

ARKANSAS ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT INNOVATION COALITION	
APPLICANT AND SUBRECIPIENT BIOS	
Organization	Staff Bios
LEAD APPLICANT	
Metroplan	<p>Casey Covington, PE, AICP, Executive Director - Casey started at Metroplan as an engineer and travel modeler and has also filled the study director and deputy director roles. He supervises Metroplan staff and, with the Board officers, oversees the overall direction of the organization. He earned his M.S. in Civil Engineering from North Carolina State University. As Executive Director, Casey is responsible for ensuring that Metroplan products satisfy federal regulations, including the long-range transportation plan, transportation improvement program (TIP), and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Casey provides technical assistance to cities regarding roadway improvements, plans, and traffic calming. He serves on the Policy Committee for the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and monitors transportation grant opportunities for members.</p>
	<p>Bernadette Gunn Rhodes, MPA, AICP, Senior Regional Planner for Partnerships and Grants - Bernadette has 16 years' experience in the non-profit and government sectors. She joined Metroplan in August 2020 after managing community programs at the City of North Little Rock for 9 years. Bernadette earned a Master of Public Administration from UA Little Rock in 2019 and membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners in 2023. Bernadette will manage CPRG-funded Grant Administration and Energy Ambassador personnel and will pursue additional funding to maximize the region's impact on climate pollution reduction.</p>
COALITION MEMBERS	
Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC)	<p>Tim Conklin, AICP, Executive Director, has lived and worked in the Ozarks for over 30 years. Prior experience includes working 16 years at the City of Fayetteville and five years working at metropolitan planning organizations in Springfield, MO and Fort Smith, AR. He has a master's degree in City and Regional Planning from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA and is member of American Planning Association, American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), and Congress for the New Urbanism.</p>
	<p>Nicole Gibbs, AICP, Regional Planner, was Senior Planner for the City of Centerton prior to joining NWARPC in 2021. She holds a Master of Science in Planning degree and a Heritage Conservation Graduate Certificate from the University of Arizona. She is a member of the American Planning Association (APA) and the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). Nicole is coordinating the Northwest Arkansas regional proposals for the CPRG Implementation Grant.</p>
City of Fort Smith	<p>Carl E. Geffken, City Administrator - Carl serves as the municipality's top executive and specializes in finance management. Before joining the City of Fort Smith, Carl served as the Managing Director of the City of Reading, Pennsylvania and was the Chief Operating Officer for Berks County, Pennsylvania. An active member of the Arkansas Municipal League (AML) and the National League of Cities, Carl holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Binghamton University and a Master of Business Administration in Finance and Investments from the Zicklin School of Business at Bernard M. Baruch College.</p>

<p>Joshua D. Robertson, Deputy Director of Business Administration - Joshua has been with the City of Fort Smith since 2016. His contributions focus on project management and process improvement, including initiatives such as the Consent Decree, Customer Service, and Public Relations. Recently, Joshua was appointed as the Sustainability Officer and Energy Ambassador for the city. Under this new role, the City implemented its first Energy Master Plan. Joshua holds a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Communications from Northeastern State University and certifications in Project Management, Customer Service, and Energy Efficiency.</p>	
<p>Chris B. Hoover, Grants & Government Relations Manager - Chris oversees various projects and initiatives for the City of Fort Smith. Previously, Chris served as the State Projects Director for the Office of United States Senator Tom Cotton. Chris holds a Bachelor of Science in Emergency Management from Arkansas Tech University. Prior to his current role, Chris gained valuable experience as a Congressional Intern for both United States Representative Steve Womack and United States Senator John Boozman. Additionally, Chris interned at the Crawford County Department of Emergency Management.</p>	
SUBRECIPIENTS	
ALL REGIONS	
Arkansas Advanced Energy Foundation (AAEF)	<p>Lauren Waldrip, Executive Director - Over 7 years of experience in public affairs, public relations, and advanced energy advocacy. Lauren holds an undergraduate degree in marketing and public relations from the University of Arkansas, along with a Masters of Business Administration from the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas. Her expertise includes trade association management, policy advocacy, public education program management and event planning, with a strong focus on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and conservation improvements. She reinforces AAEF's strategic positioning for this project through direct relationships with stakeholders across the energy ecosystem, including financing entities, local partners, and energy efficiency companies.</p>
	<p>April Ambrose, LEED Fellow, GCP, Director of Workforce Development for the Arkansas Advanced Energy Foundation - 27 years of experience in sustainability, green building, advanced energy, DEIA, and workforce. April received her self-designed B.A. in Environmental Education in 2001 from Hendrix College. Her unique skills will support the proposal through the overall facilitation of the workforce development programs including apprenticeship, training, curricula, collaboration, and metrics.</p>
Trailblazers	<p>Erin Rushing, PLA, Chief Executive Officer - Erin is a 1995 Landscape Architect graduate from the University of Arkansas and has been designing, managing and consulting on parks and recreation projects in this area for over 20 years, including about 70 miles of Greenway Trails and 300 miles of natural surface trails. He is well-versed in land development and has a strong background in site and civil-related development projects with an emphasis and passion for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Erin is a proud father to three boys and two girls and finds comfort and motivation from their enthusiasm for all that Northwest Arkansas has to offer, the outdoors, and embracing cycling as much as he does.</p>

