

Equity Advisory Group Meeting: Solar Grants & High Energy Burden Elimination: *Key Strategies*

May 18, 2026
5 p.m. – 7 p.m.



Welcome and Introductions

Ishmael Nuñez, Uncommon Bridges
Facilitator



Safety Moment

Em Piro, Puget Sound Energy

Energy Equity Program Manager - Community Partnerships



Spring Growth & Power Line Safety

What You can Watch For

- 🌳 Trees growing into or near power lines
- 🌿 Branches hanging over lines after storms

What You Can Do

Report at [PSE.com/Trees](https://www.pse.com/Trees) or call **1-888-225-5773**
FREE certified arborist will come

⚠️ EMERGENCY

Tree touching lines? Call 911 + PSE immediately

! Never trim near power lines yourself

! Stay 10+ feet away



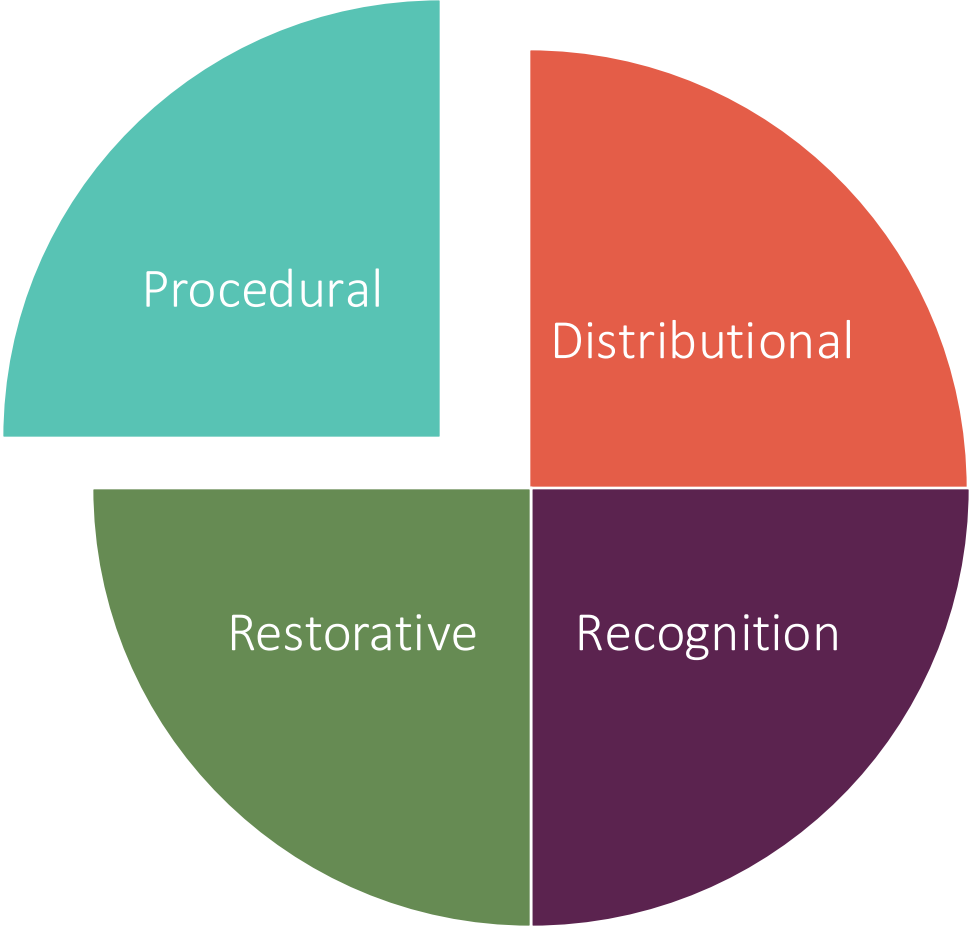
Equity Moment

Glenda Duldulao

EAG Member



Tonight's equity focus



Equity in Procurement and Grantmaking

Grassroots and community-based organizations are **closest to the challenges and solutions to our neighborhoods.**

They may be doing the work in the community, but larger organizations win the contracts because they have more capacity to navigate the system.

Too often, **procurement and grantmaking systems are built in ways that unintentionally leave** grassroots and smaller community-based organizations.

And it doesn't have to be this way.

