

What is YEPA?
(By Larry Weeks)

YEPA stands for the Yuma Educational Purchasing Association and is a cooperative purchasing project between Yuma County school districts. Our current members are; Crane School District No. 13, Gadsden Elementary School District No. 32, Mohawk Valley School District No. 17, Somerton School District No. 11, Yuma Elementary School District No. 1 and Yuma Union High School District No. 70.

Our goal is to share information and resources to save tax dollars by improving our own performances and efficiencies, and through economies of scale. For example, many school districts replicate the same bids year after year. Cooperative purchasing allows the districts to develop a master bid specification together and to solicit the bid on behalf of the entire group. Once the bid has been awarded, all member districts can use the resulting contract. By developing bid specifications as a group, districts can partake in even greater volume discounts.

Cooperative purchasing works by assigning a district as the lead district (i.e., YUHSD). The lead district will meet with the other school districts to develop the bid specification. The bid is then solicited, opened and evaluated. The results are sent to the lead district's governing board for approval. Once the lead district's governing board has awarded the bid, it is made available to the other school districts. School districts can cooperatively purchase by way of a legal document called an IGA (Intergovernmental Agreement).

Experience has taught us that educational procurement can be a complicated process. One of the strategies of the YEPA is to reach out to interested parties in Yuma County about how to do business with school districts. Future articles will include a breakdown of the bid document, the bidding process, the difference between the different types of bids and more.

Your homework assignment is to go to the YEPA website at <http://www.yepa.us> and review its contents. If you have not done so already please fill out the Prospective Vendor Application. It's your best method of introducing your products and services to the school districts.

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