Moving Towards Green Office Supplies

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This document has been edited for public posting online.
Presentation Overview

- What are green office supplies
  - Including office paper, supplies and toner
- Tips for promoting them
- Tips for getting your vendor to help
- Contracting options

Disclaimer: The information provided is based on experience and research conducted by Alameda County GSA. Any references to products, manufacturers, vendors, etc. shall not be construed as an endorsement. Agencies should exercise sound judgment in applying this information to their specific situation.
StopWaste.Org publishes an excellent document that summarizes recommended minimum recycled content levels and green certification standards for many common business products. These standards are taken from reputable standard setting bodies. This document is an excellent place to start when deciding what office supply products to target for your green purchasing program.

![Comprehensive EPP Resource](http://stopwaste.org/docs/guidelinesforepproducts.pdf)
More Resources: Factsheets

- StopWaste.Org
  - [www.stopwaste.org/epp](http://www.stopwaste.org/epp)
  - See factsheets on paper and non-paper office supplies, and toner cartridges

- Responsible Purchasing Network
  - [www.responsiblepurchasing.org](http://www.responsiblepurchasing.org)
  - Purchasing guides and webinars; membership required to access most resources
Even More Resources: Bids

- Alameda County, CA
  - [http://www.acgov.org/sustain/what/purchasing/](http://www.acgov.org/sustain/what/purchasing/)

- King County, WA

- Portland, OR

- EPPnet Listserv
  - [http://www.nerc.org/eppnet/index.html](http://www.nerc.org/eppnet/index.html)
As you consider greening your organizations office supply purchases, don’t forget to include messages that reduce purchases overall, such as buying less or buying reusable products. Also, encouraging bulk purchasing, or consolidation of purchasing orders within a department can reduce the transportation impacts of your contract fulfillment.

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**Before You Buy**

- **Link purchasing to waste reduction**
  - Connect duplex printing and copying to office paper purchases
- **Link purchasing to reuse**
  - Set up office supply reuse areas or encourage staff to restock lightly used items
  - Promote purchase of durable supplies from Alameda County Property & Salvage - (510) 667-7591
- **Encourage consolidation of orders to reduce shipping impacts**
Alameda County has developed an online internal green buying guide as a resource for our 9,000 employees.
What Are Green Office Supplies?

- Contain recycled-content
- Meet third-party standards or eco-labels
- Reusable, refillable, durable, rechargeable
- Non-toxic, low-odor, low-VOC
- Reduce energy consumption
Shades of Green

- Light Green
  - Brand owner certification
  - Below minimum PCR
- Green
  - Eco-label
  - Meets minimum standard
- Dark Green
  - Exceeds minimum standard
Recycled Content Products

- Copy Paper
- Pads / Notebooks
- Envelopes
- File Folders
- Dividers
- Storage Boxes
- Binders
- Calendars / Planners
- Pens, Pencils
- Scissors
- Paper Clips
- Post-It ® Notes
For recycled content products, the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Comprehensive Procurement Guideline serves as the defacto standard for the minimum level of post- and pre-consumer recycled content that should be specified in products.
Eco-labels are very valuable in helping purchasers identify products that meet defined environmental standards. However, purchasers must be careful to use only meaningful labels that demonstrate true environmental achievement, and not just a marketing gimmick or the manufacturers' own standard.
The Responsible Purchasing Network maintains a list of valid eco-labels as a free resource on their website: [http://www.responsiblepurchasing.org/publications/](http://www.responsiblepurchasing.org/publications/), click EPP Resource
Reusable, Rechargeable, Refillable, Remanufactured

- Pens, pencils
- Rechargeable batteries
- USB drives
- Reusable dishware
- 3-Ring binders
- Toner cartridges

These types of items reduce environmental impacts extending the life of the products and, therefore, reducing the amount of resources used.
This is important because, as this graphic illustrates, the impacts of a product occur throughout the entire lifecycle of that product, not just during the time we use it and dispose of it. In fact, the US EPA estimates that, when evaluated on a lifecycle basis, the greenhouse gas emissions related to the provision of goods and packaging account for 42% of all US greenhouse gas emissions.
VOC – Volatile Organic Compounds are a significant source of indoor (and outdoor) pollution. GREENGUARD is an eco-label that certifies products meet stringent VOC limits.
Canned air dusters contain more than just air. They can contain chemicals that are potent greenhouse gasses, more powerful than carbon dioxide. An alternative is a hand-held squeezable blower which you can find by searching online for ‘rocket air blower.’ Key board brushes can also be helpful.
It is important to note that as a leadership standard, the EPEAT standard is designed to be revised every few years in order to raise the bar on environmental leadership. Agencies should evaluate the level of standard to specify based on the number of products available in the market that meet the standard at that level. For instance, agencies should expect that a new or newly revised standard would have mostly bronze and some silver-rated products available, but very few gold products. Over time, manufacturers would improve environmental performance of products to achieve the higher rating.
These are definitions of terms that are used to describe cartridges:

