



RESA Cooperative Purchasing

1. Why do RESAs facilitate cooperative purchasing?

Since their inception in 1972, Regional Education Services Agencies (RESAs) have been facilitating cooperative purchasing for school districts. West Virginia State Code §18-2-26 (b-1-3) identifies cooperative purchasing as an areas of service for West Virginia Regional Education Service Agencies.

W. Va. Code §18-2-26. Establishment of multicounty regional educational service agencies; purpose; authority of state board; governance; annual performance standards.

...”(b) *Purpose.* -- In establishing the agencies the Legislature envisions certain areas of service in which the agencies can best assist the state board in implementing the standards based accountability model pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and, thereby, in providing high quality education programs. These areas of service include the following:

- (1) Providing technical assistance to low performing schools and school systems;
- (2) Providing high quality, targeted staff development designed to enhance the performance and progress of students in state public education;
- (3) Facilitating coordination and cooperation among the county boards within their respective regions in such areas as **cooperative purchasing**; sharing of specialized personnel, communications and technology; curriculum development; and operation of specialized programs for exceptional children;
- (4) Installing, maintaining and/or repairing education related technology equipment and software with special attention to the state level basic skills and SUCCESS programs;
- (5) Receiving and administering grants under the provisions of federal and/or state law; and
- (6) Developing and/or implementing any other programs or services as directed by law or by the state board.”

2. How are RESAs authorized to facilitate cooperative purchasing?

West Virginia State Code defines the authority of public agencies to enter into cooperative agreements.

W. Va. Code §8-23-2. Definitions.

“For the purposes of this article: (1) The term "public agency" shall mean any municipality,

county or other political subdivision of this state, or any county board of education of this state”...

W, Va. Code §8-23-3. Intergovernmental agreements generally.

“Any power or powers, privilege or privileges, authority or undertaking, exercised or capable of exercise, or which may be engaged in, and any public works which may be undertaken, by a public agency acting alone may be exercised, enjoyed, engaged in or undertaken jointly with any other public agency which could likewise act alone.

Any two or more public agencies may enter into a written agreement with one another for joint or cooperative action pursuant to the provisions of this section. Appropriate action by ordinance, resolution or otherwise pursuant to law of the governing bodies of the participating public agencies shall be necessary before any such agreement shall become effective. Any separate legal or administrative entity established hereunder is a public corporation and may exist for the length of time set forth in the intergovernmental agreement.”

In addition, State Board Policy Purchasing procedures for Local Education Agencies, Policy 8200, states:

“8.1 The LEA may purchase equipment and other commodities or services directly from a vendor without competitive bidding, if any of the following conditions exist:

8.1.7 The item is available from an internet website maintained by a legitimate government purchasing cooperative, such as the one maintained by the Government Purchasing Alliance or the Southern Region Education Board, or from a vendor who participates in a government purchasing cooperative, and where competitive bids have already been obtained.”

3. How did RESAs become part of a national organization for cooperative purchasing?

To provide school districts with additional cost savings, West Virginia RESAs began the process of joining the Association of Education Purchasing Agencies (AEPA). West Virginia was approved as a member State of AEPA in November, 2011.

The Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies (AEPA) is a nationwide group of educational organizations working collaboratively to save school districts time and money. AEPA has more than \$300 million in annual protected purchases.

AEPA started with ten states in 2000 and has now grown to 26 states representing over 25 million students. Together AEPA has hundreds of years of public sector purchasing experience. www.aepacoop.org

AEPA Mission

“Our mission is to cooperatively serve our agency memberships through a continuous effort to explore and solve present and future purchasing needs. AEPA is working on your behalf to secure multi-state volume purchasing contracts that have benefits that are measurable, cost-effective and continuously exceed our membership’s expectations.

AEPA Goals

- Leverage the purchasing power to benefit all schools regardless of size, with the ability to purchase at equal buying levels.
- Combine the potential needs of all schools to create an incentive to vendors to offer the best price and the highest quality product in the country.
- Stream line the bidding and purchasing process through a single locally and nationally recognized purchasing solicitation.
- Provide a single contract that is available statewide with one cooperative agency identified to function as the statewide contract facilitator and representative.
- Become the national purchasing option and solution for interested qualified customers and vendors.”

