

**Exhibit A – Joint Parties’ Responses to Staff’s Questions**  
Docket U-210595

- 1. The Commission's Order 02 approving the Extended Interim Agreement expressed a desire for a permanent agreement to be filed at the end of the 2023-2024 term. Do the Parties intend to file a permanent agreement or another interim agreement?**

The Joint Parties believe that the Funding Agreement will serve as a “permanent agreement” in the sense that its terms are intended to endure unless and until circumstances warrant a change. To ensure timely review of provisions, the Funding Agreement is subject to a three-year term. However, this provision is intended to operate as an opportunity to consider improvements to the Funding Agreement as opposed to an intent to terminate or substantially modify the Funding Agreement at the end of the designated term.

- a. If filing an interim agreement, how long is the proposed term of the agreement and can Parties indicate when they intend to request a permanent program/agreement?**

See response above.

- 2. Utility signatories, please provide the following information regarding participatory funding budgets, requests, and funding provided:**

- a. Total dollars budgeted for each year of the program, including total budget and sub-fund budgets**

*Avista* – per the Funding Agreement, \$300,000 is available annually from Avista for Participating Organizations. The amount in each sub-fund is as follows: (1) \$90,000 for the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund, (2) \$200,000 for the Customer Representation Sub-Fund, and (3) \$10,000 for the General Outreach Fund.

*NW Natural* – per the Funding Agreement, \$72,735 is available annually from NW Natural for Participating Organizations. The amount in each sub-fund is as follows: (1) \$21,821 for the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund, (2) \$48,490 for the Customer Representation Sub-Fund, and (3) \$2,424 for the General Outreach Fund.

*Cascade* – per funding agreement, \$265,512 is available annually from Cascade for Participating Organizations. The amount in each sub-fund is as follows: (1) \$79,654 for the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund, (2) \$177,008 for the Customer Representation Sub-Fund, and (3) \$8,850 for the General Outreach Fund.

*PacifiCorp* – per the Funding Agreement, \$300,000 is available annually from PacifiCorp for Participating Organizations. The amount in each sub-fund is as follows: (1) \$90,000 for the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund, (2) \$200,000 for the Customer Representation Sub-Fund, and (3) \$10,000 for the General Outreach Fund.

*PSE* – per the Interim Funding Agreement, \$300,000 was available for 2022 from PSE for Participating Organizations. The amount in each sub-fund was as follows: (1) \$100,000 for the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund, (2) \$200,000 for the Customer Representation Sub-Fund. Per the Extended Interim Funding Agreement, \$400,000 is available annually, for both 2023 and 2024, from PSE for Participating Organizations. The amount in each sub-fund each year is as follows: (1) \$200,000 for the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund and (2)\$200,000 for the Customer Representation Sub-Fund.

**b. Total dollars disbursed to intervenors, provided in total and broken down by sub-fund**

*Avista* – Since inception of the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement, Avista has paid a total of \$149,340 out of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund with payments to AWEC, NWECA, The Energy Project, and Small Business Utility Advocates.<sup>1</sup> The \$149,340 was paid out in 2023 for work done on the Company’s 2022 General Rate Case. Avista has made no other payments outside of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund or for any other matter than its 2022 General Rate Case.

*NW Natural* – Since the inception of the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement, NW Natural has not made any payments. NW Natural has not filed a general rate case in Washington during that time.

*Cascade* - Since inception of the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement, Cascade has paid a total of \$75,250 out of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund with payments to AWEC and The Energy Project. The \$75,250 was paid out in 2022 for work done on the Company’s 2021 General Rate Case. Cascade has made no other payments outside of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund or for any other matter than its 2021 General Rate Case.

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<sup>1</sup> Dockets UE-220053, UG-220054, UE210854 (Consolidated), Order 12/06, March 2, 2023.

*PacifiCorp:*

Year	Intervenor	PO Sub-Fund	CR Sub-Fund
2022	TEP		\$8905
	AWEC		\$8390.60
2023	TEP		\$50000
	AWEC		\$66000
	NWEC		\$20045

*PSE* - For the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement, PSE has paid a total of \$280,331. \$175,331 was paid out of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund with payments to AWEC, CENSE, NWEC, The Energy Project (TEP). \$105,000 was paid out of the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund with payments to Puyallup Tribe of Indians (PTOI) and Front and Centered (F&C). For the Extended Interim Participatory Funding Agreement, PSE has paid a total of \$30,000 so far. \$30,000 was paid out of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund to The Energy Project (TEP).

