



Equity Advisory Group – Equity Lens Session

Meeting Date: May 23, 2025
 Time: 7:30 am – 9:00 am
 Location: Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

Facilitator	Present	EAG Member	Member Organizations
Amber Lenhart	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clyde Abrahamson	Spokane Indian Housing Authority
Avista Team Members	<input type="checkbox"/>	Margee Chambers	Spokane Clean Air
Tamara Bradley	<input type="checkbox"/>	Connie Kliewer	NEWESD101
Kelly Dengel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clair Trapp	Rural Resources
Amanda Ghering	<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Reilly	SNAP
	<input type="checkbox"/>	KJ January	Spectrum
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	William von Bracht	Othello, school English as 2nd language
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lynn Suksdorf	Community Member
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brook Beeler	Department of Ecology Eastern Region
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jupiter McGee	Sunrise Spokane Affiliation (youth led) (Facebook)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vanessa Strange	Spokane Public Library
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tami Dillion	Providence
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Latrice Williams	Community Member/ WA state board of Equity
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cindy Kimmet	Takesa Village
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carmen Groom	SNAP
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandra Childers	Rural Resources - Colville
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sue Lani Madsen	Washington Rural Environmental Network (WREN)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jean Kindem	Aging & Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Karen Boone	Red Cross
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Andrew Gardner	Spokane Public School District
		Guests	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joshua Dennis	Washington UTC

Agenda

I.	Welcome & Introductions	2
	Overview of Meeting: Rules and Intent	2
II.	Partner Share/ Connections.....	2
III.	Review Previous Meeting Comments.....	2
IV.	Strategies to improve community participation.....	3
	Your Support Team and Next Meeting	3

EAG Equity Lens Session Meeting Notes

I. Welcome & Introductions

Overview of Meeting: Rules and Intent

II. Partner Share/ Connections

- Lullaby Concert May 23: <https://events.spokanelibrary.org/event/13529322>
- Aging and Long-Term Care is seeking volunteer positions in Spokane County and would love to see participation from organizations that support people from other countries moving into the Spokane County area. Please call 509-458-2509
- The Spokane YWCA will soon be seeking a new CEO. Please look for some information from Tamara Bradley who sits on the selection committee.
- [Provide comments on Ecology's 2025 Air Quality Monitoring Network Plan](#)

III. Review Previous Meeting Comments

Follow up with Sue Lani on streetlights in Edwall.

Provided the following updates to actions and comments provided during the April Equity Lens Sessions.(slides 10 & 11 below)

EAG Comments & Actions

Area	Comment	Avista's Response
Customer Benefit Indicators & Supplier Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Is Avista using OMWBE (Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises) list to determine supplier diversity? If you limit recognition to this list you will limit understanding of diversity in this region.▪ State OMWBE certifies companies as minority or women owned, but not all companies eligible participate particularly in Eastern WA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Avista does utilize OMWBE as one resource for supplier diversity. Additional resources include, but not limited to: The Native Project, Hispanic Business Professionals Association, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance, Tribal Employment Rights offices of the sovereign nations, AHANA, and Inland Northwest Business Association.
Community Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ I would like to encourage more participation at community events and thinking about minority institutions, giving the example of the Filipino organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ This will be part of today's discussion.

EAG Comments & Actions

Area	Comment	Avista's Response
Alternative Customers Energy Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does Avista track if a household uses alternative energy sources? Are there potential dangers of individuals not informing Avista? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, Avista tracks households with alternative energy sources that generates power who have returned an application for interconnection. Yes, there are potential safety concerns of power feeding back to the grid if the system is not connected properly and inspected. Additionally, customers who do not inform Avista, are not receiving all the financial benefits Avista's net metering program offers.
Outreach/ Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does Avista have something for people with hearing impairment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avista does have a call in line for hearing impaired customers. Digital Public meetings also include closed captions. We will keep hearing impairments in mind when making communication decisions.

IV. Strategies to improve community participation

Please join me in the google document for the next part of the meeting:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vvex2Md5dh6NaRR1F9rka73XpVT5WuJ8qGRpeefj_0w/edit?usp=sharing

No bad idea brainstorm, see Attachment A

Your Support Team and Next Meeting

- Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday June 18 and Friday June 20.
- 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.

May 2025 EAG Summary

During the May 2025 Equity Lens Sessions, Avista Equity Advisory Group (EAG) members were encouraged to brainstorm strategies to increase participation in meetings, surveys, and presentations among named communities—populations that are most often disproportionately and negatively impacted by environmental change (for example, due to unemployment, housing and food insecurity, income inequality, race/ethnicity, language, geography, age, gender identity, and other factors). Participants identified barriers, facilitators, and possible solutions through discussion and using Google documents.

