

Jobs Initiative Hard at Work

In the Meeting the Challenge report prepared by the Mayor's Task Force on City Efficiencies and Revenues and released January 1, 2003, the most ambitious recommendation was that the City of Fresno take the lead in creating 25,000 - 30,000 net new jobs over the next five years. But this new goal, which was quickly endorsed by the City leadership, was at a much larger scale than anything the City could do by itself.

Instead, a regional project was needed. This collaboration was to include leaders from private industry, the City of

Fresno, the City of Clovis, and the County of Fresno. This group was formed in March 2003 and became known as the Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI).

The group's first goal was to hold a Regional Jobs Summit. This meeting was held on September 12, 2003. Over 280 volunteers, mostly from the private sector, got together to ask tough questions and discuss how such an ambitious goal of 30,000 new jobs could be reached. What they came up with was the Fresno Regional Jobs Initiative

Implementation Plan.

The Plan laid out in specific detail how and where the 25,000 - 30,000 new jobs would be created and what specific steps would have to be taken. As a result, programs are being designed to train and hire those currently living in the Fresno area who are either unemployed or underemployed. Once the program is completed, the result will be the creation of jobs with an expected average annual salary of \$29,500.

This huge task requires the full, focused attention of every agency of

government - from schools, cities, Fresno County, the State and Federal governments. The RJI plan is creating the institutional infrastructure to move forward by adopting some very simple, but hard to practice principles.

To be successful, the leaders of the Greater Fresno area recognize that this Jobs Initiative must be implemented across the region.

The plan keeps in mind that most jobs are created by the private sector. Those jobs, in turn, help the public sector in their job creation and retention

efforts. This is why the overall effort is a public-private partnership.

The RJI Implementation Plan recognizes the need to aggressively and effectively advocate these initiatives in Washington DC and Sacramento. In order to accomplish this, the citizens of Fresno need to be their own watchdogs. The residents of this City must insist that this effort not slip in priority or allow the indifference about our economic needs to ever occur again.