## Puget Sound Energy Equity Advisory Group Meeting

Meeting Summary Tuesday, January 16, 2024 | 5 – 7 p.m.

## Meeting purpose & topics

Equity Advisory Group (EAG) meeting objectives:

- Receive relevant updates from PSE and EAG Committees
- Learn about a new Climate Commitment Act (CCA) engagement opportunity
- Inform application intake and project selection for equity-focused spending in upcoming Distributed Energy Resource (DER) products
- Revisit 2023 EAG topics

## Agenda

- 1. **Opening:** 5:00 5:15 p.m.
  - 1.1. Welcome
  - 1.2. Safety & equity moment
- 2. **PSE and EAG updates:** 5:15 5:25 p.m.
  - 2.1. Staffing
  - 2.2. End of year check-ins summary
- 3. Climate Commitment Act Subcommittee: 5:25 5:40 p.m.
  - 3.1. Presentation
  - 3.2. Q&A Discussion
- 4. Review Distributed Energy Resources selection process: 5:40 6:25 p.m.
  - 4.1. Presentation
  - 4.2. Small group discussion on projects
  - 4.3. Group share out
- 5. **Break:** 6:25 6:30 p.m.
- 6. Looking back on 2023: 6:30 6:55 p.m.
  - 6.1. Presentation
- 7. **Next Steps:** 6:55 7:00 p.m.
  - 7.1. Last EAG meeting of 2023
- 8. **Public Comment:** 7:00 7:10 p.m.

The full meeting materials can be found online.



## Meeting action items

Below is a summary of the action items from the Jan. 16, 2024 EAG meeting. A feedback report of questions and comments, alongside PSE's responses, is in <u>Attachment B: Feedback Report</u>.

What	Who	When
Respond and follow up on all questions and feedback on DER programs	PSE	By Feb. 20 meeting
Coordinate with EAG members interested in CCA engagement opportunity	PSE	Before Jan. 23 meeting

## Meeting summary

Below is a summary of the presentations and discussions from the Jan. 16, 2024 EAG meeting. A recording of the presentation portions of the meeting is also available on the <u>EAG YouTube</u> channel.

### **Opening**

#### Welcome

Rose McKinney-James, Advocacy BL/ACK, opened the meeting, welcomed everyone, and acknowledged the Lunar New Year and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Jenny Harding, EAG member, provided a safety moment on emergency preparedness. Talysa McCall, PSE Communications Initiatives Consultant, presented an equity moment on how the meeting will focus on procedural justice and starting in February EAG members will present equity moments instead of safety moments.

Rose introduced Mary Kipp, PSE President and CEO. Mary noted that the EAG has been central in providing a greater equity focus at PSE. With the help of the EAG, PSE is now closer to their clean energy goals and is committed to listening and learning from the EAG. Coming together in an environment of listening and collaboration, the EAG has informed PSE on how to incorporate equity into their work. Energy is an essential need for everyone, and it is critical no one is left behind. The EAG's network has opened doors for PSE to engage with customers and communities, and their feedback has reached the upper levels of management at PSE to ensure equity is kept top of mind. Mary thanked the EAG for being a part of the clean energy transition and for their help on the Clean Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP).

EAG members thanked her for her acknowledgement of their efforts and contributions.



### PSE and EAG updates

Rose introduced Kara Durbin, PSE Clean Energy Strategy Director, and Troy Hutson, PSE Energy Equity Director.

#### Staffing

Kara explained some organizational changes that will be happening now that the EAG's efforts are extending beyond clean energy. PSE will be transitioning the coordination of the EAG from the Clean Energy Strategy team to the Energy Equity team. Lysa will continue as the primary EAG contact, and the Clean Energy Strategy team will still be involved with the EAG from time to time. PSE will make this transition over the next couple of months. Troy mentioned it has been a pleasure to present at past EAG meetings and meet some of the members at Equity Forums. He thanked Kara and her team for laying an incredible foundation.

#### End of year check-ins summary

Lysa thanked all EAG members for having end of year check-ins during the holiday season. So far, 11 of the 16 members have completed interviews with PSE. If a member has not been interviewed yet, Lysa will be reaching out.

Additional details on PSE and EAG updates are on <u>slides 12 to 13</u> of the meeting presentation. A recording is also available to watch on the <u>EAG YouTube channel</u>.

