



 **Columbia  
Business  
School**  
The Eugene Lang  
Entrepreneurship  
Center



## **Columbia Business School – Master Class**

**NYC: Innovative and Entrepreneurial Solutions to the City's Complex Challenges**

**Prof. Clifford Schorer Entrepreneur in Residence**

**Course Title:**

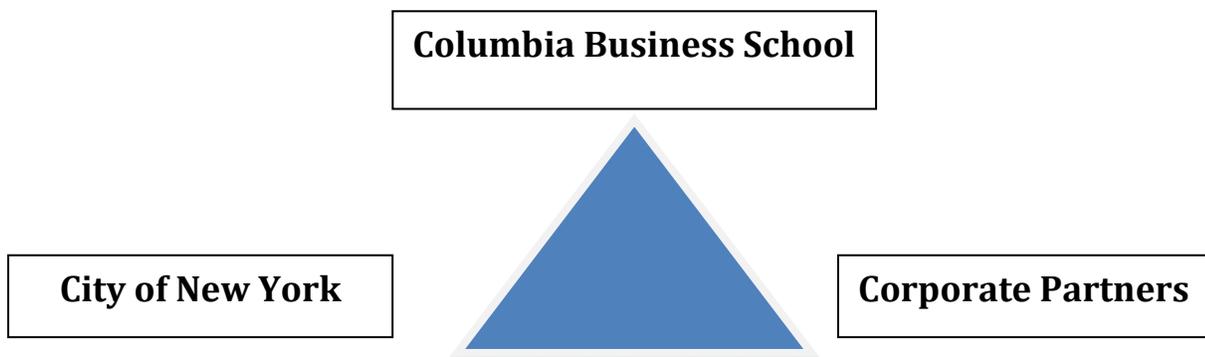
**NYC: Innovative and Entrepreneurial Solutions to the City's Complex Challenges**

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**Overall objective:**

To leverage the mutual talent of both the City Administration and Industry Experts and Columbia's MBA candidates to work in tandem with the Mayor's office to enhance the efficiency of the City's operations and to mitigate fiscal challenges. Projects will be identified and teams will develop plans to implement enhanced managerial techniques and recommend technologies that will generate significant cost savings and enhance the life experience of the city's population.

Selected corporations will be offered the opportunity to actively participate as partners in the program. A triangle linking corporations with both Columbia and the City will provide a unique opportunity to heighten awareness of the programs and talent resident at the business school and knowledge acquired by the students will be those of addressing large scale problems in a complex environment, and this combination of knowledge and skill will prove useful regardless of the career path they choose.



## **Methodology:**

Prior to the course launch, Prof. Schorer and the Director of the Master Class program, Robbin Smith, met with the Mayor's Office to select and define five specific areas of opportunities/challenges deemed by the City to be important to both operational efficiency and the quality of resident life. MBA teams consisting of 6 students will partner with an appropriate member of the City's management staff who will work in conjunction with the participants to provide insights, access, and guidance. The output of the class will be a comprehensive written plan for implementing the project along with a formal presentation to the City.

NY City officials will present to participants the projects selected by their departments. Students will be assigned to one of the project teams and will work in conjunction with the City official for the entire term. For example, projects might include subject areas such sustainability and the environment, media, transportation, parks and recreation, public education, etc. It will be left to the City officials to identify and recommend the appropriate projects.

Class size will be limited to 36 second year students. There is no specific pre-requisite for the course although students will be expected to be fully committed to bringing creative and innovative solutions to major initiatives.

Prior to the first class, each registered student will be required to present a brief statement to Prof. Schorer outlining their specific skill sets and experience. This will assist in assigning them to the most appropriate project.

During the first phase of the semester, teams will be given a tour and be briefed (on location when possible) by the appropriate official to establish a more detailed overview of the target area. Teams will become familiar with the working environment and develop a deep understanding of the current situation including procedures, policies, managerial structure, personnel, user experiences, etc.

