

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Maritime Blue, the Port of Seattle and WeWork Labs launch first Washington state maritime accelerator, now accepting applications for January 2020 start date**

*Accelerator to be housed and run by WeWork Labs in Seattle*

**SEATTLE (October 15)** -- Washington Maritime Blue, the Port of Seattle and WeWork Labs have partnered to launch Washington's first maritime accelerator to help maritime companies innovate and grow. The accelerator, which is [currently accepting applications](#) through November 18, aims to advance three key strategies for Maritime Blue and the Port of Seattle: help maritime companies innovate and grow, establish Washington as a global leader in maritime innovation, and increase the sustainability of maritime businesses in both Seattle and beyond.

Funded by the Port of Seattle and a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce, the maritime accelerator will be housed and supported by WeWork Labs in Seattle. WeWork's global innovation platform for early-stage startups will run the accelerator through unique programming and events. Interested applicants [can apply here](#) (URL: [f6s.com/maritimeinnovationaccelerator](https://f6s.com/maritimeinnovationaccelerator)).

**Dr. Lisa Brown, Director, Washington State Department of Commerce:**

"Support for tech innovation and commercialization is vital to the future of our maritime sector. The new maritime accelerator has great potential to launch new business opportunities and create jobs that will strengthen communities all over Washington state."

**Port of Seattle Commissioner Fred Felleman:**

"The Port of Seattle is committed to investing in maritime innovation, drawing from the diversity of our region's expertise, to create jobs of the future that fuel a thriving economy which advances our understanding and protection of the marine environment and all those dependent on it. I look forward to being inspired by the first round of applicants for the accelerator that I'll be reviewing in my capacity as Vice President of the Port of Seattle Commission and Board Member of Maritime Blue."

**Joshua Berger, Maritime Sector Lead for Governor Inslee + Board Chair, Washington Maritime Blue:**

“This first Maritime Blue Innovation Accelerator is yet another way in which we can work across the various sectors of the maritime and ocean economy. By supporting innovators and entrepreneurs we tap into whole ecosystems of expertise and capital that we have not yet accessed. We are recruiting for new and growing markets as a global innovation hub for the Blue Economy”.

**Elizabeth Scallon, Head of WeWork Labs for the Northwest and Silicon Valley:**

"Governor Inslee, the Port of Seattle, and our booming tech sector all want a better, brighter future for our state, and our maritime economy should be central to that vision. Through this unique public-private-partnership, we're bringing resources, focus, and intentionality together under a shared roof at WeWork Labs to do just that.

“In partnership with Maritime Blue, we'll be making waves that crash onto shores far beyond our own by accelerating the linkages between the Puget Sound's oldest industry, maritime, and all of the innovation happening here. This is a powerful opportunity to ensure that our maritime industry continues to be an engine of growth while at the same time a leader in preservation for one of our most precious natural resources, and I am honored and excited to have WeWork Labs play a central role.”

The launch of the accelerator signals a new direction for maritime. One of Seattle’s oldest industries is repositioning itself to better leverage the vast tech and innovation resources Washington has to offer. This will be a powerful opportunity for local companies to grow and secure funding in a sector where capital is often scarce.

**About the accelerator:**

WeWork Labs is now accepting applications from any startup or new venture that is passionate about finding innovative solutions that benefit the maritime economy. Applicants will be reviewed and selected by the Maritime Blue advisory committee.

- Maritime Blue will select 10 promising startups to be admitted to the first accelerator cohort, which will formally begin in January 2020.
- These selected startups will benefit from intensive programming provided by WeWork Labs over an accelerated 4-month period. In addition to being housed at WeWork Labs, startups will receive access to the WeWork Labs global network of mentors and advisors, be a part of unique programming, and the opportunity to connect with the larger WeWork community.
- WeWork Labs will work with each startup to address their current challenges and obstacles through intensive seminars and custom workshops tailored for their particular stage in growth.

- The accelerator will conclude in April with a formal demo day where the selected startups will pitch their ideas to a crowd of investors, mentors, corporate partners, government officials and the general public.

### **Why an accelerator?**

As the first maritime accelerator in the state, and among only a handful that exist in the US, this is a transformative moment for Seattle with ripple effects that go far beyond our own waters.

