**EAST TEXAS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

This document was created to clarify the standard policies and procedures which will govern the East Texas Council of Government’s (ETCOG) Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) and to comply with the requirements of the “Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the Office of the Governor (OOG), Public Safety Office (PSO) and ETCOG.” This document shall become effective immediately and shall remain in effect until it is rescinded by the ETCOG Executive Director, CJAC, and ratified by the ETCOG Executive Committee.

**SECTION I. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CJAC**

The CJAC is a volunteer committee comprised of a multi-disciplinary representation of members from the ETCOG region. CJAC membership must include individuals from the following groups/disciplines, according to the requirements of the Governor’s Office, PSO:

1. Education;

2. Juvenile Justice;

3. Law Enforcement;

4. Mental Health;

5. Nonprofit Organizations;

6. Prosecutors and/or Courts;

7. Victim Services; (w/at least 1 member from a non-governmental agency) and

8. Other (may represent 1 of the required disciplines or be classified as “other”).

No single group/discipline may constitute more than one-third (1/3rd) of the CJAC. This means that no more than five (5) members of the CJAC may be from any one group. Group representation shall be declared in writing, by each member, on a form which shall be provided annually, at or before the first meeting of the CJAC. A CJAC member may also represent more than one jurisdiction, dependent upon Executive Committee approval.

No more than sixteen (16) members shall be appointed to the CJAC at the beginning of each calendar year. Any current and/or past member may be re-appointed to serve for an additional term. Recommendations may be made by Executive Committee members, Board Members, CJAC members, and/or ETCOG staff. Appointments shall be confirmed by the ETCOG Executive Committee.

**SECTION II - OFFICERS OF THE CJAC AND THEIR DUTIES**

A. **Chair:** Preside at all meetings of the CJAC. Call regular and special meetings of the CJAC. Appoint temporary sub-committees at his/her discretion to perform specific tasks related to the business of the CJAC.

B. **Vice-Chair:** During the absence or incapacity of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall have all the duties, responsibilities, powers, and privileges of the Chair.

C. **Term of Office:** Term of office for all officers shall not be limited but determined at the discretion of the CJAC. Each officer must be a CJAC committee member. The proposed slate of officers shall be recommended by the ETCOG Executive Committee to the ETCOG Executive Board, for confirmation after elections, at the biennial meeting for all advisory committees.

D. **Vacancy:** In the event of a vacancy for the position of any officer, the CJAC will recommend a replacement to the ETCOG Executive Committee.

**SECTION III - MEETINGS OF THE CJAC**

A. Regular meetings to conduct business of the CJAC shall be called by the Chairperson or ETCOG staff. Notice shall be 5 business days in advance of all meetings.

B. A special meeting may be held at any reasonable time and place, if called by the Committee Chair, or by agreement of 3 Committee members, or at the request of ETCOG staff. At least one-week notice (5 business days) shall be given of any special meeting.

C. The CJAC shall determine the time and place of its regularly scheduled meeting(s). Notice of all meetings shall be emailed to the members at least 5 business days in advance of when a meeting is to be held. Meetings may be held either in person or by teleconferencing, either by phone, webinar or video.

D. All members are expected to be present at each meeting. Any member who cannot be present at a regularly scheduled or specially called CJAC meeting shall notify ETCOG via *RSVP* reply to a meeting Announcement as soon as possible, or at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting, stating the inability to be present and the reason(s) for same.

E. Any member who is absent from two consecutive CJAC meetings without notification to ETCOG staff as determined by the CJAC Chair, shall be presumed to have resigned from membership of the CJAC, and shall be replaced at the discretion of the Chair, with the consent of the ETCOG Executive Committee.

F. ETCOG will maintain written and/or recorded documentation of all CJAC proceedings related to PSO business. Processed minutes must be certified with the signature of a CJAC member who was in attendance at the meeting and was not disqualified from voting due to any conflict of interest.

