

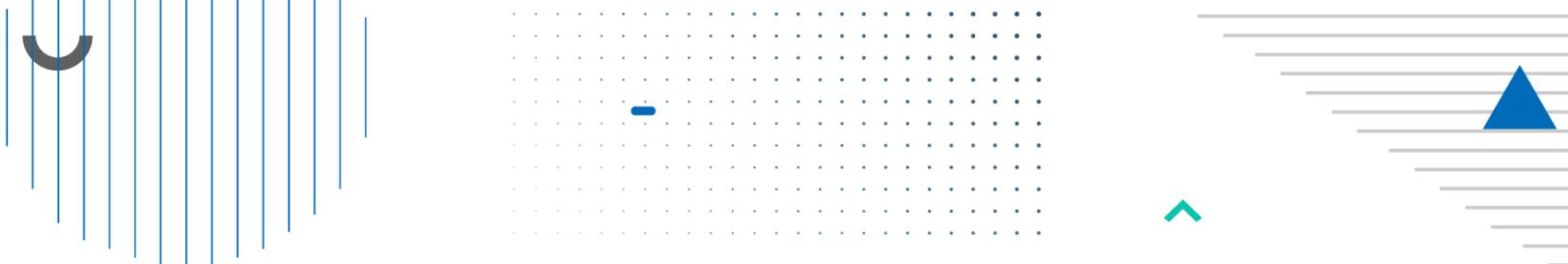
AMERICAS COMPETITIVENESS EXCHANGE on Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Application Form to Host an ACE

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APPLICATION TO HOST AN AMERICAS COMPETITIVENESS EXCHANGE ON INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP (ACE)

1. ABOUT

The Americas Competitiveness Exchange on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ACE) is one of the leading activities of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the promotion of better innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems in the Americas. The ACE program is one of the core initiatives of the Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC)¹, for which the OAS serves as Technical Secretariat.

The ACE brings together 50 senior-level government, business, policy, and economic decision-makers from across the Americas and beyond to experience first-hand the diverse range of projects, strategic investments, public-private partnerships, and best practices from a particular region's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems. The top leaders selected to participate in the week-long program tour innovation hubs, advanced technology centers, leading firms, and educational and research institutions, to explore local, regional, urban, and rural economic development models, share experiences and knowledge, and build networks among the local and visiting stakeholders to enhance innovation and competitiveness in the Americas.

The ACEs are designed to build cooperation networks throughout the Americas and beyond to create better Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystems that promote sustainable and inclusive economic development and increased trade.

To date, the ACE has been held eight times since 2014. Five times in the United States (Atlanta, Georgia and North & South Carolina in April 2014; Minneapolis, Minnesota-Central, Wisconsin & Chicago, Illinois in April 2015; Arizona & Southern California in April 2016; Central Texas in April 2017; and North-Central Florida December 2017); in Mexico in August 2014; in Cordoba, Argentina in October 2015; and in Ontario, Canada in September 2016. Upcoming ACEs include a special-edition Ninth ACE will be held jointly outside the Americas by Germany and Israel in June 2018, and a Tenth ACE to be held in California in October 2018.

¹ <http://www.riacnet.org/>

2. INSTITUTIONS:

ACE is convened in the context of the RIAC² by its Chair Pro Tempore (revolving every two years); the Government of the United States, through its Department of Commerce (the International Trade Administration (ITA)³ and the Economic Development Administration (EDA)⁴) and its Department of State⁵; and the General Secretariat of the OAS as the RIAC Technical Secretariat⁶. This group makes up the standing ACE Coordinating Committee. For ACE events selected to be held outside the United States, the ACE Coordinating Committee will also include representatives from the ACE Host Country (the coordinating team and a representative from the Permanent Mission of the country to the OAS).

