
2027 Program Year

Austin Area Research Organization (AARO) is accepting applications for the 2027 Class of Frank McBee Jr. Fellows. Applications are due by **Saturday, August 22, 2026**.

AUSTIN AREA RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

AARO, a non-partisan thought leader for Central Texas, has worked behind the scenes on critical regional issues for more than 45 years. AARO engages its 110 members in deliberative, strategic activities to advance the long-term economic and social well-being of Central Texas. An intentionally diverse group of Central Texas leaders drawn from business, industry, religious institutions, education, health care, real estate, the arts and foundations, AARO currently focuses its efforts in five priority areas: Health, Education, Social Equity, Transportation, and Water.

More information about AARO is available at www.aaroregion.com.

THE FRANK MCBEE JR. FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN CIVIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Frank McBee Jr. Fellows Program is a rigorous, 13-month program for civic leadership development. The Fellowship is designed to seed Central Texas with leaders who think regionally and act as stewards for the greater common good. Like AARO members, McBee Fellows:

- Lead with integrity - individually and collectively
- Establish and nurture relationships of trust
- Think and act systemically, considering the interdependency of issues

During the program year, Fellows actively engage with many of the region's most influential business and community leaders through AARO's monthly issue and bi-monthly membership meetings. AARO carefully selects two mentors for each Fellow to maximize their growth as leaders and enhance the quality of the Fellowship experience. Fellows engage with each other through monthly gatherings designed and determined by the Fellows, providing a unique experience for each class. Finally, Fellows are provided the opportunity to participate in an AARO task force or working group addressing a regional challenge or issue shaping the long-term economic and social quality of life for all Central Texans.

Fellows are expected to repay the privilege of participating in the Fellowship year by contributing to the region as future leaders and inspiring others in their spheres of influence to think and act in the long-term best interest of the region.

CRITERIA

Selection of Frank McBee Jr. Fellows is highly competitive with a number of attributes being considered, including:

- Proven portfolio of community experience and leadership
- Diversity of thought and experience
- Passion for making a difference in the economic and social well-being of Central Texans
- Alignment with AARO's objectives, regional focus, and values
- Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively and foster collaboration
- Capacity and commitment to participate fully in AARO each month

AARO will select up to ten Fellows for 2027.

Applicants must live in Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis or Williamson counties. Applications from elected officials or candidates running for elected office will not be considered.

COMMITMENT

The Fellowship year begins December 1, 2026, and concludes December 31, 2027.

McBee Fellows must attend:

- McBee Fellow orientation in November 2026
- 2026 AARO Annual Meeting - December 14, 2026
- 2027 Annual Meeting – tentatively December 13, 2027

McBee Fellows are also expected to attend a minimum of:

- Seven of the ten monthly Issue Meetings held on the first Wednesday Feb-Nov, 11:30-1pm around the region, availability for virtual participation varies.
- Three of the five bi-monthly, in-person only membership meetings. Three programmed meetings are held from 11:00am – 1pm on a Monday around the region; location and availability for virtual participation varies. Two are socials, held 4-6pm on a weeknight around the region.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Completed applications and two letters of reference must be submitted no later than **Saturday, August 22, 2026** via [this form](#).

Finalist interviews will be scheduled in early October. AARO anticipates selecting the class of 2027 McBee Fellows by mid-October 2026. Applicants will be notified by phone or email.

PROGRAM FEES

Program fees for 2027 will be \$3600. Fellows may pay up front or in scheduled installments. Need-based, partial scholarships are available. AARO will work with applicants to ensure the cost of participation is not a barrier to accepting the Fellowship.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Applications will only be accepted via online submission ([2027 McBee Application](#)). Applicants are responsible for ensuring their completed application and two letters of reference are submitted before the deadline on **Saturday, August 22, 2026**.

In addition to responding to basic demographic questions and submitting two letters of reference and a resume, applicants should be prepared to respond to the following:

- Provide a brief biography, include highlights of your values and work in the community, professionally and personally.
- Describe three most recent or most significant community and/or civic leadership roles and how your leadership in this role impacted the community.
- List any distinctions, honors or awards, if applicable.
- Briefly describe your company or organization and your role and decision-making authority within the organization.
- Explain your interest in AARO and serving as a McBee Fellow in 2027.
- Describe an experience you've had when working on a community project that illustrates the reason you would be a good fit for the McBee Fellowship Program. Describe the impact of the project.

QUESTIONS

Contact **Breier Mairena** at **512-477-4000** or at bmairena@aaroregion.com with questions about the McBee Fellowship program or application process.