Equity in Procurement and Grantmaking

Challenges and Barriers

- Grant applications that are **long, technical, and hard to navigate**.
- **Short** timelines
- Reimbursement-only funding that **requires cash reserves** that many organizations do not have.
- High **administrative burden**
- Little **transparency** on how funding decisions are made.

Equity-Centered Practices

- Prioritize **lived experience, trust, and long-term community impact** over formal credentials
- Directing resources to **rural, Tribal entities, and BIPOC-led organizations** serving historically marginalized communities.
- Increase **transparency** in application criteria, timelines, and decision-making
- Investing in **community-designed** grant and procurement programs
- Make applications more **accessible**
- **Scale requirements** to the size of the funding
- Improve **payment and contracting** practices

Equity in Procurement and Grantmaking

Equity in procurement and grantmaking means removing barriers, sharing power, and ensuring resources flow to the communities **most impacted by inequities**, not just organizations with the most capacity, cash reserves, or grant-writing expertise.

It is ensuring that community-based organizations can succeed, not just survive.

Agenda

5:00 p.m. – Welcome & Equity Moment

5:20 p.m. – Solar Grants

5:40 p.m. – BREAK

5:50 p.m. – High Energy Burden Elimination: *Key Strategies*

6:50 p.m. – Public Comment

6:55 p.m. – Next steps

Facilitator requests

Participants, please:

- Listen to and appreciate the diversity of views and opinions
- Actively participate in the group
- Behave constructively and courteously towards all participants
- Respect the role of the facilitator to guide the group process

Observers, please:

- Respect the Equity Advisory Group's time to discuss meeting topics
- In the chat ... describe what lens you are representing today?

YouTube livestream and Public Comment for observers

Public Comment

- The public comment period will start at 6:50 p.m.
- Instructions to join will be presented during break.
- **Please do not join the meeting until then.** The first 5 individuals will have 2 minutes each to speak.

Livestream

- Observers can watch the meeting through the YouTube livestream link.
- Prepare to provide your verbal comments during the observer comment period on the agenda.

Solar Grants

Mackenzie Martin

Clean Energy Product Manager- Equity, Customer Clean Energy Solutions



2026 PSE EAG Priority Action Plan Worksheet

EAG Priority	Goal Statement	System Level Impact	2026 EAG Actions	EAG Audience
Accessibility	Everyone can access PSE's programs and services with relative ease. No one faces unfair obstacles; operations are culturally responsive and respect the diverse experiences of all communities.	Greater leverage of the existing connection PSE has with named communities and deepest-need customers in PSE investments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for and advise on expanding systems that ease enrollment access Provide guidance on systemic obstacles to program participation for customers with diverse needs and circumstances 	PSE Staff, Community-Based Organizations and Other Agencies
Affordability	All customers, especially those in named communities, view energy affordability as standard. The cost of energy is no longer a barrier to accessing essential services. By using data and community input to guide decisions, investments, and results are fair and equitable for everyone in all communities.	Elimination of high energy burden.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for a more equitable rate structure Advocate and provide perspective on finding "hidden" customers who need access but are missed by current identification methods 	The UTC, PSE Staff
Accountability	PSE is a reliable partner that demonstrates how commitment to equity can enhance the well-being of customers. Its accountability systems help lessen burdens and give more power to the voices of the community.	Quantitative and qualitative results reflect the experiential results of distributional equity efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and advise PSE to build trust and stronger accountability measures Guide and provide perspective on accountability mechanisms that demonstrate how equity commitments translate into community benefits, reflected by community experience 	PSE Staff
Advocacy	Through strong partnerships and community involvement, PSE and the EAG work together to create lasting change. They advocate for fair energy policies and make sure that solutions led by the community help shape a clean and equitable energy future.	Policy and practice change in the areas of energy affordability, reliability, sufficiency, and abundance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage collaboration and influence to affect rules, laws, and business practices governing energy utilities 	PSE, Tribes, the UTC, and other regulators, legislatures, business communities, and Named Communities

Discussion – Solar Grant

Objective

For EAG members to

- Learn about the Solar Grants
- Consider participating in the 2026 review panel
- Share the Solar Grant opportunity with eligible applicants in their community

EAG Feedback Level

Involve*

With EAG input, we will...

decide the 2026 solar grant recipients, as well as receive feedback regarding accessibility in the overall grant process

*Involve (We will work with you): Actively ensuring EAG concerns are considered in alternatives.
See appendix for IAP2 Feedback Level Descriptions

Solar Grants: The 'what'



\$1,000,000 total available for customer-owned solar installations

Up to 100% or \$100,000 per project

Projects must:

- Be located in PSE's electric service area
- Be less than or equal to 100 kW AC and enroll in Net Metering
- Have a total solar resource fraction (TSRF") of at least 75%
- Be owned by the applicant or leased for at least five more years, with property owner approval



Solar Grants: The 'who'

Eligible applicants are:

CBOs, government agencies, and Tribal entities serving their communities.

