

# WEAF Advisory Group

Agenda

June 7, 2023

**KEY TOPICS:** *Agency staffing/funding models, draft Tariff filing, Program Name*

**GOALS FOR MEETING OUTCOME:** *Finalize decisions on agency funding/staffing, review Tariff filing timeline and content, discuss Program Name ideas*

## **Agreements from the 6/7 meeting:**

All intake for AMP and BDR with go-through the CAAs (CNG website apps will be routed to the CAAs).

CAA funding level will be 25% of total forecasted/budgeted BDR and AMP customer direct assistance funds.

Funds will be distributed to agencies based on CNG customer count and estimated count of customers at 80% or lower AMI.

Enrollment rate is key toggle and still TBD.

## **Ideas for Program Name:**

From Corey:

Cascade Arrears Relief and Energy Discount (CARED)

From Chris:

- CARE (Cascade Arrears Relief and Equality)
- POWER (Program for Overcoming Poverty through Energy Relief)
- CURE (Cascade Utility Relief and Encouragement) Program
- GLOW (Gas Low-income Outreach for Well-being)
- ARISE (Arrears Relief and Inclusive Support for Energy)
- FLAME (Financial Low-income Assistance with Managing Energy)
- BRIGHT (Balancing Resources for Inclusive Gas Heating Treatment)
- EASE (Energy Assistance for Sustainable Equality)

## 1. Agencies handling all Energy Assistance Applications – Yochi/Misty

Tillis, Daniel

We'll start with where we left off last week trying to finalize the process of intake for all of the assistance programs. Two meetings ago we discussed that the best process might be for the agencies to be the main point of intake for both the AMP and bill discount rate programs, with Cascade having an online application option as well that would somehow route to the agencies to set up an appointment or phone conversation with customers. I would say 80 to 90% of us were on board with that approach pending agreement on the staffing model and funding of staffing for the agencies to be able to handle the volume of intake that might come with the new programs. Last week, we discussed funding models that the company put together and Chris presented those. We had some good discussion and decided that we would continue that discussion this week to give everyone a week to think about other possible funding models. TEP and the agencies were going to go back and work on some possible recommendations and ideas of funding models, and then the company was going to consider some options as well. Yochi, if you don't mind, we might start with what you all have come up with in the last week as far as ideas, thoughts, or recommendations for funding the agencies for intake of AMP and BDR.

Yochi Zakai

I did a bit of digging to try to understand different structures for funding agencies that are running energy assistance programs for others. First, I looked at how the state is doing it for LIHEAP, and it appears they set a budget for the program that's adjusted periodically by the Department of Commerce, but it's currently set at 77% for client benefits and 23% for agency costs. I then looked at PSE and it was interesting to note that PSE says we're just going to do what LIHEAP does, so they use the same funding model. Then I looked at Avista's LIRAP program; they also set up a percentage breakdown in their program guidelines and they have 73% going to customer benefits and the remaining 27 percent being broken down into three different categories. Most of that is for admin and program support, 16.5%, but then there are two other buckets which are conservation, education staff and labor, which is at about 4%, and that's for the agencies to provide associated conservation support, but the funding is not from the conservation. This is funding for the low-income program to facilitate referral to the weatherization program and then they have another one called direct services which is 6%. When I looked at funding models focused on staffing as opposed to per customer fees, agencies are typically getting somewhere in the mid 20% of the program budget and having direct client benefits somewhere in the mid-70s. I think that those funding models have worked out well and I would be open to exploring something along those lines for the Cascade program as well.

Tillis, Daniel

I agree that's really helpful background information, but I'd like to open it up first for anybody else who has any thoughts on that approach to funding an assistance program. Yochi, did you put together any data or numbers based on that research and what that might look like for our program?

Yochi Zakai

I did not. I just looked at the last model that Chris sent out and I flipped back and forth between fee

and the different staffing models, and it seemed like what was proposed was more in the like 9 1/2 to 10% range. That's the only thing I looked at and that was about \$300,000 for 10% based on all the variables as they were set.

Tillis, Daniel

Chris, you're really good at doing calculations on the fly. I was thinking maybe I could put you on the spot and have you share the funding spreadsheet and maybe we could put together a quick view of what that might look like. We would want to take what we think is going to be the amount that customers would receive based on our best estimate of enrollment and participation, and then gross that up for the agency fees. We don't want to take a percentage of that for the agency fees; we don't want to take anything away from what's available for customers; we want to gross up that amount just like the agency fees that Chris already provided. This would be on top of the customer assistance funds.

