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AESA Names Cliff Carmody Recipient of 2026 Excellence in Executive Leadership Award

National award recognizes longtime SWWC leader for innovation, collaboration, and commitment to strengthening schools and communities.

October 13, 2026 – The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESa) is pleased to announce Cliff Carmody, Executive Director of Southwest West Central (SWWC) Service Cooperative in Minnesota, as the recipient of the 2026 AESa Excellence in Executive Leadership Award.

The award recognizes Carmody for leadership that has strengthened educational opportunities across Minnesota while advancing the work of educational service agencies nationwide.

For more than 27 years, Carmody has helped position SWWC as a strategic partner to schools and communities across 18 counties. His leadership has supported major investments in learning facilities, the creation of the SWWC Foundation and The READY Clinic, and expanded initiatives in cybersecurity, student data privacy, workforce development and educator support.

Carmody's influence also extends nationally. He is a former member and President of the AESa Executive Council and has supported leadership development through AESa's Executive in Residence program.

"Cliff's leadership exemplifies what the Excellence in Executive Leadership Award is all about. He sees possibility in complex challenges, brings people together around a shared vision, and turns ideas into solutions that make a meaningful difference for schools and students," said Joan Wade, AESa Executive Director. "His impact in Minnesota and across the ESA community is a powerful example of educational service agency leadership at its best."

Carmody will be recognized during the 2026 AESa Annual Conference & Expo in Orlando, alongside recipients of AESa's other 2026 National Awards.

About the Association of Educational Service Agencies

AESA is the national organization representing Educational Service Agencies and regional educational organizations across the United States.

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