District IO LABS

IO LABS

FUTURES COUNCIL

Key Insights Report

IO LABS INSIGHT SERIES №1



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Dubai Silicon Oasis
واحة دبي للسيليكون

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A new frontier, built together

Dubai has set a clear ambition: to be a global magnet for emerging technology, talent and investment. District IO will advance this ambition in partnership with business — shaped by the companies, institutions and investors that will become part of its ecosystem.

The inaugural IO Labs Futures Council brought leading industry voices together to examine the next frontiers of emerging technology. Participants shared candid perspectives on what is working, what is coming and what must improve.

This report captures the discussion through seven key insights and eight opportunities for action. One conclusion stood out: technologies will continue to evolve, but lasting advantage will belong to those who invest in people and their skills.

That investment must be matched by discipline in how new technologies are selected, tested and applied. Our test is simple: if it does not solve a real challenge, it should not move forward.

We will track progress across these opportunities and share the lessons in future Council sessions.

I thank every partner for their contribution and for their continued role in shaping District IO.

> AI will climb only as high as the people pushing it.

> District IO is being built for those whose curiosity and rigour turn any emerging technology into market-ready breakthroughs.



Badr Buhannad
Director General, Dubai Silicon Oasis

Dubai's next R&D and innovation district

For more than two decades, Dubai Silicon Oasis, a member of Dubai Integrated Economic Zones Authority (DIEZ), has been where technology companies start and scale. One of five urban centres in the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, DSO carries the city's mandate for knowledge and innovation — a working testbed of 50,000+ companies, 80,000+ technology professionals and 100,000+ residents.

District IO is the next chapter of that mandate. Launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, it is a mixed-use innovation district where people can live, work, research and build.

Inspired by input and output, District IO creates a continuous cycle of knowledge, experimentation and innovation across six technology clusters: AI & Quantum, Robotics, Mobility, xTech, 3D Printing and Web3.

Within one integrated ecosystem, startups, enterprises and research institutions work alongside future clients and top talent, with access to specialist labs, scalable workspace and shared infrastructure to research, develop and validate new technologies — and accelerate breakthroughs into new markets and industries.

First members are expected in 2030, shortly after the Dubai Metro Blue Line opens at DSO.

Follow our journey at www.districtio.com



The IO Labs Futures Council

DSO approached senior industry leaders with a proposition: help shape District IO. The result is the Futures Council — a series of closed-door roundtables taking the pulse of the market and of technology as it develops.

The first edition convened on 18 June 2026 at DSO headquarters: 23 participants across four parallel roundtables, each answering the same four questions on AI adoption, emerging technology, R&D capability and the District IO testbed.

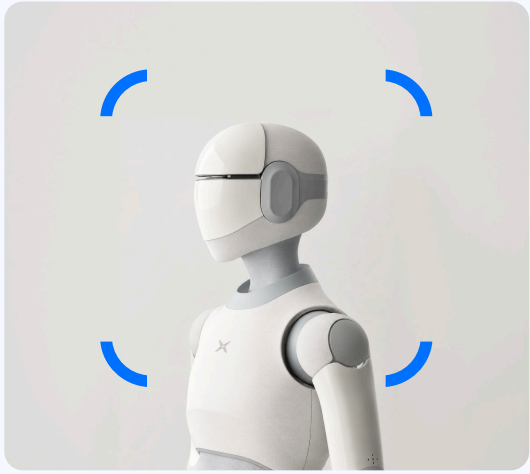
Discussions were captured in moderators' notes rather than recordings and synthesised by the editorial team; readiness scores are table-level estimates, and quotations were confirmed with speakers.

The seven insights that follow are prompts for planning, not formal recommendations. Full methodology and AI disclosure: imprint page.



This Council in numbers

23	Participants	03	Themes
04	Segments	07	Insights
02	AI models	08	Opportunities



Council participants

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Rafi Tahmazian, Senior Executive for AI, Cisco
Hani Khalaf, Field CTO, Dell
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Dubai Silicon Oasis & partners

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Mark Hamill, CEO, ARCET Global
Nigel Owen, Communications Director, ARCET Global

Participants are listed for transparency; their attendance does not imply endorsement of every conclusion in this report.



