

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

RFP # 26-001

TITLE: Transportation Modernization Software & Hardware Solutions

ISSUING AGENCY: Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative (SEARK)

DATE ISSUED: January 12, 2026

1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Introduction

The Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative (SEARK) is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified vendors to provide a comprehensive **Transportation Modernization Solution**. This project is funded by the Transportation Modernization Grant (2025).

The goal is to procure software and necessary hardware for approximately **212 school buses** across **13 member school districts**. The solution must facilitate optimized bus route planning, accurate tracking of student ridership, and enhanced communication with stakeholders.

1.2 Participating Districts

The successful vendor will serve the following SEARK member districts:

- Star City
- DeWitt
- Drew Central
- Monticello
- Lakeside
- Cleveland County
- Dumas
- Fordyce
- Dermott
- Woodlawn
- Warren
- McGehee
- Hermitage

1.3 Contact Information

All questions regarding this RFP must be directed in writing to the RFP Coordinator:

Name: Nathan White

Email: nathan.white@searkcoop.com

Address: 1022 Scogin Drive
Monticello, AR 71655

Phone: 870-367-6848

Bidders are prohibited from contacting other SEARK staff or member district superintendents regarding this solicitation during the bid process.

1.4 Schedule of Events (Tentative)

Event	Date
RFP Released	January 12, 2026
Deadline for Vendor Questions	January 16, 2026
Proposal Due Date	January 23, 2026 @ 12:00 PM CST
Proposal Opening	January 23, 2026 @ 2:15 PM CST
Evaluation & Demonstrations (if needed)	January 26-27, 2026
Notice of Award (Pending Board Approval on January 28, 2026)	January 27, 2026

2.0 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted in a sealed envelope or package clearly marked with "**RFP 25-001: Transportation Modernization**" and the vendor's name.

- **Physical Copies:** Submit **one (1)** original and **three (3)** hard copies.
- **Digital Copy:** Submit **one (1)** digital copy on a USB drive.
- **Deadline:** Late proposals will be rejected and returned unopened.

2.2 Arkansas Procurement Regulations

This solicitation is conducted in accordance with **A.C.A. § 6-21-304** (Purchase of Commodities) and Arkansas procurement rules for Education Service Cooperatives.

- **Bid Bond:** If the proposal exceeds \$50,000 for construction or specific commodities as defined by law, a 5% bid bond may be required (Not typically required for software services, but vendor should verify).
- **Ethical Standards:** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for a person to be retained to solicit or secure a SEARK contract upon an agreement for a commission, percentage, brokerage, or contingent fee.
- **Period of Offer:** Proposals must remain valid for a minimum of 90 days from the due date.

3.0 SCOPE OF WORK (SOW)

3.1 Project Overview

The vendor must provide a turnkey solution that modernizes transportation for 212 buses. The solution must include software, driver-facing interfaces (hardware or tablet compatibility), and implementation services.

3.2 Key Deliverables

The proposal must address the following functional areas as outlined in the grant:

A. Optimized Bus Route Planning

- Software must provide automated route optimization to reduce mileage and travel time.
- Ability to adjust routes for road closures or student transfers in real-time or near real-time.
- Support for 13 distinct districts within a single cooperative dashboard preferred, or easy management of multiple tenants.

B. Student Ridership Tracking

- System to track when and where students board and exit the bus.
- Hardware provision (e.g., card readers, tablets, or scanners) for 212 buses.
- Secure data handling in compliance with **FERPA**.

C. Driver-Facing Interface

- Digital interface for drivers to view turn-by-turn navigation and ridership data.
- Hardware must be ruggedized and suitable for school bus environments (vibration, temperature variance).
- Proposals must specify whether proprietary hardware is required or if the district can use existing tablets (Bring Your Own Device, BYOD).

D. Enhanced Communication (Parent/Stakeholder App)

- A secure mobile app or portal for parents/guardians to receive real-time updates on bus location and ETA.
- Push notifications for delays or emergencies.

