Swiss Leading House Latin America

ACADEMIA-INDUSTRY TRAINING (AIT) COLOMBIA 2026 / 2027

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) has mandated the University of St.Gallen as Swiss Leading House for the Latin American Region to develop scientific relations and bilateral collaboration with partner institutions in Latin America. The Academia-Industry Training (AIT) is an initiative by the Swiss Leading House and the Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior (ICETEX). The AIT helps Swiss startup talents innovate and develop their entrepreneurial and business skills. ICETEX serves in cooperation with multiple university, startup, and industry partners as the main organizers for the AIT Colombia Camp.

The AIT Colombia, whose goal is to connect Swiss researcher-entrepreneurs with their Colombian peers, consists of two phases: a training camp in Bogotá and Cali predominantly organized by ICETEX, and a second training camp in Switzerland headed by the Swiss Leading House. This is the 5th cycle of the AIT Colombia, running from October 2026 to March 2027. 10 Swiss startups will be chosen, and the most promising Swiss research breakthrough project will be awarded CHF 10,000 on the last day of the Colombia Camp in February 2027. The winning Colombia startup will be awarded the equivalent of USD $10,000.

The AIT Colombia aims to transform high-level applied research into market applications. Entry is awarded on a competitive basis to selected projects with entrepreneurial potential. The main objectives of the program are to help participants advance business plans, establish further contacts with industry, and clarify intellectual property issues. The AIT will provide the opportunity to network at an international level, to foster new partnerships and collaborations, and to have access to an emerging market. The program is meant for Master or PhD students, PostDocs, and researchers from Swiss universities, Universities of Applied Science, and research institutes as well as centers of technological excellence with research track-record working on a non-profit basis. The entire event will be free of charge for the 10 selected participants, including food, travel, and accommodation expenses in both Switzerland and Colombia.

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Aims and Objectives

1. Promote innovation
   - Help participants transform their research into a high-potential startup
   - Augment relevant skills to take research from the lab to the marketplace
   - Improve market application by developing participants' ideas with the help of peers, experts, and potential customers
2. Favor the exchange of knowledge and expertise between Switzerland and Colombia
   - Provide connectivity to industry-specific, high-level researchers and startups
   - Assist engagement between researchers and entrepreneurs to understand new market opportunities and exploit new synergies
   - Incentivize transfer of know-how
3. Provide researchers the tools needed for a better understanding of industry environment
   - Deliver interactive workshops on entrepreneurship, business plans, intellectual property, market entry scenarios, funding strategies, and pitching
   - Encourage best business practices and social impact
   - Induce an entrepreneurial spirit and a focus on sustainability
4. Promote networks to foster new partnerships and collaborations
   - Accessibility to a wide, international network of peers, mentors, and industry experts
   - Support young scientists in establishing first partnerships with industry and potential investors
   - Maximize contact with top researchers from key institutions

Eligibility

1. Be a Swiss citizen or foreigner with a permanent visa
2. Have minimum a Master's degree in any area of scientific knowledge
3. Proof of English proficiency
4. Provide a Curriculum Vitae
5. Be affiliated to a Swiss University, University of Applied Science, or research institute

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The eligibility criteria indicated above are mandatory. After the selection of the 10 projects / startups, results will be published on the website: www.aitstartups.org

Evaluation and Selection

An internal panel, composed of startup, business, and industry experts from Switzerland and Colombia, and members from the Swiss Leading House for the Latin American Region and ICETEX will evaluate applications to select 10 startups according to the following criteria (equal weight):

1. Quality of overall idea, applied research, technology (product, service)
2. Market potential (competition, scalability and application possibilities of research project, product and/or service)
3. Feasibility of business plan (revenue and cost model)
4. Roadmap to success (next milestones)
5. Entrepreneurial personality and team (experience, skills, diversity)
6. Expected impact of the AIT program (motivation for the program)

After the careful evaluation of all applications, the selected candidates are required to pitch their scientific based project (product and/or service) during the online Jury Day. Each candidate will do a 5-minute PowerPoint presentation, followed by a 5-minute question and answer round.

Application

Applications can be done online through our website: www.aitstartups.org

Once selected, the 10 participants commit themselves in writing to attend both the Switzerland and Colombia Camp.

The Swiss Leading House for the Latin American Region has the right to modify the terms of this call according to the circumstances related to any decision made by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and/or the Embassy of Switzerland in Colombia.

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Timeframe

Steps	Dates
Launch of Official Call	October 22, 2026
Info Webinar Register here to receive the Zoom link	November 9, 2026 10:30 Bogotá / 16:30 Zurich
Application Deadline	November 23, 2026 (Midnight)
Jury Day for Swiss Startups	December 2, 2026
Jury Day for Colombian Startups	December 3 & 4, 2026
Online Kick-off Meeting	December 10, 2026 09:00 Bogotá / 16:00 Zurich
Training week - Colombia Camp	February 8 - 12, 2027
Training week - Switzerland Camp	March 15 - 19, 2027

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University of St.Gallen
Institute of Management in Latin America

ICETEX Invertimos en el talento de los colombianos

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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER
State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI

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Embajada de Suiza en Colombia