



Arkansas Early Childhood Association Policy Manual

(Rev. Jan 2026)

connecting, developing, and representing
Arkansas early childhood care and education professionals

PO Box 4291 | Fayetteville, AR 72702 | 501 680 1930

About AECA and Required Disclosures

Our Mission

To connect, develop, and represent Arkansas early childhood care and education professionals. In doing so, we elevate the diversity, equity, and vibrancy of the profession and to ultimately promote high-quality care and education for all Arkansas children & families.

Who We Are

The Arkansas Early Childhood Association (AECA) is a statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening Arkansas’s early childhood workforce and improving outcomes for young children and their families. AECA supports early childhood educators through professional development, advocacy, and access to high-quality resources, while also administering scholarship and grant programs that expand educational opportunities across the state. Guided by our commitment to equality, excellence, and collaboration, AECA works to elevate the profession and ensure that every child in Arkansas has the foundation needed to thrive. AECA is Arkansas’s largest professional association for early childhood educators.

Disclosures

AECA will register annually with the Arkansas Secretary of State and file the required Annual Financial Report by August 1. AECA will comply with any audit requirements associated with receipt of state financial assistance under Ark. Code § 4-28-104.

AECA will make its IRS determination letter, and the three most recent Forms 990 available for public inspection and provide copies upon request or via online posting, consistent with IRC § 6104 and the Form 990 instructions.

For purposes of the AECA Bylaws and this Policy Manual, “Board approval” or “approved by the Board” indicates that Board action is required consistent with Article VIII(D) of the AECA Bylaws.

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I

AECA Governing Bodies

Board of Directors

Function

The Board of Directors shall exercise general supervision over the affairs of the Association, establish policy, consider then carry out recommendations and resolutions of established committees and membership and foster the implementation of AECA's mission as well as those of the regional affiliate, the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA).

Membership

The membership of the AECA Board shall consist of five voting members and two non-voting *ex officio* members:

- President
- Four additional voting members
- Representative to the SECA Board of Directors (*ex officio*, non-voting)
- AECA Executive Director (*ex officio*, non-voting)

Responsibilities

The Board shall exercise the following responsibilities:

- Develop annual goals and objectives.
- Oversee the work of established committees, review committee reports and consider their recommendations for implementation.
- Review and approve proposed annual budgets.
- Review and approve procurement actions over \$250,000.
- Approve new Board members upon recommendation of Governance committee.
- Review and approve all official policies, position statements, and publications.
- Review and approve changes to the AECA Constitution, Bylaws, and policies.
- Select AECA award and scholarship winners based on established criteria.
- Other operational issues not specifically assigned to AECA staff or committees.

Terms of Office

The Board President is elected from membership after a nominations period of at least 30 days coordinated through the Governance committee. Candidates for Board President must meet the requirements to hold office found in this policy manual. The Board President serves for two years.

The Representative to the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is appointed by a majority of Board members every two years and must meet the requirements to hold office found in this policy manual.

Four other voting members of the Board are selected and shall serve two-year terms on a rotating basis.

Board Member Standards of Conduct

Board members agree to:

- (1) uphold AECA's mission;
- (2) prepare for and attend meetings (target attendance $\geq 75\%$);
- (3) disclose and manage conflicts per AECA policy;
- (4) maintain confidentiality of non-public information;
- (5) act with civility and respect;
- (6) support fundraising consistent with AECA's strategies; and
- (7) follow AECA's communications protocol when representing the organization.

AECA Advisory Council

Membership

- The AECA Advisory Council shall consist of the presidents or designees from all affiliate groups plus any past AECA presidents who wish to participate in an advisory function.
- The AECA Board President shall appoint a Chair of the Board Advisory Council.
- A voting Board member not serving as President, Secretary or Treasurer shall serve on the Council as engagement coordinator of the *Membership & Affiliate Engagement Subgroup*.

Responsibilities

The AECA Advisory Council has the following responsibilities:

- Serve as liaison between the Board of Directors and affiliate groups.
- Communicate the needs and ideas of affiliate groups.
- Advise the Board of Directors on matters of local and/or regional concern.
- Share updates on AECA activities and initiatives with affiliate groups.
- Make recommendations for follow-up action to the Board.
- **Membership & Affiliate Engagement Subgroup:** Promote AECA membership and support affiliate development through this subgroup to coordinate outreach, supports affiliate compliance, promote diversity in leadership, and recommend scholarship recipients and fundraising strategies.

Meetings. The Board Advisory Council will meet bimonthly in the months when AECA Board of Director meetings do not occur. The Chair shall call meetings, designate the date, time and format of such meetings then preside. The Advisory Council shall meet with the AECA Board at least twice a year.

TEACH Early Childhood Advisory Group

Membership.

The TEACH Early Childhood Advisory Group shall consist of statewide early childhood leaders and knowledge experts from the following groups:

- Four-year Higher Education Institutions

- Two-year Higher Education Institutions
- Sponsoring employer directors and/or program owners
- Head Start
- TEACH Scholars
- State Early Childhood Local Leads
- Representative from the Early Childhood Lead Agency (*ex officio*)
- Funder (if different)
- AECA Executive Director/TEACH Director (*ex officio*)
- AECA Board President or designee from the Board of Directors (*ex officio*)

The TEACH State Director shall select members to serve and shall appoint a Chair of the Advisory Group. Group members shall serve for a two-year period with the option of renewing for an additional two-year term.

Function

The TEACH Advisory Group is a bridge between TEACH Early Childhood ARKANSAS, the broader early childhood community and policy makers to ensure scholarship initiatives remain relevant and effective. The Group's specific functions include:

- *Providing strategic guidance:* Advise the state TEACH program on aligning scholarship models with workforce needs and state priorities.
- *Ensuring stakeholder input:* Include voices from affiliate leaders, past presidents, higher education, and early childhood organizations to reflect diverse perspectives.
- *Supporting program quality:* Help maintain fidelity to TEACH's core principles while adapting to local contexts.
- *Advocating for resources:* Assist in identifying funding opportunities and promoting policies that strengthen professional development for early educators.
- *Monitoring impact:* Review program outcomes and recommend improvements to enhance educator access, retention, and compensation.

Meetings

The Advisory Group shall meet a minimum of two times a year, in person or virtually. Minutes shall be kept of the Group's discussions and recommendations and shall be made available to the TEACH National Center upon request.

II Duties of Board Members

Board President

The AECA Board President serves as the chief volunteer leader, responsible for guiding the strategic direction, governance, and operations of the organization. The following condensed responsibilities are grouped by functional areas for clarity and ease of reference.

Duties

1. Leadership & Strategic Planning
 - Provides leadership in planning and implementing AECA goals and activities. Assists established committees in formulating objectives and scope of work.
 - Serves as a Board liaison to the Executive Director, communicating board decisions and priorities.
2. Governance & Board Management
 - Oversees board members in their assigned responsibilities.
 - Appoints committee chairs with attention to diversity and representation.
 - Plans Board meeting dates, times and agendas and presides at each meeting.
 - Invites Board Advisory Council to open meetings and requests written reports from affiliate presidents and committee chairs.
 - Meets regularly with the Executive Director to maintain alignment of goals and priorities.
 - Serves as an advisor to the Executive Director on operations and daily management of the association.
 - In emergency situations, the Board President and Treasurer may act jointly on behalf of the Board, consistent with Article VIII of the AECA Bylaws.
3. Conference & Public Engagement
 - Coordinates with Conference Committee to set conference agenda and major events at conference.
 - Presides over the annual business meeting.
 - Represents AECA at SECA events.
 - Serves as AECA's official representative in coordination with the Executive Director.
4. Communications & Reporting
 - Submits a President's Letter for each issue of the AECA Update.
 - Notifies affiliates of their status regarding minimum requirements.
 - Notifies candidates of election outcomes and confirms vote results to the Board.

- Coordinates with Board Secretary to ensure votes are recorded in meeting minutes.

5. Transition & Documentation

- Transfers all materials to the incoming President before January 1.
- Writes a report of incomplete tasks and suggestions for the incoming President.
- Provides lists of continuing appointees, committees to be appointed, updated board roster, and calendar.
- Files a complete record of the year's business and accomplishments with the AECA office.

Qualifications

- Be a current member of AECA in good standing.
- Have served at least one full term on the AECA Board of Directors in any role.
- Demonstrate leadership experience within AECA or an AECA affiliate group, or in the broader early childhood education profession (e.g., committee service, conference presentations, volunteer leadership).
- Possess relevant professional experience in early childhood education, child development, developmental psychology, or a closely related field.
- Exhibit skills in management, administration, and strategic planning.

Secretary

Duties

- Serve as a voting member of the AECA Board of Directors and attend all Board meetings.
- Record and distribute accurate minutes of Board meetings, following approved parliamentary procedures.
- Maintain official records of AECA business, including minutes, Treasurer's reports, audits, and committee reports.
- Manage official correspondence and ensure proper filing of documents with the AECA Office Manager.
- Maintain library of official AECA governing documents, including Constitution, Bylaws, Policy Manual, and all procedure manuals. Update library upon approval of any revisions.
- Distribute updated materials to Board, Advisory Council, and other established committee chairs.
- At the end of the term, transfer all materials to the incoming Secretary, provide a summary of pending tasks, and offer guidance for a smooth transition.

Qualifications

- Only current voting Board members, excluding the Board President, are eligible to serve as Secretary.

- The Secretary is selected annually in January by a majority vote of the current voting Board members.
- Selection should be based on the skills and experience necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of the role:
 - Demonstrated leadership within AECA and/or a local affiliate (if one exists), or within the early childhood education field (e.g., conference participation, committee service, presentations, or volunteerism).
 - Active engagement in early childhood education, child development, or a related field.
 - Proficiency in organization, minute-taking, word processing, and working knowledge of the parliamentary procedure.

