



BULLETIN

NEWS

Employment And Economic Development Establishing The "Link"

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The City of Santa Ana, in Orange County, like many cities in California, has an active economic development agency. The City's motto "Open for Business" reflects its innovative and aggressive approach. Often in the forefront of economic development, the City has implemented a creative solution to a common problem. Historically, the City's economic development efforts and its employment and training programs were functions of different City departments. Because the goals of these departments were not coordinated, jobs that were created as a result of economic development activities were not directly targeted toward Santa Ana residents. Therefore, in April, 1986, the Santa Ana Employment Linkage Program was established. This program is designed to "link" together existing resources in the City in a coordinated economic development effort. Community cooperation is standard practice in a successful economic development program, but Santa Ana brought a new segment of the community into the partnership. The Rancho Santiago Community College District, the Technology Exchange Center and the Private Industry Council were "linked" with the City and the Santa Ana Economic Development Corporation to accomplish the common goal of a well-trained labor pool which could be used as an incentive to attract new investment to Santa Ana and which would be readily employable, thereby serving both local businesses and local workers. Mayor Dan Young calls the program "a win-win situation."

One of the more important attributes of the linkage program is that its function is to build upon existing departments and programs and accomplish a more efficient utilization of resources. According to Dave Ream, City Manager, "The idea (Employment Linkage Program) has universal merit, and was therefore readily accepted by all parties." To bring existing departments and programs together, a Linkage Task Force was established which included representatives from the Community Development Agency, the Economic Development Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Private Industry Council, the Rancho Santiago Assessment and Referral Center and the Technology Exchange Center.

The first order of business for the Linkage Task Force was to address the organizational, programmatic and procedural aspects of the linkage program. Organizational "linkage" was accomplished by establishing overlapping advisory committees, shared staff, a linkage coordination committee, and departmental merging. Programmatic "linkage" was achieved by the channeling of available resources to the objectives of the program as a whole, performance-based contracts, and the "First Source Referral Agreement" for participating businesses to preserve employment for qualified Santa Ana residents. Procedural "linkage" was established through the small business assistance program, job retention interviews, and customized job training. The Linkage Task Force created a memorandum of understanding which was signed by all five of the participating entities, and a coordinated marketing campaign was developed for both employers and prospective employees.

The City Council chose a pilot project for the Santa Ana Employment Linkage program: Mainplace Santa Ana. Mainplace is a major shopping center renovation which is the result of almost ten years of redevelopment efforts by the City. With the full support of the City, JMB/Federated is doing a \$90 million makeover of Santa Ana Fashion Square, one of Orange County's oldest shopping malls. Santa Ana's "linkages coordinator" approached JMB/Federated with the idea of using the City's available employment training and job placement programs to attract tenants to the new shopping mall. JMB/Federated was enthusiastic about the opportunity to increase its services to its tenants, at no cost. The pilot project is currently in progress.

The Employment Linkage Program is being introduced to each tenant by JMB/Federated. The linkages coordinator will meet with each tenant to explain the services and to elicit their cooperation in interviewing Santa Ana residents and to hire residents whenever possible (the "First Source Referral Agreement"). Each tenant will be presented with a letter from the City Council, an endorsement of the program by JMB/Federated, and a packet of information regarding the program. The tenant will be briefed on the quality of applicants which will be provided and the potential for cost savings in employee recruitment. The linkages coordinator will collect information regarding available jobs and will enter "job orders" into a computerized job bank where they will be matched to available Santa Ana residents possessing the required skills. The City will market the job bank to the community, assemble complete qualification

information on each applicant and will provide skills assessments. Qualified applicants will be referred for job interviews. Because the shopping center is under construction, the City will arrange for an interview location for pre-qualified residents. The Employment Linkage Program will provide training prior to and during employment. Coordination of different tenants' training needs will allow all tenants (even those with few employees) to benefit from on-site training at the shopping center. According to Kathy Lusk, Linkages Program Manager, the perspective of job training has been re-oriented: "Most training

programs were directed toward jobs which might be available, now training is directed toward jobs which are available." Additionally the City has obtained a commitment from the State Employment Training Panel (ETP) to provide outside funds to businesses that are moving into or expanding in the City of Santa Ana. The City will assist businesses with information and applications for ETP funds as well as funds available through the Job Training Partnership Act and will provide tax credits for businesses which hire disadvantaged Santa Ana residents.

The City of Santa Ana Employment Linkage Program ensures that economic development directly serves residents by providing job opportunities in their community. The City of Santa Ana has successfully achieved economic development of the City, by the City and for the City. ■

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