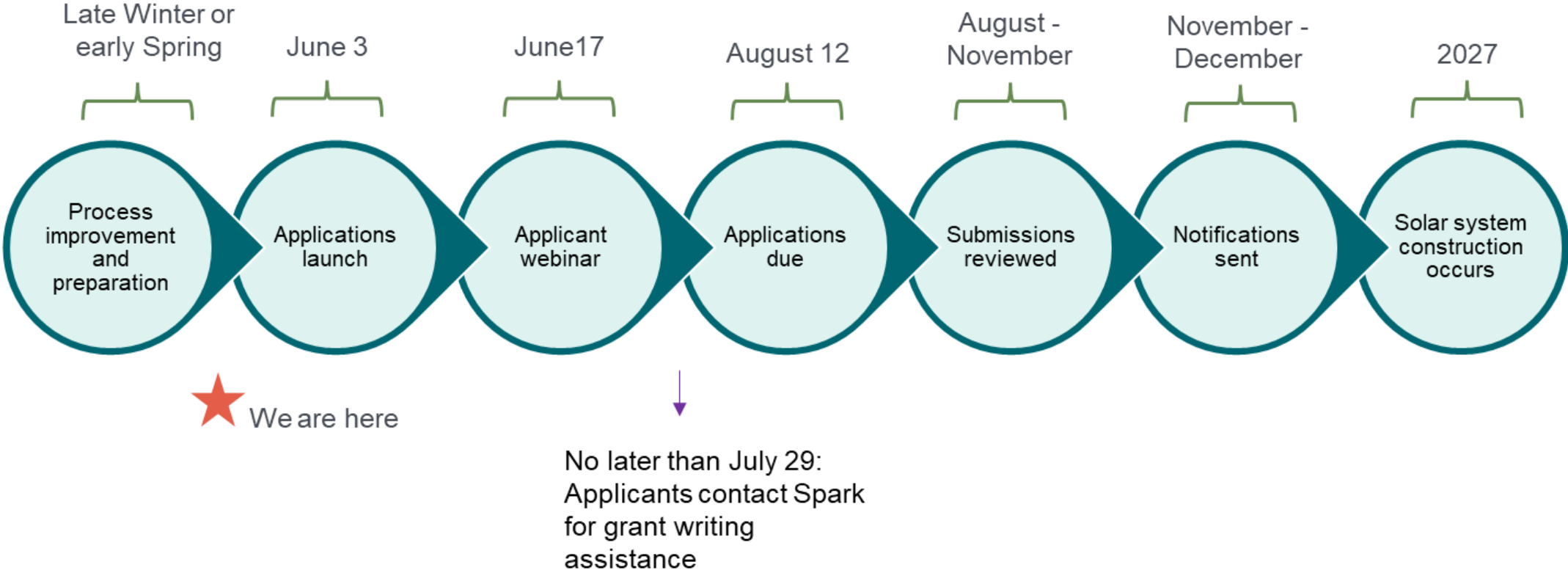
Successful applicants will articulate how they will redirect the savings from their energy bill to directly benefit the communities they serve.

Past project examples:

- Boys and Girls Club of South Puget Sound (Kitsap)
- Camp Korey (Skagit)
- Family Support Center of South Sound (Thurston)
- Ferndale Food Bank (Whatcom)
- Island Senior Resources (Island)
- South County Area Human Services Alliance (King)
- Suquamish Tribe - Chief Kitsap Academy (Kitsap)
- Vadis (Pierce)



Annual Solar Grant process



Impact of Solar Grant awards

Impact from 2017-2025

- Awarded over 90 projects, totaling over \$6.1M
- Approx 3 million kWh to be generated annually

Impact from 2025 grant round:

- 38 applications, totaling over \$3.15M in requests
- Awarded 12 projects, totaling over \$900,000