### Climate Commitment Act Subcommittee

Rose introduced Kelima Yakupova, PSE State & Regional Policy Consultant.

#### Presentation

Kelima provided an overview of the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) and presented a CCA engagement opportunity for EAG members to be a part of. She discussed key elements of the state "cap and invest" program, which incentivizes the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Since the start of the program in 2023, PSE has been working with interested parties implementing CCA compliance on the gas side. The Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) has approved PSE's CCA compliance tariff filings related to recovery of estimated 2023 and 2024 compliance costs and pass back of estimated 2023 and 2024 no-cost allowance auction proceeds in the form of credits to low-income and all other eligible customers.

As part of PSE's 2024 CCA filing, PSE proposed to allocate \$23 million of auction proceeds to low-income and named community decarbonization projects (single-family, multi-family, and small business) over 2024-2026. This was driven by feedback from interested parties in 2023



and PSE's commitment to promote equity and serve our vulnerable customers. The UTC approved \$7.7 million in 2024. The program design for these decarbonization projects will be finalized in the first quarter of 2024 through collaboration with interested parties. PSE is inviting EAG members to be a part of the engagement process. The first meeting will be later this month.

#### A&Q

During the full group Q&A on the CCA engagement opportunity, the following comments and questions (with responses) arose:

- Comments about it being a great start and interest in hearing about small business benefits.
- Does PSE have methods to identify all low-income households in the territory to ensure customers get the bill credit?
  - Response: As part of the implementation program, PSE pulled data from energy assistance programs. There will be a rolling 24-month CCA low-income flag for low-income customers receiving CCA LI credit.
- What types of projects does PSE expect?
  - Response: PSE assumes full electrification projects for residential housing with heat pumps and electrification of water heating, multi-family buildings with lowincome customers and/or in named communities, and small businesses in named communities. PSE will be working with interested parties in determining which programs will be funded, how, and how much will be allocated to each project/program.

Additional details on the CCA subcommittee are on <u>slides 14 to 20</u> of the meeting presentation. A recording is also available to watch on the <u>EAG YouTube channel</u>.

### Distributed Energy Resources selection process

Rose introduced Mackenzie Martin, PSE Clean Energy Product Manager, and Heather Mulligan, PSE Customer Energy Renewable Programs Manager.

#### Presentation

Mackenzie reviewed previous discussions on the Distributed Energy Resources (DER) selection process from past EAG meetings. She provided an overview on how identifying customer solar benefits and barriers helped PSE create the solar buyback program. The program will launch this year and provide customers with additional upfront incentives towards installation costs for community-based organizations, tribal entities, and government agencies who served historically marginalized communities. Mackenzie went over the current applicant review process, scoring, and prioritization with community impact weighed at 85%.



Mackenzie then presented on residential batteries and the identified benefits and barriers. This year, PSE plans to provide residential installation incentives for vulnerable populations and reliability-focused customers. Customers can apply individually, but PSE will also partner with affordable housing providers to install batteries for qualified customers.

Mackenzie explained that PSE is open to changing aspects of these programs after learning more about customer interest, but for now PSE expects to award rebates on a first come, first served basis.

### Small group discussion on projects

EAG members split into breakout rooms to discuss the following questions on solar or battery customer journeys:

- Do you have any concerns or suggestions for improvement?
- Do you have suggestions for how to market the program?

#### Feedback themes

During the full group discussion on the DER selection process, the following feedback themes arose.

#	Tenet	Theme	Response
1	Procedural	Develop an approach for accountability after awards are received	We will develop an accountability mechanism for Solar Buy Back awards. We are exploring a one-year checkin, where recipients can showcase how their utility bill savings as a result of their solar were used to directly benefit the named communities they serve. This checkin could either be written or oral, to help reduce operational burdens for under-resourced recipients. Conversations are still ongoing about implementing something similar for the Green Power Solar Grants and we will align these processes as much as possible.
2	Procedural	Provide technical assistance during application process	Our intention is to work closely with Recommended Energy Professionals, manufacturers and other entities interfacing with our customers to ensure they are well-equipped to provide quality technical assistance. We will then evaluate the effectiveness of this approach and determine if additional resources should be onboarded to further enhance this technical assistance. To help ensure our Recommended Energy Professionals are engaging with named communities in equitable, sensitive and culturally-appropriate manners, we are exploring an 'Equity Orientation'.



