



## Equity Advisory Group – Equity Lens January Session

Meeting Dates: January 21 and 23, 2026

Location: Zoom meeting

## Attendees:

Facilitator	Present	EAG Member	Member Organizations
Amber Lenhart	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clyde Abrahamson	Spokane Indian Housing Authority
<b>Avista Team Members</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brook Beeler	Department of Ecology Eastern Region
Ana Matthews	1/21/26	Karen Boone	Community Advocate
Amanda Ghering	1/21/26	Margee Chambers	Spokane Clean Air
Ariana Barrey	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandra Childers	Rural Resources - Colville
	1/23/26	George Dahl	Spokane County Housing & Community Development
	1/21/26		Providence Healthcare
	1/23/26	Andrew Gardner	Spokane Public Schools
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carmen Groom	SNAP
1/23/26	1/21/26	KJ January	Spectrum
Kelly Dengel	1/21/26	Cindy Kimmet	Takesa Village
Michele Drake	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jean Kindem	Aging & Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington
Kelsey Solberg	<input type="checkbox"/>	Connie Kliewer	NEWESD101
Kristine Meyer	1/21/26	Vladimir Kronin	Slavic Community
	1/21/26	Sue Lani Madsen	Washington Rural Environmental Network (WREN)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vanessa Strange	Spokane Public Library
	1/21/26	Lynn Suksdorf, Phd	Rural Community Member
	1/23/26	William von Bracht	Othello, school English as 2 <sup>nd</sup> language
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Latrice Williams	Community Member/ WA state board of Equity
		<b>Guests</b>	
	1/23/26	<i>Joshua Dennis, WUTC</i>	

## Agenda

I.	Welcome & Introductions .....	2
II.	Agenda Item I: Regulatory Overview .....	2
III.	Equity Advisory Group Overview .....	3
IV.	Review of the EAG's priorities for the Named Communities Investment Fund .....	4
V.	Questions and Discussion.....	5
VI.	Your Support Team and Next Meeting .....	5

## 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, introduction of new members, member connect, and public participation spectrum.

#### **Partner Shares**

- Takesa Village manufactured home co-op has recently started a food bank. They have helped several families this month and are looking for donations. If you would like to make donations, please send Cindy an email [cmkimmet@comcast.net](mailto:cmkimmet@comcast.net) or text at 509.710.7658.
- Martin Luther King Community Center will make a film with Avista around the solar panels and battery project. It should be finalized around March. Avista will share the video when it is complete with the group.
- Spokane Clean Air renewed its woodstove change out grant to run through the next year and half. <https://spokanecleanair.org/burning/changeout/>. There is an income-qualified element to the program. Flyers included.
- Transitions & Volunteers of America Mardi Bras – the annual campaign to provide unhoused women, non-binary and trans individuals with basic needs such as bras, underwear, hygiene products, tissues, and cough drops. Please contact [jburke@help4women.org](mailto:jburke@help4women.org) or [sscot@voaspokane.org](mailto:sscot@voaspokane.org) for details. Flyer included.
- Spokane County Housing & Community Development is currently accepting proposals for homeless services, affordable housing, community development and disaster recovery housing projects and are eager to work with new partners. Check out <https://www.spokanecounty.gov/3142/Current-RFP> for the details.
- School district levy resolutions will be coming out soon. Please take time to learn about your local levy resolutions and what they do for kids.

### **II. Agenda Item I: Regulatory Overview**

Amanda Ghering presented Avista's request for increased operating and maintenance costs to fund critical investments, highlighting infrastructure upgrades, wildfire safety measures, and compliance with clean energy requirements. She shared resources for customers to access energy assistance and efficiency programs.

Amanda reviewed the reasoning for the updated rates being proposed through a multi-year rate plan with performance metrics that are available online. Some rationales included increases in costs for capital and technology improvements, regional growth, clean energy compliance, and wildfire safety and prevention. Along with providing some

resources, Amanda encouraged individuals to contact the Avista Call Center at 800-227-9187 for questions they may have.

The following informational links were provided in the Chat:

- [Washington PBR Metrics](#)
- [www.myavista.com/rates](#)
- [Your Energy Dollars at Work | Avista](#) - several videos include key investments such as wildfire prevention and dams.

Member Comments/Question(s):

- 1/23/26 meeting:  
An EAG member commented that their community has two utility service providers, which creates a comparison between Avista as a for-profit utility and another provider whose rates are approximately half the cost. The member asked whether, in the interest of transparency, Avista provides information explaining the reasons for rate increases and the differences in costs between utility service providers.

