

2019 BizFed Leadership Roundtable Series: Lenny Mendonca



Lenny Mendonca, Gov. Newsom’s Director of Economic Development, reiterated the new administration’s promise to pay attention to Central Valley issues during a breakfast meeting with BizFed Central Valley members and several key local elected officials on Friday, June 7 in Fresno.

Mendonca’s interest in the economic vitality of the valley isn’t new. He served as chair of the California Economic Summit for several years and was instrumental in developing the new administration’s “Regions Rise Together” initiative to bring together leaders from California’s disparate regions and find ways to prosper.

“The Central Valley is not an island,” Mendonca said.

“Further, the Silicon Valley and San Francisco are as dependent on the center part of this state as they are on Stanford.”

Mendonca repeated an incredible statistic several times during his conversation with BizFed CV leaders:

Seventy percent of job growth is in California’s coastal communities while almost all its population growth is inland.

That imbalance needs to be corrected by forging connections and training so all Californians can have access to good-paying jobs and affordable housing, he said.



Those solutions, though, will come from each region. The Newsom administration isn’t interested in a top-down approach, but wants to hear from locals what works best for them and how the state can facilitate that success or, simply get out of its way.

He mentioned the importance of the upcoming California Economic Summit, which will be held in





Fresno this year on Nov. 7-8. The administration hopes to hear some clearly defined ideas for economic vitality from local communities at that summit.

“We need your ideas of what you need to be successful,” he stressed.

BizFed CV members asked several questions about where the state stood on infrastructure and CEQA reform Mendonca said the Newsom administration is very focused on infrastructure and they understand the

importance of water infrastructure, specifically, for the valley.

As for CEQA reform, Mendonca said: “CEQA is open for discussion.”

He also noted the current situation with tariffs and immigration on the part of the federal administration saying that California will continue to strive for friendly relations with neighboring countries.

“California exports from ag to tech are dependent on those relationships,” he said. “A robust relationship with Mexico is crucial to economic development.

“In California, all dreams are welcome.”

