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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**The Idea Village Unveils Strategy to Scale the New Orleans Entrepreneurial Ecosystem**  
*Selects Propeller to grow the 5<sup>th</sup> Water Challenge*

**New Orleans, LA (August 14, 2014)** – Today, The Idea Village announces the selection of **Propeller: A Force for Social Innovation** to grow the nationally acclaimed **Water Challenge**. Founded in 2010 by **The Idea Village** and **Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF)**, the Water Challenge is an annual initiative focused on solving critical water challenges through entrepreneurship, culminating each year during New Orleans Entrepreneur Week.

“In order to sustain the entrepreneurial ecosystem, everyone will need to have a role,” said Tim Williamson, Co-founder and CEO of The Idea Village. “Over the past 15 years, we have witnessed firsthand the organic growth of the ecosystem attracting dynamic leaders aligned with our mission to drive entrepreneurship in New Orleans. The strategic decision to delegate critical initiatives out to partners ensures long-term sustainability. The ecosystem thrives when our partners succeed and collaborate.”

In the coming weeks, The Idea Village will announce additional partnerships aligned with the 7<sup>th</sup> annual New Orleans Entrepreneur Week, March 20-27, 2015, further solidifying the annual business festival as the hub of the New Orleans entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Idea Village’s strategy to nurture a sustainable support system for New Orleans entrepreneurs led to the collaboration with GNOF to launch the Water Challenge. Over the last four years, the program has engaged a global network to support innovative water ideas and elevate the industry as a critical part of New Orleans’ entrepreneurial renaissance. Program advisors include leaders from the *City of New Orleans, GNO Inc., Jefferson Parish, the National Audubon Society, NOLA Vibe, Plaquemines Parish, PosiGen Energy Efficiency, the Regional Planning Commission, SBA, Tulane University, The Water Institute of the Gulf, and Waggoner & Ball Architects*. Entrepreneur alumni include: [CC CleanTech](#), [NanoFex](#), [ORA Estuaries](#), [Pierce Industries](#), [Tierra Resources](#), [VertiFarms](#), and [Water Works](#). In 2012, the Water Challenge received the **Nania Award**, an honor given out by Tulsa Partners in recognition of outstanding work on the national stage to build disaster-resistant and sustainable communities.

Propeller will grow the overall reach and impact of the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Water Challenge by aggregating a broad coalition of resources to provide direct resources to 13 water entrepreneurs selected from the 10-parish region through peer learning, mentorship, business acceleration, and access to capital. Eligible entrepreneurs will be selected to pitch for \$10,000 in startup funding during the Water Challenge Day, on Monday, March 23, 2015 at NOEW.

“Propeller is honored to be carrying on the legacy of the Water Challenge,” said Andrea Chen, Executive Director of Propeller. “Given our long-term commitment to supporting social innovation in New Orleans, we are well positioned to sustain and scale resources to leverage social entrepreneurship to tackle challenges in urban water management and coastal restoration. We look forward to increasing the participation in this critical industry during New Orleans Entrepreneur Week.”

Over the last several years, The Idea Village has begun to delegate critical initiatives to strategic partners. In 2011, The Idea Village launched the Education Entrepreneur Challenge, in collaboration with 4.0 Schools and Teach for America (TFA), with a goal of encouraging TFA members and alumni to utilize entrepreneurship to solve some of the most difficult challenges in education. Given their focus and expertise in education, **4.0 Schools** assumed leadership of the program in 2012. It has since grown into a year-round program supporting education entrepreneurs and culminating with the annual **Education Pitch**, during NOEW.

“We are psyched to keep growing education entrepreneurs with The Idea Village!” said Matt Candler, CEO of 4.0 Schools. “We look forward to sustaining the momentum by leveraging our efforts at New Orleans Entrepreneur Week.”

**ABOUT THE IDEA VILLAGE:**

In 2000, The Idea Village was formed by a group of New Orleans citizens who believed entrepreneurship is a catalyst for positive change. The Idea Village formalized in 2002 as an independent 501c3 non-profit organization with a mission to identify, support, and retain entrepreneurial talent in New Orleans by providing direct service to high impact entrepreneurs, educating the broader community, and supporting initiatives that strengthen our entrepreneurial infrastructure. From 2009-2014, The Idea Village has provided direct support to over 3,411 New Orleans entrepreneurs by engaging over 2,600 professionals to allocate 68,543 consulting hours and \$2.5 million in seed capital. In addition, The Idea Village hosts New Orleans Entrepreneur Week, a business festival that has become the platform for the New Orleans entrepreneurial ecosystem. [www.ideavillage.org](http://www.ideavillage.org)



**ABOUT PROPELLER:**

Our mission is to drive systemic change and economic impact in New Orleans by incubating early-stage ventures that have the potential to solve our city's most pressing issues. At the heart of Propeller's mission and impact lies the Social Venture Accelerator, a 10-month business accelerator that connects change-makers with the resources needed to make change happen faster. We operate out of our 10,000 s.f. facility in the Broadmoor neighborhood where 80 startups call us home. Since June 2011, we have incubated 35 new ventures, including a healthy school meals initiative that reaches 50% of all New Orleans public schools, urban farms, a regional food hub, a wetlands kayaking tour company, and a maternal health collective.

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