



AESA

2026-27

Programs Guide

SPRING 2026 EDITION

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Who We Are

The Association of Educational Service Agencies is dedicated to supporting and strengthening regional educational service agencies (ESAs), helping them to effectively serve their communities and improve educational outcomes for students nationwide.

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Advancing Leadership in the Age of AI

Ascend Academy is a year-long leadership lab for experienced ESA leaders ready to move beyond the tools conversation and into the harder questions: how to lead well as everything accelerates, how to maintain judgment, clarity, and trust, and how to lead when change outpaces what organizations can absorb.

What Participants Will Gain

Participants will leave Ascend Academy with:

- A practical framework for leading through acceleration, built on principles that hold up no matter what tools come next.
- A stronger sense of judgment about AI as a leadership practice, not a technical skill.
- A trusted peer network built through a year of honest dialogue and applied problem-solving with experienced ESA leaders.
- A clearly articulated, pressure-tested personal leadership stance.

Structure of the Experience

Date	Format	Details	Location/Time
September 14–16, 2026	In-Person Convening	Hosted by Region 10	Dallas, TX
October 13, 2026	Virtual Leadership Lab	Session 1	2:00–3:30 pm ET
November 19, 2026	Virtual Leadership Lab	Session 2	2:00–3:30 pm ET
February 16, 2027	Virtual Leadership Lab	Session 3	2:00–3:30 pm ET
March 16, 2027	Virtual Leadership Lab	Session 4	2:00–3:30 pm ET
April 26–28, 2027	In-Person Convening	Hosted by Western Region Education Service Alliance	Asheville, NC

Investment

\$3,425: Tuition includes all program activities and meals during in-person convenings. Enrollment is limited to 25 participants.

READY TO LEAD FOR THE FUTURE?

<https://www.aesa.us/ascend-academy/>



AESA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Designed for ESA CEOs and cabinet-level administrators



2026-27 Schedule:

July 13-16, 2026

Summer Leadership Conference
Riverside, CA

August 27, 2026

Virtual Session
2:00–4:00 pm ET

September 23-25, 2026

Advocacy in Action Conference
Washington, D.C.

October 22, 2026

Virtual Session
2:00–4:00 pm ET

December 1-4, 2026

Annual Conference
Orlando, FL

February 9, 2027

Virtual Session
2:00–4:00 pm ET

April 1-9, 2027

Global Systems Lab to
Vienna & Budapest

May 13, 2027

Virtual Session
2:00–4:00 pm ET

July 2027

Optional Session
Summer Leadership Conference
Location TBD

A Transformative Experience for ESA Senior Leaders

This selective, yearlong executive learning experience designed for ESA CEOs and senior cabinet leaders who are ready to shape the future of ESAs.

What Participants Will Gain

As a Leader

- Strengthen strategic leadership
- Expand global perspective
- Lead innovation and AI adoption
- Connect with ESA peers nationwide
- Build advocacy and influence skills

In Your Agency

- Apply learning to a key priority
- Bring back practical tools and strategies
- Strengthen innovation and resilience
- Turn global insights into local action
- Create a ready-to-use leadership portfolio

Global Systems Lab: Vienna & Budapest



LEARN MORE & APPLY

<https://www.aesa.us/leadership-academy/>

SCAN ME



GLOBAL COORDINATOR TRAINING



Program Overview Oct. 2026 - May 2027



Blended Learning

Virtual meetings, online modules, and in-person simulations.



Training Tour

Puts leaders on the ground, turning global theory into action.



Certification

Earn the AESA Global Coordinator designation.

International education is no longer optional!

The year-long AESA Global Coordinator Training program is built for individuals ready to lead global engagement within their ESA. Graduates emerge prepared to design and launch international programs that are sustainable, mission-aligned, and make a lasting impact on students and educators.

