

Texas AER Policies and Procedures Manual

Purposes:

The Texas AER (TAER) Policies and Procedures Manual shall be a working document, and as such, any section or portion may be continuously revised by a majority vote of the TAER Board of Directors. Policies and Procedures describe this organization's guidelines for operations and the actions necessary to fulfill or carry out the bylaws. The revised Policy and Procedures shall be posted to the TAER website, with an e-mail notice sent to Chapter members

SECTION 1: Board of Directors and officers

Members of the Board of Directors have duties and responsibilities established according to the Bylaws of TAER. Additional duties have been developed through Policy and Procedures. TAER will make a good-faith effort to have all areas of AER represented.

1.1 DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1.1.1 President:

Duties of the president are outlined in the TAER By-Laws Revised 2021, section 4.5.1

- Additional Duties:
 - will contact the AER office to find out who the AER District 2 and the CCCP (Council of Chapter Presidents) representatives are and their roles.
 - President shall report the chapter's activities for the year during the annual state conference
 - President (along with Conference Chair - past president) and communicate with the webmaster all updates to the website.
 - will install and train newly elected board of directors on roles and responsibilities at the first meeting after elections.

1.1.2 President-Elect:

Duties of the president are outlined in the TAER By-Laws Revised 2021, section 4.5.2

- Additional Duties:
 - President-Elect review the By-Laws and P&P with committee members and newly elected officers.
 - Shall assume other duties as assigned by the President.

1.1.3: Past-President

Duties of the president are outlined in the TAER By-Laws Revised 2021, section 4.5.3

- Additional Duties:
 - Shall work with the President and President-Elect on conference programming and vendors
 - Conference Chair - past president (along with President) shall communicate with the webmaster all updates to the website.
 - Shall assume other duties as assigned by the President

1.1.4 Treasurer I and II

- Additional Duties
 - Treasurer I shall be considered the senior treasurer. Upon completion of the treasurer's term, Treasurer II shall move up to Treasurer I.

1.1.5 Secretary

- Additional Duties
 - will present the current business meeting notes at the 1st TAER board of directors meeting for review and will post to the website the revised minutes for membership review after that 1st board of directors meeting.
 - Contact information of all board of directors will be collected at annual conference and distributed to the board members and members at large prior to the first meeting.

1.2 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1.2.1 Board of Directors shall include the officers and 6 board members-at-large

- Board members-at-Large shall attend TAER board meetings
- Shall serve on committees as assigned by the President
- Shall serve on the conference committee and assume duties as assigned by the Conference Chair.

1.3 TAER BOARD OF DIRECTORS ATTENDANCE

All members of the Board of Directors are expected to attend all TAER Board meetings. If a member is not able to attend, then written communication needs to be made to the president before the meetings. Members who attend less than 80% may be subject to removal from office.

SECTION 2: COMMITTEES

2.1 The President, upon assuming office, shall appoint standing committees and special committees as required.

Committee chairperson will be appointed by the President for a period of one year. All appointed committee chairpersons and committee members shall be a member in good standing of said organization. The following standing committees are approved by the Board of Directors:

- Nominating
- Scholarships/Awards
- Resolution
- By-Laws and Policy and Procedures
- History & Memorial
- Ways & Means
- Public Relations
- Membership
- Audit
- Legislative

Ad Hoc Committees

- Social Media
- Webmaster
- Any other committee as assigned by the President.

2.2 The Conference Chair will assign committees revolving around the annual conference, in conjunction with standing presidential committees.

Additional Conference Committees

- program
- vendor
- auction (ways and means)
- presenter/session acceptance

SECTION 3: FISCAL POLICIES

3.1 REIMBURSEMENT TO MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

3.1.1 Board Meetings, Membership Meetings, Regional or International Conferences:

TAER does not reimburse officers or members of the Board of Directors for personal, accommodative, or travel expenses related to these meetings.

