

BEFORE THE NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION)
OF NEW MEXICO GAS COMPANY, INC.)
FOR APPROVAL OF REVISIONS TO ITS)
RATES, RULES, AND CHARGES PURSUANT) Case No. 21-00267-UT
TO ADVICE NOTICE NO. 87)
)
)
NEW MEXICO GAS COMPANY, INC.)
)
)
Applicant.)

**DIRECT TESTIMONY AND EXHIBIT
OF
DIANA E. JARAMILLO**

December 13, 2021

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF
DIANA E. JARAMILLO
NMPRC CASE NO. 21-00267-UT**

1 Q. **PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS.**

2 A. My name is Diana E. Jaramillo. My business address is 7120 Wyoming, Albuquerque,

3 New Mexico 87109.

4

5 Q. **BY WHOM AND IN WHAT CAPACITY ARE YOU EMPLOYED?**

6 A. I am the Director of Customer Experience & Customer Relationship Management

7 (“CRM”) Strategic Solutions for New Mexico Gas Company, Inc. (“NMGC” or the

8 “Company”).

9

10 Q. **PLEASE SUMMARIZE YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK**

11 **EXPERIENCE.**

12 A. My educational background and work experience are described in NMGC Exhibit DEJ-1.

13

14 Q. **PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS DIRECTOR,**

15 **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND CRM STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS FOR NMGC.**

16 A. I am responsible for operations of NMGC customer experience functions including

17 customer walk-in centers, the call center, billing, remittance, credit & collections, meter

18 reading, and facilities.

19

20 Q. **HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY TESTIFIED BEFORE THE NEW MEXICO PUBLIC**

21 **REGULATION COMMISSION (“NMPRC” OR THE “COMMISSION”)?**

22 A. No.

23

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1 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY IN THIS CASE?**

2 **A.** The purpose of my testimony is to describe and support the additional employees NMGC
3 is adding in the area of customer service and communications by 2023.

4

5 **Q. HOW DID THE COMPANY CONCLUDE IT WAS APPROPRIATE TO ADD THE
6 EMPLOYEES DESCRIBED BELOW?**

7 **A.** The recent COVID-19 pandemic has caused NMGC to re-evaluate its businesses practices
8 and customer offerings in order to accommodate customer growth and changing customer
9 expectations. Customer desires and expectations regarding the way they conduct business
10 with utility companies is changing. In light of these circumstances, we concluded that we
11 should expand our customer service and communications teams.

12

13 **Q. PLEASE IDENTIFY THE EMPLOYEES THAT YOU ARE ADDING IN YOUR
14 AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY.**

15 **A.** By 2023, NMGC intends to add the following ten employees in the area customer service
16 and communications:

- 17 • four Customer Service Representatives;
- 18 • a Low-Income Program Manager;
- 19 • a Customer Service Trainer;
- 20 • a Customer Experience Program Manager;
- 21 • a Digital Customer Experience Specialist;
- 22 • a Web Designer; and
- 23 • a Communications Specialist.

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1 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES**
2 **(“CSR”).**

3 **A.** NMGC is adding four new CSRs who will be responsible for providing customer service
4 to walk-in customers such as taking payments, scheduling service orders, answering billing
5 inquiries, providing payment plan assistance, responding to budget billing requests, and
6 other program requests.

7

8 **Q. WHY IS NMGC ADDING THE CSRS?**

9 **A.** NMGC is adding the CSRs to staff a new walk-in customer service center. Currently, there
10 are approximately 249,400 NMGC customers in the Albuquerque service area, but there is
11 only one walk-in customer service center in Albuquerque. NMGC’s headquarters building,
12 located in the northeast heights, does not have a walk-in customer service center, but many
13 customers go there attempting to make in-person payments, schedule service orders, and
14 make other inquiries and requests. Additionally, customers have stated a desire to have an
15 additional customer service center in Albuquerque. For these reasons, NMGC plans to add
16 an additional customer service center to provide another option for Albuquerque customers
17 who wish to conduct in-person transactions.

