



WEAF Advisory Group Meeting
January 18, 2023 2:00 – 3:30pm Pacific

Welcome and roll call – *Shannon Steed*

Advisory Group Member	Contact
Blue Mountain Action Council	Sylvia Schaefer
Community Action Connections	Dalia Ochoa
Community Action of Lewis, Mason, & Thurston Counties	Dale Lewis, Sandra Koch
Coastal Community Action Program	Debbie Gregg
Chelan-Douglas Community Action Council	Vern Gurnard, Kristi Hills, Alan Walker
Kitsap Community Resources	Kandi Balandran, Julie Barleta
Lower Columbia Community Action Center	Deanna Dahlberg, Kathy Bates
NW Community Action Center	Jose Alvarez
OIC of Washington	Heidi Silva, Casandra Ochoa, Candi Jaeger
Opportunity Council	Marie Stangeland, Lorena Shah
Community Action of Skagit County	Misty Velasquez
Snohomish County Human Services Dept	Constance Hockett, Manu Morgan, Sara
WUTC Staff	Heather Moline, Andrew Roberts, Andy Sellards
The Energy Project	Ross Quigley, Yochi Zakai
Public Counsel	Corey Dahl
NW Energy Coalition	Charlee Thompson
Department of Commerce	Michelle DeBell
Cascade Natural Gas	
Mark Chiles, VP of Regulatory Affairs & Customer Service	Lori Blattner, Dir Regulatory Affairs
Dan Tillis, Dir Customer Experience	Chris Mickelson, Mgr Regulatory Affairs
Byron Pfordte, Mgr Customer Experience	Pam Archer, Regulatory Analyst
Shannon Steed, Consumer Specialist	Noemi Ortiz, Mgr OR Conservation & Weatherization

1. Company update
 - a. Small group meeting update - *Lori Blattner/Dan Tillis*
Dan – I think most of the company updates will be covered under 2A and 3A so I'll move to 2A. The only other company updated is the recent results distributed by Shannon. November 2022 WEAF pledges increased month over month from October and compared to November 2021.
2. Unresolved items from the previous meeting
 - a. Department of Commerce arrearage funding – *Dan Tillis*
Dan – WA Legislature earmarked \$100M in funds for low-income customers impacted by COVID. Dept of Commerce managed it, they started distributing funds to utilities in late 2022. In compliance with guidelines Cascade was able to secure \$65K in funds for WA customers. Customers had to accrue a past due balance between 3/1/2020 and 12/31/2021, and receive any type of assistance during that period, and/or on a time payment

arrangement. Dec 31st 2021 was a year ago, so some customers have caught up on payments and/or already received other types of assistance to address their past due balance, which reduced the amount to \$65K. Write off accounts were eligible as well. We provided assistance to 340 active accounts, equating to \$51,749, and 150 write off accounts received \$13,251. All customers have been notified via email or letter. Questions? No

b. Recruiting additional CAAs for the Small Group – Yochi Zakai

Yochi- Wanted to make another pitch to Community Action Agencies that have not joined sub-committees, to become involved. Big change on how we will provide assistance to customers. You can help design the program from the ground up. Let Shannon know if you want to join.

3. Update on new program design focusing on agency impacts - Dan Tillis

Dan – We’ve talked about different ways to help low-income customers impacted by the 25% increase for the from the PGA and GRC. One request from the group was to give a one-time grant to help. The Legislative Commerce COVID funds are helping with that. Those went to low-income customers. We also discussed finding ways to determine likely low-income customers who have not reached out for assistance. We’ve engaged Mark Thompson from Forefront Economics. He is looking at a model that would identify likely low-income customers, from there we would determine if we should proactively provide one-time grant to those customers in that group who are past due. This would allow us better insight to that customer base, so we can reach out to them and partner with agencies to possibly utilize the data to improve outreach. We are doing more research on options for obtaining similar data to make sure Mark’s model is the best approach. Once we determine that, we will either move forward or change it. Mark created the same data for Yakima County few years ago, but we did not use the data at that time. The current proposal enhances the model and expands it to all WA territories. We will share that information once we have it. Any questions? No

a. WEAFF Tariff Revisions filing and calculator redesign – Chris Mickelson/Lorena Shah

Chris – Commission approved Tariff Revisions last Thursday, effective 1/23/23. Included grant CAP at \$625, floor at \$125, rolled in 80% AMI and removed soft budget tiers – now just one budget at \$1.5M.