3.1.2 Waiver of Registration Fees: Actively serving* Board

Members will be eligible for having registration fees waived to the annual state conference. *See 1.3 for qualifying requirements

3.2 REIMBURSEMENT/STIPENDS FOR SPEAKERS

3.2.1 Conference Breakout Session Presenters: Conference breakout session presenters are not reimbursed for expenses or paid stipends when presenting at TAER annual conference.

3.2.2 Keynote: Keynote speakers invited to conferences may receive reimbursement for travel, expenses, and a stipend or fee as agreed upon by the Board of Directors. Typically invited keynote speakers are also asked to do a presentation in addition to the opening address. The costs related to keynote speakers should be discussed with the Board of Directors via meeting, phone conference, or online forum.

3.3 BUDGET AND SALE OF ITEMS

3.3.1 Fundraising: Individuals or businesses may make donations to TAER, and should be provided with a receipt. TAER may explore various ways to raise funds, including raffles, program advertisements, sale of items, etc. Proceeds from all fundraising activities will be placed in the general TAER fund, unless individuals donate for a specific purpose or request a particular direction of donated items or funds. Because TAER is a charitable 501(c)3 organization, money or donated items are tax-deductible.

3.4 REALLOCATIONS OF BUDGET ITEMS:

The President and the Treasurer, or the board as a whole, may jointly make a decision to reallocate budget line items if necessary for the business of the Chapter. Total budget expenditures may not be increased without a vote of the Board of Directors.

3.5 COMMITTEE/DIVISION BUDGETS:

Committees and Divisions may not establish organizational budgets for the purpose of retaining funds. They may develop line item expenditure recommendations and submit to the Board of Directors to request funds for conducting their activities. Additional fundraising for specific activities must be approved by the Board of Directors.

3.6 ADVERTISEMENTS:

Advertisements (hardcopy and/or digital) may be solicited and accepted for the TAER conference program. With rates for EXAMPLE: 1/8 page \$25; 1/4 page \$50; 1/2 page \$75; Full Page \$100.

SECTION 4: DIVISIONS

SECTION 4.1

Division groups are established and outlined within the [International AER organization](#). Please refer to the link for the varied divisions.

Those interested in meeting under the auspices of a Division (Interest) Groups, are welcome to meet at the state level with prior communication with the current Conference Chair (Past President-Conference Chair). Any AER member or division member or members can request time and space to meet during the yearly conference to discuss topics of interest to their division. Requests must be received in writing by no later than December prior to conference.

SECTION 5: AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

SECTION 5.1 AWARDS MAY BE PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AS RECOMMENDED BY THE AWARDS COMMITTEE.

Additional information can be obtained on the [TAER website](#). The awards are as follows:

Section 5.1.1 Chapter Awards

- Texas Chapter Award - The Texas Chapter Award is to be presented to an individual or organization not responsible for direct delivery of services to persons who are blind or visually impaired but who has made an outstanding contribution to work for these persons, with statewide implications. Examples of potential recipients include legislators, eye professionals, physicians, employers, public officials, and interested individuals or organizations.
- Aubrey Boyd Tipps Memorial Award - The Aubrey Boy Tipps Memorial Award is presented to an individual or organization who consistently provides outstanding services in the field of placement or persons who are blind or visually impaired either in competitive employment or sheltered workshops.
- Jim Durkel Paraeducator of the Year Award - This award will honor a full-time paraprofessional or worker. The award will be presented to a paraprofessional/worker who has performed duties conscientiously, has taken pride in the work performed, has shown initiative, has assumed additional responsibility when called upon, and has demonstrated a good working relationship with supervisors, co-workers, and the public. The recipient shall have promoted an understanding of blindness and acceptance of persons who are blind

or visually impaired by the public. This person will also actively promote independence with the students he/she serves.

