



## Equity Advisory Group – Equity Lens Session

Meeting Date: July 23, 2025

Time: 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

Location: Zoom Meeting

### Attendees:

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

### Agenda

I.	Welcome & Introductions.....	2
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## EAG Equity Lens Session Meeting Notes

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

- Overview of Meeting: Rules & Intent

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

- Connection – What is your favorite season and least favorite season, and why?
- Partner Shares – nothing new to share this month

### **III. Review of Previous Meeting Comments**

- Not applicable this month

### **IV. Agenda Item I – May 2025 EAG Comment & Review**

Company: Compiled comments into six difference themes from May meeting – the first theme is communications and highlighted areas that we're increasing communication channels.

Area	Comment	Avista's Response
Communication Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Remember that different strategies might work better for each community.</li><li>•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).</li><li>•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.</li><li>•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)</li><li>•Consider leveraging sponsorship opportunities to spread awareness and increase visibility of Avista's good work.</li><li>•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</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Various marketing channels</li><li>▪ Video production (MED/NCIF)</li><li>▪ Language strategy</li><li>▪ Discussion around leveraging local free distributed media</li><li>▪ DH partnership</li></ul>

Company: The second theme is messaging with the strongest comment centered around “explaining the why.” Avista is committed to explaining the why and what to share with you how we're improving in this area.

Area	Comment	Avista's Response
Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•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.</li> <li>•Report back to the community how their feedback has made a difference in programs and decisions (e.g., through interim updates and reports).</li> <li>•For meetings or presentations, indicate whether there will be time provided for comments and feedback.</li> <li>•Clearly communicate the anticipated effort associated with participation (e.g., whether there will be group activities/discussions, the amount of time needed, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ EAG action review</li> <li>▪ Committed to explain the "why"</li> <li>▪ Assess opportunities to proactively share information about public filings with advisory groups.</li> <li>▪ Identify effective methods—such as email updates, meeting briefings, or website notifications—to ensure timely and accessible communication.</li> </ul>

Company: The third them is convenience and how we can engage with customers more effectively. We're accountable for how Avista manages rate payer funds, so need to be cautious without spending money. We'd like to have more discussion with the EAG about how to create quality engagement without giving things away.

Member: There is an assumption that Avista is so big and as a utility, it has intrinsic power, and that hearing from people doesn't have an impact. And if feedback is provided, it's really not wanted or taken seriously – it's turned in but not read. I've heard this commentary at least 13 times, and that the consumer's opinion has little impact on the commission and the utility. If someone is filtering a message, it impacts their perception of the request and the company.

Company: Thank you for that comment. Avista is a mid-sized company and we're trying to fix that perspective through our advisory groups. We're showing that we want to overcome these barriers through the public participation plan and the Clean Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP). Can the EAG members help us change this perception? And, the work we're doing with DH, how can we become a better partner in the community with organizations? We'd like to change this, but we need your help. This group exists for that exact purpose. The CEIP will have a comment matrix – here's what's been said and here's how we've responded.

Member: If you can share that Avista listened to and heard, then you can say this was the message that was brought to us with our services. Then, you can share the change that's occurred on the other side. To show that publicly could be helpful in saying Avista isn't a monopoly that doesn't care. I want to comment about gift cards, I know going into Named Communities, the way to draw a crowd is to give a \$25 gift card. That will bring people to the event that wouldn't otherwise come. Sometimes a discount on your bill doesn't resonate the same as a \$25 gift card to Safeway.

Company: For our larger events we could try gift cards or provide food. But we have to be good stewards and figure out what works for what community. It might not be necessary for one, but necessary for another.

Member: I would like to second what Karen said about the value that we're gained from the group and then tell the story of how Avista reacted – that's powerful. Cautionary note on the gift card, it's tricky when they give a gift card – make it local. Be careful and think about the local audience.

Area	Comment	Avista's Response
Convenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incentivize participation by providing gift cards, bill credits, drawings for prizes, etc.</li> <li>▪ Consider providing free childcare, activities for kids, and other support for caregivers.</li> <li>▪ Provide food as an incentive and to offset competing priorities, especially for families and caregivers.</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ Provide multiple ways to participate, (e.g., virtually, rebroadcast, etc.)</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer affordability and Avista's responsibility</li> <li>▪ Swag to outreach events</li> <li>▪ Meeting customers where they are at</li> <li>▪ Tracking outreach</li> <li>▪ Consider activities – talk about what we do have</li> <li>▪ Advisory group date, time, and variance</li> <li>▪ Ceta website (recording, notes, upcoming events)</li> </ul>

The fourth area is community partnerships – with bi-directional relationships. We've heard from you and we're going to partner with DH on how to build out the community partnership model.

