

ORDER NO. 25-529

ENTERED Dec 24 2025

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

OF OREGON

UM 2389

In the Matter of

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF
OREGON,

House Bill 2475, Environmental Justice
Communities Funding Agreement.

ORDER

DISPOSITION: STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ADOPTED

At its public meeting on December 23, 2025, the Public Utility Commission of Oregon adopted Staff's recommendation in this matter. The Staff Report with the recommendation is attached as Appendix A.

BY THE COMMISSION:



Alison Lackey
Chief Administrative Law Judge



A party may request rehearing or reconsideration of this order under ORS 756.561. A request for rehearing or reconsideration must be filed with the Commission within 60 days of the date of service of this order. The request must comply with the requirements in OAR 860-001-0720. A copy of the request must also be served on each party to the proceedings as provided in OAR 860-001-0180(2). A party may appeal this order by filing a petition for review with the Circuit Court for Marion County in compliance with ORS 183.484.

ITEM NO. RA1

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: December 23, 2025**

REGULAR X CONSENT RULEMAKING EFFECTIVE DATE N/A

DATE: December 17, 2025

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Katharine Mapes, Administrative Law Judge

THROUGH: Alison Lackey, Chief Administrative Law Judge **SIGNED**

SUBJECT: ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION:

Docket No. UM 2389

Approval of Pre-certification Grants Consistent with OAR 860-001-0850
and the Environmental Justice Communities Funding Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Commission should approve the pre-certification grant applications filed in docket UM 2389 as outlined in this memo.

DISCUSSION:

Issues

Whether Verde is an Eligible Entity for Northwest Natural Gas Company, dba NW Natural's grant funds.

Whether the Commission should approve the pre-certification grant applications filed in docket UM 2389 as outlined in this memo.

Applicable Rule or Law

On September 25, 2021, House Bill (HB) 2475 was enrolled into state law. As enrolled, HB 2475 took effect January 1, 2022. HB 2475 is legislation with two components. One component is designed to address issues associated with energy burden, and it permits utilities and the Commission to take action to relieve energy burden for certain classes of customers. The second component of the legislation provides for the Commission to administer intervenor funding agreements that public utilities may enter into with two distinct groups of advocates; those representing "environmental justice communities" and "low-income communities." Sections (3) and (4) expand the types of entities that are eligible for intervenor funding under ORS 757.072(1). The intervenor funding statute

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passed in 2001 provides that an energy utility may enter into a written agreement with organizations that represent “broad customer interests in regulatory proceedings” to govern the manner in which financial assistance may be provided to the organization. HB 2475 expands eligibility for such funding to include organizations that represent the interests of: 1) Low-income residential customers; and 2) Residential customers that are members of environmental justice communities. HB 2475 requires the PUC to determine, by rule, the qualifications for determining which organizations are eligible for financial assistance and limits the amount of new funding to \$500,000 annually. The PUC was required to establish a process for organizations to access financial assistance and must evaluate and approve intervenor funding agreements. ORS 757.072(4) provides that, for all financial assistance under the intervenor funding law, the Commission shall allow the public utility to recover such financial assistance in rates.

Background

On October 14, 2025, at its regular public meeting, the Commission approved an agreement between PacifiCorp, dba Pacific Power; Portland General Electric Company (PGE); NW Natural; Idaho Power Company; Avista Corporation, dba Avista Utilities; Cascade Natural Gas Corporation; Community Energy Project (CEP); Verde; Coalition of Communities of Color; the Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO); and Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA) (referred to as the Justice Funding Agreement). That agreement takes effect on January 1, 2026, and is the successor to an expiring agreement.

The Justice Funding Agreement and associated Division 001 rules provide for two types of funding for eligible recipients. The first type is case funding, which is requested on a docket-by-docket basis. This means that a group may ask for funding as they start to participate in a specific docket. Up to 50 percent of this funding is available up-front.

The second is pre-certification grant funding and is the subject of this recommendation. This is a broader type of funding and is available to groups to participate in a variety of dockets. Effectively, this funding can operate as a multisubject grant for activity at the Commission, and groups can request that all this funding be provided up front. Groups request this type of funding one time per year, with the Commission approving funding for up to five pre-certification grant requests per year.

Applications Received and Overall Recommendation for 2026 Justice Grant Funding

For 2026 justice grant funding, we received pre-certification grant requests from four entities: CEP; CAPO; Verde; and OJTA. Each of these entities was found by the Commission at its October 14, 2025 meeting to be an Eligible Recipient to receive

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pre-certification and case fund grants under the criteria in the Justice Funding Agreement and accompanying rules.

