



Subject: Nomination Form Content, Letters of Support for Rob Buchwald, and Relevant Work — AI25 Nomination

Dear AI25 Selection Committee,

For continuity, I'm including submission text in this document:

Why should this person be part of AI25?

Akron's identity as the City of Invention is getting a modern reboot thanks to Rob Buchwald. He combines hands-on AI upskilling, community convening, and governance tech to help companies adopt AI safely and at speed. His goal of adding 30 AI companies to the region by 2030 makes him a force multiplier for Akron's AI economy.

Why This Matters

The state's "Big Cs," Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati, capture most of the AI news in Ohio but Akron, the Rubber City, and long known as the City of Invention, deserves some of that spotlight. Rob Buchwald, CEO and founder of Akron Innovations, sees AI as an opportunity to revive the moniker. "What attracts companies isn't tax breaks or temporary incentives," Rob says. "It's a skilled workforce that can work with technology on day one." With Akron Innovations, Rob works diligently to make Akron a more welcoming hub for AI companies. This is one of the many reasons why I am nominating him for Ohio's AI25.

Rob's goal: See 30 AI companies established in Akron by 2030 – and he has already added two to that list himself in under a year. His approach integrates three fronts: people, process and technology, and ties directly to workforce training, governance innovation, and attracting investment into the region.

People. Rob invests heavily in talent development. He takes the time to mentor emerging professionals. I am one of them: I worked with Rob for six of the past eight years and will continue to benefit from his mentorship as I have joined him again at Akron Innovations. He now organizes hands-on training to boost the region's level of AI literacy through the AI Catalyst Institute, LLC, which received state approval in September 2025 to offer education certificate programs in AI (SBCCS certificate #2332). The first cohorts are scheduled to complete before end of year. Now, Rob might not note this publicly, but he is a strong advocate for diversity. In his six years of IT leadership at Brouse McDowell LPA, Rob built teams in which the majority were women and professionals from underrepresented backgrounds. The same commitment to inclusion is foundational to AI Catalyst's audience and programming.



Process. Rob builds community capacity, not just company capacity. His monthly AI mastermind breakfasts draw Northeastern Ohio professionals from over thirteen industries, and attendance has climbed 156% in only eight months. Rob also takes part in chamber forums and serves on the Polymer Industry Cluster’s innovation committee. His current clients include the Medina County Economic Development Corporation, which has provided multiple referrals – an indicator his programs deliver real value.

Technology. With a CIO’s mindset, Rob treats governance as a prerequisite for scale. Rob is leading development of a patent-pending AI governance and compliance platform designed for highly regulated industries. His governance-first approach is redefining how organizations in complex, compliance-heavy sectors adopt and scale artificial intelligence responsibly. This enables brands to achieve faster cycle times, lower costs, and higher accuracy without adding compliance risks.

Rob’s work is practical, inclusive, and execution-oriented and it aligns directly with Akron’s strengths. His impact is described at length in letters of support attached to this form and align with a strategic goal, “Let’s get outside money into Ohio,” Rob notes, “rather than watch Ohio tech dollars go coastal.”

For these reasons, he merits recognition in the 2025 AI25 cohort.

Also, please find attached three letters of support for Rob Buchwald’s AI25 nomination. These statements come from leaders across economic development, the chamber, and the startup ecosystem, and they speak to Rob’s practical, Ohio-centered impact and cross-sector leadership.

Highlights from the letters:

- **Medina County Economic Development Corporation (Bethany Dentler):** Describes an eight-session AI capability-building program tailored for local organizations, immediate real-world application, and guidance that helped secure an Ohio TechCred grant.
- **Greater Akron Chamber (Steve Millard):** Details Rob’s Chamber partnership, “Lunch & Learn” programming that accelerates adoption, and his role within the Polymer Industry Cluster to translate AI into manufacturing use cases.



- **Bounce Innovation Hub (Jessica Sublett):** Notes the AI Breakfast Series launched this year and Rob's ongoing work to convert AI from concept to business outcomes for startups and small businesses.

Together, these letters demonstrate impact, recency, and real-world application while showing Rob's sustained commitment to empowering Ohio workers, companies, and founders.

