

Fresno, California

Strong Cities, Strong Communities - Fresno Work Plan Summary



Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) is a federal interagency collaboration that aims to increase the capacity of local government and support the Mayor's plans for economic development and downtown revitalization. The Community Solutions Team (CST), which is comprised of 12 federal agencies, partnered with the Mayor's Office in a place-based strategy to develop specific actions to advance the goals of the City. The SC2 efforts in 2012 are organized around ten priority focus areas.

Downtown Revitalization: Working from within the Mayor's office, CST members will help develop and implement the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan and the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan by providing technical assistance and identifying resources. The team will also assess opportunities for key regional economic drivers to locate in Downtown Fresno by providing policy strategies, developing business cases and establishing next steps. The CST will provide data that the City can share with potential investors, lenders and developers to demonstrate the feasibility of projects that would contribute to downtown revitalization. The CST has placed AmeriCorps and VISTA volunteers to address downtown and neighborhood revitalization and housing issues.

Business Development: The CST will assist in the expansion, retention and opening of new "Value Added" food processing in Fresno by researching potential ways to develop and market industrial land, determine constraints to business expansion and identify potential funding sources. Focusing on the region's key product- agricultural goods- the CST will work to strengthen international trade through export promotion. Last, the CST will support small businesses to increase local capacity through government contracting workshops, export assistance, training and other forms of technical assistance.

Economic Development & Innovation: The CST will assist in determining the feasibility of a Public Market at the Fulton Mall and then in the development of a business plan to guide implementation. In collaboration with state and private partners, the CST will also leverage existing rural in-the-field, high-capacity wireless infrastructure to support the development of an Ag Tech/New Ag Economic Cluster. AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers have been placed with partners such as the Economic Development Corporation and the Economic Opportunity Commission to increase the capacity of Fresno area organizations to address economic development needs.

High Speed Rail: The CST will provide technical assistance to conduct High Speed Rail station area planning that emphasizes transit connectivity, supports Downtown revitalization, and coordinates and leverages existing city, state/federal funding and planning efforts. The team will also develop case studies that highlight how American and international communities have successfully managed and financed the construction and operation of high speed rail stations and major transit stations. Members of the CST will assist small businesses in competing for high speed rail sub-contracts, and an AmeriCorps VISTA will focus on high speed rail workforce development and relocation assistance to displaced businesses.

Transportation: The CST will advance transportation projects and establish a direct line of communication to quickly resolve issues related to High Speed Rail and Bus Rapid Transit - key elements of Downtown revitalization. The CST will identify opportunities to enhance projects, clarify processes and procedures for obtaining funding, and coordinate transportation projects with the various downtown planning efforts. The team will also convene meetings between key stakeholders to discuss options to accelerate the City's BRT project and identify discretionary transportation projects the City would like to pursue.

Land Use Planning: The CST will help develop and implement the General Plan Update by providing technical assistance. The CST will also coordinate efforts between various federal, state and local agencies to deploy a development impact assessment tool. This tool will compare the cost and budget implications of various growth scenarios and forms of development to illustrate to decision makers and the public how policy choices today will affect Fresno in the future.

Livable Communities/Housing: The CST will assess Fresno's housing programs and strategies to identify options for leveraging existing HUD financing and increasing the capacity of the City to achieve its neighborhood revitalization goals. This will include assisting in the evaluation of the Lowell revitalization model and its transfer to other neighborhoods, and building the knowledge of local affordable housing developers and owners through industry workshops. The team will also promote Livable Communities, helping to coordinate the numerous federal policies and investments at the intersections of housing, community development and health.

Resource Management & Sustainability: The CST will assist the City of Fresno Department of Public Utilities in researching, analyzing and presenting environmental and economic data on the economic opportunities and benefits of water conservation, ground water recharge projects and renewable energy generation.

Workforce Development & Adult Education: The CST will support the Mayor's Learn2Earn initiative, identifying resources to support the work and help strategize around obstacles regarding GED testing requirements. The CST will help the Workforce Investment Board identify and streamline data to better accomplish its mission and assist in streamlining regulations that will facilitate adult education and skill building that will result in increased job creation and job placement. Team members will also provide assistance in increasing Fresno's workforce capacity for the Downtown Revitalization.

Homelessness: The CST will support the City, the Continuum of Care (CoC), and other key partners in aligning Fresno's current 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness with the new Federal Opening Doors policy to end all forms of homelessness. The CST will help address local gaps in services and funding through multiple forms of technical assistance. Through regular convenings, the CST aims to institutionalize working relationships among critical partners in the provision of homeless housing, services and jobs. An AmeriCorps VISTA has been placed with the City of Fresno to work on these issues.

Fresno SC2 Community Solutions Team Federal Partners include:

- Environmental Protection Agency – Team Lead
- Department of Housing & Urban Development
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Labor
- Department of Energy
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Commerce
- Small Business Administration
- Corporation for National & Community Service
- White House Office of Science & Technology
- General Services Administration

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