



TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Tom Allon, founder and publisher of City & State media company

RE: The Five Boroughs Ideas Lab (FBIL)

I) About the Five Boroughs Ideas Lab

The Five Boroughs Ideas Lab (FBIL) will be a non-profit, non-partisan clearinghouse for great urban policy ideas and pragmatic solutions to chronic problems. After the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City needs a forward-thinking, nimble and experienced think-tank that is able to convene major stakeholders from business, government, academia and to generate the most cutting-edge and practicable ideas available.

Particularly after the global pandemic, it is important to recognize that there can be global solutions to local ideas. That is why one of the focuses of this “Ideas Lab” will be to identify best practices from other large cities in the U.S. and around the world and analyze ways to apply these solutions in NYC through pilot programs or larger rollouts. It will also work on identifying which policies espoused by Eric Adams mayoral campaign can be prioritized and executed efficiently during his first term from 2022-2025.

FBIL will be solutions and fiscally focused. Through special reports, FAQ videos, podcasts, white papers and events produced by our team of experts, we will emphasize two key themes often overlooked by policymakers: how to fund new programs and how to effectively execute them.

It is anticipated that in 2022, FBIL will forge affiliations with other top NY academic institutions like NYU, Fordham, Cooper Union, Pace University and Hunter College.

FBIL anticipates evaluating a number of concrete policy ideas that were part of incoming NYC Mayor Eric Adams campaign platform and putting them through a rigorous academic analysis to assess their financial viability and ability to implement.

II) Policy Areas of Interest

Some initial ideas that FBIL plans to focus on include but are not limited to the following:

Jobs, the Economy and Workforce Development:

- The post-pandemic economy has left urban centers with many skilled positions and not enough qualified candidates to fill them. How can unions, corporations and academia work together to **turbocharge workforce development** in NYC?
- The pandemic revealed how important, yet vulnerable many independent workers are. Creatives such as freelancers and independent contractors in the gig economy all faced unique issues. Can the city of New York develop a **system of portable benefits** to support the independent workforce to build this sector while ensuring these workers have access to a modern safety net?
- After economic hardship, thousands of New Yorkers are suffering. How can Eric Adams' plan for the **NYC Advanced Income Deployment (NYC AID)**, which aims to boost the earned income tax credits to poor families by more than 10 times, be paid for and implemented?

Education and Equity:

- **Quality Universal Child Care and Education in NYC** (0-3 years old). How can this \$3 billion annual program be funded and how can it be executed so that the focus is on improving early childhood brain development, one of the key ingredients to leveling inequality.
- How to revamp New York's **Gifted and Talented Program** and make it more widely available in lower-income communities. Can we rebrand it and call it "Accelerated Learning?" When is the proper time to evaluate students for these programs and what measures should be used?
- How to replicate the excellence of **NYC's top specialized high schools**. It's a travesty that 29,000 students apply each year for less than 5,000 seats. How can we add seats without diluting the academic product and make admissions to specialized high schools more equitable while maintaining the highest level of academic rigor all our students are entitled to?
- Studies show the teenagers are **chronically sleep deprived** and that this has a large impact on health and academic performance. How can NYC DOE reprogram the school day, so that the high school start time is not earlier than 9 am and make other adjustments so that students are set up for success?
- The key to turning around public education is **recruiting, training and retaining great teachers**. How to do this? Should there be a "Master Teacher" category that can train young teachers?

Budget and Government Efficacy:

- Fortunately, the federal government has stepped up to close our budget gaps, but this funding won't last forever. We will evaluate **avenues for developing alternative revenue**

streams for city government. Can the new administration hire a Chief Revenue Officer, whose office will be responsible for helping monetize the city's considerable assets (city buildings, parks, public hospitals, NYC brand, etc.)? How can the new administration finally implement property tax reforms that have been discussed but not acted on for years? Can the Department of Finance unilaterally re-assess vacant land as a way to incentivize affordable housing development and earn revenue?

- **Cybersecurity** is becoming a growing problem in the public and private sector. How does NYC become the academic beacon of training the next generation of digital security warriors? How do we leverage our growing tech sector to innovate our city government through blockchain and other technologies?

These are just some examples of ideas FBIL will explore as it tries to match the best minds and solutions in NYC with the most pressing and chronic urban problems. Above all, our goal will be to advance practicable solutions in a digestible and user-friendly manner that reaches the decision-makers in our city to turn ideas into action.

III) Activities

As a thought-leader, FBIL will produce digestible research on the city's most pressing problems. To communicate our ideas, we will execute our scholarship through the following activities for public consumption.

- **Policy reports and white papers** with distinct research topics and tangible solutions
- **Sponsored events** to convene the brightest minds around the hardest challenges
- **Podcast & FAQ videos** that convey complex policy issues in digestible ways
- **Newsletter** featuring op-eds from our researchers and guest contributors
- **Robust press outreach** to a variety of media sources
- **Social media** engagement

IV) Structure of the Organization

FBIL plans to hire an Executive Director who is steeped in public policy and wants to run an organization that aids in New York's comeback from the pandemic. FBIL will also hire a Lead Policy Director and 4-6 Policy Analysts to execute the ideas presented by its Board of Directors as well as by leaders in government.

FBIL's Board of Directors will include 14-18 prominent New Yorkers from different industries, including business, real estate, academia, media, the arts and other important NYC sectors.

FBIL's Board Chairman will be Tom Allon, the founder and publisher of the respected media company City & State. Allon ran for NYC Mayor in 2013 and received the Liberal Party Endorsement. In 2019-2021, he was the creator and principal of Mayor Eric Adams "Mayor

School,” which conducted more than 100 rigorous policy discussions with leading experts in different industries in NY.

FBIL is seeking to raise **\$800,000-\$1.5 million for its initial annual budget**. The founders will be speaking to foundations, philanthropists, tech leaders, business leaders and others to raise its annual budget.

V) Final Thoughts

The good news is that after two devastating years, New York City is finally set to turn a new page. With the election of a new Mayoral administration and a largely new City Council, the leadership of our beloved city is ready to implement new ideas that meet both the severity and the potentiality of this moment. With so many developments in the ways we live, work, travel, and socialize, everyone has a role to play in our revitalization. Now is the perfect time for the emergence of a flexible, cutting-edge policy incubator to help guide the city and its decision makers through this period of immense transition, but also, immense possibilities. Join us as we create the Five Boroughs Ideas Lab, a place where real issues will meet real solutions to advance every corner of our city.