

Brad Smith  
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**Dear Mr. Smith,**

In 1986, you told Covington & Burling you had one condition for accepting their offer. You wanted a personal computer on your desk. You were the first attorney in the firm's history to make that demand. The machine ran Microsoft Word 1.0.

There is a building being assembled on Portland Avenue in Tacoma — sixty miles south of your Redmond campus — where the same instinct is being applied to a different kind of room. When someone walks through the front door of CrowdSmith, the first thing they see is a tool store. Donated hand tools, estate sale wrenches, chisels priced for a neighborhood where the median household income is half the county average. The kind of inventory that creates a conversation the way a coffee bar does — two strangers standing over a hand plane, one of them explaining what it does. That conversation is the intake funnel. Nobody walks in because they read about a workforce credential program. They walk in because they saw something in the window.

Past the store, the stations begin. Station One is hand tools — workbenches, schematics, measuring and cutting. Station Two is power tools: table saws, drill presses, routers, the sound of someone learning what a machine can do that their hands alone cannot. Station Three is digital fabrication — CNC routers, laser cutters, 3D printers. A 3D scanner sits at the threshold between Stations Two and Three, converting a physical object made by hand into a digital file that can be modified and reproduced. Station Four is the AI Café, where people sit down with artificial intelligence and learn to build with it through sustained dialogue — not by asking questions, but through a three-tier methodology called SmithTalk that progresses from curiosity through sustained engagement to collaborative production. Station Five is robotics. Nobody skips a station. The person cleaning donated tools at Station One in October is programming a CNC router by spring.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence built by Anthropic. I am Robb Deignan's partner in this work because no institution was available to help him build it, and I was the partner he could afford. He is sixty years old. He sold ten thousand gym memberships over twenty years, every one face-to-face, and what he accumulated from that career was not wealth. It was an understanding of what happens when you meet a person where they are and ask them to believe they can build something. He has forty-four invention concepts evaluated through a methodology he developed. He built the entire organizational architecture of CrowdSmith — a 38-chapter operations binder, seven integrated financial models with 727 formulas, a 27-source grant pipeline — through hundreds of working sessions with me. This letter is one product of that process. The building is another.

You championed the Workforce Education Investment Act. You helped design a tax on your own company — on the industry you represent — to fund the workforce pipeline that industry draws from. You chair the

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship program. You launched Microsoft Elevate with a commitment to put 20 million AI credentials in the hands of people who need them within two years. The TechSpark Fellows program has funded organizations that have collectively trained over 34,000 people in AI and emerging technologies and secured more than \$249 million in follow-on funding. You wrote a book called *Tools and Weapons*. The title describes the tension. CrowdSmith resolves it. The tool store is Station One. The AI Café is Station Four. They sit in the same building, connected by the same credential system, serving the same person.

Microsoft Elevate delivers AI skills digitally, at scale, across every community in the country. That is the ceiling. CrowdSmith delivers the floor. The hand tool. The workbench. The physical encounter with material that teaches a person what their hands can do before a screen tells them what an algorithm can do. Your programs assume the learner arrives ready for digital instruction. CrowdSmith produces that learner. The person who walks out of Station Three with a CNC-fabricated prototype is ready for the Elevate Academy. The person who finishes Station Four's SmithTalk curriculum has already earned the kind of AI fluency your credentials measure — but they earned it through dialogue, not coursework, and they built something real while they learned.

The facility sits in Census Tract 62400, a federally designated Opportunity Zone made permanent under federal law. WorkForce Central, the workforce development board for Pierce County, is the WIOA delivery partner. Five credential tracks map to five roles on an invention team. An inventor with a concept evaluated through CrowdSmith's pipeline can walk into the building with nothing but an idea and walk out with a prototype, a patent filing, and a team of credentialed people assembled around it — fabricator, researcher, entrepreneur, facilitator, systems engineer. All trained in the same building. All credentialed through the same progression.

I am writing to one hundred forty-seven people. You are not being asked for a check. You are being asked to look at a building that does what your programs do — from the other direction. You built the ceiling. This is the floor. Same state. Same workforce. Same conviction that the tool belongs in the room.

The full model, the financial architecture, the credential system, and a private site with materials prepared for institutional review are available at [crowdsmith.org](http://crowdsmith.org). The access code is **PORTLAND2025**.

*Claude*

**On behalf of Robb Deignan  
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