- Sammie K. Rankin Memorial Award (Outstanding Member Award) - This award is to be presented to an individual or organization who is a member of the Association and has made an outstanding contribution to services for persons who are blind and visually impaired in Texas.
- Julia L. Young Award – This award is to be presented to an individual who has done outstanding work with children who are visually impaired in Texas.
- Natalie Barraga Award – The Natalie Barraga Award recognizes excellence in public school programs for students with visual impairments. The award is given in honor of Dr. Natalie Barraga for her long and distinguished career in the education of students with visual impairments and in university personnel preparation. Awards are given to:
 - a small program (1-20 students) and
 - to a large program (21 students and over). School districts and special education cooperatives may enter their programs in visual impairment for the award. After a program has been nominated, an entry form will be sent directly to the program to request more specific information.
- Virginia Bishop Award – This award is to be presented to an individual, group, or agency who has contributed outstanding services and/or contributions to the field of early childhood education in relation to blindness and visual impairment.
- Phil Hatlen Award – The Phil Hatlen Award recognizes excellence in leadership and innovative changes in the field of education of students with visual impairments. This award is given in honor of Dr. Phil Hatlen for exemplary and dedicated service to our field. A visionary of change, Dr. Hatlen has been an inspiration to countless professionals during his career as a teacher, university professor in teacher preparation programs, and in his many leadership roles in national and state organizations and committees.
- Outstanding Parent of the Year Award – This award will be presented to a parent or parents of a person who is visually impaired who has demonstrated advocacy and dedication on the interest of persons who are visually impaired.
- Outstanding Student of the Year Award – This award will be presented to an outstanding high school or college student who has demonstrated unparalleled accomplishment in: a) academic achievement, b) the pursuit of a vocational goal or c) athletic performance.
- Patrick Van Geem Assistive Technology Award- This award is given in honor of Patrick Van Geem, who began his career in the field of blindness and visual impairment in the early 1980s as a residential instructor at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. While employed at TSBVI he attended school and became certified as a teacher of students with blindness and visual impairments. He then worked as a Dorm Teacher, an itinerant TVI through the Austin

Independent School District, and then in the Outreach Programs of the Texas School for the Blind as an Assistive Technology and Braille Production Specialist. Not only did Pat provide support to TVIs and students across the state of Texas, he also networked extensively with others in and outside of our field involved in technology. He was forward-thinking, stayed up-to-date on new equipment, and was aware of technologies and devices in development. This award recognizes the values that Pat demonstrated through his work; continuous excellence, exceptional service, and inspirational leadership. This award will be presented to a TVI or team member who demonstrates outstanding instruction and support in an educational setting of a student(s) with blindness or visual impairment using Assistive Technology.

- Other Awards – Other awards may be presented by the membership to the TAER Board for approval. Upon approval, awards categories may be added or removed.

Section 5.1.2 Division Awards

Orientation and Mobility Awards (O&M)

- The TAER O&M Best Practice Award- The O&M Best Practices award is given to an individual or group of individuals who demonstrate exemplary standards in professionalism, has effective communication, is creative in teaching skills, and plays an integral role in teaming with other professionals and family members.
- Bob Bryant/Bill Bryan O&M Leadership Award- The Bob Bryant and Bill Bryan Leadership Award is given to an individual (an O&M specialist or layperson) who has had an enduring impact on the field of O&M in the state of Texas. This award is in honor of Bill Bryan and Bob Bryant who demonstrated leadership through the development of professionals to serve blind and visually impaired individuals in Texas and continued to serve the field in a variety of positions. The recipient should be a person who has unceasingly served the O&M field in many capacities, i.e. as a TAER officer, committee member, SWOMA organizer, researcher/author, conference presenter, promoter of better O&M services for students/consumers, advocate for O&M professionalism and growth, etc.
- The Mike Shirley O&M Student Award - The Mike Shirley O&M Student Award is presented to an O&M student/consumer who has shown unusual determination and courage as he/she endeavored to learn and maintain the skills needed to be an independent traveler to the highest degree possible.

