

# CONNECTING MIDWEST & GERMAN CLEANTECH STARTUP ECOSYSTEMS

## Draft Agenda

September 14 to September 19, Denver and Chicago

**Note for Startups:** Additional event opportunities in Denver from September 10–12 can be found at the end of this agenda.

### Sunday, September 14, 2025

Time	Program
All day	<b>Individual Transfer to Denver, CO</b>  Denver's startup ecosystem demonstrated remarkable strength in 2022, raising \$5.7 billion through 597 venture deals, with cleantech emerging as one of the highest-funded industries alongside B2B SaaS and biotech. Notable cleantech success stories include Crusoe Energy Systems and Uplight (a unicorn company), which exemplify Denver's ability to nurture innovative clean technology companies. Denver's appeal for cleantech startups is further enhanced by its recognition as the city with the lowest startup costs in the US, its ranking as the 4th best mid-size city globally for startup ecosystems, and Colorado's position as the 6th most innovative state, creating an ideal environment for cleantech innovation and growth.
PM	<b>Hotel Check-in</b>  <i>Hotel: Denver</i>
6PM	<b>Welcome Dinner</b>  <i>Location: Denver</i>

### Monday, September 15, 2025

Time	Program
AM	<b>Hotel Breakfast</b>  <i>Location: Denver</i>
AM	<b>Transfer</b>
AM	<b>Powering Innovation: How Colorado Supports Cleantech Startups Through Policy &amp; Public Programs</b>  A comprehensive exchange of startup landscapes in Germany and Colorado, highlighting key trends, transatlantic collaboration ship opportunities, and policies aimed at fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and transatlantic collaboration.  <b>Interactive Workshop: Navigating Startup Ecosystems Across Borders</b>

	<p>A collaborative session addressing the challenges and opportunities within the startup ecosystems in Colorado and Germany. Topics include scaling up, internationalization strategies, and enhancing global competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic market.</p> <p><b>Exemplary Agenda &amp; Talking Points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome &amp; Introduction</li> <li>• State and City Initiatives Supporting Innovation in Germany and the US <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Policies, incentives, and strategic goals</li> <li>○ Overview of Colorado's / Germany's Cleantech Landscape</li> <li>○ Funding opportunities &amp; public-private partnerships</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Spotlight on Collaboration with International Startups</li> <li>• Networking Opportunity over Lunch</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential Participants include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Denver Economic Development &amp; Opportunity (DEDO), City and County of Denver</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Office of Economic Development &amp; International Trade (OEDIT), State of Colorado</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Colorado Cleantech Industries Association</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Colorado Smart City Alliance</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Colorado Solar and Storage Association (COSSA)</a></li> </ul> <p>Possible talking points for introduction rounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Who We Are &amp; Mission</b> – Briefly introduce the organization, its role, and its mission in supporting startups.</li> <li>• <b>Focus Areas &amp; Initiatives</b> – Highlight key industries, flagship programs, and notable collaborations.</li> <li>• <b>Opportunities for Collaboration</b> – Explain how the organization partners with other support networks (joint programs, funding access, market entry support).</li> </ul> <p><i>Location: Denver</i></p>
PM	<b>Lunch &amp; Transfer</b>
PM	<p><b>Inauguration Event of the Colorado Startup Week</b></p> <p>Colorado Startup Week is a celebration of everything entrepreneurial in Colorado, bringing over 10,000 people together with 200+ programs and events to celebrate the state's thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. The weeklong event is organized by the community and volunteers, featuring sessions, presentations, panels, workshops, happy hours, celebratory events, job fairs, and more. It aims to unite the entrepreneurial community in Colorado and beyond, celebrating great companies, innovation, ideas, and people.</p> <p><i>Location: University of Colorado Denver (tbc)</i></p>
PM	<b>Transfer</b>
PM	<p><b>Prost to the Planet: Connecting with Germany's Cleantech Scene (tbc)</b></p> <p>We'll open the evening with an informal interview featuring our German delegates — representatives from the country's vibrant startup support ecosystem. This conversation will highlight current trends, internationalization strategies, and opportunities for</p>

	<p>collaboration, setting the tone for the networking session to follow. Let's give our transatlantic partners a firsthand look at the dynamic and innovative cleantech startup landscape in Germany — and why it's an exciting partner for transatlantic innovation. At the same time, the German delegation is here to learn from the experiences and approaches of their US counterparts, drawing inspiration from the unique strengths of American innovation ecosystems.</p> <p><i>Location: German American Treffpunkt, Denver (tbc)</i></p>
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## Tuesday, September 16, 2025