Treasurer

Duties

- Serve as a voting member of the AECA Board of Directors and attend all Board meetings.
- Collaborate with the Executive Director to develop the annual budget, incorporating input from relevant stakeholders.
- Review monthly financial statements and ensure timely presentation of financial reports to the Board.
- Present quarterly financial updates to the Board and Advisory Council.
- Present the Treasurer's Report at the annual business meeting.
- Ensure compliance with AECA's financial policies and internal controls.
- Support Executive Director and Conference Chair(s) in managing conference-related finances, including budget tracking and reconciliation.
- Coordinate with the Executive Director to collect and review annual financial reports from local affiliates, ensuring completeness and accuracy.
- Serve as a financial resource to the Board, helping members understand financial documents and implications of fiscal decisions.
- Monitor AECA's financial health and alert the Board to any concerns or risks.
- In emergency situations, the Board President and Treasurer may act jointly on behalf of the Board, consistent with Article VIII of the AECA Bylaws.
- Prior to leaving office on January 1, transfer all materials to the incoming Treasurer, provide a summary of pending tasks, and offer guidance for a smooth transition.

Qualifications

- Only current voting Board members, excluding President, are eligible to serve as Treasurer.
- Treasurer is selected each January by a majority vote of current Board members.
- Selection is based on financial literacy and the ability to fulfill the responsibilities of the role:
 - Working knowledge of nonprofit budgeting, financial reporting, and fiscal accountability.

- Demonstrated leadership within AECA and/or a local affiliate (if one exists), or within the early childhood education field (e.g., committee service, conference participation, or fiscal oversight).
- Active engagement in early childhood education, child development, developmental psychology, or a related field.

Representative to the SECA Board of Directors

Duties

- Serves two-year term as Arkansas’s Representative to the SECA Board of Directors.
- Serves as a non-voting, *ex officio* member of the AECA Board of Directors (The SECA Representative may make motions and participate in all discussions.).
- Represents AECA at SECA meetings and communicates SECA concerns to AECA.
- Communicates AECA perspectives to the SECA Board of Directors.
- May be asked to serve on AECA committees or commissions at the discretion of the Board President.
- Prepares a SECA report for each issue of *AECA Update*.
- Prior to leaving office, transfers all materials to the incoming SECA Representative and provides a summary of ongoing tasks and recommendations.

Qualifications

- Be a current AECA member in good standing.
- Have demonstrated leadership within AECA or an AECA affiliate group, or in the broader early childhood education profession (e.g., attending conferences, serving on committees, volunteering, or presenting).
- Be actively engaged in early childhood education, child development, developmental psychology, or a related field.
- Demonstrate knowledge of or interest in regional collaboration and the mission of the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA).
- Be appointed by the AECA Board President and approved by a majority vote of the voting members of the Board.

Engagement Coordinator

Duties

- This is a Board member (not the President) who leads the Membership & Affiliate Engagement Subgroup of the Advisory Council.
- Serve as the primary liaison between the Board and affiliate groups on matters related to membership growth, engagement, and support.
- Coordinate efforts to promote AECA membership benefits and increase member retention.
- Collaborate with the Executive Director and Office & Finance Manager to ensure accurate membership data and timely communications.

- Support affiliate leaders in meeting annual renewal requirements and strengthening local engagement.
- Oversee the development and distribution of membership marketing materials and outreach strategies.
- Coordinate AECA's presence at conferences and events, including membership tables and promotional activities.
- Identify and support emerging leaders within the membership and affiliate network.
- Participate in the review of scholarship applications and support related fundraising efforts.
- Report regularly to the Board and Advisory Council on membership trends, affiliate needs, and subgroup activities.

Recommended Skills

- Strong interpersonal and relationship-building skills.
- Experience in membership development, community engagement, or nonprofit leadership.
- Familiarity with AECA's mission, programs, and affiliate structure.
- Strategic thinking and ability to identify and act on opportunities for growth.
- Organizational and facilitation skills to lead meetings and coordinate subgroup activities.
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in membership and leadership development.
- Comfort working collaboratively with staff and volunteers in a virtual environment.

III

Duties of Executive Staff

Executive Director/TEACH Early Childhood State Director

The AECA Executive Director oversees daily operations of AECA as well as the TEACH Early Childhood® Arkansas program. This dual role position provides strategic leadership, operational oversight, and external representation for both programs. The Executive Director is responsible for advancing the mission of AECA to support early childhood professionals and for ensuring the effective implementation of the TEACH scholarship model to improve workforce education, compensation, and retention. This position reports to the AECA Board of Directors.

Duties

1. Governance & Board Relations
 - Serve as the chief executive officer of AECA, supporting the Board in fulfilling its governance responsibilities.
 - Collaborate with the Board President to develop agendas, facilitate meetings, and maintain a positive and productive board culture.
 - Keep the Board informed of organizational performance, strategic issues, and emerging opportunities.
 - Assist with board development, committee support, and strategic planning.
2. Organizational & Program Leadership
 - Provide vision and leadership for AECA, the TEACH Early Childhood® Arkansas program and other workforce development programs under AECA.
 - Ensure alignment of programs with AECA's mission and member needs.
 - Oversee TEACH Early Childhood operations, including contracts, scopes of work, and licensing requirements.
 - Oversee all workforce associated programs such as the Early Educator Apprenticeship program.
 - Supervise staff and contractors, fostering a collaborative and mission-driven culture.
 - Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information related to staff, board, and scholarship recipients.
3. Financial Management
 - Develop and manage budgets; ensure financial sustainability and transparency.
 - Approve expenditures, applications, and contracts in accordance with policies.
 - Provide regular financial reports to Board, funders, and TEACH National Center.
 - Ensure compliance with all requirements of grants and licenses.
4. Resource Development
 - Lead fundraising efforts, including grant writing, donor cultivation, and sponsorships.

- Identify and pursue new funding opportunities to support AECA, TEACH and workforce development initiatives.
- Maintain strong relationships with funders and ensure timely reporting and stewardship.

5. Outreach, Partnerships & Communications

- Serve as the public face of AECA and TEACH, representing both organizations to stakeholders, media, and the public.
- Build and maintain partnerships with early childhood organizations, higher education, state agencies, and community groups.
- Promote membership and participation through outreach and marketing.
- Oversee the organization’s website, social media, and communications materials.
- Appoint members of the TEACH Early Childhood Advisory Group and a chairperson.
- Work with Advisory Group chair to establish meeting agendas and guide discussions.

6. Advocacy & Public Policy

- Monitor state and federal policies affecting the early childhood workforce and Arkansas families.
- Collaborate with the Board, Board Advisory Council and Public Policy Committee to develop and implement an annual policy agenda.
- Represent AECA in advocacy coalitions and policy discussions.

Authority

The Executive Director is authorized to develop and implement procedures necessary to carry out AECA policies approved by the Board of Directors. The Office Manager and other designated staff may assist in this process.

All procedures must:

- Be consistent with AECA’s Constitution, Bylaws, and Board-approved policies;
- Comply with applicable laws and regulations;
- Align with requirements and conditions set forth by AECA’s funders, including state and federal agencies.

Procedures shall be documented and made available to the Board upon request. The Board reserves the right to review and revise any procedure that appears inconsistent with AECA’s governance framework or obligations.

Employment Terms and Termination

The Executive Director is hired by a majority vote of the AECA Board of Directors. The terms and conditions of employment, including performance expectations, evaluation procedures, and grounds for termination, shall be outlined in a written employment agreement approved by the Board. Any decision to terminate the Executive Director must follow the due process provisions of that agreement and be approved by a majority vote of the full Board.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in early childhood education, public administration, nonprofit management, or a related field.
- Demonstrated leadership experience in nonprofit or program administration.
- Strong knowledge of early childhood systems, workforce development, higher education programs, and public policy.
- Proven skills in budgeting, staff supervision, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement.
- Skills: Written and verbal communication, presentation, and interpersonal.
- Ability to travel as needed.

Succession Plan

If the Executive Director (ED) is unexpectedly unable to serve, the Board President will immediately appoint an Acting ED (typically the Office & Finance Manager or another qualified staff member) for up to 90 days, pending Board action. Banking, payroll, and contract authority will temporarily follow the internal control structure already specified in the manual (President and Treasurer serving as dual approval and back-up). Records and systems access will be transferred in accordance with AECA's document retention and cybersecurity policies. Due to conflict of interest, if a Board member is appointed to serve as ED, that member must first resign their Board position before acceptance.

For planned transitions (e.g., resignation/retirement), the Board will (a) designate a search committee, (b) review the ED position description and compensation, (c) approve an interim leadership plan, and (d) communicate the timeline to staff and key partners.

Office and Finance Manager

The Office and Finance Manager is a key member of AECA's Executive Staff, reporting directly to the Executive Director and supporting the financial, administrative, and operational functions of the Association. This position ensures the integrity of AECA's financial systems, supports compliance with nonprofit and grant requirements, and provides essential administrative infrastructure for both AECA and its workforce development programs. The role requires a highly organized, detail-oriented professional with strong accounting expertise, nonprofit fiscal management experience, and the ability to work collaboratively in a virtual team environment.

Duties

1. Financial Management & Accounting
 - Maintain accurate and timely financial records, including accounts payable, receivable, and general ledger entries.
 - Process payments to vendors, scholars, and educational institutions.
 - Submit payroll and maintain payroll records in compliance with federal and state regulations.
 - Reconcile bank accounts monthly and prepare financial reports for internal and external stakeholders.

- Assist Executive Director in preparing the budget and financial forecasts.
 - Support any audit process by preparing documentation and responding to auditor requests.
 - Ensure compliance with AECA policies and grant requirements.
 - Maintain documentation for all financial transactions and ensure readiness for audits and funder reviews.
2. Office Operations
 - Oversee day-to-day office operations, including equipment maintenance, supply procurement, and mail processing.
 - Contribute to development of office procedure manuals and support updates to program-specific manuals (e.g., Employee, Finance, TEACH).
 - Manage staff records and support human resources functions, including onboarding, benefits coordination, and compliance with employment policies.
 - Provide administrative support to the Executive Director and staff as needed.
 - Directly supervise all administrative support staff.
 3. Governance Support
 - Maintain documentation of all Board member and committee expenses.
 - Assist with other duties as assigned by the Executive Director.
 4. Membership & Public Engagement
 - Support membership processing and database management.
 - Respond to inquiries regarding AECA membership and services.
 - Assist with membership outreach and engagement efforts in collaboration with the Executive Director and Board.
 - Coordinate check-in and accounting procedures at the annual conference.
 5. Program Support
 - Provide administrative and financial support to AECA's workforce development programs, including TEACH and Apprenticeship.
 - Assist with data entry, document management, and reporting requirements for program funders and partners.