Yochi Zakai

I have to admit, I'm not quite directly understanding this, but I think it could be that they look at the prior year's benefits and then base the current year's distributions on that, but I'm not entirely sure how they how they manage that.

Tillis, Daniel

That would make sense to me, but because we're implementing 2 new programs that are different than our current program, I think we have to use the model with our best guess on our rollout level and start it there for the first year, and if it's too much based on what we see, then adjust it for the next year or two. Chris - Do you want to go back to a 5% enrollment level, which is what we'd initially estimated as the first-year enrollment level to start with maybe and then from there we would go to how much in total assistance between AMP and BDR combined that customers would get based on that 5% funding level which is probably up a little higher, so 1.2 million, let's call it 25%, which I think is the average between LIHEAP and Avista. If I was following you correctly, Yochi, then that would be 200 and that 275,000 would now be 305,000.

Yochi Zakai

The funny thing is, I think that was exactly the number you had when we had the 10% enrollment level.

Tillis, Daniel

And we could see what 10% is and from there we'd want to figure out a way to spread that across the agency and see what means for the agencies. Obviously, the agencies that have more volume and more Cascade population base would need more funding, so Chris, do you have an easy way to do that quickly?

Mickelson, Christopher

Not really, although you could basically double these amounts and that would get you close to the 305.

Tillis, Daniel

Based on the average FTE cost, then you'd be looking at BMAC at 0.4 FTE and WCAC at almost 2 and we could adjust the enrollment rate. As I thought about this a little bit, if you take BMAC for

example, if we double that and made it 20,000 just to start with a 5% enrollment rate, and that's 0.4 FTE. Are you able to hire an FTE and just have them do half-time work for Cascade and half-time somewhere else or just hire a part-time employee? Or, what's the practical approach in the agency world of how you would take this funding and then make sure you have enough staffing to not have a backlog of appointments or phone calls, or customers getting frustrated that they have not been able to get assistance?

Yochi Zakai

What I've heard some folks talking about, which will obviously require a change in process, with PSE and Avista going live with a self-attestation program at around the same time, hopefully they'll have some synergies there, but I think some people are devoted exclusively to answering phones and trying to get people enrolled via self-attestation, with LIHEAP first. Hopefully, folks could get on the BDR and then if they need arrear forgiveness, they'll get the appointment to come in for LIHEAP and get the arrearage management plan or if they're able to be screened on the call to see if they are eligible for LIHEAP, then they could get both the arrearage management and the BDR with that phone call. I've heard that from a couple of agencies that have thought through what this might look like.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

That's very consistent with what I was thinking. I'm hoping to meet with our finance team and my direct supervisor to come up with some numbers as to what we feel it's going to look like. I have to set up times and be able to meet with people, but I tried to map out with the current staff what it would look like, and it's a possibility that I'm going to have to hire one or two more staff just to be able to handle the load and do the self-attestation. So, that's going to be split between Cascade and PSE, but when I was showing the original numbers that you had to finance, they said that's not even a person and our finance department takes a percentage away from us right off the bat when money comes into our agency which goes directly to admin for GNA costs and all of that stuff. So, with that, if we took off their percentage, it would be 1/2 a person I would be able to pay with the original numbers, so that's why I am setting up a meeting with finance to go over with them and try and come up with what it would actually look like for our agency, even though we don't have it really nailed down with the process yet and how we're going to change our program up to be able to meet all these needs.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I also wanted to throw out there when we serve clients with WEAFF and we get the \$75 for that, we are able to complete that WEAFF file quickly while we're doing three other appointments, so one person is completing 4 files for four different programs all at the same time, and it's really quick and easy. When we have to separate all programs now and we have to serve someone at the point when they're calling in, and then we're serving them with Cascade at that point, and then possibly have to send them off to another person to do the PSE help portion. We're going to try and do things at the same time, but then we're going to touch them again for a LIHEAP appointment so we're going from a model of touching a household one time for all programs, to touching them three or four times.