4. What are the advantages of becoming a member of a national purchasing consortium?

By becoming a part of AEPA, RESAs have leveraged the buying power of national consortium bid pricing.

- a. Local agency in West Virginia manages the contract.
AEPA contracts are competitively bid and tailored to meet each member state’s specific legal requirements. AEPA streamlines the bidding and purchasing process through a single locally and nationally recognized purchasing solicitation.
- b. Avoid duplication and expense of bid process.
With shrinking budgets and fewer resources, school districts and public agencies are looking to AEPA more than ever to meet their purchasing requirements. Collaborative purchasing expertise insures that AEPA contracts are legal, safe and bid law compliant.
- c. Volume contracts based are on 26 state participation.
AEPA is a national cooperative of education purchasing professionals representing lead agencies in their respective states. Each contract is available statewide and is facilitated by RESAs.
- d. Attract and leverage national vendors.
Combining the needs of 25 million students provides an incentive to vendors to offer AEPA their best price and the highest quality products.
- e. Save time and money.
AEPA contracts are designed to protect buyers and are guaranteed to save member agencies time and money.

5. What West Virginia Agencies can use AEPA bid pricing?

According to the terms and conditions established with AEPA and each individual vendor company, “All West Virginia PK-12 school districts, including Career and Technical Education Centers, Regional Education Services Agencies, West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) and all Institutional Education Programs operated by WVDE are eligible to participate and purchase from the awarded AEPA contracts. In addition, all colleges and universities, state, municipalities, counties, other governmental agencies and non-profit agencies are eligible to participate if the AEPA contracts satisfy their individual procurement requirements. ”

6. What is the AEPA bid process?

The member states form the Board of the AEPA. The Board meets each spring for the purpose of, among others, selecting product categories to seek bid responses from national vendors. A vote is taken based on the potential success of a contract in each of the states. Task groups, or sub-committees, are assigned to each bid category to develop product specifications, market and educate potential vendors, and refine terms and conditions specific to product categories.

The AEPA Board is provided with a timeline by the bid committee, and it is every committee's obligation to adhere to that timeline. In the fall, each member posts the bid announcements in their state. This allows the bids to adhere to the advertising requirements in each state, which is especially important because the member states, not AEPA, award the contracts.

When bids are received back, the sub-committees review the submissions and make their recommendations to the Board for approval at the winter meeting. It is then up to each member state to enter into a contractual agreement with each recommended vendor they wish to (minimum 50% of the total AEPA contracts).

7. How are AEPA contracts awarded?

Awarded vendors are required to send a signed Acceptance of Bid and Contract Award form to each member state. The member state then has to return the signed contract back to finalize the contract. Each member will be provided with an entire bid package from the vendor. Members should work with the new vendors to develop a marketing strategy within their state.

In addition to signing new contracts, existing contracts in favorable terms must be extended each year. The member extends a signed Contract Extension form to each vendor they wish to extend, and the vendors must return a signed copy back to the member.

A current list of new and active contracts can be found on the AEPA website (www.aepacoop.org).

8. How do West Virginia customers order from AEPA contracts?

Purchasers will work directly with the vendors to get pricing information and place orders. In order to receive AEPA bid pricing on items, purchasers must contact the vendor and register with the vendor as a member under WV RESA Cooperation Purchasing. It is also recommended that, after registering with the vendor, that orders clearly state that AEPA bid prices are listed.

9. Where can I find a vendor list?

A current vendor list is kept on the AEPA website (www.aepacoop.org). If there is more than one contact listed for a vendor, the primary contact will be indicated by an asterisk.

10. Who are the West Virginia contacts for AEPA purchasing?

To receive assistance for AEPA purchasing in West Virginia, please contact your Regional Education Service Agency or contact the AEPA Board members from West Virginia members listed below.

Keith Butcher, Executive Director
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