



**Equity Advisory Group – Equity Lens Session**  
**November 19, 2025**  
**Noon to 1:30 pm**

**Attendees**

<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>EAG Member</b>	<b>Member Organizations</b>
<i>Amber Lenhart</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Clyde Abrahamson	Retired, Spokane Indian Housing Authority
<b>Avista Team Members</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brook Beeler	Department of Ecology Eastern Region
<i>Ana Matthews</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Karen Boone	Community Advocate
<i>Lisa Garrett</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Margee Chambers	Spokane Clean Air
<i>Kelly Dengel</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandra Childers	Rural Resources - Colville
<i>Meghan Pinch</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tami Dillion	Providence
<i>Leona Haley</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Andrew Gardner	Spokane Public Schools
<i>Amanda Ghering</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carmen Groom	SNAP
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	KJ January	Spectrum
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cindy Kimmet	Takesa Village
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jean Kindem	Aging & Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Connie Kliewer	NEWESD101
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sue Lani Madsen	Washington Rural Environmental Network (WREN)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Olly Murphy	Spokane Regional Health District
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vanessa Strange	Spokane Public Library
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lynn Suksdorf, Phd	Rural Community Member
	<input type="checkbox"/>	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>	
		<i>Sofya Aitisogbe</i>	

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## EAG Equity Lens Session Meeting Notes

### **I. Welcome & Introductions**

The group facilitator led an overview of the meeting rules and intent as well as the spectrum of participation engagement level for the meeting.

### **II. Partner Share/ Connections**

- One member shared that she has made attempts for automatic payment. Avista staff will coordinate a connection to get that set up.
- Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition will host an interactive movie night 11/29 at the Garland for Elf proceeds to the coalition.
- A member shared their experience with Avista Academy was a wonderful learning experience that brought a human aspect to the corporation. Energy is available at efficient cost, safe, secure and consistent service with a sense of concern that energy is available to all citizens with a focus on payments and arrears – Avista really cares about keeping connected to their power. The last day was an exercise with sources of electricity by looking at ratios of various sources, with storage. The members strongly recommend anyone in the group who has the opportunity.
- Shades of Motherhood event at the Northtown mall 3 to 8 pm, fundraising with information about non-profits
- Trans Day of Remembrance, Saturday, 2 to 4 pm at the downtown library.
- Avista staff shared the comment deadline on Avista's Clean Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP) is coming up. December 5th is the deadline for written comments to be submitted to the Commission. Avista will send a reminder email on how to submit comments.
- A member reminded all that Thanksgiving is coming and please donate/contribute so that all may have a wonderful holiday.

### **III. Agenda Item I: Demographic Collection for Distributed Energy Resource Programs**

Lisa Garrett and Meghan Pinch provided an overview of Distributed Energy Resources (DER), with the presentation focus being on residential customer programs.

Member asked what managed EV charging means. The answer is that EV charging can be scheduled, because it can be flexible, therefore the charging can be managed.

Another member questioned what is behind the meter means? Avista staff stated it is anything the customer pays for, such as energy to run HVAC, or roof top solar generation, micro-grid.

Another question was posed around how energy use is managed. Staff responded that communication of cellular or wi-fi signals can be sent to control the amount of energy being used. Which is a typical practice among other utilities but currently not for Avista.

Avista staff provided background regarding the Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission (WUTC) requirement that the company ask and obtain customer information DER programs, with recognition that information can help with program design and ensure equity is addressed. The company has been Instructed to consult with their Energy Efficiency and Equity advisory groups to obtain thoughts, concerns and ideas regarding the survey. Survey participation is voluntary, and customers must consent to the collection of information.

Demographic data is already being collected with the company's My Energy Discount program, and WUTC suggested using that practice as a starting point. Working through the processes and ways to collect and protect information but starting with what to gather and how.

Ten (10) demographic data points that are currently collected through MED were presented to begin the discussion around thoughts about the data points for relevance, and if there are any that are missing. EAG members were also asked about their experiences when they've been requested to provide similar information - how do they typically respond to such surveys? Are there any questions they tend to skip?

A member commented that they don't think that race or education makes a difference or matter, so she skips those questions. Another member posed a question about the difference between ethnicity and race as they seem very similar. A member shared that ethnicity seems like it would make better sense. The facilitator who has experience with surveys says current best practice combines both or selects all that apply. However, historically ethnicity is Hispanic or Slavic where race is Native American, Black, White. A member who has done Phd research in academia shared that race and ethnicity are two separate things – race goes with color (Caucasian, Asian, African, etc.). Ethnicity gets to country and culture. Some ethnicities are more deprived than others.

Avista staff distinguished that the question set is for Distributed Energy programs that do not have income qualification requirements, which is different than the bill discount program.

#### Comments in the chat

- It seems it's an income-qualified program, so you must obtain income information. I agree that education does not matter. If you are looking at race/ethnicity/language as a whole, so you can communicate with the population, then it's needed. I don't know if disability matters. You are either income qualified or not. As a gas/electric utility, you need to know about primary heat source/fuel.
- To tie onto another member's comment - it seems that it would make sense to understand how many people live in the home as relates to income qualifications.

