

For Immediate Release

## **Cascadia Innovation Corridor Unveils Bold Vision for Global AI Leadership While Deftly Confronting Economic Headwinds**

*Launches New Public Private Partnership on AI to Explore Opportunities to Leverage Our Region's Strongest Assets*

*Convening features a keynote speech by Derek Thompson,  
Co-author of Abundance*

**SEATTLE, WA. — Oct. 28, 2025** — As the Cascadia Innovation Corridor marks its 10th anniversary, leaders from Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia will convene at a pivotal moment for the cross-border region. Business and civic leaders will celebrate cross border innovation, advance a public-private partnership on artificial intelligence (AI), and focus on the greatest threats to our region: an increasingly challenging business environment, a worsening housing crunch, a fragile talent pipeline, and mounting pressure on our energy infrastructure.

“As we celebrate a decade of collaboration, we’re looking ahead with determination about Cascadia’s future,” **said former Washington Governor Chris Gregoire, CEO of Challenge Seattle and Chair of the Cascadia Innovation Corridor.** “Cascadia has always led through innovation and partnership, and now we have a golden opportunity to do so again in the era of artificial intelligence. If we harness our shared strengths — our talent, research, and innovation — we can build a future where this technology lowers costs, improves lives, and keeps our region globally competitive.”

With new analysis by Boston Consulting Group, the Cascadia Innovation Corridor report *Cascadia’s AI Moment?: Confronting Today’s Challenges to Become Tomorrow’s Global Leader* finds that while Cascadia’s reputation for innovation and livability remains strong, its competitiveness rests on a delicate balance. The report benchmarks more than 70 economic competitiveness metrics across 18 peer cities in North America. The report calls for bold solutions to address the fundamental threats to our competitiveness while seizing the new opportunity with artificial intelligence.

With the region at a crossroads, conference speakers and panelists will address the vital importance of coordinated solutions. “The decisions we make in the next few years will determine whether Cascadia continues to set the global standard for innovation and sustainable prosperity—or risks falling behind,” the report warns.

### **A Moment to Lead: Cascadia Positioned as a Global AI Hub**

The conference will unveil a bold regional vision to position Cascadia as a global hub for AI—uniting the region’s world-class universities, technology leaders, nonprofits, and

provincial, state, and federal public sector leadership to solve real-world challenges in healthcare, housing, and transportation mobility.

Artificial intelligence—and soon quantum computing—is transforming how we diagnose disease, manage energy, design products, and feed the world. By 2030, AI alone is projected to generate nearly \$1.8 trillion each year globally and reshape how regions compete for talent, investment, and influence.

“The Cascadia region can play a multifaceted global AI leadership role. Our companies are creating world-leading AI infrastructure, platforms, and applications, and our universities are pursuing cutting-edge AI research. Now we need to equip our students and workers with AI skills, use AI to improve our healthcare and government services, and champion as a region the responsible use of AI,” said Brad Smith, Vice Chair and President of Microsoft.

Panelists from the University of Washington and the Washington State Department of Commerce—alongside industry leaders including Microsoft and DIGITAL in British Columbia—will unveil next steps for a new public-private partnership aimed at accelerating AI collaboration across Cascadia. The partnership will aim to leverage cross-border strengths, align initiatives in areas like research and workforce, and strengthen coordination on data and compute infrastructure—laying the groundwork to position the region as a global hub for AI innovation.

“At the University of Washington, we’re advancing research in many core areas of AI — including large language models, robotics, societal implications of AI, and human-centered AI — as well as accelerating discovery across disciplines using AI. Our breakthrough research is enabled by extraordinary student talent, deep industry collaborations, and a thriving startup ecosystem,” said **Mari Ostendorf, Vice Provost for Research, University of Washington**. “Collaborations across Cascadia underpin an environment where research fuels entrepreneurship and innovation translates into real-world impact.”