18

19 As discussed in the last rate case, NMPRC Case No. 19-00317-UT, NMGC recently
20 completed the purchase of its headquarters building. In purchasing the headquarters
21 building, NMGC acquired not only the space that it previously leased, but additional space
22 that the landlord was interested in selling. In NMPRC Case No. 19-00317-UT, NMGC
23 Witness Tom C. Bullard testified that NMGC planned to use this additional space for future

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1 expansion and possibly for a payment center.¹ For the reasons described above, NMGC
2 has decided to use this additional space to create a walk-in customer service center, as it
3 can easily be modified without having to lease or purchase additional space. We are in the
4 process of making the necessary modifications and intend to have the customer service
5 center up and running by 2023.

6

7 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE LOW-INCOME PROGRAM MANAGER.**

8 **A.** The Low-Income Program Manager will manage NMGC's Heat New Mexico Program
9 ("Heat NM") which provides payment assistance to income qualified residential customers
10 throughout the Company's service territory. This employee will be responsible for
11 development and outreach activities and programs with both internal and external
12 community partners for support and assistance to low-income customers. This employee
13 will also oversee the development and management of an outreach plan to effectively
14 connect all low-income customer groups to NMGC and community assistance programs.
15 The Low-Income Manager will develop relationships and work with a broad array of state
16 and local agencies, such as LIHEAP and the Salvation Army, to promote program
17 offerings, assist with customer outreach, and collaborate to assist low-income customers.

18

19 **Q. WHY IS NMGC ADDING THE LOW-INCOME PROGRAM MANAGER?**

20 **A.** We are adding this employee because NMGC currently has funds in its low-income
21 program, Heat NM, which are not being utilized and which NMGC wishes to make more

¹ Case No. 19-00317-UT, Bullard Dir. at 40.

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1 accessible to customers who need them. The Heat NM program was enacted in 2009 and
2 was initially a very seasonal program – the funds would be accessible to customers
3 beginning in January and be completely utilized by March. In recent years, although the
4 amount of available funds for the program has remained the same, they have been left
5 unused much later in the year, sometimes even through December. There are still available
6 Heat NM funds that have not been utilized, and currently there are additional funds
7 contributed by the Company to assist customers with arrearages caused by the COVID-19
8 pandemic.

9
10 NMGC has reviewed the Heat NM program, which has become increasingly important due
11 to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on NMGC customers, and concluded that it needs
12 someone to connect customers to these unused funds. NMGC needs someone to raise
13 customer awareness that these funds are available, to coordinate assisting customers
14 through the application process, and to guide customers to additional resources available
15 for help such as LIHEAP. NMGC also needs someone to coordinate with local
16 organizations so that NMGC can provide the most effective assistance to its customers and
17 promote additional resources in the community. This employee will allow NMGC to
18 ensure that its customers have improved access to all of the resources that are available to
19 them.

20
21 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINER.**

22 **A.** This employee will provide training to customer service personnel statewide in customer-
23 facing functions such as payment processing, billing, generating service orders, and credit

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1 and collections. The Customer Service Trainer, along with the current training personnel,
2 will also be responsible for developing training materials, processes, and procedures. This
3 employee will also monitor CSR transactions to ensure established policies and procedures
4 are followed and quality service is provided to customers. In addition, this employee will
5 train customer service personnel on newly implemented applications, new and upgraded
6 systems, and interfaces.

7

8 **Q. WHY IS NMGC ADDING THE CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINER?**

9 **A.** NMGC is adding this employee in an effort to provide more uniform and consistent training
10 for its CSRs throughout the state. NMGC has numerous customer service centers at various
11 locations but does not currently have uniform statewide training policies or procedures for
12 the CSRs staffing those centers. This employee will allow NMGC to train its CSRs more
13 consistently and effectively in order to provide customers with better customer service.

14

15 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM MANAGER,**
16 **THE DIGITAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE SPECIALIST, THE WEB**
17 **DESIGNER, AND THE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST.**

18 **A.** These employees are described as follows:

19 • Customer Experience Program Manager - This employee will assist NMGC in
20 growing and expanding its customer experience program and will be responsible
21 for the development, implementation, and management of customer programs. This
22 employee will also be responsible for creating, updating, and maintaining analytics

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1 to support initiatives, identify operational efficiencies and opportunities for
2 improvement to guide the customer experience initiative.