#	Tenet	Theme	Response
			We also heard the need to simplify the application process and will review all application materials with an eye for culling unnecessary questions and translating materials to Plain Talk. We will review the application process on recurring basis to further simplify and increase accessibility.
3	Distributional	Prioritize product marketing, engagement, support and awards for entities that need it the most	For Residential Batteries: While the Vulnerable Populations incentive is a reserved pool of funds that cannot be claimed by others, we heard the need for targeted, intentional outreach to customers who experience an intersectionality of multiple vulnerability factors or Deepest Need customers. We are planning to identify community-based organizations that can help us connect with these customers and begin outreach with them as soon as possible. We will compensate CBOs for the time they take to meet with us about this product. We want to partner with these CBOs while still acknowledging that marketing this product to some of their communities, given the potential for out-of-pocket costs, may come across as out of touch. While the Vulnerable Population incentives will still be awarded as eligible customers apply, we are open to modifying this approach in year two based on outcomes from year 1. From year 1 we hope to a) learn more about which customers are interested in batteries, 2) understand which customer barriers need to be worked out and 3) further refine our outreach approach.
			For Solar Buy Back: We will tailor our outreach for the product to eligible customers who provide substantial impact to named communities, specifically Deepest Need customers. After year 1, we are open to program revisions, like prioritizing applicants who have not received financial assistance from PSE before, to increase the equitable distribution of our incentives.
			For both products: We plan to engage with our Recommended Energy Professionals to learn more about their experience working with customers in vulnerable populations. We want to better understand what demand they perceive exists, what barriers they are hearing from customers and how we can partner to create a better customer experience.
			We commit to ongoing flexibility and process improvements, where needed. We would like to present to the EAG again in 2025 to share what we

#	Tenet	Theme	Response
			learned from year 1 and ideate potential improvements.
4	Procedural	Provide recommendations to applicants to help them leverage other resources to reduce or eliminate out of pocket costs (e.g., IIJA)	We will provide resources to connect customers with other state and federal funding mechanisms that may reduce their out-of-pocket costs. For example, for residential batteries, we will include information about the Residential Renewable Energy Tax Credit.
5	Procedural	Make application materials available in multiple languages and available on multiple devices	For residential customers: We have put Spanish translation and transcreation on our roadmap. We will continue to assess the need for additional languages. This will include and require an assessment of the various customer interfaces and their potentially disparate language capabilities. In the meantime, if we have a customer with specific language needs, PSE will make resources available to help with translation. We will transparently market this offer to customers on the product webpage and educate Energy Advisors and Recommended Energy Professionals about the offer as well.
			For commercial customers: We will continue to explore options for translation and transcreation. But will likely prioritize residential customers at this time.
			PSE.com is mobile-friendly and we will continue to review the accessibility of other third-party software.
6	Procedural	Design applications to avoid unnecessary applicants (i.e., applicants that are unlikely to be successful)	We will provide clear and transparent 'personas' for successful and competitive applicants along with a 'you are eligible if' checklist to clearly communicate program eligibility. While we do not currently have the IT resources to develop an eligibility widget that encompasses all eligibility factors, we will continue to explore ways to automate this process. We will also be transparent about the number of awards available each year, and what percentage of funding has already been awarded.
7	Procedural	Fully disclose all costs including future maintenance and repair	We will continue to communicate to our Recommended Energy Professionals the importance of clear financial communication to customers. We are working on educational materials that can help customers secure an accurate and complete bid and spot common red flags. We will work to develop a case stud(ies) with real and representative customer(s) that clearly showcases the financial breakdown of their project(s).

To view all EAG member's comments and suggestions, refer to the <u>Attachment B: Feedback Report</u>. Additional details on the DER selection process are on <u>slides 21 to 35</u> of the meeting presentation. A recording is also available to watch on the <u>EAG YouTube channel.</u>

### Looking back at 2023

Ray Outlaw, PSE Communications Initiatives Manager, gave a brief preview of the 2023 year-in review and asked members to review the slides. Due to time constraints, PSE intends to continue this topic during the February 2023 meeting.

### **Next Steps**

Rose discussed next steps, reminders, and planning logistics.

- Next Steering Committee meeting: February 5, 5-6 p.m.
- Next EAG meeting: February 20, 5-7 p.m.

