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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Idea Village Announces New Chief Executive Officer

Jon J. Atkinson Selected to Lead

NEW ORLEANS (June 25, 2018) – Today, The Idea Village announced its Board of Directors has appointed Jon Atkinson as Chief Executive Officer. Atkinson joins The Idea Village with over 10 years of experience in finance, investment, entrepreneurship, and education.

“Jon’s vision, strategy, and execution track record is exactly what Idea Village needs as we enter our next phase of growth,” said Patrick Comer, founder and CEO of Lucid and Chairman of the Board of The Idea Village. “With innovation advancing so quickly, Jon’s unanimous support from the Board of Directors shows he is clearly the leader for our future.”

Atkinson serves as co-founder and administrator for Lagniappe Angels, a local angel investment fund, and led the Center for Entrepreneurship and Community Development at Loyola University New Orleans, where he served as the first director. He is a practitioner of Lean Startup methodology and focused his efforts at Loyola on creating experiential learning programming to help catalyze the region’s “innovation-ready workforce” needed to build scalable businesses from the ground up. He has previously served as the CFO of a food startup, an advisor and mentor to both for profit and social ventures, and co-founder of the Changemaker Institute at Tulane University.

Atkinson is a volunteer member of the Investment Committee of the New Orleans Startup Fund and has been named one of the most Influential People in Entrepreneurship for three years in a row by *Silicon Bayou News*. Atkinson previously also worked in commercial banking for Hancock Bank and as community development lender for Trufund Financial Services. He received his degree in Economics from Davidson College and MBA from Tulane University Freeman School of Business.

“I join The Idea Village with a passion to lead the next chapter at an organization where I believe the possibilities are limitless,” Atkinson said. “The Idea Village’s bold and relentless vision of New Orleans as an innovation hub and programs that help form the fabric of our burgeoning entrepreneurial community are the foundation of the robust entrepreneurial ecosystem that exists today. The opportunity to lead this organization is humbling and exhilarating, and coincides with my personal passion to serve this region’s entrepreneurs, innovators, startups, and growth oriented companies.”

“Jon has demonstrated the energy and passion that we were looking for in a successor, and we took that challenge very seriously,” said Jen Medbery, The Idea Village Board member and co-chair of the search committee. “We had a great pool of candidates with the experience, intellect, and integrity required for the position, but Jon stood apart as a passionate leader, ready to engage people and propel ideas to drive strategy, execution, and high impact.”

Atkinson will replace Sally Forman, who served in the Acting CEO position since last year. “This is one of the most exciting organizations in New Orleans, filled with people focused on the future,” said Forman. “Jon is a leader capable of jumping right in to take our ecosystem and city to its next level of growth.”

Jon Atkinson begins work as CEO effective July 9, 2018, overseeing all of the nonprofit’s operations and programs.

ABOUT THE IDEA VILLAGE: Founded in 2000, The Idea Village was built on the belief that entrepreneurship transforms communities. To date, The Idea Village has provided over 8,000 entrepreneurs more than \$26 million in resources, including over 93,000 consulting hours and \$3 million in seed capital. Of these entrepreneurs, 243 have been selected into the core accelerator program, with this portfolio producing 3,022 jobs, over \$185 million in private capital, and \$208 million in annual revenue. Today, 78% of the alumni companies are still in business and 90% of those still in New Orleans, creating a \$200 million/year annual economic impact for the regional economy.

The 2017 Innovation that Matters report conducted by the US Chamber of Commerce ranks New Orleans as the #19 Healthiest Startup City, #2 in Startup Culture, and #1 in Connectivity. A large contributing factor to the culture and connectivity of this ecosystem is New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW), an annual conference produced by The Idea Village to celebrate and promote entrepreneurship and innovation. Learn more about The Idea Village at ideavillage.org.

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