Energy Production and Manufacturing



Ecolab is a Global company offering advanced technology for water, hygiene, and infection prevention solutions and services. Ecolab's leads science-based solutions, data-driven insights, and services to advance food safety, maintain clean and safe environments, and optimize water conservation and energy use across multiple industries.



PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

ACE DELIVERED

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

As a result of the ACE Illinois program, participants:

- 42** Expanded regional and international network of high-level decision-makers.
- 37** Enhanced skills in economic development, innovation and entrepreneurship to further support the national or subnational economic development agenda.
- 34** Learned about economic development best practices that can be replicated.
- 34** Identified trade/investment opportunities to better position a company or institution.
- 15** Learned about business soft-landing opportunities in Illinois, the U.S., and/or in other countries.





New collaborations or partnerships following up ACE Illinois

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

560

**Overall connections and business
opportunities reported**

278

**With Illinois
sites**

282

**Within ACE
Delegation**





MAIN RESULTS ON ACE ILLINOIS

Held on April 27 to May 2, 2025

17 letters of intent for MOUs signed between:



1. University of Illinois Springfield (United States) and Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil (Ecuador), will implement student exchanges and research collaboration.

2. Illinois Innovation Network (United States) and Invest Guatemala (Guatemala), will advance institutional cooperation.



3. Luhula Tradiciones de Mexico (Mexico) and Atzimba Catering Events (United States), to develop business partnerships of premium products from Luhula Tradiciones.

4. Luhula Tradiciones de Mexico (Mexico) and the Belize Trade and Investment Development Service BELTRAIDE (Belize), will cooperate in business opportunities in the creative and orange economy.



5. Radin Rahimzadeh (Entrepreneur, United States) and N7 Ventures (Brazil), will connect and develop innovation, mentoring and soft-landing opportunities for deep tech startups and investors in the United States and Brazil.

6. Government of Armenia and Radin Rahimzadeh (Entrepreneur, United States), will support the Armenian startup ecosystem.

7. Government of Armenia and the Innovation Exchange Coalition (United States), will support the Armenian startup ecosystem.



8. Province of Córdoba (Argentina) and the Innovation Exchange Coalition (United States), will support connecting startup ecosystems and accelerating tech startups in Argentina and the United States.



MAIN RESULTS ON ACE ILLINOIS

Held on April 27 to May 2, 2025

17 letters of intent for MOUs signed between:



9. Government of the Province of Córdoba (Argentina) and N7 Ventures (Brazil), will support startup ecosystem and knowledge exchange between the Brazilian and Argentinian startups.

10. Enterprise Solved LLC (United States) and Business Works Limited (Jamaica), will contribute with knowledge exchange and support Jamaica's SMEs.



11. Government of Santa Catarina, Nuevo Leon, (Mexico) and Illinois Innovation Network (United States), will support knowledge exchange and startup ecosystems.

12. Government of Santa Catarina, Nuevo Leon, (Mexico) and ThEEN (Germany), will cooperate in knowledge transfer and energy.

13. Government of Santa Catarina, Nuevo Leon, (Mexico) and Radin Rahimzadeh (Entrepreneur, United States), will develop startup ecosystem, growth, and investment.



14. Government of the Province of Tucumán (Argentina) and ThEEN (Germany), will cooperate in knowledge transfer and energy.