Grounded in the AESA Global Education Operations Curriculum (2025), the program builds competency in:

- Cultural Intelligence (CQ)
- International negotiation strategy
- Ethical risk frameworks
- Market entry planning
- Cross-cultural leadership
- Strategic partnership development

***We do not offer just travel experiences.
We build professional capacity.***



JOIN THE 2026-27 COHORT
www.aesa.us/global-coordinator-training/

Registration Deadline: August 1, 2026



Academy for Women Leaders



2026-27 Schedule:

October 5–7, 2026

In-Person Retreat
Location TBD

November 12, 2026

Virtual Session
2:00–3:30 pm ET

December 2026

In-Person Lunch Meetup
Annual Conference
Orlando, FL

February 1, 2027

Virtual Session
2:00–3:30 pm ET

March 8–10, 2027

In-Person Retreat
St. Louis, MO

April 28, 2027

Virtual Session
2:00–3:30 pm ET

Registration:

Annual Fee: \$2,175

Travel and lodging for in-person events not included.

Leading with Courage, Influencing with Integrity, and Speaking with Power

AESA's Academy for Women Leaders is a yearlong leadership experience for women in educational service agencies who want to lead with courage, communicate with confidence, and make values-driven decisions.

Through guided learning and peer connection, participants strengthen their influence, deepen their leadership presence, and apply purpose-driven strategies to complex challenges.

Who Should Participate?

Women in senior leadership roles at ESAs, including:

- Superintendents
- Executive Directors
- Deputy Superintendents
- Assistant Superintendents
- Other comparable executive-level leaders

This was such a wonderful opportunity and exactly what I needed to get excited about the work we do!

-Past Participant

READY TO LEAD?

www.aesa.us/academy-for-women-leaders/



Learning Labs

Learning Labs are structured, time-limited learning experiences focused on specific topics. Led by expert facilitators, they provide practical tools and opportunities to apply new strategies in real-world contexts.



Designed for ESA operations staff, this experience strengthens systems, improves efficiency, and builds operational excellence while equipping participants with practical tools to enhance daily operations.

July 14-16: Optional In-person Launch during Summer Leadership Conference

Virtual Meetings

September 15

Creating a Culture of Standard Operating Procedures

Learn how to build a systems-driven culture that gets critical details right.

October 13

Time and Task Management for Operations Teams

Master essential tools and practices to manage time, tasks, and priorities—beyond the urgent.

November 17

Project Planning and Building an Operations Calendar

Integrate long-term planning into daily workflows to stay on track.

December 15

Key Tools for Managing Vendors and Teams

Discover practical tools to boost accountability and performance with both vendors and internal teams.

Annual Fee: \$349

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

www.aesa.us/operations-online-learning-lab/



Focused on deep learning, strengthening capacity, and translating ideas into action!



New in 2026-27!

This year-long, cohort-based experience is for ESA and regional leaders advancing Career and Technical Education, strengthening strategic thinking, leadership, and regional impact.

July 14-16: Optional In-person Launch during Summer Leadership Conference

Beyond Programs: The Hidden Architecture of High-Impact CTE

Focused on examining system-level leadership conditions that shape CTE outcomes and establishing shared language and frameworks for the series

Virtual Meetings

September 16

Distinguishing Quality: How High-Impact CTE Actually Takes Shape

Understand what drives meaningful outcomes beyond surface-level activities.

November 17

Influence: Advancing CTE Through Strategic Leadership

Guide direction, build credibility, and move initiatives forward

January 12

Strategic Positioning: Elevating CTE as a Driver of Regional Success

Communicating CTE's role in workforce development and community impact.

March 4

From Insight to Momentum: Leading Sustainable CTE Transformation.

Capstone session on turning insight into lasting CTE action.

Annual Fee: \$349

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REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

<https://www.aesa.us/cte-online-learning-lab/>

Professional Networks

Networks are ongoing communities of practice that connect ESA professionals with shared roles or interests. They focus on peer learning, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas and best practices, helping members stay connected, informed, and supported throughout the year.