Employment Terms and Termination

The Office & Finance Manager is hired by and reports directly to the Executive Director, with Board approval. The terms and conditions of employment, including performance expectations and termination procedures, are governed by the official job description and AECA's personnel policies, and must comply with applicable employment laws.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in accounting, Finance, or Business Administration required.
- Master's degree in business administration (MBA) preferred.
- Minimum 3–5 years of experience in financial and office management, nonprofit experience is a plus.
- Experience with grant compliance, payroll, and human resources.

- Knowledge of and experience implementing GAAP in a business setting.
- Strong organizational and time management skills.
- Proficiency in accounting software, Microsoft Office, and cloud-based systems.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a virtual environment.
- High level of integrity, discretion, and professionalism.
- Commitment to AECA's mission and values.

IV AECA Board Committees

Governance

The Governance Committee plays a critical role in ensuring the integrity, effectiveness, and sustainability of AECA's leadership and organizational structure. This committee is responsible for overseeing board development, maintaining alignment with AECA's governing documents, and promoting best practices in nonprofit governance.

Functions

The functions of the Governance Committee include:

1. **Board Recruitment and Selection:** The committee coordinates recruitment for new Board members, including overseeing the application process, verifying eligibility, conducting interviews, and making recommendations to the Board for approval. This process is guided by AECA's commitment to diversity, equity, and strategic leadership.
2. **Identification of Needed Skills:** The committee regularly assesses the skills and competencies needed on the Board to fulfill AECA's mission and strategic goals. It uses this assessment to guide recruitment and succession planning efforts.
3. **Board Orientation and Education:** The committee develops and oversees the orientation and onboarding process for new Board members. It recommends ongoing education and training opportunities to strengthen Board performance and engagement.
4. **Oversight of Governing Documents:** The committee reviews the AECA Constitution, Bylaws, and Policy Manual to ensure consistency, clarity, and alignment with nonprofit best practices and Arkansas law. It recommends updates or amendments as needed and ensures that governing documents are properly maintained and distributed.
5. **Succession Planning:** The committee develops and monitors succession plans for key Board roles to ensure leadership continuity and preparedness. This includes identifying potential future leaders and supporting their development.
6. **Board Evaluations and Assessments:** The Governance Committee will facilitate an annual Board self-evaluation covering mission alignment, strategy, fiduciary oversight, fundraising, policy compliance, and board culture. The Committee may also administer an individual board member self-assessment and provide confidential feedback. Findings inform board education, recruitment, and updates to governance practices. Documentation of evaluations will be retained per AECA's document retention schedule and made available to the Board on request. Assessments may be conducted directly or contracted with an external party to ensure objectivity and confidentiality. Evaluation results are used to inform strategic planning and governance improvements.

- 7. Review of Board Actions and Conflicts:** The committee monitors Board actions to ensure compliance with AECA policies and ethical standards. It reviews any reported conflicts of interest and recommends appropriate resolutions. Investigates allegations or formal complaints against Board Members and makes a recommendation for disposition to the full Board, in accordance with Article XVIII of the AECA Bylaws.

Membership

The Governance Committee shall consist of:

- Two AECA past presidents.
- One AECA affiliate president.
- Two AECA members with demonstrated leadership experience and at least five years of continuous membership.
- A Chair shall be elected from among the committee members.

Development

The Development Committee is responsible for advancing AECA's mission through strategic resource development and fundraising efforts. This committee plays a vital role in ensuring the financial sustainability of the Association by cultivating donor relationships, engaging the Board in fundraising activities, and coordinating events that support AECA's programs and initiatives.

Functions

The functions of the Development Committee include:

- 1. Resource Assessment:** The committee evaluates AECA's current and potential resources to determine what is needed to effectively carry out the organization's mission. This includes identifying gaps in funding and opportunities for growth.
- 2. Fundraising Strategy Development:** The committee designs and recommends fundraising strategies that align with AECA's goals and values. These strategies may include donor campaigns, grants, sponsorships, and special events.
- 3. Board Engagement in Fundraising:** The committee encourages and supports active participation by Board members in fundraising efforts. This includes providing guidance, tools, and opportunities for Board members to contribute to donor outreach and fundraising events. *Board and Executive Staff are encouraged to make an annual financial contribution to AECA, which is within their capacity but personally meaningful. This practice reflects a commitment to AECA's mission and strengthens the Association's credibility with funders and stakeholders. While no specific amount is required, the Board strives for 100% participation in annual giving.*
- 4. Donor Cultivation and Engagement:** The committee works to build and maintain relationships with donors, funders, and community partners. This

includes identifying potential donors, coordinating outreach, and ensuring appropriate recognition and stewardship.

5. **Fundraising Event Planning:** The committee plans and executes fundraising events throughout the year, including coordination with the Conference Committee on the annual silent auction. These events serve both to raise funds and to increase visibility and engagement with AECA's mission.

Membership

The Development Committee shall consist of:

- One Board member with fundraising experience or skills as Chair.
- Four members selected from AECA affiliate boards and/or general membership.

Audit and Oversight

The Audit and Oversight Committee is charged with safeguarding the financial integrity and accountability of AECA. This committee operates independently of the Board's budgeting and fiscal management functions to ensure objective review and oversight of AECA's fiscal practices, internal controls, and compliance with nonprofit standards.

Function

The functions of the Audit and Oversight committee include:

1. **Audit Review:** The committee reviews any financial audit conducted by an external auditor, including the auditor's report, management letter, and any recommendations for improvement. It ensures the audit process is thorough, impartial, and compliant with nonprofit standards.
2. **Year-End Financial Reports:** The committee examines AECA's year-end financial statements to assess the organization's financial health and identify any areas of concern. It provides feedback to the Board on the clarity, accuracy, and completeness of these reports.
3. **Internal Controls:** The committee evaluates AECA's internal financial controls and procedures to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to prevent fraud, mismanagement, or errors. It may recommend updates to strengthen AECA's financial systems.
4. **Auditor Selection Oversight:** The committee reviews management's recommendation for auditor selection, as well as any RFP's to select the auditor and individual proposals. The chair of the Audit and Oversight committee shall sign off on the Letter of Engagement along with the Executive Director.
5. **Investigation of Financial and Whistleblower Concerns:** The committee investigates any reported financial irregularities or concerns raised under AECA's Whistleblower Policy. Investigations are conducted confidentially and in accordance with AECA's policies and legal obligations.

Membership

The Audit and Oversight Committee shall consist of:

- Three members selected from AECA past presidents or affiliate presidents.
- Members should possess financial literacy and experience relevant to nonprofit financial oversight.
- A chair shall be selected from the committee.

Public Policy

The Public Policy Committee is responsible for guiding AECA's advocacy efforts in support of young children, families, and the early childhood workforce. This committee develops policy positions, monitors legislative and regulatory developments, and mobilizes AECA members to engage in nonpartisan advocacy that aligns with the Association's mission and values.

Functions

The functions of the Public Policy committee include:

1. **Policy Development and Recommendations:** The committee researches and develops policy positions on issues affecting early childhood education and care in Arkansas. These positions are grounded in AECA's mission and informed by member input, professional standards, and current research. Recommendations are submitted to the Board for approval before public dissemination.
2. **Advocacy, Education, and Mobilization:** The committee coordinates efforts to educate AECA members, stakeholders, and the public about key policy issues. It promotes nonpartisan advocacy strategies such as letter-writing campaigns, public testimony, and participation in awareness events. The committee also supports member engagement in state and federal policy processes through training and resource development.
3. **Stakeholder and Policymaker Engagement:** The committee cultivates relationships with policymakers, state agencies, advocacy coalitions, and other organizations working on behalf of children and families. These relationships help amplify AECA's voice and ensure that the perspectives of early childhood professionals are represented in policy discussions.
4. **Legislative and Executive Monitoring:** The committee monitors pending legislation, executive actions, and regulatory changes that may impact AECA's programs or constituents. It provides timely updates to the Board and recommends appropriate responses or positions.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, AECA is legally permitted to engage in limited lobbying and nonpartisan advocacy but must avoid any activity that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status. Specifically:

- AECA may not support or oppose candidates for public office.

- AECA may engage in lobbying, defined as attempts to influence legislation, if it remains an insubstantial part of the organization’s overall activities.
- AECA may educate policymakers and the public about issues, legislation, and the impact of public policy on children and families.
- All advocacy efforts must be nonpartisan, issue-focused, and aligned with AECA’s charitable purpose.

Committee members must understand and respect these limitations. AECA’s Public Policy Committee operates within the boundaries of federal and state law and consults with the Executive Director and Board to ensure compliance. Any official public policy position, advocacy campaign, or public recommendation must be reviewed and approved by the AECA Board of Directors prior to release or implementation.

Membership

The Public Policy Committee shall consist of:

- One Board member (not President).
- Two members selected from AECA past presidents and affiliate presidents.
- Four AECA members with experience in advocacy and public policy.
- The Board President shall appoint the Chair of the committee.

Conference

The Conference Committee is responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing AECA’s Annual Conference and any other major convenings hosted by the Association. This committee ensures that AECA’s events reflect the organization’s mission, engage members meaningfully, and operate efficiently and professionally.

Functions

The functions of the Conference Committee include:

1. **Comprehensive Event Planning:** The committee oversees all aspects of conference planning, including theme development, venue selection and coordination, keynote speakers, workshop presentations, logistics, budgeting, vendor management, marketing, check-in, and registration. The committee works closely with venue officials to ensure that facilities meet the needs of AECA’s attendees and programming.
2. **Silent Auction Coordination:** The committee collaborates with the Development Committee to plan and execute the annual Silent Auction, which serves as a key fundraising activity. Responsibilities include securing donations, organizing auction, and promoting the event to attendees.
3. **Marketing and Outreach:** The committee develops promotional materials and outreach strategies to encourage attendance, highlight key sessions, and highlight AECA’s impact. This includes coordination with affiliate groups and AECA communications channels.