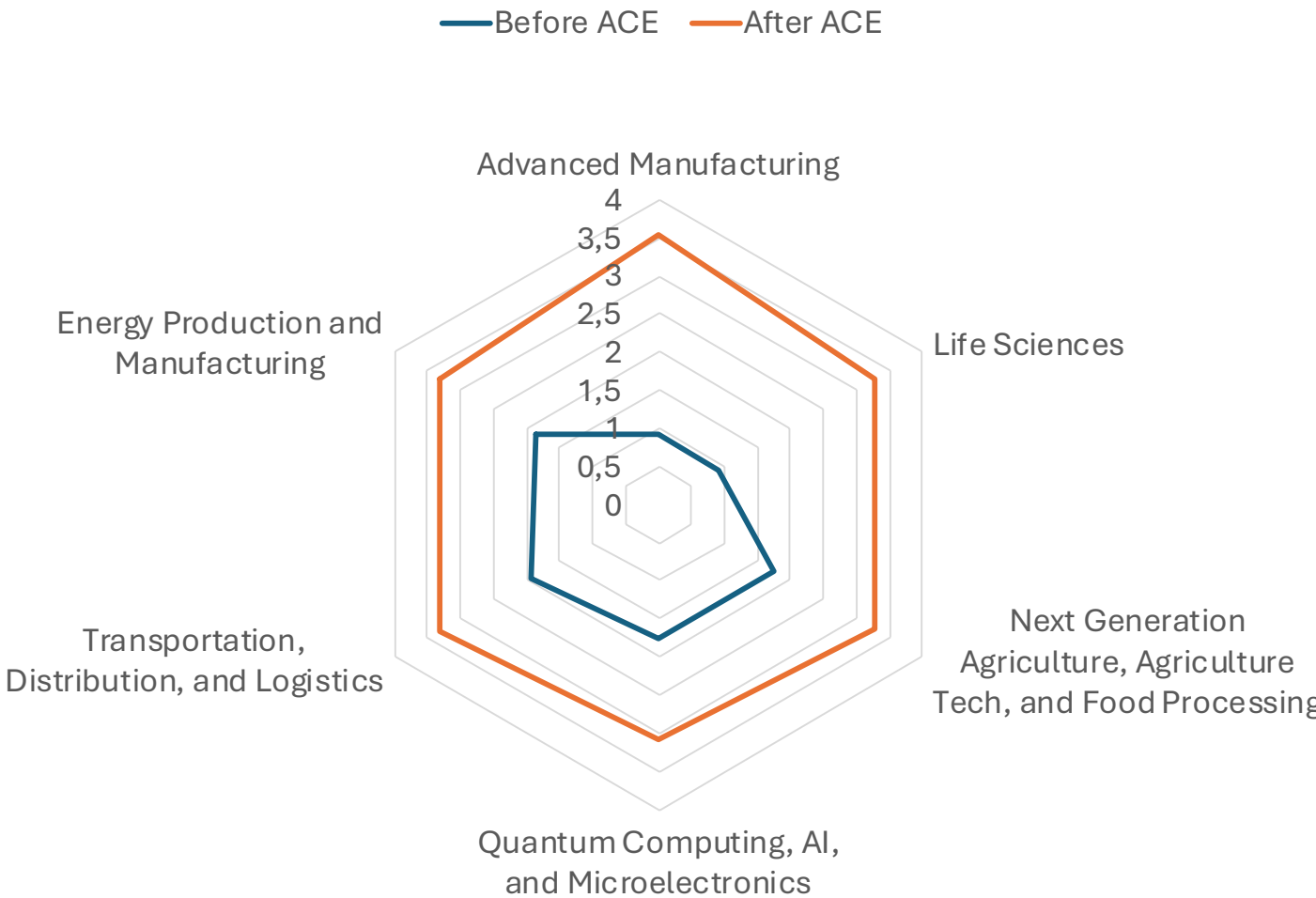
15. Invest Guatemala (Guatemala) and UpSquad (United States), will develop a pilot program to implement the UpSquad solution in Guatemala.



16. Business Works Limited (Jamaica) and Illinois State University for research (United States), will cooperate in educational, and professional programs.

17. UpSquad (United States) and the Belize Trade and Investment Development Service BELTRAIDE (Belize), will develop a pilot program to implement the UpSquad solution in Belize.

ACE Illinois contributed to increase participants' knowledge on economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurship ecosystem



TESTIMONIALS



Susana Lau Hou

Founder And CEO- Etyalab | IEEE Entrepreneurship VP

Etyalab | IEEE Entrepreneurship

Panama

“Thanks to the ACE Program, I had the opportunity to connect with high-level decision-makers from diverse industries and countries, many of whom represent potential partners to help advance our projects and strengthen our regional initiatives. This participation has opened doors to talented speakers or mentors or lobbyists who can contribute meaningfully to our programs to promote and grow entrepreneurship as part of our region’s economic development efforts. I’m currently following up with contacts such as Allison (mHub), Radin (USA), Danielle (Brazil), and Roberto (Ecuador) to collaborate and cross-promote our initiatives. Additionally, we’re excited to deepen our collaboration with Julia from Uruguay to highlight her story as a woman founder in tech—her testimony will help shape a compelling narrative that can inspire our community.”



Jorge Cervantes

Secretary of Economy

Santa Catarina, Mexico

“We signed three letters of intent with international organizations that will allow us to develop strategies and initiatives for the economic growth of our city. This enables us to exchange best practices and information to continue improving our public policy on economic matters.”



Evelyn Lisseth Córdova López

Foreign Direct Investment Advisor

Ministry of Economy Guatemala

Guatemala

“It has definitely improved capacities for economic development planning, learning about practices that a state promotes development, fosters advanced industries, and fosters an environment of collaboration among the entire ecosystem for the development of the state. It motivates the implementation of good practices in Guatemala. It also motivates people to think big about development in the country.”

