

The EIT and its Innovation Communities present:

CONNECT & EXPERIENCE SV: Bridging Ecosystems 2024

We are excited to officially open the call for the 2024 Connect & Experience (C&E) Silicon Valley cohort. We invite you to join the European-Silicon Valley community that offers a platform for peer learning and collaboration, aimed at enhancing open innovation and transatlantic business creation in your ecosystem.

Who are we? The [EIT Hub Silicon Valley](#) is an initiative of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)'s Global Outreach (GO) program, that aims to create synergies between the European and the US West Coast innovation ecosystem to support the growth of innovative start-ups and increase the number of EU-US collaborative projects. EIT Hub Silicon Valley supports European innovators to enter the US West Coast market and attract customers, partners, and investors by showcasing European innovation to the California innovation and education ecosystem. To date, EIT Hub Silicon Valley has supported the synergies between European and the US West Coast innovation ecosystem in the following ways:



45+ Scale-Ups
Helped with access to market



10 Deep Hacks
Completed



65+ Events
1500+ participants



50+ Students
Trained

Call for participation

You are invited to apply to a one-of-a-kind, interactive program and become part of an exclusive European-Silicon Valley active innovation community.

What is Connect & Experience?

The program encompasses three elements:

1. Intensive 5-day in-person professional training in Silicon Valley (6th – 11th October 2024)
2. European "Connect & Experience Playground" follow-up conference (TBC)
3. Full access to the Connect & Experience innovation community network

1. Professional Training in Silicon Valley

This full-stack 5-day immersion into the Silicon Valley ecosystem goes beyond the usual introductions, and drills down to the key drivers of ecosystem building. Key drivers include government funding schemes, academia and startups, the role of community builders, corporates and more. This deep dive is designed to provide a genuine insight into what could be considered the most fascinating ecosystems in the world, all while providing the highest practical value and impact on participants.

The program is highlighted by the brand names of the Silicon Valley ecosystem who will share their experience and describe their role in making Silicon Valley the innovation powerhouse it is today. The program will leverage existing know-how and best practices, will provide broad access to mentors, hands-on training, and tools to commercialize & scale -up ideas, research, and IP to better support innovation. It will also focus on how to build a sustainable transatlantic system in the process. The program will start with an overview of Silicon Valley and what makes this a unique ecosystem. EIT Hub Silicon Valley will host networking activities, providing a platform for business creation, and knowledge transfer. During the ram, global trends and challenges for innovation leaders will be analysed, offering a fresh perspective and take on innovation & ecosystem management.

2. "Connect & Experience Playground" Follow-up Conference

The annual highlight of the C&E community network - European Playground is a professional follow up conference that offers practical tools and strategies to develop and manage innovation communities and start-up support systems, bringing together professionals from across Europe, Silicon Valley, the UK and Israel, alumni of Connect & Experience programs in these locations from the past 5 years.

In addition to attending the conference and benefiting from the global knowledge and expertise, embers will be offered the opportunity to design and co-facilitate content and workshops with peers who have experience in connecting the public and private sector, as well as start-ups and corporate players. As such, the playground can be used as a testbed for new ideas and initiatives, receiving real time feedback and potential collaborations from leading experts in the field.

C&E alumni of 2024 will be entitled to a complimentary ticket to the Playground (ticket value EUR 350).

3. Full access to the active C&E Community Network

Connect & Experience offers more than training. The C&E community network is an active EU-Global online and offline community offering easy access to opportunities, curated content, matchmaking, soft landing services and support. The community offers a space for community

builders from Silicon Valley, Israel and Europe to interact, share best practices and collaborate, with the common goal of enhancing your start-up community.

Why should I apply?

- A leading program with a high caliber of participants and expert facilitators;
- Provides you with top tools to become a leader in your field by learning best practices of ecosystem management, including community building, tech tools, network leveraging and more;
- Experience the innovation creation, and effective tools to support it, developed exclusively for the 2024 cohort;
- Get immersed and build sustainable partnerships in the most innovative region in the world;
- Explore opportunities to partner with EIT Hub SV to access the Silicon Valley market and get co-create activities in 2025¹;
- Become a part of a closed community network of strategic players in ecosystem building, get ongoing support, access to events and a matchmaking service from the EIT Global Outreach that has strategic hubs in Silicon Valley, Israel and the UK.

The ideal participant:

The ideal participant is a European **experienced senior professional, at management/decision making level**, in an organization boosting European innovation growth and significantly impacting the European ecosystem. The participant should deal with innovation or business creation, with a minimum of 5 years of relevant professional experience from at least one of the following sectors: industry, academia, government. As such, they should be able to contribute knowledge, experience and network to the program and provide added value to their peers.

For example: VCs, TTOs, Heads of accelerators, Innovation agencies, research centres, incubators, or other business creation activities from academia, industry and government. The program is not suited for individual start-ups or consultants.