	<p>Paxton Roberts, Managing Director - Paxton has worked in bicycle and pedestrian advocacy and infrastructure for 15 years. Paxton has a bachelor's degree with Honors in Anthropology and a master's degree in Geography and has completed coursework toward a Ph.D. in Public Policy focusing on bicycle and pedestrian policy and planning. He has been an active member of the Arkansas bike advocacy community since 2010, becoming the advocacy director for Bicycle Coalition of the Ozarks in 2012, then executive director of BikeNWA in 2016, and then Managing Director of Trailblazers in 2021.</p>
	<p>David Criswell, PE, Senior Director of Active Transportation - David received his Bachelor of Science in Agricultural & Biological Engineering from Oklahoma State University and his Master of Science in Civil & Environmental Engineering from Colorado State University. David uses his experience in geographic information systems (GIS) and engineering to produce technical solutions in active transportation advocacy, planning, and design. His skills include map design, database management, development of interactive map-based dashboards and web applications, project management, and design review of active transportation infrastructure.</p>
	<p>Prentis Grayson, Senior Manager of Community Outreach & Advocacy - Prentis has nearly 20 years of experience in public affairs and media & communication, having spent 15 years working in the Arkansas Army National Guard as a Public Affairs Specialist. For the last three years, he has worked for non-profits in Northwest Arkansas including the Northwest Arkansas Center for Sexual Assault and more recently with Trailblazers as the Senior Manager of Community Outreach and Advocacy. He has led and supported several community efforts at Trailblazers such as the Northwest Arkansas Trails and Active Transportation Equity Report as well as the Trails, Cycling and Active Transportation Advisory Council and serves as a critical connector between community programs and the general public.</p>
	<p>Lauren Hildreth, Senior Manager of Community Programs - Lauren graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a major in Natural Resources Management and Public Relations. With over 10 years of experience working in environmental sciences, sustainability, and community engagement, her career began in Arkansas and Bolivia, where she focused on environmental education. Lauren's sustainability work includes transportation alternatives, carbon impact reduction, urban sustainable solutions, stormwater management, landscaping, city and organizational sustainability plans, food systems, and small-scale agriculture. At Trailblazers, Lauren concentrates on advocacy, inclusion, education, and access to resources for community programs and engagement regarding trails, cycling, recreation, and active transportation.</p>
<p>CENTRAL ARKANSAS SUBRECIPIENTS</p>	
<p>Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport (LIT)</p>	<p>Tom Clarke – Deputy Executive Director</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Licensed Professional Engineer •15 years of managing the capital program at LIT including the Phase 1 – Terminal Redevelopment Program •Has completed over \$200 million capital projects during tenure at LIT. •Has experience funding capital projects with FAA AIP grants, PFCs, CFCs, and local airport funds. •Prior airport experience managing projects at MEM