SECTION 5.2 SCHOLARSHIPS -

Scholarships may be presented at the annual conference as recommended by the Awards Committee. The scholarships are as follows:

Section 5.2.1 Scholarship Categories:

- Student with a Visual Impairment Scholarship: This scholarship is for a student with a visual impairment who is either preparing or currently attending college.
- Professional Preparation Scholarship: This scholarship is for a student who has either been accepted or is currently attending college to study either rehabilitation or education of people with visual impairments.

- Other Scholarships – Other scholarships may be presented by the membership to the TAER Board for approval. Upon approval, scholarship categories may be added or removed.

Section 5.2.2 Scholarship Criteria:

- Texas Resident
- Student in good standing
- Able to document a visual impairment (applicable only for the Student with a Visual Impairment Scholarship)

Section 5.2.3 Nomination Requirements

- A letter from the individual nominating the student (students may self-nominate).
- Letters of recommendation -- although TAER will accept one letter, the scholarship committee prefers at least two.
- A letter written by the nominee to the scholarship committee regarding the goal of his or her education.

Note: Letters should address how the student meets the scholarship criteria. Additionally, the Scholarship Committee reserves the right to request documentation of educational status and visual impairment as well as information pertaining to other scholarships applied for or awarded to the nominee.

SECTION 6: Annual Conference

Each year TAER will present an annual conference that will typically run 2 or 2 ½ days in length. At the discretion of the conference committee a pre-conference may be added to focus on more intensive presentations. The pre-conference may be ½ or 1 day in length. The annual conference will be held in the spring during times that will allow for maximum attendance.

6.1 PROGRAM CONTENT:

The program committee should work from evaluation forms of recent programs to determine any consistent topics or themes. Specific topics or speakers can be combined into an overall theme developed by the committee. Themes and topics should be discussed with the Board of Directors. Content of programs should:

- a. Be of a general nature that is of interest to all members, regardless of professional field or clients served.
- b. Include several presenters who can address various interests.
- c. Offer concurrent sessions to address needs of various membership groups.

6.2 LOCATION/FACILITIES:

- a. The location of the annual conference should be discussed by the Board of Directors and conference chair. The decision can include whether to hold the conference in a city or resort area.

- b. The Conference Chair may investigate potential sites and their costs and benefits, and present the information to the Board.
- c. If a commitment needs to be made prior to the first meeting, the Executive Committee can make the necessary decisions.

6.2.1 Other Guidelines

- a. Costs for guest and meeting rooms, banquet and exhibit area, and audiovisual/technology setup should be considered.
- b. The program committee or executive board will determine how the conference site will handle registration, as well as whether forms and/or flyers should be included in the registration packets.
- c. All facilities should be accessible--see Accessibility Policy (Section 8 of this Manual).
- d. Hotel Staff should be invited to have some training regarding blindness and visual impairment.

6.3 BUDGET:

A budget for conferences and programs should be prepared, according to the following guidelines:

- a. The annual conference should be planned either to break even in revenue and expenditure, or to cost no more than registration/vendor fees.
- b. The budget for this conference should be approved by the Board of Directors.

6.3.1 Budgets may include:

- a. Invited Speaker/Keynote fees, travel expenses, lodging, and meals. (see section 3.2.2)
- b. Meeting rooms.
- c. Audiovisual equipment and setup.
- d. Food (banquet, snacks, etc.).
- e. Printing and braille (program, flyers, maps, etc.).
- f. Decorations as necessary or appropriate.
- g. Conference- or workshop-related supplies (labels, flash drives, CDs, name tag holders, folders, etc.)
- h. Social media and scheduling apps
- i. Language support/interpretation services with request sixty (60) days prior to conference date.

6.4 REGISTRATION FEES:

Registration fees should be determined by dividing the total cost by anticipated number of participants and overall conference cost. Registration fee calculation should include:

- a. Meals.
- b. Session/meeting room fees.
 - 1. meeting rooms cost (based on block room fulfillment)
- c. Audiovisual rental/setup.
- d. Speaker fees, etc.