In addition to class time, teams will be independently visiting various locations to view firsthand current operations. These site visits will be approved by and coordinated with the city.

Once the teams have developed a clear understanding of the opportunity/challenge the teams will begin to craft innovative solutions.

During the semester, students will be participating in a structured process of:

- Problem/opportunity identification
- Root Cause Analysis – or Root Cause Opportunity
- Brain storming exercises
- Management structure
- Technology evaluation
- Financial modeling
- Implementation planning

At a mid-point in the course, preliminary presentations will be made to the assigned city officials to measure their reactions, and obtain additional input, and guidance.

During the second half of the semester, teams will develop a detailed implementation plan supported by metrics including financial models that reflect the investment required projected savings, payback periods, insights from vendors, etc. In essence, output will be similar to a report generated by a major consulting firm. Student teams will be encouraged to reach out to and coordinate with corporations who may be helpful in defining appropriate technical expertise, equipment, etc. For example, a project might require utilizing I Pads or an advanced network and companies like Apple and Cisco will be asked to provide guidance.

### **Sample Scope of Projects**

Effort will be made to define projects whose scope will provide adequate time during the course of the semester to produce meaningful and realistic results.

While project selection and development is still in process, below are a few examples of suggestions that came out of our exploratory meetings with City officials.

#### **Downtown Jamaica (near the Airtrain/LIRR station): Real estate development and marketing plan**

The City completed a rezoning in 2007 for the area around the Airtrain/LIRR station in Downtown Jamaica and the ingredients are in place for the development of an “Airport Village” which will leverage the great transportation nodes as well as the proximity to JFK Airport. Develop a marketing strategy and execution plan to attract hotels and businesses.

#### **Film/New Media Incubator: Develop the goals for the incubator and a promotional plan**

The incubator will serve emerging media firms including firms working in digital, interactive entertainment, trans-media, digital advertising, social media and mobile apps with an eye towards the larger goal of creating permanent jobs and promoting NYC’s local media infrastructure -- develop the goals of the incubator based on the needs it fills for the media/entertainment industry in NYC and create a promotional plan including specific methods of outreach and intended audience.

#### **Minority and Woman-Owned Businesses: Improve city contract awards**

The City’s Minority and Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Program was signed into law in 2005. The City has been exploring ways to increase the number of M/WBEs competing for and winning City contracts and has identified a number of changes that will help M/WBEs including capacity building, access to capital and improved compliance/monitoring and procurement processes – students will conduct research, work closely with the City in establishing a relationship with a financial partner, work with surety companies and develop business models to create access to capital.

#### **NYC Life: Audience development**

NYC life (channel 25) airs original programming as well as content from partners like the History Channel and NBC New York Nonstop (content is also available via VOD or a mobile app) – how can this be improved to better serve and grow the audience?

## **NYC Taxis - The Challenge of Moving Millions**

Incorporating the proposal made by the Mayor's team including evaluating the problem of inefficient deployment of cab resources at the airports, the project would include elements of "what can be incorporated into the rider's experience in the next generation of cabs?" The project would include interviewing various cab operators, mining information regarding NYC cabs from digital media feeds, and studying the upgrading of real time communications for the benefits of the drivers and the riders.

## **The Classroom**

Speakers will include representatives of various companies such as Verizon, IBM, Google, Face Book, IDEO, and Apple, Bell Labs etc. who will provide information on various technologies that would be appropriate for the defined opportunities. In addition, people involved in large scale, public sector finance will be asked to provide insights on how government financing is secured and deployed.

The course will also leverage the skills sets of other CBS faculty possessing knowledge applicable to a specific project.

## **Final Output**

In addition to a complete implantation plan, the final will include a formal presentation to the Mayor's Office and the appropriate staff.

The output of the class will be a comprehensive plan for implementing the project including a roll out schedule and detail financial analysis. The product will be similar to those developed by a major consulting firm or technology development team.

The final project will also include a formal presentation of the proposed solution at City Hall.