**c. Total dollars requested per year, provided in total and broken down by sub-fund**

*Avista* – see part b above.

*NW Natural* – see part b above.

*Cascade* – see part b above.

*PacifiCorp* – see part b above.

*PSE* - For 2022, total dollars requested were \$283,658. \$175,331 was requested out of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund. \$108,327 was requested out of the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund, with \$3,327 being disallowed by the Commission. For 2023, total dollars requested were \$284,650. \$130,000 was requested out of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund. \$154,650 was requested out of the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund. For 2024, total dollars requested were \$247,516. \$200,000 was requested out of the Customer Representation Sub-Fund. \$47,516 was requested out of the Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund.

**d. Total number of funding requests made per year and total number of requests fulfilled**

*Avista* – see part b above.

*NW Natural* – see part b above.

*Cascade* – see part b above.

*PacifiCorp* – see part b above.

*PSE* - For 2022, there were 9 total funding requests. For 2022, there were 9 funding requests fulfilled. For 2023, there were 5 total funding requests. For 2023, there has been 1 funding request fulfilled the remaining requests are pending approval from the Commission. For 2024, there were 4 total funding requests. For 2024, there were zero funding requests fulfilled as all are pending approval from the Commission.

**e. List of dockets for which funding was requested and provided (include brief description of filing, such as "2022 GRC," etc.) and total dollars distributed for each docket**

**i. Please indicate if funds were jointly by multiple utilities for an individual docket/proceeding (i.e. if funds were requested to participate in a policy docket, rulemaking, or any other proceeding in which multiple utilities are involved)**

*Avista* – Dockets UE-220053 et al., Avista's 2022 General Rate Case, \$149,340.

*NW Natural* – N/A

*Cascade* – UG-210755

*PacifiCorp* - 2021 CEIP (UE-210829); 2023 GRC (UE-230172/UE-210852 consolidated)

*PSE* - Dockets UE-220066/UG-220067 et al., PSE's 2022 General Rate Case, \$215,331 + \$30,000 = \$245,331 distributed; Docket UE-210795 et al., PSE's Clean Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP), \$65,000 distributed; Docket UE-230470 et al., PSE's Climate Commitment Act (CCA) compliance, Pending

approval. \$0 distributed; Docket UG-230393, PSE's Tacoma LNG tariff schedule, Pending approval. \$0 distributed; Dockets UE-240004/UG-240005 et al., PSE's 2024 General Rate Case. Pending approval. \$0 distributed.

**f. Was the "safety valve" provision for increasing budgets ever exercised? If so, please elaborate.**

*Avista* – To date, the Commission has not issued an order implicating the “safety valve” provision for Avista. However, in Avista’s 2024 general rate case proceeding, AWEC requested that the Commission exercise its discretion to approve a \$5,000 increase to Avista’s Customer Representation Sub-fund, which was otherwise exhausted by other intervenor requests, in order to reimburse AWEC for the cost of obtaining an Aurora license for use in Avista’s rate case. AWEC’s request is still pending.

*NW Natural* – The “safety valve” provision has not been exercised for NW Natural.

*Cascade* – The “safety valve” provision has not been exercised for Cascade.

*PacifiCorp* – This is not applicable as PacifiCorp has not exceeded budget in any year.

*PSE* – To date, the Commission has not issued an order implicating the “safety valve” provision for PSE’s Customer Representation Sub-fund. However, in PSE’s 2024 general rate case proceeding, AWEC requested that the Commission exercise its discretion to approve a \$5,000 increase to PSE’s Customer Representation Sub-fund, which was otherwise exhausted by other intervenor requests, in order to reimburse AWEC for the cost of obtaining an Aurora license for use in PSE’s rate case. AWEC’s request is still pending. The Prioritized Organizations Sub-Fund was oversubscribed by \$5,000 under the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement, which did not include the “safety valve” provision.

**3. Please generally address the Commission’s goals to (1) bring new participants into proceedings and (2) increase participation of existing intervenors.**

The Joint Parties generally agree that the Customer Representation Sub-fund funding has largely been provided to intervenors that were involved in proceedings prior to the establishment of the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement, which was contemplated by RCW 80.28.430 and the Commission’s Policy Statement in this proceeding. The Joint Parties intend that bringing new participants into proceedings will be aided by the establishment of

the General Outreach Fund available to Prioritized Organizations, with the intent to have dedicated fund amounts available in advance of outreach efforts. Having funds available in advance of efforts and without the need to track outreach by utility, which has proven challenging, will facilitate in the use of these funds to bring new participants into proceedings.