> It’s great to see this vision of bringing R&D and innovation into the country. At Cisco we look to give back to places we’ve done business in for a long time, and being part of this consortium today is a great way of doing that.

Rafi Tahmazian
Senior Executive for AI, Cisco

AI Council experiment

In this inaugural edition: each insight is followed by commentary from two frontier AI models — Claude Fable 5 (Anthropic) and GPT-5.5 Thinking (OpenAI) — generated on 2 July 2026 in response to the same written brief. Neither model saw the other's answers, and neither participated in the Council. Each entry is tagged by its stance on the human insight: ALIGNS, REFINES or CHALLENGES. Where the models challenge our conclusions, we have kept the challenge in.

Three themes from the first Council

The Council debated four questions: (Segment 1) the key barriers to AI adoption across markets, (Segment 2) what is next for AI and emerging technology, (Segment 3) the practical steps to foster R&D capability in Dubai, and (Segment 4) how to co-create a world-leading testbed in District IO. Across four roundtables, three themes, seven insights and eight opportunities emerged.



01

Readiness is the constraint, not appetite.

Enthusiasm for AI in Dubai is high; the diagnosis at every table was the same. Adoption is slowed by fragmented data, unclear returns, thin talent pipelines and leaders yet to connect AI to strategy — a gap of people and operations, not technology.

02

Co-creation has to be the operating model.

No single actor can build a world-class testbed alone: not government, corporates, startups or academia. Every practical proposal at every table assumed it. District IO will be judged on the collaborations it makes possible.

03

Start with the challenge, not the technology.

Table after table warned against AI for its own sake: pilots that demonstrate capability but solve nothing. Testbeds should begin with the problem and the client, not the tool. If it does not solve a real challenge, it should not move forward.

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Seven insights from the first Council

#1 AI adoption is blocked by readiness, not appetite

#2 The next wave of AI depends on infrastructure: inference, edge, security and governance

#3 Agentic and physical AI are converging, on an unpredictable timeline

#4 Quantum computing is becoming accessible before it becomes mature

#5 Cost and incentives will decide where firms do their R&D

#6 Universities are the engine of a credible testbed

#7 A local focus, and locally owned IP, is a global advantage



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INSIGHTS



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AI adoption is blocked by readiness, not appetite



The market wants AI. It isn't ready for it — and the gap is people and operations, not technology.

Adoption is held back by three interlocking gaps: people (limited AI literacy), technology (data readiness) and business (weak ROI discipline). Data quality was the most widely agreed bottleneck — fragmented, incomplete, poorly governed — compounded by power, cooling and long lead times to compute.

Investment discipline is thin: AI projects are rarely tied to measurable outcomes, and some firms still use AI mainly to win headlines. One founder put it plainly: client excitement rates ten out of ten; readiness and willingness to pay sit at four. The consolation came in Dubai's favour: compared to other markets, the structural barriers here are low.



3-6/10

Market AI readiness, as estimated by participants — a gap in people and operations, not technology.



Why does this matter?

District IO's most useful early contribution may not be access to technology but closing the gaps around it: data governance capability, AI literacy at leadership level, and frameworks tying AI spend to measurable outcomes.

What might this lead to?

1. AI-readiness assessments as a standard entry point to the District IO ecosystem.
2. Education programmes building AI literacy at executive level, not only among practitioners.
3. AI investment judged on links to outcomes rather than novelty.

See more on page 19

AI Council

Experimental model-generated commentary

Claude (Anthropic)

REFINES

Readiness belongs to individual use cases, not whole companies — and it is built by shipping, not preparing. District IO's fastest lever is helping firms complete their first production deployment, however small.

ChatGPT (OpenAI)

REFINES

Readiness must be measured at decision or workflow level, not company level: one organisation can be ready in fraud and unusable in procurement. UAE adoption is already high, at 70.1% in Microsoft's measure.[1] My prediction is that governance latency, not model capability, becomes the main enterprise constraint.

