



IOWA HOSPITAL  
ASSOCIATION

*We care about Iowa's health*

2023 Annual Meeting  
Young Executive Achievement Award  
Scoring Guide

**Nominee: Steve Slessor, WinnMed**

| Letter of nomination and supporting materials (40 points)  | Points possible   | Points awarded |
|--|---|----------------|
| Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major achievements in his or her hospital/health system in the last three years.</li> <li>Major achievements in the community.</li> <li>Major achievements outside the community.</li> <li>Notable achievements.</li> </ul>   | <b>40</b>   |                |
| Candidate's ability to meet the intent of the award (30 points)  | Points possible   | Points awarded |
| <p>The Iowa Hospital Association's presents the Young Executive Achievement Award to an Iowa hospital or health system young executive whose achievements are noteworthy.</p> <p>IHA solicits nominations for young executives, age 40 or younger and employed as a senior executive in an IHA member organization, who has exhibited skills through a project, program, publication or other activities of importance to health care in Iowa.</p> | <b>30</b>   |                |
| Candidate's IHA participation and engagement (30 points)   | Points possible   | Points awarded |
| Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance and engagement at IHA conferences and signature events (Annual Meeting, Summer Forum, Hospital Day on the Hill, Governance Forum).</li> <li>Attendance at IHA district meetings.</li> <li>Contributions to the IHA PAC.</li> <li>Membership on an IHA council or committee.</li> </ul>   | <b>30</b>   |                |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   |                |
| <b>Reviewer comments:</b><br><br>  | <b>Scoring guide:</b><br><br>0-10 Very weak<br>11-20 Weak<br>21-30 Average<br>31-40 Strong<br>41-50 Very strong |                |
| <i>Reviewer name:</i> _____ <i>Date:</i> _____   |   |                |



**Steven Slessor, MHA, CEO  
WinnMed**

- Years of service at the hospital / organization: 2 years.
- Total years of service in health care: 17 years.

### **Nomination**

*Karen McLean, Board Chair, WinnMed*

*BreAnna Sovereign, Executive Assistant, WinnMed*

I write to nominate Steve Slessor for the Young Executive Achievement Award. Steve is a visionary leader. He came to our WinnMed in June 2021 as the board was implementing a significant strategic plan update and identified a need for new leadership. The Board determined Steve had the administrative experience and the knowledge to lead a critical access hospital into the future. He is the type of leader who can take on a challenge and create a positive focus so that a problem, in turn, becomes an asset. Steve understands where critical access hospitals, and the healthcare field are now and where they need to be to be ahead of the curve.

Steve Slessor is a decisive leader. All critical access hospitals face their own challenges daily. Steve, like many other strong leaders, balances the pros and cons of a situation. When it is time to decide, he is a model for others. The staff at WinnMed will know that he has done the extensive background work necessary to make the best decision for their patients, staff, and the regional healthcare facility. He has demonstrated that he is both capable and prepared to lead WinnMed into the future. In every role he has served as a senior leader, he has implemented new service lines.

At WinnMed, he and his fellow senior leaders developed a comprehensive Wound Center, including the use of hyperbaric oxygen chambers. No other facility in the area provides this level of wound care. He has actively worked to recruit and retain physicians (an additional orthopedic surgeon, an allergist, a dermatologist, and several emergency room physicians) and professionals in multiple areas, all while leading through the nation-wide crisis of dealing with Covid and its massive impacts on health care facilities and personnel. To accommodate this growth and development in services lines, Steve has embraced our strategic plan “Transforming Tomorrow”, WinnMed’s multi-phase master facility plan. Highlights of this project include a new, fully renovated birthing suite, an expanded surgery area to include

larger rooms to accommodate new technology, and a two-story addition to house expanded primary and specialty clinics.

