



Equity Advisory Group – Equity Lens January Session

Meeting Dates: February 18 & 20, 2026

Location: Zoom meeting

Attendees:

Facilitator	Present	EAG Member	Member Organizations
<i>Amber Lenhart</i>	<i>2/20/26</i>	Clyde Abrahamson	Spokane Indian Housing Authority
Avista Team Members	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brook Beeler	Department of Ecology Eastern Region
<i>Ana Matthews</i>	<i>2/20/26</i>	Karen Boone	Community Advocate
<i>Clay Christensen</i>	<i>2/18/26</i>	Margee Chambers	Spokane Clean Air
<i>Rendall Farley</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandra Childers	Rural Resources - Colville
<i>Amanda Ghering</i>	<i>2/20/26</i>	George Dahl	Spokane County Housing & Community Development
<i>Steven Cutter</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tammy Dillon	Providence Healthcare
<i>Kim Vollan</i>	<i>2/18/26</i>	Andrew Gardner	Spokane Public Schools
	<i>2/18/26</i>	Carmen Groom	SNAP
<i>2/18/26</i>	<i>2/18/26</i>	KJ January	Spectrum
<i>Ariana Barrey</i>	<i>2/18/26</i>	Cindy Kimmet	Takesa Village
<i>Meghan Pinch</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jean Kindem	Aging & Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington
	<i>2/18/26</i>	Connie Kliewer	NEWESD101
<i>2/20/26</i>	<i>2/18/26</i>	Vladimir Kronin	Slavic Community
<i>Kristine Meyer</i>	<i>2/18/26</i>	Sue Lani Madsen	Washington Rural Environmental Network (WREN)
<i>Kelsey Solberg</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vanessa Strange	Spokane Public Library
<i>Kelly Dengel</i>	<i>2/18/26</i>	Lynn Suksdorf, Phd	Rural Community Member
	<input type="checkbox"/>	William von Bracht	Othello, school English as 2 nd language
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Latrice Williams	Community Member/WA state board of Equity
		Guests	
	<i>2/18/26</i>	<i>Joshua Dennis, WUTC</i>	
	<i>2/18/26</i>	<i>Paul Koenig, WUTC</i>	

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EAG Equity Lens Session Meeting Notes

I. Welcome & Introductions

The group facilitator led the opening meeting activities that included the welcome, overview of the shared expectations, member connect, and public participation spectrum.

Partner Shares

- No updates on 2.18.26
- 2.202.26 Spokane Tribe has partnered with an investor for rental properties and has purchased eight buildings in the Seattle area and reduced the rent for the occupants. Looking into Spokane with plans for one veteran in Spokane. In addition to affordable housing, the Tribe is looking to create workforce development and expand eligibility to moderate income. An EAG member from Spokane County Housing and Community Development Department offered to connect regarding the acquisition strategy and possibility of partnership opportunity.

I. EAG Comment & Action Review

January Meeting: Chat Comment



Ana provided an overview of the EAG member comment that was posted in a January meeting Chat. The noted fire station had been a participant of Avista’s Small Business Lighting Program and had been experiencing flickering lights. A trade alley visited the site and identified and corrected a damaged breaker. The flickering has appeared to be corrected.

II. Agenda Item I: Electric Vehicle Community Program

Rendall Farley and Clay Christensen provided an overview of the free loaner electric vehicle program. They shared an example of an electric vehicle award that included Spokane Regional Health District with operational savings and client benefits.

In 2026, \$220k in funding is available, and the funding categories include estimated passenger miles, cost, organizational capacity, and proposal uniqueness.

Avista provides support for the charging station installation and purchase of the vehicles. Clay is the primary point of contact for questions and support through the application and award process.

Members were provided with the link to the upcoming informational session scheduled for February 20 to learn about the program and application process in the Chat.

February 18 meeting

Member Comments/Question(s):

- The **Facilitator** stated that it is a cool program and encouraged the group to consider sharing with anyone they think would be interested.
- **EAG member** requested an explanation of how the loaner program operated. Avista staff response: top proposals, confirm award jointly determine best vehicle for the organization needs and value, sign memorandum of understanding, take title and insurance. Conditions are stated in the MOU in general flexible arrangements. The Avista staff person provided an example of organization underutilization, that when discussed, the organization shared the current situation. An organization that provides transportation in need is going out of business, so if had given a vehicle would not have way to recoup the vehicle and redistribute. Organizations must have drivers and are responsible for maintenance.
Considering the best process and program model that is not so laborious. Some organizations use for short trips or move supplies, the overall
- **EAG member** asked for clarity for maintenance and insurance. Avista confirmed that the awarded organizations are responsible for insurance and maintenance of vehicles.
- The **facilitator** questioned if an applicant needs help filing out the application whether Avista is available.
Avista staff confirmed support is available.

