



Participatory Funding Program Guidelines

Overview

[State law](#) requires investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities to provide funding for groups participating in UTC proceedings, and prioritize funds for groups representing vulnerable populations or highly impacted communities.

The UTC issued guidance for utilities on how to follow this law through a policy statement in November 2021, and approved an interim funding agreement in March 2022 authorizing \$1.2 million in available funding.

Groups seeking funding must demonstrate that they meet eligibility criteria and can effectively represent the public interest.

Eligibility

Eligible organizations include nonprofit organizations representing low-income, commercial, and industrial customers, and vulnerable populations or highly impacted communities as defined by the Clean Energy Transformation Act. Tribal entities are also eligible to apply; all other government organizations are ineligible.

All organizations must apply for certification from the UTC for each proceeding they request funding for.

Funding Details

In the first year of the program, each utility will:

- Cap its program at 0.1% of its annual gross intrastate revenue, but no more than \$300,000.
- Set aside at least one-third of funds for organizations representing vulnerable and highly impacted communities.

The policy statement and interim agreement outline how utilities should recover that funding through customer rates.

Approved Costs

All organizations may use these funds for the costs of participating in UTC proceedings, including consulting and legal fees. Organizations serving vulnerable populations and highly impacted communities may also use these funds for a variety of costs, including training, technical assistance. Any group may receive funding to advertise the funding opportunity and provide training to groups representing vulnerable communities.

Groups cannot use these funds for overhead expenses, lobbying, or filing formal complaints.

Approved Costs	All customer advocate groups	Groups serving prioritized communities
Consulting	✓	✓
Legal fees	✓	✓
Training	✓	✓
Technical assistance	✗	✓
Outreach	✗	✓
Overhead expenses	✗	✗
Lobbying	✗	✗
Filing formal complaints	✗	✗

Participating Utilities

The UTC authorized the following funding amounts for the first year of the program, which ends Dec. 31, 2022:

- Avista - \$300,000
- Cascade Natural Gas - \$265,512
- Northwest Natural Gas - \$72,735
- PacifiCorp - \$300,000
- Puget Sound Energy - \$300,000

The funds will not carry money over from year to year, the utilities will remove any unused money from the funds at the end of the term and refresh them based on current agreements.

Organizations New to UTC Proceedings

The UTC will provide assistance to organizations wishing to learn how to participate in UTC proceedings.

References

- The final policy statement and interim agreement are available in [Docket U-210595](#) on the UTC's website
- [Revised Code of Washington 80.28.430](#)
- [Clean Energy Transformation Act](#) (RCW 19.405)