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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Idea Village Receives Innovation Grant from Blackstone Charitable Foundation
Investment is dedicated to scaling New Orleans Entrepreneur Week's Culminating Event The Big Idea

New Orleans, LA (February 15, 2016) – The Idea Village is pleased to announce that it has received a Blackstone Innovation Grant from the Blackstone Charitable Foundation. Now in its fourth year, the Blackstone Innovation Grants program supports innovative regional initiatives and events that foster entrepreneurship. The grants announced this week total \$2 million to thirteen non-profit organizations whose work strengthens entrepreneurial ecosystems and supports promising entrepreneurs.

This investment from the Blackstone Charitable Foundation will enable The Idea Village to scale New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW), presented by IBERIABANK. Specifically, The Idea Village plans to leverage the funds to grow The Big Idea, the crowd-driven pitch extravaganza that closes out NOEW each year. Next month, The 2016 Blackstone Big Idea will take place on Friday, March 18th from 6pm – 8:30pm and is expected to engage 4,000 individuals to support 10 of the next big ideas to come out of New Orleans. Using \$25 voting chips, attendees invest in their favorite of the featured startups as they experience the entrepreneurial movement firsthand. The entire community is invited to attend, and voting chips can be purchased [here](#).

“NOEW is an essential piece of the city's annual cultural calendar and a critical component to position New Orleans for the future,” said Tim Williamson, Co-founder and CEO of The Idea Village. “The Blackstone Charitable Foundation’s generous donation will allow us to engage the broader community in New Orleans’ entrepreneurial movement through The Big Idea.”

“Over the past four years, the Blackstone Charitable Foundation is proud to support a diverse set of dynamic organizations that complement the work of our Entrepreneurship Initiative and build momentum around entrepreneurship in their regions,” said Amy Stursberg, Executive Director of the Blackstone Charitable Foundation. “This year’s cohort of Blackstone Innovation Grant recipients have already helped hundreds of companies and entrepreneurs to create over 9,000 jobs – we couldn’t be more excited to support them as they continue that work in the year ahead.”

For the 2016 grants, more than four hundred and fifty organizations submitted proposals through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process established by the Foundation for both program and event-focused grants. The reach of the grantees’ programs and events extend across eight U.S. states, Washington, D.C., and the United Kingdom, and the entrepreneurs supported by these programs represent communities from across the globe.

NOEW 2016 is scheduled for March 11-18, 2016 and will be headquartered on Fulton Street in Downtown New Orleans. An estimated 14,000 individuals are expected to be engaged through 111 different events hosted in partnership with 60 local and national organizations.

About The Idea Village: The Idea Village is an independent 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization based in New Orleans that provides direct service to high impact entrepreneurs, convenes the ecosystem through New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW), and supports initiatives that strengthen our entrepreneurial infrastructure. The IV 100, a group of forward thinking corporations, foundations and individuals committed to New Orleans’ future, funds the Idea Village. For more information: www.ideavillage.org.

About the Blackstone Charitable Foundation: The Blackstone Charitable Foundation was founded at the time of Blackstone’s IPO in 2007 with substantial commitments from the Firm’s employees. Influenced by the enterprising heritage of the firm and its founders, The Blackstone Charitable Foundation is directing its resources and applying the intellectual capital of the firm to foster entrepreneurship in areas nationwide and globally. Through its investment expertise across several asset classes and geographies, Blackstone has a unique perspective on the global economy and a heightened understanding of how entrepreneurial activity is often the crucial catalyst in the growth of successful businesses, industries and communities. For more information, see <http://www.blackstone.com/foundation>.