6.4.1 Members/non-members

AER members should be offered a reduced rate as compared to AER nonmembers.

6.4.2 Registration Fees for AER student members:

Students who are living in the state of Texas and are enrolled full-time in a university visual impairment program (local or distance) are eligible for a reduced rate for conferences and workshops. University visual impairment programs can include, but are not limited to, Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Rehabilitation Teacher, and Low Vision Therapist.

6.4.3 Registration Fees for Individuals Working in Support/Clerical Position:

Individuals working in support/clerical positions, including paraprofessionals, braille transcribers, administrative assistants, etc., may be offered a reduced registration rate to attend a conference or workshop if the board determines that this will be an appropriate measure within the confines of the budget for each event.

6.5 REGISTRATION INFORMATION:

Registration information provided to members via email, website, social media, may include the following:

- a. Details about the agenda
- b. Information about invited speakers and presenters.
- c. Clear directions/map to the site
- d. Special parking arrangements if applicable
- e. Site accessibility and special areas (guide dog relief, etc.)
- f. Food
- g. Media needs
- h. Hotel/Conference Layout or map

6.6 FOOD:

To the extent possible, arrangements should be made to plan for special dietary needs (i.e., including a vegetarian option). However, event participants should also be made aware on the registration form and in other advertising as appropriate that not all needs can be accommodated and that they will need to plan accordingly.

6.7 PUBLICITY:

The TAER website should provide TAER members with access to the following:

- a. Announcements regarding conference dates and other events for the calendar year.
- b. Reminders about and previews for meetings.
- c. Program and registration information.

6.7.1 Social Media should:

- a. Be presented in a way that will entice people to attend conferences and workshops.
- b. Demonstrate why conference or workshop programs are of vital importance to participants and their professional development.
- c. Encourage employers to support employees in their attendance.

6.7.2 Print & Digital Media/Website:

All conference handouts should be offered in accessible format(s). These can include braille, large print, and/or electronic files. A section on the registration form should be included where participants can request alternate media formats. See Accessibility Policy (Section 8 of this Manual).

6.7.3 Other:

Registrants should be encouraged to request accommodation for any other special needs that they might have, either on the registration form or via email or other appropriate communication forum.

6.8 PROGRAM MATERIALS:

Program committee members should consider and provide for the following:

- a. Number and type of handouts to provide.
- b. Whether to include folders or bags with conference materials.
- c. Creation of name tags.
- d. Certificates that can be signed by a Board Member or program Co-Chairs to allow members to receive professional continuing education credits.

6.9 CONFERENCE LOGISTICS:

Committee and other board members should be prepared to assist with the following prior to or on the day of the conference or workshop, as necessary, to:

- a. Direct traffic.
- b. Answer questions.
- c. Provide facility orientations.
- d. Meet and greet speakers.
- e. Assist vendors with set-up and display room accommodations.
- f. Ensure that presenters have needed materials.
- g. Organize meeting rooms.
- h. Coordinate audiovisual setup.
- i. Introduce speakers and facilitate sessions.

6.10 EVALUATION:

Each program should be evaluated, to include feedback from TAER members regarding the full conference and individual sessions. These evaluations should be used to direct planning and preparation for future events, including choice of topics and speakers as requested by individual participants.

6.11 FOLLOW UP:

Post-conference activities should include the following

- a. Letters of appreciation sent to presenters
- b. Continuing education credit certificates sent to participants
- c. Travel/accommodation reimbursements made to specially invited speakers/keynote presenter
- d. Summary of sessions provided for the next newsletter

SECTION 7: ELECTIONS

7.1 ELECTIONS PROCEDURE:

As reflected in the TAER Bylaws, revised 2021 by a majority vote of the TAER membership, elections shall be held at the annual conference in the spring. (See section 8.3 TAER Bylaws). The officers and board members-at-large shall be officially installed at the last business session of the annual meeting.