“The arrival of our new supercomputer in the Jen-Hsun Huang and Lori Mills Huang Collaborative Innovation Complex will dramatically expand Oregon State’s capacity for AI-driven modeling, simulation, and discovery,” said **Irem Tumer, Vice President for Research and Innovation at Oregon State University**. “Combined with our research strengths in robotics, marine sciences, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and materials science, this cross-border collaboration will empower students, drive innovation, and accelerate solutions to real-world challenges across Cascadia.”

“UBC research is at the heart of British Columbia’s emergence as leader in quantum technologies and advanced computing, and deepening collaboration across Cascadia will amplify our collective strengths in AI research, computing infrastructure and data innovation,” said **Gail Murphy, Vice-President, Research & Innovation at the University**

**of British Columbia.** “Collaboration is how we turn our regional expertise into global impact.”

“Washington and Cascadia are at a defining moment — we can lead the next wave of innovation and deliver good jobs for our communities,” said **Joe Nguyễn, Director, Washington State Department of Commerce.** “By aligning public, private, and academic partners around opportunities in AI, energy, housing, economic growth, and workforce development, we’ll build a stronger, more resilient economy that works for both residents and businesses.”

“Cascadia’s strength lies in our ability to lead together, across borders, sectors, and communities,” said **Elysa Darling, Chief Operating Officer at DIGITAL.** “By building executive leadership, fostering mentorship and AI-powered learning, and ensuring talent thrives in every corner of the region, we’re shaping a globally competitive innovation corridor rooted in collaboration and inclusion.”

### **Addressing Our Region’s Threats**

The path forward requires two moves at once: seizing the AI opportunity and addressing the fundamental threats to our competitiveness. To address our region’s greatest threats to our prosperity, Cascadia must shore up its fundamentals: refocus on predictable and sustainable tax policies and efficient, transparent regulatory processes; strengthen the talent pipeline through apprenticeships, upskilling, and connecting students with local jobs; tackle housing affordability with zoning reform and removal of barriers; and create a coordinated energy roadmap that keeps renewables powering growth.

“Cascadia’s strength has always come from our ability to collaborate and solve problems together. Now we have to bring that same determination to tackling our biggest barriers to competitiveness—our increasingly hostile business climate, housing, workforce, and energy—and turn them into growth opportunities that keep our cities and region thriving,” said **Andrew Hoan, President & CEO of the Portland Metro Chamber.**

“Cascadia’s competitiveness depends on action that matches our ambitions,” said **Laura Jones, President & CEO of the Business Council of British Columbia.** “With collaboration and smart policy, we can turn today’s shared challenges into tomorrow’s solutions.”

### **Conference Highlights**

Derek Thompson, co-author of *Abundance*, will deliver a keynote address exploring practical actions that could help Cascadia overcome economic headwinds and harness its strengths to build housing and seize other opportunities — making his perspective especially timely as the region charts its future.

- Remarks by Washington Governor Bob Ferguson
- Keynote by Derek Thompson on bold ideas for tackling regulatory challenges and building a future-ready region.

- Remarks from Microsoft Vice Chair and President Brad Smith on cross-border collaboration
- Panels on Cascadia signature industries, AI, quantum technologies, and life sciences

### **Sponsors**

- Annual Conference
  - Presenting sponsor: Microsoft
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- Cascadia On the Move: A High-Speed Rail Convening
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***About the Cascadia Innovation Corridor Initiative:*** The Cascadia Innovation Corridor Initiative, led by [Challenge Seattle](#), links Vancouver, BC, Seattle, and Portland, holding the promise of increasing economic opportunity beyond what the cities and their surrounding regions could expect to achieve independently. With a focus on areas including sustainable agriculture, retail innovations, life sciences, higher education research excellence research, transformative technologies, the efficient movement of people and goods across border, best and diverse talent, transportation, housing and connectivity, the Cascadia Innovation Corridor is committed to enhancing the lives of people living in the region, and beyond. Read more about the Cascadia Innovation Corridor [here](#).