

Community and Equity Advisory Group (CEAG) Charter/Operating Guidelines

Background

NW Natural (the Company) has a history of community engagement throughout its service territory and recognizes that improving energy equity is a dynamic and long-standing need. NW Natural supports over 150 community and nonprofit groups in the fields of youth and family resiliency, environmental stewardship, health and human services, and arts and culture.

Energy equity requires expanding access and removing barriers for underserved and overburdened customers. The region is seeing a growth in engagement from community-based organizations as well as increasing awareness by our regulators and policy makers around issues of intersectionality and disparate impacts of energy and climate. These factors, in addition to building upon NW Natural's history of community engagement and commitment to diversity equity and inclusion, have culminated in NW Natural's decision to formulate a Community and Equity Advisory Group.

Purpose

The CEAG is designed to provide NW Natural direct feedback, recommendations, advice, and review on areas related to (a) NW Natural energy system planning and renewable resource development, (b) income-based and arrearage programs, (c) company philanthropic investments, (d) workforce development, and (e) other areas as determined by NW Natural.

The CEAG will have representation from Oregon and Washington to align with the distinct and unique community needs and policy requirements of each state and the areas we serve.

From a place of listening and learning, the Community and Equity Advisory Group (CEAG) seeks out and elevates historically underrepresented voices, perspectives, and lived experiences to advance inclusive practices and institutional actions and bring a racial equity and environmental justice lens to NW Natural's energy and operational planning. Through this deeper community engagement, NW Natural will be positioned to uncover and understand barriers to equitable participation, and, in turn, formulate strategies to address those barriers and center equity in our work ensuring that diversity, equity and inclusion are not merely convenient add-ons, but catalysts for change.

Desired Goals, Outcomes, and Objectives

Deliverables may include drafting recommendations or guidelines for engaging diverse stakeholders, providing concrete feedback and review, and coordinating with other working groups to evaluate recommended strategies for improving energy equity.

CEAG Principles

NW Natural operates within five core values: Integrity, Service Ethic, Caring, Safety, and Environmental Stewardship (outlined in detail in [NW Natural's Code of Ethics](#)). Reflecting these core values, the NW Natural CEAG will be founded on the principles as listed.

CEAG Principles:

- Integrity
- Transparency
- Openness and Communication
- Accountability (to its Members)

NW Natural Commitments

- Foster an environment which respects and values diversity and inclusiveness
 - Utilize a 3rd party facilitator to establish inaugural charter, processes, methods of communication, and as needed for meeting facilitation, etc.
- Understand and acknowledge the history in which current systems such as energy regulation were formed
- Recognize that serving the Oregon/Washington of today and the Oregon/Washington of the future requires new ways to engage the communities we serve
- Provide clear parameters regarding the decision-making power and/or role of the CEAG throughout the formation and implementation process
- Provide resources to CEAG members to enable understanding of topics as needed
- Commit to an ongoing and iterative learning process.
- Be open to new ideas, and diverse experiences and opinions
- Understand and respect the role of the facilitator
- Be accountable with respect to CEAG feedback and recommendations
 - At each following meeting, NW Natural shall bring back to the CEAG an update on concrete actions, deliverables, etc that were undertaken since the last meeting and under recommendations from the CEAG members
 - NW Natural is open to cocreation of topics for discussion

Representatives from Community-Based Organizations

With the intention to hear from underrepresented voices and experiences, NW Natural is seeking out community-based organizations (CBOs) serving an identity, community, and/or underrepresented population present within the NW Natural service territory who do not currently have a “seat at the table” within energy planning and/or the utility industry. It is up to each CBO to select the correct representative(s) to participate in the CEAG.

Member CBOs are intended to represent a historically underrepresented community or communities. Member CBOs are not intended to represent the beliefs of a single individual. NW Natural will utilize selection criterion that aims to balance diverse representation from both Oregon and Washington. By joining the CEAG, member CBOs are responsible for identifying appropriate representatives to

participate in CEAG activities and ensuring coordination between representatives if more than one staff member is involved.