TESTIMONIALS



Yolanda Martínez
Technical Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Commission
Mexican Senate
Mexico

“The ACE program has proven to be an invaluable platform to strengthen my work in legislative affairs, international cooperation, and inclusive economic development. It has allowed me to build new alliances, expand my global perspective, and identify practical avenues to translate ideas into action. For example, I followed up with Winston & Strawn LLP to gather their insights on the future of trade between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Their perspective outside of Washington, D.C. enriches the Senate’s understanding and preparation for potential renegotiations of the trilateral agreement, providing a more diverse and informed foundation for legislative action. I also see myself as a facilitator between local and global actors.”



Elizabeth Tikoyan
Healp
United States

“The ACE program has been instrumental in advancing Healp’s [my startup] mission and expanding our strategic footprint across North America. Overall, the ACE program has significantly accelerated conversations with hospitals, academic research institutions, and international stakeholders, laying the foundation for long-term partnerships that align with Healp’s vision of equitable access to clinical research and patient-centered innovation.”



Nicolás Rodríguez
Investment Director
Medellín and Metropolitan Areas Cooperation and Investment Agency -
ACI Medellín
Colombia

“The ACE program will contribute significantly to my work in several ways. First, it allowed me to connect with a broad network of international partners, opening up valuable opportunities for collaboration between companies. Second, I gained exposure to best practices that I can now recommend and adapt within my local projects. Finally, the program has strengthened my ability to continue promoting Medellín as a city full of potential and opportunities, leveraging the insights and connections gained during the experience.”

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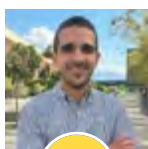
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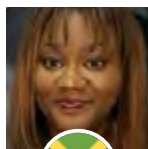
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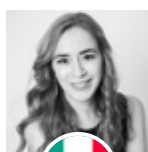
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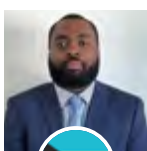
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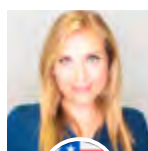
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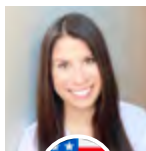
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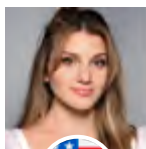
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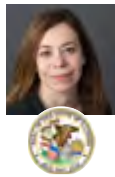


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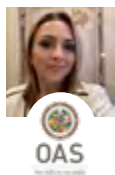


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International leaders visit U of I System facilities in Americas Competitiveness Exchange tour

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From research to results: How the U of I System powers economic competitiveness

MAY 9, 2025 9:00 AM



At left, Andrea Livingston, Insulator Director and Lead Facilities, Business Works Limited and Jamaica Chamber of Commerce, test drives an arm manipulator robot with an assist from robotics and CAD adjunct professor Jonathan Liu at Chicago's Richard J. Daley College. At right, from left, Rolando Martinez (left), Naperville Mayor Scott Wozniak, Jorge Cervantes, and Jeanette Tamayo during a stop in the western Chicago suburb.

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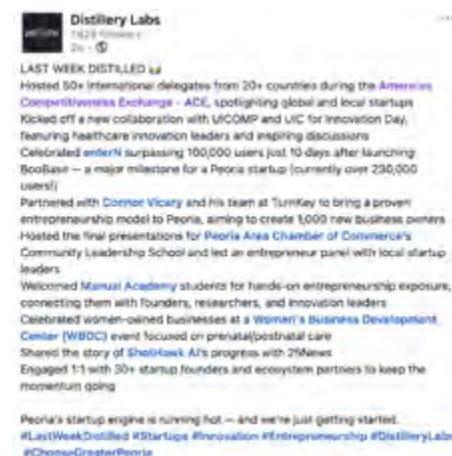
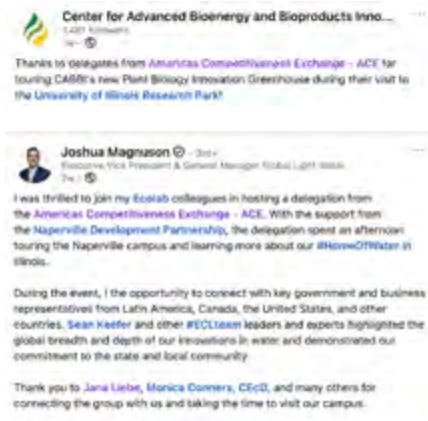


PHOTO GALLERY

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/89835551@N02/albums/72177720326676969>







This tripbook was prepared by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States using Federal funds under award ED21HDQ3070011 from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Economic Development Administration or the U.S. Department of Commerce.



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ACE ILLINOIS REPORT



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