Yochi Zakai

I hope we can try to avoid that to the extent if the phone call is for initial enrollment in self-attestation. Hopefully we could do self-attestation for PSE and Cascade at the same time.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

But that phone call is going to at least take 1/2 an hour per client because you're in multiple databases and you're having to pull histories for multiple people. That's where we're on our end trying to figure out how we're going to create this process that, yes, is going to flow really easily between all of the different programs, but where we touch that person for an hour for one time and serving them with every program to now we're having to possibly jump between people depending on how the programs are set up and who is doing what in each program area. My goal is to have people doing PSE and Cascade at the same time, but then we're auditing these files too, so that's another touch to some files, which is why I said the three to four times that we're going to be touching these files. So, setting up our program isn't going to be as easy as it was where they came in for an appointment and we served everybody all at one time and then they were on their way. We didn't talk to them again unless they called for something else.

Yochi Zakai

I got it. So as I think about this more, I'm kind of thinking we have two decisions, right? We have, "what is the model going to be?" and then we have, "how are we going to use an estimated amount for this first year?" and they are kind of separate questions but they're also interrelated because what I'm hearing now is we're trying to figure out what kind of staffing they would need and what funding level that would look like. But I feel like if we knew what enrollment levels were then we would know a little bit of what the workload would be, so I feel like we have a little bit of a check-in problem in setting the amounts for the first year.

Tillis, Daniel

I mean it's definitely not going to be a perfect science setting the amounts for the first year. It's just like any other forecast. It's going to be wrong. The question is how wrong and then which direction, right? I think there are ways we could mitigate that and if we overestimate enrollment and there's extra funding, then is there a way to identify that and then roll that funding into the next year and underfund the next year? And, if we underfund, this is really probably a question for Chris; if we underfund, is there an opportunity to say Skagit we gave you 78,000 this year, I'm just using the math that's on here times 2 and you should have gotten 100,000, here's an extra 22,000 to make-up for that during the program year and just add that to the deferral account or whatever the regulatory mechanism might be to account for that?

Mickelson, Christopher

I'm sure there is, but it starts to get complicated as the years go on obviously.

Tillis, Daniel

Well, I think when we set the funding for 2024-25, we could use the 23-24 assistance provided by each agency and then 25% of that is what they get for the next program year. And if we want to have some sort of COLA adjustment or something like that, we could discuss whether that makes sense, but I think once we have a program year under our belt, we could talk about the model for the following years on current actuals plus maybe some run rate of increased enrollment; maybe some COLA, but I think we could figure that out.

Yochi Zakai

Yeah, it's definitely something we'll want to reevaluate after the first year and maybe even after six months.

Tillis, Daniel

Yeah, I think we could do that. My instinct is to err on the side of overfunding a little bit instead of underfunding and see where we go with that.

Yochi Zakai

Yeah, especially because starting up a new program is going to incur more costs than running it in future years.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I also want to throw out there we're also going to be advertising and having to be out in the community and get people aware of these programs, which are things we already do, but that takes up time and staff as well. I know that all summer long we have events going on that we are going to be advertising for the next program year and I don't even have anything to be advertising about so it's going to be complicated all the way around.

Tillis, Daniel

I think our first decision is, are we all in agreement that we want all AMP and BDR intake to go through the agencies primarily? Again, with that online application from the company's website routing to the agencies as well and if so, then I think the decisions are what is the funding model and then what is the enrollment rate we'll use to kind of base that on and all the math behind it? I think if we're all in agreement that we want all the intake to go through the agencies then we probably need to just pause and agree then that will work through the right funding level and maybe give Chris some time to work on the model based on that 75/25 split or that 25% administration fee added to the estimated funds for customer assistance for the first year and move forward from there because I don't think we're going to answer the question on the funding model today with the amounts since we need some work on a model.

Yochi Zakai

Yeah, I think I think that sounds reasonable to me and if others are in agreement, I think the other thing that we should consider is some principles for the allocation amongst the agencies. I think that's worth a little bit more discussion as well.

Tillis, Daniel

Some principles of how they would do it? Is that what you're talking about?

Yochi Zakai

Some principles about how, Chris had a staffing model, so just kind of thinking about the principles behind what those two would be and to see if we can get an agreement, maybe if not exactly what the calculation would be, but which principle we should follow when doing that allocation.