Member: You have people on your EAG that can connect you with community groups and peoples – places where they already have a group of people and I think developing a relationship with those entities could allow opportunities for education and surveys – really a multitude of things. For example, the community meetings that take place around the noon – at the senior center where people are coming for lunch – Avista could share the meeting agenda and educate a mass of people without much effort.

Company: I agree and it's going to be a learning opportunity for Avista to understand these communities, organizations and the organization's services.

Area	Comment	Avista's Response
Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leverage partnerships to reach more people and grow visibility of Avista programs and opportunities.</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ Consider creating an event kit to respond quickly to short notice invitations to community events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partnership Program (DH)</li> <li>▪ Bi-directional relationship</li> <li>▪ Outreach season</li> <li>▪ Outreach coordination</li> </ul>

Company: The fifth area is inclusion & accessibility – we do want to have honest dialog and make an inclusive environment. We want to make a safe place, but it's a tricky sometimes in a public forum. This month's slides were shared prior to the meeting in email, addressing the "sending materials in advance." We're also looking at creating some support for new members and highlighting an EAG member each month.

Area	Comment	Avista's Response
Inclusion & Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ Avoid a sense of urgency and allow for enough time to gather feedback and survey responses.</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Setting the stage (psychological safety)</li> <li>▪ Respecting the pause</li> <li>▪ Sending materials in advance</li> <li>▪ One-on-one</li> <li>▪ Story/Journey of EAG</li> <li>▪ EAG member spotlight</li> </ul>

Company: The sixth area is survey quality. We'd like to pilot test with this group for our next CEIP survey to get stronger engagement.

Area	Comment	Avista's Response
Survey Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Make it clear that demographic questions are anonymous (if this is the case) and explain why the data are useful.</li><li>•Make the first three questions count to capture attention.</li><li>•Avoid biasing surveys and using polarizing language; consider pilot testing wording and questions with different audiences.</li><li>•Use simple language and keep surveys under five minutes.</li><li>•Ensure surveys are available in the languages spoken by the audiences you hope to reach.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ We reviewed and discussed the feedback related to survey quality and are committed to incorporating those suggestions into the design and delivery of our clean energy surveys.</li></ul>

Company: Back to the one-on-one comment, we'd like to start with an onboarding process. This will be a topic that we'd like your input to develop – it will be a topic in the near future.



V.    **Agenda Item II – Multi Language Update**

Company: We provided an update in October 2024 on this topic, so this will be an update on the MLS efforts. This group supports offering services in languages other than English on the web, Avista’s outage map, and customer service calls.

These were the recommendations in 2024 – the EAG supported strategy #1. Russian is the third most spoken language in Avista’s service territory, and implementing Russian should take less time than implementing Spanish did. The second project – adding Spanish to the automated customer service automated phone system. It’s approved internally, but the project timeline is pending, and more information will be shared when available.

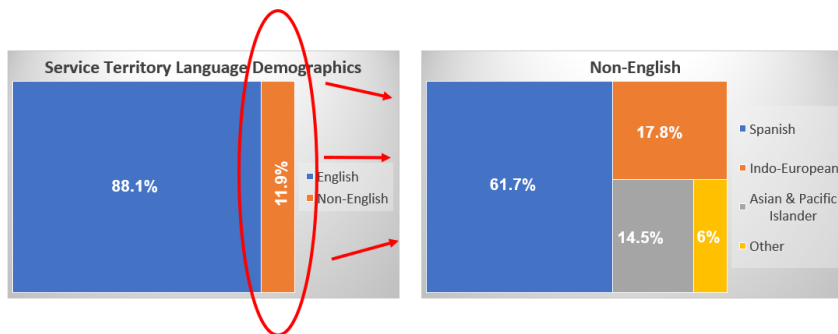
Member: Do we know how many people speak Spanish or what percentage?  
 Company: Yes, we have an upcoming slide for that by census tract.

