

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND  
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,

Complainant,

v.

AVISTA CORPORATION,

Respondent.

DOCKETS UE-220053 and UG-  
220054 (*Consolidated*)

NW ENERGY COALITION  
PROPOSED BUDGET

1. Pursuant to RCW 80.28.430, the Washington Interim Participatory Funding Agreement (“Funding Agreement”) approved by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (the “Commission”),<sup>1</sup> and Order 05 in this docket, NW Energy Coalition (“NWEC”) hereby submits its Proposed Budget for this matter.

**I. PROPOSED BUDGET**

**A. Statement of Work**

2. NWEC hereby requests a Fund Grant to partially offset the expense of expert consulting services to address: 1) capital additions supporting investments at the Colstrip coal-fired power plant; and 2) distribution system planning and distribution system investments. NWEC also requests a Fund Grant to offset the expense of retaining counsel to represent NWEC on all matters related to its participation in this docket, and to partially cover apportioned wages for in-house staff directly related to NWEC’s participation in the proceeding. All services provided to NWEC by all contractors in this proceeding are being retained at a reduced rate, and the Fund Grant request does not cover the entire cost of NWEC’s participation in this proceeding.

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<sup>1</sup> *In re Petition for Approval of an Interim Participatory Funding Agreement Pursuant to RCW 80.28.430*, Docket No. U-210595, Order 01 (Feb. 24, 2022).

**B. General Areas to Be Investigated**

3. As stated in NWEC’s Petition to Intervene, NWEC’s interests in this case include, but are not limited to: 1) Avista’s performance related to implementation of Washington climate and clean energy policies; 2) issues related to Avista’s interest in the Colstrip coal-fired power plant in Montana; 3) Avista’s performance metrics and other Senate Bill 5295 implementation issues; and 4) issues related to customer-side resources, distribution system investment, energy efficiency assistance, and other affordability issues for low- and moderate-income customers. NWEC continues to review the multi-year rate plan filing, conduct discovery, and may address other issues not stated here.

**C. Specific Fund/Available Funds**

4. As stated in its Request for Case Certification and Notice of Intent to Request Fund Grant, NWEC requests a Fund Grant from the Customer Representation Sub-Fund of the Customer Access Fund for Avista. Section 4.2 of the Funding Agreement provides for a Customer Representation Fund of \$200,000 for all parties for all Avista proceedings in 2022.<sup>2</sup> At this time, NWEC does not foresee requesting a Fund Grant for any other Avista proceedings in 2022.

**D. Proposed Budget**

5. As reflected in Exhibit A, attached hereto, NWEC submits the following estimated budget for its requested Fund Grants in this matter:

Estimated Expert Consultant/Expert Witness(es):	\$25,000
Estimated Staff Participation Costs:	\$15,000
Estimated Attorney Fees:	\$10,000
Total:	<b>\$50,000</b>

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<sup>2</sup> See Funding Agreement § 4.2.

6. Estimates for contracted services represent discounted rates for services to NWEC, and do not represent the full market value of these services. Requested amounts also do not include the full cost for NWEC staff to participate in the case and serve as witnesses on issues in which they themselves have expertise.

**E. Additional Information Requested by the Commission**

7. Order 05 requested that any proposed budget submitted by NWEC should include the information from its Response to Bench Request No. 1, any additional detail and explanation of how any overlapping interests differ from other intervenors, such as The Energy Project (“TEP”), how each intervenor’s specific perspectives on these topics are not adequately represented by the other intervenor, and how its participation will benefit the public interest.<sup>3</sup> Both NWEC and TEP have a long history of successful intervention in Commission proceedings as separate representatives of their own differing constituencies’ interests. NWEC has been granted intervention in numerous dockets in which TEP has also appeared.

8. NWEC is a diverse coalition comprised of over 100 organizations and numerous individual members, including TEP. While TEP has a broad interest in every issue that impacts low-income customers, NWEC’s interest in low-income issues is narrower: ensuring that the transformation to clean energy treats low-income customers equitably. While NWEC at times addresses an aspect of low-income program design or rate design, it does not have the same focus on, expertise about, or specific interest in low-income customers as TEP. NWEC does not hold itself out as a principal advocate for low-income customers. For this reason, NWEC cannot adequately represent the interests of low-income customers in the same way as TEP.