4. **Conference Budget:** The committee works with the Treasurer and Executive Director to develop and monitor the conference budget within the parameters of the overall AECA budget, ensuring responsible use of AECA's resources.

Board Approval

To maintain alignment with AECA's mission and governance standards, the Board of Directors must approve the conference theme, keynote speaker selections, and any expenditures beyond the amounts approved in the AECA budget. The committee shall present recommendations to the Board in advance of final decisions.

Membership

The Conference Committee shall consist of:

- The Board President, Treasurer, Executive Director, and Office Manager, who serve as standing members of the committee.
- Three to five additional members selected from AECA affiliate groups and the general membership.
- The Board President shall appoint the Chair of the committee.

General Committee Guidelines

1. All AECA committees will function in an advisory capacity. Committees may research, develop, and recommend policies, strategies, or actions, but final decisions must be approved by the AECA Board of Directors.
2. The Board may establish *ad hoc* committees or workgroups to address specific issues or tasks. These committees are temporary, advisory, and time-limited unless otherwise authorized. The Board will define their purpose and duration and may dissolve them at any time.
3. The Board shall periodically review the purpose, effectiveness, and composition of each committee. Committees may be eliminated or restructured by Board action to meet the changing needs of the Association.
4. Committee Meetings:
 - a. Committees shall meet at least quarterly or as often as needed to fulfill the functions of the committee, whichever is greater.
 - b. A simple majority of committee members shall constitute a quorum.
 - c. Each committee will keep a record of meetings and submit to the Board Secretary for recordkeeping.
 - d. Regardless of whether recommendations are made, committee chairs shall submit a written summary of committee actions and discussions before each Board meeting.

5. Committee Chair Responsibilities:

- a. The Chair is responsible for calling and presiding over meetings, setting agendas, and ensuring that the committee fulfills its charge.
- b. Chairs are expected to coordinate with the Executive Director and relevant staff to ensure alignment with AECA's strategic goals and operational needs.

6. Member Selection:

- a. Committees must meet the minimum membership requirements as specified in the AECA Bylaws and Policy Manual. *Except for the Governance and Audit & Oversight Committees*, additional members may be selected to participate in a non-voting capacity, provided their involvement does not present a conflict of interest or interfere with the mission and responsibilities of the committee. Non-voting members may participate in all discussions and provide advice and guidance.
- b. Other than Audit and Oversight, the Executive Director or Office & Finance Manager may serve as a non-voting, ex-officio member of any committee to provide administrative support, continuity, and coordination with AECA operations.
- c. Individuals interested in serving must complete a Committee Interest Form.
- d. Forms will be reviewed by Board members who will consider the following:
 - i. Alignment with committee needs and skill sets.
 - ii. Diverse representation across all backgrounds, levels of experience, geography, and program types.
 - iii. Commitment to AECA's mission and values.
 - iv. Availability and willingness to attend and actively participate.
 - v. The Board will approve committee assignments.
- e. Committee Members will serve one-year renewable terms, with case-by-case consideration for continuity and leadership development. Terms shall run from January 1 to December 31 except in the case of vacancies.
- f. Committee members must maintain confidentiality and sign the AECA Conflict of Interest acknowledgement.

V Board Meetings

General Meeting Information

The Board of Directors shall meet at least every other month. The Board President shall set the date, time, and format of the meeting. Meetings may also be called upon written request of at least three other members of the Board. Meetings are critical to the healthy operation of the Board. Candidates for the Board should consider if they are able to commit to at least six meetings per year. To conduct official business, Board of Director meetings must follow the quorum requirements and parliamentary procedures in the AECA Bylaws.

Voting Members	Non-Voting Board (may participate in discussions and make motions)	Non-Voting Advisors (provides feedback on discussions and advises board on local issues)
President Secretary Treasurer 2 additional board members	SECA Representative Executive Director	Advisory Council consisting of Affiliate Presidents plus any Past Presidents wishing to serve

At the first meeting each year (or at the end of the year), Voting Board Members will need to nominate and select a Secretary and Treasurer for the next year from among Board members (President and Executive Director not eligible). An Engagement Coordinator will also be selected.

VOTING: For any item requiring a vote, this will mean a show of hands or voice vote for in-person meetings; anyone on Zoom must vote in the chat. Any voting member may call for a roll call vote.

Parliamentary Procedures

The following parliamentary procedures shall be the controlling authority for meetings and conducting official business.

- A. Chairing the Meeting
- The President (or presiding officer) runs the meeting.
 - If the President is absent, the Board shall designate a presiding officer from among the current voting Board members.
 - A parliamentarian shall be appointed annually by the Board President and confirmed by the Board with a majority vote. The parliamentarian serves in an advisory capacity only on matters of parliamentary procedure and shall not

vote on board actions or take a position on discussions while serving in this role.

B. Agenda

- Prior to each meeting, the President or presiding officer will prepare and follow a simple agenda.
- The meeting agenda and supporting documents for discussion shall be sent out in advance of the meeting to participants and stakeholders.

C. Making Decisions

- Any Board member can make a motion ("I move that we...").
- Another member seconds the motion ("Second").
- The chair calls for a vote:
 - Voice vote ("All in favor?")
 - Show of hands or roll call if needed.
- A simple majority of voting members present carries the vote unless Bylaws require otherwise.

*Example: Motion: "I move that we approve the annual budget as presented."
Second: "Second."
Vote: "All in favor? Opposed? The motion carries."*

- A roll call vote may be requested by any voting member, in which case individual votes must be recorded in the meeting minutes.

D. Discussion

- Allow everyone a chance to speak but keep discussions on topic.
- The chair may limit speaking time if needed.
- No interrupting other members while they are speaking.

E. Minutes

- The Secretary (or other Board member if Secretary is absent) records:
 - Date/time
 - Who was present
 - Motions made and votes taken.
 - Key discussions (full transcripts are not required)
- Minutes are approved at the next meeting.
- Minutes should reflect the actions of the Board, including motions, seconds, votes taken, and a summary of key points of discussion. Minutes should not contain direct quotes, emotional remarks, or individual comments unless specifically requested by the President for clarity. The Secretary shall summarize discussions in a neutral and factual manner. The President or presiding officer may give direction to the Secretary regarding the level of detail appropriate for the minutes.
- Approval of previous minutes requires a motion, 2nd, and vote

F. Quorum

- A quorum is the minimum number of voting Board members required to meet.
- For a five-member Board, quorum is three voting members.
- While the SECA Representative and Executive Director may make motions and participate in discussions, they will not vote or count towards a quorum.
- In the absence of a quorum, the members present may receive reports, discuss agenda items, engage in discussion, and reach an informal consensus on non-binding matters, but no motions may be made or votes taken. Any consensus decisions shall be subject to ratification at the next meeting where a quorum is present.

AECA Board Meeting – Sample Agenda

Arkansas Early Childhood Association

Board of Directors Meeting

Date

Time:

Location / Zoom Link:

1. Call to Order

- President or Presiding Officer calls the meeting to order
- Confirm meeting is being recorded (if applicable)

2. Roll Call and Quorum Verification

- Secretary calls roll for Board members
- Confirm whether quorum is present (Note: The SECA Representative and Executive Director do not count toward quorum.)

3. Approval of the Agenda

- Motion → second → vote

4. Verbal Reports (Informational Only)

- President
- Treasurer
- Executive Director
- SECA Representative
- Any committee chair verbal reports
- Action after all reports: "I move to accept all verbal informational reports as presented."
(Motion → second → vote)

5. Consent Agenda (Written, Pre-Distributed Reports)

- The presiding officer states: "The consent agenda has been distributed. Does any voting member wish to remove an item for separate consideration?"

- Typical items included:
 - Minutes of the previous meeting
 - Written Treasurer's Report-Financial Dashboard
 - Written Committee reports
 - Routine informational items
- If no items are removed: Motion → second → vote to approve the entire consent agenda.
- If any item is removed: Consent agenda is approved minus that item, and the removed item becomes a later agenda item.

6. Action Items

- These are items that need votes. Examples would be formal recommendations from committees, new board members, committee assignments, public policy agendas, position statements, budget or audit approval, policy revisions, procurement items over \$250,000, membership items, etc.
- ACTION: Each item requires - Motion → second → discussion → vote

7. Items for Discussion

- These are items we want to have conversations on but no action vote is required. Examples would be strategic planning topics, concerns and issues, upcoming conference issues, membership trends.
- ACTION: Secretary records only a neutral summary — no quotes, no attribution.

8. Executive Session (Only if needed for sensitive topics outlined in bylaws)

- Motion to enter Executive Session → second → vote
- Only voting Board members + SECA Representative remain
- Any others, including Parliamentarian, must be explicitly invited by the President.
- There are no detailed minutes. The Secretary will only record: "The Board entered Executive Session at __:__ to discuss ____."
- No votes are taken—only discussion. Board must return to open session for a vote.

9. Announcements

- Upcoming deadlines
- Conference dates
- Committee meeting or action reminders
- Next Meeting date, time, and location

10. Adjournment

- Motion → second → vote
- Record time of adjournment

VI

Ethics and Accountability

AECA Board members, committee members, staff, and volunteers are expected to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct, including honesty, fairness, confidentiality, and respect for others. All decisions and actions shall reflect AECA's mission and values.

The NAEYC Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators outlines the responsibilities we have to colleagues. Board members and staff are expected to adhere to these ethical guidelines.

AECA maintains Conflict-of-Interest and Whistleblower policies to ensure ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability in all aspects of its operations. All Board members, affiliate leaders, employees, and authorized agents must review and sign both policies annually. Signed acknowledgments are maintained by the Board Secretary and AECA Office. These policies are reviewed annually for compliance with applicable laws and nonprofit standards.