## Recommendations

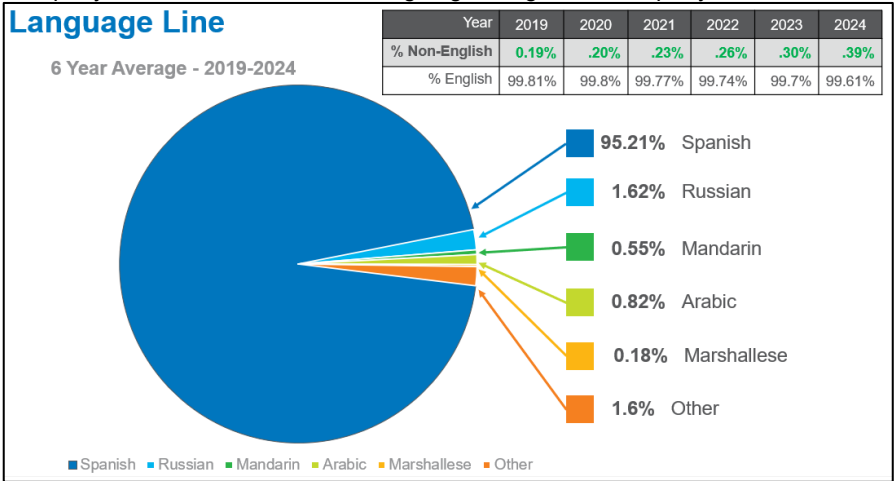
- 1) [Strategy] As a utility, we are adopting **Spanish** as the second official language for customer facing channels and customer services. We understand we have diverse linguistic customers living in our service territory, and our approach is to focus on the largest non-English linguistic customer demographic – Spanish – and continue to evaluate other languages to eliminate communication gaps and improve services. **[adopted – efforts are active and ongoing]**
- 2) [Project] The multi-language team recommends **Russian** as the third language to be released on myavista.com following phase 1 (Spanish) business requirements. **[approved – release pending Q3 2025]**
- 3) [Project] The multi-language team recommends to move forward with the implementation of a **Spanish** automated phone system option. Our numbers show there are multiple opportunities to increase self-serve options through this customer facing channel. **[approved – discovery complete, timeline pending]**

Company: 11.9% speaking something other than English, and of the 11.9%, 62% speak Spanish and the following breakdown:

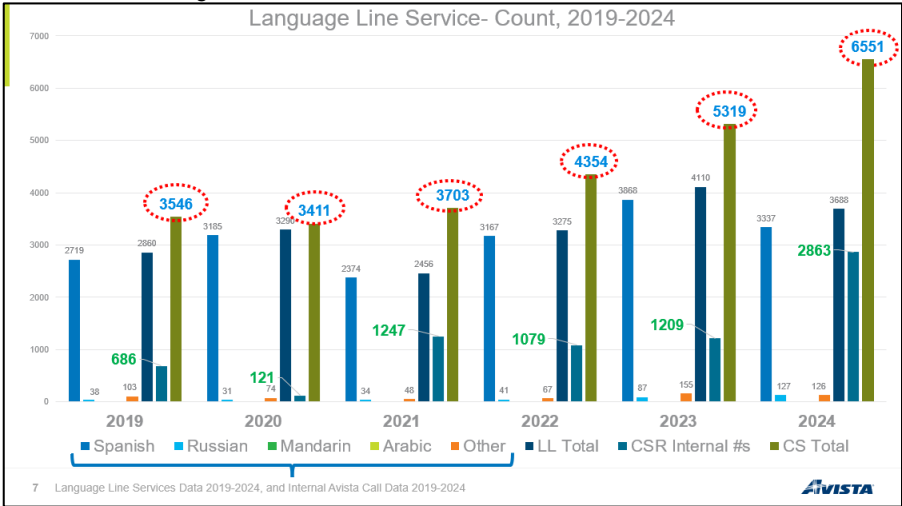
## Service Territory Language Demographics – 2018-2022



Company: This chart shows the calls going through our third-party translation services:

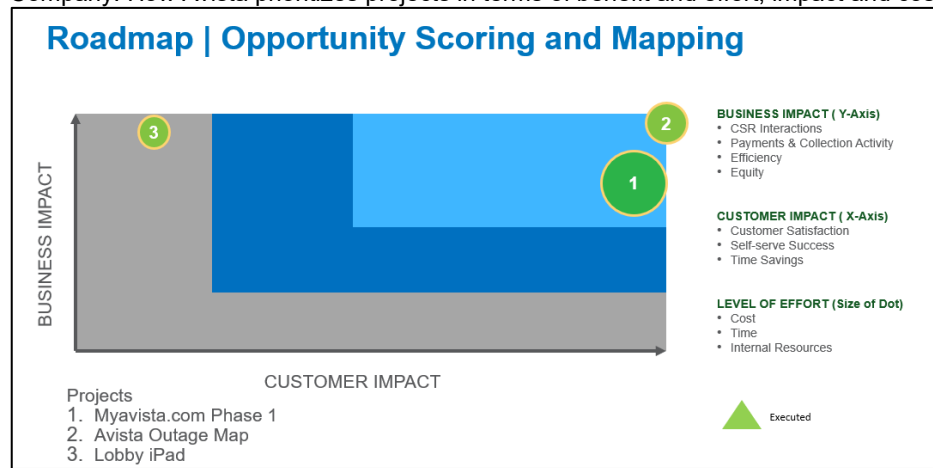


Company: This is a different view on the same information – and the multi-language calls are increasing:





Company: How Avista prioritizes projects in terms of benefit and effort, impact and cost.



Company: This is the prioritized list of MLS efforts and work is continuing in this space. And we'll have more EAG conversations with the EAG about prioritization efforts.



Company: This shows the languages in Avista's service territories and what opportunity for language translation is available for each project. As a company, Avista would like to have a wholistic experience with language translation – from website, to bill, to a phone call, etc. – but this will take time.

PROJECT	SPANISH	RUSSIAN	ARABIC	MANDARIN	UKRAINIAN	VIETNAMESE	MARSHALLESE	DARI
MYAVISTA.COM	April-24							
SPANISH IVR								
AVISTA BILLS								
EMAIL - COMMUNICATIONS								
NOTICES & LETTERS	August-21	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
TEXT CAMPAIGNS								
MOBILE APP	+		+	+				
CUSTOMER PREFERENCES								
REBATES								
IN PERSON PAYMENT SOLUTION	September-24							
STORM CENTER	June-24							
BIDGELY								
Non-HTML (Web)								
INSERTS								
TWO WAY TEXT								

Executed  
 Available  
 Not Available  
 Dependency  
 Needs More Discovery

Member: As this project advances and Avista works on language issues, a thought that struck me: in my health insurance statement, they send out a one-page inclusion for multiple languages. Maybe Avista should consider a one-page insert in the bill like this. That sort of communication will catch their eye, and it might provide a pathway for solving this issue for Avista. Customers might not even know that language services are offered.

Commented [KD1]: Action item

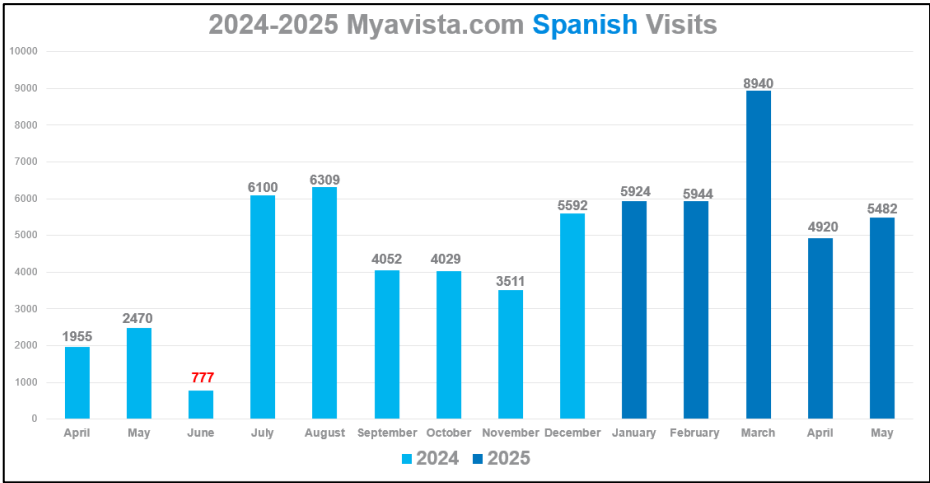
Company: This is a good idea – we'll take as an action item

Sue Lani: As we're talking about ways to get the word out to people . . . When I received the Avista bill, I didn't actually see it. It would be good to know what percentage of people get the paper bill and what person actually gets their bill (vs. renter).