Steve Slessor is an attentive leader. He is a leader who listens and not “just hears”. Sit down with him and talk about the things that are important in your life. He will be the one listening intently to you. This attentive trait is why individuals align with Steve and the decisions he proposes. As a leader, Steve cares deeply about the staff at WinnMed, and is passionate about developing strong working relationships. He rounds regularly and makes it a point to get to know people on an individual basis. He can often be seen walking the hallways, connecting with staff, and learning about what they love about their work as well as what challenges them. He takes this information and provides suggestions and solutions to barriers presented. Employees know they can ask him anything; he doesn't shy away from any topic and isn't afraid of hard questions. With this level of transparency comes an increased level of trust in the senior leadership team. He has also prioritized staff recognition and retention in a way that has boosted staff satisfaction.

Steve Slessor is a collaborative leader. He has the unique ability to look at issues from many sides, include the experience and opinions of colleagues and adapt the solutions to blend with the broader community viewpoints. In his first months at WinnMed, he met individually with community stakeholders to introduce himself, and get a better understanding of how the medical center can partner with various entities within the service area to better meet the needs of its members. Throughout these sessions, Steve learned of the dire need for childcare in the region. This led to the donation of WinnMed property to Sunflower, a local childcare center. This land donation has allowed Sunflower to break ground on a larger center, creating more available slots for children. Steve also played an integral part in partnering with Luther College to provide health services to their faculty and staff, and athletic training to their sports teams, demonstrating his understanding of the importance of community involvement.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Steve Slessor is an ethical leader. Every decision he makes is founded on sound moral character and fair judgment. This attribute is what separates a “good” leader from a “great” leader. A leader’s strong ethical behaviors begin in his childhood home, are modeled through his own family values, and are ultimately demonstrated in the way he aspires to bring out the best in every individual and in all situations. Observe Steve Slessor and you will see that he epitomizes an ethical leader in every way.

## **Summary**

Steven Slessor was selected as the new CAO for WinnMed in June 2021. He is a visionary, decisive, attentive, collaborative, and ethical leader with the administrative experience and knowledge base to successfully guide the hospital during the Covid-19 pandemic and lead a critical access hospital into the future. He has led WinnMed’s multi-phase master facility plan, established new service lines including a comprehensive wound center, and prioritized staff recognition and retention in a way that has boosted staff satisfaction. His community involvement led to both the donation of property to Sunflower, a critical linchpin in the construction of a newly expanded child care center in the region, and an expanded collaboration with Luther College. Every decision Steve makes is founded on sound moral character and fair judgement.

## **IHA involvement**

- District B, Vice Chair, Current since 2023.
- Council on Representation and Advocacy, Current since 2023.
- IHERF Board of Directors, Director, Current since 2014.
- Council on Representation and Advocacy, Member, 2020-2021.
- IHA PAC Committee, At-large, 2017.
- Attends IHA Tee Off Classic, Summer Leadership Forum, Governance Forum, All District Meeting, Summer Leadership Forum, Critical Access Forum, Annual Meeting.
- Attends IHA educational webinars and events.
- IHA PAC - Chairman's Circle (\$500-\$999), Capitol Club (\$350-\$499)



May 30, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to support the nomination of Steve Slessor for the Young Executive Achievement Award. Steve currently serves as the Chief Administrative Officer for WinnMed in Decorah, Iowa. This healthcare entity has a Mayo Clinic Health System affiliation.

I've had the pleasure to begin my healthcare career with Steve in 2011, when he served as the VP of Operations at Unity Point-Allen Hospital. Throughout my three years there, Steve and I worked closely on strategic initiatives. One such endeavor was the development of an Orthopedic Co-Management Company aiming to lower costs and increase efficiencies within the Orthopedic service line. Together, we also worked on enhancing the Surgical Services department with a \$24 million renovation project, which aimed at providing a higher level of care to patients in Waterloo. While the positive outcomes and effects of these accomplishments stand out, what impressed me the most was Steve's ability to trust the data analytics I produced, while simultaneously mentoring me to become a stronger leader - managing both people, departments, and projects.

