
Retired Educators Association of Minnesota (REAM)

Annual Executive Director's Report

Program Year 2025–2026

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"Strengthening the Voice of Minnesota's Retired Educators"

PO Box 7519, St. Cloud, MN 56302 | (612) 515-7326 | 48 Local Units Statewide

Executive Summary

This annual report summarizes the major initiatives, accomplishments, and organizational progress achieved by the REAM Executive Director during the 2025–2026 program year. The year was defined by significant modernization — launching a new CRM platform, rebuilding the organization's public-facing website, redesigning member communications, and expanding the membership pipeline through an Associate Membership program. Statewide member coordination, travel program partnerships, and forward-looking conference planning round out a year of focused, mission-driven leadership on behalf of Minnesota's retired educator community.

The initiatives described in this report reflect the Executive Director's ongoing commitment to advancing REAM's core mission: to protect and strengthen the retirement security, advocacy voice, and community of Minnesota's retired educators. The Board's continued partnership, guidance, and strategic direction have made this year's progress possible.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

The 2025–2026 program year included substantive work to clarify and strengthen organizational governance structures, delineate leadership responsibilities, and establish transparent reporting channels between the Executive Director and the REAM Board.

Leadership Highlights

- Executive Director and Co-President roles and responsibilities formally clarified
- Transparent reporting structure established with Governance Board and Executive Board
- Participated in Tuesday Talks
- Supported smooth collaborative leadership transition process

CRM MODERNIZATION — NEON SYSTEM LAUNCH

A major organizational priority this year was the modernization of REAM's client relationship management (CRM) infrastructure through the implementation of the NEON CRM platform. This investment positions REAM to more effectively manage membership records, deliver targeted communications, and generate meaningful organizational reporting.

Staff Training & System Readiness

Staff training was completed in partnership with Christopher Smith of NEON CRM, covering all major system modules including member record management, email campaign tools, and reporting functions. Staff are now proficient across all primary NEON CRM modules and are prepared for system Go-Live!

System Onboarding & Data Migration

New member data upload is actively in progress as part of system onboarding. Certified and verified sender email setup is underway to ensure secure, compliant member communications through both the NEON CRM and Your Membership platforms.

- Completed final member data migration into NEON CRM
- Confirm staff readiness and conduct post-launch checklist review
- Develop and execute a member communication plan
- Completed DRS verified sender email credential setup

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

The development of REAM's new public-facing website has been a sustained priority throughout the 2025–2026 program year. A development session was held with Craig and Ronan to advance the website build, and the site is now completed and LIVE.

Updated Outstanding Pre-Launch Integrations

Four key integrations resolved before the site went go live:

1. **Legislative and pension resource links** — Updated and verified links to current legislative and pension resources
2. **Renew/Donate button links** — Fully built and tested for functional member transactions
3. **DRS verified sender email** — Configured and confirmed for compliance and deliverability
4. **Domain transfer and password transition** — Coordinating with Craig and Sharon Morgan to ensure a seamless technical handover

Member Communication

The website launch was communicated to the full statewide membership through the Summer Newsletter, with a notice that the new site would be live soon--and is live now. The digital copy of the Summer Newsletter will be among the first resources archived on the new site upon launch.

NEWSLETTER DEVELOPMENT & MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Member communications were significantly strengthened this year through the redesign and distribution of the REAM Summer Newsletter. This effort reflects REAM's ongoing commitment to professional, timely, and engaging member outreach across all local units statewide.

Summer Newsletter

The REAM Summer Newsletter was completed, professionally printed, and mailed to the full statewide membership. A refreshed newsletter design was introduced, modernizing REAM's visual identity and communications standards. The Executive Director authored the *"From the Executive Director"* section, providing leadership messaging, organizational updates, and information on upcoming initiatives.

Newsletter content included organizational updates, legislative news, pension information relevant to TRA benefit holders, and information on upcoming events and conferences. Collaboration with Amy M. ensured the newsletter was produced and distributed on schedule. A digital copy will be archived on the new REAM website.

