



## CONNECTING MIDWEST & GERMAN STARTUP ECOSYSTEMS

### *Hardtech & Deeptech in Manufacturing and Industry*

#### Delegation Trip – Draft Agenda

Dates: July 12–17, 2026 | Locations: Detroit • Lansing • Chicago

##### Sunday, July 12, 2026 – Detroit, MI

Time	Program
All day	<b>Individual arrival to Detroit (DTW) and Hotel Check-in</b>
6:00 pm	<b>Delegation Meet &amp; Greet over Detroit Style Pizza</b>

##### Monday, July 13, 2026 – Detroit, MI

Time	Program
9:00 am	<p><b>Opening Briefing: Detroit’s Mobility &amp; Hardtech Renaissance with <a href="#">Detroit Regional Partnership (DRP)</a> and the <a href="#">Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)</a></b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> How regional EDOs support, fund, and attract startups — especially international ones.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An overview of how Detroit is leveraging its legacy strengths in manufacturing and mobility to rebuild itself as a leading center for hardtech and deeptech innovation.</li> <li>• Business attraction strategies, site readiness, and inclusive prosperity — including sector strategies in mobility and advanced manufacturing.</li> <li>• <a href="#">DRP’s Global Epicenter of Mobility (GEM)</a>: A federally-backed mobility transformation initiative enabling pilots, workforce programs, and cross-sector innovation.</li> </ul>



Time	Program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MEDC’s funding and incentive tools for tech and mobility startups.</li> <li>• How German stakeholders can collaborate on reciprocal soft-landing, incentive matchmaking, and pilot deployment for mobility &amp; cleantech founders.</li> </ul>
12:00 pm	<p><b>Networking Lunch at <a href="#">Michigan Central</a></b></p> <p>Michigan Central serves as a cornerstone of Detroit’s transition from a traditional industrial center to a globally relevant innovation district. As a 30-acre open innovation campus led by Ford, it provides the physical and regulatory infrastructure needed for hardtech and mobility startups to develop, test, and scale new technologies.</p>
1:30 pm	<p><b>Lab Tour &amp; Working Session: <a href="#">Newlab</a> at Michigan Central</b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Hardtech and deeptech commercialization, prototyping, and pilot infrastructures.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry needs in the U.S. mobility and energy sectors</li> <li>• How Newlab supports &gt;100 mobility, energy, logistics &amp; climate-tech startups through prototyping, fabrication, and R&amp;D labs.</li> <li>• The Transportation Innovation Zone enabling rapid testing of drones, AVs, and mobility tech — a regulatory model German clusters can learn from.</li> <li>• How Newlab connects startups to corporates (Ford, Stellantis, Amazon) and government partners for challenge-based innovation.</li> <li>• Replicable models for testbed governance, public-private funding, and industrial pilot deployment.</li> </ul>
3:00 pm	<p><b>Workshop: From Prototype to Production with <a href="#">Centrepolis Accelerator</a></b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Hardtech acceleration, manufacturing readiness, cleantech commercialization.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p>

Time	Program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centrepolis' unique focus on hardware, cleantech, and product commercialization, including its Experts-in-Residence model.</li> <li>• How startups receive manufacturing diagnostics, prototyping support, and access to Michigan's supplier network.</li> <li>• Overview of the C3 Accelerator for hardtech &amp; circular economy startups.</li> <li>• Lessons for German hardtech accelerators: embedding engineering talent, co-developing prototypes, and reducing cost/time to production.</li> </ul>
6:00 pm	<b>Evening Meetup: Detroit × Germany Startup Social</b>

**Tuesday, July 14, 2026 — Lansing / East Lansing, MI**

Time	Program
08:00 am	<b>Transfer to East Lansing</b>
09:30 am	<p><b>Breakfast Roundtable: <a href="#">Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP)</a></b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Regional innovation building &amp; startup services.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEAP's public-private partnership model for regional startup development.</li> <li>• How LEAP scales small-business formation and innovation programs.</li> <li>• Incentives and support for international founders entering the Lansing region.</li> </ul>
12:00 pm	<b>Lunch &amp; Campus Walk at Michigan State University (MSU)</b>
1:30 pm	<p><b>Tour &amp; Discussion: <a href="#">MSU Research Foundation, Burgess Institute &amp; Red Cedar Ventures</a></b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> University-driven venture creation &amp; funding.</p>

