



**Equity Advisory Group – Equity Lens March Session**

Meeting Date: Noon, March 18, 2026

Location: Zoom meeting

**Attendees:**

<i>Facilitator</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>EAG Member</i>	<i>Member Organizations</i>
Ana Matthews		Clyde Abrahamson	Spokane Indian Housing Authority
<b>Avista Team Members</b>		Brook Beeler	Department of Ecology Eastern Region
Kelsey Solberg	3/18/26	Karen Boone	Community Advocate
Amanda Ghering	3/18/26	Margee Chambers	Spokane Clean Air
Kim Boynton		Sandra Childers	Rural Resources - Colville
Jaime St. Peter		Tami Dillion	Providence Healthcare
Kristine Meyer		Andrew Gardner	Spokane Public Schools
		Carmen Groom	SNAP
	3/18/26	KJ January	Spectrum
	3/18/26	Cindy Kimmet	Takesa Village
	3/18/26	Jean Kindem	Aging & Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington
		Connie Kliewer	NEWESD101
	3/18/26	Vladimir Kronin	Slavic Community
	3/18/26	Sue Lani Madsen	Washington Rural Environmental Network (WREN)
		Maliek Martin	Spokane Workforce Council
		Vanessa Strange	Spokane Public Library
	3/18/26	Lynn Suksdorf, Phd	Rural Community Member
	3/18/26	William von Bracht	Othello, school English as 2 <sup>nd</sup> language
		Latrice Williams	Community Member/ WA state board of Equity
		<b>Guests</b>	
		Andrew Reeves, Public Counsel	
		Joshua Dennis, WUTC	

**Agenda**

- I. Welcome & Introductions .....2
- II. Agenda Item I: Equity Considerations in Conservation Potential Assessment .....2
- III. Agenda Item II: Clean Energy Implementation Survey .....6
- IV. Agenda Item III: Energy Education Video .....6
- V. Your Support Team and Next Meeting .....6

## EAG Equity Lens Session Meeting Notes

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

The meeting began with introductions from Equity Advisory Group members and other participants, including representatives from the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and Public Counsel.

Ana Matthews, Customer Engagement Manager led a discussion on sharing joyful examples of equity or inclusion, with participants sharing personal stories, including community events, educational achievements, and international nonprofit work. The group also discussed upcoming events, including a clean energy implementation plan presentation to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, which was approved. No specific action items or decisions were made during this portion of the meeting.

#### **Partner Shares**

1. Avista's Clean Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP) was presented to and approved by the Washington Utilities & Transportation (WUTC); theme of that conversation was community collaboration; grateful to the EAG members for being so significant in the development of the CEIP
2. Takesa Food Bank is growing – that's a win!
3. Spectrum Center upcoming events:
  - a. Wills and Estate: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVr0hwlj1bH/>
  - b. Gayme on (Day Party): <https://www.instagram.com/p/DVrLVVVARhk/>
4. [NCIF](#) was recognized twice last Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>
  - a. Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce awarded NCIF the Community Stewardship award
  - b. Corbin Senior Center also recognized NCIF for supporting their HVAC replacement project; this recognition was through a dinner celebration, and a highlighted on the Saturday morning news.

### **II. Agenda Item I: Equity Considerations in Conservation Potential Assessment**

Kim Boynton, Manager Energy Efficiency Analytics, explained how the CPA evaluates technology changes affecting future energy use by starting with a comprehensive list of measures and filtering them based on technical feasibility, affordability, and cost-effectiveness compared to utility power generation.

Kim addressed questions about incorporating equity considerations, describing three main approaches: segmenting populations using Name Community census tracts as a proxy for low-income areas, and adjusting incremental costs for different customer segments, particularly for low-income customers who may have reduced or zero costs for energy efficiency measures.

**EAG Member Question in Chat:** How does the CPA decide on assumptions regarding changes in technology affecting future use?

**Avista staff response:** The CPA occurs every two years, so it's possible that the list of measures we have today does not include emerging technologies that we don't yet have. As those emerging technologies come to light, they do show up at the "ramp rate" which we will be talking about soon.

**EAG Member Question in Chat:** How do you take into consideration changes in the federal direction regarding energy efficiency and green energy incentive reductions?

**Avista staff response:** Energy efficiency is things above the baseline standard. That movement increases year over year, so you must find things that are MORE efficient. Some administrations might reduce those requirements, and that actually increases our potential based on what we're already doing. In general, we only have to find things in our potential for are more efficient than minimum rule.

### **Equity Considerations**

1. Segmentation based on Named Community Census Tracts
  - a. We have a low-income segment that we break out separately
  - b. We created a model that uses NC census tracts as a proxy for low-income; so instead of just low-income, we're doing NC segmentation
2. Incremental cost – adjusting for specific measures
  - a. Difference in costs between a baseline measure and an efficient measure and are borne by the customer.
3. Ramp rates – adjusting for specific measures
  - a. Relative speed that a measure is adopted over time.
  - b. With NC measures where we adjusted the incremental cost, we can speed up adoption (i.e. we can get more homes insulated faster)

Kim explained the concept of ramp rates in energy measure adoption, describing how they affect the speed at which measures like insulation are implemented over time. Kim discussed how both incremental costs and ramp rates can be adjusted to reflect equity considerations, with lower costs potentially speeding up adoption for certain measures while slower ramp rates could reflect inequitable opportunities for some populations. When Karen asked about the criteria for naming communities, Kim clarified that while income is a factor in census tract segmentation, Named Communities use additional demographic criteria beyond just income levels.