	<p>Suzanne Peyton – Director, Properties, Planning & Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bachelor’s Degree in Civil Engineering •Licensed Professional Engineer and Airport Planner •Certified Member of the American Association of Airport Executives •25 years experience executing grant funded projects for airports •Oversees a \$150 million capital program that includes 40+projects •Annually applies for and receives grant funding for over 75% of capital program costs <p>David Finnie – Manager, Design and Construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •25 Years of experience in Commercial Construction •Bachelor’s Degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering •Directly Responsible for Onsite Management of Construction Projects totaling over \$1.4 Billion. •Average value of over \$100 Million for each completed project. •Sectors of completed projects include Airports, High-Rise Office and Apartment Buildings, NFL Football Stadiums, Educational Facilities •Proficiency in Construction Management, Scheduling, Cost Estimating and Control, Onsite Construction Coordination and Management, LEED and Sustainability Projects <p>Laura Long – Manager, Capital Finance•Certified Public Accountant in the state of Arkansas •Certified Member of the American Association of Airport Executives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bachelor’s Degree in Accounting – University of Arkansas at Little Rock (Magna Cum Laude) •Over 10 Years of experience in grant management including projects funded by the federal Airport Improvement Program, FY2020 CARES Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) grant program, as well as local state grants and PFC funded projects. •Responsible for managing funding of all Construction Projects at LIT. •Manage all aspects of the grant life cycle: application process, pre-award, post-award, and grant close-out activities. •Prepare annual Schedule of Federal Expenditures (SEFA) •Apply/Interpret Federal grant management laws, administrative rules, policies, and regulations including OMB Circulars, AIP Handbook and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) program guidance. •Provide guidance on contractual and financial issues related to the federal Airport Improvement Program (AIP), Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) Program and state grant processes. •Work closely with federal agencies and senior management to provide support services to ensure compliance in accordance with grant agreements, Airport procedures and federal agency requirements.
NORTHWEST ARKANSAS SUBRECIPIENTS	
<p>Watershed Conservation Resource Center (WCRC)</p>	<p>Sandi Formica, Executive Director/Co-founder - Sandi oversees and manages the WCRC, and is responsible for project design and management, technical support and review, and carrying-out watershed based projects. She has a proven administrative ability in the development, implementation and management of environmental programs; grant development; and establishment of working relationships with a variety of government agencies, industries and the public resolving environmental issues, while providing technical expertise in fluvial geomorphology; river stability, stream restoration; watershed management approach; sediment and nutrient watershed assessment.</p>

	<p>Matthew Van Eps, P.E., Associate Director/Co-founder - During Matt's professional career, he has received over 200 hours of training in fluvial geomorphology studies and has over 20+ years of direct experience in the field. He is the lead design engineer and project engineer, for numerous successful stream restoration projects utilizing a "natural channel design" approach, and is involved in stream assessments in both urban and rural settings. His experience and training allow him to analyze existing river conditions and conceptualize potential restoration scenarios. He is an occasional guest lecturer at the University of Arkansas for ecological engineering and natural sciences courses.</p> <p>Graham Thompson, P.E., Senior Engineer - Graham brings over 29 years of experience in, watershed & estuary planning, river assessment & restoration, stormwater management, floodplain & fluvial hazard mapping, water quality assessment, and quality assurance. He has had many successes designing and implementing natural channel restoration projects. Graham seeks a balanced, multidisciplinary approach to design that incorporates hydraulic engineering, geomorphology, and ecosystem function including riparian vegetation and aquatic habitat while integrating aesthetics and recreation.</p>
<p>Illinois River Watershed Partnership (IRWP)</p>	<p>Leif Kindberg, MBA, Illinois River Watershed Partnership Executive Director, has 15 years of experience in project management and implementation of conservation activities. He has held technical and management roles designing and implementing natural resources and climate change programs for US non-profits, federal agencies, private companies, and foundations. Leif is a 2008 graduate of the George Washington University in Business Administration. Leif will work with Annie Sales to oversee landscape restoration of the Prairie Grove Battlefield and other projects in collaboration with State Parks and municipalities.</p> <p>Annie Sales, Green Infrastructure Program Manager - Annie has a BS in Physical Geography from Missouri State University and 10 years of conservation experience, specializing in ecological restoration and native plant cultivation. Annie manages the Green Infrastructure program at the IRWP, overseeing a 319 grant funding stormwater improvements across the watershed.</p>
<p>Beaver Watershed Alliance (BWA)</p>	<p>Becky Roark, Executive Director, Beaver Watershed Alliance – 13 years of experience in the sustainability, community initiatives and watershed management fields. Becky is a 2011 graduate of the University of Arkansas Landscape Architecture program. Beaver Watershed Alliance will support the proposal through public education and outreach, technical assistance, further advancement of workforce development strategies, and project implementation.</p>
<p>Northwest Arkansas Land Trust (NWALT)</p>	<p>Grady Spann, Executive Director and CEO - Grady comes to the land trust from Arkansas State Parks where he served for 28 years. Grady joined Arkansas State Parks in 1993 and in 2016 was promoted to director of Arkansas State Parks. He also served as a park ranger after graduating from the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy in 1995. Grady is the past president of the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD), past president of the Association of Southeast State Park Directors, and formerly the Chairman of the Board of Regents for NASPD State Park Leadership School.</p>

	<p>Pam Nelson, Director of Land Protection - Pam has been working in conservation and climate solutions for over 10 years. She leads a comprehensive land protection program at Northwest Arkansas Land Trust to protect the region's vulnerable lands with a variety of tools, including conservation easements, land acquisition and bargain sales. She has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from University of North Texas and a master's degree in Applied Geography with a focus on Environmental Studies from Texas State University.</p> <p>Marson Nance, Director of Land Stewardship - Marson has served as Director of Land Stewardship at Northwest Arkansas Land Trust since 2018. He leads the land stewardship program, including conservation easement monitoring and enforcement, habitat restoration, and public access on land trust preserves. Marson has a bachelor's degree in Environmental Biology from the University of North Carolina, Asheville. He has experience and expertise in natural resource conservation in government, nonprofit, and private sectors.</p>
University of Arkansas	<p>Eric C. Boles, University of Arkansas Office for Sustainability Director, has 12 years of experience in the areas of greenhouse gas inventories, trail system development, and ecosystem restoration. Eric is a 2012 graduate of the University of Arkansas with a masters of science in Biological Engineering. Eric will coordinate land and stream restoration projects on the University of Arkansas campus.</p>
	<p>Todd Furgason, Senior Campus Planner for the University of Arkansas, has 20 years of experience of overseeing the design of campus buildings, landscapes, and infrastructure. He led the effort to develop better landscape management practices and to protect critical open spaces. Todd is a 2003 graduate of Harvard University with a Master of Architecture in Urban Design. He will incorporate landscape restoration projects into the university's physical planning framework.</p>
City of Fayetteville	<p>Peter Nierengarten, PE, Fayetteville Environmental Director, has 21 years of local government work in the areas of Climate Change Preparedness, Greenhouse Gas Inventories, Environmental Restoration and Invasive Species Management. Peter is a 2001 graduate of the University of Arkansas with a masters degree in Civil Engineering. Peter will coordinate and oversee all land and stream restoration projects within the City of Fayetteville.</p>
	<p>Matt Mihalevich, PLA, Fayetteville Active Transportation Manager, has 23 years of trail design and construction experience. Matt is a 2001 graduate of the University of Arkansas, with a degree in Landscape Architecture. Matt will oversee the design and construction of all shared-use paved trails within the City of Fayetteville.</p>
City of Lowell	<p>Karen Davis, PCED, Planning and Community Development Director – Karen has worked at the City of Lowell for thirteen years and attended the University of Arkansas at Monticello and the Community Development Institute at the University of Central Arkansas. She works closely with community partners such as businesses, community organizations, and the public to develop strategies for improving economic and community initiatives while preserving neighborhood or community cohesion. She has the responsibility of protecting the quality of life of the residents of Lowell through implementation and enforcement of the community's standards for development. She supervises a broad portfolio of activities and events which foster a strong and active community including urban planning, increase economic opportunity, sustain natural resources, and guide comprehensive planning that determines community goals and aspirations.</p>

City of Rogers	<p>John McCurdy, Director of Community Development for the City of Rogers is a CNU-accredited City Planner with a B.S. in Math, Science and Engineering from the United States Air Force Academy and M.A. in Strategic Planning from American University. John has 7 years of experience managing municipal engineering and planning projects and as a retired Air Force Colonel managed significant projects in Afghanistan and The United States.</p>
	<p>Lance Jobe, PE, CFM, Deputy Director Engineering is a licensed, professional engineer and certified floodplain manager with a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Arkansas. Lance has 25 years of experience related to the design, permitting, and construction of parks, trails, stormwater infrastructure, and stream restorations.</p>
City of Springdale	<p>Ben Peters P.E., Director of Engineering Springdale - Undergraduate degree in Civil Engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology. Professional Engineer License in Arkansas # 12174 and has 22 years in municipal engineering and 6 years in reinforced concrete products manufacturing. Ben will oversee all projects within the City of Springdale.</p>
	<p>Chris Herrera, Springdale Stormwater and Floodplain Coordinator - Chris has four years of experience of government work in the areas of environmental compliance, water quality, floodplain management, and natural resource management. Chris has a degree in Environmental Studies, concentrating in Natural Resources Management from Baylor University and pursuing a Masters in Natural Resources and Masters Certificate in Global Sustainability from Virginia Tech. Chris will coordinate and be the point of contact for all restoration projects within the City of Springdale.</p>
	<p>Kaleb Lathrom, Horticulturist at Springdale Public Works - Bachelor's of Science in Agriculture, Food and Life Science at the University of Arkansas, with additional studies in perennial agriculture, biology, and ecology. Kaleb has 4 years of experience in landscaping, and 2 years in food production, education, and research. Kaleb will oversee the invasive species removal and tree plantings as well as the maintenance of the restored projects within the City.</p>