Ways we create access

- Shortened and reorganized application
- Opportunity to do part of application in video/audio format
- Grant writing and bid procurement assistance
- Prioritize new applicants
- Offer funding for education and outreach sessions for awardee's communities
- Process improvement and feedback loop
- Connect unsuccessful applicants with other relevant programs

EAG + PSE partnership opportunity: Solar Grant review panel



*Share out from
former grant
panelists*

Participation in the Solar Grant program application review, project selection process, and process improvement conversations for the 2026 round

- Meetings and communications start in August/September and usually conclude in November/December.
- Meetings occur after work hours, usually 4-6PM or 5-7PM.
- It may take 20 hours of your time. Stipends are provided at the rate of \$50/hour.

Consult – Questions for EAG members

Who wants to volunteer for the 2026 review panel?

- Put your name in the chat *or* let Em know if you are interested **by June 22**
- Limit of 5 participants, we may prioritize new members if we have too many volunteers

Can you share the opportunity with eligible applicants in your community? *Outreach Materials to Be Provided*

Questions: Mackenzie.Martin@pse.com



Solar Grant installation at Skagit Food Distribution Center in Sedro-Woolley.

PSE's Solar Grants are funding to increase equitable access to the benefits of solar. Over the past eight years, PSE has awarded over \$6.8 million in total grant funding to 96 local solar projects.

These solar installations allow community-based organizations, government agencies and Tribal entities to save money through lower utility bills, increasing the funding available for them to support their communities.

The 2025 round of Solar Grants is now closed and award notifications will be made by year-end. Please fill out [the interest form](#) if you would like to be on the mailing list for the 2026 round of Solar Grants.

 \$6.8 million awarded



Break

Please return in 10 minutes



"Elements of Power" by Angie Hinojos, a PSE "ARTility" Collaboration

The public comment period will start at 6:50 p.m.

Please do not join the meeting until then. The first 5 individuals will have 2 minutes each to speak.

1. Join the Zoom meeting:
 - a) Visit <https://zoom.us/join>
 - b) Insert Meeting ID: **880 4612 8281**
 - c) Call in to the meeting:
 - a) Call number: +1 253 215 8782 US
 - a) Insert Meeting ID: **880 4612 8281**

High Energy Burden Elimination: *Key Strategies*

Troy Hutson, Puget Sound Energy
Director, Energy Equity



2026 PSE EAG Priority Action Plan Worksheet

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Objective – High Energy Burden Elimination – Key Strategies

For EAG members to consider:

- The current energy burden landscape
- PSE's existing approaches to energy burden and associated challenges
- Opportunities for PSE to lead on high energy burden elimination in its service area

EAG Feedback Level

Collaborate*

With EAG input, we will...

Establish the foundational principles and ongoing collaboration framework to guide development of PSE's high energy burden elimination strategy.

*Collaborate (We will partner): Partnering with the EAG to develop solutions and integrate advice.
See appendix for IAP2 Feedback Level Descriptions

High energy burden concentrates among the lowest income customers.

High Energy Burden:
More than 6% of income spent on energy annually

~50% of customers are estimated low-income
based on Federal Poverty Level, Area Median Income (AMI), and household size

Energy Burden by Income Level

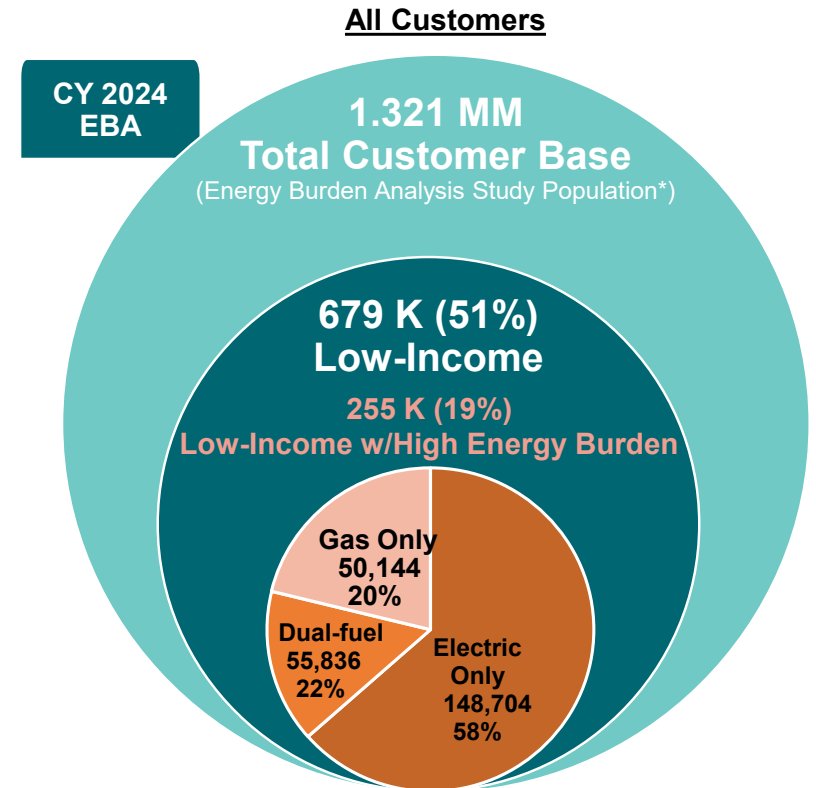
- All residential customers: **2.7%** of income spent on energy
- All low-income customers: **4.7%** of income on energy
- Low-income + high burden: **10.3%** of income on energy