The following informational links were provided in the Chat:

- The registration link for the Community EV Program informational meeting for Friday at 10 am was posted.

February 20 meeting

Members Questions/Comments:

EAG member posed a question around the criteria to select with emphasis for Named Communities, and how to engage with those most impacted by lack of transportation with assurances to support their engagement. The members shared an example of individuals from Wellpinit reservation that are vulnerable to recidivism because they are unable to make court dates.

Avista staff response embedded in the 4th criteria with the proposal's uniqueness, diversity and value. Have not tied to whether in Named Community and provided an example of an award that supported rural community. The funding has a requirement to use 30% of the funding for populations that have a ranking of 9 or more on the Department of Health's Environmental Disparities map.

Another **EAG member** shared there is a bus – the Moccasin Express that travels from Wellpinit to Airway Heights and connects with Spokane Transit. The member will check to see if there is a possibility of repurposing a van used for seniors to provide another option for those needing transportation from the reservation.

Avista staff said there is a probability to electrify the shuttle vehicle.

III. Agenda Item II: Review of the EAG's priorities for the Named Communities Investment Fund

Amber conducted a review of the information provided during the January meeting regarding the process of the EAG prioritization of the EAG.

She then led the group through a discussion to obtain EAG members' input on how the NCIF is performing and identifying new or modifying the program's priorities.

February 18 meeting

Member Comments/Question(s):

- Hard to tell whether work has been conducted in all the priority areas. If work has been conducted in all areas, keep it up.
- Insulation has been put under the trailers in a manufactured home area, and that seems to be working well.
- Member question about the new Adams Elementary school that is being built and whether the program will help this project.
Avista staff
- Member question about the openness to different/out of the box projects.
Avista staff, totally open to unique and innovative

Member Questions & Comments posed in the Chat:

- What about EE projects for libraries?
- And EE for all community / senior centers

- Replicate the MLK Center solar / batteries for all community centers - as they are used when there is a natural disaster.
- community centers / libraries serve as clean air centers when affected by wildfire smoke, warming centers when it's really cold, cooling centers when it's really hot.....
- I like adding some of these to the listed opportunities of the NCIF funding.

The facilitator summarized the potential new/revised priorities:

- Adding libraries and senior centers to the list of places named communities spend time (other places to specify?)
- Adding a priority around community resiliency (e.g. in case of natural disaster, major power outage)
- Something related to new builds and renovations
- Projects that address other community needs like food deserts. Because of low margins in grocery stores, 3% and makes it difficult to maintain produce.

February 20, 2026, meeting

Member Comments/Question(s):

- **EAG member** identified the topic of homeless with an example of Camp Hope, and how to get housed, and encouraged the group to think differently about those who need help with emphasis on those who are often in trouble. Provided an example of a tiny homes pilot program to help improve the lives of those with questions about sustainability – most specifically will they be able to pay electric bills and other utility bills. Working with Health & Human Services to provide training to individuals. Some are difficult because of lifestyle choices. Facilitator Wednesday meeting potentially adding priority that are co-benefits, benefits community in other ways. Adding another benefit of having benefits for individual well-being or stabilization.
- **EAG Member** commented that it is a social program but helps with individual needs and consideration of their want and readiness.
- **EAG member** suggested that perhaps Avista could offer some assistance in energy efficiency, as person is moving into residence from homeless and play a part in helping with the monthly bill but need a program that is going to work through mentorship the person to wellbeing. Shared example of Hawaii shelter is not a problem to move individuals from shelter to home, but it is an educational gap that exists most especially if an emergency occurs, they will not pay bills rather they will deal with the issue. It requires ongoing education and support. The model could be that Avista focuses on bills in partnership with a social service agency to provide that support.
- The **facilitator** recommended new priority support to basic support for living (i.e., food, etc.). An **EAG member** commented on from homelessness to housing, with mentorship. The facilitator guided that the focus should be on priority rather than priority. The **EAG member** would like to capture the concept and for the group to continue to discuss Avista's assistance for someone moving to housing is a temporary fix but having an entity like SNAP or Rural Resources would provide a

greater chance for the individual to benefit long term. The organization would help the individual learn responsibility and discipline.