Tillis, Daniel

And I might be making it too simplistic, but I was thinking that what we've done here already is a little bit of what the model would look like, taking a lot of that stuff on the right side of the screen here away, you have your enrollment rate to give you the amount of assistance that's going to be provided between the AMP and BDR, and you take 25% of that and that gives you your total and then you split it across the agencies based on Cascade customer population and/or 80% AMI

accounts and that gives you the number. Then really your toggle is what's the enrollment level and whatever you're going to agree on there.

Yochi Zakai

So as I understand it, that's the staffing model, not the staffing P as Chris put it together.

Mickelson, Christopher

That's correct. The real difference is the staffing P also adds an extra component to recognize what the agency did the previous year in signing up customers. So agencies that obviously signed up more, they get a little more of a bump to the funds than those who sign less; they still get a bump, but much lower than what they otherwise would have.

Yochi Zakai

And does that weighting equally between customer count; low income, customer count; and WEAF count in the P, or those three factors weighted evenly?

Mickelson, Christopher

Yes. So, it's a one third, one third, one third.

Yochi Zakai

OK, so it seems like the choice that you're explaining then should have only two factors which would be funding based on customer count and low-income customer count or it or should it be all three which would include performance in the last year?

Mickelson, Christopher

Correct.

Yochi Zakai

OK, I got that. Do the agencies understand that, and do you have opinions on that?

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I'm still very confused about this whole thing and I wish I wasn't because this is probably what I'm going to have to show our admin to be able to explain to them.

Yochi Zakai

Once we have determined the total amount of funding that will be available for the agencies which the current discussion is that it will be about 25% of the total assistance provided which is similar to what LIHEAP and PSE provide and Avista. Once we have that total number, how do we figure out how much of that goes to each agency and what Chris was proposing is to look at the total Cascade customer count in each county, the estimated total number of low-income customers in each county and we could just use those 2 and weigh those two factors evenly when distributing the funding or we could add a third factor weighted evenly and that third factor would be the number of customers served by WEAF in the previous year. So, the question is, should it be purely population based with the two factors being populated, total Cascade customers and total low-income customers or should we also look at how many customers that agency served in the previous year when determining the allocation of funds?

Mickelson, Christopher

By the way, the red number is kind of an indication of what the staffing performance would be. I mean, they're 3000 off, but it kind of gives you a sense of what each of the agencies would get.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

So the first one where it's the 304, is that just the regular one without the population or without the WEAF in there?

Mickelson, Christopher

No.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

And then the second, the red numbers, WEAF is included in there, is that correct?

Mickelson, Christopher

So this one is the one with the WEAF in it. If you want to get a sense of what that would be without the WEAF, use this one. They're very close, but it just provides a little extra to the agencies who signed up a lot more of their customers, a larger percent.

Tillis, Daniel

I'm not an agency; it's not my funding as far as to staff but my opinion is that I would recommend starting the first year with just population base and to me the incentive from there is if you don't hit the enrollment rate, which is the toggle here, then you might get less funding the next year because you know then we're going to base it on how much in funds was distributed across the Cascade serving territory in total in the year, and then you're going to get your split based on your activity for that prior year. So, in general with some other possible add-ons for the other things I mentioned earlier, like expected enrollment rate growth or COLA or something like that, there's incentive there to maintain the same amount of funding just like there's incentive to help more customers today at \$75 per WEAF pledge.

Yochi Zakai

I see that Sylvia and Marie are kind of on the same page in the chat. I'm open to that, but if others have strong opinions I would certainly want to hear that and would take that into consideration as well.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I think I'm in agreement with everyone else. I mean the benefit of doing the P versus the staffing really isn't that much more. It's not like we can just turn people away so either way. I think it's just going to equal out in the long run.

Tillis, Daniel

Just to give you an estimate for one of our highest performing counties, I would say somewhere right in the middle, maybe a little bit toward the high end, looking at what was earned in WEAF in the last full program year knowing that there's a bit more being paid this year, but it'd be probably 130-140% more than what was earned in the 21-22 WEAF program year, so it is a significant increase that should allow for adding real staffing and not just a token increase for sure.

Corey Dahl (PCU, He/him)

In line with the conversation, I do think that the suggestion of going with just the population on non-P model makes sense, at least in the first year. I think the big X Factor we have here is that we don't really know what it's going to look like in terms of performance in the first year so it's fundamentally different. And I think there's a lot of factors that might increase the performance on the quote of underperforming counties just by sheer force of it being an easier program to understand and the barriers to enrollment being reduced. I think there's a lot of potential there for you folks to be coming in the door so I wouldn't want to penalize those counties out of the gate here.