**Member Question:** With the segmentation based on NC Census Tracts – how are those communities determined? What demographics are used?

**Avista staff:** Generally, when we do census tract segmentation, we would look at the average income within the census tracts as compared to FPL and AMI and then determine that as low-income based on that relationship. We then aggregate how many households have low income within our service territory. Then we can look at the potential within that population (rentals, housing type, heating source, etc. Using Named Communities is similar, but income is not the only factor to identify NCs.

**Avista staff:** Two things that factor into Named Communities – first is the Department of Health environmental health disparities map that includes populations adversely affected by fossil fuel pollution and climate change, and tribal, and second is the Vulnerable populations that the EAG helped to define the characteristics which were mapped to census blocks.

**Member Comment:** a considerable amount of people who are white and have low income; when you start looking at equity considerations, the population of Named Communities includes them as well – how do you identify and consider those who are not captured in the averages of this data.

**Avista staff:**

Our NC population increased significantly between our first and second CEIP cycles. We identify Named Communities (NC) using the Washington State DOH Health Disparities Map, which highlights census tracts where households experience multiple, overlapping disparities. The state recently updated this map, and we adopted the new version—expanding our NC designation accordingly. We also use the Justice40 map, which was recently updated as well and added approximately 8,000 additional households. Input from our EAG helped us identify areas not fully captured by the maps, such as Takesa Village.

As a result, our NC population increased from 43% of our customer base in 2021 CEIP to 58% in 2025 CEIP.

We recognize that we cannot holistically reach every household within this expanded NC segment. To address this, we are developing an approach to identify “deepest need” customers within the NC population. We will bring this topic to our EAG for guidance on both identifying these customers and designing responsive programming. This “deepest need” focus helps us achieve the “more inclusive” features in a more targeted and effective way.

**Member Question:** If you’re doing all this design of low-income, if you identify an individual who is an Avista customer and whose usage is outside the norm, is there any way to contact them and advise them on how to reduce their utility cost.

**Avista staff response:** There are two ways this may be addressed. We recently launched a Home Energy Report where customers are sent a personal energy use report of their home compared to similarly structured homes with tips for efficiency. Additionally, a customer may submit a high-bill complaint, and we can look at that bill and their energy use and work through some of the potential issues.

#### **Comments shared in the Chat:**

- We have a great resource online to help with this: [Energy Saving Tools and Services For Your Home | Avista](#)
- The Energy Manager tool will break down usage by appliances and give you tips for saving. It's a great self-service option and a good way to learn about your usage.
- How does the energy manager tool know what appliances are plugged in?

**Participant Question:** Alongside these considerations, is Avista also considering Time of Use (TOU) in the equity of the measures?

**Avista staff:** TOU is Demand Response - not energy efficiency and therefore, not part of the CPA. To make programs and DRs more attractive to certain populations, we might shift these considerations to increase their utilization of those.

If you have ideas that we haven't considered, please share those with us! Reach out to [Kim.Boynton@avistacorp.com](mailto:Kim.Boynton@avistacorp.com).

### **III. Agenda Item II: Clean Energy Implementation Survey**

Ana provided an overview of the improvements to their customer survey, including expanding the online survey language options to Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic, and paper for Marshallese, and adding an incentive where participants can nominate non-profits for \$1,000 grants from the Avista Foundation.

Ana emphasized the need to better represent underserved populations, noting that the previous survey had a low response rate of 1.2% and primarily included Caucasian, English-speaking, college-educated individuals.

The Avista team plans to leverage community partnerships, enhance outreach through social media and newsletters, and make the survey more accessible with simplified language and definitions to better understand customer needs around affordability and clean energy.

The EAG group discussed survey distribution methods, with a member suggesting outreach through community centers, senior programs, food banks, and other local venues to reach technology illiterate individuals.

The EAG group reviewed potential survey marketing messages, with option 1 ("Take our survey to help your favorite nonprofit win a \$1,000 grant") receiving unanimous support.

Ana will send survey communications materials to members around mid-April for distribution.

EAG members recommended Avista consider and implement strategies to increase survey participation among underrepresented, technology-illiterate, disability, and blind communities, including paper surveys, in-person outreach at community centers, and accessible formats (e.g., for blind customers).

**Comments shared in the Chat:**

- 1.2% is not a very representative sampling. Any new strategy to increase the return rate for improved representation?
- Any thoughts to give incentives to those who do a survey?
- With AI, is it possible to create a resident address file for multi-family facilities where Avista knows the bill goes to a landlord or property management company? Then use that list to expand the survey reach?
- Love the multilingual print surveys!
- <identified EAG member>, thank you for bringing up the challenge of technology illiteracy. The assumption that everyone has access to or understands and uses technology creates a barrier to effective communication for many companies and organizations. THANK YOU.
- Why do you care about respondents' sex?
- Do you mean gender or sex?

#### **IV. Agenda Item III: Energy Education Video**

Ana announced a new 30-minute educational video about Avista's utility state and future, which will include Spanish and Russian captions and be distributed through various channels including social media, website, and partner networks.

The new 30-minute public participation video will be emailed to EAG members when completed, and request feedback on dissemination strategies to help maximize viewership. Members are encouraged to share the video with networks to boost participation.

## **V. Your Support Team and Next Meeting**

The group confirmed attendance plans for the upcoming April in-person meeting from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM, with breakfast refreshments and lunch provided.

Ana will send out (or resend) meeting notice/RSVP email for the April in-person meeting with location details and response link.