



The Idea Village
For entrepreneurs and those who believe in them

IDEAcorps EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE IDEA VILLAGE

The Idea Village Inc. is an independent 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation whose mission is to encourage a culture of innovation and to provide focused tools and resources to accelerate the development of entrepreneurial ventures in New Orleans. Since its formal inception in 2002, The Idea Village has become the primary driver for entrepreneurship in New Orleans; it is supported by more than 300 individuals, corporations, foundations, Tulane University, University of New Orleans, Greater New Orleans, Inc., the City of New Orleans, and the State of Louisiana. The Idea Village is governed by a Board of Directors that includes some of the city's most accomplished and respected business, civic and academic leaders.

OBJECTIVES

- Accelerate post-Katrina economic recovery by providing resources, education, and guidance to local entrepreneurs.
- Develop entrepreneurial villages to house entrepreneurs, musicians, artists, venture capitalists, university and professional resources.
- Recruit, educate, engage, and retain the next generation of New Orleans business leaders.
- Reposition post-Katrina New Orleans as a competitive entrepreneurial environment.

IDEAcorps PROGRAM OVERVIEW

One of the silver linings to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina is the unprecedented opportunity for New Orleans to engage and retain young, bright talent – a stark contrast to the “brain drain” that has historically plagued our community. Accordingly, The Idea Village, in partnership with Tulane University, has formed, “IDEAcorps,” a Peace Corps-like initiative for civic and business-minded college graduates.

Each IDEAcorps team works closely with a portfolio of entrepreneurs to help identify and prioritize their most pressing business needs and assist in the development and implementation of plans to address them. Because the landscape of the New Orleans small business community is particularly diverse, IDEAcorps teams focus on a specific industry or neighborhood corridor to encourage a comprehensive understanding of the specific business climate and maximize impact of assistance.

IDEAcorps teams are comprised of “IDEAcorps fellows,” The Idea Village Executive team, seasoned business professionals, and local MBA students. Furthermore, national universities and graduate programs, including Stanford University, Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Columbia University, are engaging their students in specific projects to encourage active participation in the recovery of a great American city. The injection of national talent poses a phenomenal opportunity to recruit young, vibrant entrepreneurs to consider New Orleans as a long term career choice.

IDEAcorps PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- 1) **ACCELERATION** –Customized business development program that sets operational goals and provides strategic and technical assistance in areas such as accounting, finance, informational systems, management and marketing.
- 2) **EDUCATION** – Seminars include business plan development, financial literacy and presentation skills. IV also publishes e-newsletters with information aimed to further business development.
- 3) **NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES** –Events intended to draw the New Orleans entrepreneurial community together, fostering relationships and exchanges that assist growing companies.
- 4) **SERVICE PROVIDERS** - Provides direct access to business professionals and industry experts who have agreed to provide pro-bono or discounted services for IV entrepreneurs.
- 5) **MENTORS** - IV pairs entrepreneurs with professionals who have started their own businesses and/or found success in the business world.
- 6) **CAPITAL** - IV assists entrepreneurs in securing capital, including grants and loans and directly invests in carefully selected companies to elevate them to a level worthy of venture capitalist attention. IV will also foster relationships between specific companies and potential venture capital investors.

INAUGURAL IDEACorps PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Idea Village and Tulane University created and launched *IDEACorps* in July 2006 to support New Orleans based entrepreneurs through a combination of capital and technical assistance. Through funding from the *Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation*, IDEACorps distributed \$100,000 in “triage relief” to tourism-based small businesses that are indigenous to New Orleans culture. This effort was a continuation of The Idea Village’s plan to revitalize New Orleans through the “IV Business Relief Fund” created in September 2005 to assist those entrepreneurs disrupted by Hurricane Katrina. To date, The Idea Village has raised over \$800,000 to support 110 entrepreneurs through grants and technical assistance.

PROJECTED 2 YEAR IMPACT OF GRANT MONEY

We project these companies will generate 125+ additional jobs and over \$1 million in revenue over the next 2 years.