Behavioral Health Network

Designed for ESA professionals who lead, coordinate, or provide behavioral and mental health services in schools, this national professional learning community supports strong peer connections, collaborative problem-solving, and the advancement of effective, school-based behavioral health systems.

Sept. 23 | Nov. 18 | Jan. 20 | Feb. 24 | Mar. 17 | Apr. 21

2:00-3:30 pm ET

Annual Fee: \$480



New in 2026-27!

Business Officials & HR Network

Designed for CFOs, business managers, and HR leaders in ESAs, this network fosters connection, collaboration, and shared learning. Participants explore strategies in finance, human resources, and compliance while exchanging practical tools to support effective and efficient operations.

Sept. 9 | Nov. 4 | Feb. 10 | Apr. 7

2:00-3:30 pm ET

Annual Fee: \$320



Communications & Marketing Network

Designed for ESA communications, marketing, and public engagement professionals, this national professional learning community fosters connection, collaboration, and shared learning. Participants exchange strategies, share practical resources, and work together to strengthen their impact and amplify the collective voice of ESAs nationwide.

Aug. 27 | Oct. 8 | Dec. 10 | Feb. 4 | Apr. 8 | Jun. 3

2:00-3:30 pm ET

Annual Fee: \$480



New in 2026-27!

Where people stay connected, learn from each other, and keep growing.

Executive Assistant to the CEO Network

The Executive Assistant to the CEO Network is a dedicated professional learning community for executive assistants supporting ESA leaders. This network provides role-specific training, practical tools, and a peer network to help executive assistants enhance organizational efficiency, strengthen communication, and support high-level leadership with confidence and clarity.

Oct. 7 | Jan. 27 | Apr. 21 | Jun. 23

12:00-1:00 pm ET

Annual Fee: \$175



Professional Learning Consultants Network

This network is for consultants, professional development specialists, and department coordinators who serve school districts. Designed to support your unique role, this network offers targeted learning, practical tools, and a national peer community. Participants will explore key topics, sharpen consulting skills, and gain actionable strategies to enhance their impact and effectiveness.

Sept. 15 | Nov. 10 | Jan. 5 | Feb. 16 | Mar. 16 | Apr. 13

2:00-3:30 pm ET

Annual Fee: \$480



Revamped for 2026-27!

Professional Learning Directors Network

Designed for leaders who design, lead, and manage professional learning systems in ESAs, this national professional learning community fosters connection, collaboration, and shared learning. Participants engage in leadership-level conversations, exchange strategies, and strengthen their capacity to lead effective teams, manage resources, and support high-quality professional learning systems.

Sept. 17 | Nov. 12 | Jan. 7 | Feb. 18 | Mar. 18 | Apr. 15

2:00-3:30 pm ET

Annual Fee: \$480



New in 2026-27!

Special Education Directors Network

Designed for directors, coordinators, and other special education leaders at ESAs, this network fosters collaboration to share strategies, address common challenges, and stay ahead of emerging trends. Participants engage in structured discussions, explore evolving policies and practices, and access practical tools, service models, and leadership frameworks—while building lasting peer connections and benchmarking ideas across agencies.

Sept. 22 | Nov. 17 | Jan. 12 | Feb. 9 | Mar. 9 | Apr. 20

2:00-3:30 pm ET

Annual Fee: \$480



Technology Leaders Network

The network offers ESA technology staff a dynamic space to explore emerging trends, tackle shared challenges, and connect with peers nationwide. With timely topics, expert insight, and a strong collaborative community, this network empowers participants to lead innovation and shape the future of educational technology.

Aug. 27 | Oct. 15 | Dec. 9 | Feb. 11 | Apr. 1 | Jun. 3

2:00-3:30 pm ET

Annual Fee: \$480



SCAN ME



FIND YOUR NETWORK!

www.aesa.us/networks

Business Strategy Development

We help ESAs thrive with customized solutions designed by professionals who understand your challenges. From refining business models to fostering innovation, our strategies support growth, optimize resources, and uncover new opportunities.