Meeting materials are available at <u>cleanenergyplan.pse.com</u>.

#### **Public Comment**

Rose provided step-by-step instructions for how observers could join the meeting to provide verbal public comments.

There were no public comments.

The meeting officially adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

## **Attachment A: Meeting Attendees**

### **Equity Advisory Group members**

- 1. Jenny Harding, GSBA and New Chapter Wedding Events
- 2. Emily Larson Kubiak, Sustainable Connections
- 3. Marco Morales Mendez, Community advocate
- 4. TJ Protho, Community advocate
- 5. Dennis Suarez, Community advocate
- 6. Megan Walsh, Community advocate
- 7. Demeco Walters, Community advocate
- 8. Karia Wong, Chinese Information and Service Center
- 9. Monica Guevara, Emerald Cities Collaborative
- 10. Amy Nichols, Community advocate
- 11. Xi Wang, Community advocate
- 12. Rachel Perlot, African Community and Housing Development
- 13. Amasai Jeke, UTOPIA Washington
- 14. Glenda Duldulao, Asia Pacific Cultural Center

### **Puget Sound Energy**

- 1. Mary Kipp, CEO and President
- Kara Durbin, Clean Energy Strategy Director
- 3. Ray Outlaw, Communications Initiatives Manager
- 4. Brian Tyson, Clean Energy Planning & Implementation Manager
- 5. Troy Hutson, Energy Equity Director
- 6. Talysa McCall, Communications Initiatives Consultant
- 7. Mackenzie Martin, Clean Energy Product Manager Equity
- 8. Heather Mulligan, Customer Energy Renewable Programs Manager
- Malcolm McCulloch, New Products and Services Manager
- 10. Yvonne Wang, Energy Equity Supervisor
- 11. Kelima Yakupova, State & Regional Policy Consultant
- 12. Wendy Gerlitz, Regulatory Policy Manager

### **Consultant Staff**

- 1. Rose McKinney-James, Advocacy BL/ACK
- 2. Kim Zamora Delgado, Triangle Associates
- 3. Zachary Ott, Triangle Associates
- 4. Will Henderson, Maul Foster & Alongi
- 5. Jack Donahue, Maul Foster & Alongi



# Attachment B: Feedback Report

Topic	Question/Comment	PSE response
Solar buy back program	Are there ways for PSE to offer more incentives and do more work for the CBOs?	Please see feedback theme #3 above.
Solar buy back program	How is PSE helping facilitate conversations between businesses and landlords?	At the customers' request, we are happy to answer any questions that arise from landlords. We can participate in email exchanges or meetings on the topic. We can continue to explore other methods to help support these conversations.
Solar buy back program	Concerns about methods of accountability and orgs ability/capacity to tell their story. What is the goal of telling these stories?	Please see <u>feedback theme #1 above</u> .
Solar buy back program	Is technical assistance provided to CBOs during the application process?	Please see feedback theme #2 above.
Solar buy back program	Needs to be accessible in multiple manners and languages. PSE should support applicants in a way that gives information about who needs the support most and why.	Please see feedback theme #5 above.
Solar buy back program	Is this program geared more toward residential or commercial customers?	This is geared toward commercial scale projects, system sizes greater than 100 kW are not typical for residential homes.
Solar buy back program	Are Recommended Energy Professionals internal PSE staff or contractors?	Recommended Energy Professionals are independent contractors that meet certain criteria. They are not employed by PSE.
Solar buy back program	How are businesses in highly impacted communities targeted?	PSE's community teams hold relationships with these customers and help market the program to small businesses, community-based organizations, and others. Solar installers can also drive people to the program.
Solar buy back program	Market programs to landlords and ask them to support	We will explore ways to weave this suggestion into our roadmap.
Residential battery program	Prioritize the apps that we can screen and identify orgs/people that need it the most.	Please see feedback theme #3 above.
Residential battery program	Include different usages and load shifting in the application description/overview	We will explore including this in our customer-facing communications.