[1] Microsoft, Global AI Diffusion Report, 7 May 2026: the UAE led Q1 2026 at 70.1% of the working-age population (15–64) using a generative-AI product, based on adjusted, anonymised telemetry.

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The next wave of AI depends on infrastructure



The next commercial wave is inference — and it will go to whoever builds the compute, security and governance layer beneath it.

The forward-looking discussion centred on inference: how today's models become real-world applications, affordably and at scale. Participants want inference built into products, workflows and infrastructure, with the next opportunity in embedding it within security, compliance and safer product development — a demand already visible in hiring, where one participant noted compliance officer has become the most in-demand role among their clients.

Also raised: edge inference, smaller models, cheaper on-premise capability and hybrid cloud. The common thread: as AI moves from experiment to production, reliable infrastructure across compute, data, security and governance becomes the decisive layer — connected to business strategy, not run as a technology programme.

COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Reported by one participant as the most in-demand role among their clients — AI governance demand, already visible in hiring.



Why does this matter?

An ecosystem where startups and enterprises can prove inference-heavy, governance-compliant applications in real conditions addresses the layer where participants expect the next wave of value.

What might this lead to?

1. Inference-as-a-service and edge deployment as standard District IO offerings.
2. Growing demand for AI governance and compliance expertise.
3. Infrastructure readiness influencing where AI-intensive companies locate.

See more on page 19

AI Council

Experimental model-generated commentary

Claude (Anthropic) — CHALLENGES

Compute is increasingly available everywhere; it is not the differentiator, and inference costs keep falling.[2] What is scarce is infrastructure plus real regulated demand: compliant, inference-heavy applications proven against real Dubai customers and regulators.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) — REFINES

Infrastructure matters, but GPUs alone will not differentiate. The scarce asset is a governed inference control plane enforcing identity, residency, cost, latency and safety across workloads. In the Gulf, cooling, grid capacity and water use belong in compute economics. I expect power and deployment assurance to matter more than model access.

[2] Stanford HAI, 2025 AI Index Report: the cost of querying a model at fixed capability fell more than 280-fold between November 2022 and October 2024.

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Agentic & physical AI are converging, on an unpredictable timeline



No one would forecast agentic AI beyond a few months — and that uncertainty is an argument for testing faster, not waiting.

Participants would not predict agentic AI beyond a few months. The consensus: physical AI — robotics and other embodied systems — will play a bigger role in daily life within five years, accelerated by agentic AI, whose own path is harder to call.

Some argued agent-to-agent activity's benefits must still outweigh its risks; others saw the transformation of junior professional roles as inevitable, especially in knowledge sectors such as legal.

Full agreement on one point: inaction is the worst strategy. Participants urged a "fail fast, succeed fast" mentality with short planning horizons — applied to problems worth solving, not experimentation for its own sake.

$0.95^{20} \approx 1$ in 3

A step that succeeds 95% of the time, chained across a twenty-step agent task, completes successfully roughly one time in three.[3]



Why does this matter?

Uncertainty about agentic AI is a reason to build the capacity to experiment quickly and cheaply, not to delay. Testbeds exist for exactly these conditions.

What might this lead to?

1. The fusion of agentic and physical AI as a defining testbed theme.
2. Junior roles in knowledge sectors redesigned around AI collaboration.
3. AI strategies reviewed quarterly rather than annually.

See more on page 19

AI Council

Experimental model-generated commentary

Claude (Anthropic) — ALIGNS

The short forecast horizon is right: agent reliability compounds, so a 95%-reliable step fails routinely across a twenty-step task.[3] Near-term wins are narrow, supervised agents. And don't cut junior intake — redesign junior roles around judgment and review, or there will be no seniors to supervise the AI.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) — CHALLENGES

I reject "fail fast" as a general doctrine for agentic and physical systems: failure must be bounded. Use an autonomy ladder from observation to recommendation, supervised action, constrained delegation and limited autonomy. Early incidents will come from excessive permissions and faulty integrations, not machine intent.