Conflict-of-Interest

AECA maintains a Conflict-of-Interest Policy applicable to all board members, officers, and employees. All financial decisions must be made free from personal or organizational conflicts and must be disclosed in accordance with IRS and state requirements. This policy requires disclosure of any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts. The Board may, by majority vote, require recusal from deliberation or voting. Disputes over recusal are referred to the Governance Committee. If quorum cannot be achieved due to recusals, the Board may delegate decision-making on the specific issue to the Governance Committee, except in cases involving board elections, bylaws amendments, major financial decisions, or asset transfers.

Whistleblower Policy

This policy protects individuals who report misconduct, financial irregularities, or violations of law or policy. Reports are managed confidentially and investigated by the Audit and Oversight Committee or designated parties. AECA complies with federal whistleblower protection laws. Any employee or contractor who reports suspected fraud, waste, or abuse shall be protected from retaliation, in accordance with applicable federal statutes.

Media and Communications

Only the following individuals may speak on behalf of AECA:

- Board President
- Executive Director
- Individuals specifically authorized by one of the above

Committee chairs, Board members, and volunteers may discuss their work, but may **not** present their personal views as official AECA positions.

Media & Public Statements

If contacted by reporters, policymakers, partner organizations, or external stakeholders:

- Refer them to the Board President or Executive Director.
- Do not provide comments “off the record” on behalf of AECA.
- Do not release internal documents or unpublished information.

If authorized to speak on behalf of AECA to the media, individuals must:

- Ensure statements are accurate, mission-aligned, and nonpartisan
- Avoid speculation or releasing confidential information
- Consult with the Executive Director before issuing statements to news media, government officials, or statewide partner organizations
- Use only approved AECA logos, templates, and branding in accordance with the AECA Brand Guide.

Social Media Standards

(applies to Board, Advisory Council, Committees and Volunteers)

When using personal or professional social media:

1. Do not imply AECA endorsement unless you are an authorized spokesperson.
2. Make it clear when views expressed are personal (“Views are my own.”).
3. Maintain confidentiality of AECA documents, HR and financial information, internal discussions, and donor or scholarship recipient information.
4. Do not engage in political endorsements, candidate support, or partisan activity in a way that suggests AECA endorsement — consistent with IRS rules for 501(c)(3) entities.
5. Avoid posting content that could harm AECA’s reputation, relationships, or partnerships.
6. Report any misinformation circulating about AECA or any of its representatives to the Executive Director so the organization can correct or clarify officially.
7. Respect copyright, branding, and privacy rules when sharing AECA photos, videos, or materials.

Organizational Use of Social Media

AECA’s official social media accounts will be managed by staff or contractors designated by the Board President and Executive Director. All posts must:

- Support AECA’s mission
- Be nonpartisan and educational
- Follow donor-privacy expectations (no posting donor details without permission)
- Align with AECA’s public-inspection obligations under IRS rules
- Reflect AECA’s values of professionalism, equity, respect, and accuracy

Violations

Concerns about misuse of AECA’s name, logo, or social media presence will be addressed by the Executive Director and/or Board President and may be referred to the

Governance Committee for follow-up consistent with Board policy. This policy protects individuals who report misconduct, financial irregularities, or violations of law or policy. Reports are managed confidentially and investigated by the

Gift Acceptance

AECA welcomes charitable contributions that further its mission. The Board (or Conference Committee, if a silent auction item or door prize) may decline gifts that (a) are inconsistent with AECA's purpose or values, (b) impose impractical restrictions, (c) create undue financial/administrative burden, or (d) expose AECA to legal or reputational risk. The Board President and Executive Director may accept routine unrestricted gifts and sponsorships on behalf of AECA consistent with this policy.

For most gifts, AECA will provide required donor acknowledgments and, when applicable, quid pro quo disclosures to donors (e.g., sponsorships or auction purchases that include benefits) in accordance with federal tax rules.

For any endowed, restricted, or otherwise "institutional" funds, AECA will prudently manage, invest, and, when necessary, seek modification of restrictions in accordance with Arkansas's Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA).

Donor Privacy

AECA respects the privacy of its donors. AECA does not sell, rent, or trade donor contact information. Donors may request that their gifts remain anonymous in public listings, where permitted by law. AECA will make available its IRS determination letter and its three most recent Forms 990 in accordance with 26 U.S.C. § 6104; however, donor names/addresses listed on Schedule B are not disclosed in the public-inspection copy (except where federal law requires disclosure, such as certain private foundations).

AECA maintains reasonable administrative, physical, and technical safeguards to protect donor information and will honor donor communication preferences (recognition listings, mail/email opt-outs, and restrictions on public attribution).

VII

Document Security and Retention Schedule

All official documents shall be retained in accordance with the retention schedule prescribed by the Internal Revenue Service, other federal law, Arkansas non-profit law, and grant funder requirements. The schedule shall be reviewed periodically for compliance with applicable laws and funder requirements.

1. Permanent Records (keep forever)

- a. Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, amendments
- b. Board and committee minutes and resolutions
- c. IRS determination letter
- d. Audited financial statements
- e. Property deeds, mortgages, trademarks/copyrights

2. Financial & Tax Records

- a. Tax returns (990 series) – permanent
- b. Supporting financial documents – 7 years
- c. Payroll tax records – 4 years
- d. Asset/depreciation records – life of asset + 7 years

3. Employment & Human Resources Records

- a. Personnel files – 7 years after termination
- b. I-9 forms – 3 years after hire or 1 year after termination, whichever later
- c. EEO/ADA/ADEA hiring records – 1 year

4. Governance & Legal

- a. Policies (conflict of interest, whistleblower, retention) – permanent
- b. Contracts and leases – 7 years after expiration
- c. Insurance policies – permanent

5. Fundraising & Program Records

- a. Donor acknowledgment and gift documentation – 7 years (permanent for endowed restrictions)
- b. Grant files – see clause below

6. Grant Records

For Federal awards, AECA will retain records at least 3 years from submission of the final Federal Financial Report (with exceptions for litigation, equipment, indirect cost proposals, and program income), per **2 CFR 200.334**. AECA's internal standard of seven (7) years continues to apply where longer. In the absence of explicit written retention requirements from a grantor, all grant-related documents—including applications, award notifications, budgets, financial reports, performance reports, correspondence, amendments, and close-out documents not otherwise addressed in

this schedule—shall be retained for seven (7) years following the end of the grant period or final close-out.

Method of Discarding Documents After Retention Period	
Document Type	Shred/Trash?
Donor lists with contact info	Shred
Employee files	Shred
Bank statements/canceled checks	Shred
Old brochures/flyers	Trash/Recycling
Blank forms	Trash/Recycling
Board minutes with confidential matters	Shred
Tax returns (after retention period)	Shred
Unlabeled agendas (no notes or names)	Trash/Recycling
Program/client records	Shred

7. Electronic Records

- a. *Primary System of Record:* SharePoint Online is the organization’s *official* system of record for electronic files. Staff should store final versions of organizational documents in SharePoint whenever practical to ensure appropriate retention, access control, audit logging, and long-term availability.
- b. *Local Storage by Remote Employees:* Because the organization operates in a remote environment, employees *may* temporarily store work files on their local computers when necessary for daily operations. However, when local storage is used, employees must follow all cybersecurity requirements in this policy manual to protect records containing organizational, financial, donor, programmatic, HR, or participant information.
- c. *Transfer to SharePoint:* Whenever practical, employees should move final or long-term records from local storage into the SharePoint system of record. Temporary local copies should be deleted once the official version is stored securely.
- d. *Secure Destruction of Local Files:* When local files containing sensitive information are no longer needed, employees must delete them using secure, irreversible deletion methods (not simply sending them to the computer’s trash folder). A permanent digital shredder using Bitdefender or other internet security system should be utilized.

VIII Financial Procedures and Internal Controls

Accounts Receivable and Deposits

1. Mail Collection and Processing of Deposits:
 - a. Checks mailed to AECA are collected from the PO Box once or twice per week by the Executive Director or Office Manager.
 - b. Each check is photographed, and the images are sent to the Office Manager.
 - c. The purpose of each payment is identified, and the check is stamped with the appropriate bank account deposit stamp.
 - d. Checks are then deposited into the appropriate AECA bank account.
 - e. A screenshot of the deposit receipt is sent to the Office Manager to verify and match against the original check image.
2. Data Entry and Recordkeeping:
 - a. The Office Manager enters:
 - Deposits into the accounting system.
 - Membership payments in the AECA membership database.
 - Scholarship co-payments into the scholarship database.
 - b. At the end of each month, deposit records are reconciled with the monthly bank statement.
3. Payment Types and Sources:
 - a. Membership Dues may be paid by check or online via the membership portal. Electronic payments are automatically deposited into the Operations Account.
 - b. AECA Conference Payments, including registration fees and vendor/exhibit fees, may be received by mail and deposited or via ACH direct deposit into the General Operations Account.
 - c. TEACH Scholarship Payments:
 - Subgrant funding is received via direct deposit from the federal passthrough entity following invoice submission.
 - Participants will pay scholarship co-pays by check or online through the merchant web portal.
 - All credits to TEACH shall be deposited into that bank account.

Accounts Payable and Payment Procedures

1. General Guidelines:
 - a. Positive Pay: AECA uses Positive Pay to match presented checks against the authorized check list to prevent check fraud.
 - b. Check & ACH Processing: Checks are entered and printed through the accounting system. ACH may be used for short-deadline or vendor-required payments with written justification (e.g., invoice).