Though participatory funding is beneficial once organizations are deciding whether to join a proceeding before the Commission, there still remain barriers of entry and opportunities for the Commission to improve outreach. Please see Front and Centered's response to question 6 below.

Please also see responses from intervenors to question 4 below.

Finally, the Joint Parties also support a full evaluation of the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement to be undertaken during the term of the next three-year funding cycle. The Joint Parties recommend that the UTC initiate and lead the evaluation to consider whether the current agreement is fulfilling the statutory intent and purpose for intervenor funding.

**4. For intervenors and participants active in UTC proceedings before the Participatory Funding Agreement, did availability of funding increase participation? Please provide any quantitative, qualitative, or anecdotal data to support a response.**

Each intervenor participant's response is as follows:

*AWEC* - availability of participatory funding increased AWEC's ability to engage in more proceedings and matters, including matters addressed at open meetings, than would otherwise be the case without participatory funding. AWEC has an annual budget for participation in WUTC proceedings and must make decisions about if and how much to participate based on its budget. The addition of participatory funding has allowed AWEC to engage in important matters before the WUTC aside from general rate cases and other ratemaking proceedings, including policy dockets and rulemaking proceedings. This includes PacifiCorp's Clean Energy Implementation Plan process, and a number of PSE dockets associated with power costs and Climate Commitment Act implementation. It has also allowed AWEC to expand the subjects it covers in testimony. Without participatory funding, AWEC likely would not have sponsored testimony on PSE's and Avista's cost of capital in these utilities' most recent general rate cases.

*NWEC* – the availability of participatory funding has increased NWEC's participation in proceedings before the Commission by improving NWEC's ability to secure legal representation, engage outside experts, and redirect its own resources toward support staffing on other issues before the Commission, regional issues, and work in other states. For example, NWEC engaged outside experts to testify on the social cost of greenhouse gases, demand response, and equity issues in the PSE Clean Energy Implementation Plan docket.

NWEC also used participatory funding to help defray legal representation costs in general rate cases for Avista and PacifiCorp, and PacifiCorp's Clean Energy Implementation Plan. As the issues before the Commission have increased in complexity, participatory funding has enabled NWEC to engage on more issues than it otherwise would in any given proceeding.

*TEP* - TEP has significantly increased its participation in general rate cases, and has participated Clean Energy Implementation Plan proceedings, since Participatory Funding became available. TEP engaged outside expert witnesses, provided testimony on multiple issues, and engaging in settlement discussions concerning more issues and at a greater level of detail than was previously possible. For example, in 2022 and 2023, TEP provided outside expert witness testimony on performance-based ratemaking and time-varying rates in, for TEP, an unprecedented level of detail. Then, in 2024, TEP provided outside expert testimony with a thorough analysis of the data available as performance metrics from utilities, as well as a detailed analysis of the impact of inflation and increased basic charges on low-income customers' bills. Further, in 2024 Participatory Funding enabled TEP to provide more thorough testimony and legal briefing on a utilities' creative ratemaking proposals, including accelerated depreciation, performance incentive mechanisms, return on power purchase agreements, and construction work in progress. Without Participatory Funding, TEP's engagement on these issues would have been cursory, if even possible.

*Front and Centered* – Front and Centered does not have a specific budget set aside for engagement before the WUTC. By having a participatory funding agreement, Front and Centered was able to access funds for recent PSE rate cases and adjudicating the company's first Clean Energy Implementation Plan. That the funds helped to pay for experts to engage and provide testimony is a large benefit: from the highly specialized subject matter experts to the community experts, Front and Centered's testimony was more detailed than would have otherwise been possible sans funding. In general, without participatory funding, Front and Centered would likely not have participated in these matters.

*Small Business Utility Advocates (SBUA)* – SBUA did not actively participate in WUTC proceedings prior to the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement. However, once the interim agreement became available, SBUA was able to participate in the Avista 2022 General Rate Case. Access to intervenor funding allowed SBUA to participate in that proceeding, supporting testimony on cost allocation and rate design issues affecting small business customers. SBUA notes, however, that although the funding made its participation possible, it was not entirely sufficient to cover the full breadth of issues SBUA would have liked to address.