G. ETCOG must maintain all scoring sheets, prioritization documents, minutes, grant applications, and any other vital written records of meetings, in addition to working papers stored on paper, electronic, or other media related to the services and requirements identified in the Interagency Cooperation Contract, for a minimum of seven (7) years after the final payment by PSO, under the terms of the contract with PSO.

**SECTION IV - ACTIVITIES OF THE CJAC**

Assist with Criminal Justice Strategic planning, including but not limited to the following:

1. Identifying Criminal Justice problems/concerns/issues;
2. Determining the needs of the region;
3. Analyzing the existing Criminal Justice system and available resources; and
4. Establishing goals and priorities.

Ensure that funding recommendations on grant applications are based upon:

1. Any state strategies identified by the PSO within the RFA;.
2. Criminal Justice priorities identified in the COG’s most recently completed strategic plan;
3. The eligibility, reasonableness, and cost effectiveness of the proposed project; and
4. Current COG Policies and Bylaws.

Grant applications that will be reviewed and prioritized by the CJAC include, but are not limited to the following funding sources from the PSO:

* General Victim Assistance – Direct Services Program (VA);
* Violent Crimes Against Women Criminal Justice and Training Projects – Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence and Stalking ( WF);
* Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs - (SF);
* Truancy Prevention (TP);
* Justice Assistance Grant Program – ( DJ);
* And/or any other newly assigned funding sources identified by PSO that may be released for solicitation via ETCOG.

**SECTION V - GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW AND SCORING**

**A. Project Scoring Criteria**

1. Grant application score sheets will be used to evaluate each application submitted for review. A copy of the current score sheet shall be attached to this document as Exhibit A. The score sheet may be rearranged by majority vote of the CJAC; however, all changes for the upcoming year must be made by the CJAC prior to the Grant Application Workshop for the application year in which that score sheet will be used.

2. The approved definitions of key factors will be used to evaluate each application submitted for review. Any relevant guidance received from PSO for the current application cycle will be provided to the CJAC prior to its initiation of the scoring process.

**B. Project Scoring Process**

Once the PSO determines the eligibility of applications within a funding source, the eligible applications will be provided to ETCOG for scoring. To be eligible to participate in ETCOG’s CJAC application review and prioritization process, the applicant agency must be located in or provide services within Anderson, Camp, Cherokee, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Marion, Panola, Rains, Rusk, Smith, Upshur, Van Zandt or Wood counties; the 14-county ETCOG region.

The CJAC will review and score eligible applications at the CJAC prioritization meeting for each of the PSO designated funding sources. Per the PSO, the COG shall distribute the region’s applications to the CJAC at least 2 weeks prior to the members prioritization meeting.

A representative from each applicant organization shall attend the prioritization meeting, at which time each applicant present will be given five minutes to make a brief presentation to the CJAC. After each presentation, questions may be asked by CJAC members and answered by the applicant. Failure of an applicant agency to attend the CJAC Application Review and Prioritization Hearing will deem the application ineligible for CJAC review and prioritization, which will result in a score of “0” with no recommendation for funding.

CJAC members will assign a final score to each application, recording that score on the approved scoring instrument. All scoring documents will be collected by ETCOG staff at the end of each prioritization meeting. ETCOG staff will then assign each voting member a random number, tabulate all applicant scores, and create a prioritization list ranking each application from highest to lowest score.

CJAC rankings shall be provided to each applicant by ETCOG staff, via e-mail, within ten (10) business days of CJAC result verification. Ranking notices shall include information about the procedure available to applicants for making an appeal to the ETCOG Executive Committee.

Minimum Score Required. A project must receive a minimum score of sixty percent (60%) of the maximum total points available, or that project will not be recommended for funding, regardless of funding source.

The ETCOG Executive Committee will review all Criminal Justice priority rankings, recommended by the CJAC, and approve submission of final rankings to the Governor’s Office, PSO.

