



BACKGROUND

Start It Up! Fresno's \$250k Entrepreneur Challenge was initially organized to promote entrepreneurship and the development of start-up and early stage companies in "The New California" (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program 2007) by encouraging submission of plans of original concepts that will potentially lead to the development of new growth businesses in Fresno, Kings, Madera and Tulare counties. At this time we've chosen to focus on the city of Fresno for our initial efforts.

The project headquarters is located in Fresno, California at the Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship on the campus of California State University, Fresno found within the Craig School of Business.

Start It Up! Fresno's \$250k Entrepreneur Challenge was organized to:

- Enhance the city of Fresno's image and establish it as one of the most original and innovative cities in the country;
- Attract a variety of innovative and entrepreneurial talent representing businesses or business plans for high-growth industries that will become and stay Fresno-based;
- Attract venture capitalists from outside Fresno to explore the city's innovative environment;
- Generate newfound city pride and teamwork through collaborative partnerships and funding development;
- Enhance economic prosperity for all without regard to socio-economic boundaries through the incubation and development of entrepreneurial ideas.

MISSION

The mission of Start It Up! Fresno's \$250k Entrepreneur Challenge is to create a path to attract innovative talent from across the nation which will enhance the city of Fresno's image to be one of the most innovative cities in the country. We will accomplish this through collaborative partnerships and funding development resulting in newfound city pride.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Start It Up! Fresno's \$250k Entrepreneur Challenge began with a collaborative that included The Innovation Task Force of the Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI), the City of Fresno, and the Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, CSU Fresno. The RJI was established to generate long-term, sustainable economic development in the Fresno surrounding region.

RJI task forces identify and develop plans to expand existing and emerging industry clusters in which our region has a competitive advantage for job creation. The Innovation Task Force creates and implements programs and activities that connect to new business start-ups, retention and attraction of knowledge workers, improved competitiveness of existing businesses, and enhanced creativity.

Through the Innovation Task Force, the idea forth came to attract innovative entrepreneurs and venture capitalists to our region through a vehicle. That vehicle is Start It Up! Fresno's \$250k Entrepreneur Challenge.

In June 2006 the Fresno City Council voted to support Start It Up! with a \$100,000 dollar contribution contingent upon an equal match from the private sector. This financing will assist in marketing the city of Fresno as an innovative and entrepreneurial city on a national scale through a variety of media modes.

The Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship fosters innovation and entrepreneurship on campus and throughout the community. The Lyles Center will serve as the foundational platform for the Start It Up! Project.

Other participating sponsors include:

- Astone Agency
- California Small Business Development Centers
- Central Valley Business Incubator
- Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Cerda Consulting
- City of Fresno Economic Development Department
- Comcast
- Craig School of Business, California State University, Fresno
- Economic Development Corporation of Fresno County
- Fresno Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Fresno Business Council
- Fresno City & County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Fresno Redevelopment Agency
- Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce
- Office of Community and Economic Development – Regional Jobs Initiative
- San Joaquin Valley Black Chamber of Commerce
- SCORE Counselors to America's Small Business
- Walter Wilhelm Law Group and more...