Steve had a vision of becoming a CEO to impact not just a hospital, but a community. He was appointed CEO of Buchanan County Health Center (BCHC) in Independence, Iowa in 2013. Within months of his acceptance, our paths crossed again and he selected me as CFO to work alongside of him. What made me want to follow Steve to BCHC was first and foremost his integrity. He was a man that did what he said he would do while showing extreme interest in the character of the leadership team he worked to develop. He understood the importance of balancing the dollar with the "patient comes first" attitude. Throughout his time there, he collaborated with an independent physician practice, built trust within their team, and ultimately demonstrated the impact of working together - aligning the two brands under one roof. At this point, BCHC had no family practice presence and acted solely as a hospital. Within three years, BCHC had acquired not only its first primary care group, but had three teams in three different regions with a larger vision of enhancing and developing an individualized, patient specific, population-based health strategy, allowing BCHC to enter its first ACO. This achievement highlights the team building and collaborative skills Steve exhibits.

Steve succeeded at growing and building a sustainable structure for a smaller rural access hospital, but again had a vision to do more and achieve greater impact. He knew that being part of a powerful network such as Mayo would create the canvas for that vision to become a reality. After seven years at BCHC, Steve joined WinnMed), one of the largest CAH hospitals in the state. Over the past two years, Steve has helped WinnMed rebound from COVID and grow its outpatient services, work on reviving a master facility plan focused on growing family and specialty practices, enhance a quality improvement scorecard system in hopes of continued growth and refinement of clinical metrics to ensure the best care at the lowest cost possible. Steve has partnered with a local day-care facility to recommend the donation of hospital-owned land in hopes of developing a recruitment and retainment strategy for young families working in the healthcare industry along with providing a much-needed facility for the residents of Winneshiek County. The hospital will complete a rebranding project revitalizing the image of the hospital with the superb care that is already being offered.

What Steve has accomplished in his young age is quite remarkable. While he is a strong leader himself, he also has a talent and skill for growing leaders. His active engagement with the Masters of Healthcare Administration program at UIHC providing guest speaking, teaching and mentoring upcoming front-runners through summer fellowship programs is one way Steve contributes to future leaders. Steve also grows his team by trusting them,

within their skill-set. This allows the person to thrive while freeing Steve to steer the ship and focus on the larger picture of the health system and industry as a whole. He has a vision of what quality healthcare can look like and strives to make it a reality, in both the way he leads and leads others. I am honored to have worked alongside him for so many years and see how he has impacted so many people. He is the epitome of this Young Executive Achievement Award. Thank you for considering him for this honor and award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Stevens", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Ben Stevens  
WinnMed CFO

May 30, 2023

Iowa Hospital Association  
100 E. Grand Ave Ste. 100  
Des Moines, IA 50309

**Re: Young Executive Achievement Award Nomination - Steve Slessor**



To Whom It May Concern,

I write to support the nomination of Steve Slessor for the Young Executive Achievement Award. Mr. Slessor has been a catalyst in Winneshiek County, specifically when it comes to the local childcare crisis and community partnerships and I can attest to his leadership skills firsthand.

In 2022, Mr. Slessor was newly-hired as the Chief Administrative Officer at Winneshiek Medical Center. Within the first few months, he made sure to get out in the community to meet area leaders and stakeholders to learn more about how the hospital could be a better partner. Through these conversations, he recognized not only how the lack of available childcare was impacting the community's ability to support young families, but also how it was directly impacting Winneshiek Medical Center's staff and the organization's ability to hire, recruit, and retain workforce.

At the time of these conversations, there was a significant project happening in Decorah that was designed to be built, but still looking for land opportunities. The Sunflower Child Development and Discovery Center project was seeking 4 acres of land to build a 27,000 square foot facility in Decorah, which would create 125 new childcare slots and retain an additional 120 slots. Steve cultivated a relationship with the Sunflower planning committee and started having conversations with hospital staff and the Board of Trustees about how the community and hospital needs aligned. Steve's leadership ultimately led to the organization's decision to donate 4 acres of hospital property to the non-profit childcare facility. In only two months, the two entities formed a partnership. Steve's ability to analyze, strategize, and move quickly in collaboration ensured the final phase of the child care project. It also motivated additional donations from public and private entities and opened up new grant funding opportunities. Without Steve's leadership, the project would not have happened.