**C. Maximum Request Amount**

The maximum request amount, per vehicle, applied for under any of the funding streams is set at $30,000 each, with an additional $3,000 for “emergency vehicle equipment” which may be requested through the state Byrne JAG applications.

**D. Continuation Projects**

Continuation applications will be ranked in the same manner as new projects; however, continuation projects may earn additional points if all required reporting is complete, and if the previous year’s reports were submitted to PSO on time.

A continuation application may lose points if the previous year’s monitoring reports indicate non-compliance with certified assurances, failure to complete program progress reports, failure to submit financial reports required by PSO, failure to comply with quality and assurance recommendations, if they were placed on vendor hold within the last year, or at the discretion of the CJAC.

**E. Tiebreak Procedure**

Should any two or more applicants for any Criminal Justice grant program receive the identical number of total points,during the CJAC prioritization process, the tie shall be resolved as follows: The highest score and the lowest score of each applicant shall be removed, and the applicant with the highest remaining score shall be ranked ahead of the other(s). This process shall continue until all ties have been resolved. Should any two or more applicants have identical scores, resulting in a tie which cannot be resolved in the manner stated above, that tie shall be resolved by majority vote of all eligible scoring members of the Committee who originally participated in the scoring of that group of applications.

F. Recusals

If a CJAC member recuses themselves from scoring a grant application, that application will have one fewer score than the others. To ensure fairness across all projects within the same funding stream, the lowest score will be dropped from the scoring of each application that did not have a recusal.

**G. Appeal Procedure**

Any applicant who wishes to appeal the ranking given to any application may appear before the Executive Committee at the same regularly scheduled meeting at which the CJAC rankings will be presented for approval. The appealing applicant will be given a brief presentation (usually three minutes) to present his or her appeal. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be final.

Applicants may only appeal if an alleged scoring error is found and must submit written notification, signed by the applicant’s authorized official, of their intent to appeal to ETCOG’s Director of Public Safety and the sitting CJAC Chair at least 48 hours before the ETCOG Executive Committee’s next scheduled meeting where the CJAC priority list of applications recommended for funding will be approved.

**H. Notification of Funding Recommendations**

Following approval by the ETCOG Executive Committee, of the CJAC Priority Rankings, ETCOG staff shall notify all grant applicants, within fourteen (14) business days of all funding recommendations made to the PSO. Notifications will be sent via email and per the PSO, shall include the following statement:

After the CJAC prioritizes the grant applications and the COG’s governing body approves the priority listing, the COG submits the written priority listing to the PSO. Based upon the COG’s priority listing, the PSO will verify the eligibility, reasonableness and cost effectiveness strategy of the proposed project, and the availability of funding, and will render final funding decisions on these grant applications. The COG will notify grantees of any changes in the funding recommendations.”

**SECTION VI - CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

To avoid conflict of interest, members of the ETCOG governing body, CJAC members and ETCOG staff members must abstain from scoring and voting on any grant application, other than a grant application submitted by a COG during the prioritization process if the member or an individual related to the member within the third degree by consanguinity or within the second degree by affinity:

1. Is employed by the applicant agency and works for the unit or division that would administer the grant, if awarded;
2. Serves on any governing board that oversees the unit or division that would administer the grant, if awarded;
3. Owns or controls any interest in a business entity or other non-governmental organization that benefits, directly or indirectly, from activities with the applicant agency; or
4. Receives any funds from the applicant as a result of the grant; or a substantial amount of tangible goods or services, from the applicant agency.

Additionally, per the PSO: “If a CJAC member has a conflict of interest regarding a specific grant application, the COG will ensure that the CJAC member abstains from voting, commenting, or otherwise influencing the prioritization process for that application.”

If any applicant, CJAC member, COG personnel or other individual has reason to believe that favoritism or inappropriate actions occurred during the scoring or prioritization of PSO projects, the COG shall ensure that the concerns are shared with PSO as soon as possible.”