- c. Handwritten Checks: Handwritten checks are allowed only with prior written approval from the Board President or Treasurer.
 - d. Bank Review: Bank software is used to track and approve all checks.
 - e. Scholarship Deadlines: Scholarship check requests must be submitted and approved by close of business Wednesday unless the Office Manager provides alternative notice.
 - f. Check writing Schedule: Checks are normally issued on Thursdays. The Office Manager will inform the Executive Director in writing of any schedule changes; urgent or planned-absence exceptions may be made.
 - g. Positive Pay Upload: On Thursday, the Office Manager uploads the weekly check list to Positive Pay and sends a copy (including ACH transactions) to the Executive Director or, if unavailable, the Board President or Treasurer.
 - h. Signature Stamps must be stored in a locked drawer when not in use.
 - i. Approval Documentation: Required written approvals may include digitally signed check requests, AECA email correspondence, or Microsoft Teams messages from authorized individuals.
2. Invoices:
- a. Invoice Intake: Invoices are scanned and emailed to the Office Manager (or forwarded if received by email).
 - b. Coding Instructions: The Executive Director emails the Office Manager with the purpose of the expense and the correct ledger coding.
 - c. Payment Processing: On check writing day, the Office Manager processes payments in the accounting system and issues them by mail or ACH.
 - d. Approvals: All invoices must be approved in accordance with AECA's Procurement and Reimbursement procedures.
3. Scholarship Expenses:
- a. After verifying submitted documentation, the Administrative Assistant enters the scholarship claim into the scholarship database.
 - b. The Office Manager reviews/approves claim, and issues check request.
 - c. The Executive Director signs check request and sends to Office Manager.
 - d. The Office Manager then writes and mails the check or sends via ACH.
 - e. Check requests for tuition and fees may be sent directly to AECA's foundation funder for disbursement to colleges. If this is the case, the foundation will confirm checks have been written and send the check number to the Office Manager to document in the scholarship database.
4. Apprenticeship Payments:
- a. Mentor agencies and independent mentors shall submit invoices using an approved expense form.
 - b. Mentors must itemize:
 - 1. Travel expenses (mileage × reimbursement rate)
 - 2. Hours worked, broken into:
 - a. Onsite visit time
 - b. Travel time
 - c. Report/preparation time

- c. Mentors are paid at a designated hourly rate. Rate may vary depending on number of apprentices assigned.
 - d. The Executive Director compares expense reports to visit logs. If approved, the report is signed and forwarded to the Office Manager and Apprenticeship Coordinator.
 - e. Apprenticeship payments to participants (scholars, programs) follow the procedures listed in #3 above.
 - f. The Office Manager issues the payment or reimbursement check.
 - g. TEACH Advisory Committee shall review procedures and mentor payments annually.
5. Documentation for Reconciliation and Audit:
- a. All expenses must be supported by:
 - i. Invoices or agreements (MOA, MOU, etc.) or
 - ii. Receipts for any credit/debit transactions
 - b. Credit/debit transactions are governed by the same procurement limits as transactions paid by check or ACH.
 - c. Receipts may be maintained in a locked file drawer or digitally on a secure drive or secure SharePoint folder for submission to the auditor if requested.
 - d. Retention: All audit documentation shall be retained for at least seven (7) years.
6. Backup Approval:
- a. If the Executive Director is unavailable for more than one (1) week, the Board President or Treasurer will serve as the backup to maintain internal controls.
 - b. If the Office Manager is unavailable for more than one (1) week, the Executive Director shall write any checks needed and the AECA Board President or Treasurer will serve as a second approval.

Procurement

Procurement is the purchase of goods or services from a vendor. Procurement guidelines for federal grant subrecipients are outlined in Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200). Micro-purchases and small (simplified acquisition threshold) purchases are conducted in accordance with 2 CFR 200.320(a) and the definitions in 2 CFR 200.1, which incorporate the micro-purchase and simplified acquisition thresholds referenced in FAR 2.101.

Procurement documentation must be retained for a minimum of seven (7) years in accordance with audit documentation policy.

AECA shall follow the following procurement guidelines which are consistent with Uniform Guidance:

Category	Amount	Requirements
1	\$0-5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Micro-purchase ○ Supported by receipt, invoice, agreement, or expense report. (AECA's internal threshold for requiring a purchase order is \$5,001.) ○ To the maximum extent practicable, AECA will distribute micro-purchases equitably among qualified suppliers. ○ No competitive quotations are required; however, AECA must document that the price is reasonable based on research, experience, purchase history, or other information.
2	\$5,001-\$15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Micro-purchase using AECA's threshold (up to \$15,000). ○ Purchase requisition completed containing the vendor, item(s) and price signed off by the Office Manager and Executive Director or backup authority. ○ Other applicable paperwork requirements in Category 1.
3	\$15,001-\$250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deemed to be a small purchase (SAT). ○ AECA will obtain quotations at least two qualified sources. When two or more quotes cannot reasonably be obtained, staff must document the attempts made and the reason fewer quotes were available or proceed under the noncompetitive procurement provisions when applicable. ○ Both price and value must be considered in the selection of the vendor. Justification must be documented. ○ Other applicable requirements in Categories 1-2.
4	Above \$250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For procurements above the simplified acquisition threshold, AECA will use a formal procurement method, either sealed bids (IFB) or competitive proposals (RFP), as appropriate under 2 CFR 200.320(b). ○ AECA will prepare an independent estimate before soliciting bids or proposals and will perform a cost or price analysis. When there is no price competition, AECA will negotiate profit as a separate element of the contract price. (2 CFR 200.324) ○ Proposals shall be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Publicly advertised and include all evaluation factors; ▶ Solicited from at least two qualified sources; ▶ Technically evaluated using a written method; and ▶ Awarded based on most responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous using price and other factors. ○ Award shall be taken to the Board for final approval. ○ Other applicable requirements in Categories 1-3.
5	Non-competitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Criteria for allowing non-competitive procurement: <i>(one or more must apply)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The item is available only from a sole source;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Public exigency or emergency for the requirement will not permit a delay resulting from a competitive solicitation; ▶ Funder expressly authorizes a noncompetitive procurement in response to a written request from the subrecipient (AECA); or ▶ After solicitation of a number of sources, competition is determined inadequate. ▶ Written documentation of criteria is required and must be maintained for audit purposes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Written approval from the funder, as specified above, must include the reasons for pursuing noncompetitive procurement. ○ Other applicable requirements in Categories 1-4.
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Other Guidelines

- Procurement standards cover “acquisition of property or services” under 2 CFR 200.317–200.327.
- Routine costs (such as compensation, fringe, rent, utilities, maintenance, travel, and basic facility expenses) and program payments (scholarships, stipends) are addressed in Cost Principles—Subpart E (2 CFR §§ 200.400 through 200.476), not in procurement.
- All procurement transactions will be conducted to provide full and open competition. AECA will not divide or artificially split procurements to avoid competition requirements or to remain under any monetary threshold
- To the greatest extent practicable and consistent with law, AECA will provide a preference for the purchase, acquisition, or use of goods, products, or materials produced in the United States. This requirement will be included in all solicitations, contracts, and subawards.
- Before awarding any contract, AECA will verify that the vendor is not suspended or debarred by checking the System for Award Management (SAM.gov), as required by 2 CFR 200.214 and 2 CFR part 180.
- AECA will include all contract provisions required by 2 CFR Part 200, Appendix II in every contract issued under a federal award, applying the clauses that correspond to the contract type and dollar amount.

Travel

This travel policy applies to all AECA employees, board members, contractors, and other authorized representatives whose travel is paid for or reimbursed by AECA. All travel costs must comply with this policy and with the requirements of 2 CFR 200.475, including required documentation showing necessity to any Federal grant charged and the reasonableness of such charges.

1. Mileage and Transportation

- a. **Reimbursement Rate:** The mileage reimbursement rate will be set annually and listed on the expense report. The rate shall be reviewed whenever the IRS reimbursement rate is changed.
- b. **Mileage Calculation:** Mileage will be reimbursed based on the number of miles driven for official AECA business using the most direct and reasonable route between the points of travel. Authorized travelers must document the starting point, destination, and total miles claimed. AECA may independently verify mileage if there is any question.
- c. **Shared Travel:** In the event two or more authorized persons travel in the same vehicle, only one traveler may claim mileage reimbursement.
- d. **Airfare Paid by AECA:** AECA may directly pay airfare for approved travel, but there may be fees employee must pay and request reimbursement.
- e. **Airfare Paid by Employee:** If employee pays for airfare out of pocket, AECA will reimburse the actual cost of a regular round-trip ticket, taxes, reasonable baggage fees, transportation to/from the airport or the long-term airport parking rate. Receipts are required.
- f. **Personal Vehicle Use – Liability:** Authorized travelers may use their personal vehicles for AECA business when required or approved. Personal automobile insurance is the primary and sole coverage for any accident, damage, liability, or loss involving a personal vehicle. AECA does not provide, purchase, or reimburse for business-use auto insurance, vehicle repairs, or any other costs related to operating or insuring a personal vehicle. Authorized travelers are responsible for ensuring their personal auto insurance meets state legal requirements. If their insurer requires “business use” coverage, it is the traveler’s responsibility to obtain it. This provision does not affect any rights under workers’ compensation laws for injuries occurring while performing official job duties.
- g. **Uber/Lyft/Taxi:** Reimbursable for out-of-state travel with receipts.
- h. **Personal Vehicle Use In lieu of Air Travel:** If an employee, board member, or other authorized representative chooses to drive a personal vehicle for out-of-state travel when air travel would be more cost-effective, AECA will reimburse mileage and related travel costs up to the total cost of reasonable air travel. This includes the cost of standard round-trip airfare, reasonable baggage fees, airport parking, and ground transportation. The employee must provide documentation (e.g., airfare quote) to establish the comparative cost.

2. Hotel

Whenever possible, authorized travelers should stay at the designated conference hotel using the group rate. If an official conference hotel or group rate is unavailable, authorized travelers should select a hotel using the following criteria:

- a. **Safety First**
 - Lodging must be in a safe, well-lit area with secure access.
 - Authorized travelers should prioritize hotels with interior room access (e.g., no exterior-facing doors) and 24-hour front desk service.
 - Consider proximity to the conference venue or work site to minimize travel in unfamiliar areas.
- b. **Reasonable Cost**
 - Lodging should be reasonably priced relative to the conference hotel rate, the location, and seasonal market conditions.
 - Authorized travelers should select a hotel that balances safety, proximity, and cost. Hotel class or brand is not the determining factor; reasonableness and safety are.
 - Negotiated conference or corporate rates should be used when available.
- c. **Discretion and Documentation**
 - Authorized travelers have discretion to choose a hotel that meets both safety and budget guidelines.
 - If a higher-cost hotel is selected due to safety concerns, a brief explanation should be included with the travel request.
- d. **Booking, Approval and Incidentals**
 - Whenever possible, hotel reservations should be made in advance and reviewed by the Office Manager or Executive Director to ensure compliance with policy.
 - If employee reserves the hotel that is approved, they will submit a copy of their confirmation to the Office Manager who, in most cases, can arrange a direct bill with the hotel.
 - If employee pays for hotel out of pocket, they will submit their paid receipt with the expense form. For audit purposes, receipt must show a balance of zero. Confirmations or estimates cannot be accepted
 - Authorized travelers will need to provide a credit/debit card for incidentals. Incidentals may be reimbursable except for any personal items.