3. OBJECTIVES:

- Increase knowledge of Innovation and Entrepreneurship by sharing best practices to strengthen local innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems.
- Establish collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders from universities, industries, and governments.
- Advance commerce, accelerate business opportunities and foster inbound investment.
- Showcase the importance and benefits of:
 - Public-private partnerships to advance a coordinated regional economic development strategy that leverages local assets;
 - A coordinated regional business plan to stimulate capital investment and job creation;
 - Research to understand problems and develop tools to achieve environmentally sound economic development;
 - Providing appropriate infrastructure for innovative businesses to start up and expand;
 - Uniting Universities, Industry, and Government to solve complex challenges no one sector or player could address on its own; and
 - Promoting and strengthening the implementation of national policies that protect intellectual property rights, facilitate the movement of goods, and support transparency and the rule of law.

4. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS TO HOST ACE:

Countries and regions interested in hosting ACE should present a written proposal and preliminary itinerary for consideration by the ACE Coordinating Committee. ACE Host and site proposals should focus on highlighting the following criteria:

² <http://riacnet.org/>

³ <https://www.trade.gov/>

⁴ <https://www.eda.gov/>

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/>

⁶ http://www.oas.org/en/about/general_secretariat.asp

- The organizing institutions are led by “gatekeepers” for the region or country – people who have the authority to allocate and direct the necessary resources to host and formally request the organization of an ACE event.
- The proposed sites include economic regions of a country (or countries⁷) with enough critical elements of critical commercial drivers that can act as a single economic unit for the ACE program to enable close and meaningful collaboration with potential partners.
- Regional demonstration of market fit with the Americas⁸
- Regional cooperation is demonstrated through a consortium of public, private, and academic partners and the strength of their partnerships.
- Urban and rural economic assets with the capacity to develop commercial networks with the Americas through trade, FDI, or partnerships.
- A combination of financial support and economic and cultural assets is available to engage the ACE delegation to drive regional development.
- The region contains an International Airport (s) as designated by the International Air Transport Association or the International Civil Aviation Organization; and the airport can handle customs and international connections.
- Host countries/regions must be OAS Member States or Permanent Observer Countries.
- There is sufficient national or regional level budget allocation to host and support the design, planning, and execution of the ACE program. The host country/region will need to allocate an estimate of USD 50,000 – 100,000⁹ to provide event-wide support to the RIAC at the OAS¹⁰. The national amount supplied to the RIAC Technical Secretariat includes the following items:
 - Designation of a full-time regional coordinator of the OAS team and minimum two other part-time authorities/staff that will help to make progress with the program and with subsequent follow-up¹¹;
 - Design and production of any materials, including video recording;
 - Thematic support and production of documents;
 - Logistical coordination;
 - A media campaign and outreach; and
 - Partial to full financial support to at least 10-12 participants from smaller economies.

⁷ Some countries may choose to co-host an ACE event, such as Germany and Israel who are co-hosting the special edition ACE 9.

⁸ This may include, but is not limited to, highlighting existing trade between the region and the Americas or identifying institutions and organizations with an interest in developing partnerships and/or increasing trade with the Americas.

⁹ Amount varies based on location, size of economy, etc. and is subject to negotiation with the OAS RIAC Technical Secretariat. Local costs such as event space, meals, etc. are not included in this estimate and should be coordinated as desired by each host region.

¹⁰ For U.S. ACE events the national amount is provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of State. The local-level support must be supplied by the local region.

¹¹ For U.S. ACE events the national coordinator is the U.S. Department of Commerce