Time	Program
	<p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSU’s model for student entrepreneurship, startup education, and interdisciplinary founder pipelines.</li> <li>• MSU Research Foundation’s venture structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Red Cedar Ventures (seed) &amp; Michigan Rise Pre-Seed Fund fueling early-stage tech.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How MSU blends incubation, R&amp;D, capital, and corporate engagement.</li> <li>• Models for German universities to replicate (e.g., integrated venture funds, statewide pitch programs like PitchMI).</li> </ul>
3:30 pm	<p><b>Lab Tour &amp; Exchange: <a href="#">Fraunhofer USA – Center Midwest (East Lansing)</a> – joint research and collaboration models</b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Applied R&amp;D, commercialization pathways &amp; German-American tech transfer.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fraunhofer USA Center Midwest capabilities in coatings, diamond technologies, and advanced materials.</li> <li>• How Fraunhofer USA structures R&amp;D contracts with startups and SMEs.</li> <li>• How to design binational research collaborations between Michigan, Germany, and Fraunhofer Institutes.</li> </ul>
6:00 pm	<b>Cultural Dinner in East Lansing</b>

**Wednesday, July 15, 2026 – Transfer to Chicago, IL**

Time	Program
08:00 am	<b>Coach Transfer from Lansing to Chicago</b>
12:30 pm	<b>Hotel Check-in &amp; Lunch</b>
2:00 pm	<b>Briefing: Illinois – Policies, Programs &amp; Partners with <a href="#">Illinois Department of Commerce &amp; Economic Opportunity (DCEO)</a> and <a href="#">Illinois EDC</a></b>

Time	Program
	<p><b>Focus:</b> State-wide startup &amp; innovation policy, incentives, landing programs.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DCEO’s suite of innovation-support programs &amp; economic growth plan.</li> <li>• Illinois EDC’s role in site selection, international business attraction, and ecosystem navigation.</li> <li>• Incentive structures for advanced manufacturing, quantum, and clean-energy industries.</li> <li>• How German regional agencies can set up joint landing pads and co-funded programs.</li> </ul>
4:00 pm	<p><b>Chicago isn’t Silicon Valley and that’s a good thing: <a href="#">World Business Chicago (WBC)</a> – Chicago 2050 strategy</b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> City-level innovation clusters and corporate engagement.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chicago 2050 strategy: focusing on high-growth sectors (manufacturing, digital/AI, quantum, life sciences).</li> <li>• How WBC activates corporate innovation to support startups (Fortune 500 HQ density &amp; corporate expansion).</li> <li>• How international partners plug into Chicago innovation districts.</li> </ul> <p>As <a href="#">Abin Kuriakose</a>, Chief Innovation &amp; Strategy Officer, <a href="#">World Business Chicago</a> shared at the opening panel at SET Tech Festival Berlin 2025: “Chicago, Illinois, and the Midwest is open for business when it comes to science-driven innovation and the big opportunities in energy transformation. If you are working on climate technology, we invite you to collaborate with us. Chicago is open for our European partners and remains dedicated to building global partnerships.” This spirit of openness and international collaboration makes Chicago a strategic gateway for German startups exploring US opportunities.</p>

**Thursday, July 16, 2026 – Chicago, IL**

Time	Program
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Time	Program
09:00 am	<p><b>Half-Day Immersion in the daily operations of Start-Up Ecosystem Players</b></p> <p>Take a deep dive into one of our hardtech /deeptech ecosystem players in Chicagoland. Spend half a day at their location, meet the team and learn about the collaboration between emerging companies, investors, and innovation hubs. You'll discover operational initiatives and strategies driving success in the U.S. market, build valuable connections, and gain inspiration for your own projects. Depending on the focus, you'll either have a personalized immersion experience tailored to your interests or join a small group for a collaborative deep dive. Possible stakeholders include but are not limited to the partners listed at the end of this document.</p>
12:00 pm	<p><b>Lunch</b></p>
1:30 pm	<p><b>Deep-dive Visit: <a href="#">mHUB</a> — Deeptech &amp; Medtech Lab Tour &amp; Exchange</b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> A streamlined, high-impact exchange and tour of mHUB's deeptech, medtech, and quantum-enabling infrastructure, showcasing why mHUB was selected as an official On-Ramp location for the <a href="#">Illinois Quantum &amp; Microelectronics Park (IQMP)</a>.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how Illinois accelerates deeptech commercialization using interim lab infrastructure.</li> <li>• Learn how mHUB integrates quantum, microelectronics, hardtech, and Medtech development workflows under one roof.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for German accelerators, health-tech hubs, and deeptech clusters to co-develop soft-landing, prototyping, and research partnerships with mHUB and IQMP.</li> </ul>
3:30 pm	<p><b>Site Visit: <a href="#">Illinois Institute of Technology — Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation &amp; Tech Entrepreneurship</a> — program showcase and lab tour</b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> University-focused innovation training &amp; prototyping.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IIT's interdisciplinary project-based innovation model through</li> </ul>