Energy Burden + Low Income

- Residential customers → **19%** have low-income + high energy burden
- Low-income customers → **37%** have high energy burden
- High Energy Burden customers → **97%** are low-income

Across Income Spectrum

- **Below 10% AMI: 99%** have high energy burden
- **Above 240% AMI: 0.2%** have high energy burden

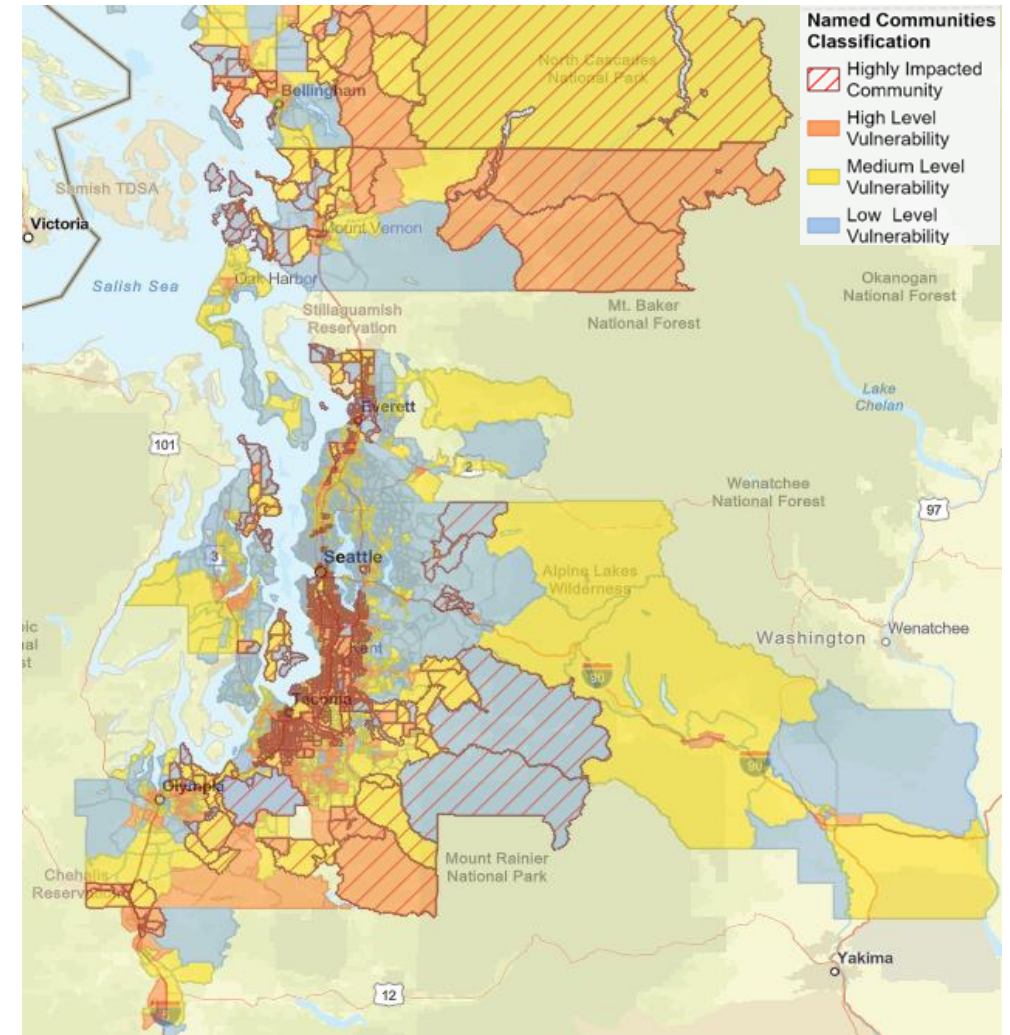


Named Communities face disproportionate energy affordability challenges.