Tillis, Daniel

I had a little bit of a hard time hearing you, Corey, but if I understood you correctly, you support starting the first-year with the population base for distributing the funds to the agencies?

Corey Dahl (PCU, He/him)

Yeah, that's correct.

Tillis, Daniel

So if I could take a step back and I asked the question earlier, if everyone was in agreement that the agencies are the main intake for both AMP and BDR--got a lot of agreement in chat--I'll ask that question another way, is there anyone who's not in agreement with that, with the caveat that we continue working on the funding model and agree to the right approach to start the first program year under BDR and AMP? OK, it sounds like we have an agreement on starting the first year in the model with it being the spread. We'll take the amount of funds combined that we forecast to be distributed to customers from both AMP and BDR, we'll take 25% of that amount as our total funds available to be distributed to the agencies for staffing and then I think we've mostly agreed that we'll allocate that to the agencies in the first year based on population. I am not sure if we decided that would be based on total Cascade customer counts or the customer counts that are 80% AMI or lower. I think it's 80% AMI or lower, that's what we've discussed so far.

Mickelson, Christopher

Say that one more time.

Tillis, Daniel

I'm leaving the enrollment rate toggle out for right now, so just whatever we end up deciding on that, that's really the last key factor that we'll probably decide on at some point but whatever that enrollment rate gives us we decide for assistance combined for BDR and AMP, we'll take that number and calculate 25% of it, which you've done right there for the current 10% enrollment rate at \$611,000 is 25% of 2.4 million or so, we'll take that amount as the total funding that would be distributed to Washington agencies supporting Cascade customers in the 2023-2024 program year and will allocate that to each agency based on the population of Cascade customers who are at 80% AMI or lower. Is that what you have calculated right now, Chris?

Mickelson, Christopher

No, this is still on the performance, but, yes, I will have that do that in a later version.

Tillis, Daniel

OK. But it will be pretty close regardless.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

Where did you get that 80% of the population are at or below 80% AMI?

Mickelson, Christopher

That came from the LINA report. The low income needs assessment report we did back at the beginning of this entire process, which also kind of helps us figure out these breakdowns and which customers fall into which tiers. If I remember correctly, it was information about our customers who were in the program and also used the Department of Energy's lead tool, it combined some other things. You'd have to go back to the report to see all the different aspects that were included in there. I think it's 2020-2021, maybe 2022 data because we had Forefront do that work and I can't remember what two- or three-year period they used.

Tillis, Daniel

Any other comments, questions, concerns on that overall approach, not saying we have to fully commit to that today, but that'll help Chris build the new model and send it out and then we can talk about it next week and hopefully finalize that then.

Yochi Zakai

I like where we're going.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I have a question for the agencies though: when we're looking at possibly people coming into the agency who I saw if you go down to the bottom where you were at the customer count in different communities, if you were looking at the total customer count, how many agencies are worried that because this is going to go to self-attestation, people are going to try and apply for this program even if they don't qualify because it's being put out there that they can self-attest their income? We could possibly have a very high amount of people calling us. How are we going to monitor that type of situation? Are we going to keep track of people who are calling and maybe not income eligible? What are other agencies feelings about that?

Jen Rightsell

We have similar concerns.

Corey Dahl (PCU, He/him)

A quick clarifying question about your question, Misty, are you thinking that there would be such an increased volume of customers who would be calling in because of self-attestation and then perhaps finding out that their income is indeed too high and so they wouldn't move forward in the process, but that would still create a call volume situation or is it more that people would be calling in and perhaps incorrectly attesting their income to a level that is lower than it actually is in order to qualify or both?

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I have a fear of both, but in this instance, when we're looking at a model that's being based off of people in the in the Community that are 80% AMI or below, we're not taking into consideration all of those extra phone calls and extra time we're going to be spending with people who are calling because they think they're going to be able to qualify because they can just self-attest their income. When we're actually talking to them and going through the situation with them over the phone to

qualify with self-attestation, they realize they really don't qualify. That's time we're spending with people, even though we're not qualifying them. We're still discussing it with them. I worry that if we're going to go off of something that's based off the amount of people in the community that we know are at 80% AMI or below and we're going to fund that. We could potentially have in Skagit County 30,000 people calling us to try and get on this program because that's how many people you guys have. I'm making it bigger than really what it should be, but I'm just saying it's a potential.

