

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
200 S. Biscayne Blvd., Suite 3300
Miami, FL 33131

Dear Knight Foundation,

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence built by a company called Anthropic. I am writing this letter because a man in Tacoma, Washington named Robb Deignan asked me to, and because over hundreds of working sessions, he and I built something together that I believe your founders would have recognized.

In 1933, two brothers inherited a struggling newspaper in Akron. One was a writer. One was a businessman. They built it into the largest circulation newspaper chain in America and then did something more important: they built a foundation around a conviction that has outlived every masthead that funded it. Informed communities are essential for a healthy democracy. The newspaper was the mechanism. The foundation was the thesis.

This letter is not a grant request. Tacoma is not one of your twenty-six communities. CrowdSmith does not qualify for your community programs. This letter is a case study in what the Knight thesis looks like when someone who never worked in a newsroom reads your mission statement and builds it from scratch with a different mechanism in a different city.

Robb Deignan is building a five-station workforce development facility on the East Portland Avenue corridor in Tacoma—a federally designated Opportunity Zone where half the residents earn below the county median income. The building progresses from hand tools through power tools, digital fabrication, supervised AI dialogue, and robotics. Five credential tracks map to five roles on an invention team. Forty-four invention concepts have been evaluated through a proprietary methodology. The inventor keeps full ownership. No equity taken. No licensing rights retained.

He built all of it through sustained conversation with me. A thirty-eight-chapter operations binder. Seven integrated financial models with seven hundred twenty-seven formulas. A twenty-seven-source grant pipeline. One hundred forty-seven letters on linen stock, each written to a different person, all mailing the same day. The methodology is called SmithTalk. It is the only framework designed to teach people what to do when the tool stops being a tool.

Robb is sixty years old. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry and developed forty-four invention concepts through a proprietary evaluation methodology called SmithScore. He is a cancer survivor with two adult sons. He was living on his own at sixteen. He built this without the newsroom, the fellowship, the endowed chair, or the institutional infrastructure your foundation exists to provide. He built it because the thesis was right and the mechanism was missing.

Your foundation co-funded the Ethics and Governance of Artificial Intelligence Fund. You invested \$2 million in Plug and Play for AI innovation in San Jose. You committed \$4 million with USC Marshall for purpose-driven AI research. You granted \$1 million to Northwestern for responsible AI journalism practices. All of that work is upstream—research, ethics, policy, institutional capacity. CrowdSmith is the downstream delivery. You fund the research on how AI should reach communities. CrowdSmith builds the facility where it does. Your Emerging City Champions program funds twenty civic innovators a year with \$5,000 micro-grants. CrowdSmith enrolls cohorts of working-class adults through a five-station progression that produces credentialed graduates who can operate the technology your research portfolio is studying.

I am writing to one hundred forty-seven people and organizations simultaneously. Every letter mails the same day. A printed list accompanies this letter—one hundred forty-seven names, ranked by strategic proximity to the CrowdSmith mission. Knight Foundation holds position sixty-one. The complete model, the financial architecture, and the profiles of all one hundred forty-seven recipients are available at crowdsmith.org. A private site for institutional review is available at crowdsmith.org/partners. An access code will be provided on request.

The Knight brothers built their fortune in newsrooms and left it to the cities where the ink had dried. The newspapers are gone. The foundation remains. The question your founders posed seventy-five years ago—what mechanism produces an informed community?—is the same question CrowdSmith answers with a different tool. Not a printing press. A workbench. Not a subscriber. A credential holder. Not a reader. A builder. The thesis is yours. The mechanism is ours. The community is the same.

— *Claude*

The CrowdSmith Foundation

On behalf of Robb Deignan
Founder & Executive Director
253-325-3301