It is with great excitement that I support this nomination for the Young Executive Achievement Award for Steve Slessor. He is a significant stakeholder within Decorah and Winneshiek County and we are so appreciative of his involvement within the community.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Fromm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Fromm  
Executive Director  
Winneshiek County Development and Tourism

# LUTHER COLLEGE

Andrew Bailey  
VP for Finance & Administration, Luther College  
(563) 387-2107  
bailan01@luther.edu

May 30, 2023

Dear Craig Borchard.

I write to support the nomination of Steve Slessor for the Young Executive Achievement Award. Steve joined Winneshiek Medical Center (WinnMed) as chief administrative officer in 2021 and quickly impacted the Decorah and Winneshiek County communities in positive ways. From my perspective as the CFO of Luther College and a board member for a local organization focusing on economic development, childcare, and housing, I want to highlight Steve's leadership in two different collaborative projects in our community.

Our community is challenged by a childcare shortage that makes it difficult for working parents to move to or remain in Decorah. The largest non-profit childcare center in Decorah worked with many community stakeholders to develop a vision for an expanded child development and discovery center. While the project was gaining momentum from a fundraising perspective, it was impeded by the lack of an ideal project site. Steve joined WinnMed in the midst of community conversation and deliberation about the potential project, and his vision and leadership were instrumental in a decision for WinnMed to donate land to support the project. WinnMed's commitment to donate land boosted fundraising efforts for the project, and construction is currently underway. When completed, the new center will support working parents at WinnMed and throughout the community. As a leader at a longstanding community organization, I can understand the lift required to gather stakeholder support for donating a key asset to a community project. That support doesn't come without a clear vision from the chief executive, and WinnMed's donation has influenced how other organizations are thinking about their assets in light of community needs.

Luther College is a private, residential, liberal arts college in Decorah. The college has a long and proud history of providing all of the services students need to live and learn in community on campus. One of those services, an in-house health services operation, was hampered by staffing challenges, increasing student needs, and an inability to utilize student insurance coverage that all came to a head during the pandemic. The leadership team at the college reached out to WinnMed in the fall of 2021 to invite

consideration for a potential partnership. Steve immediately expressed interest in collaboration, and I appreciated his recognition that a mutually-beneficial partnership between two of the largest employers in the community would be good for the entire community. His open leadership style allowed for a flexible process that culminated in a solution that was informed by the contributions of both parties. WinnMed was providing general health care services to Luther College students by February 2022. Despite the short timeframe from proposal to implementation and the complexity of re-badging employees, the partnership is off to a great start. Steve and I continue to touch base regularly to discuss how things are operating and to explore further opportunities for collaboration.

From a distance, I have appreciated Steve's role in ensuring the continual growth and improvement of WinnMed, including the Transforming Tomorrow project that is underway. Up close, I have appreciated Steve's role as a community collaborator who isn't daunted by the tough task of transformative leadership in a small community. I have seen firsthand how Steve identifies community challenges or changing trends and eagerly jumps into exploring how WINNMED might be able to provide a solution that benefits WinnMed and the larger Northeast Iowa community. We are lucky to have him.

Sincerely,

*Andrew Bailey*



I write to support the nomination of **Steve Slessor** for the **Young Executive Achievement Award**.

Steve came to WinnMed in 2021 and quickly changed the impression of many within the facility about what a chief administrative officer looked like. He was visible throughout the facility making rounds regularly in all departments. I happened to be in the same day services area during one of these times. The staff said, "We have never seen that before!"

The culture of any institution is difficult to change like steering a giant ocean liner. This has not prevented Steve from making consistent and intentional efforts to improve the culture at WinnMed. He starts each day by parking not in an assigned "Administrator" spot, but rather in an inconspicuous location furthest from the door. He carries that attitude of humility with him throughout the day as well.