Topic	Question/Comment	PSE response
Residential battery program	It strikes me that most people that really need resiliency (and have the means) likely have a backup generator. It may be necessary/helpful to provide a compare and contrast of the benefits of a battery to a generator.	We will explore including this in our customer-facing communications.
Residential battery program	Will load shifting technology or tools be utilized in combination with the batteries?	Customers will be enrolled in the system that allows PSE to utilize their battery during peak energy times. Customers can work with their installers to set their battery charging schedules.
Residential battery program	You list what the benefit is, but what is the total price of a battery to begin with, ballpark?	One estimate shows \$10,000 to \$20,000, fully installed. But many factors, like battery size, impact cost.
Residential battery program	Will PSE provide some capacity guidance to aid in sizing the batteries?	PSE will review applications and work with representatives to ensure the system is adequately sized.
Residential battery program	Will this service also be included for larger industrial sized projects?	PSE is developing a battery option for commercial applications.
Residential battery program	Is the main objective to provide resiliency to the grid or to the household?	The program meets both objectives. We will be transparent about PSE's use of the battery for grid resilience versus how much will be available for the customer's own use in customer-facing collateral.
Residential battery program	Since there's a gap between battery costs vs the incentive, I would love for PSE to guide people on other incentives (IRA for example) that could help vulnerable communities not have to come out of pocket. Otherwise, it seems like there's a \$5K-\$10K gap which may be a significant barrier.	Please see feedback theme #4 above.
Residential battery program	Identify communities that would benefit from this. Rural communities would benefit more from it. Target that audience.	Please see feedback theme #3 above. We will add rural communities to our priority populations to conduct outreach with.
Customer program feedback	I want to elevate the point about a self-select in/out set of questions that could minimize people unnecessarily filling out an application if they aren't a strong applicant.	Please see feedback theme #6 above.
Customer program feedback	Important to ensure that the application is mobile friendly - not everyone has access to a computer.	Please see feedback theme #5 above.
Customer program feedback	Provide information on what is important to the customer (i.e. like buying a car). Put things together in a model. Clearly communicate rebates and offsets.	Please see feedback themes #2, #4 and #7 above.
Customer program feedback	Can PSE work with other county and federal measures to essentially help folks find "match" funding to defray costs?	Please see feedback theme #4 above.



Topic	Question/Comment	PSE response
Customer program feedback	Being transparent about the overall number of awards available in a given year is helpful and gives transparency.	Please see feedback theme #6 above.
Customer program feedback	Include a set of pre-application questions that can maybe align with PSEs scoring system letting applicants know whether they score in the highly likely /strong applicant category or not.	Please see feedback theme #6 above.
Customer program feedback	What kind of support would be available for non-English speaking business owners?	Please see feedback theme #5 above.
Customer program feedback	What is the source of the budget for this program? Did I hear you say it's baked into the rates?	Yes, funds are recovered through rates.
Customer program feedback	How will the community impact questions be measured overtime, if at all?	Please see feedback theme #1 above.
Customer program feedback	Does workforce development include who the entity contracts with?	It could, if the installer is a BIPOC-owned business. The concept could also include the installer inviting members of the applicant's community to learn about the installation process.
Customer program feedback	Marketing needs to include the absolute total price, with upkeep and end of life costs included. People without a lot of extra cash will be hesitant to get into this if they don't know the total cost up front.	Please see feedback theme #7 above.
Customer program feedback	Flyer/factsheet with visuals would be helpful.	We agree and will create such customer-facing collateral.
Customer program feedback	Could PSE hold community dinners (not just a one time off) - hold monthly events so they become more aware of the programs. Educational/technical assistance dinners.	We will continue to explore this suggestion in partnership with our community teams.
Customer program feedback	Are we giving non-English speaking organizations enough time to understand the information/to apply for the programs?	Please see feedback themes #2 and #3 above. We will continue to explore ways to alleviate this barrier.
Customer program feedback Customer program feedback	Recommended Energy Professionals- how do they relate to the utility? How are they chosen, and do REP have to charge specific rates based on PSE's guidelines, or their own?	Recommended Energy Professionals are a subset of PSE's larger Trade Ally network. They are independent contractors that meet certain criteria. Please visit this website for more information on Trade Ally criteria.
Customer program feedback	What is the plan for outreach and selection since it seems like a very small number compared to those that may qualify?	Please see feedback theme #3 above.



Topic	Question/Comment	PSE response
General meeting comments	Maybe using Mural or a similar app will be helpful for these breakout sessions in the future. It'll allow people to put their thoughts down even if everyone can't speak it gets captured.	We have used this format in the past and will look for additional opportunities going forward to leverage collaborative tools like this.