9. In NWEC’s response to Bench Request 1, NWEC explained how the overlapping interests represented by NWEC and TEP (including low-income and transportation

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<sup>3</sup> See Order 05 at 8-9 (Mar. 24, 2022).

electrification issues) differ and how each intervenor's specific perspectives on these topics are not adequately represented by the other.<sup>4</sup> Where the represented interests overlap (including low-income and transportation electrification issues), NWEC explained how the public interest will benefit from the participation and funding of both intervenors. Regarding low-income issues, NWEC advocates for clean and affordable energy resources, programs, and services that meet the needs of low-income customers. TEP represents the interests of the Community Action Partnership organizations, which provide low-income energy efficiency and bill payment assistance for clients across Washington State, with a goal of improving affordable access to energy services for low-income households across Washington.

10. While NWEC has a specific focus on clean and affordable energy, TEP evaluates a broader scope of low-income customer issues in general rate proceedings. TEP is a member of NWEC, and NWEC and TEP often agree on various issues related to low-income customers. However, neither organization can represent the others' specific perspective in this proceeding, and it is possible that there may be disagreement between the two organizations on issues in this proceeding as they represent different constituencies. TEP represents the specific interests of the Community Action Agencies and their clients, and low-income customers generally. In contrast, NWEC represents a diverse coalition of organizations and individuals who support an equitable transition to clean and affordable energy that also protects low-income customers.

11. In past rate case proceedings NWEC and TEP have focused on different issues. For example, in the Avista 2019 rate case (Docket Nos. UE-190334 and UG-190335), NWEC sponsored testimony on the company's revenue decoupling mechanism, gas line extension allowances, energy efficiency programming, and Colstrip obligations, while TEP sponsored

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<sup>4</sup> NWEC Response to Bench Request 1 (Mar. 18, 2022).

testimony on the importance of low-income weatherization and assistance funding to mitigate proposed rate increases. Similarly, it is possible that NWEC and TEP sponsor testimony on different topics in this proceeding. It is also possible that NWEC and TEP sponsor testimony on the same topics, with different perspectives and foci, or advocating for different outcomes for different constituencies.

12. NWEC and TEP use their best efforts to work together and avoid disagreements, and these efforts are often successful. However, each organization is responsible to a different constituency and disagreement concerning the issues presented in this case is entirely possible. In the past, TEP and NWEC have taken different positions in both confidential settlement negotiations and in public filings before the Commission. For example, TEP and NWEC have taken different positions in filings on decoupling.<sup>5</sup>

13. For the purpose of this Fund Grant request, we also note that NWEC and TEP are seeking fund grants to support expert witness services on different topics. The public interest will benefit from the participation and funding of both intervenors because the Commission will hear testimony from a more diverse pool of experts on a broader set of topics, leading to a more thorough and balanced record. We also note that both NWEC and TEP are seeking fund grants to support legal representation, as they are separate parties with separate legal representation in this proceeding.

14. Order 05 requested that any proposed budget submitted by NWEC should include additional detail and explanation of how any overlapping interests differ from intervenors other

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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., *In re Petition of PSE Corporation, D/B/A PSE Utilities, for an Order Authorizing Implementation of a Natural Gas Decoupling Mechanism and to Record Accounting Entries Associated With the Mechanism*, Docket No. UG-060518, Order 04 (Feb. 1, 2007).

than TEP. NWECC, the Association of Western Energy Consumers, Public Counsel, and the Small Business Utility Advocates all represent the interests of end use consumers. NWECC's advocacy and participation is focused on ensuring that changes in the energy system values community voices and ensures that our most vulnerable community members and communities of color have affordable energy services in order to directly benefit from clean energy resources within communities. NWECC seeks to ensure that end use consumers benefit from a carbon-free energy system in a way that equitably meets the consumers' needs. A core principle for NWECC is that all residential utility customers deserve reliable, high quality, and affordable electric service.

## II. CONCLUSION

15. For the foregoing reasons, the Commission should accept NWECC's proposed budget.

Dated this 22nd day of April 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Irion Sanger

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