**SECTION VII - COMPLIANCE WITH ADMINISTRATIVE RULES**

**A.** All policies, rules, and regulations set forth in this document comply with the Texas Government Code, Chapter 551 (Texas Open Meetings Act) and the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 1, Part 1, Chapter 3, and the state and federal statutes, rules and regulations adopted by reference in Texas Administrative Code. The above can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/tac/index.shtml>.

**B.** The Texas Administrative Code applies to all applications for funding and grants submitted to the Public Safety Office (PSO), Office of the Governor. Subchapter A covers the general provisions for grant funding. Subchapter B addresses general eligibility and budget rules for grant funding. Subchapter C outlines specific eligibility and budget rules applicable to various funding sources available to PSO; these rules are in addition to all other general rules in this chapter. Subchapter D provides rules detailing the conditions PSO may place on grants. Subchapter E sets out the rules related to administering grants. Subchapter F specifies rules regarding program monitoring and audits. Grant applicants are encouraged to be familiar with all these rules prior to submitting an application to PSO.

**SECTION VIII – NOTIFICATION OF THE AVAILABILTY OF FUNDING & GRANT APPLICATION WORKSHOPS**

**A.** Per the PSO, the COG shall make the OOG funding opportunities publicly available on the COG’s website by either posting those opportunities or providing a link to the eGrants funding announcements found at: https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/fundopp.aspx.

**B.** At the beginning of each new PSO grant cycle, ETCOG will hold one or more Grant Application Workshops, which shall be scheduled by the Council of Governments, Director of Public Safety and/or Public Safety Planner. All workshops will be open to anyone who wishes to attend. Notification of the workshop date shall be sent via e-mail, regular mail, fax, and/or telephone message to every potential applicant who has contacted the COG and requested such notification.

**C.** At each workshop the COG Planner will provide any information specified by PSO and must instruct applicants on the following:

Who can apply and what activities are eligible under each funding opportunity;

1. Requirements for project problem statements with supporting data, goal statement, project activity explanations, target output and outcome measures, and budget categories and line items;
2. The project period for each funding opportunity as stated in the Request for Application (RFA) issued by PSO.
3. Applicable rules, regulations and certifications required for each funding opportunity;
4. Any prohibitions stated in the RFA issued by PSO.
5. Civil rights rule related to applicant employees and projects or activities;
6. State strategies or funding preferences identified by PSO.
7. Priorities identified by the COG related to criminal justice issues;
8. Local policies and procedures that affect the COG’s prioritization process; and
9. Due dates for applicants to submit and certify applications for the funding opportunities.

**D.** **MANDATORY ATTENDANCE**: Attendance is mandatory each year for all current and new applicant non-profits/agencies/jurisdictions. At least one person per non-profit/ agency / jurisdiction must attend the current year’s PSO grant workshop as presented by ETCOG. Attending a grant application workshop conducted by a COG outside of the ETCOG region does not substitute for the required attendance at the grant application workshop, conducted by ETCOG.

**E.** If attendance at the regularly scheduled workshops is not possible for an applicant, the applicant must contact the ETCOG Public Safety Director in advance of the workshop date, to make other arrangements.

**F.** **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**: New applicants will be provided technical assistance during the drafting of applications prior to submission, if requested. ETCOG’s Criminal Justice Program staff will answer questions for both current grantees and new applicants via telephone consultation and email as much as practical. PSO staff will provide technical assistance on the operation of the interactive web-based application.

**G.** **DEADLINES:** Application submission deadlines will be set by the Governor’s Office, PSO and all applications will be submitted directly to the PSO electronically, via the eGrants website at  <https://egrants.gov.texas.gov>.

Per PSO, ETCOG will notify, by e-mail or telephone all potential applicants who have requested grant information, of the PSO deadlines established for the various funding sources. Such notification will be made within forty-eight (48) hours of ETCOG being notified by PSO of the deadlines, and/or within forty-eight (48) hours of ETCOG’s receipt of the request from the potential grant applicant.

