



Green Purchasing Guide

This worksheet will help you lay the groundwork for environmentally friendly purchasing and monitor the success of your green purchasing efforts as part of the Trash Free Potomac Facility Program.

Green, or environmentally friendly, purchasing involves buying products or services that effect human health and the environment to a lesser extent as other products or services. This can simply include buying “only what you need” or doing bulk purchasing with neighboring facilities. Examples include:

- Items made with recycled content
- Products that can be reused or recycled
- Bio-based products
- Energy- and water-efficient products
- Renewable energy
- Environmentally preferable products
- Alternatives to hazardous or toxic chemicals
- Alternative-fuel vehicles

Why Green Purchasing?

The key to reducing your organization’s environmental impact is to try and become a little greener every day, and every day your organization makes purchasing decisions. With each purchasing decision, your organization has the opportunity to change its course by making an environmentally friendly choice. In today’s market, there are literally thousands of ‘green’ products and service options. Take advantage of what is out there and make a commitment to research those options and consider which products, suppliers, and vendors are offering a ‘greener’ option that is still high quality and within your budget.

It is critical to encourage buyers and project managers to include environmentally friendly options as part of their normal procurement process and include them in environmental sustainability goal planning. Buyers have more impact on environmental sustainability than they may think. Learn more about Green Purchasing on p. 11 of the [Trash Free Potomac Facility \(TFPF\) Guidebook](#), which can be downloaded from the online Resource Hub found at TrashFreePotomac.org.

Tracking The Impact of Your Purchases

Establish a record keeping system to monitor the success of your green purchasing program. Track your information by commodity or service. Use the Green Purchasing Worksheet on p. 3 of this guide as an example to compare bids received for products or services. TFPF members are encouraged to report any cost savings or green purchasing data that have been achieved through their efforts. Participants can report their results online with the EPA’s WasteWise Program and through the Annual Reporting Form (see p. 15 of the TFPF Guidebook).

Things to Consider When Purchasing:

1. What is the environmental and social impacts of the product?
2. Does the product have a green certification, such as certified compostable, sustainable forestry, Energy Star, or Fair Trade?
3. What kind of packaging is used? How could the packaging be minimized?
4. What are the primary raw materials used?
5. Is how long the product lasts appropriate to its task? Is the product durable?
6. Is waste minimized during its life cycle (e.g. during manufacturing, shipping, and disposal)?
7. At the end of the product’s life, can constituent materials and components be reused, recycled, or recovered?

How to Buy Recycled Products:

1. Create Green Purchasing Policy: Lay the groundwork for environmentally friendly purchasing by establishing a green purchasing policy. For facilities that already have a policy in place, take time to review it and identify ways it could be improved. Consider including following in your own policy:

- **Set a minimum percentage of recycled content.** By buying items made of recycled content, your workplace helps complete the cycle of recycling and stimulate the demand for recyclable materials. The more post-consumer content the better. Look for the acronym “PCW” for pre- or post-consumer recycled material. The list below illustrates the range of recycled-content products already available on the market.

Office:

- Printing and writing paper
- Tissue and towel products
- Trash can liners
- Office supplies (bulletin boards, folders, trays, pens, pencils, push pins, scissors)
- Trash and recycling containers
- Refurbished office equipment
- Recycled toner cartridges

Vehicle Fleets:

- Re-refined motor oil
- Recycled antifreeze
- Retread tires
- Auto parts
- Solvents

Construction Projects:

- Carpet
- Aluminum siding
- Doors
- Building insulation
- Compost and mulch
- Composite lumber
- Wallboard

- **Invest in reuse instead of single-use.** There are many items that get thrown away after a single use or have no way to be recycled. Consider including the over-all impact of a product from when it is manufactured to after it is thrown out. Is the manufacturing process wasteful? Are the components recyclable? How long will the product last?
- **Put your money where your mouth is.** Make a commitment to invest in your environmentally preferential purchasing policy, by setting a standard for how much more your facility is willing to pay (such as 5% or 10% more) in order to maximize the recycled content in products and to provide clearer guidelines investing in more environmentally friendly products. Green purchasing can save you money, but it sometimes involves more up-front costs. For example, energy efficient light bulbs (CFLs) may cost more than normal light bulbs, but they lasts up to ten times longer and will save money on your energy bill. In the long run CFLs are the more economical and environmental choice.¹

2. Review current purchasing habits to determine what is currently being purchased and identify products or services that could potentially be replaced by greener options. Determine where you can substitute or include recycled products in future bids by examining products and contract lists. Start with low-hanging fruit or options that will maximize your savings by switching over to a more sustainable product.

3. Research alternatives by examining product specifications to determine if they meet the specifications outlines in your green purchasing policy. Use the worksheet on the next page to identify the most cost-effective solution that will meet your green purchasing policy.

Resources:

Trash Free Potomac Facility Resource Hub: download the TFPF Guidebook and other resources.

<http://fergusonfoundation.org/trash-free-potomac-watershed-initiative/market-based-approaches/trash-free-potomac-facility-program/resource-hub/> or go to TrashFreePotomac.org and click on “Facility Program” under the “Get involved” menu.

EPA Green Purchasing Guide: <http://www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/greenguides.htm>

NRDC Office-wide Purchasing Policy: includes sample policies and product-specific purchasing guides. <http://www.nrdc.org/enterprise/greeningadvisor/pu-policy.asp>

FedCenter Acquisition Page: Case studies, resources, et al. specific to government buildings. https://www.fedcenter.gov/kd/go.cfm?destination=Page&pge_id=1820&dialog=0

Environmental Paper Network Paper Calculator: The environment impacts of different types of paper. <http://c.environmentalpaper.org/home>

¹Energy Star Light Bulbs: Product information. http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find_a_product.showProductGroup&pgw_code=LB

Green Purchasing Worksheet

Product or Service Requested: _____

What product or service will the new one be replacing? _____

Contract Specifications

Number of units requests: _____ Contract number: _____

Duration of contract: _____

Buyers name: _____

Using department/section: _____

Percentage and Definition of recycled content request in bid:

% Pre-consumer Content: _____ % Post-consumer Content: _____ %Total Recycled Content: _____

Comparison of Bidders

(Circle successful bidder)

Name of Bidder	Pre-Consumer Content (%)	Post-Consumer Content (%)	Total Recycled Content (%)	Relevance to Green Purchasing Policy	Price (\$)

Price preference paid (if any): _____

Is this a cooperative purchase? _____ If yes, list participants: _____

Total dollars per units purchased: (vendors should be required to provide information on actual usage)

Was there any positive or negative feedback from the users?