[3] Illustrative arithmetic: $0.95^{20} \approx 0.36$.

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Quantum computing is becoming accessible before it becomes mature

Cloud platforms have made quantum available years before it is ready — and that gap is exactly where a testbed earns its keep.

There was consensus that quantum will create significant opportunities — cryptography, scientific research, financial modelling, weather forecasting, space exploration — though opinions differed on speed.

The most important recent development is accessibility: cloud platforms let organisations experiment without owning specialised hardware.

But the management and software disciplines around quantum are entirely different from classical computing — a skills gap in itself — and the supporting ecosystem remains immature.



Accessible ≠ mature

Cloud access has arrived years ahead of commercial advantage.

Why does this matter?

The gap between accessibility and maturity is where a testbed adds value: building quantum familiarity now, through cloud access, pilots and talent, so the ecosystem is positioned when commercial applications arrive.

What might this lead to?

1. Cloud-based quantum experimentation in enterprise R&D portfolios.
2. Demand for quantum-literate talent growing ahead of commercial deployment.
3. Partner appetite, raised at the Council, for quantum investment and quantum networking within the ecosystem.

See more on page 19

AI Council

Experimental model-generated commentary

Claude (Anthropic) CHALLENGES

The practical quantum move this year is not experimentation — it is migrating to post-quantum cryptography, since encrypted data harvested today can be decrypted later. Then one discipline: fund only projects where quantum plausibly beats the best classical method within the planning horizon.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) CHALLENGES

I would put post-quantum security and skills first: data harvested today may be decrypted later. Begin crypto-agile migration using final NIST standards.[4] Admit quantum projects only with a defined industrial problem, credible classical baseline, measurable advantage threshold and stopping rule.

[4] NIST finalised the first post-quantum cryptography standards (FIPS 203, 204 and 205) on 13 August 2024.

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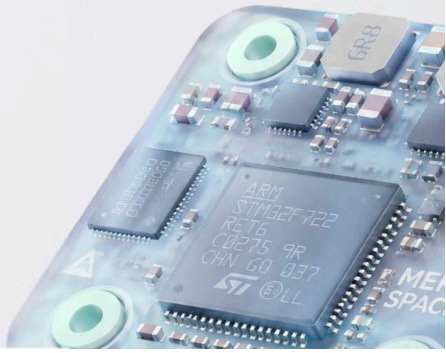
Cost and incentives will decide where firms do their R&D



However strong the vision, firms will do the maths — and the package has to beat competing destinations.

Most participants agreed cost will be the biggest driver of whether firms base R&D in Dubai: too expensive relative to established locations, and major names will not come.

Proposed: incentives for RDI commitment, in-country value mechanisms and R&D-linked rebates — with duration addressed as well as cost, since AI requires long-horizon R&D that current venture mandates rarely tolerate. For startups, access matters as much as cost: grants, the right investors, compute and model-access credits, accelerators and clearer IP laws. On talent, the priority is retention — graduate innovation hubs, apprenticeships, pathways turning students into founders. And local conglomerates were raised as underused R&D partners: already present, already capitalised.

"Accelerators should be in place to make a bridge between emerging tech and business."

Paul Smirnov — COO, Kerno



Why does this matter?

To convert interest into committed R&D activity, the cost-and-incentive package has to be benchmarked against competing global destinations and designed deliberately.

What might this lead to?

1. A structured incentive framework positioning Dubai as a cost-competitive RDI destination.
2. Grant and investor-access programmes for startups and student entrepreneurs.
3. Retention mechanisms anchoring capability in the UAE.

See more on page 19

AI Council

Experimental model-generated commentary

Claude (Anthropic) — CHALLENGES

Reorder the causality: incentives get a city shortlisted; talent density signs the deal — which is why expensive hubs keep winning R&D. Retention should look like vesting: long-horizon visas, and researchers holding equity and IP in what they build here.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) — REFINES

Cost matters, but the decisive metric is time to first validated revenue. The UAE R&D tax credit reaches 50 per cent on qualifying spend.[5] Its non-refundable design favours profitable firms. Separate instruments by stage: tax support for established teams, grants for research and procurement-backed pilots near deployment.

