

## LEAVITT HINTS AT BIG PLAN

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Gov. Mike Leavitt is loath to offer specifics, at least just yet.

Instead, the governor with a penchant for big plans offers only hints about a grand scheme he calls perhaps his most aggressive ever.

He won't tell you what it is exactly, only that it is a "1,000-day plan" that will ride the momentum of Olympic hoopla to create years of fame and prosperity.

Leavitt hints the plan will focus on promoting Utah as a high-tech mecca, on creating an educated technology work force second to none, on luring to the Beehive State businesses that treasure the unique quality of life here — all time-worn themes in Leavitt's nine years in the governor's office.

So what makes this plan different? He won't say, only that it's been drafted and "I'm very proud of myself."

Leavitt will formally unveil his 1,000-day plan during his State of the State address on Jan. 28, just 11 days before Olympic opening ceremonies thrust Utah into an international media spotlight unlike anything the state has ever experienced.

For good or ill, the state will remain in the glare for at least 17 days during the Games. What happens after will depend on sound marketing.

"It will involve taking the 17 days . . . and leveraging them into 1,000 days of economic progress," Leavitt said.

Leavitt has offered clues during recent speeches to various business and **civic** groups. Officials in the Leavitt administration have also filled in some of the missing pieces.

The centerpiece of the 1,000-day plan will be the creation of six high-tech high schools, said Rich Kendall, the governor's chief education deputy, who called it a "major, major part" of Leavitt's plan.

The high-tech schools would be available to those interested in careers in math, science or engineering. Students would graduate from the schools with a high school diploma and an associate degree. Then they would move on to universities in those fields.

"So far, there's been enthusiastic support" for the idea, Kendall said, noting the idea is rooted in a national technology movement backed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and its billions of dollars. "People feel there needs to be a school dedicated in part to improving the number of kids interested in science, math and engineering. . . . Those will be the new entrepreneurs and people who will build the new economy in Utah," Kendall said.

The schools would also boost the teaching force that has grown thin in those subjects. The first schools could open in Ogden and Salt Lake City in fall 2003, and the other four would open the following year. Leavitt said during a recent press conference his education initiative "will involve building on some of our initiatives we have in place," including "our goal to double the number of engineers and computer science graduates."

A related focus of Leavitt's 1,000-day plan includes making Utah a capital for high-tech employment and investment, and setting up a missionary program, of sorts, to preach the virtues of Utah as a technology capital the world over.

"It will involve trade missions throughout the country and the world," Leavitt

confirmed.

The idea of a post-Games push to capitalize on the Olympics spotlight has been kicked around for months. Leavitt has offered tempting clues during addresses to the Board of Business and Economic Development and the Utah Information Technology Association, noting the initiative would "put Utah in the place of a top-tier technology capital."

"It's something we've all been working on, we're making progress on, but this will formalize the next 1,000 days to build on the Olympic experience," he told UITA.

The Department of Community and Economic Development has a multitude of activities planned during the Games to get business leaders, venture capitalists, site selectors and others interested in having Utah as a place to do business.

David Winder, the department's executive director, cited as one example the receptions along the route of the Olympic Torch Relay. Those networking opportunities have provided a place to pool business cards that can be sorted and assigned so business recruiters can do follow-up work.

Leavitt has followed the torch in Southern California this week hosting receptions for technology, film and other industries.

"It has to be an organized effort," Winder said. "The thing about the Olympics is you build your image and meet people, but after the Olympics you have to keep working to mature the relationships you started and turn it into something beneficial for Utah."

Throughout the Olympic Games, Leavitt will be hosting daily breakfast meetings with top venture capitalists, corporate CEOs and business leaders from around the world to pitch Utah as "the place" to do business.

Another 1,000-day thrust will come in the tourism arena, a \$4.15 billion industry that ranks among the top five economic producers in the state. Utah's scenic and cultural treasures are expected to be showcased during Olympic Games coverage, something that could boost tourism only temporarily without follow-up advertising.

"If we don't find enough funding to take advantage of market position we have created with the Olympics, we will have wasted the entire effort up to the Olympics," said Spence Kinard, deputy director of the Utah Travel Council. "The reality is we have one and only one opportunity to capitalize on what the Olympics have done."

State legislative leaders admit Leavitt's plan — of which they have not seen the details, either — presents a troubling paradox. Lawmakers are struggling to cut \$202 million from state budgets this year alone.

"How do we justify to the public cutting prescriptions for the elderly and spending more money on advertising the state?" said Senate President Al Mansell, R-Sandy.

On the other hand, "there really should be an all-out assault" to promote the state, he said. "We need to be doing more in economic development and tourism, but it is difficult to find the dollars to do it."

Leavitt's plan also calls for the rather vague notion of maintaining a certain quality of life. At a recent KUED press conference, Leavitt said of the plan, "I'll be talking about quality of life and the need to position Utah as a place where we have high quality of life. Because businesses can locate anywhere in an information society, we need to maintain the level of the quality, we need to maintain Utah as an affordable place, a business-friendly place."

Does that mean tax breaks for businesses? Breaks for families now weighted by some of the highest tax burdens in the nation?

"We don't need more (business) tax breaks," warned House Majority Leader Kevin Garn, R-Layton, who said legislative leadership has been briefed in general terms about Leavitt's plan. That's a bit of a switch. In years gone by, when a big business, like Delta Airlines, came to the Legislature asking for special favors, the threat of leaving the state usually worked. They got the tax break they desired.

"We just need to focus on what we have here — a wonderful quality of life, limited business regulation, limited business taxes. We don't have to give away the ship," Garn said. "We have to resist those kinds of demands."

Even with 1,000 days, Leavitt will emphasize that the Olympic glow will be temporary, and the very narrow window of opportunity will slam shut if the state does not act quickly.

At least that's the plan.