

CASE STUDY →

CASE

QED-C

DC QUANTUM SUMMIT 2026

CASE 10



ABOUT QED-C

The Quantum Economic Development Consortium (QED-C) is a U.S. public-private partnership established to accelerate the growth of the quantum industry and strengthen national and global competitiveness. Supported by NIST, QED-C brings together industry, government, national laboratories, academic institutions, and standards bodies to identify gaps, remove barriers, and advance quantum technologies. With members across the full quantum ecosystem—hardware, software, communications, enabling technologies, talent development, and



end-user sectors—QED-C serves as a neutral platform for coordination and collaboration. Its mission is to grow a robust quantum economy and ensure that the United States plays a leading role in its global development.

EVENT CONTEXT

Quantum technology is accelerating globally, with rapidly increasing investment, national strategies, and emerging competition. QED-C, as the neutral industry consortium, recognized the need to convene senior stakeholders in Washington, DC on World Quantum Day. The 2026 DC Quantum Summit marks the first step in building a global platform for alignment across government, industry, investors, and international partners.

WHO IS ORGANISING THE CHANGE?

Under the leadership of QED-C Director Celia Merzbacher, the consortium sought to establish a unified annual moment for strategic alignment across the quantum ecosystem. To meet the growing global visibility and coordination needs of members and government partners, QED-C partnered with the Event Design Collective to create a new convening architecture. The team initiated a design process to prototype a high-level summit in 2026 that would evolve into Global Quantum Week for QED-C's 10th anniversary in 2029.

WHAT WAS THE CHALLENGE?

Quantum leaders across government, industry, startups, and investment face increasing fragmentation, competing events, and inconsistent narratives. QED-C needed a neutral, authoritative forum where the ecosystem could

align on strategy, opportunities, risks, and global developments. The challenge was to create a focused, high-impact event—within three months—that would cut through noise, enable real dialogue, and lay the foundation for a global model.

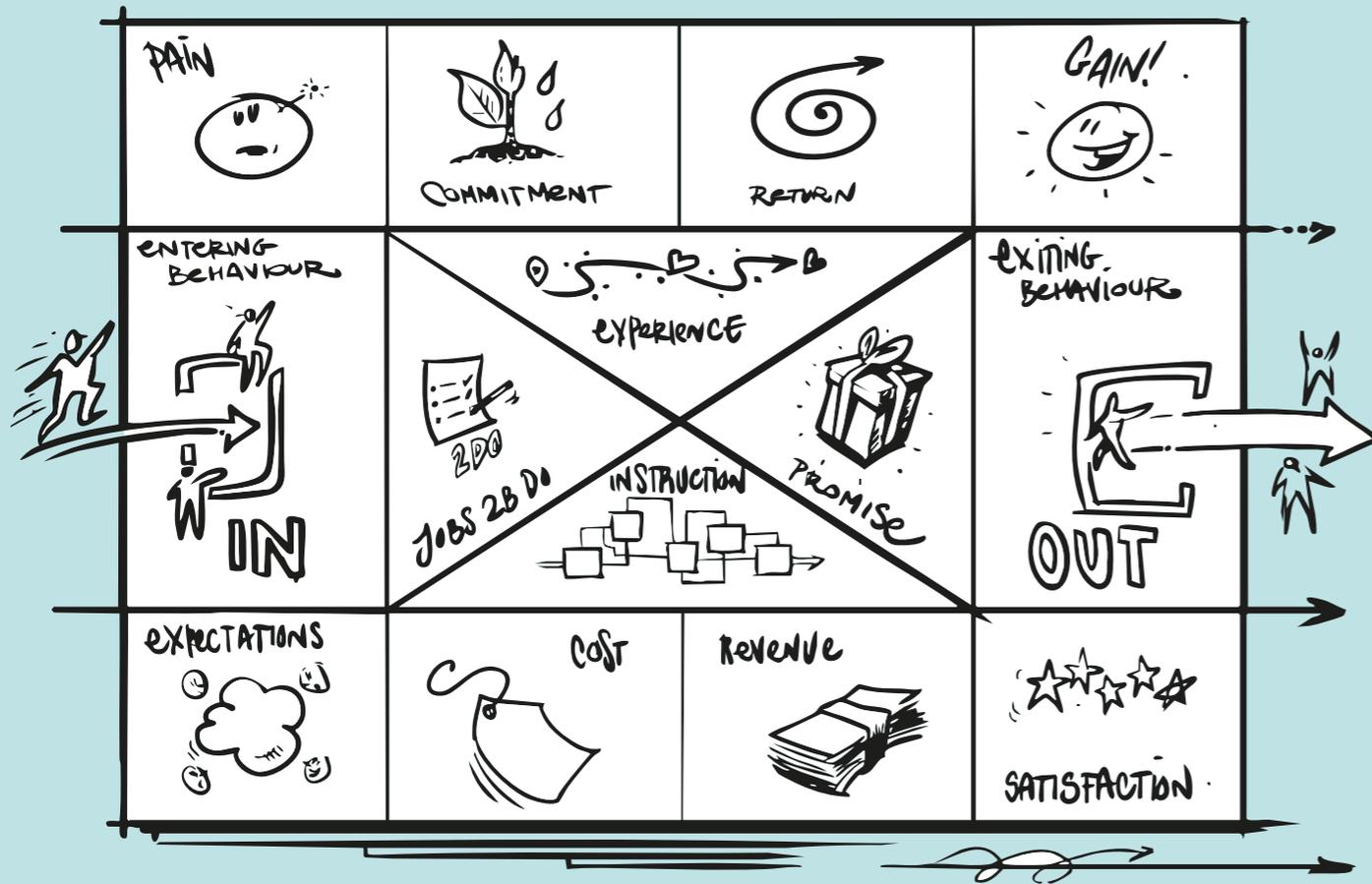
WHO ARE THE MAIN STAKEHOLDERS?

