



Meeting Summary for Avista’s February Equity Lens Sessions (1 & 2)

Meeting Date:	February 26 & 28, 2025
Location:	Zoom Meeting

Avista Equity Advisory Group (EAG) – Equity Lens Sessions

Attendees:

Facilitator	Present	EAG Member	Member Organizations
Amber Lenhart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Andrew Gardner	Spokane Public Schools
Avista Team Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brook Beeler	Department of Ecology Eastern Region
Tamara Bradley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Karen Boone	Community Advocate
Dan Blazquez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	KJ January	Spectrum
Amanda Ghering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Latrice Williams	Vision Properties, WA Office of Equity
Kelly Dengel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lynn Suksdorf, PhD	South Steven’s County Citizen
Ariana Barrey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cindy Kimmet	Takesa Village
Christine Tasche	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sue Lani Madsen	WA Rural Environmental Network
Kristine Meyer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vanessa Strange	Spokane Public Library
Charrissa Bisiar	<input type="checkbox"/>	William von Bracht	Othello, school English as 2nd language
Elizabeth Arnold	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Connie Kliewer	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vanessa Strange	Spokane Public Libraries
		Guests	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joshua Dennis	Washington UTC, Regulatory Analyst
	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Quick recap

Avista presented its customer payment tools and processes, including flexible payment arrangements and energy assistance programs for low-income customers. The EAG also covered additional tools and processes, discussed potential inequities and barriers in customer payments and collections, and suggested improvements for outreach and engagement. The group also explored strategies for promoting Avista's programs, measuring their impact on the community, and scheduling future sessions with reminders about upcoming discussions on the public participation plan.

Next steps

- **Community Engagement:** Avista will explore opportunities to expand sharing informational posters/flyers in public areas, distributing flyers through low-income schools, and participating in community events and school science nights.
- **Consider:** Schedule individual meetings with EAG members to discuss their thoughts and concerns outside of regular meetings.
- **Customer Technology Access:** Avista will research and report on customer technology access, working with the data team to gather relevant information.
- **EAG Meetings:** Avista will propose dates and plan the agenda for an in-person EAG meeting in 2025, incorporating feedback from previous meetings and considering hands-on learning activities.
- **Energy Assistance Programs:** Avista will continue to provide information to local nonprofits and support outreach through targeted communication strategies, such as social media, multilingual promotional materials, and other efforts.

2025 EAG Meeting Scheduling

- **Schedule survey results** revealed that attending members are largely in favor of maintaining the current times and dates.

Avista payment tools and processes summary

- **Avista's Payment Tools and Processes:** Avista provided an overview of its payment tools and processes for customers with past-due balances, including flexible payment arrangements, budget alerts, preferred due dates, and early intervention strategies. They also detailed the multi-step process for unpaid bills, protections during extreme weather events, and special considerations for low-income customers
- **Customer Payment Assistance Process:** The EAG discussed Avista's approach to working with customers who have difficulty paying their bills, including various assistance options and communication tools. Suggestions were made to improve outreach and engagement, including partnering with community organizations.
- **Reducing Past Due Balances:** Avista presented an overview of tools available to reduce past due balances, including the My Energy Discount, Arrearage Management, and Arrearage Forgiveness Plans. They also mentioned the disconnection reduction plan from the 2019 General Rate Case, which aims to reduce the number of non-payment service disruptions.
- **Financial Assistance Tools:** Avista discussed various financial assistance tools, noting that 44% of eligible Washington residential customers received bill assistance as of December 31, 2024. They detailed non-income-based and income-based energy assistance options.
- **Determining Annual Income and Discounts:** Avista clarified the process for determining annual income for discounts. They confirmed that customers don't need to explain their hardship for non-income-based plans.
- **My Energy Discount Program Overview:** Avista discussed participation levels in the My Energy Discount program and explained available tools for customers. They

confirmed automatic enrollment for low-income customers and ongoing promotional efforts.

- **Payment Collections and Disparities:** Avista explained its payment collections process to avoid disconnections and highlighted the importance of customer action.
- **My Energy Discount Program Expansion:** Avista will continue to promote this program through strategic marketing and communications.
- **Community Programs Promotion Strategies:** Avista discussed strategies for promoting their programs. They explored ways to measure the impact of these programs and alleviate the shame associated with past due bills.