- **EAG member** recommended bumping the 4th ranked initiative up as there needs to be a higher level of awareness and what it means so people will learn to turn off the lights and every gadget in the house. The members don't believe that people understand that and suggested a one page about Avista who they are, what they do, and why it is important to the community because the community does not have to the degree they should.

The **facilitator** reminded the group that there has been discussion around trusted members with established networks taking those messages forward. The member said an individual may take the information but will be focused on food. She would like to see a program where Avista shares information about the company in communities.

- **EAG member** commented that his organization had met with Avista previously on the topic that both may be funding the same projects and recommended that priority be given to similarly funded projects.
- **EAG member** recommended the prioritization for tree canopy should be expanded from increase to include preserve (i.e., Increase and preserve tree canopy).

IV. **Agenda Item III: Climate Commitment Act Programs for Named Communities**

Meghan Pinch presented on 2.18.26 and Steven Cutter presented on 2.18.26

Avista staff asked whether attendees have heard of the climate commitment act. **2.18.26** most participants shared thumbs up with one member posting the following comment in the chat: *Honestly, they have only heard of it as a punch line.* **Avista staff** commented that it does come with some price increases but with opportunities as well.

2.20.26 an **EAG member** commented “no” to the question.

Avista staff provided background on the Climate Commitment Act with specific focus of funding set aside for Avista to invest in programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote clean energy. First time talking about what to do with the funds with guidelines that include eligibility, allowable uses, restrictions, and estimated funding.

CCA Program Guidelines

Eligibility: Customers on **natural gas schedule 101** (residential and small commercial)

Allowable uses: for programs that reduce natural gas use for **customers in Named Communities (including income-qualified customers)**

Restrictions: revenues **cannot be moved** from the gas utility to the electric utility.

Estimated funding: Around **\$3 million**, to be used through December of 2027(actual amount will be determined by Spring of 2026).

"For the residual benefit amounts from Schedules 162 and 163 that were previously estimated to benefit low-income natural gas customers, Avista must work with its **energy efficiency** and **equity advisory groups** and **weatherization agencies**, to investigate developing and launching a multi-year **pilot program** beginning in 2026 to benefit low-income customers and Named Communities."

Docket UG-250663, Order 02



Potential CCA Programs

- **Deferred maintenance for weatherization agency partnerships:** Funding for repairs that enable weatherization- ie plumbing repair, roof repair, roof replacement. Income-qualified customers
- **Supplemental assistance for Home Insulation Program:** gas customers in Named Communities who need better insulation
- **Energy Smart Loans:** low, fixed-rate funding for residential and small commercial gas customers for energy efficiency/ decarbonization programs
- **Named Communities Investment Fund:** funding for projects that benefit nonprofit and small business customers in Named Communities

February 18 meeting

The **facilitator** asked about appliances conversion. **Avista staff** confirmed there is need; the tricky point is whether we can convert. The focus is more around efficiency improvements.

The **facilitator** talked about trusted messengers in the community and asked if there was possible to include something similar. Meghan said it is important to include a component for education and awareness.

Member Comments/Questions

- **EAG member** questioned: how about more money towards offsetting the cost to replace 25-year-old gas furnaces with new super-efficient gas furnaces, not a loan. Like 50% cost or higher+. *I replaced my old gas furnace with an efficient one and had about a 30% reduction in natural gas use and warmer home. But new furnaces are very expensive, and many low-income homeowners may not have resources to pay for the upgrade.*

Avista staff provided an overview of the current Low Income Weatherization Program. And that often-moderate income with need may not qualify.