Eligible applicants are divided in to three categories:

1. EIT KIC Partners² and KIC cooperating entities under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) from the 6 KICs involved in the EIT Silicon Valley Hub - EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Culture & Creativity, EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health and EIT Manufacturing.
2. Partner from other KICs - EIT InnoEnergy, and EIT Raw Materials, and EIT Urban Mobility.
3. Non-EIT Partners - Ecosystem/Innovation/Education Managers,

Assessment Process:

Each application will be reviewed and ranked by the following criteria:

Criteria	Details	% of Score
Diversity	The cohort aims to represent the diversity of the European ecosystem	10%
Seniority	Professional role and seniority level	20%
European Innovation	Impact of your organization / program on the European Innovation ecosystem	30%
Value Added	Maturity of your transatlantic business creation proposal & ability to add value to the C&E program	40%

An individual online interview might be scheduled as an additional evaluation criterion.

The selection will be competitive and based upon excellence and the above noted criteria. The final selection will be made by the EIT Silicon Valley Cross KIC Steering Committee (with members representing the KICs).

Finance:

The full cost of the program is 8,000 EUR. Travel and accommodation will be financed by participant's own resources. EIT Hub Silicon Valley can offer partial funding of the programs based on the following categories:

¹ The EIT might support business proposals in 2025 that create new partnerships with EIT Hub Silicon Valley, that have high business maturity according to the criteria of Annex2 and they are not more than 3 per cohort (0-3 proposals per cohort).

² All 9 KIC's are invited to apply, however funding will be offered to the 6 KIC's active in the EIT Hub Silicon Valley: EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Culture & Creativity, EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health and EIT Manufacturing. See more in the finance section.

Category Number	Participant Category	Eligible KIC's	Eligibility for Program Funding	Eligibility for Travel and Accommodation Reimbursement
1	KIC Partners and KIC cooperating entities under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS)	6 GO KIC's: EIT Climate- KIC, EIT Culture & Creativity, EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health and EIT Manufacturing.	85% Funded; Price: €1,200	Financed by participant own resources
2	Partner from other KIC's	EIT InnoEnergy, EIT Raw Materials, and EIT Urban Mobility	70% Funded; Price: €2,400	Financed by participant own resources
3	Ecosystem Leader (Non EIT)	Any individual professional can apply.	Early Bird 50% Funded; Price: €4,000	Financed by participant own resources

Staff from 6 EIT GO KICs can apply through the same process. Note, only up to 1 representative from each KIC will be considered. Travel and costs will be financed by KICs own resources.

The evaluation of applications will be conducted by the EIT GO Steering Committee, focusing on organizations with strong business creation ideas or individuals with strong professional profiles.

The EIT Hub Silicon Valley will award up to 4 "Golden Tickets" to exceptional Partner/Non-EIT organizations, making them eligible for up to 100% discounts. We consider an application exceptional if there is a high potential for synergies on transatlantic activities in collaboration with the Hub.

Timeline:

Call for applications:

- Application Opening: May 20th, 2024
- Early Bird closes: June 30th, 2024 (23:59, CEST)
- Application Closes: August 25th, 2024 (23:59, CEST)
 - Selection announcement and travel arrangements – by August 30th, 2024
 - Onboarding webinar (for accepted participants) – September 24th, 2024, 17:30 CEST

The applicants that were not selected but got onto the waitlist will be notified between 10th– 17th of September if they will be joining the program in case of cancellations.

Agenda:

The agenda has been set to build on learning and to support individual goals. Attendees will have the opportunity to visit Silicon Valley, San Francisco, and Berkeley, immersing them fully into the magic of the Silicon Valley Ecosystem. Key topics that will be covered are focused on Innovation, Education, and Research. Networking and building a community are also a part of the program. Here is a [sample](#) agenda to give you a feeling of the week:

- **DAY 0: Welcome Attendees** | Arrival to San Francisco and the Silicon Valley Connect & Experience, a unique experience that combines professional and mental growth to help you and your ecosystem thrive and a community to start forming. Day of introductions and dinner.
- **DAY 1: Introduction to Silicon Valley** | Working day sessions will include learning about the Silicon Valley Ecosystem and Mindset, setting expectations for the week, participating in roundtables, and introduction pitches.
- **DAY 2: Deep Dive into the Silicon Valley Innovation Ecosystem** | The aim of the day is to expose the participants to the unique Silicon Valley ecosystem through site visits and learn about key success factors and methods that created Silicon Valley the capital of inn. We will learn about the deep connections and roots of the innovation landscape in the traditional economy and how incentivized innovation transformed the Silicon Valley industries and society.
- **DAY 3: Connecting with Silicon Valley** | Meet and learn from key organizations who will share how they built a successful, organic ecosystem by leveraging upon MNCs, start-ups and talents.
- **Day 4: Education & Research** | Silicon Valley, renowned for its technological innovation and world-class universities like Stanford and UC Berkeley, has established itself as a hub for cutting-edge research, transformative educational programs, and successful technology transfer initiatives. We will delve into innovation that arise from its unique blend of academic excellence, entrepreneurial spirit and partnerships between universities, industry leaders, and talented individuals.

