

Equal Justice Authority
Board Meeting
March 18, 2026

- I. Welcome
 - A. The meeting was convened at 4:02 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. No members of the public were present.
- II. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Toni-Anne made a motion to approve the minutes and Allison seconded. The minutes of the January 26, 2026, board meeting were approved with no changes.
- III. 2026 Grant Discussion & Approval
 - A. Rubric
 1. Allison reviewed the changes to the 5 criteria that the Rubric Committee and Application Committee collaboratively worked on:
 - a) Criteria 1: This measurement remained the same.
 - b) Criteria 2: This measurement was updated to better reflect spread spread and to include scoring for pro bono attorneys.
 - c) Criterion 3: This measurement was adjusted in the direct representation category to reflect the increased capacity that direct representation requires.
 - d) Criterion 4: This measurement proposed clarified language around geographic reach.
 - e) Criterion 5: This measurement proposed clarified language around serving Coloradans with barriers to legal services.
 2. Toni-Anne suggested a vote and moved to approve the updated rubric as modified by the Rubric Committee and in partnership

with the Application Committee. Lauren seconded. The board unanimously approved the updated rubric.

B. Application

1. Toni-Anne reviewed the discussion around geographic reach, emphasizing the Application Committee and Rubric Committee's preference to modify the question to regions instead of counties.
2. The two committees also collaborated to adjust the question around serving Coloradans with legal barriers.
3. Lauren suggested Elise add a key for the regions and their correlated counties to the Application Guide. Allison and Matt agreed.
4. Allison inquired if the board felt there was a need to ask if re-applying grantees spent all of their funds from the previous grant cycle. The board determined this question should not be included in the application.
5. The board decided to move the qualification question to the top of the form.
6. Allison moved to approve the updated application and Cesar seconded. The board unanimously approved the updated application.

C. Other

1. Community Outreach

- a) Toni-Anne highlighted the need to continue outreach across the state to raise awareness of the grant opportunity.

(1) Toni-Anne and Elise drafted newsletter blurbs for distribution. The board supported Elise in outreaching to the Colorado Bar Association, COLTAF, and the Colorado Access to Justice Commission to request an announcement in their regular newsletters.

- b) Allison suggested that Elise send an email to the courts liaison and request they forward the announcement.

- c) The board discussed the possibility of a press release, but determined that it should wait until the first year of grants closes and grantee final reports are received.
 - d) Lauren inquired about outreach opportunities to the Colorado Attorney General's Office. Matt agreed this was a good idea. He or Lauren will send to their contact, Vanessa.
2. Scheduling Two Grant Information Zoom Sessions
- a) The board agreed to hold two grant information sessions during the application period, similar to 2025.
 - b) Last year was Lauren and Toni-Anne and Charlie
 - (1) Lauren and Toni-Anne volunteered. Elise will follow up with them to coordinate dates and presentation content.
3. Look Ahead for April Meeting
- a) Grant Award Materials
 - (1) Cesar shared that most materials will be similar to 2025 with minor updates, including adding mandatory February-March 2027 virtual check-ins.
 - (2) Also contemplating the role of enhanced data collection in the mid- and end-of-year reports.
 - (3) The board discussed the role of grant funding oversight. Matt articulated that general funding grants could be more vulnerable to scrutiny and that the board should continue to actively think through award oversight.
 - b) The formula will be discussed at the next meeting.

IV. Old Business

A. 2025 Grantee Check Ins

- 1. Toni-Anne, Cesar and Renzo joined Elise for check-ins. Board members found it rewarding and grantees expressed gratitude for these funds during an otherwise challenging funding period.
 - a) 19 of 27 grantees participated in this optional check-in
 - b) Cesar noted there were questions on data quality reporting and possible funding changes

- c) Renzo shared that meeting with a grantee during the check-in was a great opportunity to promote collaboration among grantees and other rural-serving organizations.

B. Legislative Update

1. A bill was introduced for the license plate effort:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/HB26-1251>

- a) There is a fiscal note that may impact the bill's success this year.
- b) If successful and signed, license plate fees will go to the EJA and be passed along to legal aid organizations in the exact same way court fees are administered.

(1) Although previously understood to be a direct donation to EJA to receive the license plate, it has been clarified that the DMV will get the donation and send it to EJA on a regular basis.

2. Legal aid partners are collectively advocating to ensure there are no cuts to ELDF & FVJF.

C. Financial Update

1. All but two JDs have sent in February fee revenue. All spreadsheets are accurate and up-to-date. The most recent statements are in the shared folder.
2. Charlie and Elise have begun looking at year-over-year comparisons. As funds trickled in slowly at the beginning of year one, it is not yet feasible to understand how the fund has changed in year two.

V. New Business

A. ATJC Contract Discussions

1. EJA's contract with the Colorado Access to Justice Commission (ATJC) for administrative support expires in June. Matt identified a conflict of interest, as he is a Commissioner for ATJC, so Toni-Anne will take the lead in discussing this contract with the ATJC Executive Director, Emo Overall.
2. Toni-Anne will outreach to Emo in April.

B. Next Meeting

1. The board decided to meet next on Wednesday, April 15 at 4:00 p.m. Elise will send a calendar invite and update the website.

C. Other

1. Allison requested the board's feedback on a potential conflict of interest. She shared that she had worked previously as a potential 2026 applicant (Weld County Legal Services). As she is on the review committee, she wanted to highlight that for the board.
 - a) Allison did not work for this organization, but with them collaboratively.
 - b) Matt, Toni-Anne, and Lauren agreed that they identified no conflict of interest with Allison being on the Review Committee.
 - c) The board agreed as a whole that there was no conflict of interest for Allison to serve on the Review Committee.

- D. Toni-Anne mentioned that the Pro Bono Summit will be on July 31, 2026 in Colorado Springs. She will send more details.

VI. Adjournment

- A. The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.