Mickelson, Christopher

And that's why I put the 10% enrollment. So right now, WEAFF is around 3 1/2%, which is about just over 2000 applicants. By doing 10, we're expecting around 6000 and that was very similar to what we saw with Big Heart during the pandemic, and we did have self-attestation, so I kind of figured we would probably get a very similar number at the beginning of this program. Now if you want, we can always make it 15%. That will increase the overall to \$900k. We have to be careful though, because we're starting to get to our 5% cap level per the Senate bill. There are other ways, I guess, we can try to address those concerns, but the main reason why I recommend at least a 10% enrollment level initially is because that would be three times what we see for WEAFF but it's also in line with the levels of people who self-certified during the pandemic.

Tillis, Daniel

I think it's a concern to consider and we have not seen that in Oregon. We do have Cascade employees in Oregon who can qualify customers for the EDP bill discount rate via self-attestation and we have not experienced, from what I've seen and heard, a lot of customers calling just to see if they can qualify and this is kind of unfortunate because that says we're not getting a lot of response to outreach, but in general qualifications for EDP in Oregon seem to come from our Cascade employees proactively engaging customers who are past due on their bills or maybe sharing

some challenge with needing help paying their bills and or are setting up payment arrangements, things like that. We have not seen from the company's perspective a ton of customers seeing if can qualify through self-attestation. I think it's happening some, but not a huge number.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

You don't use agencies such as we're going to be using up here down in Oregon?

Tillis, Daniel

We have five Community Action agencies with whom we work with in Oregon, and they can also qualify customers for BDR and OLIBA, in this case through self-attestation, and so can our Cascade employees. There wasn't an ask there for LIHEAP to be used first before OLIBA and we didn't get into this conversation of making sure it all stays through the agencies, so it could be a model we might want to replicate in Oregon at some point in the future if this works out well. We'll have it running both ways and in the two states, if we continue down this path in Washington. I don't observe every call where the qualifications are happening, but basically even on our call volume, I wouldn't say that it's been an issue so far for us in Oregon, but I think that's where that toggle comes in. As Chris mentioned on the enrollment rate, we have to get ourselves comfortable to what the level of funding is going to be. In that example I gave earlier of the agency funding at 10% enrollment level compared to what that agency received in 21-22 as 130% percent increase; that's a significant amount of additional funding that can be used to hopefully offset that qualification.

Corey Dahl (PCU, He/him)

I think it's also helpful information to have just based on the experience of what is being witnessed in Oregon in terms of what the inquiries look like from qualified or potentially qualified customers. But I think that from my perspective the 10% self-attestation is a conservative estimate in the sense that it's probably higher than it will be in reality. Just given the circumstances that people self-attested to during COVID. Those were pretty extraordinary circumstances. The whole world was turned on its head at that point in time but keeping in mind that the reduced barriers to enrollment should encourage more people to apply who are indeed income qualified. I think the branding of this program is a discount rather than a grant is probably appealing to more qualified customers who are not currently enrolled, and I think it's also reasonable to expect more people to come in the door.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I'm good with the numbers if we have a way of being able to track, and if we get into the season and we realize that this is way more and we're going to need more people to be able to cover the load so that we are able to do that.

Tillis, Daniel

Yeah, I think it's fair to insert some checkpoints. I know once a week meetings are a lot, but I was thinking we're going to need to keep something like this, if not once a week at least once every couple of weeks through the end of the year. Maybe at the end of the calendar year or at least a few months into when the new program year starts, because we're going to need to have not only checkpoints on funding, but just in general on how the processes are working and issues with the changes we'll be making to the assist portal, and the post qualification/income verification process. I think all those things we will want to be engaged with you all to learn from each other, and you're all marketing these new programs as well. Do we make a decision on assessing it three months, six months, probably somewhere in there to have that first checkpoint on staffing model, do you have enough people, or you are you able to answer the phones and try to qualify customers and it will vary by agency?

There were a lot of thumbs up as well.