This document synthesizes and summarizes solutions recommended by EAG members by key themes. Themes included:

- Communication methods
- Messages
- Convenience

- Community partnerships
- Inclusion and accessibility
- Survey quality

Notes from each session are available online ([Wednesday](#) and [Friday](#)).

Communication Methods

- Remember that different strategies might work better for each community.
- Use trusted messengers and community leaders to help spread the word, such as mayors; pastors; commissioners; fire chiefs; board members of hospitals, fire districts, and school districts; teachers and coaches; etc. Host meetings in locations connected with community leaders (e.g., churches or community centers).
- Share announcements in printed media such as weekly newspapers, free distributed media (e.g., Huckleberry Press, Lincoln Advertiser, etc.), and school district mailings (e.g., Peach Jar), or on bulletin boards in places like post offices, grocery stores, social services, and other places where people frequent, especially in rural communities.
- Use separate mailings for surveys or event announcements (i.e., not included with utility bills), and find creative ways to reach energy users (who might not be on the utility account)
- Consider leveraging sponsorship opportunities to spread awareness and increase visibility of Avista's good work.
- Attend community events across the service territory, such as farmers' markets, fire district events, library events, local fairs or summer events, BINGO and networking events, city or county council briefings, NAACP, Spokane Pride, Unity in the Community, FAIEE (Filipino Association) lunch meetings, events hosted by organizations like Asians for Collective Liberation in Spokane, and other cultural events. Community leaders can also help identify relevant community events in rural areas.

Messages

- Clearly communicate why participation is important—even if people don't feel like they have the technical knowledge required—and how feedback will be used.
- Report back to the community how their feedback has made a difference in programs and decisions (e.g., through interim updates and reports).
- For meetings or presentations, indicate whether there will be time provided for comments and feedback.
- Clearly communicate the anticipated effort associated with participation (e.g., whether there will be group activities/discussions, the amount of time needed, etc.).

Convenience

- Incentivize participation by providing gift cards, bill credits, drawings for prizes, etc.
- Consider providing free child care, activities for kids, and other support for caregivers.
- Provide food as an incentive and to offset competing priorities, especially for families and caregivers.
- Keep engagements short and leverage existing meetings or gatherings. Examples in rural areas could include conservation districts, growers' meetings, school events, Junior Livestock shows, county fairs, Friday night football games and basketball tournaments, community days, pancake breakfasts, quilt shows, and auctions.
- Provide multiple ways to participate, (e.g., virtually, rebroadcast, etc.)
- Consider offering meetings or presentations at multiple times (e.g., during lunch and after the workday). Multiple focused meetings, surveys, and presentations over time may be more reasonable than one longer event.

Community Partnerships

- Leverage partnerships to reach more people and grow visibility of Avista programs and opportunities.
- Take time to build trusting relationships with leaders in named communities (potential trusted messengers) and develop two-way relationships with community organizations beyond annual events. Ensure community organizations will benefit from partnership (for example, through resources and opportunities). Use events to celebrate and engage named communities.
- Organizations to consider for partnerships include the Carl Maxey Center, MLK Center, HBPA, senior centers, Latinos en Spokane, SIRC, and other organizations working with immigrants.
- Consider creating an event kit to respond quickly to short notice invitations to community events.

Inclusion and Accessibility

- Keep safety in mind, including perceived safety of meeting spaces (for example, ICE or police presence, safe time and location, accessible parking, etc.). Sharing feedback may make people feel vulnerable or bring up past traumas; meet people where they are in safe environments, be prepared to share resources, and avoid shame.
- Avoid a sense of urgency and allow for enough time to gather feedback and survey responses.
- Understand cultural values of a group and consider adaptations to improve feelings of inclusion. Some communities may prefer to learn and absorb first, then discuss and digest within their community, and only then provide their feedback.

- Avoid technical jargon and acronyms. Take the time to educate participants on topics before asking for their feedback. Consider sharing technical information in advance so people can take time to better understand it before engaging.

Survey Quality

- Make it clear that demographic questions are anonymous (if this is the case) and explain why the data are useful.
- Make the first three questions count to capture attention.
- Avoid biasing surveys and using polarizing language; consider pilot testing wording and questions with different audiences.
- Use simple language and keep surveys under five minutes.
- Ensure surveys are available in the languages spoken by the audiences you hope to reach.