About half of our customers live in priority areas or face high energy cost burdens:

Area Type	% of all PSE Customers	% of all Low-Income + High Energy Burdened Customers	LI-HEB Rate in Area
High Vulnerability Population	30%	42%	27%
Highly Impacted Communities	25%	32%	25%
Electric Deepest Need Areas	6%	23%	75%

Source: PSE's 2024 EBA
*2024 EBA customers



Source: Named communities (Highly Impacted Communities and high-level Vulnerability) map available here:
<https://esri.pse.com/portal/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=da2b79bdd39847b4949683b10c7e2d81>



Our regulatory context includes CETA Energy Assistance mandates.

CETA Section 120 Energy Assistance

Mandate

"all Washington electric utilities **must provide energy assistance funding and programs** to low-income households by July 31, 2021"

Suggestion

"**to the extent practicable, priority** must be given to low-income households with a **higher energy burden**"

Reporting Obligation

Utilities "are required to assess energy assistance available to low-income households...and **provide their findings biennially** to the Washington State Department of Commerce"

- *Energy Burden Analysis (EBA)*
- *Biennial CETA Sec.120 Energy Assistance Reports*

2026 legislative changes (HB 1903)

- Progress achievement **timelines removed** from statute
- State-wide energy assistance program

Reporting Obligations vs Mandates

Clear Mandates:

- Provide **energy assistance** funding and programs
- Submit **biennial reports** to Commerce
- **30%** clean energy benefits to named communities

The Gap

Statutory language *suggests but does not require* energy burden prioritization

Suggestions/Guidelines:

- Energy burden reduction prioritization
- Priority to households with higher energy burden ("to the extent practicable")
- Community-responsive approaches
- Timelines

We are making progress. Assistance programs are reaching customers and reducing energy burden.

2024 Achievements

- \$95M provided in direct bill assistance
- 126,700 customers received assistance
- Strong **reach to named communities**:
 - 35% recipients in highly impacted communities
 - 47% in high vulnerable population areas
- **Median energy burden reduced** from 7.7% to 4.7% for assistance recipients
- 32,005 customers (12.2%) moved from **energy-burdened to non-energy-burdened**
 - **Pre-Assistance**: ~255k (19%) estimated low-income + high energy burdened
 - **Post-Assistance**: ~223k (17%) remained low-income + high energy burdened

Increased accessibility efforts

- **Self-attestation** of income to qualify for certain programs
- **Automatic eligibility** for programs (ex: Seattle Housing Authority partnership)
- Increased access to programs through **Washington Connection** via DSHS partnership
- Continued, expanded, and prioritized **outreach efforts**
- Expansion of and improvements to **bill assistance programs** and program design

*Source: PSE's 2024 EBA

Since CETA, we have expanded and improved bill assistance programs.

Bill Discount Rate (2023)

- Program launched
- Easier access: customers can self-report income online
- Apply for both bill discount rate and HELP at the same time

Past-Due Bill Forgiveness (2024)

