

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

TRANSPORTATION MODERNIZATION GRANT PROGRAM

Grant Application

Authorized under Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-20-2701 – 6-20-2704 (LEARNS Act, Acts 2023, No. 237)

Grant Cycle Year	Application Opens	Application Deadline
FY 2027	Monday, October 19, 2026	Friday, November 13, 2026

Innovation is at the heart of this program. By law, funds are directed to the most innovative solutions proposed for transporting students who attend public schools, open-enrollment public charter schools, and licensed childcare centers serving publicly funded students [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(d)(2)]. We are looking for approaches that are new, more efficient, or transformative — from transportation resource-sharing and rideshare or carpool models, to smarter routing technology, fleet strategies, and creative community partnerships.

Complete all sections. Applications are scored on a 100-point rubric that weights innovation and efficiency most heavily (see Appendix A). At least 25% of grant funds are reserved for qualified rural and remote public school districts [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(e)]. Attach additional pages as needed; label each with the applicant name and section number.

INNOVATION SNAPSHOT

Summarize, in 2–3 sentences, what makes your proposed solution new, more efficient, or transformative compared to how student transportation works today.

SECTION 1. Applicant Information & Eligibility

Eligible applicant categories are established at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2702. Select the one category that describes the applicant.

- ☐ Public school district
- ☐ Open-enrollment public charter school
- ☐ Early childhood care and education program (or its local early childhood coordinator)
- ☐ City, town, or county
- ☐ Education service cooperative
- ☐ Non-profit organization
- ☐ Other entity to be deemed eligible by DESE

Legal name of applicant	
LEA / entity number	
County / region	
Mailing address	
Primary contact & title	

Phone / email	
Authorized official (name & title)	

Rural & Remote Status

"Rural" and "remote" are defined by rule at 6 CAR § 337-101, adopted under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(a)(1). See Appendix B for the full text. Districts meeting the definition are eligible for the 25% set-aside.

- ☐ Applicant is a public school district that meets the "rural and remote" definition in 6 CAR § 337-101 (Appendix B)
- ☐ Applicant does not meet the "rural and remote" definition / not applicable

SECTION 2. Grant Request Summary

Total amount requested		
Total students / children impacted		
Grade levels / ages served		
Proposed project period	Start	End

Allowable Use Categories

Check every category your project will fund [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2704]. You may select more than one. Use these category numbers in the Section 5 budget table.

- ☐ (1) Transportation resource sharing with neighboring districts or open-enrollment public charter schools
- ☐ (2) Developing or contracting with rideshare programs, or engaging neighborhood carpool strategies
- ☐ (3) Reducing costs / improving efficiency (e.g., fleet vehicles, technology for more efficient routing)
- ☐ (4) Addressing personnel shortages or challenges
- ☐ (5) Funding in lieu of grants given to parents (complete the priority-population table in Section 5)
- ☐ (6) Partnering to re-evaluate bus routes to decrease ride time (priority: elementary & middle grades)
- ☐ (7) Collaborations to ensure students' safe and effective passage to school / early childhood programs
- ☐ (8) Other relevant grant activity as determined by DESE (describe below)

If (8) Other, describe	
-------------------------------	--

SECTION 3. Narrative A — Improving Access to Transportation

Required by Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(a)(1)(A). Keep concise — the innovation narrative (Section 4) carries the most scoring weight. **Worth 15 of 100 points** (see Appendix A).

- What transportation access gap or barrier does this project address, and for which students?
- How will the project improve access for students attending a public school district, open-enrollment public charter school, or licensed childcare center serving publicly funded students?

SECTION 4. Narrative B — Innovation & Efficiency (PRIMARY SCORED SECTION)

This section is weighted highest (**45 of 100 points**). Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(a)(1)(B) requires applicants to explain how funds will support transportation innovations and efficiency solutions, and § 6-20-2703(d)(2) directs DESE to distribute funds to the most innovative solutions proposed. Address every prompt below. See the scoring rubric in Appendix A.

4.1 The problem & current state

- What is inefficient, costly, or unworkable about how this transportation need is met today? Quantify where possible (e.g., ride times, cost per rider, unfilled routes, driver vacancies).

