



Equity Advisory Group – Equity Lens Session

Meeting Date: September 17, 2025
 Time: 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm
 Location: Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

Facilitator	Present	EAG Member	Member Organizations
Amber Lenhart	☐	Clyde Abrahamson	Spokane Indian Housing Authority
Avista Team Members	☒	Margee Chambers	Spokane Clean Air
Ana Matthews	☒	Connie Kliewer	NEWESD101
Amanda Ghering	☐	Clair Trapp	Rural Resources
Kelly Dengel	☒	KJ January	Spectrum
Tamara Bradley	☒	William von Bracht	Othello, school English as 2nd language
Kristine Meyer	☒	Lynn Suksdorf, PhD	Rural Community
	☐	Brook Beeler	Department of Ecology Eastern Region
	☐	Jupiter McGee	Sunrise Spokane Affiliation (youth led) (Facebook)
	☐	Vanessa Strange	Spokane Public Library
	☒	Olly Murphy	Spokane Regional Health District
	☐	Tami Dillion	Providence
	☐	Latrice Williams	Community Member/ WA state board of Equity
	☒	Cindy Kimmet	Takesa Village
	☒	Carmen Groom	SNAP
	☐	Sandra Childers	Rural Resources - Colville
	☐	Sue Lani Madsen	Washington Rural Environmental Network (WREN)
	☐	Jean Kindem	Aging & Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington
	☒	Karen Boone	Red Cross
		Guests	
		Lyra Maidhoff, SNAP	
		Denys Lopez, DH	
		Alex.Evans, DH	
		Kia McGlone, UTC Office of Equity	
		Paj Nandi, DH	

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EAG Equity Lens Session Meeting Notes

I. Welcome & Introductions

- Welcome to new EAG member – Olly Murphy from Spokane Regional Health District

II. Partner Share/ Connections

- An EAG member reported on presentation from a statewide council that focused on communication with minority and international language speakers – translation is one way communication attempt, and engagement with communities is not just one way communication it is more interactive and engaging as well as building trust, equity is about building trust. “Transcreation” – translation in context of tool we are using such as English requires active participation of people working with and includes cultural norms inclusion. Language translation rather than a message to language user. The presenter shared experience one on one is more translatable than current events, rather than community events because people are fearful of public events, walkup opportunities are more effective.
- SRHD Community workers have shared reports of individuals reluctant to attend public events because of fear most specifically immigrants and refugees. In government there is a lot of fear among employees because work has been hampered. If looking for opportunities around health equity and health equity, restorative justice training, please contact Olly and they can provide presentations.
 - SRHD event annual Baby Shower, free baby products to expectant parents on Thursday October 30th from 1-3 pm this year at the YMCA in Spokane Valley (2421 N Discovery Pl, Spokane Valley, WA 99216). Please join us in spreading the word among expectant and new parents in our community.
- SNAP
 - Pajama Fundraiser this past Saturday. Donations received are distributed through Homeless Services, and other SNAP programs.
 - Energy Assistance kicked off the 2026 program year, appointment line opens every third Tuesday of the month. Avista staff training for *My Energy Discount* Program. New internal staff procedure for storytelling to develop culture, share client engagement stories, similar through Client Advisory Council. Also working on Disaster Preparedness. And planning international ready workshop. International Rescue is a smaller venue rather than a large event.
- Events from Chat
 - Hands Across Spokane is a **citywide campaign** working to make mental health visible in our community. For many, mental health struggles are carried in silence due to stigma, shame, or barriers to support. This campaign is about showing that no one has to face those challenges alone. **Here’s how you can take part:**

- **Take a Photo** – Gather your team, coworkers, friends, or family and snap a picture together holding hands.
 - **Share It** – Post your photo on social media using **#HandsAcrossSpokane** to help spread awareness.
 - **Invite Others** – Encourage friends, colleagues, and community members to join in and show their support.
- On Thursday, October 10th — World Mental Health Day — SNAP will be at the **Hands Across Spokane Resource Fair** which will be held at the North Central Community Mental Health & Development Center.
 - SNAP Partner Appreciate Oct 15th Every day, partners, volunteers, vendors, and donors come alongside SNAP to help us create lasting change in our community. Now's your chance to honor their impact by nominating someone for the 2025 Mission & Values Partner Awards!

III. DH Community Partner Survey

DH has been working with a core group of Avista for 1.5 years around CETA and specifically in the Equity and Social Impact space. For today's meeting they would like to discuss a plan for a Community Partnership Program (CPP) with the EAG.

Context & Background

DH has conducted Strategic research for Avista's CETA requirements, along with requirements to engage communities those they serve. Avista wants to exceed and create meaningful and long-lasting relationships by connecting in respectful, authentic and impactful ways. Avista sees connecting with community organizations to connect with community members they serve. An example could be a leader in rural communities. These entities are the way to really connect with underserved communities to implement projects and bring the company closer to the communities they serve. DH reviewed the Spectrum of Participation and identified that often the EAG functions in the Inform and Consult and the CPP is looking to move down the spectrum to Involve and Collaborate. DH has discussed the strategy with Avista, conducted research that involves survey and landscape to see what utility peers are doing, and engagement with EAG. Once the plan with the budget is approved, Phases 2 through 4 may set in.

DH reviewed to distinguish the role of EAG and difference with the CPP.

■ **ROLE OF EAG:**

- Provide **input and guidance** on principles and structure of the community partnership program.

■ **DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EAG AND PARTNER PROGRAM:**

- The EAG **advises** Avista on several aspects of its work, including community engagement programs like this one.
- The desired partnership program focuses more on community relationships, investment, and honoring that **community organizations are the best message carriers and connections** between community members and Avista.