CEAG Member Commitments

- Participate in scheduled (facilitated) discussions regarding NW Natural’s energy system planning, programs, investments, and other topics related to the operations of the Company
- Provide advice, experience, and perspectives from the communities of which the CBO serves, which may include social, economic, racial, tribal, and environmental equity, and assist in identifying best practices/ solutions for improving and expanding equity as a way to inform how NW Natural develops metrics and measures performance
- Understand the regulatory and policy environment in which NW Natural must operate, and to what extent NW Natural has the ability to influence particulars of the energy system and/or planning process
- Commit to an ongoing and iterative learning process
- Be open to new ideas, and diverse experiences and opinions
- Understand and respect the role of the facilitator

CEAG Term of Service

Term of Service:

CEAG participants’ terms will run for a length of 2 years with opportunity for renewal. Terms will run (May) to (April) within the year set with the intention of overlapping of membership so that a full turnover is avoided. Members of the inaugural group may be appointed to a three-year term to facilitate such an overlap in membership.

Inaugural Term:

- Year 1: May 2022 – April 2023
- Year 2: May 2023- April 2024
- Year 3 (tentative per each CBO): May 2024- April 2025

Open Positions & Recruitment:

Recruitment will take place each year in the months prior to identified term dates. If a position opens outside of typical recruitment period, NW Natural in consultation with the CEAG and a third-party facilitator may choose whether to fill the position before normal recruitment period.

Calendar and Work Plan for CEAGs

The inaugural CEAG two-year term runs from (May 2022) to (April 2024). During this period, NW Natural anticipates up to 8 meetings across 24 months. CEAG meetings, each with an expected duration of 2-3 hours, depending on the topic(s).

Subsequent CEAG calendars and work plans will be developed by NW Natural and the CEAG.

CEAG Sub-Groups (if applicable):

NW Natural and the CEAG may determine the need for the creation of sub-groups to focus on specific programs and or elements of the energy system planning process.

Roles and Responsibilities

NW Natural:

NW Natural is the convener of the CEAG. The Company provides the services of a third-party facilitator as needed. NW Natural determines final appointments of CBOs to the CEAG and additionally is responsible for final approval of any work plans or activities of the CEAG. The Company is also responsible for ensuring accessibility for members during all CEAG activities.

Community and Equity Advisory Group Members:

The CEAG members must attend meetings, provide direct feedback, advice and recommendations, and reviews of programs and/or materials to the NW Natural team as requested. CEAG members do not need to come to a consensus or have a majority vote in order to provide advice to NW Natural. Members may suggest agenda topics and or areas of focus. Members may designate alternatives from their organization. It is up to each organization to ensure continuity between representatives.

Facilitator(s):

NW Natural will provide a third-party facilitator for inaugural group meetings. The goal of providing facilitator(s) is to help ensure neutral and impartial support to all participants, maintain the integrity of the process, and facilitate communication about the process among participants and other interested parties. The facilitator will work collaboratively with the NW Natural project team to prepare process designs, meeting agendas, materials and final CEAG work products.

Group Conduct/Code of Conduct

CEAG conduct will be governed by the principles of the CEAG and are as follows:

- Integrity
- Transparency
- Openness and Communication
- Accountability (to its Members)

Disagreement and differences of opinion are to be expected, acknowledged, explored, understood, and appreciated. Should conflict arise, it will be addressed with the guidance of the CEAG facilitator.

Recurring inappropriate individual behavior may result in an individual being respectfully excused from participation in the CEAG, generally after the following steps have been taken:

- First Notice: A mediated discussion concerning the behavior/disruption/non-conformance between NW Natural, Facilitator/Mediator, and CEAG member
- Opportunity to correct the behavior/disruption/non-conformance
- Second Notice: A mediated discussion concerning the behavior/disruption/non-conformance between NW Natural, third-party Facilitator/Mediator, CEAG member, and CBO leadership
- Opportunity to correct the behavior/disruption/non-conformance

- Continued failure to follow code of conduct will result in removal of the individual CEAG member
- NW Natural and CBO leadership to discuss replacement of member with guidance and input from remaining CEAG members and third-party party facilitator

It is important to note that the above is not a set procedure and the particulars of the individual situation will be considered in how NW Natural proceeds in addressing concerns that may arise.

Compensation

CBOs who have a member serving on the CEAG are provided with an honorarium paid by NW Natural in recognition of their donated time and input. The honorarium is per CBO, per year.