- **EAG member** shared: *I was involved in this issue in 2022-2024 and found multiple challenges for large, old gas-powered boilers. The outcome was great and reduced costs dramatically, but the asbestos mitigation related to removing the old boiler and all of the related piping shot the budget and delayed completion. Excellent outcome, but a very lengthy and costly removal of the old equipment.*
- **EAG member** shared an example of community center replacing old boiler but there is asbestos, and questioned who is responsible for the mitigation?
- **Avista staff** asked how the group feels about using the funds for collateral costs, or should the funds be focused on projects that are ready to go?
- **EAG member** responded that one of the biggest challenges with finding support for asbestos removal, as a follow-up to the comment in the Chat. They could not find any funding sources.
 - Another member commented that the issue is very valid, how do non-profits pay for those situations.
 - Member comment in support: My point is exactly.
- **EAG member** commented that asbestos is very expensive.
- **EAG member** commented that once the door is opened, the door of asbestos finds it in other places. It delayed their project for 2 years.
- **Avista staff** stated that it is a good issue to identify because funding is for carbon focused and suggested ongoing dialogues with EAG and EEAG to consider including it in proposal to WUTC.
- **Avista staff** commented that the discussion identifies a desire for a comprehensive solution rather than a piece of meal.

Comments in the Chat:

- Some older community buildings (i.e. schools, community centers) have those big old boilers to heat the space. What about helping replace those?
- I was shocked that the energy efficiency improvement that my new furnace provided!
- One issue to keep in mind with major equipment upgrades is the collateral costs that arise - upgrading utility infrastructure or finally fixing other problems that have been coasting, for example.
Avista's response: deferred maintenance pilot identified the need when customers are making efficiency upgrades; they often needed a new electrical panel to support the new load.
- Maybe matching?

- I love the idea of funds for projects that are community focused rather than individual - yes pay for the large costs while unraveling the full scope of the work needed.
- This discussion is one of the frustrations with programs like the CCA, which are so siloed and ignore whole pictures, whole problems. And so easy little stuff gets picked around the edges while costs have been driven up for everyone, including those dealing with whole problems.
- It is easy to say "replace", but there are ancillary costs to recipients that were not thought of in the creation of the program.
- Anyone who has ever remodeled anything knows how one little project cascades into others!

February 20 meeting

Member Comments/Questions:

- A **member** posed question regarding the proposed programs and clarity of whether the agencies are the community action agencies (CAAs).
Avista staff confirmed the eight (8) agencies that are contracted for weatherization.
The **member** pointed out the agencies that are in the middle, what is the criteria for who is receiving the weatherization services. The decision makers, while they have purpose but the individual on the other side may never see the money. How does Avista ensure that the benefit goes to the intended individuals.
Avista staff provided an overview of the eligibility and qualification process. Individuals never see the funds; they see the benefits of the program.
- The **member** asked how Avista ensures that the intended audience is aware of the program.
Avista staff response that he tables at community events to share information about the Low-Income Weatherization Program and recently developed some videos.
The **member** suggested that sometimes the spoken word is better than a video, and the significance of being in community and rather than presenting information, discussion should occur for learning.
- Another **member** commented on the topic of deferred maintenance and his experience around not being able to service homes because they could not weatherize safely. He saw this situation mostly around mobile homes (no amount of dollars would make it livable). In his role, he and his team often considered if they could make the home livable for 20+ years. He shared an overview of the intricacies of the weatherization program and difficulties in making tough decisions, most specifically mobile homes. They took out around 15-20 mobile homes and replaced them. He reiterated that Weatherization is a great program supported by connectedness between state, utility and local organizations.
- A **member** question about the pilot program and where the funding was applied.
Avista staff confirmed.

Member Comment in Chat:

This program is a partnership between the WA Dept. of Commerce and Spokane County. We contract services through SNAP. [Home Electrification & Appliance Rebates \(HEAR\) | Spokane County, WA](#). We submitted a request to Commerce for \$3M to keep the program going through 2027. We should know how successful our request was this spring.

V. Questions and Discussion

February 18 meeting

Member comment in Chat: I would love a project highlight for what been accomplished - I know we need to move forward with new activities but it's also nice to hear about the successes of the programs

VI. Next Meeting

- Next meetings are scheduled for:
 - Wednesday, March 18th at noon
 - Friday, March 20th at 7:30 am
- ****Please mark your calendars for Wednesday, April 22nd for the in-person meeting to be held in Spokane. More details are forthcoming soon.**
- Please sign up for our quarterly newsletter if you have not already and we hope to see you all next month.
- Provide any additional comments or feedback to us at ceta@avistacorp.com. Comments made via the website at: www.myavista.com/ceta may be provided anonymously.