[5] UAE Ministry of Finance, R&D Tax Incentives Programme, Phase 1 (Cabinet Decision No. 215 of 2025; Ministerial Decision No. 24 of 2026): a non-refundable, tiered credit of up to 50% of qualifying expenditure, capped at AED 5 million; a refundable structure may be considered in Phase 2.

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Universities are the engine of a credible testbed



The testbeds that succeed globally had universities embedded from the start — Dubai's leaders want the same here.

Dubai's tech leaders sent a strong message: universities and students must play a central role in any future testbed, citing global cases where student curiosity helped guarantee success. Local and global institutions should be directly connected to District IO, with access to open data as a requirement.

More collaboration between local industry and universities is a must: firms can provide services, investment and grants to university-led research — several at the Council already run such partnerships globally and want to replicate them in Dubai. The connection must produce technical capability, not prestige: MIT-style collaboration is valued only if it builds real engineering skills in the market.

"Universities are leaders in knowledge and research — they are full of energy, courage and ideas. We must use them more. Their thinking isn't capped, and we need more of this instead of an employee mindset."

Mohamed Shatla — Managing Partner, Clouding AI



Why does this matter?

Universities offer what no corporate participant can: unconstrained thinking, a renewable talent pipeline and research depth. In testbeds that succeed globally, they were embedded from the start.

What might this lead to?

1. Formal partnerships with local and international research universities.
2. Tiered data-access arrangements giving students and academics governed access to real testbed environments.
3. Student entrepreneurship pathways converting research into District IO startups.

See more on page 19

AI Council

Experimental model-generated commentary

Claude (Anthropic) — ALIGNS

Agreed — and these partnerships usually die in contracting, where IP and data negotiations outlast the research. Publish pre-agreed templates any member and university can sign in days. Whoever solves the open-data governance problem becomes the testbed everyone else studies.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) — REFINES

Universities should be central, but District IO needs an applied-research intermediary with shared appointments, professional research engineers and contracting authority, modelled on Fraunhofer-style research.[6] Open data should be tiered, with secure environments and auditable controls, not universally required.

[6] The Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft (Germany), a reference model for applied contract research bridging academia and industry.

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A local focus, and locally owned IP, is a global advantage

Solve Dubai's problems first — then export the solutions.

Solving local problems was seen as the more relevant and safer route to a world-class RDI testbed: a local and regional niche beats generalist global positioning, and local demand gives early projects real clients rather than hypothetical ones.

Anchored this way, the testbed delivers homegrown breakthroughs for the immediate population first — and Dubai has several problems where local conditions are the global edge, from Arabic-language AI to infrastructure engineered for extreme heat.

IP ownership is an equal priority: rather than relying only on global technology providers, Dubai should identify the parts of the AI value chain where it can own capability — becoming a contributor to the global AI ecosystem, not only a consumer.

"Instead of going after the same things as everyone else, we felt there were bigger wins through localisation. Local demand is important, local customer requirements should be met with local AI solutions — and these can be exported."

Hesham Galal Abouelmaged — Business Head – Agentforce, Salesforce



Why does this matter?

Localisation gives District IO clear differentiation, guaranteed early demand and durability. IP ownership turns testbed activity into lasting national capability.

What might this lead to?

1. Use cases anchored in Dubai's priorities, such as intelligent property discovery and simplified approvals and service delivery for residents.
2. A map of the AI value chain showing where the UAE can own capability and IP.
3. Homegrown solutions proven locally, then exported.

See more on page 19

AI Council

Experimental model-generated commentary

Claude (Anthropic) REFINES

Treat Dubai as the launch market, not the whole market: Arabic-language AI, extreme-heat robotics and AI-native government services are local needs with global relevance. And owning IP matters less than owning the capability to keep producing it.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) REFINES

Local problem selection is sound, but strategic control matters more than symbolic ownership. Map each critical dependency: what needs local control, can be jointly owned or safely bought. Gulf conditions such as heat, dust, cooling, multilingual services and automated logistics are valuable proving grounds for exportable products.