Lastly, please find a listing of Rob's engagements over the last year. His actions speak to his dedication to moving organizations from AI awareness to responsible outcomes that drive real business outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CA', is positioned above the name Carla Anderson.

Carla Anderson

Director of Operations, Akron Innovations
Director of Education, AI Catalyst Institute



October 6, 2025

Ohio Tech News
AI25 Selection Committee

RE: Letter of Support for the Nomination of Rob Buchwald to the AI25 List

To Whom it May Concern:

As the Executive Director of the Medina County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC), I am writing in support of the nomination of Rob Buchwald for the Ohio Tech News AI25 list because of our own outstanding experiences with Rob's company, Akron Innovations.

MCEDC is a non-profit organization helping to grow the economy in Medina County for nearly four decades, including supporting the growth of businesses and fostering opportunities for job retention, job creation, and population growth. It is imperative that we stay on the cutting edge of the same technologies used by the businesses we are attracting and retaining in our region, so we were thrilled to meet Rob Buchwald earlier this year when we were exploring the best resource we could find for AI training.

With Rob's guidance, we designed an 8-session course that was specifically customized for our staff, whose experiences with Artificial Intelligence ranged from complete novices (like myself!) to AI practitioners. Rob's team prepared an excellent curriculum that allowed for the flexibility needed by adult learners in a professional setting to explore real-world situations. Within a few sessions, I had learned enough to use AI tools to create a presentation with graphics and talking points appropriate for middle school students that kept them engaged for over an hour. That in itself was enough to convince me that Rob's AI expertise was valuable, but then he also walked with me through the process of successfully securing an Ohio TechCred grant. From my perspective, that kind of innovative guidance and customer service makes him one of the state's outstanding AI leaders.

We also saw firsthand how Rob's ability to articulate complex AI concepts in an accessible way makes him an outstanding public speaker. He frequently speaks on the topic of AI to a variety of audiences, offering expert insights on how this technology is transforming the workforce. This kind of leadership has resulted in ever-increasing influence in the tech community.

One of the other reasons we chose Rob was because of the value he places in supporting the economy in our region. Rob's mission extends far beyond just the business plan for his organization's success; like MCEDC, he is passionate about creating new jobs in our community. He is dedicated to creating an environment where AI can flourish in Akron and beyond, actively working to expand community access to digital skills and build a local talent pipeline. He aims to ensure that the growth of the AI sector translates into tangible economic opportunities for Akron and surrounding communities, and he is truly worthy of making the Ohio Tech News AI25 list.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bethany Dentler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bethany Dentler, CEcD
Executive Director

September 26, 2025

Ohio Tech News

AI25 Selection Committee

RE: Letter of Support for the Nomination of Rob Buchwald to the AI25 List

Dear Selection Committee,

As President of the Greater Akron Chamber, I am proud to submit this letter in support of the nomination of Rob Buchwald for the Ohio Tech News AI25 recognition. Rob has been an exceptional partner to our Chamber, a dedicated advocate for innovation, and a visible leader in ensuring that Akron and Northeast Ohio play a meaningful role in the future of artificial intelligence.

Rob's commitment to the Akron business community is evident in the many ways he has engaged with the Chamber and its members. He has been an active participant in our initiatives, including his presentation at our *Lunch and Learn* program, where he delivered practical, accessible insights into AI adoption for local businesses. Rob has also taken a role in the Chamber's Polymer Industry Cluster committee, helping connect one of our region's core industries with the transformative opportunities AI presents. His ability to translate complex AI concepts into real-world strategies has made him an invaluable resource to Chamber members seeking to adapt and grow in a rapidly changing economy.

Beyond thought leadership, Rob has demonstrated a strong commitment to building capacity for AI in Akron. He is working to ensure our region is not simply a consumer of AI technologies but a creator and innovator within this field. His efforts to foster AI-related jobs, expand local workforce skills, and upskill Akron professionals with AI capabilities are directly aligned with our Chamber's mission to drive growth and competitiveness in the region.

Rob embodies the qualities that Ohio Tech News seeks to recognize: forward-looking leadership, measurable impact, and a dedication to ensuring that the benefits of AI extend across communities. Through his advocacy, collaborations, and vision, he is making Akron a relevant and influential player in Ohio's AI landscape.

