



March 31, 2025

Dear Secretary Crowfoot and Secretary Ross:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter and commitment to supporting the Counties of Fresno, Tulare, Kings & Madera (The Four Counties) and their partnership with Sierra San Joaquin Jobs Initiative (S2J2) on this project. We deeply appreciate the partnership you are offering and share your enthusiasm for advancing a vision that integrates economic opportunity, stewardship, and resilience in our region and across California.

As you know, our region's economy is built upon agriculture and its supporting industries, but we are facing a pivotal moment—navigating challenges around water supply, land transitions, air quality, habitat conservation, and renewable energy production. Though the challenges our region faces are significant, we are committed to leveraging the partnership opportunities that the four Counties have through Jobs First and S2J2 to prepare our region for investment that yields economic transformation. With support from our Regional Convener, the Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF), and a broad coalition of local partners, we are eager to work alongside your agencies to determine the key actions needed to deliver on the promise of a thriving, resilient Central San Joaquin region that contributes to the health and vitality of the state.

To that end, we welcome the engagement of your designated staff representatives in our **Four-County Coordinating Committee**, which includes representatives from County Boards of Supervisors, each County's CAO, and key planning, economic development and related staff. Your participation and leadership will be instrumental in aligning our efforts, unlocking funding opportunities, and providing technical assistance where needed. We are eager to collaborate on specific areas where state agency expertise can accelerate progress. Specifically, we propose the following

- **Structured Coordination:** We propose **standing monthly meetings** with you and your team to ensure regular progress updates, troubleshoot challenges, and maintain alignment across state and regional priorities.
- **GIS and Land Use Planning:** Immediate collaboration with **the Department of Conservation on GIS mapping and modeling** will help us refine land use strategies, particularly as we navigate the intersection of economic development, groundwater recharge, conservation, and energy infrastructure.
- **Energy Planning & Policy Alignment:** We request guidance and hands-on assistance from key experts at **the California Energy Commission (CEC)**. An early priority would be to arrange a **state-local briefing** to understand the state's regional energy production plans for our region within California's broader climate and economic strategies. Given the scope and significance of the need to bring local agencies up to speed on the state's renewable energy planning, we would welcome your direction on how best to prepare for this exchange of information.

- **Natural Resources Stewardship:** As we explore opportunities in land restoration, renewable energy, groundwater recharge, and sustainable agriculture, we seek continued help from the **Department of Water Resources** and see potential synergies with the **Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the California Conservation Corps** in shaping strategies that create new career pathways while advancing conservation goals. Your agencies have already provided tremendous support to the San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program (CAP). Our intention is to continue to incorporate the CAP leadership in the task teams that will support the Regional Coordinating Committee.

Additionally, we look forward to working with **the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)** to ensure agricultural producers in our region have access to the programs and resources that support innovation, resilience, and market competitiveness. We request CDFA's involvement in all of the above activities.

The four Counties and their partnership with S2J2 and the Jobs First Initiative present a unique and urgent opportunity for our region to collaborate with you, analyze and identify key strategies that advance regional and State priorities, and determine the investment and actions needed to achieve those priorities. We are grateful for your leadership and sense of urgency to act in support of the regional-state coordination needed to bring a vibrant vision for our region to life. Furthermore, we look forward to building a model for regional-state collaboration that can inform similar efforts across the state.

We will follow up with your offices to coordinate next steps and look forward to continued engagement with your teams and you.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Ashley Swearengin
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