Misty – With these changes, are we going backwards and providing additional money?

Dan – Yes – Shannon and Byron will handle the calculations for the additional 25% up to the cap and the CNG Billing Team will apply to customer accounts. We will then provide each agency with spreadsheets with the additional pledge amounts for all accounts that received pledges from October 1 – January 20. Every customer will receive the additional 25%.

Chris – Calculator Redesign – came to Cascade’s attention there were a couple of errors on the calculator originally created by UTC Staff. Cascade only updates poverty level for each program year. When we started to dig into it the errors came to light. Another thing, some of the agencies are using their own calculators. Can you advise if you are? (Lorena said that Skagit and Opportunity Council use the same one that they create together. Chris shared the version of this calculator he has and asked if this is the one used. Lorena said yes. She also said it uses CNG’s calculator but is put into a master spreadsheet with all the other calculators they use. Chris went through CNG’s calculator in detail. Rounding should only be done at the end, in that calculator it is rounding at every step, therefore amount wasn’t calculated correctly. Discussed WEAFF Bill discount benefit (which was designed some time ago).

Could you provide an example to illustrate the WEAF bill discount benefit calculation?

Yes. For example, let's consider a low income household with average consumption and a total yearly bill of \$535,⁵⁰ of which 62 percent, or \$332, is the heating bill prior to the application of any LIHEAP benefit. If this customer falls into the income bracket of 0-50 percent of FPL, LIHEAP will provide a grant that equals between 84-90 percent of the heating bill for this income bracket. For illustrative purposes, let's assume that LIHEAP provides \$289 of support (the average between 84 and 90 percent, multiplied by the heating bill of \$332). In this circumstance, a WEAF bill discount (as Staff proposes) would provide 30 percent of the discount off of the bill. Over the span of a year, that would be a discount of \$161 (yearly bill multiplied by

In talking with small group – LIHEAP does it the above way, is that the method that was agreed too? If so, need consensus that calculator will divide annual increase in bill.

Lorena – Essentially been doing it this way for years, we supply back up heat costs – extrapolating yearly gas usage using just heat cost. Always done it that way with calculators, recommending that continue. Use back up heat cost from CNG, then formula to create gas usage, then benefit off full gas usage as opposed to just the heat cost.

Chris – Any questions on that piece? Is everyone in agreement? That is different from what we've worked on. I do need to get consensus.

Misty -Skagit – yes

Manu-Snohomish-yes

Yochi - yes

Andrew – anything related to the calculator is regulatory services area, and with him being in consumer protection, he's not comfortable speaking to the calculator

Chris noted that no one from regulatory services appeared to be in the meeting

Corey - Public Council – yes

Charlee - NW Energy – yes

Sylvia – BMAC – yes (via chat)

Julie – KCR – yes (via chat)

Jose – NCAC - yes (via chat)

Heidi – OIC – yes (via chat)

Chris - Ok will keep the formula in place.

The new calculator was then shown and walked through. No questions.

Dan – This would be the calculator we would want agencies to use starting 1/23. If you have questions, reach out to Shannon. Huge improvement over the last one.

Jen – How is it determined between which to use AMI/FPL?

Chris - Goes off whichever provides the higher benefit.

Jen – Can you show demo for backup?

Chris – Walked through the calculation – if they have been in house less than 12 months, back up is used.

Jen – Will this be adjusted to our agreed backup heat cost?

Chris – Yes

Jen – Can you delete Propane only, doesn't really apply?

Chris - Yes

Yochi – Thank you to everyone that prepared this and increased benefits.

Dan – Let's make sure we start using the calculator on Monday, 1/23. Any issues or questions, reach out to Shannon.

Chris – will send out updated calculator.

Lorena – Confirm, any pledges Monday, 1/23 or later, use the new calculator – prior to 1/23 use calculator you have now.

Shannon – Yes

4. Dedicated discussion of an agreed upon topics

a. No submissions from the group from the January 9th email request

b. Topic ideas for the February meeting

i. CBO program development – *Yochi Zakai*

Yochi – would like to discuss community-based organization trusted messenger program. He sent email on the topic earlier in the day. Open to feedback.

Shannon – Any ideas on CBO program, please feel free to share.

Yochi- Suggested working with each other in between now and the February meeting.

Dan – Review document Shannon sent and Yochi's document – prepare before next meeting.

Meeting adjourned