Amount of Overall Funding Available

Pre-certification funding is available for activity in dockets affecting and for groups representing communities in the PGE, PacifiCorp, and NW Natural service territories. There is \$85,000 available annually for each of these three utilities from the precertification fund, plus rollover funds from prior years, for a total of \$275,270.55 in available funds. Accordingly, the following amounts are available for pre-certification grants in 2026:

| Utility | Rollover Amount | Grant Amount | Total Available 2026 |
|---------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|
| PGE | \$13,206.04 | \$85,000 | \$98,206.04 |
| PAC | \$5,492.00 | \$85,000 | \$90,492.00 |
| NWN | \$1,572.51 | \$85,000 | \$86,572.51 |

Below is a table of the requests received by the four applicants and the funds remaining in each utility fund if all requests were approved:

| Group | PGE | PAC | NWN | Total Requested |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| CEP | \$24,551 | \$22,623 | \$21,643 | \$68,817 |
| CAPO | \$24,552 | \$22,623 | \$21,643 | \$68,818 |
| Verde | \$24,552 | \$22,623 | \$21,643 | \$68,818 |
| OJTA | \$24,552 | \$22,623 | \$21,643 | \$68,818 |
| Total Requested | \$98,207 | \$90,492 | \$86,572 | \$275,271 |
| Total Remaining | -\$0.96 | \$0 | \$0.51 | -\$0.45 |

The request for PGE's fund is over by approximately \$1. To account for this, I recommend reducing each request by \$0.24.

Individual Proposals

1. Community Energy Project

CEP intends to continue participation in docket UM 2211. CEP states that this docket provides opportunities for CEP to bring its unique perspectives on program design and implementation. CEP also intends to continue to participate in each of the utility bill discount programs and monitor the utilities disconnection reporting for non-payment

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dockets. CEP also states that it is deeply engaged in new workstreams under UM 2211 Phase 3 which address arrearages, weatherization and energy burden metric reporting and procedural equity issues.

CEP has also been working towards the implementation of performance-based ratemaking and the FAIR Energy Act in dockets UM 2405, AR 676, AR 677, and AR 678. It has intervened in PGE's large load tariff, in docket UM 2377. It is involved in AR 671 on Division 21 customer protections. In addition, CEP is participating in or intends to participate in ongoing Integrated Resource Planning and Clean Energy Plan proceedings, rate cases, and wildfire mitigation plan proceedings, as well as the Energy Trust of Oregon multi-year plan.

Based on the explanation from CEP's application as to why CEP is eligible for pre-certification funding under the agreement and rules, and the fact that CEP has already been deemed an Eligible Entity under the agreement and rules for each of the three utilities it is applying for funds from, and based on its description of activities to be undertaken, I recommend approval of CEP's grant request as discussed above.

2. Community Action Partnership of Oregon

CAPO intends to participate in dockets that touch issues of energy affordability, energy burden, economic impact of rate changes, arrearage management, targeted programs for "income eligible" or low-income ratepayers, including programs related to clean energy transition, and reporting dockets related to each of the investor-owned utilities that participate in pre-certification funding grants. Currently, known dockets where CAPO intends to participate include but are not limited to: all workstreams of UM 2211, associated rulemaking dockets, and ETO 1. It is also considering participation in the Integrated Resource Planning and Clean Energy Plan dockets; the performance-based ratemaking and FAIR Energy Act implementation dockets (UM 2405, AR 676, AR 677, AR 678); community solar implementation (UM 1930, ADV 1234, ADV 1284); rate cases; and implementation of HB 2066 for microgrid regulatory framework (AR 681).

Based on the explanation from CAPO's application as to why CAPO is eligible for pre-certification funding under the agreement and rules, and the fact that CAPO has already been deemed an Eligible Entity under the agreement and rules for each of the utilities it is applying for funds from, and based on its description of activities to be undertaken, I recommend approval of CAPO's grant request as discussed above.

3. Verde

Verde intends to continue its engagement in docket UM 2211, providing feedback on program eligibility, enrollment, verification, level of relief, outreach, engagement, and timeline. It also intends to engage in utility Integrated Resource Planning and Clean

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Energy Plan dockets, as well as the IRP guideline revisions docket. Verde also intends to engage in the implementation of FAIR Energy Act dockets (UM 2405, AR 676, AR 677, AR 678).

Initially, Verde was found to be an Eligible Entity for PacifiCorp and PGE. On December 12, 2025, Verde filed a supplemental application asking to be found an Eligible Entity for NW Natural as well. Verde states that its work directly engages with NW Natural customers, and that it supports and represents the needs of NW Natural's low-income customers. I recommend that Verde's request be granted. Based on this, on the explanation from Verde's application as to why Verde is eligible for pre-certification funding under the agreement and rules, and the fact that Verde has already been deemed an Eligible Entity under the agreement and rules and based on its description of activities to be undertaken, I recommend approval of Verde's grant request as proposed.

4. Oregon Just Transition Alliance

OJTA intends to be active in AR 670 and AR 671, concerning customer protections and disconnections within the UM 2211 stream, and also intends to continue participation in UM 2211. It also names each of four dockets related to FAIR Energy Act implementation (UM 2405, AR 676, AR 677, AR 678). More generally, OJTA states that it will spend time planning future ways to advocate within the PUC beyond specific dockets already in motion.

Based on the explanation from OJTA's application as to why OJTA is eligible for pre-certification funding under the agreement and rules, and the fact that OJTA has already been deemed an Eligible Entity under the agreement and rules for each of the utilities from which it requests funds, and based on its description of activities to be undertaken, I recommend approval of OJTA's grant request as proposed.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

That the Commission find Verde an Eligible Entity as to Northwest Natural Gas Company, dba NW Natural, and approve the pre-certification grant requests as outlined in this memorandum.