Time	Program
	<p>the Kaplan Institute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How IIT builds founder skills across design, engineering &amp; business.</li> <li>• Collaboration opportunities with German universities &amp; applied research organizations.</li> </ul>
6:30 pm	<p><b>Venture Networking Reception with <a href="#">Honigman LLP – Startup &amp; Venture Division</a> and <a href="#">TechNexus Venture Collaborative</a></b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Legal, venture, and cross-border startup readiness.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entity setup for German startups entering the U.S.</li> <li>• Funding instruments (SAFE, preferred equity, venture debt).</li> <li>• IP structures and implications for binational research or university partnerships.</li> </ul>

**Friday, July 17, 2026 – Chicago, IL**

Time	Program
09:00 am	<p><b>Site Visit: <a href="#">MxD – the Digital Manufacturing &amp; Cybersecurity Institute</a> – factory floor demos and cyber readiness</b></p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Industry 4.0 readiness, SME digitalization &amp; cybersecurity.</p> <p><b>Possible Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How MxD operates the U.S. national center for manufacturing cybersecurity.</li> <li>• “Future Factory” demonstration zone showcasing robotics, sensors, simulation.</li> <li>• Digital readiness assessments &amp; upskilling programs.</li> <li>• Models for Germany–U.S. collaboration on Industry 4.0.</li> </ul>
12:00 pm	<p><b>Debrief &amp; Next Steps</b></p> <p><b>Talking Points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key takeaways &amp; lessons learned</li> </ul>

Time	Program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback round</li><li>• Next steps USA – how to follow up to build sustainable partnerships</li></ul>
2:30 pm	<b>Chicago Architecture Boat Tour</b>
4:00 pm	<b>End of Program - Departures</b>

*Please note that this agenda serves as an initial framework only. All program elements—including meeting formats, company visits, and discussion sessions—will be adapted to reflect the objectives and thematic priorities of the German participating organizations.*

Scan the QR code or visit our website to sign up today:



<https://www.gaccmidwest.org/de/events/connecting-midwest-and-german-startup-ecosystems-hardtech-deeptech-in-manufacturing-and-industry>

**Any Questions? Let's discuss how this expert delegation trip aligns with your goals.**



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**Abin Kuriakose, Chief Innovation & Strategy Officer, World Business Chicago**

*Participating in the Midwest-focused delegation during Berlin Energy Week 2025, organized by GACC Midwest, was one of the most professionally enriching experiences of my career. It provided an invaluable opportunity to connect with and learn from leaders and colleagues across Berlin and Germany. GACC Midwest has built a powerful brand and network that truly enables its partners to grow and deepen global economic ties through strong transatlantic collaboration.*



## About the Regions & Partners

**Detroit Region:** Detroit's innovation economy blends mobility, advanced manufacturing, and climate/energy tech. Michigan Central and Newlab anchor a growing hardtech ecosystem with dedicated pilot zones for urban mobility and aerial systems. The Detroit Regional Partnership (DRP) leads regional business attraction, including the Global Epicenter of Mobility (GEM).

**Lansing / East Lansing:** Home to the State Capitol and Michigan State University, the region's startup community is driven by MSU's commercialization engine (MSU Research Foundation, Red Cedar Ventures, Michigan Rise) and regional partners like LEAP and the Lansing Regional SmartZone.

**Chicago:** A diversified global hub with the #2 concentration of Fortune 500 HQs in the U.S., 100+ higher-ed institutions, and a top-4 STEM talent ranking. World Business Chicago's Chicago 2050 strategy prioritizes sectors like manufacturing, life sciences, digital tech & AI, and clean energy/quantum.

### Preliminary Partner List:

#### Michigan — Detroit / Lansing / East Lansing

- **Detroit Regional Partnership (DRP)** — *Regional business attraction and investment agency.* DRP leads signature manufacturing and mobility initiatives (e.g., VIP site-readiness program) and anchors the Global Epicenter of Mobility (GEM)—a federally backed effort to accelerate advanced mobility and supply-chain transformation across Southeast Michigan.  
<https://www.detroitregionalpartnership.com/>
- **Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)** — *State economic development agency.* MEDC coordinates incentives, small-business services, and industry programs supporting manufacturing, mobility, and domestic production across Michigan.  
<https://www.michiganbusiness.org/>
- **Michigan Central** — *30-acre open innovation district led by Ford in Detroit.* Provides a real-world Transportation Innovation Zone for urban tech pilots and is home to the Newlab Detroit hardtech hub supporting mobility, energy, and industrial technologies.  
<https://michigancentral.com/>
- **Newlab Detroit @ Michigan Central** — *Venture platform for critical technologies (mobility, manufacturing, climate).* Offers a 270,000 sq ft hardtech facility with advanced prototyping labs and access to specially permitted urban testbeds for pilots with OEMs and public agencies. Milestone: 100+ member startups within first 14



months.