- Year 1: \$5,000
- Year 2: \$5,000

Operational Guidelines

Meeting Dates and Times:

Meeting dates and times are established in consultation with the group. Meetings take place four times per calendar year, generally meeting, once per quarter.

Quorum Requirement:

There is no quorum requirement; participants present and active at each meeting can continue to work in the absence of others.

Meeting Materials:

Meeting materials may include agendas, reports, resources, and other documentation provided by either NW Natural or members of the CEAG, or facilitator, dependent on topic.

Meeting Location:

Meetings are hosted by NW Natural. Meeting locations are determined by NW Natural in conjunction with CEAG members. The principles of Safety and Inclusion lead all decision making on meeting location determinations. Accessibility accommodations are made as necessary, dependent on the requirement of the meeting location. Hybrid (virtual and in person) meetings may be considered.

Meeting Structure:

To be determined by the inaugural CEAG in conjunction with NW Natural.

Process Documentation:

All CEAG meetings and activities are documented by at least a representative of NW Natural. Further process documentation will be determined as needed in consultation with CEAG members.

Correspondence:

The group may correspond via email, telephone, and/or virtual meeting platforms. NW Natural shall provide a list of correspondence contacts at the start of each CEAG term.

Media, Photography, and Recording:

CEAG participants may speak individually to the media outside of meeting sessions, per the policies of their respective organization, but shall not speak on behalf of the CEAG or NW Natural. Participants may be video recorded, audio recorded and/or photographed by NW Natural or others during the meeting. In these cases, CEAG members are notified in advance when meetings are being video- or audio-recorded. If a member takes issue with any of the above, NW Natural will work with the third-party facilitator to address concerns.

Accessibility:

NW Natural will make the following efforts in order to ensure CEAG meetings and activities are accessible to all CEAG members.

- Provide assistive technology to CEAG members with disabilities, or provide other reasonable accommodations as needed (e.g., large-size print documents, documents formatted for screen readers, etc.).
- Provide language interpretation, as needed/ requested.
- Choose Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and transit -accessible venues if meetings are held in person.
- Provide virtual meeting platforms with call-in options to be mindful of limitations in access to technology.

Eligibility for Grants and Resources

NW Natural is seeking strong engagement from local community organizations throughout its service area. It is likely that member organizations engage with NW Natural on multiple fronts across several departments; including, but not limited to the Company's philanthropic giving program, corporate sponsorship offerings, pro bono hospitality services, etc. We welcome this level of engagement and connectivity and the introduction of the CEAG will not change this ethos. The grant programs are an entirely separate processes from CEAG operations and will remain unassociated with CEAG membership and processes. To this end, NW Natural offers the following guidance: participating in -or declining to participate in- the CEAG will not jeopardize, disqualify nor otherwise influence decisions on grant requests, award levels, resource allocations or other offerings.

Confidentiality Agreement

All participants have agreed to a confidentiality through the Participant Agreement. The statement is as follows:

In order to protect the confidentiality of the community-based organizations (CBOs) and their clients as well as NW Natural customers, all CEAG participants must agree to the following:

- I will not divulge information discussed at meetings, within communications, and/or site visits with anyone except fellow team members, appropriate organization or NW Natural staff, or the third-party Facilitator.

- I will not use privileged information gained as a CEAG member for personal or professional gain.

To create a “culture of candor” and raise awareness, CEAG members are encouraged to disclose and discuss with NW Natural anything that may be potential conflicts of interest relating to matters pertaining to the topics discussed by the group. For example: business relationships with family and friends.

Charter/Guidelines Adoption and/or Amendments

This Charter for the CEAG is considered a living document and as such, a work in progress. The adoption of the inaugural CEAG charter will be achieved through a facilitated discussion and review. The CEAG Charter may be amended consistent with the terms and processes agreed to by the Company and the CEAG. The facilitator will work with the Company and the CEAG to annually evaluate if adjustments to the Charter and Operational Agreements are warranted.

Resources for CEAG Members (attached as Appendices)

- Service Territory Map (Appendix A)

Appendix A: NW Natural Service Territory Map



Figure 1 NW Natural Service Territory Map