**SECTION IX - FUNDING GUIDELINES**

**A.** GENERAL APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY.

To be eligible for grant funding through ETCOG, the applicant agency must be an ETCOG; unit of local government, community supervision and correction department, faith-based organization, independent school district or college/university, juvenile board, nonprofit corporation, Native American Tribe, or regional education service center within the ETCOG region.

Agencies within the ETCOG region may expand their service area outside the ETCOG region to contiguous counties provided their headquarters are within the ETCOG region and the majority of services provided by the applicant agency are within the ETCOG region.

Eligibility requirements for criminal justice related grant solicitations are set by the Governor’s Office.. Please refer to the eGrants website at the following link to review applicant eligibility requirements - <https://egrants.gov.texas.gov>.

Prior to August 1st of the award year, all applicant counties *MUST* reach at least 90% completion of Computerized Criminal History dispositions (CCH) for both Adult and Juvenile cases, for previous years received and reported to/by the Texas Department of Public Safety’s Uniform Crime Reporting unit.

**B.** FUNDING DETERMINATIONS

The ETCOG Executive Committee meets on the first Thursday of every month except for January and July.

1. The CJAC and the Executive Committee of ETCOG will submit the CJAC’s priority list recommendations to the Governor’s Office, PSO for each funding source.

2. The Governor’s Office, PSO does not have an appeals process for grant applicants. All PSO funding decisions are final and made at the sole discretion of the Governor’s Office.

**SECTION X – REGIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN**

Each COG has been deemed the responsibility of compiling a Regional Criminal Justice Strategic Plan (ERCJSP), per the PSO. The ETCOG multi-year plan will prioritize the criminal justice needs in the ETCOG region and outline the COG’s strategic vision related to criminal justice issues. This plan will be structured around a set of guidelines, identified by PSO, and will detail all regional priorities, fund source priorities, regional resources, regional partners, regional statistics, future steps and helpful links. Per PSO, the plan shall not exceed a 5-year cycle beginning from the date of submission to PSO. It is imperative that strategies are custom to each fiscal year and not inherently duplicative of the strategies outlined in the prior fiscal years.

ETCOG’s Regional Criminal Justice Strategic Plan (ERCJSP) will include priorities identified by communities and agencies within the ETCOG region, including members of local government, law enforcement, mental health, substance abuse, victim services and juvenile services. Priorities will be established based on this information. Per the PSO, the plan must describe the following:

1. How local communities are engaged in the planning process;
2. The data used to support the plan;
3. The stakeholders participating in the planning process;
4. The gaps in resources for criminal justice needs;
5. The criminal justice priorities identified during the planning process; and
6. How the plan will be used by the CJAC during the prioritization process.

The plan must also include an executive summary, not to exceed two (2) pages, written for a general public audience that describes the following:

1. The strategic planning process; and
2. The top five (5) most critical needs for the region across all criminal justice areas.

Agencies requesting funding through PSO should have an identified regional issue listed in the ERCJSP. If an agency identifies a regional need that is not listed in this plan they need to contact ETCOG Public Safety staff concerning compiling the required data, reviewing the data for accuracy, and entering all final data into the ERCJSP.

A copy of the most current ERCJSP can be found on the ETCOG website, at the following link - <http://www.pineywoods911.com/criminal-justice>. The ECJSP will be reviewed and revised annually.

***CJ Policies and Procedures History:***

Amended by the CJAC – 12/28/10 Approved by the Executive Committee – 02/03/11

Amended by the CJAC – 01/07/15 Approved by the Executive Committee – 01/29/15

Amended by the CJAC – 08/29/18 Approved by the Executive Committee – 12/06/18

Amended by the CJAC – 08/20/25 Approved by the Executive Committee – 09/04/25