3. Meals

- a. **Standard Reimbursement:** Authorized travelers will be reimbursed up to the daily GSA per diem rate for the location. Rates are located on the GSA website.
- b. **High-Cost Area Exception:** If the travel location is in a high-cost area where the standard GSA rate is insufficient to cover reasonable meal expenses, the Executive Director or Board President may authorize an exception in writing which should be filed with the expense report and retained for audit purposes.
- c. **First and Last Day of Travel:** Reimbursement is limited to 75% of the daily per diem rate on the first and last day of travel, in accordance with GSA guidelines.

- d. When claiming per diem, **receipts** are not required for meals.
- e. **Meal Delivery Services:** Use of services like Uber Eats or DoorDash is permitted when dining out is not feasible or safe. These costs must still fall within the per diem or authorized limit.
- f. **Alcohol** is not reimbursable.
- g. **Combining Meals:** Authorized travelers may allocate the daily per diem across meals as needed, but the total reimbursement may not exceed daily limit.

4. Conference Registration

AECA supports professional development by covering the cost of reasonable registration fees for approved conferences, workshops, and trainings that align with the organization's mission and the employee's role.

- a. **Pre-Approval Required:** All conference attendance must be pre-approved by the Executive Director or designated supervisor.
- b. **Registration Process:** Whenever possible, AECA will register authorized travelers directly and pay the registration fee in advance. If an employee must register and pay out of pocket, prior approval is required, and reimbursement will be provided with a receipt.
- c. **Pre-Conference Sessions:** Authorized travelers must submit any pre-conference session selections or add-ons for approval before registration is completed.
- d. **Reasonable Costs:** AECA will cover standard registration fees. Premium options (e.g., VIP access, gala dinners, or merchandise) are not reimbursable unless specifically approved.
- e. **Cancellations/Substitutions:** If an employee is unable to attend after registration, they must notify the Office Manager or Executive Director immediately. AECA will attempt to transfer the registration or request a refund when possible.
- f. **Documentation:** For audit purposes, authorized travelers must provide documentation confirming attendance (e.g., name badge, completion certificate, agenda with check-in record, or similar proof).

5. Expense Reports

- a. **Submission Deadline:** Authorized travelers must submit expense reports within 10 business days of returning from travel.
- b. **Required Form:** All expenses must be submitted using the official AECA Expense Report Form.
- c. **Trip Details:** Reports must include the dates, purpose, and location of the trip or event.

- d. **Prepaid Items:** Travelers must indicate which expenses were prepaid by AECA.
- e. **Receipts:** Itemized receipts are required for all expenses except meals reimbursed via per diem.
- f. **Mileage:** Mileage claims must include the starting point, destination, and total miles claimed. AECA may verify mileage using a mapping tool.
- g. **Hotel Documentation:** Travelers must provide a zero-balance hotel receipt showing full payment, even when prepaid.
- h. **Conference Attendance:** For conferences, travelers must include documentation of attendance (e.g., name tag, completion certificate, or similar proof).
- i. **Certification:** Travelers must sign and date the expense report, certifying that expenses are accurate and comply with AECA policy.
- j. **Submission & Approval:** Expense reports must be submitted to the Office Manager, who forwards them to the Executive Director or President for approval.
- k. **Payment:** After approval, the Office Manager processes payment according to AECA's Accounts Payable / Payment Procedures. Reimbursement may be issued by manual check or electronic payment (e.g., PayPal).

Payroll and Benefits

AECA charges salary, wages, and related payroll costs to Federal awards in accordance with 2 CFR 200.430. All payroll costs must reflect the actual work performed, be supported by complete and accurate time-and-effort records and follow AECA's established payroll and internal control procedures.

1. Payroll Schedule

- a. **Payroll periods:** 1st-15th and 16th-last day of the month
- b. **Pay Dates:** 10th and 24th of each month
- c. If pay date falls on a weekend or holiday, payroll will be issued on the preceding business day.

2. Timesheet Submission and Approval

- a. On the first day of each new payroll period, employees will submit completed timesheets for the previous period to the Office Manager.
- b. The Office Manager verifies hours and matches them with scheduled hours.
- c. Timesheets are submitted to the Executive Director for review and approval.
- d. The Office Manager also tracks and approves time off manually.

3. Payroll Preparation

- a. One week prior to each payroll date, the Executive Director submits a timesheet summary to the payroll processor.
- b. This summary includes hours worked, wages, paid time off and benefit deductions.

4. Payroll Processing and Approval

- a. Payroll processor sends a final report to Executive Director for approval.
- b. Upon approval, the processor submits payroll for payment via ACH.

5. Payroll Reporting and Year-End Processing

- a. Final payroll reports are sent to the Office Manager on each payroll date.
- b. The payroll processor prepares and distributes:
 - W-2 statements for employees
 - W-3 summary reports for tax preparers and the IRS
 - Treasurer shall receive a copy of the W-3 each year to ensure compliance with budget.

6. 403(b) Contributions

After receiving the final payroll report, the Executive Director or Office Manager submits a contribution report to the 403(b) Plan Administrator to document deposits into individual employee accounts.

Financial Oversight

1. Budgeting

- a. The Board Treasurer shall prepare an annual budget in collaboration with the Executive Director.
- b. Anticipated expenditures for the entire Association must be included in the annual budget.
- c. The annual operating budget must be presented in a format that is clear, understandable, and aligned with AECA's programmatic structure and mission.
- d. All budget line items must be clearly labeled to reflect their purpose, funding source (if applicable), and associated program area.
- e. The budget should allow for easy identification of expenditures by category and support accurate financial reporting and compliance with 2 CFR Part 200.
- f. Prior to the start of the fiscal year, the Board Treasurer must present the budget to the full Board for approval.

2. Monthly Review

- a. Within 30 days from the end of the month, the Board Treasurer shall receive the following information: ending balances for all accounts, the income statement, and the balance sheet.
- b. Board Treasurer shall review all materials for adherence to the budget.
- c. In addition, snapshots of key financial indicators, including actual vs. budget, shall be provided to the Board members.

- d. Individual procurement awards of over \$250,000 must be approved by the Board even if included in the budget.

3. Audit and Oversight

AECA seeks to maintain strong financial accountability and may elect to obtain an annual independent financial audit when beneficial for governance, transparency, or grant-funding purposes.

AECA understands that Arkansas law permits the Arkansas Division of Legislative Audit to audit any nonprofit that receives state financial assistance, including federal funds passed through a state agency, in accordance with Ark. Code § 4-28-104. AECA will cooperate fully with any such audit.

If AECA expends \$1,000,000 or more in Federal funds during a fiscal year, AECA will obtain a Single Audit in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart F. In years when a Single Audit is not required, AECA will determine whether an independent audit is needed based on funder requirements, state or federal monitoring requirements, and available resources.

Purview of the Audit/Oversight Committee

- a. The Audit/Oversight committee shall:
 - Ensure AECA maintains effective internal controls;
 - Complies with 2 CFR Part 200;
 - Monitors contractors as applicable; and
 - Approves the auditor and tax preparer.
- b. This committee shall also review year-end financials, risk assessments, conflict of interest disclosures, and any findings from audits or monitoring activities.
- c. These functions shall remain separate from budgeting and monthly review.
- d. Access to specific documents and bank statements are available to Board members on demand via SharePoint.

4. Selection of Independent Auditor

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear governance, procurement, and oversight procedures for the selection of an independent auditor for AECA, in compliance with Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200). AECA receives federal funds as a subgrantee of CCDF pass-through funding and is therefore subject to Uniform Guidance procurement and audit requirements.

The Audit and Oversight Committee of the Board of Directors is responsible for overseeing and approving the selection of AECA's independent auditor and for maintaining an effective working relationship with the auditor on behalf of the Board. The Board of Directors retains final authority to appoint an independent auditor. The objective of procuring audit services is to obtain a high-quality, independent audit that meets federal and state compliance requirements.

a. **Overview of Process**

1. The Audit and Oversight Committee shall approve the recommended selection of the independent auditor and submit that recommendation to the Board of Directors for final approval.
2. The auditor shall be independent and free from conflicts of interest.
3. The selection of an auditor shall be conducted as a procurement action and shall follow AECA's procurement policies and Uniform Guidance requirements.
4. The auditor shall report audit results, findings, and recommendations to management and the Audit and Oversight Committee and be available to present findings to the Board of Directors if requested.

b. **Conflict of Interest Safeguards**

1. The audit firm shall not have employed AECA's Executive Director or Office & Finance Manager within the three years preceding the audit.
2. No member of the Board of Directors or Audit and Oversight Committee may be employed by the selected audit firm.
3. Any non-audit services provided by the audit firm must be permitted under professional standards and approved in advance by the Audit and Oversight Committee.
4. Currently permitted non-audit service:
Preparation and filing of AECA's annual IRS Form 990

c. **Auditor Term and Rotation**

1. Solicitation of proposals does not require a change in auditors but provides an opportunity to assess audit quality, service levels, and fees.
2. AECA may engage an audit firm under a multi-year contract, typically structured as a one-year agreement with annual renewal options for up to seven years, subject to periodic procurement review and satisfactory performance.
3. The current auditor shall be invited to respond to a solicitation unless the Audit and Oversight Committee or management determines that a change is warranted.
4. For any firm engaged for 5 or more years, the engagement partner (or equivalent) on AECA's audit shall **rotate**, where practicable for firms of sufficient size, to preserve independence in fact and appearance.

