

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES & TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,

Complainant,

v.

AVISTA CORPORATION D/B/A/ AVISTA UTILITIES

Respondent.

DOCKETS UE-220053, UG-220054, and UE-210854 (Consolidated)

**SEBASTIAN COPPOLA
ON BEHALF OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
PUBLIC COUNSEL UNIT**

EXHIBIT SC-11

Avista's Response to Public Counsel's Data Request No. 249, with Attachment A, on
CSR costs and Customer Contacts

July 29, 2022

AVISTA CORP.
RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

JURISDICTION:	WASHINGTON	DATE PREPARED:	05/13/2022
CASE NO.:	UE-220053 & UG-220054	WITNESS:	Kelly Magalsky
REQUESTER:	Public Counsel	RESPONDER:	Matt Halloran
TYPE:	Data Request	DEPT:	Customer Solutions
REQUEST NO.:	PC – 249	TELEPHONE:	(509) 495-4170
		EMAIL:	matt.halloran@avistacorp.com

SUBJECT: Miscellaneous Expenses

REQUEST:

RE: Miscellaneous Expenses, Direct Testimony of Kelly E. Magalsky, Exh. KEM-1T at 20:10–17, Figure No. 4 (Customer Contacts by Channel (Data)).

Please provide the following information in Excel:

- A. Provide the information in Figure No. 4 with actual 2016, 2017 and 2021 data.
- B. Provide a breakdown of the number of web visits by type tracked for 2021.
- C. Provide the number of Customer Service Representatives (CSR) for each year 2009, and 2016–2021 with the related annual cost for the CSR.
- D. Provide the number of CSR and related costs forecasted for each year for 2022 through 2024.
- E. Confirm that the data is system-wide and not only Washington. If not confirming, please explain.
- F. Provide the average number of customers for each year 2009 and 2016–2024 for the system or jurisdiction to which the data in the chart pertains.
- G. Explain why the number of self-service contacts has been increasing each year at a higher rate than the decline in total live contacts. Are customers finding it more difficult to get information from the Company without a live contact and are repeatedly accessing the digital channels searching for information they cannot easily obtain? Please explain and support your answer with documented evidence.

RESPONSE:

- A. Please see PC-DR-249 Attachment A, tab labeled “Figure 4”.
- B. Please see PC-DR-249 Attachment A, tab labeled “Figure 4”.
- C. Please see PC-DR-249 Attachment A, tab labeled “CSR Costs”. Because of the Company’s flexible staffing model, such that the number of CSRs working at any given time varies depending on customer call forecasts, we have provided the number of CSR hours staffed for each year along with the associated labor cost. CSR labor data is not available for 2009.
- D. CSR data and related costs is not available for 2023-2024. Call Center staffing analysis is performed on an as needed basis prior to onboarding new staff. CSR costs in future years will vary based on actual observed call volumes and as driven by market and labor trends.
- E. The data provided in Figure 4 is system wide.
- F. Please see PC-DR-249 Attachment A, tab labeled “Figure 4”. For purposes of this data, the Company does not have a forecast available for 2023-2024.
- G. Avista does not know every reason and exactly why this trend is occurring as we cannot always fully explain complex customer behavior in simple and quantifiable terms. The following are some of the reasons we believe this trend is occurring:

1) Avista continues to offer more functionality on myavista.com that our customers find value in. That value drives a change in their behavior to interact with myavista.com and/or the Company's mobile app on a more frequent basis than has been observed historically. Our digital channel tools are often easier to access at the time and location of customer's choosing and, in some cases, provide customers with a tool, information, or service that they did not have previously. We do suspect that providing the new functionality provides benefits such as giving customers more choices or information and may also have the benefit of avoiding a phone call but it is not a 1-for-1 phone to digital channel visit tradeoff. The data seems to show that the easier it is for the customer, the more frequently they will use a specific functionality. For example, related to Avista's recent AMI deployment in Washington state, we've developed and deployed functionality on myavista.com that allows a customer to view their energy usage down to the 5-minute interval, and see their 'bill-to-date' and 'projected-bill.' These features provide valuable information to our customers about their energy use that they never had previously and as such, they are accessing myavista.com more frequently.

Another example is the 'View and Report Outages' page. Prior to any digital channels to complete these two functions, we know that some customers would call to either report or view the status of their outage. The volumes that we are seeing now, however, through our digital channels is likely far exceeding the number of customers who were accessing that information through a phone call. We believe this can be attributed to the ease of which they can now access the information on either the website or mobile app.

Documented evidence to support these examples is provided in Table No. 1 below. The customer traffic to the "View Your Usage" page on myavista.com has seen growth that is directly correlated with the deployment of smart meter data availability. The page was deployed in 2017 and initially only had a view of 'total monthly usage.' In 2019, Avista added the ability for customers to view their smart meter data and saw a marked increase in page traffic that continues to grow year over year.

The 'View and Report Outage' pages have seen similar trends. As customers become more aware of the ability to check their outage status without calling Avista, that digital functionality has seen drastic increases traffic.

Table No. 1: Number of Page Views By Year

Myavista.com Page Title	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
View Usage	0	39,022	60,549	105,606	124,393
View and Report Outage	19,343	20,352	520,396	1,080,951	1,349,612

2) Additionally, digital channels support more than just interactions that were historically supported by the call center. For example, our percent of customers paying via cash or check in the mail is decreasing and the percent paying using a digital channel is increasing. A portion of the digital traffic increase in visits can be attributed to this trend.

**ATTACHMENT A TO AVISTA'S RESPONSE TO PUBLIC
COUNSEL'S DATA REQUEST NO. 249**

Customer Service Representative (CSR) Related Annual costs

	Hours Staffed	Agent loaded labor rate		Labor Costs
2009	121,237	\$ 36.69	\$	4,448,185.53
2016	122,603	\$ 39.38	\$	4,828,106.14
2017	113,272	\$ 43.50	\$	4,927,316.62
2018	111,761	\$ 43.50	\$	4,861,603.50
2019	113,833	\$ 43.70	\$	4,974,502.10
2020	122,026	\$ 44.11	\$	5,382,566.86
2021	112,000	\$ 45.23	\$	5,065,760.00