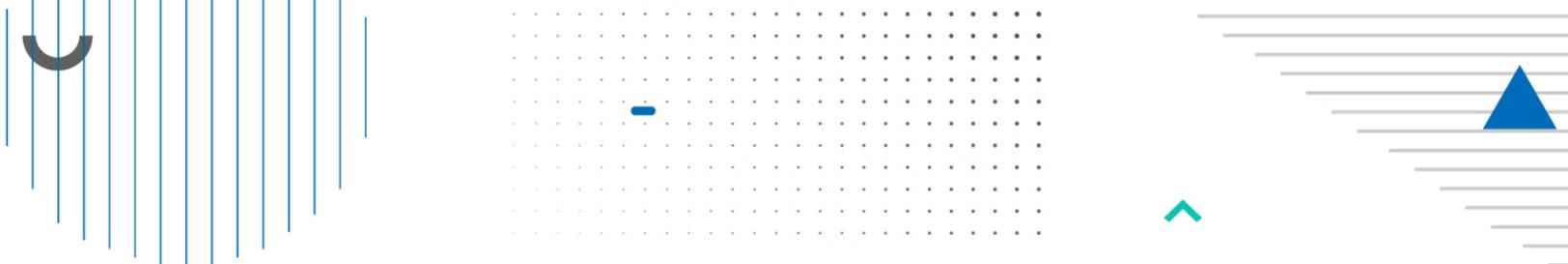
- Moreover, host countries/regions should have the additional financial capacity to cover the necessary costs to host the ACE program. Some examples include:
 - Meals for participants;
 - Local marketing;
 - Local branding;
 - Local event space;
 - Local security¹²;
 - Regional coordination;
 - Logistics; and
 - Event space.
- Host countries/regions are also responsible for the:
 - Designation of a full-time regional coordinator with the capacity to make timely decisions and to participate in all weekly calls required to prepare the program; and
 - Appointment of at least one or two other full-time support staff to support preparation of the program.
- Host countries/regions are committed to conducting follow-up after an ACE. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Dedication of staff to conduct monitoring in coordination with the OAS RIAC Technical Secretariat;
 - Host communities remain in good standing with the ACE Coordinating Committee; and
 - A commitment to participate in post-event surveys and metrics exercises to evaluate the continued success of the program.
- As relevant, host countries/regions should participate in the Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF)¹³. By organizing an ACE, host communities will be invited to bring delegations from their region to the ACF to engage with high-level business and government leaders in the region. If bringing a delegation, former ACE hosts are guaranteed assistance by the ACE Coordinating Committee to facilitate meetings and activities that will ensure host communities can take advantage of a robust agenda at the ACF, meet with other ACE Alumni, and continue post-ACE follow-up.

5. PROCESS TO HOST ACE:

There shall be up to two ACEs per year, ideally occurring in two different countries. While two different countries are ideal, the ACE Coordinating Committee may select the same country based on bids received.

¹² The US Government provides national level security assistance to local hosts but local security is still a local cost.

¹³ The ACF is an event hosted every 18 months to two years that convenes senior-level business and government leaders to discuss ways to improve the competitiveness of the region.



There are four steps required to plan and execute an ACE program:

1. **Expression of Interest/Letter of Intent:** interested ACE hosts must submit a Letter of Intent for consideration by the ACE Coordinating Committee no more than three-years in advance of the proposed ACE.
2. **Full Proposal:** if invited by the ACE Coordinating Committee, the interested ACE hosts must submit a detailed proposal at least nine months before a proposed ACE.
3. **Selection and Announcement:** formal selection of ACE hosts will be made in writing and is announced at the preceding ACE event or the preceding ACF.
4. **Finalize Agenda and Itinerary of ACE:** once planning begins, the ACE Coordinating Committee will provide guidance and assistance to the ACE host starting 6 to 8 months in advance of the ACE program. This guidance is mandatory to maintain branding, security, and scope.

Details on each of these steps can be found below.