3.3 Implementation & Support

- **Installation:** Vendor must outline the timeline for hardware installation across 212 buses in 13 geographically dispersed districts.
- **Training:** Provide comprehensive training for Transportation Directors, Drivers, and Admin staff.
- **Support:** Ongoing technical support (hours of operation, SLAs for hardware replacement).

4.0 PROPOSAL CONTENT

Vendors must organize their proposals in the following order:

1. **Cover Letter:** Signed by an authorized officer.
2. **Executive Summary:** Brief overview of the proposed solution.
3. **Technical Proposal:** Detailed response to the Scope of Work (Section 3.0).
4. **Hardware Specifications:** Spec sheets for any tablets/GPS units proposed.
5. **Implementation Plan:** Timeline and strategy for rolling out to 13 districts.
6. **Company Qualifications:** Evidence of experience serving educational institutions.
7. **References:** Three (3) references from school districts of similar size.
8. **Cost Proposal:** Detailed breakdown (Hardware, Software Licensing, Implementation Fees, Annual Recurring Costs).
9. **Required Forms:** Completed Anti-Collusion Affidavit (see Section 6).

5.0 EVALUATION RUBRIC

In accordance with grant requirements, SEARK will select the vendor that best meets the established criteria. This is a **Competitive Sealed Proposal**, meaning price is a primary factor but not the sole determinant.

Scoring Committee: Proposals will be evaluated by a committee composed of SEARK representatives and member district stakeholders.

Criteria	Description	Weight
1. Competitive Pricing	Total cost of ownership (upfront + recurring). Cost-effectiveness of the solution.	30%
2. Robustness & Breadth of Services	Does the software meet all technical requirements (Routing, Ridership, Parent App)? Is the hardware durable?	25%
3. Experience in Education	Proven track record with Arkansas schools or similar rural cooperatives.	20%
4. Customer Service & Support	Quality of the training plan, help desk availability, and warranty terms.	15%
5. Proposal Quality	Clarity, completeness, and professionalism of the submitted proposal.	10%
TOTAL		100%

Note: In the event that no vendor meets the established criteria, SEARK reserves the right to reject all bids and collaborate with Arkansas DESE for next steps.

6.0 REQUIRED FORMS

6.1 BIDDER INFORMATION FORM

- Company Name: _____
- Address: _____
- Contact Person: _____
- Phone: _____ Email: _____
- Arkansas Vendor Number (if applicable): _____
- TIPS/TAPS Vendor Number (if applicable): _____

6.2 ANTI-COLLUSION AFFIDAVIT

(Must be notarized)

STATE OF ARKANSAS

COUNTY OF _____

I, _____, being first duly sworn, deposes and says that:

1. I am the (Title) _____ of (Company) _____, the Bidder that has submitted the attached Bid;
2. I am fully informed respecting the preparation and contents of the attached Bid and of all pertinent circumstances respecting such Bid;
3. Such Bid is genuine and is not a collusive or sham Bid;
4. Neither the said Bidder nor any of its officers, partners, owners, agents, representatives, employees, or parties in interest, including this affiant, has in any way colluded, conspired, connived, or agreed, directly or indirectly, with any other Bidder, firm, or person to submit a collusive or sham Bid in connection with the Contract for which the attached Bid has been submitted.

(Signature of Affiant)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 2026.

(Notary Public)

My Commission Expires: _____

End of Document

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS EDUCATION SERVICE COOPERATIVE (SEARK) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) #25-001

The Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative (SEARK) is accepting competitive sealed proposals for **Transportation Modernization Software & Hardware Solutions**. This project involves the procurement of routing software, ridership tracking, and parent communication tools for approximately 212 buses across 13 member school districts.

Submission Deadline: Sealed proposals will be received until **12:00 PM CST on Tuesday, January 23, 2026**, at the SEARK administrative office. Late bids will not be accepted.

Bid Documents: Interested parties may pick up the official bid packet, including specifications and submission forms, at the SEARK office located at:

1022 Scogin Drive Monticello, AR 71655

Digital copies may also be requested by contacting Nathan White at **nathan.white@searkcoop.com** or by calling the Cooperative office.

SEARK reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive any formalities or irregularities in the bidding process.

Publication Dates: