



March 21, 2024

Center for Economic Development  
University of Arkansas - Fort Smith  
70 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Fort Smith, AR 72901

RE: Letter of Commitment for Arkansas Tri-Region Coalition's CPRG Application

Dear Mr. Covington:

This letter is intended to express the Center for Economic Development at the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith's strong, long-term commitment to supporting the goals outlined in the Arkansas Tri-Region Coalition's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) implementation application.

Arkansas, known as the Natural State, faces critical environmental challenges. Air quality is a pressing concern, with pollutants impacting public health and exacerbating respiratory conditions. By curbing greenhouse gas emissions, we can mitigate these adverse effects. Moreover, Arkansas boasts abundant environmental assets, including pristine forests, waterways, and diverse ecosystems. Protecting these natural treasures ensures a sustainable future for generations to come.

However, our efforts must extend beyond environmental conservation. Low-income and disadvantaged communities often bear the brunt of pollution. These vulnerable populations deserve equitable access to clean air, safe water, and green spaces. By prioritizing emission reduction, we uplift these communities and promote environmental justice.

Lastly, the environmental sector offers immense potential for high-quality jobs. Investing in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and conservation initiatives creates employment opportunities while safeguarding our planet. We recognize that reducing greenhouse gas emissions isn't just an environmental goal—it's a commitment to the well-being of Arkansans and the resilience of our state.

The Center for Economic Development at the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith is dedicated to fostering economic growth and prosperity in the River Valley region. Our mission aligns closely with the objectives of the CPRG application, as we believe that sustainable economic development and environmental stewardship go hand in hand.

Through our robust community partnerships and innovative research initiatives, we are well-positioned to support CPRG activities. Our ongoing projects include sustainable business development, renewable energy research, and community engagement programs aimed at promoting environmental awareness and sustainability practices.

In partnership with Metroplan, the City of Fort Smith, and other stakeholders, the Center for Economic Development will actively contribute to CPRG efforts by leveraging our expertise in economic development to facilitate the implementation of greenhouse gas reduction projects. Specifically, we will focus on identifying opportunities for green job creation, promoting sustainable business practices, and advocating for policies that support environmental sustainability and economic growth.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the coalition's efforts to protect the Natural State and ensure environmental and economic benefits to over one half of Arkansas' population, including some of the state's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kendall Ross". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kendall" being more prominent than the last name "Ross".

Kendall Ross  
Executive Director  
Center for Economic Development  
University of Arkansas – Fort Smith  
Mobile: (479)461-5642