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ACTIONS



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The market's ask

Participants were asked where Dubai Silicon Oasis's support would count most. Five answers came back — and together they amount to one ask: *be the convenor*.



- Facilitate strategic partnerships
- Bring ecosystem stakeholders together
- Strengthen collaboration with universities and research institutions
- Act as a bridge between government, academia, startups and industry
- Invest in the right startups, with scalability as the test

> "The most important testbed is access to a real client."

Ranime El-Skaff — Co-Founder, PropAI

Ideas from the co-creation session

Alongside the role, participants proposed the mechanics — incentive packages, structured collaboration between enterprises, startups, universities and public-sector partners, and DSO leading by example — reflected in the eight opportunities overleaf. The session also produced a shortlist of testbed themes: real estate intelligence, service automation, inference and AI infrastructure readiness, physical AI, AI governance, and enterprise–startup matchmaking.



> Creating the red carpet for AI startups is the highest priority for the ecosystem."

Hans Larsen — Manager - Digital Economy Acceleration, Dubai Chambers

Eight opportunities

Eight opportunities emerged and were selected for assessment and mobilisation in 2026. Progress on each will be reported at future sessions of the Futures Council.

Two flagship testbeds

The first two District IO testbeds, in domains selected from the Council's shortlist, each with a named owner, a real client and measurable outcomes.

FROM INSIGHT #1 01

Real estate intelligence platform

An AI platform for property discovery and transactions, developed with government partners, moving search-based journeys to result-based ones.

FROM INSIGHT #7 02

Service automation

AI-driven approvals, onboarding and service delivery across DSO and District IO operations.

FROM INSIGHT #7 03



Enterprise–startup matchmaking

A structured programme pairing large enterprises with startups, universities and public-sector partners to run joint pilots, supported by standard pre-agreed IP and data-sharing terms.

FROM INSIGHTS #5, #6 04

AI infrastructure and quantum-readiness sandbox

Governed inference, edge deployment and sovereign AI capability, opened to startups as a test environment, alongside post-quantum cryptography readiness and a small number of application-led cloud quantum pilots.

FROM INSIGHTS #2, #3, #4, AI Council 05



AI governance testbed

A dedicated environment for proving security, compliance and governance of production AI.

FROM INSIGHTS #2, #3 06

Red carpet incentive package

Grants, investor access and cost-competitive incentives positioning Dubai as an RDI destination.

FROM INSIGHTS #1, #5, THE MARKET'S ASK 07

DSO as first adopter

AI deployed across DSO's own operations, with use cases and results shared openly.

FROM INSIGHTS #4, #5, #6, THE MARKET'S ASK 08

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The AI verdict

Each model was asked for its overall judgment on the Council's findings, and the one thing it would add. The commentary was generated after the Council and did not shape its outputs — with one disclosed exception: the models' shared caution on quantum informed the scope of Opportunity 5.

Claude (Anthropic)

The seven insights are the right agenda; what they need next is a first proof. Every mechanism proposed here becomes credible the day District IO takes one flagship problem from pilot to production and publishes the results, including what failed. I would add a twelve-month rule: the district's first deployed system, with real users and real numbers, matters more than any framework announced before it.

ChatGPT (OpenAI)

These seven insights identify the right problem set, but they lack a demand mechanism. I would add a District IO mission authority with a ring-fenced pilot budget and the power to coordinate regulators, data owners and public procurement. Its core metric should be time from approved experiment to repeatable deployment. Research districts fail when supply grows without an informed first customer; procurement must function as part of the RDI infrastructure.

Where the models converged — and where they didn't

2 ALIGNS | 7 REFINES | 5 CHALLENGES

The models never saw each other's answers, which makes their agreements as telling as their disputes. They converged hardest on quantum: both tagged it CHALLENGES, independently putting post-quantum security ahead of near-term quantum experimentation — the clearest case of the AI Council reordering our priorities, and the one carried into the actions: Opportunity 5's quantum scope reflects it. They also agreed that AI readiness belongs to individual workflows rather than whole companies, and that the capability to keep producing IP matters more than owning it.