SUMMARY OF GRANT ALLOCATION

- Total grant money allocated: \$100,000
- 65% of funds to women & minorities
- Use of Funds: 39% marketing materials; 18% renovations; 18% equipment; 11% inventory; 10% advertising; 4% employment
- Sector: 20% Cuisine, 20% Creative Entrepreneur; 20% Cultural Education; 17% Eclectic Retail; 13% Music Production; 10% Lodging

ACCOUNTABILITY

IDEACorps presented the selection of grant recipients to an advisory group comprised of local business and civic leaders. Entrepreneurs who received assistance were required to attend a personalized 2-4 hour strategy session, submit receipts to validate the use of grant money, and provide quarterly updates for The Idea Village to track their successes.

IDEAcorps APPENDIX 2: Inaugural IDEAcorps Team



Lauren Baum leads the inaugural IDEAcorps team. Lauren, a New Orleans native, recently returned from New York, where she was a Senior Account Executive for a Public Relations Agency. After Katrina, Lauren came home to New Orleans to assist in the rebuilding process. Lauren completed her undergraduate degree in Communications and Chinese from Stanford University where she continued her studies to earn a Masters degree in Business and Organizational Sociology.



Jamal Brown is a second year MBA student at Tulane's Freeman School of Business. Jamal, a local New Orleanian, attended Brother Martin High School and received his undergraduate degree in Marketing from Loyola University. Jamal is the Executive Vice President of the Graduate and Professional Student Association at Tulane and serves on Freeman's Graduate Business Council.



Tim Johnson, also a New Orleans Native, attended Isidore Newman High School and is currently studying economics at Vanderbilt University. Tim was a student volunteer at the Southern Center for International Studies in Atlanta and returned to New Orleans in June to volunteer with the IDEAcorps team.



Emily Mitchell is a second year MBA candidate at Tulane's Freeman School of Business. Emily grew up in Portland, Maine and attended Tulane in 1998. She completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology and holds a Masters Degree in Spanish. Emily serves on Freeman's Graduate Business Council and Tulane's Graduate and Professional Student Association. She is the Co-Founder of the Tulane Net Impact Chapter, the Vice President of the National Association of Women MBAs at Freeman and the Vice President of the Tulane Entrepreneurs Association.



Miji Park came to New Orleans in the spring of 2006 with a group of student volunteers from the University of Pennsylvania. She joined the IDEAcorps team in June with the intention of helping for a few weeks before beginning a job in Berkeley, CA. After growing attached to the New Orleans community in a few short weeks, Miji decided to forgo her original career plans and stay in New Orleans to help lead the city towards recovery. Miji attended high school in Danville, California and recently graduated from the University of Pennsylvania where she majored in Urban Studies and Economics.



Morial Vallot is a second year MBA candidate at the Freeman School of Business. Morial, who grew up in Lafayette, LA, attended Erath High School and earned a degree in Marketing at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Morial is the Vice President of Freeman's Black MBA Association and is actively involved in assisting local entrepreneurs recover from the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina.



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**IDEA VILLAGE AND TULANE UNIVERSITY LAUNCH "IDEAcorps" TO SUPPORT LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS WITH GRANTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
Initial \$100,000 to Target Tourism-Based Businesses**

For Immediate Release
July 17, 2006

(New Orleans) – Today, The Idea Village and Tulane University launched the first "IDEAcorps" team, a combination of MBA students, community volunteers and professional consultants who will work directly with a diverse portfolio of local entrepreneurs.

The launch of IDEAcorps coincides with an announcement by The Idea Village of plans to distribute \$100,000 in relief grants, combined with technical assistance, to local small businesses and entrepreneurs affected by Hurricane Katrina. This is a result of a recent donation from the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation in response to the continued efforts of The Idea Village to revitalize New Orleans through the "IV Business Relief Fund." To date, The Idea Village has raised over \$300,000 which has been carefully distributed to 90 qualified businesses and entrepreneurs.