On behalf of the Greater Akron Chamber, I strongly and enthusiastically support Rob Buchwald's nomination. I am confident his contributions will continue to shape not only Akron's future but also Ohio's position as a hub for AI innovation.

Regards,



Steve Millard
President & CEO

September 22, 2025

To the AI25 Selection Committee:

It is my pleasure to support the nomination of Rob Buchwald of Akron Innovations for inclusion on the Ohio Tech News AI25 list. As CEO of Bounce Innovation Hub, I have had the privilege of seeing firsthand how Rob is shaping the future of artificial intelligence and innovation in Greater Akron and beyond.

Rob has been an active and trusted partner in our community, consistently finding ways to connect AI to real-world business growth and economic opportunity. Through his engagement with both Bounce and the Greater Akron Chamber, he has helped broaden the conversation about how AI can drive jobs, investment, and innovation in our region. Whether on stage at the Chamber's programs or in everyday conversations with business leaders, Rob is able to demystify AI in a way that is both practical and inspiring.

His leadership extends beyond thought leadership; Rob is building pathways for our community to thrive in the AI economy. He has made it his mission to expand access to digital skills, grow the local talent pipeline, and ensure that the benefits of AI adoption are shared widely. This focus on building an inclusive, forward-looking workforce is exactly the kind of impact Ohio Tech News and OhioX are seeking to recognize through the AI25.

Perhaps one of the most exciting initiatives Rob has spearheaded is a community-building AI breakfast series that he launched earlier this year. What began as a small gathering has quickly grown week after week, bringing together business leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators from across Greater Akron to learn about and explore the opportunities of AI. This effort is fostering collaboration, sparking new ideas, and helping position Akron as a leader in applied AI adoption.

Rob's contributions are not only advancing the AI field, they are advancing Ohio's ability to compete and lead in the next generation of technology. I can think of no one more deserving of recognition on the inaugural AI25 list.

Sincerely,



Jessica Sublett, JD, LLM
President & Chief Executive Officer
jsublett@bouncehub.org // 440-417-2453



Host and Facilitator, Monthly [AI Breakfast Series](#) (started in March 2025, Akron Family Restaurant)

- Between 10-20 attendees at each event from various industries (technology, marketing, legal, polymers, telecommunications, business coaching, engineering, regional development, finance, journalism, health insurance, restaurant service, payroll, and more) and cities all over Northeast Ohio and attendance has climbed 156% in only eight months.

Member, Polymer Industry Cluster's (PIC) Innovation and Commercialization Committee (since July 2025)

- The committee's objective is to select and allocate funding to innovation projects based on the seed funding provided by the Ohio Innovation Hub grant.

Member and Investor, Greater Akron Chamber (since December 2024)

- Support the Chamber's economic development and small-business programs, collaborate with regional leaders, and help accelerate inclusive growth across Greater Akron.

Member and Tenant, Bounce Innovation Hub (since July 2025)

- Contribute to startup ecosystem through engagement with founders, peer networks, and cross-company collaboration to accelerate responsible innovation in Greater Akron.

Attendee and Team Sponsor, AI Summit in Paris in July 2025

- [RAISE Summit | 8 & 9th July 2025 | Carrousel du Louvre, France](#)

Guest, GAC's Dreamers, Drivers, and Doers Podcast

- [Ep. 109 - Harnessing and Adopting AI for your Business](#)

Panelist, Greater Akron Chamber, May Lunch and Learn (May 2025)

- [AI Without the Hype: Midwest Common Sense for Real Business Growth](#)



Panelist, Association of Corporate Council CLE with Shumaker, Kendrick & Loop (May 2025)

- Integrating AI and Ensuring Data Privacy Compliance for Businesses

Panelist, Cleveland WITCON 2025 (September 2025)

- [How AI Is Transforming our World](#)

Panelist, Keystone Technology Consultants' Leadership Connect (October 2025)

- Trustworthy AI in Practice: Policies, People, and Pilots

Speaker, Greater Akron Chamber/ConxusNEO (October 2025)

- [Awareness to Application: Building an AI-Ready Culture](#)

Speaker, Beachwood Chamber of Commerce (October 2025)

- [AI Summit for Smarter Learning](#)