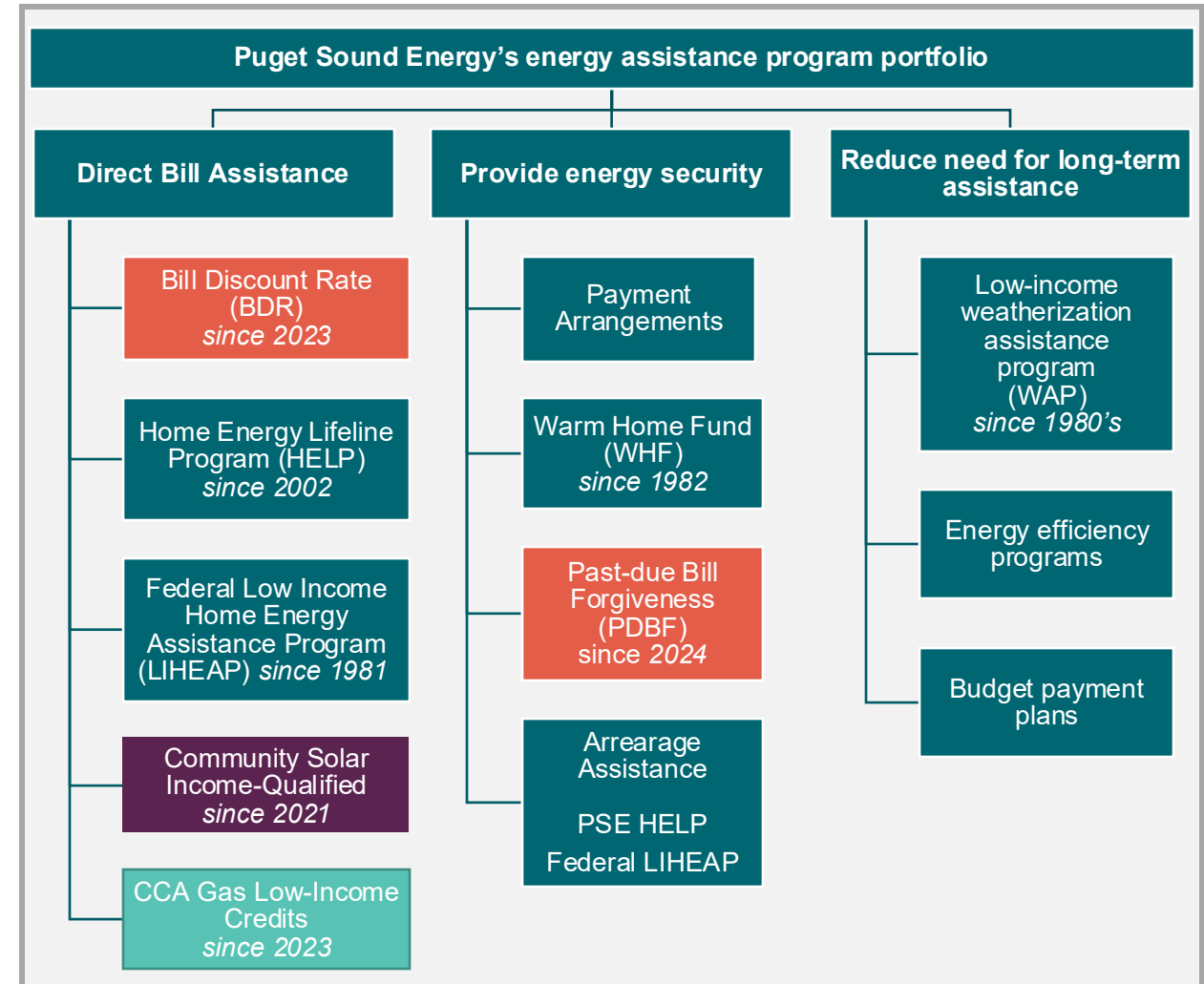
- New debt relief program

Head Start Benefit (2025)

- Additional past-due bill forgiveness option

Expanded Funding (2026)

- ~\$250M* in ratepayer-funded assistance programs



*Source: Dockets UE-250880 / UG-250881

Learn more about PSE's energy assistance programs:
[PSE | Assistance programs](#)



However, challenges remain. Need is growing faster than our current approach can address.

Growing need

Year-over-year increase in estimated low-income and energy-burdened customers

Scale of Challenge

- \$221M estimated need to reduce energy burden to 6%* and it is **expected to grow**
- In 2024, **73% of assistance** (\$70M) went directly toward reducing energy burden, with **12.2% reduction** in low-income energy-burdened
- \$250M energy assistance programs funding in 2026 means **burden shift to all customers**

Access barriers

Data privacy, opt-in requirements, etc. present persistent barriers

Our assistance programs reach customers, but we can be more strategic and more effective with limited funding.

Current programs available to all income-qualified customers equally, on **first-come first-serve basis**, regardless of energy burden severity.



**Estimate as of 2024*

We want to shift from a compliance-driven to community-impact focused approach.

Key Strategies

Guiding Question

What combined approaches most effectively reduce high energy burden across customers?