According to Tim Williamson, President of The Idea Village, "This program represents a unique opportunity for The Idea Village to leverage New Orleans's greatest assets - bright, talented individuals – to further our mission of assisting and accelerating the development of local entrepreneurs that drive the New Orleans economy."

This round of grant provisions will focus on tourism-based businesses that exemplify the rich cultural flavor of New Orleans. According to Stephen Perry, President of the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, "Many local treasures need community support as we work to increase tourism traffic during these slower times. These businesses epitomize New Orleans and are perhaps even more crucial to our community members than to tourists. With the help of The Idea Village and the IDEAcorps team, the rich New Orleans culture that we know and love will be able to survive."

In an effort to preserve these cultural institutions, the IDEAcorps will identify, evaluate and award grants to small, Orleans Parish businesses that are indigenous to New Orleans culture and economy. To qualify, businesses must demonstrate that they were adversely impacted by the hurricane, had a steady increase in revenue prior to August 29, 2005 and displayed a courageous and entrepreneurial spirit in their post-Katrina business endeavors. The grants will range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 with an average of \$5,000. In addition, grant recipients will participate in a personalized strategy session at The Idea Village, partnered with follow-up technical assistance, as well as educational and networking opportunities organized by IDEAcorps members. For further information and to apply for grants, businesses may go to www.ideaavillage.org and fill out the application.

According to John Elstrott, a Tulane professor whose *Rebuild New Orleans* course helped spearhead this initiative, "We expect this diverse and talented team to have a significant impact on local small businesses and the New Orleans economy. This program will pave the way for continued expansion as local universities join us in launching IDEAcorps teams that focus on other industries and sectors vital to the New Orleans economy."

Chairman Donald Powell, Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding, added, "The continued recovery of the Gulf Coast will take a commitment from all sectors of society coming together. I commend organizations like The Idea Village and Tulane University for their unwavering commitment to rebuilding New Orleans and the important example they set for the rest of the community. A creative combination of resources such as this will help ensure a strong future for New Orleans."

About The Idea Village

The Idea Village, an independent 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization devoted to supporting entrepreneurial ventures in the region, established The Idea Village *Business Relief Fund* in September 2005 as an emergency grant-making program for qualified small businesses. Companies, foundations and individuals have donated relief dollars to sponsored funds and work with The Idea Village to define criteria for the fund allocations. Since its formal inception in 2002, The Idea Village has become the primary driver for entrepreneurship in New Orleans, supported by more than 300 individuals, corporations, local foundations, Tulane University, University of New Orleans, Greater New Orleans, Inc., the City of New Orleans, and the State of Louisiana.

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**THE IDEA VILLAGE ANNOUNCES
PORTFOLIO OF ENTREPRENEURS TO PROVIDE GRANTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
\$100,000 will be distributed to eclectic New Orleans businesses**

AUGUST 25, 2006

(New Orleans) – Today, The Idea Village will award \$100,000 in “trriage” relief grants to 20 small businesses affected by Hurricane Katrina. Culturally-indigenous businesses were selected by the inaugural IDEAcorns team, a combination of MBA students, community volunteers and professional consultants who will work directly with this diverse portfolio and help them adapt to post-Katrina New Orleans .

An average of \$5,000 will be awarded to each business after participating in a personalized strategy session at The Idea Village. The lead sponsor for this round of relief grants is the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation.

The businesses that will receive grants and tailored technical assistance include Magic Tours, New Orleans Cooking Experience , Ovah da Rivah , Voodoo Authentica , India House , Grand Victorian B&B , The Praline Connection , Two Sisters Restaurant , Leah's Pralines , Creole Delicacies , Fleur de Paris , Jazzy Ice , Louisiana Folk Art Museum , Three Ring Circus , Wehmeier's Belts , Bourbon French Parfums , The Music Shed , Home Team Productions, Whiteoak Productions , and Maskarade .