- In terms of income – there were a few comments that it is ok to include as a range.
- In my survey response, I think key info is language, housing (own/rent), heating fuel type and income are important info. But, if you are going to provide additional discounts then disability, military and senior status could be important.
- Is it possible to be a participant in the My Energy Discount on a temporary basis for a person or family in transition? While enrollment for two (2) year period is
- What are the security steps taken by Avista to secure personal and sensitive data being retained by the company?
  - There are a lot of security measures in place, but specifics around those practices will need to be followed up on.
- A last-minute question on the survey topic. In this time of many working poor families and singles having to live with multiple families and individuals in one housing unit, would this issue be an informative aspect of a need for the discount program? My thinking is that this information might not be a "given" known, but could impact usage and therefore need?

The facilitator mentioned how the information is tied to Customer Benefit Indicators. The response was that currently we have good census data, but we don't know who in given Census track has participated in Avista programs. We'd like to ensure participation by demographics in company programs among those who have been underrepresented, are we reaching the people we intended to ensure equitable representation among customers.

General member comments during the discussion:

- Income seems to be variable when considering things such as social security.
- Seeking confirmation of voluntary nature – with comment that when attempting to reach those most in need in the community, how does it pair with situations that are occurring at federal level where food stamps and jobs are gone along with furlough. It is a calamity where such information is being requested, where folks are making a choice between eating and paying the Avista bill – with questions about how it serves the community's best interest. Message with ways for people to make arrangements on paying bills when they can pay.
- Interesting time, with furloughs, thousands being let go, working poor disrupted by change with curiosity that survey takes snapshot at moment in time – how will information be used when situations around economic decline are happening questions – how used and updated amid changing environment. Local food bank line has tripled; Energy is so essential to personal wellbeing.
  - Avista staff - thinking about how often the information is updated, if someone participates multiple years how to track overtime? All very important logistical details to make the information useful and meaningful.
- Member question whether Avista can look at individual demographic data or does it roll up. Is it stored at customer level or rolled up?  
Avista staff response that under the bill discount, it is specific to the customer based on qualification requirements. There is the ability to store the data with

extra protection for individual data that is only reported at aggregate, never at an individual level.

- Sensitivity for protection and safeguarding.

The Menti link was provided for members to select which demographic points make sense. The poll results showed strong support for homeownership, rental, income, language preference, military veteran status, and senior status with lower support for race, ethnicity, and education.

A general member's comment was that while it is a lot to ask folks for this information in the current environment where people do not want to disclose this sort of information, it is especially important to track and see where disparities are occurring.

The presenters posed the question around demographic data not shared that should be – with no response from the group.

#### **IV. Agenda Item II: Shaping of EAG**

The group facilitator led a discussion looking for member input on what is working or can be improved.

- (a) The facilitator posed the following for discussion around structure and composition: Ideal number for effective engagement and what voices might be missing. Group comments included the following:
  - Over 20 folks tend not to participate.
  - Never know if all 20 will come on any one of the days offered. Participation seems to vary with the group not leaning any one way.
  - A good group size is 10 to 20 – any larger not as comfortable.
  - Maybe members can find a stand-in for months they are unable to attend.
  - The facilitator shared that it is hard to lead a group of over 10 people.
  - Large group of charitable nature, to share perspectives of those they serve.
  - Youth presence helps foster understanding around energy efficiency.
    - i. The meeting times may not work for young people.
    - ii. Work with life skills or leadership groups, such as ASB and work with teachers, so they get extra credit for their participation.
  - A member stated that currently there are 18 members and questioned whether we are looking for 10 people for outreach. Staff response, uncertain with feedback that no more than 20 is desired whether to seek two or 10 new members.
- (b) Onboarding and Development – the facilitator asked how to support members to feel included and help develop their capacity. Group member comments included the following:
  - As new member had to start learning on their own about the committee, people involved – some sort of onboarding of new members that can be

as simple as a one sheet as it took them a long time to figure out the finer points of individual perspective and where they were coming from. Onboarding would help to be an active contributor to the group.

- Discussion around meeting times, and in-person options for the following comments were provided:
  - During the in-person one meeting that was held at Avista it felt good to see faces and get their individual perspective. Once a year everyone gets together so they can start to recognize each other.
  - Good to have meeting option times.
  - Times and virtual work well, and once a year work for them.
  - One member shared they liked the two different meetings; when they can't make one meeting, they have another option.
  - Ask the out-of-town folks how it would work for them.
- (c) The facilitator posed a variety of topics around whom information is shared along with topics of interest for the group to comment on.
- One member commented that learning is great, and the members would like to see ideas from Avista staff for areas of growth for participation in the group.

#### Chat comment(s)

- In this environment, e.g. virtual experience would indicate that over 15 active participants, participation diminishes.
- A group website, and very importantly a glossary and Acronym meaning, would be valuable. Also, a component on the site about ongoing topics/discussions would be helpful.
- All the meeting notes, meeting recordings, and the slide presentations are posted here: [Equity Advisory Group](#). meeting materials back to 2021 are posted here
- Having a simple one-pager on the issues Avista would like this group to share and/or focus on with their constituents or communities would be helpful.
- A member shared that the times and virtual works for them and supports having a once a year, in-person meeting of the group could improve understanding.
- A topic survey with suggestions and space to provide team members with ideas would be nice.

## V. Team Support and Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be in January, and there won't be a meeting in December.
- Members are always welcome to contact Amber or Ana with any questions or needs.