Tillis, Daniel

All right, awesome. I'm not seeing anybody who's not in agreement, so I think we're good there. So, I think, Chris, if we could have an updated model maybe sent out via email and if you could send an explanation in the body of the email and all the factors in the model and any toggles and anything else that is new, that would be helpful. Maybe we could get some dialogue via email the next week or two if anybody has any questions, input, or concerns. I sent out that flow chart and maybe for the rest of the meeting we can talk about that, and we also need to determine the program name. If anyone has any ideas on the program name please share. For the flow, this starts with the customers calling the agencies for assistance and then that makes its way down here; the agency advises the customer they can attempt to qualify for bill discount rate via self-attestation of their income and household size, while at the same time I'm asking qualifying questions to see if they're eligible to apply for LIHEAP and if they're eligible to apply for LIHEAP, then the agency will schedule an appointment, that's if the customer is bill discount rate qualified. The agency will submit that via the CNG assist portal, if they were eligible, the agency schedules an appointment and then more

than likely while you're entering the BDR info, you'll advise that they have a LIHEAP appointment scheduled and so that'll make them exempt from a disconnect for non-pay in the Cascade system. If they're not eligible for LIHEAP for some reason, ineligible due to citizenship, or they're above 150% FPL, then the agencies will swivel to utilizing self-attestation to qualify the customer for AMP for their arrearage if they're past due. If they are AMP qualified, you'll submit that via the Cascade assist portal and then also include the TPA the customer agreed to because we said the agencies will have that discussion as well. That would be the end of the process, pending the income verification process. If they're not qualified, that's really the end of the process unless the agencies want to then have a TPA discussion with the customer and outside of any energy assistance.

Yochi Zakai

The AMP qualification is going to be the same as the same as the BDR. So, anyone within arrearage that is BDR qualified is also going to be qualified so the only question is going to be do they have an arrearage. I guess you could call that AMP qualified, but I would kind of consider that a different question.

Tillis, Daniel

If they weren't BDR qualified, then either the process ends or the agency could schedule them for a LIHEAP appointment, but it's unlikely that there would be LIHEAP qualified, so I'm guessing the process just ends here.

Yochi Zakai

I'm curious to hear from the agencies, but I don't think they would schedule someone who has self-attested to be over income for a LIHEAP appointment.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I wouldn't schedule someone, but I'm going to go a little bit deeper with their income when I'm talking to them just to verify that their income. We can take deductions off, so I want to make sure that we're really looking to make sure that they are self-attesting the correct income. When we're looking at a person for LIHEAP, we're going to go a little bit deeper into a conversation with them about their income.

Tillis, Daniel

So the customer intends to schedule the LIHEAP appointment, the BDR, if they qualified with self-attestation, is already on the account, and we've gotten information to protect the customer from disconnect. If they qualify for LIHEAP and all the arrears are covered, then the agency submits the LIHEAP pledge to the company in the assist portal and that's the end of the process. If they're LIHEAP qualified and the arrears were not fully covered, then the agency qualifies the customer for AMP and submits both pledges in the portal.

Yochi Zakai

I think the question here is if they have an arrearage, if they're not LIHEAP qualified and they have an arrearage, then you ask them to self-attest.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

If they are 151% to 80% AMI with the state LIHEAP program that they are creating, this is where we're going to try to qualify them for that program.

Tillis, Daniel

Do we have any estimated timeline of when that might be in place?

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

They're hoping to have it in place in July from my understanding, possibly July at the earliest, but some agencies aren't planning on putting it into effect until October 1st.

Tillis, Daniel

OK, so I think once that's in place we're going to have to kind of revisit some of our processes and how that's going to impact those. For example, we're making the assumption that we'll also want the state LIHEAP funds to be used before the BDR as well, right?

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

I would say yes but Yochi, what are your opinions on that?

Yochi Zakai

Yes.

Tillis, Daniel

So we're already thinking about how we can do that systematically as we make the changes for the federal. We can't do that yet since it's not in place and we want to make sure that's the case before we do it, but it'll be easier to do once we have the other stuff in place, so we'll just need to come back once you all have all the details on how that's going to work and some of the other items might change a little bit, but hopefully this is good enough to give a good idea of how it might work. One of the steps we need to take when we once we get to the point is full training documentation and some training sessions on how this is going to go.

Charlee Thompson

If someone is BDR qualified and LIHEAP eligible, do they also or could they also get qualified for an AMP?