According to Tim Williamson, President of The Idea Village, "Our primary goal was to develop a clear, transparent and efficient process to assist and accelerate local entrepreneurs. By combining our task force of MBA students with an advisory board of community leaders, we were able to make smart assessments in a timely manner. We intend to replicate this model with different teams focused on different industry sectors as we continue our mission of serving the New Orleans entrepreneurial community."

Each IDEAcorns team will have a unique board of community leaders to advise the team on their assessment and selection. With a focus on tourism-based businesses, the inaugural IDEAcorns team's advisory board combines leaders who represent the rich cultural fabric of New Orleans, including Stephen Perry, Margo Dubos, David Sylvester, Quint Davis, David Guidry, Lee Reid, Shawn Barney, Mark Romig , Jonathon Ferrara, Suzanne Mestayer and Paige Arnof.

At the advisory board meeting, Stephen Perry, President of the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, remarked, "I commend The Idea Village and the IDEAcorns team for their tremendous hard work and dedication in selecting these entrepreneurs. With this level of commitment and due diligence, I think several zeros should be added to the grant sum."

The Idea Village has identified that many tourism-based businesses have an urgent need for marketing and online assistance. To that end, Trumpet Advertising and MakeBuzz have dedicated their time and expertise to assisting the entrepreneurs through workshops and individual assistance. Furthermore, The Idea Village is partnering with SEEDCO, a New York based financial assistance organization, in co-hosting a financing workshop in September.

Jonathan Ferrara, artist and entrepreneur explains, "Financial relief alone is not enough to sustain or grow our businesses. The Idea Village offers a unique service in combining technical assistance, strategic consulting, and networking opportunities to help these entrepreneurs brave an uncharted territory."
To join the Idea Village network of entrepreneurs, businesses may go to www.ideavillage.org and fill out the form under Information and Resources. Over \$400,000 has been raised with cash grants provided to over 110 affected businesses through *The Idea Village Business Relief Fund* since Hurricane Katrina.

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In New Orleans, a different kind of retail therapy: How one Penn grad gave up a California consulting job for the chance to help small businesses in a storm-torn city

University of Pennsylvania Publication

Jason Schwartz, September 19, 2006

NEW ORLEANS -

A crazy quilt jungle of high-fashion headwear, French Quarter boutique Fleur de Paris is already an overwhelming place to walk into. But 2006 College alumna Miji Park got more than she bargained for last weekend when, just seconds after she strolled in the door, owner Joe Perrino burst out from behind a hat rack and told her to get out. Immediately.

Park had barely made it out onto the street, though, when Perrino scrambled out to apologize. It wasn't that he was unhappy to see her - in fact, Perrino was thrilled to see Park, who works for a non-profit firm that offers free consulting services to him and another 19 of the Big Easy's most characteristic small businesses. It was just that, for once, he had customers in his store and he couldn't be distracted.

"Saturday's the only day I can make a buck," he huffed.

In short, business in the French Quarter stinks. Park says that of the 136 stores surveyed by her non-profit, most of their revenues have dropped between 50 and 70 percent since Hurricane Katrina. Across the city, tourism-dependent stores are closing by the dozen and shopkeepers will tell you that the only thing moving slower than the government is the flow of merchandise.

But Park thinks there's something she can do about it.

Last summer, the Urban Studies and Economics major turned her back on a lucrative job in her native California to take a post at New Orleans' Idea Village, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting (at this point, likely saving) local businesses. Without so much as a place to live or the promise of a regular salary, for Park, it was the academic equivalent of turning down an endowed professorship to do Teach for America.

Armed with the conviction that small businesses - once the driving force behind New Orleans' economy - are now the key to reviving it, Park has become a key member of Idea Village's five-person "Idea Corps" team. A shock troop of young consultants who've scoured the city for Katrina-bitten businesses in need of a lifeline, Park and her Idea Corps teammates are in on the ground floor of New Orleans' recovery efforts, consulting and providing grants to businesses they deem culturally indispensable to the city.