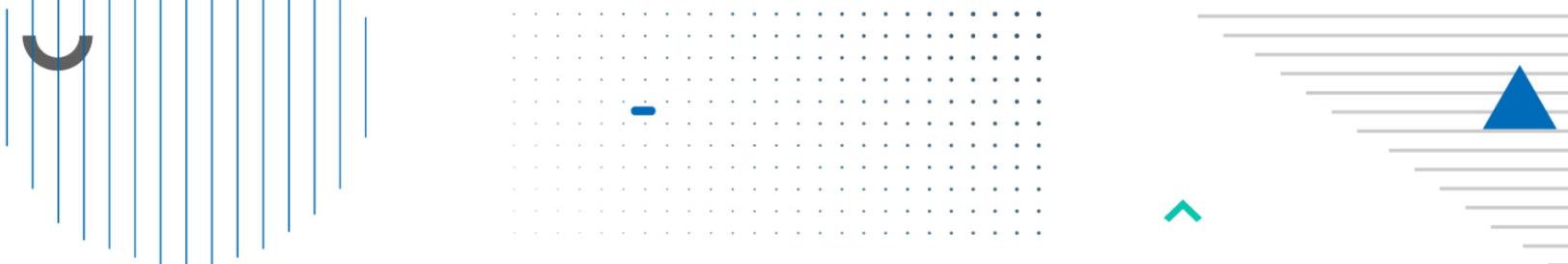
Step 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)/Letter of Intent (LOI) – An expression of interest in the form of a letter should be sent to the ACE Coordinating Committee. The LOI should describe the proposed program, key partners, region, and possible dates. This letter can also ask for consultations, advice, and technical assistance from the ACE Coordinating Committee in helping craft the full proposal. The LOI will also serve as the basis for a technical review. Potential ACE hosts can describe their ACE to ascertain whether or not it is responsive to the ACE guidelines and reflective of the essential criteria necessary to host an ACE.

The ACE Coordinating Committee will review the LOI within 30 working days and determine if it meets the ACE program objectives (see Section 3) and reflects the essential criteria (see Section 4) necessary for further competitive consideration. For those LOIs deemed by the ACE Coordinating Committee to meet the ACE program objectives and the essential criteria, the submitting party will be asked to work with the ACE Coordinating Committee to submit a full application for competitive consideration.

If a bidding group has not engaged in a RIAC related event as a participant or previous host, the ACE Coordinating Committee may recommend such involvement before submission of a letter of intent and/or a final proposal.

LOIs shall be considered starting up to three years in advance of the proposed ACE. The ACE Coordinating Committee will accept applications at any point and will work closely with applicants to provide prompt feedback and responses on funding decisions. No letter of intent shall be considered within nine months before a proposed ACE.

Step 2: Full Proposal – The preparation of this proposal is by **invitation and only after the LOI has been reviewed and accepted for further consideration by the ACE Coordinating Committee**. The full proposal shall include a detailed draft agenda, key and committed anchor sites and speakers, key organizers, and other items that demonstrate the region's ability to comply with the minimum requirements to host ACE as well as any value-added to be



considered by the RIAC/ACE Coordinating Committee. See the attached template for additional information.

Full proposals shall be submitted to the ACE Coordinating Committee at least nine months before a proposed ACE.

There are historically two ACE events per year. However, a special edition or technical visit can be considered under the ACE brand umbrella. Such situations may come about if the interested host region/country cannot meet all the criteria required to host an ACE or due to scheduling limitations. These events would require the full approval of the ACE Coordinating Committee.

Once the full proposal is submitted to the ACE Coordinating Committee, a response with the status will be officially sent to the requested country within two months via official diplomatic channels. **The ACE Coordinating Committee reserves the right to come back to the applicant for more information, refinement, or other items as necessary during deliberations.**

