

Equal Justice Authority
Board Meeting
January 26, 2026

- I. Welcome
 - A. The meeting was convened at 4:01 p.m. by board chair Matt Baca and conducted via Zoom.
 - B. Board Member and Staff Attendance
 1. Matt Baca, Allison Esser, Cesar Jimenez, Toni-Anne Nunez, Lauren Peach, Renzo Walton Reategui, and Elise Bechthold (staff).
 2. Charlie Willman joined at 4:15pm.
 3. No members of the public were present.
- II. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Allison made a motion to approve the minutes and Renzo seconded. The minutes of the December 8, 2025, board meeting were approved with no changes.
- III. Annual Board Leadership Vote
 - A. Per statute, the board is required to vote for leadership positions annually in January. In the first year of EJA board operations, Matt served as Chair, Toni-Anne served as Vice Chair, and Charlie as Secretary-Treasurer. They are all willing to serve another term in these roles.
 1. Allison offered her support in keeping the current board leadership members in their respective positions. She inquired if Charlie would be interested in splitting his role up into two positions.
 - a) Elise shared that Charlie has not indicated a preference for this, as she is taking meeting minutes and sending them to him for review.
 2. No board members added their names for leadership positions.
 - a) Matt shared that other board members should consider moving into leadership positions next year and to let him and the leadership team know if they are interested in serving in these roles.

b) Lauren expressed that she feels there is real value in continuing first year leadership roles into the second year, then this can be revisited next January.

B. Allison made a motion to approve Matt as Chair, Toni-Anne as Vice Chair, and Charlie as Secretary-Treasurer for 2026. Renzo seconded. The board approved anonymously.

IV. Proposed 2026 Grant Timeline

A. Elise reviewed the proposed timeline, highlighting changes from last year that were discussed by the board in their grant retrospective discussion, as well as applicant feedback that EJA received in the survey administered in May 2025.

1. The proposed timeline includes three committees that will meet between January-June: Rubric Committee, Application Committee, and Review Committee. Additional support will also be needed for the Grant Award Letter and Grant Agreement updates.
2. The proposed application period is six weeks, up from four weeks in 2025.
3. The timeline reflects appropriate time periods for Charlie and Elise to finalize finances and prepare ACH transfers.

B. Elise highlighted the board's ongoing discussions regarding how to consider any unspent funds and suggested spring check-ins with grantees to offer support and answer questions.

1. The board supported check-ins with grantees. Charlie suggested this happen in February and be built into the annual grant award process going forward.
 - a) The board discussed if these check-ins should be optional or mandatory. They decided that for the first year, check-ins will be strongly encouraged and in subsequent grant cycles, they will be required.
 - b) Renzo, Toni-Anne, and Cesar volunteered to join Elise at virtual check-ins.
2. Cesar inquired about board member's continuing thoughts on how to address an applicant not spending down grant funds from the previous grant cycle.

- a) Toni-Anne expressed her support for grantees with unspent funds still being allowed to apply for the next grant cycle.
- b) Allison suggested that the application include a space for previous grantees to share if they have leftover funds from the previous grant cycle. Toni-Anne supported this suggestion.
- c) Charlie agreed with both Toni-Anne and Allison, and also suggested the board as for a plan on how the grantee will spend the funds down by the end of the fiscal year.
- d) Elise highlighted that this may not be needed this grant cycle, could perhaps be pertinent for the conclusion of the FY2026-2027 grant cycle, as grant awards potentially grow.

(1) Matt agreed and expressed an interest in creating a policy around this. Charlie suggested the board wait until they see how the first year grant cycle wraps up, then create a policy as needed.

C. Committee Volunteers

- 1. Matt suggested continuing people in their previous committee roles from last year and the board agreed. Board members can join other committees as needed to ensure documents are updated appropriately and meeting minutes will be kept and notices posted for any gatherings of three or more board members, in accordance with Colorado's open meetings requirements.
- 2. Elise will coordinate and support each committee's work.
 - a) Rubric Committee
 - (1) Allison
 - (2) Charlie
 - b) Application Committee
 - (1) Toni-Anne
 - (2) Renzo
 - c) Review Committee
 - (1) Allison (but will be out of town May 15-25)

(2) Lauren

d) Cesar join the Grant Agreement/Award Letter

V. Financial Snapshot

A. Charlie sent the board a summary earlier in the day with financial details and projections.

1. Cesar shared his appreciation for the financial details and asked if it would be advantageous to promote how much we were planning on disbursing this next grant cycle, as some funders promote this number on their website.

a) Charlie liked this idea. He has been promoting this upcoming grant cycle in his CBA presidential visits around the state and will continue to do so.

b) Matt also liked this idea. The board discussed posting this to the website without a specific number, but a general ballpark estimate, as to ensure the final amount would not be misleading to applicants. Toni-Anne suggested the board be clear in the posted language that HB24-1286 requires 67% of funds to be allocated to CLS.

c) Elise will draft language for the board leadership team to review and approve, then will add it to the website in the coming month.

B. ACH Payment Solutions

1. Elise reviewed the six companies she researched and had demo meetings with. As the cost is well under \$5,000, the board did not need a vote and supported Elise and Charlie moving forward with the ACH payment solution that best works with EJA's current system set-up and that is scalable for potential future growth.

C. Charlie highlighted that he and Elise have been addressing interest questions. Charlie is having ongoing conversations with bank leadership and will update the board accordingly.

VI. Open Business

A. Legislative update

1. Matt shared that there is intent to run the license plate bill this legislative session. The board's statutory authority would need to be slightly modified in order to allow them to administer license plate funds. Matt will keep the board updated with any movement on this legislation.
2. There was discussion during last year's legislative session regarding moving ELDF & FVJF funds under EJA. Unless there is an unforeseen budgetary change, that move will not be addressed any further this legislative session.

B. Rubric discussion

1. Allison highlighted the Rubric Committee's recent discussion regarding language in HB24-1286 to consider the number of full time attorneys employed by the applying civil legal aid provider, and how to consider pro bono, contract, and staff attorneys. Furthermore, the statute requires the board consider the importance of the work of applying civil legal aid providers that employ ten or fewer full time attorneys.
 - a) The committee is considering how to appropriately ask this question in the application and how to score it. She asked board members to share any thoughts on this.
 - (1) Renzo suggested the committee run scoring scenarios to see how any changes could unintentionally impact funding.
 - (a) Allison and Charlie agreed and stated that they committee intends to do this to ensure they are promoting fairness and equity.
 - b) Lauren supported the Rubric Committees scoring review on this topic, as the Review Committee members expressed an interest in further clarity around this specific question. She said this will be useful for both the applicants and the board to clarify this and address equitable decision-making
 - c) Matt agrees and said a larger spread in funding may more equitably award funds based on need and capacity.

- VII. Matt thanked the board for their great work in the last twelve months and highlighted what a bright spot this funding is in the legal aid world right now.
- VIII. Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 18 at 4:00 pm
 - A. Vote to finalize committee documents
- IX. Adjournment
 - A. The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.