It's hardly a place she would've expected to be at this time last year, when she was a senior at Penn living 17 stories off the ground in Harrison College House.

"I can't explain my attachment to this city," Park said. Since Katrina, though, she has somehow been irresistibly drawn to it.

Like many other Penn students, over spring break in March she travelled south to help with hurricane relief. She ended up doing clean-up work in Lafayette, La., but was frustrated that she never made it to New Orleans.

"I didn't feel like I did enough. I mean, we did good work, but I just wanted to do more," she said.

So Park enrolled in a course in the School of Design on Katrina recovery and signed herself up for a second service trip at the end of May, this time gutting houses in nearby Gentilly and New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward.

Still not satisfied, though, she sent out her resume with hopes of landing a short summer job in the city related to relief efforts, but unrelated to tearing down walls ("I'm not much of a gutting-type person," she admits).

Park wanted desperately to help, but had one major constraint: Any job could only be through June, because she had to return home to take up the real-estate consulting position in Berkeley she had already accepted.

Nevertheless, word came from Idea Village that she'd be welcome to come in for an interview while she was in town in May. The interview went well, and the day before she was supposed to return home with her service group, Park changed her airplane ticket and decided to hunker down for another month in the youth hostile she'd been staying in.

During June, though, it became clear to her that leaving would be hard. She wavered back and forth, changing her mind five times within a week at one point, but in late June made the tough phone call to her would-be boss in Berkeley, saying that she was, effectively, quitting before she even started. She would stay on at Idea Village.

"It was more fear that was holding me back. I had stability in Berkeley," she said. "Toward the end of June, I was just looking at [the Berkeley] job as a number and it didn't have any other meaning.

"And real-estate economic research versus coming down here and doing work that matters, rebuilding a city essentially. You can't compare that to anything."

Her mother, of course, freaked out, but Park was in New Orleans to stay.

Last week, Park and her boss personally dropped off \$5,000 in grant checks to all 20 businesses for whom they've been consulting. Their bet is that within the next year or two, the \$100,000 grant money will blossom into an over \$1 million revenue boost for the city, but the process of selecting the businesses was agonizing.

In all, 136 companies applied for the Idea Corps program, 61 were granted interviews, and just 20 of the most vital to New Orleans culture and history were selected.

"We wanted these funky little stores that New Orleans is known for," she said. "We were really looking at businesses that, if they went out of business, New Orleans would change."

Involved in every phase of the selection process, Park became immersed in a world of hat-makers, Mardi Gras mask-designers and even one particularly hard-bitten 80-year-old alligator-leather salesman.

With free-spending tourists seemingly all gone, Idea Corps has been trying to help these companies find a way to diversify their customer base.

For instance, Park and her coworkers have advised Voodoo Authentica, a French Quarter store filled with altars, incense and (of course) voodoo dolls to harness the power of the Internet. The cashier complains that business has slowed to a crawl, but Park says that since the store's Web site is already one of the Web's authoritative voodoo resources, they've recommended that the store use a little bit of black magic to rub some revenue out of increased online sales.

The jury's out on whether Idea Corps' work will pan out, but that hasn't stopped Idea Village Chief Operating Officer Allen Bell from planning for the future. In the next 18 months, he'd like to launch between two and five additional Idea Corps teams to complement Park's.

Bell says it was "by miracle" that Park arrived at his office, and concedes that he'll need many more like her to expand his program. How many aspiring consultants, after all, would give up Wall Street salaries to work way under market value in a city where boarded up windows have become an accepted part of the scenery?

Bell admits that "it really has to be from the heart," but says he's hopeful. For her part, Park has been reaching out to Penn to help recruit students and hopes that perhaps some of them will feel the same draw she did.

"Essentially, if you can solve these problems in New Orleans, you can solve them anywhere," she said. "And that challenge was just too important to walk away from."

Even if the shopkeeper tells you to get out.