Time	Program
AM	<b>Hotel Breakfast</b>
AM	<b>Transfer</b>
AM	<p><b>Intercultural Pitch Workshop: Navigating Startup Ecosystems Across Borders</b></p> <p>This pitch workshop is designed to equip you with the tools and strategies needed to confidently present your ventures and build meaningful connections in the US market. Tailored specifically for non-US cleantech organizations and startups, this session highlights key differences in storytelling, expectations, and communication style. You will gain practical insights into how to craft a compelling value proposition, navigate US networking environments, and position themselves for success in a competitive transatlantic market.</p> <p><i>Location: Denver</i></p>
PM	<b>Lunch &amp; Individual Transfer</b>
PM	<p><b>Individual Program at Colorado Startup Week</b></p> <p>You'll have the chance to dive into selected sessions of Colorado Startup Week that match your own interests and goals. This year's program is packed with insights for entrepreneurs like you – covering everything from climate-conscious business and emerging technologies to funding strategies, leadership, maker innovation, and more. Whether you're looking for practical tools, fresh ideas, or inspiration from diverse founder communities, you'll find plenty of opportunities to connect, learn, and grow.</p> <p>The full schedule will be published online shortly.</p> <p><i>Location: Denver</i></p>
PM	<b>Individual Transfer</b>
PM	<p><b>Colorado Startup Week Opening Party</b></p> <p>After the individual afternoon program, we'll reunite at the official Opening Party to kick off the week together. This is a great opportunity for you to apply your newly gained pitching and networking skills in a real-world setting and connect with members of the international startup community.</p>

	<i>Location: Denver</i>
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## Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Time	Program
AM	<b>Hotel Breakfast</b>
AM	<b>Transfer</b>
AM	<p><b>Innovation in Action: US–German Exchange on Cleantech R&amp;D Partnerships</b></p> <p><b>Site Visit and Tour of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory &amp; Global Energy Park (GloPark) (tbc)</b></p> <p>As the U.S.'s only national laboratory dedicated exclusively to renewable energy, the <a href="#">National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL)</a> offers German climate tech startups unparalleled insight into cutting-edge innovation and public-private collaboration. NREL supports startups primarily to accelerate the commercialization of clean energy technologies and foster public-private innovation partnerships. Their main goals in working with startups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridging the gap between early-stage research and market deployment of renewable energy solutions.</li> <li>• Providing access to world-class research facilities, technical expertise, and validation resources.</li> <li>• Connecting startups with federal programs, investors, and corporate partners to scale impactful technologies.</li> <li>• Driving innovation ecosystems through initiatives like the <b>Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (IEC)</b> and programs such as the <b>Wells Fargo Innovation Incubator (IN<sup>2</sup>)</b> and <b>Shell GameChanger Accelerator</b>.</li> </ul> <p>The visit also includes <a href="#">GloPark</a>, NREL's newly launched Global Energy Park designed to foster international collaboration, co-location, and cross-sector innovation. GloPark serves as a hub for startups, researchers, and industry leaders to work side by side on the development and deployment of transformative clean energy solutions on a global scale.</p> <p><i>Location: Denver</i></p>
PM	<p><b>Lunch &amp; Transfer from Denver to Chicago, IL</b></p> <p>Chicago has emerged as a significant global innovation hub, boasting the second highest number of Fortune 500 company headquarters and ranking #4 in the US for STEM talent, supported by over 100 higher education institutions. The city is home to twenty-four corporate innovation centers and has seen substantial investment, with tech companies raising over \$7 billion in venture capital in 2021 alone. Chicago's diverse economy and strategic location enhance its appeal for startups, allowing firms to source more of their supply chain regionally while benefiting from competitive labor costs. With over 145,000 graduates entering the workforce annually, Chicago offers a robust talent pipeline, making it an attractive environment for cleantech innovation and growth.</p>
PM	<b>Hotel Check In</b>

	<i>Location: Chicago</i>
PM	<b>Transfer</b>
PM	<b>Welcome Dinner at Thattu, Chicago's West Side &amp; one of New York Times' Top 50 Best New Restaurants</b>  <i>Location: Thattu, 2601 W Fletcher St, Chicago, IL 60618</i>