- **OEM** – Original Equipment Manufacturer
- **Remanufactured** – Reuse case, replace worn parts, refill with new toner
- **Starter Cartridge** – low toner level
- **Standard Yield** – typical product on market
- **High Yield** – typically twice as much toner
Benefits and Savings

- Remanufactured
  - Can be remanufactured 3-4 times
  - Remanufactured cartridge save 3 quarts of oil, avoids 5-9 lbs of material waste
  - Save 30-60% over OEM equivalent*

- High Yield
  - Long life means less material use, shipping
  - Save 20-30% over standard yield cartridge*

*Based on 2012 CA State Contract; savings on cost/page basis; analysis performed by RPN
Remanufactured Cartridge Quality Issues

- Ask manufacturers if they follow STMC guidelines from International Imaging Technology Council (http://www.i-itc.org)
  - Proper quality control testing equipment
  - Training to use standardized test methods
- Large office supply companies use cartridges from Clover Technologies, which is certified
- No local remanufacturers certified, but should use same test equipment and test methods

The term local used in bullet three refers to Alameda County
Other Considerations

- **Warranties**
  - All cartridges should have a one year warranty
  - For remanufactured cartridges, also ask for a warranty on printer damage caused by faulty cartridges
  - Make sure users know about the warranty – “Try it risk free!”

- **Recycling/return program**
  - These can be mail back or pick-up
  - OEM’s may have loyalty programs
  - Aftermarket vendors may pay for cartridges

Additional specifications for remanufactured toner and ink cartridges
So there are green products… but what about the cost?

Examples:
- Energy Avoidance
- Remanufactured / Refurbished Items
- Energy Star items
- Power-saving strips
- Water-saving taps
- Green cleaners
- Rechargeable
- Reusable
- Microfiber Wipes
- Energy Star Technology
- Fuel efficient Vehicles
- Many recycled items
- Recycled Copy Paper
- Carbon Offsets
- Compostable Dishware

Source of this graphic is Office Depot.
Tips on Managing Cost

- Focus effort on competitive value items
  - Neutral or save on the cost continuum
  - Stick to commonly used products, i.e. 30% or 100% PCR, not 50% PCR paper
- Contract for green products
- Ask vendor to identify price competitive alternatives for you
When Products Do Cost More

- Align with your agency mandates
  - Climate Action Plan, LEED EBOM, Green Cities CA, Green Business Certification
- Make the case with environmental benefits
  - RPN maintains a wide variety of calculators: http://www.responsiblepurchasing.org/purchasing_guides/all/calculator/
- Make sure executives can boast
  - Measure and report improvements
Getting people to buy greener products reminds me of the old adage: You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make them drink.
Evaluate What You’re Currently Buying

- Ask for annual usage reports from vendor:
  - Included: product description, SKU, unit, cost/unit, quantity purchased, total spend, post-consumer recycled content of product
- Look for high volume items and seek alternatives
- Work with vendor if cost is an issue
Outreach & Education

- Get products in their hands
  - Ask vendor to do green product fair
  - Ask for or invest in demo products
- Promote use of the green catalog or green favorites list (if available)
- Set goals and report on usage
- Market greener products to employees
This is an example of an information sheet Alameda County produced to highlight green office supplies.
Vendor Technology

- Have green catalog as home page and list green items first when searching
- Ensure catalog clearly marks products that are environmentally preferable
- Block products not allowed (hard block)
- Have system suggest preferable products that are equivalent in function and cost competitive (soft block)

Here are some strategies you can ask your vendor to employ on your behalf.
These contracts are both valid at the time of this presentation, but are set to expire on June 30, 2013. Alameda County expects to issue a Request for Proposal in early 2013.
Other Contracts

- US Communities- Independent Stationers
  - Uses local distributors
  - Suggests green items first, can block items
  - [http://www.uscommunities.org/isg/](http://www.uscommunities.org/isg/)

- WSCA - Office Max and Staples
  - Sophisticated website technologies available

- State of CA
  - Office Paper and Toner contracts
  - [www.dgs.ca.gov/buyinggreen](http://www.dgs.ca.gov/buyinggreen)
Two Final Resources

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