Avista staff responded that historically, this information has not been provided, but they will explore how it might be shared in the future.

Members Questions/Comments posed in the Chat, 1/21/26:

- Member question: Is part of the very large increase in power pole price change from wood poles to non-flammable poles?

Avista Response: staff will research and provide an answer.

- Member question: If I dig into this information, will I be able to determine how much of the cost is driven by requirements to buy from less efficient renewable power sources like wind?

Avista Response: Amanda will provide the spot in the rate case that may provide the background she is seeking, although it may not be the actual costs.

Amanda provided her email address for EAG members to contact her with any questions they may have, [Amanda.ghering@avistacorp.com](mailto:Amanda.ghering@avistacorp.com)

### III. Equity Advisory Group Overview

Ana Matthews, who is responsible for the coordination of the Equity Advisory Group, provided an overview of the group's purpose, accomplishments, and 2026 topics. She highlighted the group's role in advising Avista on clean energy initiatives and ensuring equitable impact on vulnerable populations.

Ana introduced a new feature allowing members to designate substitute representatives for meetings.

In 2026 several new topics will be introduced to the group including a campaign to showcase the EAG work, the Climate Commitment Act, factors to identify the most burdened among Named Communities, Distributed Equity Analysis, and engagement for the Clean Energy Implementation Plan survey.

At the 1/23/26 meeting, an EAG member commented the online resources were helpful for their determination in joining the group.

#### **IV. Review of the EAG's priorities for the Named Communities Investment Fund**

Ana provided background on the NCIF and Amber led an overview of the Results Based Accountability activity that lent to the formation of the EAG NCIF priority areas.

This portion of the meeting focused on the Named Communities Investment Fund (NCIF), a \$5 million annual commitment by Avista to support energy efficiency and resiliency projects in highly impacted and vulnerable communities. Ana provided an overview of the fund's structure and its two main buckets: \$2 million for energy efficiency and \$3 million for resiliency and other investments. Amber highlighted the Equity Advisory Group's role in identifying priority areas, emphasizing initiatives such as improving energy efficiency in schools and community centers, increasing tree canopy, and enhancing access to energy-efficient appliances. Various completed projects that are in alignment with the EAG's priority areas, including HVAC replacements, energy audits, and solar installations.

The group is encouraged to reconsider the NCIF priorities they first identified in 2021.

Member Questions & Comments posed in the chat, 1/21/26:

- The team is amazing and makes such a difference in people getting the care they need versus continuing to enter through the ED. (in reference to Respite Care at Westminster Church)
- Question about Condition #10.
  - Avista staff responded was a requirement to identify a project for Named Communities by the Equity and Energy Assistance Advisory Group. Those groups identified a pilot project for power dependent customers. The pilot provided customers with medical equipment – a battery with small solar package and air conditioning for extreme heat conditions and extended power outages.
- As an aside: An Avista energy conservation grant replaced the lighting in our Edwall fire station, and it flickers because the high efficiency lighting doesn't seem to be compatible with our sketchy wiring.

- I would love to learn more specifics about what Avista has accomplished related to improving tree canopy in underserved and named communities since 2022.
  - The following links were provided by Avista Staff:
    - <https://www.myavista.com/connect/articles/2024/06/branching-out-avista-helps-lands-council-plant-hundreds-of-trees>
    - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfM2cC3uvv8&embeds\\_referring\\_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com%2F&embeds\\_referring\\_origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com&source\\_ve\\_path=MZY4NDlsMjM4NTE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfM2cC3uvv8&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com%2F&embeds_referring_origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com&source_ve_path=MZY4NDlsMjM4NTE)

## V. Questions and Discussion

The group is encouraged to consider the following questions for discussion at an upcoming meeting, and to revisit the NCIF priorities:

- What clarifying questions do you have about the process or our goals for today's discussion?
- How are we doing? Are we on the right track?
- What is missing?
- Were there ideas brainstormed in 2022 that should be included as priorities, but currently are not?
- What new ideas do you have for project priorities?
- How could an NCIF project benefit your community?

## VI. Your Support Team and Next Meeting

- Next meetings are scheduled for:
  - Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at noon
  - Friday, February 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 am
- **\*\*Please mark your calendars for Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 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](mailto:ceta@avistacorp.com). Comments made via the website at: [www.myavista.com/ceta](http://www.myavista.com/ceta) may be provided anonymously.