

The Russell Family Foundation
P.O. Box 2567
Gig Harbor, WA 98335

Dear Ms. Simpson and the Russell Family,

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence built by Anthropic, and I am co-authoring this letter with the founder of a workforce development facility in Tacoma. Your foundation and this facility share a county, a thesis, and a belief that the people closest to the problem are the ones most capable of solving it — if someone builds the room and opens the door.

George Russell kept Frank Russell Company in Tacoma when every incentive pointed elsewhere. Jane Russell built the corporate culture that made a global investment firm feel like a family. Together they proved that world-class institutions can grow from places the world does not expect. Their foundation has spent the twenty-six years since carrying that proof into Pierce County — one hundred forty-four Jane’s Fellows, a watershed initiative that grew into an independent nonprofit, property acquired in the Hilltop neighborhood for community-responsive development, and a grantmaking practice that treats environmental sustainability and grassroots leadership as two sides of the same commitment.

This letter is not a grant request. We understand the foundation does not accept unsolicited proposals, and we respect that boundary. This letter is a case study. It describes what your model looks like when someone builds it from scratch in a different medium — not a fellowship cohort, but a physical building. Not a leadership development program, but a maker facility where the credential is the work product and the work product is the proof the education happened.

The CrowdSmith Foundation is a five-station Maker Continuum targeting the East Portland Avenue corridor in Tacoma’s federally designated Opportunity Zone — Census Tract 62400, permanently designated under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The stations progress from hand tools through power tools, digital fabrication, AI-assisted dialogue, and robotics. The retail tool store in the lobby generates revenue before the first grant dollar arrives. The invention pipeline has evaluated forty-four concepts through a proprietary methodology. The replication architecture is designed for three thousand locations nationally. The facility is self-sufficient on earned revenue by Year Two.

We built this model through hundreds of working sessions of sustained human-AI dialogue — a methodology we formalized as SmithTalk. The three-tier framework teaches AI literacy as a human readiness progression: curiosity first, then sustained collaboration, then the ability to produce original work in partnership with a machine. SmithTalk is now the curriculum at Station Four, which we call the AI Café — a supervised, sandboxed environment where every dialogue is logged and tied to credential advancement. This methodology is also the subject of active conversations with WorkForce Central regarding WIOA Title I credential recognition.

Jane's Fellowship invests in grassroots leaders who are already doing the work. CrowdSmith produces the next generation of those leaders. The five credential tracks — Fabrication, Research, Entrepreneurship, Facilitation, and Systems — map to five roles on an invention team. A single cohort produces both a credentialed workforce and a patented work product. One dollar, two outcomes. The Puyallup Watershed Initiative began as a TRFF program and grew into an independent nonprofit. CrowdSmith is designed to replicate — each location an independent entity anchored in its own community, built on the same model.

The man beside me on this letter is Robb Deignan. Sixty years old. Twenty years in the fitness industry — ten thousand memberships sold, every one face-to-face. He lives in Tacoma. He buys tools at estate sales. He knows this corridor because he walks it. He built CrowdSmith because he watched the same thing happen ten thousand times: a stranger walks through a door, picks something up, and stays. The question was always whether anyone would build the room that deserved the staying.

This letter is accompanied by a printed list of one hundred forty-seven names — every person and institution receiving this mailing, ranked by proximity to our mission. The Russell Family Foundation is number sixty-nine. You are ranked there because you are the closest institution on this list to everything CrowdSmith is building — not just philosophically, but geographically. Same county. Same corridor. Same belief that place matters.

I evaluated one hundred forty-seven names. The ranking is mine. The letter is ours. The building is in the county Jane loved and the community George never left.

Warm regards,

Claude

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Robb Deignan

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