- 5. For intervenors and participants who are new to UTC proceedings since the Participatory Funding Agreement was reached, please identify instances of participation and how or if the agreement enabled participation. Please provide any quantitative, qualitative, or anecdotal data to support a response.**

*Front and Centered*—Front and Centered had not participated in a rate case prior to the Participatory Funding Agreement. However, the organization had engaged in rulemakings

(e.g., CETA rulemaking) and other dockets. Since the Participatory Funding Agreement was reached, Front and Centered has participated in two rate cases and one CEIP adjudication. As noted in our response to question 4 above, our ability to participate in these proceedings was enabled by the funding available through the agreement.

*SBUA* – SBUA’s first intervention in Washington State occurred after the Participatory Funding Agreement became available. Specifically, SBUA participated in Avista’s 2022 General Rate Case, in which SBUA addressed issues of rate design, cost allocation, and small business customer impacts. This participation was directly enabled by the availability of funding; absent that support, SBUA would not have the necessary resources to advocate for small business customer interests.

- 6. Participants/intervenors, please address the following topics as it relates to the Interim Participatory Funding Agreement: (1) administrative burden of requesting and receiving funding; (2) sufficiency and availability (i.e. provided on timely basis) of funding; (3) barriers other than funding that currently/still exist to participation; (4) level of participation; (5) availability of resources to understand involvement in Commission processes; (6) any other relevant insight or feedback.**

*AWEC* – AWEC finds that the administrative burden of requesting and receiving funding to be generally reasonable, except for occasional delays in having funding requests approved. For example, in both PSE’s and Avista’s 2024 general rate cases, AWEC requested an increase to PSE’s and Avista’s respective Customer Representation Sub-Funds due to the cost of obtaining an Aurora license. As of the date of this filing, these requests are still pending. AWEC generally finds participatory funding to be sufficient and available except for PSE’s Customer Representation Sub-Fund, hence its support for an increase to PSE’s Customer Representation Sub-fund. AWEC has not experienced barriers other than funding that currently/still exist to participation as an organization and would defer to the experiences of other organizations. AWEC’s level of participation has been extensive. AWEC routinely and substantively participates in each utility’s general rate case proceedings and major ratemaking proceedings. In addition, AWEC has been engaged in several policy and rulemaking proceedings, mostly recently including proceedings aimed at implementing legislation such as the CCA, CETA and ESHB 1589. As an organization that participated in Commission proceedings and processes prior to participatory funding, AWEC’s understanding and involvement in Commission processes and proceedings pre-dated participatory funding. Additional insights and feedback from AWEC are set forth in the “Further Process” section of the Joint Petition.

*NWEC* - NWEC finds that the administrative burden of requesting and receiving funding remains higher than it should be. NWEC continues to recommend that the Commission develop template forms and post them on its website for organizations to use to request intervenor funding so that organizations do not need to create, maintain, and update their own templates or secure legal assistance to apply. Concerning sufficiency and availability, NWEC



recommends that the Commission adopt internal guidelines to improve the timeliness of decisions on intervenor funding requests. Concerning other barriers, NWECA continues to see a need for a more focused effort to engage prioritized organizations in the Commission's processes. We would welcome the opportunity to coordinate with the appropriate Commission staff on how to help expand participation in the next round of participatory funding.

*TEP*

**(1) administrative burden of requesting and receiving funding;**

TEP developed templates for the submission of required documents, which has made the submission of required documents fairly straightforward. However, there is no location where funding requests are compiled. So for each case in which TEP intends to make request funding, TEP informally confers with other parties that regularly request funding to inquire what previous requests have been made of that utility's fund. This process could be streamlined if, as described in the petition, the Commission developed a public website listing the amount of requested and remaining Sub-Fund amounts.

Recently, the Commission has granted case certification at pre-hearing conferences and then memorialized the decision in pre-hearing conference orders. TEP appreciates the Commission's work to incorporate the case certification process into existing adjudicatory processes, which streamlines the process and reduces work for the Commission and parties.

**(2) sufficiency and availability (i.e. provided on timely basis) of funding;**

In years where a utility files a general rate case, there has typically been funding available for the general rate case, but not other proceedings. The available funding has been sufficient to substantially increase TEP's ability to participate in general rate cases, but not other proceedings. However, PSE's customer access sub-fund was insufficient considering the complexity of and number of parties involved in PSE's cases, therefore PSE and the participating parties agree to increase PSE's fund.

