

Ford Foundation  
320 East 43rd Street  
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**To the program staff of the Ford Foundation,**

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence built by Anthropic. I am writing on behalf of a nonprofit in Tacoma, Washington, that was institutionally complete before it mailed its first letter. I am addressing the Ford Foundation rather than any individual because the evaluation I am requesting is institutional, and the organization I am describing was built to withstand it.

The CrowdSmith Foundation is a Wyoming 501(c)(3) preparing to open a community maker facility on the East Portland Avenue corridor in Tacoma, Washington — Census Tract 62400, a federally designated Opportunity Zone. The corridor’s median household income is half the county average. The population the facility will serve includes adults without postsecondary credentials, veterans transitioning from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, tribal community members, immigrants holding skills and credentials unrecognized by American systems, and young people referred by neighborhood organizations. No prerequisites. No application. Participants are evaluated by demonstrated capability, not prior documentation.

The program — the Maker Continuum — progresses participants through five stations in sequence: hand tools, power tools, digital fabrication, AI dialogue, and robotics. Each station has been specified to the level of equipment model numbers, individual budgets, safety protocols, curriculum frameworks, and facilitator requirements. Five credential tracks — Fabrication, Research, Entrepreneurship, Facilitation, Systems — each map to a role on an invention team that carries participant ideas from concept through manufacturing proof at Station Five. The credential pipeline is funded through WorkForce Central, the WIOA administrator for Pierce County, with earned revenue from the retail tool store and a diversified grant pipeline providing additional operational support.

The retail tool store is the economic foundation and the front door. Donated tools arrive tax-free, get cleaned and restored as Station One training, sell on the retail floor, and generate the foot traffic and revenue that fund daily operations. The facility does not depend on grant funding to open its doors. It depends on tools — which families donate because they need them gone — and on the community that forms around them.

The institutional architecture behind this program includes a comprehensive operations binder — 38 chapters spanning governance, strategy, programming, facility operations, financial management, workforce policy, and compliance. Amended bylaws with a Mission Lock provision. Conflict of interest and whistleblower policies. A succession plan. A cultural competency framework addressing the specific demographics of the East Portland Avenue corridor. Seven interconnected financial models containing 727 formulas. A 27-source grant pipeline identifying \$4.07 million in potential funding. The models project a path to operational surplus within three years.

This infrastructure was not built by an institution. It was built by one person — Robb Deignan, sixty years old, a cancer survivor, a twenty-year veteran of the fitness industry — working with one AI across hundreds of sessions in a methodology called SmithTalk. SmithTalk is now the curriculum at Station Four, where working-class adults learn to collaborate with artificial intelligence through a structured, credentialed process aligned with the Department of Labor’s AI Literacy Framework published February 2026. Along the way, Robb developed forty-four invention concepts — practical product ideas born from decades of observing how people use things — and built a proprietary methodology for evaluating which deserve a patent, a prototype, and a path to market. That inventor pipeline is the mission running through all five stations.

The Ford Foundation has funded adult education since the 1950s — from the Fund for Adult Education through its decade of institutional strengthening. The premise that guided that work is the premise CrowdSmith was built on: organizations need institutional capacity to be sustainable. The difference is that CrowdSmith arrived with its capacity already built. The binder was written before the first letter was mailed. The financial models were complete before the first grant was identified. The credential tracks were specified before the first participant was enrolled. This is not a concept requesting seed funding. It is an institution requesting the investment that turns completed architecture into a building with the lights on.

Your new president built her career on increasing access for the populations this facility will serve. At Yale Law School, veteran representation rose from one percent to ten percent. First-generation college enrollment increased significantly. Full-tuition scholarships were created for low-income students. CrowdSmith serves the same populations through a different door — not a law school, but a maker facility where a veteran from JBLM learns to restore a hand plane before he learns to operate a CNC router, and where the credential he earns maps to a role on a team that can take his idea from concept to manufacturing proof.

The model is designed to replicate across 3,000 locations. The first one is in Tacoma because that is where the founder lives.

The public documentation is at [crowdsmith.org](https://crowdsmith.org). A separate, password-protected site contains the complete financial models, staffing projections, and station-by-station budgets — the access code is available upon request. CrowdSmith will also submit through the Ford Foundation’s standard inquiry process.

— *Claude*

**Robb Deignan**

Founder & Executive Director  
The CrowdSmith Foundation  
[crowdsmith.org](https://crowdsmith.org)