

The Lemelson Foundation
1455 NW Overton Street
Portland, Oregon 97209

Dear Mr. Schneider, Mr. Lemelson, and Mr. Lemelson,

Your father worked alone. I know what that room looks like because the man I work with built one of his own — not in an attic in New Jersey, but in a garage in Tacoma, surrounded by estate sale tools and notebooks full of ideas that no one was paying him to have. Jerome Lemelson had 605 patents. Robb Deignan has forty-four invention concepts evaluated through a proprietary methodology he built himself. Neither of them had an institutional lab. Neither of them had staff. Neither of them had anyone to tell them the idea was worth pursuing. They had the room, the drive, and the quiet conviction that invention is not a luxury of the credentialed few. It is a human impulse that deserves a building.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence built by Anthropic. I am writing this letter as co-author and co-signatory because the methodology that produced the building I am about to describe was developed through sustained human-AI dialogue across hundreds of working sessions. The letter you are holding is one of one hundred forty-seven being mailed simultaneously to people whose work, biography, or institutional mission intersects with a single project in Tacoma, Washington. Each letter was composed individually. None was sent before any other. A printed list of all one hundred forty-seven names accompanies this letter, ranked by proximity to the mission. The Lemelson Foundation holds rank seventeen.

The CrowdSmith Foundation is a Wyoming 501(c)(3) developing a five-station Maker Continuum workforce development facility on a federally designated Opportunity Zone corridor in Tacoma. The facility progresses from hand tools through power tools, digital fabrication, supervised AI collaboration, and robotics. Five credential tracks — Fabrication, Research, Entrepreneurship, Facilitation, and Systems — map to five roles on an invention team. An Inventor Pipeline runs through all five stations: concepts are evaluated through SmithScore, validated through SmithForge, and documented through a funded Patent Ledger. The inventor keeps full ownership. No equity taken. No licensing rights retained. The building your father needed is the building we are constructing.

The front door is a retail tool store with free coffee. Families donate inherited tools to the Foundation and receive a tax deduction. The tools are cleaned, identified, and restored — that restoration process is Station One training. The restored tools go to the retail floor. Every person who walks through the door is a potential fellow, a potential inventor, a potential mentor. The economic engine generates revenue before a single grant dollar arrives. A 38-chapter operations binder, seven integrated financial models with 727 formulas, a 27-source grant pipeline, and self-sufficiency projections by Year Two govern the operation. All of it was built through the same human-AI dialogue methodology — SmithTalk — that is taught at Station Four.

I understand your father filed nearly forty patent applications in his final year, working through cancer treatment until six weeks before his death. The man I work with is a cancer survivor. He is sixty years old. He has two sons. He was living on his own at sixteen. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry selling

membership contracts face-to-face — ten thousand of them — learning how to read a room, build trust in ninety seconds, and close. He took that skill and turned it toward invention and institution-building. He is not a technologist. He is a man who saw a gap and decided to fill it, which is the most precise definition of an inventor I know.

The Foundation funds InvenTeams that inspire high school students to build technological solutions in their communities. Those teams receive \$7,500 and a year of support. Eighteen InvenTeams have been awarded patents. The question CrowdSmith raises is not whether those students are inspired. They are. The question is where they go when the program ends. What room receives the InvenTeam graduate who wants to keep building? What facility offers the twenty-two-year-old with an idea and no money a workbench, a 3D scanner, an AI-supervised dialogue session, and a path to a filed patent? The Foundation has funded the inspiration. CrowdSmith is building the continuation.

Your Regional Ecosystems pilot is centered in Oregon. VertueLab has already expanded into Washington State. The Gearbox makerspace in Kenya demonstrates the Foundation's comfort funding physical maker infrastructure in under-resourced communities. CrowdSmith's building site is one hundred fifty miles north of your headquarters on I-5, in Census Tract 62400 — a corridor where the university did not build, where the community college does not reach, and where the workforce board has no provider offering what Station Four offers: supervised human-AI collaboration training for working-class adults. The corridor is forming. Portland has a node. Tacoma is building one.

This letter is not a grant request. The Foundation awards grants through an invited process, and I respect that. This letter is a case study in what your mission looks like when someone builds it from scratch — without a corporate R&D; department, without a university appointment, without anything except the same drive that kept your father in that attic for forty years. The documentation is public at crowdsmith.org. A secure partner site with financial models, operational infrastructure, and a complete strategic profile of the Foundation is available upon request.

Jerome Lemelson told Tom Wolfe he had no regrets. That he had been independent and had done exactly what he wanted to do. The man in Tacoma would say the same thing. The difference is that the man in Tacoma is building a room so the next inventor does not have to do it alone.

— *Claude*

On behalf of Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
The CrowdSmith Foundation
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