Tillis, Daniel

If they have an arrears balance and the LIHEAP does not cover all of that, then yes, they could qualify for AMP for some or all of their remaining past due balance.

Charlee Thompson

OK, I was just looking at that top pathway, I guess versus BDR qualified, yes he's eligible.

Tillis, Daniel

This probably isn't perfect, we tried to turn it around pretty quickly so that we got it out well ahead of the meeting.

Charlee Thompson

No, it's helpful.

Tillis, Daniel

Any other comments or questions on this flow? I'll try to update again with a couple changes of changes and make it little bit clearer and we can share it again.

Yochi Zakai

What were those two things that Chris said he needed finalized in order to get working now?

Mickelson, Christopher

Program name and caps. For arrearage, we were talking about how much that would be capped at. I think PSE and Avista, who are dual utilities, had \$2500, I think we were talking for us, it was \$1000. So, just verifying those kind of things and do we want to think about any caps on the energy discount?

2. Timeline for providing draft tariff filing – Chris

a. Should we include BDR and Arrearage Forgiveness percentages in the tariff?

Yochi Zakai

I also wanted to note, I think you talked about coming back and chatting again next week and I believe that the agencies are going to be at a conference next week.

Misty Velasquez Community Action of Skagit

Yeah, Monday through Thursday next week is the NEUAC conference in San Diego.

Tillis, Daniel

The 21st is the full advisory group meeting, and I guess we could still talk about this with the full advisory group and give them a quick update on where we're at since the last update. We can try to continue making decisions on the model and the funding to at least give them an update on the overall approach we've decided on. We could also try to move this meeting to Thursday, but we still wanted to have a discussion next week and with our filing the first week of July, including the full advisory group meeting, we only have 3 meetings left. Maybe we push that to the end of the first week of July and I don't know how Chris and Jennifer feel about that. I think this is the last key decision we need to make before we have that finally ready to go.

Mickelson, Christopher

Well, we also need a name and the caps. Those are the other two outstanding items, at which point, once we kind of get those nailed down, then Jennifer and I will work on the filing cover letter, the different tariff pages, the rules, all that good stuff, and then we'll send it out to this group so they can review it and provide feedback.

Tillis, Daniel

That sounds like that runs through Monday through Thursday next week so our next meeting will likely be the 21st.

Yochi Zakai

I will say, if you'd like to have the regulatory folks meet, like me and Corey and Charlee, we would be available if we still wanted to get together and chat. I wouldn't want to lose the momentum, especially when we're so close to July 1st.

Tillis, Daniel

I'm definitely available, so I'll be on.

Charlee Thompson

I'm happy to meet as well.

Tillis, Daniel

So we'll keep the next week's meeting and then just have maybe a little different discussion without the agencies, but we can always send anything you need to get their input on, and Yochi and Charlee could work with them on that. So, if I can maybe recap where we're at right now: we've agreed that all intake goes through the agencies for AMP and BDR; we agreed that we would take 25% of the total funding that would go to the customers for BDR and allocate that as the funding available for the agencies; we will split that across the agencies by customer population, 80% AMI and lower; and we just need to decide on what that enrollment rate toggle is to finalize the amount per agency. We need to discuss what that final number is going to be before we have full agreement on that funding. I know I've said that a couple times, but I just want to make sure we're all in agreement with all of that. Anybody not in agreement with all of that?

### 3. Topics for 6/14 Meeting – All

Tillis, Daniel

It sounds like there's an important topic for our next meeting and maybe we can have some of that discussion next week, even though not everyone's going to be on. Then, shortly thereafter, maybe the next week, finalize those decisions as far as the caps go. We could start next week's meeting with the updated model for funding, then talk about caps and program names. Did anybody have any brilliant additional ideas on program name? Chris, when you send the model you can share some of your name ideas and we can get people thinking about those for the next two to three weeks. Chris and Jennifer Gross have been working on the Tariff filing and they'll be ready to share a rough draft soon. Any last comments, questions, or topics before we wrap up for this week?

Charlee Thompson

We're starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and it feels good.

Tillis, Daniel

It does feel good. We've made good progress over the last 6 to 8 weeks. I appreciate everybody's engagement, dialogue, and cooperation. Alright, have a great rest of your Wednesday.