Company: That's a good call out and we can add as action item. We can do more for customers when we know what language they prefer.

Commented [KD2]: Action item

Member: Preferred language and preferred method of connecting.



Company: This is giving an update on our Russian translation efforts and should be live by the end of the year at Avista.com

PROJECT	SPANISH	RUSSIAN	ARABIC	MANDARIN	UKRAINIAN	VIETNAMESE	MARSHALLESE	DARI
MYAVISTA.COM	April-24	August-25						
SPANISH IVR								
AVISTA BILLS								
EMAIL - COMMUNICATIONS								
NOTICES & LETTERS	August-21	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
TEXT CAMPAIGNS								
MOBILE APP	+		+	+				
CUSTOMER PREFERENCES								
REBATES								
IN PERSON PAYMENT SOLUTION	September-24	August-25						
STORM CENTER	June-24							
BIDGELY								
Non-HTML (Web)								
INSERTS								
TWO WAY TEXT								

▲ Executed

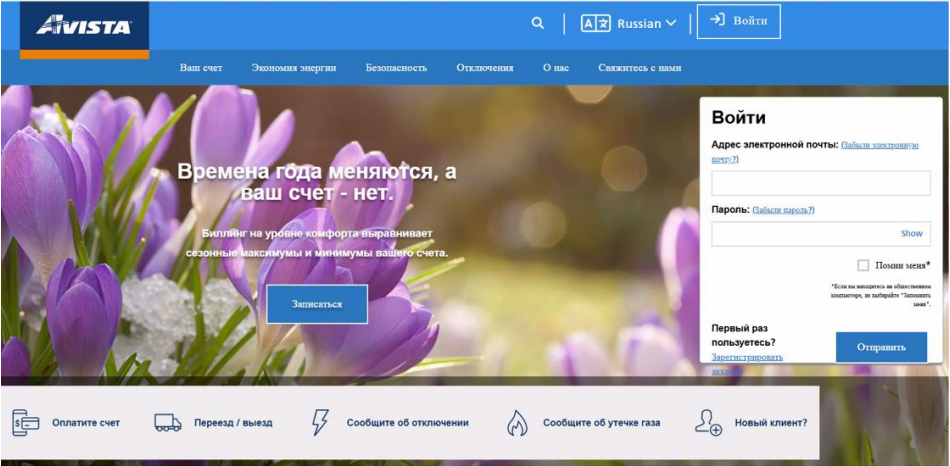
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▲ Not Available