4.2 The innovation — what is new or different

- *Describe the solution and what makes it innovative relative to conventional busing.*
- *Is this new to your community, new to Arkansas, or a novel adaptation of an existing model? Explain.*
- *How does this differ from current transportation practices?*

4.3 Efficiency gains & measurable impact

- *What specific efficiencies will result (cost savings, reduced ride time, higher utilization, fewer vehicles/drivers needed)?*
- *State target metrics and how you will measure them.*

4.4 Technology, data, or partnerships leveraged

- *Identify any routing technology, shared-services agreements, rideshare/carpool platforms, fleet strategies, or community/agency partners that enable the solution.*

4.5 Scalability & replicability

- *Could this model scale within your organization or be replicated by other districts, charters, or ECE programs? What would that take?*

4.6 Sustainability beyond the grant

- *How will the solution be sustained after grant funds are expended? Identify ongoing funding, recurring savings, or structural changes.*

4.7 Student safety

- *How does the proposed project protect and/or improve student safety?*

SECTION 5. Budget & Use of Funds

Itemize how grant funds will be spent. Round to whole dollars. Totals must match the amount requested in Section 2. Attach a continuation page if more than six lines are needed.

Use category (1–8)	Budget line item / description	Grant funds requested	Other / matching funds
			
			
			
			
			
			
	TOTAL		

Complete ONLY if you selected Use Category (5) — Funding in lieu of grants given to parents

Districts and charters using funding in lieu of grants to parents must give priority to enrolled students who meet free/reduced-price lunch economic eligibility (Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and National School Lunch Act, as in effect Jan. 1, 2023) and who attend through open enrollment where known. Students at schools in a community eligibility program (CEP) are eligible [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2704(5)(B)].

- ☐ We will prioritize students meeting free/reduced-price lunch economic eligibility
- ☐ We will prioritize students attending through open enrollment (where such information is available)
- ☐ Our participating school(s) operate under a community eligibility program (CEP)

Est. # priority students served	
Method for verifying priority status	

SECTION 6. Demand & Need Justification

DESE distributes funds based on demand [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(d)(1)]. Provide evidence of the level of need this project meets. **Worth 25 of 100 points** (see Appendix A).

- How many students/families need this service, and how do you know (waitlists, survey data, underserved areas, ridership trends)?
- What happens if the project is not funded?

SECTION 7. Outcomes, Metrics & Reporting

If awarded, recipients must report data to DESE. That data will be compiled for the Governor and legislative leaders [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(b)]. State the outcomes you will track. **Worth 10 of 100 points** (see Appendix A).

Outcome / metric	Baseline	Target

Number of children impacted	
------------------------------------	--

Required report field — Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(b)(3).

SECTION 8. Certification & Signature

The authorized official certifies that the information is accurate, that the applicant is eligible, and that grant funds will be used only for allowable purposes under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2704.

☐ I certify the applicant is an eligible entity under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2702.

☐ I certify all information in this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

☐ I certify grant funds will be used only for allowable purposes and consistent with program requirements.

Authorized official signature	Printed name & title
Date	Email / phone

A typed name in the signature field constitutes an electronic signature. If your agency requires a handwritten signature, print this page, sign, and submit the signed page with the application.

APPENDIX A — Scoring Rubric

DESE's implementation of the distribution criteria in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(d). Innovation and efficiency carry the greatest weight, consistent with the statute's direction to fund the most innovative solutions proposed. Applications are scored out of 100 points.

Criterion	What reviewers look for	Points
Innovation & Efficiency (Narrative B)	Novelty of the solution; measurable efficiency gains; use of technology/partnerships; scalability and sustainability. § 6-20-2703(a)(1)(B), (d)(2)	45
Demand & Need	Evidence of level of need; number of students/families served; consequence if unfunded. § 6-20-2703(d)(1)	25
Access Improvement (Narrative A)	Clear transportation gap addressed; measurable improvement in student access. § 6-20-2703(a)(1)(A)	15
Outcomes, Metrics & Sustainability	Concrete outcome targets; credible measurement plan; sustainability beyond the grant.	10
Rural & Remote / Equity	Serves rural and remote students or otherwise advances equitable access. Supports the 25% set-aside. § 6-20-2703(e)	5
TOTAL		100

Award note: Regardless of raw score, at least 25% of grant funds are reserved for qualified rural and remote public school districts; this reservation does not apply if an insufficient number of qualified rural/remote proposals is received [Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(e)]. DESE may retain up to 5% of appropriated funds for administration [§ 6-20-2703(c)].

APPENDIX B — Definition of “Rural” or “Remote” [6 CAR § 337-101]

Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(a)(1) directs DESE to define which public school districts are rural and remote. That definition is adopted by rule at 6 CAR § 337-101 and is reproduced verbatim below.

6 CAR § 337-101. Definitions.

“Rural” or “remote” means a United States Census-defined rural territory that is:

- (1) More than twenty-five (25) miles from a city or town with a population of fifty thousand (50,000) or more; and
- (2) More than ten (10) miles from cities or towns with a population of at least two thousand five hundred (2,500) and fewer than fifty thousand (50,000).

The twenty-five percent (25%) reservation for rural and remote public school districts appears at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2703(e) and 6 CAR § 337-102(e).