<https://www.newlab.com/locations/detroit>

- **Centrepolis Accelerator (Lawrence Technological University)** — *Hardware / manufacturing accelerator* focused on product realization, Industry 4.0, and cleantech. Provides hands-on engineering support, prototyping, supply-chain sourcing, and non-dilutive funding to get physical products made in Michigan. SBA Growth Accelerator Fund award under Domestic Manufacturing priority.

<https://www.centrepolisaccelerator.com/>

- **Fraunhofer USA — Center Midwest (CMW)** — *Applied R&D institute* specializing in coatings, diamond materials, additive manufacturing, and laser applications for industrial clients (automotive, energy, aerospace, medical). Facilities in East Lansing and Plymouth, MI.

<https://www.cmw.fraunhofer.org/>

- **Michigan State University (MSU) & MSU Research Foundation** — *University commercialization and venture platform*. MSURF supports translational research, incubation, and seed/venture investment for high-tech startups across AI, manufacturing, agtech, and life sciences; also partners with Newlab in Detroit.

<https://msufoundation.org/>

- **Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP)** — *Regional economic development organization (Clinton, Eaton, Ingham counties)*. Drives business attraction and startup support with emphasis on manufacturing, site selection, and incentives in Greater Lansing.

<https://www.purelansing.com/>

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## Illinois — Chicago

- **Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)** — *State economic development agency*. Administers incentives, workforce and community development, and trade programs; collaborates with **Illinois EDC** on business attraction.

<https://dceo.illinois.gov/>

<https://illinoisedc.org/>

- **World Business Chicago (WBC)** — *City/region's public-private economic development agency*. Leads corporate attraction and expansion, cluster strategy (e.g., Chicago 2050), and investor/corporate connections spanning advanced manufacturing,

logistics, healthcare, and tech.

<https://worldbusinesschicago.com/>

- **Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago** - *Urban manufacturing and small-business incubator.* ICNC is a nonprofit economic development organization supporting companies through business advising, incubation, workforce development, and advocacy. It operates **Make City**, one of the largest urban manufacturing incubators in the U.S., providing affordable production space and hands-on support to over 100 growing companies. ICNC also co-runs **The Hatchery**, a major food-and-beverage startup incubator, creating an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem where businesses can scale and access resources, mentoring, and specialized training.

<https://industrialcouncil.com/>

- **Illinois Institute of Technology – Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation & Tech Entrepreneurship** – *University hub for product development and entrepreneurship.* Houses IPRO and campus prototyping/fabrication labs; building features ETFE climate-responsive façade and flexible R&D spaces for hardtech projects.

<https://www.iit.edu/kaplan>

- **mHUB (Chicago)** – *Leading U.S. hardtech & manufacturing innovation center.* Provides 10+ prototyping labs, micro-factories, corporate partnerships, and a hands-on accelerator for IIoT, med-tech, energy, robotics, and connected devices; community has raised \$2B+ and launched 1,700+ products.

<https://www.mhubchicago.com/>

- **Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) – University of Illinois System** – *Applied R&D and tech-talent hub* focused on AI, quantum, and the future of computing; links industry with university researchers and builds workforce pipelines for Chicago’s innovation economy.

<https://dpi.illinois.edu/>

- **MxD – The Digital Manufacturing & Cybersecurity Institute** – *Manufacturing USA institute headquartered in Chicago.* In partnership with the U.S. DoD, MxD modernizes factory operations via digital twins, AI/analytics, 5G, and cybersecurity, and operates a 22,000 sq ft “Future Factory” for demonstration and workforce training.

<https://www.mxdusa.org/>

- **Honigman LLP – Startup & Venture Division (Chicago)** – *Active venture and emerging companies practice serving founders, investors, and corporates across the Midwest’s innovation economy.*

<https://www.honigman.com/>



German American  
Chambers of Commerce  
Deutsch-Amerikanische  
Handelskammern

- **TechNexus Venture Collaborative:** *Chicago-based venture platform bridging corporate innovation and startups in deep tech and hard tech sectors.*  
<https://technexus.com/>
- **University of Chicago Polsky Center:** *The Polsky Center supports deep tech commercialization with accelerators like Alchemist Chicago and Polsky Deep Tech Ventures.*  
<https://polsky.uchicago.edu/>

This initiative is part of the European Recovery Program (ERP), funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWE) and aims to strengthen transatlantic collaboration between the cleantech startup ecosystems in the US and Germany, fostering innovation and partnerships. The upcoming delegation trip and the accompanying webinar are designed to enhance bilateral cooperation and contribute to innovation and the global growth in manufacturing and industry.



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Affairs  
and Energy