Technology-first → **Community-need-first** approach (driven by EAG feedback)



High energy burden elimination as decision-making lens across all PSE operations



Integration across planning: Integrated System Plan (resource planning), delivery system, resource acquisition

We think there are key utility mechanisms that may impact energy burden.



How we structure costs



How we direct assistance

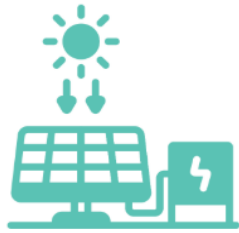


How we invest in communities



How we measure success

We have a vision for High Energy Burden elimination.



***Community-scale
clean energy benefits***
that are visible and
measurable



***Utility as
community partner***
beyond a service provider



Strategic approach
\$221M+ need requires
more than traditional
program expansion

High Energy Burden Elimination – EAG Collaboration

What are key principles, values, and systemic equity implications we should consider as we pursue our vision for the elimination of High Energy Burden?

Visual Notetaking Activity

1. **Strategic Principles Discussion (20 minutes):** EAG brainstorm on key principles, values, and systemic equity implications embedded within PSE's high energy burden elimination strategy.
2. **Gap Analysis Activity (20 minutes):** EAG identifies missing elements of PSE's current approach.

Appendix



Median energy burden of estimated low-income and energy-burdened customers is 10%

	Median energy burden by customer designation:					
Customer segment	All	KLI	ELI	HIC	High VP	E-DN
All customers in 2024 EBA	2.7%	9.0%	4.7%	3.2%	3.4%	13.2%
Estimated Upper-income (income >115% AMI)	1.5%	n/a	n/a	1.6%	1.5%	2.0%
Estimated Moderate-income (income >80% and ≤115% AMI)	2.1%	n/a	n/a	2.2%	2.2%	2.9%
Estimated Low-income (income ≤80% AMI)	4.7%	9.3%	4.7%	4.9%	5.0%	14.7%
Estimated Low-income & Non-HEB (EB≤6%)	3.4%	4.1%	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%	3.9%
Estimated Low-income & Energy-burdened (EB>6%)	10.3%	13.8%	10.3%	10.4%	10.7%	16.4%

PSE's energy assistance program descriptions



PSE

Program	Description
Bill Discount Rate (BDR)	Monthly bill discount of 5–45% based on income/household size. Works with HELP. Eligibility: \leq 80% AMI or 200% FPL .
HELP (Home Energy Lifeline Program)	\$250–\$1,000 credit covering 20–60% of annual bill; applied to arrears first. Same eligibility as BDR.
LIHEAP (Federal)	Federal bill assistance + crisis support + weatherization. Applies to arrears first. Eligibility: \leq 150% FPL .
Community Solar Income-Eligible (CS IE)	Free solar subscription to local solar shares providing monthly bill credits at no cost to income-qualified customers.
CCA Gas Low-Income Credits (CCA LI)	Credits offsetting all CCA gas charges for customers who received BDR/HELP/LIHEAP in the past 24 months.

Program	Description
Payment Arrangements	Flexible payment plans, available to all PSE customers, allowing weekly or monthly extensions for bill due dates.
Warm Home Fund	Up to \$600 for customers facing disconnection.
Past Due Bill Forgiveness (PDBF)	Forgives 1/12 of arrears per on-time payment; up to \$2,500 forgiven over 12 months. Must be on BDR + received HELP.
HELP (Arrearage)	Pays arrears first; then remaining credit (up to \$1,000) goes to future bills.
LIHEAP (Arrearage)	Can cover arrears plus additional bill support.
HeadStart Benefit (2025)	One-time credit for arrearages: \$5–\$15,000 for income-eligible customers.

Program	Description
Low-Income Weatherization (LIW)	Free energy-efficiency upgrades (insulation, duct sealing, repairs). Eligibility: \leq 80% AMI , 60% SMI , or 200% FPL .
Energy Efficiency Programs	Everyday rebates, available to all PSE customers, to help customers adopt clean energy products, reduce bills, and improve home comfort.
Budget Payment Plan	Predictable monthly payments based on past annual energy use. Available to all PSE customers.
Efficiency Boost (since 2020)	Higher rebates for moderate-income customers (\leq 90% AMI) to reduce upfront costs of high-efficiency equipment.

IAP2 Feedback Levels

Inform - To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

Consult - To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Involve - To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

Collaborate - To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

Empower - To place final decision making in the hands of the public.