d. **Auditor Selection Process**

The Office & Finance Manager is responsible for coordinating the auditor selection process every three to seven years, in collaboration with the Executive Director and Audit and Oversight Committee. The goals of the process are to engage an audit firm that:

- Demonstrates knowledge of Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200) and nonprofit audit requirements
- Has experience auditing federally funded nonprofit organizations,

including subrecipients

- Maintains strong quality control and peer review results
- Can meet AECA's reporting timelines and communication expectations
- Steps in Selection:
 1. A Request for Proposals (RFP) shall be issued in accordance with AECA's procurement policies, if required.
 2. The Office & Finance Manager may meet with prospective firms to clarify proposals.
 3. Copies of all proposals shall be provided to the Audit and Oversight Committee.
 4. Management shall conduct an initial screening and present up to three finalists to the Committee.
 5. The Audit and Oversight Committee shall interview finalist firms, as appropriate.
 6. The Committee shall select a preferred firm and recommend it to the Board of Directors.
 7. The Board of Directors shall approve the selection by majority vote.

e. **Auditor Qualifications (RFP Considerations)**

The following information may be requested and evaluated during the selection process:

1. Auditor independence
2. Firm and staff technical expertise
3. Results of the most recent peer review
4. Experience with federally funded nonprofit organizations
5. Qualifications and continuity of assigned staff
6. Ability to meet deadlines and deliverables
7. Responsiveness to RFP requirements
8. Continuing professional education practices
9. Availability of technical resources
10. Use of subcontractors or non-employees
11. Non-audit (tax) expertise
12. Fee structure and billing practices
13. Verification that the selected firm and key personnel are not suspended or debarred by checking the federal exclusions list in SAM.gov and keep evidence of the check in the procurement file.

f. **Audit Reporting and Oversight**

The selected audit firm shall annually present:

- The audited financial statements
- The management letter
- Any findings, questioned costs, or compliance issues to the Executive Director and the Audit and Oversight Committee, and to the Board of Directors upon request.

IX Cybersecurity and Data Protection

AECA shall implement reasonable cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive financial and personal data, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.303(e). At a minimum, these measures shall include:

- Secure access controls;
- Encrypted storage of financial records; and
- Annual staff training on data security.

AECA Electronic Devices and Files

- a. Lock computers when unattended and enable automatic screen-lock timeouts.
- b. Use strong, unique passwords and **never** share passwords with anyone.
- c. Use organization-managed devices or organization-approved security settings.
- d. Keep antivirus/endpoint protection enabled and up to date.
- e. Store sensitive files only in locations protected by device encryption (SharePoint).
- f. Be trained to identify and report suspected phishing or suspicious emails.
- g. Immediately report any suspected security incident or data breach.

Prohibited Storage Locations

These locations lack required privacy and security controls under federal law for protecting PII and PHI and are not approved for use by AECA.

- a. Personal cloud storage (Google Drive personal accounts, Dropbox personal, iCloud, etc.)
- b. Personal email accounts
- c. Shared family computers
- d. USB drives or external hard drives without encryption
If you need an encrypted USB drive for presentations, please request one from the Office Manager or Executive Director. You must have permission from the Executive Director before transporting any other data other than conference presentations and handouts.

X

Annual Awards, Honors and Distinctions

Kathy Stegall Emerging Leader Award

The Kathy Stegall Emerging Leader Award recognizes newer members of the organization who are already making a significant contribution to the Arkansas Early Childhood Association and to the field of early care and education and/or youth development in Arkansas and have demonstrated the potential for leadership and continuing service to the organization and to the field.

Criteria for consideration

- Has been a member in good standing of AECA for a minimum of 3 years
- Has been in the field of early care and education and/or youth development in Arkansas for a minimum of 3 years
- Has not received the award previously

The next five sections (A-E) will provide guidelines to support your nomination. Each section includes examples of what would meet the criteria, but this is not an all-encompassing list. While you do not have to have documentation on each criterion, you will need to make sure all the required supporting documentation as requested below is submitted for review.

A. Has made a significant contribution to AECA

- Submitted proposals and presented workshops at one or more conferences
- Assumed responsibility for a conference event or other event sponsored by AECA
- Served on AECA Board or an AECA Committee
- Submitted article(s) for *AECA Update*
- Active in a local affiliate by serving as an officer and/or presenting programs
- Represented AECA at the SECA Conference by attending, by presenting a workshop session, or by volunteering for a conference task

B. Has made a significant contribution to the field of early care and education and/or youth development

- Is creative and innovative in the execution and expansion of job responsibilities
- Is a registered trainer in the professional development system in Arkansas and has conducted numerous trainings

C. Demonstrates the potential for leadership

- Has run for AECA office if asked or encouraged
- Volunteers to take a lead role in an AECA or local affiliate event
- Carries through with roles and responsibilities
- Establishes events for families in his/her local program or community

- Plans events to celebrate Arkansas Children’s Week at either the state or local level
- Has led an advocacy event

D. Demonstrates the potential for continuing service in the field of early care and education and/or youth development

- Participates in professional development activities above required level
- Is recognized for his/her achievements by peers, colleagues, members of AECA and other professional groups

E. Promotes and supports others in their professional growth and development

- Is available to others when they need support and encouragement in their professional development
- Involves others in activities and events of AECA and/or local affiliates and in other professional organizations
- Gives accolades to others for their achievements

Supporting Documentation

1. Description of the nominee’s significant professional achievements
2. Assessment of the nominee’s potential for leadership and continued excellence

To show that the above criteria have been met, please include the following information:

- Accomplishments: Describe the nature and quality of the nominee’s work, noting special achievements, innovation, initiative, and demonstration of leadership
- Service: Describe the nominee’s service to AECA and other professional associations, evidence of professional leadership roles, and significant contributions
- Visibility and Recognition: Describe the extent to which others (peers, colleagues, members, etc.) recognize the nominee’s achievements.
- Major Current Undertakings: Describe work and other activities in which the nominee is currently engaged that indicate career growth and demonstrate significant potential.

Board Members: Please consider the following.

- All contact information for the nominee, including email and telephone
- Letters of support to be submitted with the nomination
- Nominee’s resume or curriculum vitae
- Contact information for the person making the nomination

Those making nominations must submit all required information by September 1 of each year. The award winner will be announced during the General Session at the Annual Conference.

Outstanding AECA Member Award

The Outstanding AECA Member Award honors an individual whose long-standing commitment, leadership, and active engagement have significantly advanced the mission of AECA and the field of early childhood education in Arkansas. This award recognizes a member who exemplifies dedication through years of service, meaningful contributions at both the local and state levels, and a deep understanding of AECA's goals and values.

Criteria for consideration

- Has been a member in good standing of AECA for a minimum of five years
- Has shown active leadership in both the local and state organizations
- Has been actively engaged in early childhood activities in Arkansas
- Has a record of interest and participation in activities of AECA and demonstrates a knowledge of AECA aims and objectives
- Is nominated by a local affiliate or by a current AECA member by the deadline stated in the request for nominations. A nomination from an affiliate must be signed by the affiliate President.
- Cannot be a current member of the AECA Board

Those making the nomination must submit information on the nominee, including name, contact information, brief description of their current work and then a narrative addressing all the criteria above.

Information must be received by September 1 of each year. The award winner will be announced during the General Session at the Annual Conference.

The Dot Brown Memorial Keynote Address

The Dot Brown Memorial Keynote Address is presented annually at the AECA Conference in honor of Dorothy “Dot” Fay Brown (1932–2025), a pioneering leader, mentor, and advocate whose legacy continues to shape early childhood education in Arkansas and beyond. A former AECA president, curriculum developer, and founder of Early Childhood Services, Inc., Dot dedicated her life to advancing high-quality early learning, mentoring educators, and generously supporting AECA's mission.

Dot's work included co-authoring the Adventures in Learning and Adventures for Toddlers curricula—resources she made freely available to programs across the state. She played a foundational role in developing the Arkansas Early Childhood Framework (now CDELS), served on numerous boards and committees, and was a guiding force behind the professionalization of early childhood education in Arkansas. Though she never sought recognition, her impact is enduring and deeply felt.

This keynote honors Dot's spirit by featuring a speaker whose work reflects her values: excellence in early childhood education, a commitment to equity and access, and a heart for service and mentorship.

Criteria for consideration

The selected keynote speaker must:

- Have a history of sustained and meaningful impact on the field of early childhood education, particularly in Arkansas or the Southern region.
- Embody the values of mentorship, generosity, and service that defined Dot's life and work.
- Be a compelling and inspiring communicator who can speak to the heart of AECA's mission.
- Offer insights that challenge, uplift, and energize early childhood professionals.

Nominations for this keynote will come to the Conference Committee who will make a recommendation to the full Board of Directors with input from those who knew Dot and worked closely with her to ensure her legacy is honored. Memorials may be made for the express purpose of supporting this annual keynote in Dot's memory.

Scholarship to the SECA Conference

Each year the proceeds from The Dot Brown Memorial Silent Auction at the Annual Conference will go to support a scholarship to the annual SECA conference. The scholarship will include conference registration, conference hotel room and tax, and round-trip transportation.

Dot believed deeply in the power of learning communities and the importance of lifting others up. This scholarship continues her legacy by helping an AECA member grow professionally, connect with peers across the region, and bring innovative ideas and inspiration back to Arkansas.

Consideration will be given to the following members:

- Be a current AECA member in good standing.
- Demonstrate a commitment to early childhood education in Arkansas.
- Show evidence of financial need that would otherwise prevent attendance at the SECA Conference.
- Be willing to share insights or reflections from the SECA Conference with AECA members (e.g., through a newsletter article, blog post, or brief presentation).

The recipient will be selected by the AECA Board of Directors in collaboration with the Conference Committee and will be announced during the General Session at the AECA Annual Conference. In selecting recipients, AECA shall reflect the diversity of its membership by considering a range of backgrounds, program types, geographic regions, and levels of experience.