- **DAY 5: Building Bridges** | As we reach the end of the week we will reflect on all lessons and opportunities learned in Silicon Valley and how they can be applied to your unique ecosystem. During the day, you will have the opportunity to pitch your ideas on bridging your ecosystem with Silicon Valley and get up to EUR20,000 of co-funding to launch it in collaboration with EIT Hub Silicon Valley. We will end the program with a networking lunch.

FAQ

Does the program require me to physically attend the week in Silicon Valley?

Yes, participation physically in Silicon Valley is required, and it is the core Connect & Experience event that provides you with professional training and builds the community. You will have the chance to travel round the country, meet US peers and learn from one of the world's leading innovation ecosystems.

Who will we meet during the program?

The cohort will be comprised of ecosystem – innovation & education leaders from all over Europe that were carefully selected to join the program. You will meet peers and innovation leaders from Silicon Valley, top speakers and lecturers on several different topics, executives from global companies active in Silicon Valley, and many more. Finally, you will have the opportunity to discuss with all key actors in the region including tech giants, VCs, startups, universities and accelerators i.e. from Apple, SAP IO, Plug & Play, Mind the Bridge, AutoDesk, Stanford University etc. (The agenda is tentative and subject to changes).

Who is considered an ecosystem leader?

An ecosystem leader is an experienced senior professional, at management/decision-making level, in an organisation boosting European start-up growth, significantly impacting the European ecosystem. They should deal with innovation or business creation in any of the following sectors: industry, academia, government. For example, VCs, TTOs, Heads of accelerators, Innovation agencies, Research Centers, incubators, or other business creation activities from academia, industry and government.

What topics will be covered during your week in Silicon Valley?

The program encompasses a wide variety of subjects (innovation, education, and research), including an overview of the Silicon Valley ecosystem and meetings with leading figures from the ecosystem. You will have the chance to get your hands 'dirty' and delve into this unique location, learn best practices, become inspired by the many opportunities that will expose themselves, and test your transatlantic business creation ideas.

How much does the program cost?

This depends on a financial category that varies from participant to participant. Check out the finance section for more information.

What does the selection process look like?

The applicants will be ranked according to the criteria noted here and the final decision as to the participants will be made by the Global Outreach steering committee. Applicants will receive responses by August 30th, 2024. If you wish to submit an appeal about the answer you received following the selection process, you can email us: contact@eithubsv.eu. Please explain your reasoning as clearly as possible by September 7th, 2024.

What can I expect as an outcome of the program?

Past participants of EIT connect & experience programs have established long-standing collaborations with both local experts and members of the cohort. You can expect to be left with a change of mindset that will enable you to approach your future activities with a newfound sense of purpose, a tangible pathway to establish the best practices you were exposed to, as well as support to launch your transatlantic activities. The Connect & Experience community is extremely active with joint ventures taking place on a weekly basis, you can expect to expand your network and be part of a supportive and professional group of people.

Why the Silicon Valley ecosystem?

The Silicon Valley ecosystem, renowned as the Innovation Capital of the world, is the global center of high technology and innovation. Silicon Valley has the highest number of scale-ups and capital raised as an ecosystem in the world. Silicon Valley numbers vs. Europe numbers, scale-ups are 9,188 vs. 9,973, and capital raised \$693.3b vs. \$261.1b. The ecosystem has cultivated a culture of innovation, encouraged creativity and risk-taking, supported early-stage start-ups, and encouraged collaboration. Silicon Valley is the global innovation trendsetter and is home to some of the world's most successful and innovative companies.

Annex 1: Sub-grant Agreement

[EIT Digital Sub-grant Agreement](#)

Annex 2:

Co-creation opportunities after the program are open to C&E participants who wish to launch transatlantic activities in 2025 that meet the established criteria. All proposers should carefully read the criteria in preparation for their proposals.

- A clear description of the business plan/opportunity that aligns with the EIT KICs focus areas and enhances transatlantic cooperation.
- Evidence that partner contributes to the activity with valuable assets, including but not limited to IP, technology, freedom to operate.
- An idea with the capacity to create or disrupt markets and a work plan that can achieve the objectives set.
- A financial plan is required with a clear description of how the resources allocated will be financed.
- Venture team relevance as well as their long-term commitment to the venture.
- Activities are requested to contribute to the financial sustainability of EIT Hub Silicon Valley.