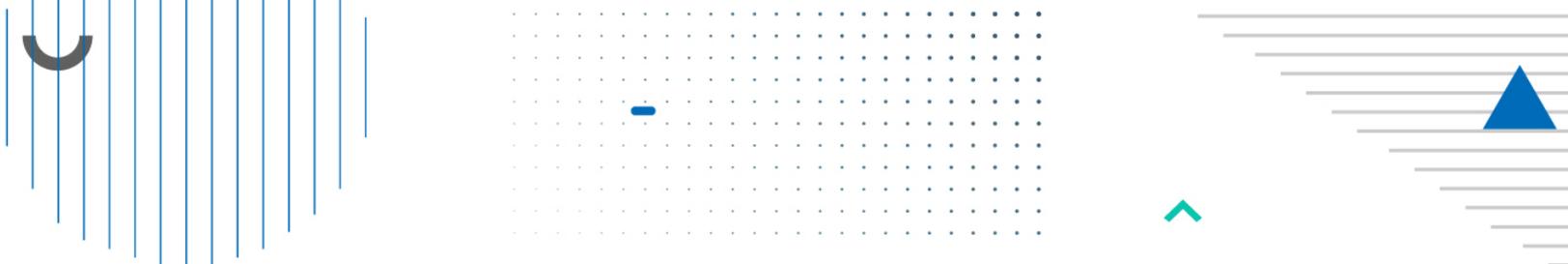
Step 3: Selection and Announcement – ACE events shall be officially confirmed via a letter from the OAS. After selection, the next host shall work closely with the **ACE Coordinating Committee** to develop materials and implement administrative procedures such as updating timelines, executing the ACE participant application process, refining and executing the ACE itinerary, maintaining a list of contacts at each site, designing a logo, developing a communication strategy to include a promotional video and marketing the program via website and social media outlets to support all preparations to host and organize the ACE program. Weekly check-ins are necessary at a minimum to ensure the ACE brand, program, and functions are correctly executed. The ACE will be publically announced at the conclusion of the preceding ACE or preceding ACF.

Step 4: Agenda and Itinerary of ACE – After ACE hosts are announced, the ACE regional team and a representative from the Host country to the **RIAC/ACE Coordinating Committee** shall be appointed¹⁴. **The RIAC/ACE Coordinating Committee shall work with the ACE host team and provide guidance on key anchor sites, themes, sectors, and clusters to be part of the program as well as recommendations and best practices on protocol, logistics, travel times, presenter schedules, and other relevant information.** This process shall start six to eight months leading up to the date of the ACE program.

6. PROFILE AND SELECTION OF ACE PARTICIPANTS:

ACE participants shall be decision makers, including Ministers/Vice Ministers or equivalent, members of Congress/Legislature/Parliament, Private Sector Leaders, Mayors or Senior Leaders from cities or provinces, Chancellors/Presidents/Vice Presidents of Universities, Presidents of

¹⁴ This role is filled by the U.S. Department of Commerce for U.S. ACE events.



Competitiveness Councils, and Senior leaders of regional economic development partnership groups, innovation agencies, or other crucial public or private sector individuals.

Participation shall be limited to 50 participants from the OAS Member States and, as relevant, OAS Permanent Observer Countries.

- If an applicant is the equivalent of a Deputy Minister or higher, s/he receives courtesy acceptance as head of the delegation from her/his country. Countries may find it useful to send multiple such senior officials.
- Countries hosting an ACE may include up to 10% of the participants in the ACE program from the host nation. If these posts are not filled, they shall become available for the general pool of applications.
- Participation from OAS Permanent Observer Countries will be evaluated on a limited, case-by-case basis. Host countries can request which OAS Permanent Observer countries they would like to be considered for ACE participation and the **ACE Coordinating Committee shall have the final say regarding their participation**. Countries are encouraged to focus on OAS member countries before identifying observer countries for involvement.
- A maximum of 20% of participant slots can be allocated to ACE hosts from the prior two ACE events. If these spots are not filled, they shall become available for the general pool of applications. Previous ACE host sites shall receive preference for delegation spots for the subsequent two ACE events after hosting. After two ACE events, their applications shall be considered among the general pool of applicants.
- Prior ACE participants who have shown results and effective implementation of partnerships and collaboration opportunities from previous ACE events will be given preference in their application.
- Gender balance, geographic representation, and the participation of leaders from academia, government, and the private sector, with a particular emphasis on small business development centers and entrepreneurs, is encouraged.