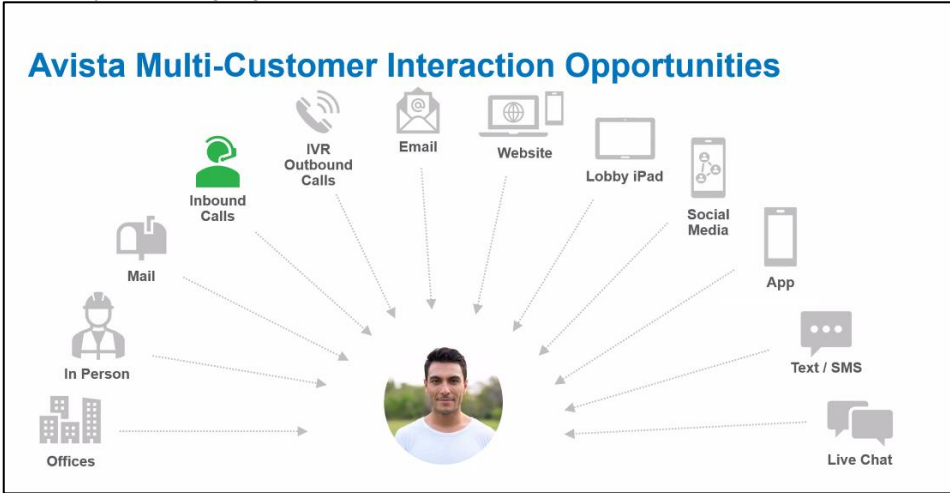
▲ Dependency

▲ Needs More Discovery

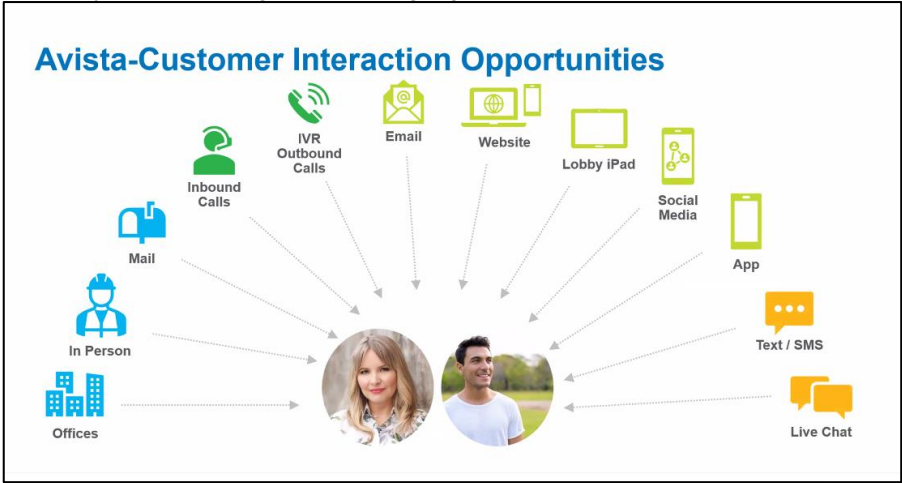
Company: Preview of the Russian website:



Company: Prior language interaction opportunities prior to the MLS:



Company: Desired end goal for all language interactions:



Company: We're working on a holistic language approach for customers

### Multi-Language Roadmap

2005 to Present	2021	2023	2024	2025	Est. 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ MLS CSRs, 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Interpreters, and Text Telephone Devices (TTY/TDD)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Past due &amp; Final Notice <span>Spanish</span></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Multi-Language Strategy Team</li> <li>✓ Multi-Language Mobile App Discovery</li> <li>✓ Multi-Language Web Discovery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Myavista.com <span>Spanish</span></li> <li>✓ Storm Center, Outage Map <span>Spanish</span></li> <li>✓ In-Person Payment Solution <span>Spanish</span></li> <li>✓ MLS Strategy Adoption(s)</li> <li>✓ CSR Pilot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Myavista.com <span>Russian</span></li> <li>In-Person Payment Solution <span>Russian</span></li> <li>Customer Emails, <span>Spanish</span></li> <li>Safety Collateral – Outreach <span>Spanish, Russian</span></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Automated Inbound Voice <span>Spanish</span></li> <li>Mobile App Architecture Discovery</li> </ul>

## VI. Questions and Discussion

### Questions and Discussion

- ☐ What clarifying questions or curiosities do you have about the presentation?
- ☐ What disparities, root factors, or inequities (historic and current) are related to this topic?
- ☐ How could Avista improve engagement strategies related to this topic, if at all?
- ☐ What new ways could help measure and track benefits and reduced burdens related to this topic?
- ☐ What steps, practices, or policies could help reduce future inequities related to this topic?

Member: The presentation on Language was very informative, and highly positive. Thank you for sharing all of this today!

Member: Everything I heard today was encouraging – that we ask for our feedback and you listen. Today was validation for participating with this group. Thank you. You want to know your time and energy well spent, and Avista does an excellent job of putting it into practice. Going back to my earlier comment, the general public doesn't understand what Avista does – they just know they have to pay their bill. I think as we look to ensure Avista outreach is equitable, that you don't forget that although 81% of people who speak English – so many of Avista's customers lack literacy around what we do and why.

Member – I echo what's been said today. There are inequities that are hard to address, but it's good that it's acknowledged. Transparency is the first step, and it helps.

Member – It's going to be interesting with 2025 with the different languages – if it increases or stays the same.

Company – It's "a build it and it will come" model. Once we offered dedicated Spanish line, we have an increase in Spanish calls.

## VII. Your Support Team and Next Meeting

- Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday August 20 and Friday August 22.
- 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](mailto:ceta@avistacorp.com)