Key stakeholders include U.S. Federal agencies (DOE, NIST, NSF, OSTP, DoD, DARPA), national laboratories, Fortune 500 Quantum Strategy Champions, hyperscalers, startups and scale-ups, investors (VC, CVC, PE, SWF), strategic QED-C members, and global quantum initiatives from regions such as Europe, Canada, Japan, Australia, Singapore, and the UK. Each plays a distinct role in shaping quantum applications, policy, markets, standards, and global collaboration.

THE EVENT DELTA

Before the summit, stakeholders operated in largely separate domains—government policy-makers, corporate strategists, technical leaders, investors, and international partners each held partial views of the quantum landscape. After the event, participants gained clarity through shared insights, curated interactions, and facilitated strategic conversations. The summit established a new annual focal point for alignment, with stakeholders recognizing QED-C as the neutral convening body needed to guide the sector's collective trajectory.





EVENT DESIGN *collective*

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EVENT NARRATIVE

The QED-C DC Quantum Summit 2026 emerged from an urgent need to convene the quantum ecosystem at a national and global level during a period of accelerating technological development and geopolitical complexity. Held in Washington, DC on World Quantum Day, the summit served as an anchor for strategic dialogue among government agencies, industry leaders, investors, startups, global initiatives, and research institutions.

This first-edition summit was designed around three core components: Elite Convening Circles, the Quantum Business Edge Deal Rooms, and a dedicated Executive Learning Track aimed at non-technical leaders who increasingly require literacy in quantum technologies and market pathways. The event brought together senior representatives from major U.S. agencies—DOE, NIST, NSF, OSTP, DoD, DARPA, and others—alongside Fortune 500 innovation executives, hyperscalers, early-stage and mature quantum ventures, and global partners.

The Elite Convening Circles created protected spaces for cross-agency, public-private, and international dialogue. These facilitated conversations addressed emerging priorities including national competitiveness, security considerations, workforce challenges, standards alignment, and opportunities for commercialization. By choreographing these sessions carefully and neutrally, QED-C enabled interactions that rarely take place in open conferences or commercial events.

The Deal Rooms represented a new mechanism for curated, high-signal interactions among startups, investors, and corporate adopters. Rather than open expo-style networking,

Deal Rooms provided structured matchmaking informed by challenge statements, readiness assessments, and investor theses. This pilot version demonstrated the potential for substantive engagements, with participants voicing strong interest in expanding this format in future editions.

The Executive Learning Track supported a rapidly growing audience: strategy, innovation, R&D, and line-of-business leaders entering the quantum space without deep technical backgrounds. Through frameworks, use case analysis, and facilitated discussions, this track helped accelerate internal organisational understanding and align expectations around quantum maturity and timelines.

Throughout the summit, participants engaged in high-density learning, ecosystem mapping, and alignment conversations. A recurring sentiment from federal and corporate leaders was the recognition that QED-C is uniquely positioned to host an authoritative, neutral convening platform—bridging technical expertise, national policy, and commercial development.

The 2026 summit served as the prototype for a multi-year plan culminating in QED-C Global Quantum Week 2029, which will celebrate QED-C's 10th anniversary. This trajectory envisions expansion from a single DC anchor to a network of global hubs, synchronised programming, multi-track Deal Rooms, and a global Executive Academy.