Communications Planning

- Digital newsletter archive to be established on the new REAM website
 - Member communications strategy to be reviewed in alignment with NEON CRM Go-Live
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STATEWIDE MEMBER COORDINATION & LOCAL UNIT ENGAGEMENT

Connecting directly with members across Minnesota's local units remains a priority for the Executive Director. In-person engagement strengthens relationships, surfaces member priorities, and reinforces REAM's commitment to being an accessible and responsive organization.

Local Unit Visits

The Executive Director accepted invitations to speak at the **St. Cloud Local**, **Owatonna Local**, and the **Willmar Local** meetings during the 2025–2026 program year. These visits provided direct opportunities to gather member perspectives, share organizational updates, and build relationships with local unit leaders and members.

Member Outreach & Pipeline Development

Active member outreach efforts continued throughout the year to drive awareness, engagement, and conference participation across all statewide local units. The Executive Director continued to build and strengthen relationships with local unit leaders to support an ongoing pipeline of member engagement, legislative advocacy, and program participation. These efforts form the foundation for sustained membership growth and organizational vitality.

Local Unit Engagement — This Year

- Spoke at St. Cloud Local unit meeting
 - Spoke at Willmar Local unit meeting
 - Spoke at Owatonna Local unit meeting
 - Strengthened relationships with local unit leadership across the region
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ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

To strengthen REAM's long-term membership pipeline and broaden its legislative advocacy base, the Executive Director proposed the creation of a new **Associate Membership** category. This program would allow currently employed Minnesota educators to join REAM at a reduced annual dues rate, connecting them early with retirement security resources and REAM's advocacy community.

REAM has proudly served Minnesota educators since 1954. The Associate Membership program extends that legacy by welcoming active educators into the REAM community before retirement, building familiarity, loyalty, and advocacy capacity well in advance of their transition to full membership.

Proposed Member Benefits

- REAM newsletters and legislative pension updates
- Annual conference and local unit event invitations
- Networking with retired and near-retirement educators
- Access to member benefit programs (insurance, discounts, legal services, ID protection)
- Legislative advocacy support and voice on pension issues

CONFERENCE PLANNING

Conference planning represents an important area of organizational investment, both for member engagement and for advancing REAM's programmatic mission. Efforts this year encompassed active planning for the 2026 Conference and early-stage forward planning for the 2027 North Area Conference.

2026 Conference

The Executive Director coordinated with Sally M. on the development and preparation of the **2026 Conference Brochure**. Member outreach is actively underway across all the local units to drive conference awareness, registration, and participation. The conference represents a key touchpoint for member engagement, leadership development, and organizational advocacy.

2027 North Area Conference — Early-Stage Planning

A planning meeting was held on **July 30, 2026** with Mari Walker and Merry Mund to advance early-stage planning for the 2027 North Area Conference. Discussions centered on conference format, logistics, and organizational goals for the event. The planning group explored a **hybrid three-location model** to provide flexibility and broader geographic access for participants across the northern region of Minnesota.

Additional planning milestones, venue decisions, and logistical details are expected to be established in Q4 2026 and throughout 2027, and will be reported to the Board as developments occur.

TRAVEL PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

REAM's travel program partnerships continue to provide members with access to organized, curated travel opportunities as a valued membership benefit. These programs serve a dual organizational purpose: they enhance the perceived value of REAM membership, supporting both member retention and new member recruitment, while also creating positive community experiences that strengthen member connection to the organization.

Coordination with travel program partners remained ongoing throughout the 2025–2026 program year. Further developments in travel partnerships — including finalized agreements, program offerings, and communication plans — will be reported to the Board as agreements are completed. The Executive Director looks forward to sharing additional details in forthcoming communications.

Respectfully submitted to the REAM Executive Board,

Mark P. Hanson

Executive Director, Retired Educators Association of Minnesota (REAM)