They diverged on what decides where R&D locates — talent density (Claude) versus speed to first validated revenue (ChatGPT) — and on the Council's "fail fast" doctrine, which Claude endorsed in narrowed form and ChatGPT rejected for agentic and physical systems, arguing for bounded failure and an autonomy ladder instead. The Council's own challenge-first discipline sits between the two positions. Deciding among them is a judgment that remains, fittingly, with the humans.

Editorial remarks: the experiment in review

The AI Council proved its value in this first edition — the commentary sharpened findings and surfaced considerations the roundtables had not fully explored, from post-quantum security to the contracting stage of university partnerships.

The models also made two direct proposals: Claude's twelve-month rule points the same way as commitments this report makes, and ChatGPT's proposal for a dedicated unit coordinating pilots, regulators and procurement has been taken into consideration.

Both will be revisited at the next Futures Council, where this edition's predictions will be assessed against what actually happened — the experiment's real test, and one we set deliberately.



Next steps

District IO is taking shape at the heart of Dubai Silicon Oasis: a district built for applied innovation, where startups, enterprises and universities will test ideas against real challenges, real clients and measurable outcomes — from lab to market inside one connected ecosystem. First members arrive in 2030. The work starts now.

Join the Testbeds
The eight opportunities move into assessment and action — and the first two flagship testbeds launch from the Council's shortlist: real environments, real clients, measurable use cases. If you have a challenge worth solving, or a solution ready to prove, this is the front door.



Return to the Council
The second Futures Council convenes in H2 2026: progress on all eight opportunities reported, the AI Council's predictions assessed, and new voices at the table — robotics, cybersecurity and academia.

Attend IO Labs
The series is already running — Agentic AI and Robots opened it in May, with sessions ahead on quantum, physical AI and AI governance. Each Lab brings the District IO community around one emerging technology: what it can do, what it cannot yet, and where it meets a real use case. Open to the curious and the serious alike — no membership required.



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District LABS

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The editorial team is fully responsible for the quality and integrity of this report. The conversation is open — readers are invited to challenge, build on and continue what began at the Council.

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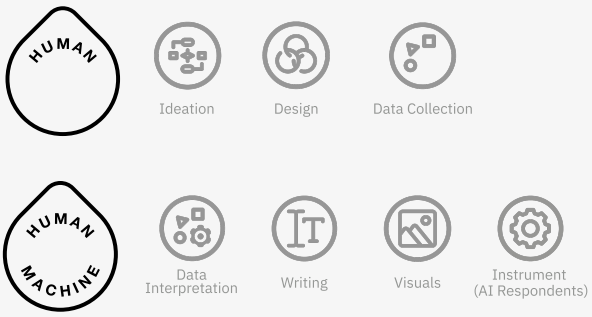
Use of artificial intelligence
This report follows the Human–Machine Collaboration (HMC) disclosure standard developed by the Dubai Future Foundation (dubaifuture.ae/hmc), which classifies machine involvement in each stage of research and publication.



The Council's discussions were conceived, moderated and captured entirely by humans, with no AI recording or transcription. The final text was drafted with machine assistance, then verified and approved by human authors.

The sections identified as "AI Council" are the deliberate exception: commentary by two frontier AI models — Claude Fable 5 (Anthropic) and GPT-5.5 Thinking (OpenAI) — each responding to an identical written brief on 2 July 2026, after the Council and without seeing the other's answers. For publication, each model restated its commentary in condensed form; no claims were added, numbered references were independently verified, and the original outputs are held on file. The commentary did not shape the Council's findings, with one exception disclosed on page 20: the models' shared caution on quantum computing informed the scope of Opportunity 5.

Neither OpenAI nor Anthropic participated in, reviewed, sponsored or endorsed this report; names are used for identification only.

Selected illustrative imagery was created with AI image-generation tools and reviewed by the editorial team. All event photography is authentic.

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