

AVISTA CORPORATION
dba Avista Utilities

SCHEDULE 173
RESIDENTIAL DEBT RELIEF PROGRAM

(N)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this schedule is to implement the Residential Debt Relief Program consistent with Commission Order No. 01 in Docket No. U-200281. The Order directs Utilities to establish a temporary COVID-19 assistance program for residential customers earning up to 200 percent (200%) of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), with an annual maximum award amount of \$2,500 per household.

AVAILABLE:

To all residential customers in the State of Washington where the Company has natural gas service available, subject to the specifications contained herein.

APPLICABLE:

This Residential Debt Relief Program is applicable to all residential Avista customers taking service under Schedule 101.

DEBT RELIEF PROGRAM:

With this Program, the Company intends to provide financial relief to customers who have experienced economic hardship due to COVID-19, and who have accumulated pandemic-related arrears. Each income-eligible customer will receive a single instance of funding up to the maximum amounts stated herein, with no resulting account credits unless otherwise noted. All programs will be available for a limited time based on funding availability. The Company will help customers manage their arrearage debt utilizing the program components described below:

- 1) Automatic Grant - one-time grant intended to forgive arrearage balances, not to exceed \$2,500, for customers with proven history of low-income program eligibility, as determined by customer receipt of Energy Assistance (EA) within the previous 24 months. The Company will review all residential customer accounts on April 30, 2021 and administer these grants automatically.
- 2) Arrearage Forgiveness Grant – one-time grant intended to forgive arrearage balances, not to exceed \$2,500, for residential customers at or below 200% FPL that have not received EA within the previous 24 months yet are expressing a financial hardship due to COVID-19.

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By

Patrick Ehrbar, Director of Regulatory Affairs



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Income eligibility for the Debt Relief Program will be determined by Community Action Agencies (CAAs). Additionally, a Community Partner Network (CPN) will be established to support program outreach and administration to engage with hard-to-reach and underserved customers.

BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION:

The program will be funded at an initial total amount of \$6,517,040, not to be increased without prior Commission approval. This amount represents one percent of the Company's 2019 Washington retail revenues. Available Direct Services (DS) funds will remain in a collective pool to be utilized as-needed by participating administrators.

The Company may utilize up to one percent (1%) of total funding for administration of the program and to promote the availability of financial assistance throughout the Company's service area.

Administration and program delivery funds will be provided to the CAAs and CPN entities on a per-application basis, with compensation set at \$100 per Debt Relief Program application successfully processed. If a CPN has obtained the necessary customer information that results in a completed application, the CPN will receive \$75 of the compensation, with the associated CAA that processes the application receiving the remaining \$25. The full \$100 will be retained by the CAA in instances where the CAA is entirely responsible for the successful processing of a customer's Debt Relief Program application. An application is considered successfully processed when it results on a Debt Relief Program benefit being applied to a customer's account.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS:

1. In accordance with Commission Order No. 01, the Company will defer and seek recovery of all associated program costs not otherwise included in rates.
2. Additional programs or adjustments to the programs listed above may occur, in collaboration with the Energy Assistance Advisory Group, as the Company develops experience in operating these programs.
3. In addition to the reporting requirements outlined in Commission Order No. 01, the Company will provide quarterly reporting on the amount of assistance that has been provided and the number of customers enrolled by program, including cost to operate the program. Additional reporting may

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- be provided as determined by the Commission.
4. Because the funding of the Debt Relief Program is limited, customers will be served on a first-come basis and are only entitled to a single grant as outlined above.

TERM:

The duration of this program is through September 30, 2022, or until the Company reaches the spending limit, or until the Commission amends the program.

RULES AND REGULATIONS:

Service under this schedule is subject to the Rules and Regulations contained in the tariff of which this schedule is a part, and to those prescribed by regulatory authorities.

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