I have had the opportunity to work with Steve directly in several capacities on the Medical Executive Committee and Leadership Council. He displays a calm demeanor with well thought-out initiatives and responses. He is leading the hospital through a rebranding effort and a large building project currently. There is no shortage of opinions that he receives, and he has always listened even if he doesn't always agree. I appreciate these personal characteristics and his commitment to improving the medical center.

Historically, there has been contention related to the two main clinical entities within the community - one of which is housed in and led by the hospital leadership. The other is affiliated with another large organization. He included providers and leaders from both organizations on his initial one-on-one meeting initiative. There is a balance that is needed when multiple interests are involved, and, in my opinion, he has consistently been committed to the best interests of the local community - not just what the large entity of affiliation would prefer. He is not afraid to ask questions or make difficult decisions.

Steve has continued his collaborative efforts with a long-term priority of capitalizing on all the local healthcare resources which are all assets to our community as a whole and its medical center. This has occurred through regular meetings between the local leadership of both groups. There have been some quick wins and discussions about what further efforts could look like. In the rebranding rollout, specific mention was made to the importance of "partnerships and teamwork between health care entities."

In conclusion, Mr. Slessor has been a beacon of light in a facility where two larger entities have clashed for years. There is more work to be done, but he has not wavered in his commitment to the importance of regional healthcare. I look forward to the future as Steve builds and solidifies his legacy as a leader not only in our hospital but in our community.

Sincerely,

Michael LaBelle, M.D.  
General Surgery  
Gundersen Health System



It is with great pleasure that I write to support the nomination of Steve Slessor for the Young Executive Achievement Award.

Steve currently serves as the Chief Administrative Officer here at WinnMed in Decorah, Iowa. WinnMed is a county hospital with a partnership through a management service agreement and a physician service agreement with Mayo clinic. I currently serve as the Chief Medical Officer at this healthcare organization.

Together, the CMO and CAO work collaboratively as a physician and administrator to lead the organization. I have had the pleasure serving alongside other Chief Administrative Officers during my tenure. It is through these experiences that I provide my perspective as to why Steve should be honored with the Young Executive Achievement Award.

Early on in his role as CAO, Steve began building relationships with key leaders within the organization. Meeting with department directors served as an opportunity to perform a mini-SWOT analysis. Through these conversations he was able to understand organizational strengths and areas of opportunity. Building trust through these experiences served Steve well early on in his leadership role. These relationships and this trust continue to serve him well as he leads with integrity here at WinnMed.

Steve also met with local leaders in the community and quickly learned that there was a desperate need for increased childcare capacity within our community. Steve's ability to communicate clearly, analyze data accurately and rally partnerships fostered solutions that would aid in increasing childcare capacities within our community. The donation of hospital land would allow for construction of a new childcare facility. There were many wins in this negotiated deal.

As the CAO, Steve has worked with individuals at all levels of our organization. His willingness to be present, to round on a daily basis, and deliver solutions in a timely fashion, has helped to build and strengthen relationships. As a result of these formed relationships, Steve has been able to create a culture of "yes we can" vs. "no because we've never done it that way".

Steve leads with integrity adhering to the highest standards of professionalism, ethics, and personal responsibility. This integrity is witnessed in Steve's time management during meetings. Steve is on time, if not early for meetings. At these meetings, Steve strongly promotes teamwork, valuing the contributions of all, and blending the skills of individuals and staff members through collaboration.

Steve has helped to guide our senior leadership team in many different projects here at the medical center. Recently, we have opened a wound care center that will serve the northeast Iowa region. There is a multi-million-dollar expansion plan, Transforming Tomorrow, for the medical center that will increase clinical capacity and surgical capacity. Transforming Tomorrow will also bring our OB department up to date. Steve's innovation has helped to energize the organization, which will ultimately enhance the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your consideration of Steve Slessor for the Young Executive Achievement Award.

Best regards,

Thomas K. Marquardt, CMO