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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Stephanie Baez | sbaez@bnydc.org | (917) 518-0067

Mayor Adams Announces New \$25 Million Space To Help Launch And Grow Bipoc, Woman-Owned, Other Health And Beauty Businesses At Brooklyn Navy

R.F. Wilkins Consultants to Develop and Operate State-of-the-Art Facility to Position New York City as Leader in Nearly \$450 Billion Health and Beauty Industry

Facility Will Create an Estimated 900 Direct and Indirect Jobs in First Five Years

Video available at: <https://youtu.be/jl-opceaczw>

BROOKLYN, NY (March 7, 2024) – New York City Mayor Eric Adams, Deputy Mayor for Housing, Economic, and Workforce Development Maria Torres-Springer, and Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation President and CEO Lindsay Greene today announced a new, total cost \$25 million state-of-the-art manufacturing, incubator, and accelerator facility — [AYO Labs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard](#) — focused on helping businesses, especially Black-, indigenous-, and other people of color-owned (BIPOC) and woman-owned health and beauty businesses, launch and grow in New York City. R.F. Wilkins Consultants has been selected to develop and operate the project, which is expected to create over 900 direct and indirect jobs in the first five years, as well as strengthen New York City’s position as a leader in the [\\$450 billion health and beauty industry](#). Once complete, AYO Labs will be one of the country’s largest Black woman-owned contract manufacturing facilities anchored in a business incubator and accelerator.

“Our administration believes we have a critical role in helping small businesses turn their big dreams into a reality. Today, I am proud that R.F. Wilkins Consultants, a Black woman-owned-and-run firm, is seeing their dream come to life,” said **Mayor Adams**. “While the beauty and wellness industry continues to boom by serving Black and Brown people, that wealth has not come back to those same communities. With this announcement, New York City is taking a stand, putting money back in the pockets of Black and Brown entrepreneurs, especially women of color. Our investment in AYO Labs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard will help small businesses — including many owned by BIPOC and women entrepreneurs — enter the beauty market, develop and scale up their brands, and become the next generation of successful entrepreneurs.”

"Our minority- and women-owned businesses are the backbone of our city, and they deserve our support in growing their companies from dreams to powerhouses," said **Deputy Mayor for Housing, Economic Development, and Workforce Torres-Springer**. "AYO Labs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard will be a tremendous resource for BIPOC and women-owned businesses in a massive and growing health and beauty industry that has historically not been accessible to them.

I'm grateful to the Brooklyn Navy Yard for paving the way on inclusive economic development and creating innovative spaces to build and sustain the city's diversity of small businesses."

"AYO Labs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard will bolster New York City's reputation as a place where viable manufacturing can and does still happen, and defines what inclusive economic development looks like," said **Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation President and CEO Greene**. "Bringing visions like this to life at the Brooklyn Navy Yard is at the core of our mission. The development of this new contract manufacturing, accelerator and incubator will help level the playing field for the emerging BIPOC and woman-owned companies and generate economic mobility for countless families and the city as a whole."

"New York City is the global capital of innovation," said **New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) Commissioner Kevin D. Kim**. "AYO Labs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard is honoring that tradition by helping over 100 diverse entrepreneurs bring their dreams to life. SBS is eager to work with the Brooklyn Navy Yard and R.F. Wilkins, one of the city's own certified M/WBEs, to support the next generation of entrepreneurs here in New York City."

"Creating a more equitable business environment for our city's small business community, including BIPOC businesses, WBEs, and certified M/WBEs, has long been a personal and professional priority for me and is a key priority for the Adams administration," said **Chief Business Diversity Officer Michael J. Garner**. "Business incubators and accelerators are effective tools in helping small and minority-owned businesses navigate the often-difficult path towards long-term sustainability and encourages prospective entrepreneurs to pursue their business passions, which ultimately creates employment opportunities, sustains local economies, and promotes generational wealth building. I applaud Mayor Adams and the Brooklyn Navy Yard for this investment in a growing industry, where BIPOC and women-owned businesses have proven to be creative leaders and stand as an able partner in this work."