## Thursday, September 18, 2025

Time	Program
AM	<p><b>Briefing: Chicago, Illinois isn't Silicon Valley and that's a Good Thing – Policies, Programs &amp; Partners</b></p> <p>This in-depth exchange offers a comprehensive overview of the state's cleantech landscape — from clean energy and sustainable mobility to carbon capture and grid innovation. Learn how the state of Illinois and the city of Chicago foster innovation through strategic state initiatives, access to funding, and collaboration with international startups.</p> <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: <i>“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.”</i> This spirit of openness and international collaboration makes Chicago a strategic gateway for European cleantech startups exploring US opportunities.</p> <p><b>Exemplary Agenda &amp; Talking Points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome &amp; Introduction</li> <li>• State and City Initiatives Supporting Innovation in Germany and the US <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Policies, incentives, and strategic goals</li> <li>○ Overview of Illinois / Germany's Cleantech Landscape</li> <li>○ Funding opportunities &amp; public-private partnerships</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Spotlight on Collaboration with International Startups</li> <li>• Networking Opportunity over Lunch</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential Participants include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">World Business Chicago</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), State of Illinois</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">1871</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago (ICNC)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Techstars</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Northwestern University Innovation and New Ventures Office</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">University of Chicago</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Northwestern University</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Gener8tor</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">University of Illinois</a></li> </ul> <p>Possible talking points for introduction rounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Who We Are &amp; Mission</b> – Briefly introduce the organization, its role, and its mission in supporting startups.</li> <li>• <b>Focus Areas &amp; Initiatives</b> – Highlight key industries, flagship programs, and notable collaborations.</li> <li>• <b>Opportunities for Collaboration</b> – Explain how the organization partners with other support networks (joint programs, funding access, market entry support).</li> </ul> <p><i>Location: Chicago</i></p>
PM	<b>Transfer</b>
PM	<p><b>From Pitch to Partnership: Unlocking Cleantech Investment Potential Across the Atlantic (tbc)</b></p> <p>Interactive workshop hosted by Chicago-based venture capital firm <a href="#">TechNexus Venture Collaborative</a>, focused on investing in relationships between leading corporations and ambitious entrepreneurs. A first-of-its-kind Venture Collaborative, TechNexus follows a relationship-driven approach to scouting, investing, incubating, and collaborating alongside ventures and industry-leading partners. To date, TechNexus has unlocked and activated hundreds of revenue-generating outcomes between some of the most matured corporations and early-stage companies to create new business models, revenue streams, and products.</p> <p><i>Location: TechNexus Venture Collaborative, Chicago</i></p>
PM	<p><b>Hardtech x Climate Tech: A US–Germany Exchange on Scaling Physical Solutions for a Sustainable Future (tbc)</b></p> <p>During this session, you will explore how Chicago’s ecosystem enables cleantech founders to access state-of-the-art mentorship, venture funding, and strategic industry partnerships. The workshop includes a deep dive into the supportive structures for early-stage ventures, followed by an insightful site visit. Network with local startups and explore collaboration opportunities between the German and US climate tech ecosystems.</p> <p><i>Location: Chicago (tbc)</i></p>
PM	<p><b>Windy City Climate Meet-Up: Startup Edition</b></p> <p>Tap into the <a href="#">Chicago Climate Connect</a> network at this informal afterwork reception, focused on cleantech startup ecosystems. Connect with founders, investors, accelerators, and public sector leaders driving climate innovation in the Midwest, and explore opportunities for transatlantic collaboration in a relaxed, engaging atmosphere.</p> <p><i>Location: Chicago (tbc)</i></p>

## Friday, September 19, 2025

Time	Program
AM	<b>From Lab to Launch: A Transatlantic Dialogue on Startup Support (tbc)</b>  Join us at the <a href="#">University of Chicago's Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation</a> for a roundtable exploring how startups move from research to real-world impact. This transatlantic conversation will bring together experts, entrepreneurs, and innovation leaders from both sides of the Atlantic to exchange expertise on supporting early-stage ventures, with a particular focus on university spin-offs and fostering strong partnerships between academia and industry.  <i>Location: University of Chicago</i>
PM	<b>Transfer</b>
PM	<b>Debriefing</b>  <i>Location: Chicago</i>
PM	<b>Transfer</b>
PM	<b>Chicago Architecture Boat Tour (tbc)</b>  Let's hop aboard the Chicago Architecture Boat Tour for a fun and scenic ride through the city's iconic skyline—discover stunning buildings, hidden history, and jaw-dropping views, all from the Chicago River!  <i>Location: Chicago</i>
PM	<b>Individual Departure</b>

*\*This agenda represents a draft program. Kindly be aware that the program is subject to modifications based on factors such as the availability of participating organizations, logistical considerations, and other relevant factors. The program organizer reserves the right to make adjustments to the content and schedule of the agenda with short notice.*

The participation fee is 695 EUR (covers organization of all agenda points including site visits and networking events; accommodation throughout the official trip dates; ground transportation within the US; and select meals. Participants pay remaining costs, including international and local flights, transport to and from airports, and accommodation outside the scope of the trip dates.) Please find more information on the registration on our [website](#).

Please don't hesitate to reach out in case you have any questions!



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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 of the cleantech sector. It is a return visit to the successful delegation trip to Berlin and Leipzig in March 2025.

### **Optional Add-on for Startups from September 10-12, 2025: Denver Global Landing Pad**

The Denver Global Landing Pad (GLP) is an immersive, three-day, in-person program designed to provide scaling foreign businesses with the runway they need to successfully enter the U.S. market. Through this experience, CEOs and founders will build valuable connections with other business leaders and establish a local network of partners, potential clients, and service providers.

This program offers tailored mentorship and business development opportunities for market expansion. Participants will have access to insights on essential topics, including immigration, licensing and registration, tax and accounting, legal requirements, intellectual property protection, venture capital, investor relations, go-to-market strategies, employee management, and more. Please contact us directly if you are interested in learning more about GLP.