Research Highlights: Community Organization Survey

DH staff introduced that they would provide high level findings of survey conducted in August. The survey was sent to just under 200 recipient's representatives of many different communities, serving regionally, 106 responses total over 50% response rate – which is unusual - speaks about the relationship Avista has with the community organizations.

Community organization representatives were overwhelmingly positive about Avista's reputation among community members – Very positive 63% and 21% somewhat.

View of Avista – 72% see Avista as community oriented, 23% as environmentally responsive. 12% see Avista as expensive, while under “Other” the company was seen as kind, responsive, genuinely interested, and helpful.

If Avista created Community Partner Program (CPP) – 61% would like to participate with 37% being unsure. Of the topics to be incorporated, financial support, - 90%. 55% would like to see support for underrepresented communities.

Reviewed a list of resources necessary to implement CPP – among the top are funding support, co-hosted events, capacity building volunteer support from Avista. Many of the organizations that responded wanted to co-build the program with Avista rather than predesign and should pay those community partners for the collaboration.

Envisioning a meaningful participation with the company, similarly financial support was at the top, co-hosted and co-development with dedicated Avista volunteers and staff to support their endeavors, as well as would like to see long term commitment with multiyear partnership.

Barriers and Concerns to prevent participation is their limited staff time and resources, funding and budgets constraints were among the top.

DH staff provided instructions they will guide discussion around what CPP could look like. The staff addressed that raw data and deeper information is available from the

survey, the previously shared was just shared highlights. Link to online mural tool posted in the chat.

Mural activity- Questions & Discussion

- (1) What does authentic partnership from Avista look like and what are the attributes and characteristics of a community organization or leader that will lead to successful partnership with Avista?

Member comments and posting in Mural

- The company should come up with ideas to help with brainstorming.
- Agency is communicative but it is scary due to intimidation when biggest funder says they want to know what they think
 - Trust has been highlighted as a theme
 - Defining what authentic partnership looks like
- Willingness to cede power to partners
 - Partnership may be imbalanced in power. Spectrum of participation helps to address gaps and avoid people telling what they are willing to do. Craft document that shows what we're willing to cede, and where not willing to change. Lead with expectations, people come in with confidence to advocate for self, when knowing what they can do in space.
 - What can Avista truly do to meet community needs
 - Communities need to be heard
- Patience Avista can exercise in engaging with partners because many times the organization or people will have a view that it is very different than what the company projects. Patience for learning occurs in both ways/directions. Many times, grants for the working community are written outside of an organization's perspective, so there is a rush to accomplish the set goals. If the organization's timeline doesn't align then it causes friction and problems.
 - Balance of sense of urgency, with speed of community moves.

What does **authentic partnership** from Avista look like?

What **actions or behaviors** will lead to successful relationships?



What are the **attributes and characteristics** of a community organization or leader that will lead to a successful partnership with Avista? (criteria for selection)

leader; intelligent, planning skills, problem solving skills, well spoken, empathetic	They would be an organization or leader that makes space for the voice of the community to be heard and then holds those they partner with accountable to respond to that voice. They lead organizations that are also actively responding to that voice.	Live their values. Transparency, committed, communicative.	Consistency
good listening skills, everyone has a voice in the conversation	organization needs to have good track record of working with community	excellent track record in community	Listening To what people needs
understanding needs of their community	willingness to collaborate, not threatened by conflict	have created positive outcomes previously	

Questions: How should Avista consider prioritizing NC for participation and what are reasonable expectations of organizations?

- DH facilitator called out a few of the comments, one that included that the prioritization is identified in requirements.
- EAG member comments
 - When looking at responsible expectations of organization – before selected to be partner there should be conversation about what want to accomplish to see if it's possible. Marginalized/underserved organizations are small and lack staff, may have best intentions but may not be able to carry out what they would want to. Find another way to work with them.
 - Marginalized groups are most burdened and are burdened differently. Others are facing more threats than others. Be considerate of that when tapping folks.
 - A member stated they don't know who will make decisions about which groups to work with, but it should have a cultural perspective. Recent experience with scholarship review that the criteria fit white upper-class students, but she wondered about refugee child who had spent time after school doing interpretation for family or single parent household and had

to help with childcare – these kids failed ranking. Take cultural aspects into consideration.



What are **reasonable expectations** of organizations?



Question: What are Avista's commitment to partner organizations and what other opportunities, concerns or risks are on your mind?

A member asked for clarification around the partnership structure. DH member gave a few examples that the relationship will be deep and established rather than transactional.

Comments in the Chat

- One of the biggest hurdles I've experienced is tension, conflict, and lack of trust around power differentials; avista holds much more power than any of the community partners and avista needs to be aware of that and how to address those dynamics
- Or they don't engage at all. The organization may not want to make mistakes and take risks.
- I also want to note that many marginalized communities are already heavily taxed by surveys and asks for data
- It can be a bigger lift for small, overburdened groups.
- Ensure organizations are responsible for what they say they will do.
- I am concerned that the relationship with Avista is temporary. Also, that the organizations will not be empowered by the relationship

- Consider what is already working- many of us are already working closely with Avista. Use as a starting point.
- Comments in Chat
 - Consider what is already working- many of us are already working closely with Avista. Use that as a starting point.
 - I am concerned that the relationship with Avista is temporary. Also, that the organizations will not be empowered by the relation.
- EAG member comment: Traditional agencies have skilled writers, Named Communities may need technical support, and they will get it.

IV. Your Support Team and Next Meeting

- Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 22nd at noon and Friday, October 24 at 7:30 am. Meeting information is featured at: www.myavista.com/eag
- Members were informed of the Comment form at www.myavista.com/ceta where thoughts, feedback and inputs can be shared either anonymously or with identification if they would like a response.