- Routine in the technology and startup sector, accelerators present game-changing opportunities by connecting promising companies to market and capital opportunities. To reverse the current capital landscape for maritime, Maritime Blue and the Port of Seattle borrowed a page from the technology sector playbook and looked to WeWork Labs to launch the first maritime accelerator program in Washington state.
- Since its launch in 2018, WeWork Labs has supported startups and its founders in over 40 cities and 19 countries globally and has successfully brought together entrepreneurs, industry experts and corporations under a single, shared roof to work on innovative and impactful ideas.
- The Maritime accelerator is an incredible example of how WeWork Labs, in partnership with Washington Maritime Blue and the Port of Seattle, aim to make the Puget Sound Region a world leading hub for sustainable maritime and ocean industries by supporting early stage startups and creating an ecosystem of innovation.

### **Why focus on maritime?**

Innovation across Washington's maritime sector is critical for a thriving economy and in the fight to protect our planet, precious natural resources, and ocean life. Finding a way to extract economic growth while simultaneously returning evermore vitality and life to our oceans and waterways is a challenging task, but one Washington must take on if the industry is to thrive for the next generation of maritime workers.

- Maritime industries are among Washington state's oldest and with a statewide economic value of more than \$30 billion and 146,000 jobs, maritime is still among the state's most economically significant industries and employers.
- Days after Washington Governor Jay Inslee celebrated the start of work on the state's first hybrid-electric ferry, a study released by Washington Maritime Blue identified technology solutions for water transportation, shipping, science and other ocean systems, as the highest growth sector in the "Blue Economy" – a term referring to sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved jobs and ocean ecosystem health.

- Despite the growth opportunity, a Maritime Blue study found multiple challenges around access to capital, including:
  1. Few equity investors are currently focused on maritime
  2. Funding at the proof-of-concept / testing stage is especially hard to find for maritime-tech businesses
  3. There are few options for “no-cost capital”, like R&D grants or prize competitions targeted at maritime, which would allow start-ups to prove concept and attract additional investment.

Without access to capital the industry cannot grow and innovate, and growth and innovation are critical for maritime to overcome modern challenges like climate change and an aging workforce.

**About the Port of Seattle:**

*Founded in 1911, the Port owns and operates Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Fishermen’s Terminal—home of the North Pacific fishing fleet—and public marinas. The Port also owns two cruise ship terminals, a grain terminal, real estate assets, and marine cargo terminals through its partnership in the Northwest Seaport Alliance. Port operations help support nearly 200,000 jobs and \$7 billion in wages throughout the region. Over the next 18 years, the port’s “Century Agenda” seeks to create an additional 100,000 jobs through economic growth while becoming the nation’s leading green and energy-efficient port. Learn more at [www.portseattle.org](http://www.portseattle.org).*

**About Washington Maritime Blue:**

*Washington Maritime Blue is a strategic alliance for maritime innovation and sustainability as an independent cluster organization to implement Washington State’s Strategy for the Blue Economy delivered by Governor Jay Inslee’s Maritime Innovation Advisory Council. As a partnership among industry, public sector, research and training institutions, and community organizations, its mission is to create a world-class, thriving, and sustainable maritime industry through knowledge sharing, collaborative research and development, commercialization, business and workforce development. Washington Maritime Blue is working to promote growth in the Blue Economy, champion maritime clean tech innovation, establish best practices, and identify and support enterprises that foster sustainable development by increasing living-wage jobs, promoting a healthy environment, and empowering resilient communities. Learn more at <https://maritimeblue.org/>*

**About WeWork Labs:**

*WeWork Labs gathers promising early-stage startups and provides them with the space, community and programming to help them succeed. We partner with local incubators, accelerators and large corporates to provide holistic, long-term support for startups throughout their journey at WeWork Labs. WeWork Labs is a global innovation platform for startups, with over 70 spaces around the world. Learn more at <https://www.wework.com/labs/>*

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## **Communications and Marketing Strategy**

Port and Maritime Blue to handle media outreach

- Seattle Times
- Geekwire
- Puget Sound Business Journal Andrew McIntosh
- KUOW Carolyn Adolph
- KPLU Bellamy Paillthorpe
- Maritime markets
- Port email blast
- Blue email blast
- Post to websites

WeWork Labs

- Social channels
- WeWork potential blog at some point

Key interviews –

- Commissioner Fred Felleman - Why is this important?
- Joshua Berger, Maritime Blue – Why is the state involved?
- Elizabeth Scallon - How will this work / how will Labs support?
- *Kristian Alcade - Participated in Port XL [accelerator in Europe] [To be confirmed]*