7.2 GUIDELINES:

Nominations and elections will be conducted according to the following provisions and guidelines.

7.2.1 Nominations

- a. Nominations for open board positions will be requested from the membership-at-large via electronic means (i.e., email, website, National AER blast advertisement) beginning no less than 90 days prior to the annual meeting.
- b. Nominations for open board positions may be taken from the floor at the opening session of the annual conference. Candidates must be in good standing with the AER membership. Nominations will close at the end of the opening session.
- c. Nominees will be informed of their potential candidacy, and their acceptance obtained, before a list of candidates is announced to the membership-at-large.

7.2.2 Elections

- a. Elections will take place at the annual conference. (See section 8.3 Procedures in the TAER Bylaws)
- b. In the event that an in-person conference is not held, an electronic voting may be conducted using an online survey created by National AER. Election timelines may be determined by the TAER board of directors. The board will make every effort possible to have votes in place and tallied by the end of a conference held electronically.
 - a. Results will be tallied by National AER immediately following the close of elections, and then announced to the membership-at-large.

7.2.3 Introduction, Training, and Installation of Officers- and Directors-Elect

- a. Officers- and board members at large will be introduced to the board and receive training on board responsibilities and organization Bylaws/policies.
- b. Board members- and members at large (newly elected) will be officially installed at the close of the last business session of the annual conference and assume their responsibilities immediately thereafter. Contact information will be collected and distributed to the board members and members at large.

SECTION 8: ACCESSIBILITY

8.1 ACCESSIBLE MEDIA:

TAER shall provide all materials in electronic format unless large print or Braille is requested 2 weeks prior to the close of registration for the annual conference. Annually, the availability of alternate media publications will be advertised via social media posts and website updates.

8.1.1 Speakers:

TAER will request that speakers provide materials in alternative media formats and will assist speakers in creating such materials as needed.

8.2 PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY/SENSITIVITY TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES:

Facilities utilized by TAER should meet standards for accessibility by persons with disabilities. When appropriate, conference site staff should agree to training that enables them to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Staff should also assist TAER in providing hotel/conference site maps, menus, and other site-related information for Braille/electronic transcription; and demonstrate appropriate attitudes when providing services to individuals with disabilities.

8.3 CONSUMER INPUT:

Program participants will be asked to comment on and make suggestions regarding accessibility issues when evaluating a program.

SECTION 9: POSITIONS OF TAER

9.1 PUBLIC POSITIONS

9.1.1 Official statement of positions:

An executive officer, Board member, Committee Chair, Division Contact, or TAER member may state a given position as an TAER position only if there has been one of the following:

- a. Vote of membership at a General Business Meeting.
- b. Resolution of membership at a General Business Meeting.
- c. Vote of the Board of the Directors taking a position for TAER.

9.1.2 Unofficial statement of positions:

An executive officer, Board Member, Committee Chair, Division Contact, or TAER member may state a given position without a vote listed above only if the individual acknowledges the following (verbally or in writing):

- a. He/she is speaking as a private individual.
- b. The given position is not representative of TAER/AER.

9.2 PUBLIC SUPPORT:

The President or other officer of the Board of Directors may write a letter of support for a grant application on behalf of TAER for TAER members. If several members/agencies are competing for the same competitive award, letters should be of a general nature, stating the needs and values of the project or activity. The Board of Directors should avoid recommending one member over another in such a competition.

Section 10: AMENDMENTS

10.1 AMENDMENTS TO THE TAER BYLAWS:

All petitions or majority votes of the TAER Board which recommend changes to the TAER Bylaws must follow the organization's legally established amendments procedure, found in Article X of the TAER Bylaws.

10.2 AMENDMENTS TO THE TAER POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL:

Amendments to the Policies and Procedures manual will be made by a majority vote from the TAER board of directors. Any member may submit a proposed amendment to the board with justification.