

## Fresno selected for program to boost exports

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Written by Hannah Esqueda

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Mayor Ashley Swearengin is joined by county and economic development leaders as she talks about the Fresno region's participation in the Brookings Institution Global Cities Initiative. City and regional leaders gathered today to announce the selection of Fresno as part of the Global Cities Initiative by the Brookings Institution as well as a \$300,000 investment from JPMorgan Chase.

The five-year program is designed to help metropolitan regions throughout the U.S. develop export plans and grow their economies by increasing international connections. As part of the project, JPMorgan Chase announced its investment in Fresno area small businesses and community development efforts.

Erik Langeland, market manager for the Central Valley for Chase Commercial Banking, said \$125,000 will go to the Fresno Community Development Financial Institution and Economic Opportunities Commission, \$85,000 towards the Fresno Area Hispanic Chamber Foundation, \$50,000 towards the Valley Small Business Development Center, \$25,000 towards the Fresno County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and \$15,000 to the Fresno Chamber of Commerce.

"The moment has come for our region to grow and expand on the global stage," he said.

The region's participation in the initiative will help Fresno become a key player in the global trade industry and give rise to more jobs, said Mayor Ashley Swearengin. The program's focus on global trade and investment will also help local businesses reach new markets and build awareness about the wealth of resources and opportunities in the Central Valley.

"This city, this region, is on the radar," she said. "It is very important that we seize the momentum and keep moving forward."

Lee Ann Eager, president and CEO of the EDC, said the organization has hosted more than 20 international group visits in the last year and recently made inroads with business and civic leaders in China and Hong Kong. The group hosted visitors during their visits to the Central Valley last year and made connections with several local producers and farmers.

"They really prefer California produce," she said. "We will be taking a group of business leaders over to their regions in August."

Events like the Fresno Food Expo have also helped market Fresno and the region to international audiences, and Swearingin said she hopes the area's participation in the Global Cities Initiative will build even more contacts.

Congressional approval of the trade promotion authority for the president will also have a big impact on the Central Valley's export growth. A so-called TPA bill would give the president the authority to "fast track" approval of trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Swearingin said the legislation for high-standard trade agreements is critical to the region's plans moving forward.

"I think that it is very important that we pay attention to the TPA rules," she said. "We won't see the needle move on income levels until we see the needle move on job creation."

Other cities named to the Brookings Institution program's new cohort include Salt Lake City, Utah, Houston, Texas and Baltimore, Maryland. The first cohort was named in 2011 and original participants include Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles and the Minneapolis - St. Paul region.