The RIAC/ACE Coordinating Committee shall consider the following criteria for Selecting Participants, in no particular order:

- Diplomatic Rank/Diplomatic protocol
- Public and Private Sector senior leadership
- Prior ACE hosts and/or participants who have shown ACE-related results such as GTECS¹⁵ or ACF
- Diversity: Geographical, sectoral, and gender balance
- Capacity to cover the cost of their participation
- Ability to create long-term economic connections
- Top entrepreneurs and innovators
- Economic development system representatives

¹⁵ http://riacnet.org/initiatives/ct_31/en/

AMERICAS COMPETITIVENESS EXCHANGE on Innovation and Entrepreneurship

ACE Host Application Proposal Cover Sheet
You may reproduce this form on your computer

Date of application: _____ Submitted for ACE host year: _____

Lead Organization Contact Information

<i>Name of overall coordinating organization</i>		<i>Legal name, if different</i>	
<i>Address</i>		<i>City, State/Province, Zip, Country</i>	
<i>Phone</i>	<i>Facebook and Twitter accounts</i>	<i>Website</i>	
<i>Primary ACE Host Coordinator</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>E-mail</i>
<i>Co – host (If applicable)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>E-mail</i>

ACE PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Please give a summary in a maximum of 10 pages showcasing your region and why it should host an ACE. This summary should include the following items¹⁶:

- Economic Background: An overview of the economic conditions, key clusters¹⁷ (using the US¹⁸ or European Union¹⁹ definition for clusters), history, and culture of the region;
- SWOT Analysis: An in-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (commonly known as a “SWOT” analysis) relating to your region's economy;

¹⁶ A proposal to bid is not a guarantee of selection. All full proposals will be given full and fair consideration

¹⁷ The Mexican and Canadian maps already use the US Definition.

¹⁸ <http://clustermapping.us/content/cluster-mapping-methodology>

¹⁹ <http://www.clusterobservatory.eu/index.html>

- Strategic Direction/Action Plan²⁰: The strategic direction and action plan should build on findings from the SWOT analysis and incorporate/integrate elements from other regional programs (e.g., land use and transportation, workforce development, etc.). In particular, this plan should show how the ACE could benefit your region as well as how your region could benefit the participants;
- Outline prior engagement with OAS member countries including results from ACE/ACF participation;
- Market fit: Demonstrate that your region is positioned for increased trade and economic development interactions with the Americas. This may include, but is not limited to, highlighting any existing trade and other partnerships²¹ between your region and the Americas or identify institutions and organizations (who have agreed to be ACE site hosts) with interest in developing economic development partnerships and/or increasing trade with the Americas;
- Key ACE host partners and their host responsibilities;
- Airport information;
- Urban and crucial rural anchor sites²²; and
- Hotel information – up to 60 rooms at the US Government per diem rate²³

The following attachments are also required:

- Full proposed agenda with anchor site participation confirmed.
- Cover submission letter from a central gatekeeper to accompany application packet.
- Letters of support from consortium members and critical regional leaders.
- Statement of availability of funds to host and support the design, planning, and implementation of the ACE program.

For applications hosted outside of the United States: bids must be coordinated by the Organization of the American States as the RIAC Technical Secretariat before being submitted to the ACE Coordinating Committee.

For applications hosted in the United States: bids must be coordinated and submitted by representatives of the U.S. Department of Commerce²⁴, and the U.S. Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States of the U.S. Department of State.

²⁰ The host committee recommends that regions have a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy or similar document based on a similar model to those used by the US Economic Development Administration.

<https://www.eda.gov/ceds/> or <https://www.cedscentral.com/>.

²¹ Research, innovation, technology transfer and other partnerships.

²² An anchor site is defined as a primary site that can be used to draw high level participation to the event. For example, MARS Discovery District in Toronto, Google in Silicon Valley, top tier universities, major cultural or historical economic drivers, etc.

²³ For CONUS <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates> and OCONUS https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp

²⁴ As outlined by the Memorandum of Cooperation between the US Department of Commerce and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States Concerning Competitiveness, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship in the Americas as dated 14 April 2016;