"Small businesses are the lifeline of New York City," said **Francilia Wilkins Rahim, founder and CEO, R.F. Wilkins Consultants and AYO Labs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard**. "We all know someone mixing shea butter, beard cream, lip gloss, and a plethora of other products in their home. AYO Labs will help these businesses streamline and scale while serving as a state-of-the-art contract manufacturing and innovation hub for nationwide brands of all sizes. This project is a groundbreaking step towards supporting the BIPOC entrepreneurial ecosystem — an ecosystem that, in turn, nourishes and empowers all New Yorkers. R.F. Wilkins Consultants is honored to partner with the local community, New York City, Brooklyn Navy Yard, and industry leaders nationwide to bring this project to fruition."

Phase one of the \$25 million project is expected to be completed by 2025 and will deliver a 26,000-square-foot, \$12 million manufacturing ecosystem to support over 100 entrepreneurs annually as they develop and scale their companies. Phase two is expected to be completed by

2026 and will expand the facility to bring an additional 14,000 square-feet of manufacturing space online.

To close the equity gap in the beauty and wellness industry, AYO Labs will help reduce long-standing barriers and support BIPOC and women entrepreneurs in entering and scaling their health and beauty businesses. The space will also serve as a manufacturing hub to some of the nation's largest wellness brands. The facility will support product formulation, small and large batch manufacturing, and packaging services. It will also provide the tools, resources, and support needed to turn innovative ideas into thriving businesses with programming for early-stage entrepreneurs. Small businesses participating in the incubator and accelerator cohorts will have access to tech-driven back-office support, world-class instructors, hands-on training, technical assistance, mentorship, and networking opportunities, as well as access to capital.

According to a [2022 McKinsey report](#), addressing racial inequity in the beauty industry presents enormous economic opportunity. Despite the wellness and beauty industry accounting for a nearly \$450 billion market share that is expected to grow to \$600 billion by 2030, only 2.5 percent of the revenue can be linked to Black-founded or -owned beauty companies despite Black consumers making up 11 percent of spending. Moreover, on average, Black brands raise just \$13 million of venture capital start-up funding — approximately two-thirds of the median \$20 million that non-Black brands raise.

R.F. Wilkins Consultants will partner with McKissack & McKissack and Studio 397 Architecture, two additional Black woman-owned businesses, to design and build out AYO Labs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Jacklitch Gardner serves as the architect of record on the project, a New York-based Minority- and LGBTQ+-Owned Business Enterprise (LGBTBE) firm. Building on R.F. Wilkins Consultant's \$1.5 million investment, Phase 1 of the project will also be funded by the New York City Council, the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President, and Lendistry, a community development financial institution.

"AYO Labs at Brooklyn Navy Yard will be a game changer for economic growth, uplifting all of our diverse communities," said **New York State Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar**. "One of the country's largest Black woman-owned facilities of its kind, it will generate 900 jobs and support over 100 BIPOC- and women-owned health and beauty businesses, whose owners will reinvest their revenue in underserved communities. The facility will also cement our status as the epicenter of the \$450 billion health and beauty industry. I applaud Mayor Adams and President Greene for their commitment to the growth of M/WBEs. I am proud of my record of supporting M/WBEs in Albany, including empowering the city to do larger contracts with M/WBEs, and will continue to deliver the support these businesses need to grow and thrive."

"Expanding opportunities for Black- and women-owned businesses to succeed is critical for our communities and local economy," said **New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams**. "The

new AYO Labs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard will support local entrepreneurs seeking to make their mark in the growing wellness and beauty industry. Through training programs, networking, business development resources, and other financial assistance, this new facility will bolster small businesses and advance the next generation of entrepreneurs in our city.”

“New York’s health and beauty industry is getting a big boost right here in Brooklyn,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso**. “I applaud Mayor Adams and the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation for moving forward with plans to bring a multi-purpose business facility to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. AYO Labs will be a huge benefit to Brooklyn’s economy. I am looking forward to its completion and to seeing this project advance BIPOC- and woman-owned businesses in New York’s \$600 billion health and beauty industry.”