- 3 • Digital Customer Experience Specialist - This employee will be responsible for
4 working with the Customer Service and Information Technology &
5 Telecommunications (“IT&T”) Departments to enhance NMGC’s digital options
6 for customers such as electronic billing, payment alerts and notifications, outage
7 communications, and elective customer programs (e.g., pick a due date, prepay,
8 budget billing, energy efficiency).
- 9 • Web Designer – This employee will be primarily responsible for the Company’s
10 digital communications with customers including assisting with the Company’s
11 social media postings and coordinating with the IT&T Department to maintain and
12 improve the internal workings of the Company’s website. The Web Designer will
13 also update website content to keep customers current and informed, as the website
14 is an important customer communication platform. This employee will also
15 evaluate and potentially help design a mobile application that would make it easier
16 for NMGC customers to pay their bills, request service orders and receive real-time
17 information about outages or billing trends.
- 18 • Communications Specialist – This employee will provide support for the
19 Company’s customer communications including assisting responding to outside
20 media requests and developing content for NMGC’s monthly customer newsletter,
21 information pamphlets, and bill messages. The employee also will coordinate the
22 Company’s internal and external communications efforts.

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1 **Q. WHY IS NMGC ADDING THESE EMPLOYEES?**

2 **A.** The Customer Experience Program Manager, the Digital Customer Experience Specialist,
3 the Web Designer, and the Communications Specialist are being added to increase and
4 improve NMGC's communications with and offerings to customers. Due to the COVID-
5 19 pandemic, NMGC was forced to reevaluate its procedures for communicating with
6 customers and the manner in which it provides some of its services. This allowed NMGC
7 to identify areas where it can improve, including the methods of communication and digital
8 services offered. NMGC has learned from its JD Power survey and from customer
9 feedback comments that customers want more digital options for conducting business with
10 NMGC, rather than in person or over the phone. Customers want the option to do things
11 online or through a mobile application such as to make payments, apply for low-income
12 programs, and request services. Currently, NMGC customers must call and speak with a
13 CSR or visit a walk-in office to conduct such transactions or obtain assistance. We
14 understand that other utilities and service providers offer options for such digital services
15 and customers are coming to expect the same from NMGC. Adding these employees will
16 allow NMGC to expand its digital services, enhance the convenience and accessibility of
17 information, and overall improve the customer experience. NMGC has a well-earned
18 reputation for providing good customer service and these employees will allow it to
19 continue to do so.

20
21 Currently, NMGC's Communications Department consists of two people who are in charge
22 of both internal and external communications. Additionally, one employee in the IT&T
23 Department handles the infrastructure maintenance for NMGC's website in addition to

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1 having many other responsibilities. NMGC has concluded that additional resources are
2 needed to manage timely and efficient communications both within the Company and
3 externally to customers. NMGC also believes that having an employee dedicated to the
4 design and maintenance of the website will facilitate communications with customers,
5 make it easier to conduct business with the Company and allow information to be more
6 easily accessible. Further, the Communications Department does not currently have the
7 expertise needed to develop the digital offerings that NMGC seeks to implement.

8

9 **Q. IS ADDING THE PROPOSED EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST?**

10 **A.** Yes. As described above, the addition of these employees will benefit customers by
11 providing an additional walk-in center for the most populated area in NMGC's service
12 territory, assisting low-income customers with obtaining assistance from NMGC and other
13 available programs, providing for more consistent customer service throughout the state,
14 improving communication platforms and the accessibility of information, and providing
15 more convenient digital options and services.

16

17 NMGC is making a concerted effort to enhance its customers' experience and these
18 employees will further that effort. As customer expectations change with technology,
19 NMGC is working diligently to ensure that it has the sufficient resources to meet those
20 expectations and provide a great customer experience. NMGC also wants to ensure that it
21 has the resources to facilitate effective communications with its customers, promoting
22 transparency and access.

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1 **Q.** **DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY?**

2 **A.** Yes.