STRATEGIC PRICING & EXPERIMENTATION IN ACTION

July 14, 2026  8:30 am - 3:30 pm



This one-day workshop gives teams simple, practical tools to improve pricing decisions, test ideas before broader implementation, and identify new opportunities for growth.

Strategic Pricing & Experimentation in Action Workshop

Pre-Conference Experience to 2026 Summer Leadership Conference

July 14, 2026

8:30 am to 3:30 pm
Lunch provided

Location

Riverside County Office of
Education
Riverside, CA

Pricing

Individuals: \$800 per person
Teams of 3+: \$650 per person

BUSINESS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK WORKSHOP 2.0



This advanced workshop builds on BSF 1.0, diving into competitive strategy and AI integration. Learn to manage uncertainty, build AI partnerships, and align your organization for strategic success. This session is led by Dr. Duncan Simester, an MIT professor and world-renowned expert in business strategy and innovation, along with AESA consultants Andy Pechacek and Doreen Marvin.

NOTE: *Completion of the Business Strategy Framework 1.0 Workshop is preferred.*

BSF 2.0: Managing Strategic Resources

October 26-27, 2026

Day 1: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Day 2: 8:30 am to 3:30 pm

Location

AC Marriott Downtown
St. Petersburg, FL

Pricing

Individuals: \$2,350 per person
Teams of 3+: \$2,200 per person

 AESA 2026 Summer Leadership Conference

Systems in Sync

Leading Coherence and Connection

July 14-16, 2026



Riverside, California

Keynote Speaker



Marlon Styles

Learning Tour



Garner Holt
Education Through
Imagination

Registration



Member Rate: \$725

Smarter systems. Stronger learning. Connected communities.

Today's ESA leaders are navigating increasingly complex systems. *Systems in Sync* focuses on how leaders create coherence across leadership, instruction, well-being, operations, and community partnerships.

This year, AESA is proud to partner with the San Bernardino Superintendent of Schools and the Riverside County Office of Education to host the conference in a region known for innovation, collaboration, and charm.



Overnight Accommodations

Mission Inn Hotel & Spa

Located in the heart of downtown Riverside, this National Historic Landmark offers a memorable place to stay!

Once you register, you'll receive AESA room block details by email.

SYNC WITH US!

www.aesa.us/summer-leadership-conference/

SCAN ME





2026 Annual Conference & Expo **ESAS IN ACTION**

Leading, Innovating, and Elevating Education

December 2-4, 2026  Orlando, Florida



Learning Focus



Leadership in Action
Executing Visionary Strategies



Innovation & Technology
Driving Systemic Change



Entrepreneurship & Sustainability
Ensuring the Future of ESAs



Student-Centered Solutions
Advancing Access



Governance & ESA Boards
Leading with Purpose and Accountability

New this year! 



Administrative Excellence
Empowering the ESA Backbone

Registration

Early Bird: \$890

Before September 1, 2026



Bonus: Specially priced Walt Disney World® Resort Theme Park tickets available for attendees and families.

December 2-4, 2026 | Hilton Orlando

The AESA Annual Conference & Expo brings together ESA leaders, staff, and board members from across the country to learn, connect, and lead. It's where ideas turn into action through the sharing of innovative strategies, practical solutions, and emerging trends that are shaping the future of ESAs and the communities they serve.

Learn from Peers

130+ Breakout Sessions

Learn from colleagues who are addressing challenges, driving innovation, and delivering results in their communities.

Expand Your Perspective

AESA Global Relations

Connect with international education leaders attending the conference and explore opportunities to expand your ESA's global reach, partnerships, and impact.

Explore New Solutions

Expo Hall

Meet with 80+ industry partners showcasing the latest products, services, and technologies designed to support educational organizations.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

<https://www.aesa.us/annual-conference/>





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