

ORDER NO. 23-183

ENTERED May 26 2023

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
OF OREGON**

UG 435

In the Matter of the

NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS  
COMPANY, dba NW NATURAL,

Request for a General Rate Revision.

ORDER

**DISPOSITION: ISSUE FUND GRANT REQUEST APPROVED**

On January 20, 2023, the Small Business Utility Advocates (SBUA) filed a Request for Payment of its NW Natural Issue Fund Grant. Section 7.3 of the Fourth Amended and Restated Intervenor Funding Agreement (Agreement), adopted by the Commission in Order No. 18-017, governs the procedures for payment of Issue Fund Grants.

On May 13, 2022, the Commission issued Order No. 22-161, which granted SBUA's request for case certification, but denied SBUA's proposed budget. In discussing that budget and SBUA's financial statements, the Commission noted that its budget for activity in dockets UG 435 and UG 411 is \$39,300, with SBUA purporting to fund 20 percent of these expenditures at \$7,860. After review of SBUA's financial data, the Commission found that in total, on an annual basis for all dockets and requests, SBUA could only justify a 20 percent match that would provide for a total budget of \$11,250, well below SBUA's proposed budget of \$39,300 in this case alone. On August 24, 2022, SBUA filed an Amended Proposed Budget and a request for the Commission to amend its determination made in Order No. 22-161. SBUA's Amended Proposed Budget identified expenses of \$24,800, indicating that SBUA would fund \$4,960 of that amount. SBUA's proposed budget of \$19,840 for an Issue Fund Grant was approved in Order No. 22-507. On March 29, 2023 SBUA further amended its budget requesting a final payment of \$20,200.

SBUA asks for a final payment of \$20,200 from the NW Natural Issue Fund. Under the Agreement, the Request for Payment must:

- 1) Itemize the expenses, payees and hourly rates of amount to be reimbursed;
- 2) Demonstrate that the expenses are reasonable and are directly attributable to issues and positions pursued on behalf of a particular customer class and consistent with the intervenor's proposed budget;
- 3) Provide information sufficient to show that the intervenor has complied with any conditions imposed on the Issue Fund Grant; and
- 4) Specify whether the request for payment is for a progress payment or a final payment and indicate whether any approved budget amount may be released back to the applicable Issue Fund.

Further, under the terms of Section 7.3(c) of the Agreement, SBUA must establish that it has "used in-house resources or outside funding for at least 20 percent of the Eligible Expenses for an Eligible Proceeding." SBUA provided the required documentation in its request.

The Agreement provides that the Commission shall make a determination in each proceeding as to how the participating utilities are to recover the funding grants from the various customer classes. Section 7.7(b) of the Agreement provides that Issue Fund Grants should be allocated to fairly align the costs of the advocacy with the intended potential beneficiaries of the advocacy. The Commission has considered the intended beneficiaries and finds that the issue fund expenditures should be allocated to NW Natural's small business (Schedule 3) customers.

The Commission finds that SBUA has met the requirements of the Agreement, and its request should be approved. Section 7.8 of the Agreement provides that the utility must pay the Issue Fund Grant to the requesting intervenor within 30 days after receipt of the Commission directive.

### **ORDER**

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Small Business Utility Advocates has met the requirements of the Fourth Amended and Restated Intervenor Funding Agreement, and its request is approved.

2. Northwest Natural Gas Company, dba NW Natural pay \$20,200 from the NW Natural Issue Fund to the Small Business Utility Advocates within 30 days after receipt of this Order, and the grant be assessed to (applicable utility's) small business (Schedule 3) customers.

Made, entered, and effective May 26, 2023.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nolan Moser".

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**Nolan Moser**  
Chief Administrative Law Judge  
Administrative Hearings Division