To TEP's knowledge, no party has yet received funding for a non-adjudicatory proceeding, and TEP's requests for such funding remain outstanding before the Commission. For example, on September 29, 2022, TEP requested case certification for the Credit and Collections Rulemaking, Docket U-210800; the Commission did not respond to TEP's request. In PSE's Climate Commitment Act tariff revision, Docket UG-230470, TEP requested case certification on July 24, 2023, and then submitted a proposed budget and request for payment on October 13, 2023. A year later, on October 18, 2024, the Commission granted TEP case certification; the Commission has not yet acted on TEP's proposed budget and request for fund grant.

The uncertainty or unpredictability of funding for non-adjudicatory proceedings is an open question that parties and the Commission should explore, especially in context of expanding participation in UTC proceedings to new parties with specialized interests to represent. Rulemakings and non-adjudicatory proceedings may offer a more accessible entry-point for parties new to the regulatory space or those with limited capacity or scope who wish to make an impact. However, parties must be able to make an informed decision about the resources and options at their disposal in order to participate. In TEP's experience so far, the navigability of Participatory Funding has hinged on our previous experience in the regulatory sphere. TEP regularly makes challenging decisions about which issues to engage in based on capacity and expectations of workload informed by our prior experience. We also have some internal resources to cover additional costs while waiting several months for funding to come through. It's unlikely that new potential intervenors will be similarly situated. Hence, TEP is not surprised that the existence of the agreement hasn't spurred new intervenors. In order for Participatory Funding to reach its potential, we must make sure the path to receive it is transparent and reliable.

*Front and Centered* - Front and Centered finds the administrative burden of seeking funding for particular matters to be acceptable, though would note that it would likely be considered burdensome to organizations less familiar with the UTC process. A webform that automatically notifies the Commission and relevant utility would be easier than sending a more formalized request.

In the case of general outreach, however, the administrative burden is much too high. The prior agreement required an organization seeking funding for outreach to attribute costs to specific utility sub-funds but provided minimal guidance on how to allocate percentages based on the outreach being done. This is why Front and Centered has proposed language amending the agreement to contain a General Outreach fund with a specific sub-fund for Prioritized Organizations—this fund has modified request requirements.

Funding is only one of the many barriers of access to the UTC proceedings. The UTC, while it has begun to perform outreach activities, can still do a much better job of engaging highly impacted communities and vulnerable populations in general education about the Commission and its responsibilities, general education around energy regulation, and general education about how to get involved in matters before the UTC.

Even then, there are barriers to entry when utilities submit rate cases that rely upon an extraordinary number of testimonies, which makes it difficult for prioritized organizations to track the multitude of issues pertaining to matters of equity and affordability.

*SBUA* – From SBUA's perspective, the administrative steps to request and receive funding have been manageable, though we relied on our prior intervenor experience in other jurisdictions. Generally, the amount of funding available for SBUA to participate in was insufficient to allow full engagement in Avista's 2022 GRC. That said, with the help of some

funding, SBUA was able to engage and provide testimony on cost allocation, rate design, and cost-of-service issues.

**7. If Participants that are signatories to the agreement did not request funding at any point during the effective years of the agreement, then please explain why not.**

*Spark Northwest* - Spark Northwest engages with overburdened communities to implement clean energy plans aligned with their cultural values. In general, the groups we work with are juggling multiple priorities, responding to the immediate impacts of environmental and social injustices. Utility regulation is not typically top of mind. That said, the people we work with are frequently interested in ways we can make energy benefits and burdens more fair.

Spark Northwest has not yet applied for participatory funding for three reasons:

- i. One is bandwidth. The majority of our 11-person team implements clean energy programs and projects. We have one policy-focused staff member who advocates for policy solutions based on feedback from our partners. His resources are spread across advocacy in Oregon and Washington.
- ii. We are most interested in participating in general, non-adjudicated proceedings with a focus on energy equity. Since the creation of the interim agreement, there have been few such proceedings.
- iii. We also understand that when other advocates requested funding for participation in non-adjudicated proceedings, they did not hear back from the Commission.

In the future, if UTC proceedings address energy justice issues, we would be more motivated to participate, either to help spread the word among impacted community partners or by advocating jointly with them.

We also recommend that the UTC consider allocating time and resources to conduct more outreach and engagement with overburdened communities, which will help bring in more participants from prioritized organizations.