The inaugural DC Quantum Summit thus marked a defining moment: the establishment of an annual alignment mechanism that allows the quantum ecosystem to gather, converse, and make sense of an increasingly complex and competitive global landscape.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

The design process for the QED-C DC Quantum Summit 2026 unfolded under a tight three-month window. QED-C engaged the Event Design Collective to structure and accelerate the development of this inaugural high-level convening. Using the EventCanvas™ methodology, the team began by identifying a comprehensive longlist of stakeholders, then narrowing to the five “Stakeholders to Delight”: U.S. Federal Government, Quantum Strategy Champions, Investors, Strategic QED-C Members, and Global Quantum Initiatives.

Through facilitated sessions, empathy mapping, and design sprints, the team captured the entering behaviours, pains, gains, and jobs-to-be-done for each stakeholder group. This created a shared understanding of why each stakeholder attends, what they must achieve, and what behavioural change would signal success after the event. These insights established the foundation for the Event Delta.

The design team used the Event Canvas to translate these behavioural objectives into concrete event architecture: Elite Convening Circles for high-stakes strategic exchange; Deal Rooms for curated commercial and investment interactions; and an Executive Learning Track to support the growing need for accessible quantum literacy. The interplay of these elements formed the backbone of the event’s Path and Engagement blocks.

Rapid prototyping was central to the process. Several possible summit formats were explored, iterated, and tested against feasibility, neutrality requirements, and the three-month operational runway. The final prototype balanced ambition with practicality, ensuring that the 2026 summit would be both impactful and deliverable.

As in other Event Design Collective cases, the Event Canvas served not only as a design tool but as a communication asset, aligning internal and external stakeholders, enabling faster decision-making, and guiding production teams. The clarity provided by the canvas ensured coherence across leadership, partners, and contributors.

In its first year, the summit exceeded expectations: participants expressed strong interest in expanding the model, particularly Deal Rooms and elite circles. The 2026 edition now serves as a validated prototype for the expanded multi-hub Global Quantum Summit in 2027 and the full Global Quantum Week experience planned for 2029.

THE BRAIDING POINT

The braiding point for this event—the moment at which the organisation crystallised its collective commitment—emerged when QED-C leadership recognised the urgent need for a high-level, neutral convening platform to unify the rapidly expanding and increasingly fragmented quantum ecosystem. As global competition intensified and stakeholders across government, industry, investment, and research accelerated their quantum activities, the absence of a shared alignment mechanism became a critical gap. QED-C, uniquely positioned at the nexus of these communities, saw an opportunity to take on this strategic responsibility.

This recognition aligned the organisation around a central challenge: to create, within three months, an authoritative summit capable of hosting cross-agency conversations, catalysing investor and industry collaboration, and anchoring the emerging global quantum landscape. The Event Design methodology provided the structure to transform this challenge into a coherent, shared objective. Once QED-C



leaders engaged with the Event Canvas, they recognised the power of visual alignment: the ability to see stakeholder needs, compare perspectives, and converge around measurable outcomes.

Cross-functional teams from QED-C—government engagement, industry coordination, R&D, communications, membership, and leadership—participated in concentrated design sprints. These sessions surfaced common themes: the need for trusted dialogue between agencies and industry; clarity for executives new to quantum; commercial pathways for startups; and a global orientation recognising the rise of parallel initiatives abroad.

The Event Canvas became the braiding point that unified these threads. It allowed diverse contributors to see how Elite Circles, Deal Rooms, and Executive Learning each addressed specific behavioural deltas for the Stakeholders to Delight. It also offered organisational confidence: by mapping the event experience to strategy and measurable change, the team could defend decisions, prioritise investments, and navigate constraints.

The process also opened internal horizons. As prototypes were developed, a larger multi-year vision emerged—the recognition that the 2026 summit could serve as the foundation

for an expanded set of hubs in 2027, ultimately culminating in QED-C Global Quantum Week for the organisation’s 10th anniversary in 2029. This larger ambition energised the team and established a unifying purpose transcending the 2026 summit alone.

Executing the 2026 prototype required courage and collaboration. Teams coordinated content, curated stakeholder invitations, and aligned neutral postures to safeguard QED-C’s credibility. When the event went live, the sense of collective achievement confirmed that the organisation had crossed a significant threshold. The DC Quantum Summit became both a proof-of-concept and a commitment—to itself and the ecosystem—that QED-C would serve as the global orchestrator of the quantum economy.

NEXT?

Following the success of the 2026 summit, QED-C is now preparing for the next phase: the 2027 Global Quantum Summit, which will introduce six regional hubs operating under QED-C’s governance and expand Deal Rooms and Executive Learning. These developments mark the pathway toward QED-C Global Quantum Week 2029, which will celebrate the consortium’s 10th anniversary and become the global alignment moment for quantum. The Event Canvas will again guide the design of these next two editions.