



“FROM LAB TO MARKET: ACCELERATING AI INNOVATION”

May 19th, 2026, 9-3:30PM CST @ Tennessee Tech University



Event Overview:

The AI TechX “From Lab-to-Market: Accelerating AI Innovation” is a statewide event designed to accelerate the transition of artificial intelligence research into real-world deployment, commercialization, and job creation across Tennessee. Hosted by AI Tennessee’s Industry Innovation Consortium, AI TechX, and supported by Launch TN’s Tennessee Technology Advancement Consortium (TTAC), the convening will bring together industry leaders, startups, faculty researchers, government, and other relevant stakeholders to align applied AI Innovation with market and societal needs.

The event will feature curated programming focused on applied AI use cases, research-to-commercialization pathways, startup and talent showcases, and facilitated conversations around industry-academic collaboration. Sponsors will have a unique opportunity to engage directly with emerging AI technologies, top faculty and student talent, and key decision-makers shaping Tennessee’s AI ecosystem - positioning their organization as a leader in innovation, economic development, and the future of work.

AGENDA

Ashraf Islam Engineering Building: 200 W 10th St. Cookeville, TN 38501

(All times in CST)

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM - Guest Arrival, Check-In, and Badge Pick-Up

9:00 AM – 9:20 AM - Welcome and Opening Remarks:

- Caleb Knight, Director of AI TechX, AI Tennessee
- Michael Aikens, PhD, Acting Vice President for Research & Economic Development, Tennessee Tech University
- Gerald Gannod, PhD, Professor and Chair, Computer Science, Tennessee Tech University
- Marc Nabhan, PhD, Director, Office of Entrepreneurship and New Ventures, University of Tennessee

9:20 AM – 9:30 AM - Remarks from Elsayed Talaat, PhD, Universities Space Research Association

9:30 AM – 9:35 AM - Introduction of Judges and Pitch Competition:

- Nanda Coimbra, Program Manager, Office of Entrepreneurship and New Ventures, University of Tennessee

9:35 AM – 10:20 AM - Morning Pitch Session I

- Tony Skjellum, PhD, Professor of Computer Science, Tennessee Tech University
- Ian Nott, Founder & CEO of Xuron
- Wansoo Im, PhD, Professor, Meharry Medical College

10:20 AM – 10:35 AM - Coffee and Networking Break

10:35 AM – 11:35 AM - Morning Pitch Session II

- James Buck, Co-Founder of Enterprise Sensor Systems
- Ali Sekmen, PhD, Founder and CEO of Pangea, Tennessee State University
- Conner McGraw, Founder and CEO of 9+1AI
- Santosh Kumar, PhD, Founder and CEO of CuesHub PBC, University of Memphis

11:35 AM – 12:35 PM - Luncheon Program:

- Presidential AI Challenge – Anne Ho, PhD, Director of Research & Development, AI Tennessee
- Keynote Address – Jenny Vipperman, President & CEO, ORNL Federal Credit Union

12:35 PM – 12:45 PM - Remarks from Amy Barnas, Google Public Sector

12:45 PM – 1:30 PM - Afternoon Pitch Session – Pitch Competition Concludes

- John Derrick, Founder & CEO of Authentrics.ai
- Shehenaz Shaik, PhD, Assistant Professor, Computing, East Tennessee State University
- Maged Shoman, PhD, Founder and CEO of Apex AI, University of Tennessee, Knoxville Center for Transportation Research

1:30 PM – 2:05 PM - Networking, Audience Favorite Voting, and Judges Deliberation

2:05 PM – 2:35 PM - Awards Announcement and Closing Remarks

2:35 PM – 3:30 PM - Networking Reception

3:30 PM - Adjourn

Support Levels:

Support Level	Spots Available	Investment	Logo Placement on Event Materials	Logo Placement on Prize Check	Recognition during opening and closing remarks	Pitch Competition Judge	Speaking Slot	Lanyard Branding
Gold	1	\$10,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Silver	2	\$5,000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Bronze	5	\$2,500	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Refreshment Support	10	\$1,000	Yes	-	-	-	-	-

Custom Support Opportunities: Looking for a unique way to engage? We can tailor a sponsorship package to align with your organization's specific goals and vision.

Why partner with us?

By giving to the "Lab to Market" event, your organization plays a direct role in shaping Tennessee's AI innovation ecosystem. Your support positions your organization as a leader investing in next-generation AI talent, job creation, and workforce readiness. Join us in developing the next generation of Tennessee-based AI entrepreneurs and innovators who will drive the future of the state's economy.

Program Organizers:



For more information, please contact Director of AI TechX, Caleb Knight: caleb.knight@utk.edu.