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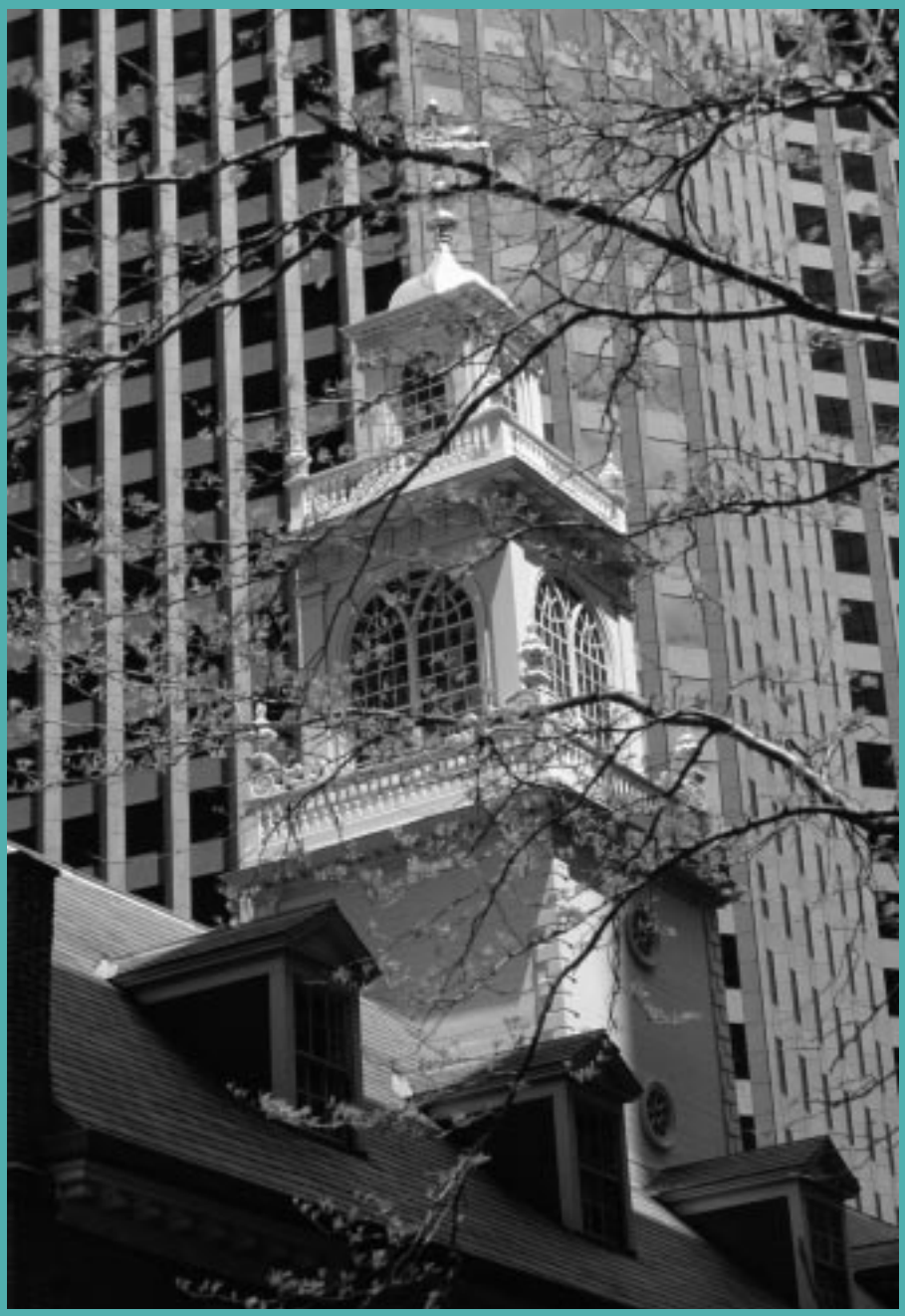
1 EPA

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program

Green Spending

A Case Study of Massachusetts' Environmental Purchasing Program



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EPP

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program

Environmentally preferable purchasing ensures that environmental considerations are included in purchasing decisions, along with traditional factors such as product price and performance. The EPP program provides guidance for federal agencies to facilitate purchases of goods and services that pose fewer burdens on the environment.

For more information contact:
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Foreword

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognizes that environmentally preferable purchasing is a dynamic concept that, depending on the product category, will not necessarily be implemented in the same manner from agency to agency or even within a specific agency. In order to demonstrate some of the ways environmentally preferable purchasing principles are currently being applied, EPA is documenting examples of environmental purchasing efforts undertaken by Executive agencies, state and local governments, and the private sector.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' environmental purchasing program is one of these efforts. This case study describes how Massachusetts incorporated environmental attributes into its purchasing process and how it spread the word to Commonwealth purchasers about the importance of buying environmental products. This case study illustrates how collaborating with other agencies and emphasizing education and outreach can result in a successful environmental purchasing program. We hope the lessons and insights documented in this case study will help you and your organization as you begin incorporating environmental preferability into your purchasing decisions.

Purchasing in Perspective

- The federal government purchases more than **$200 billion** worth of goods and services each year.
- State and local governments combined purchase more than **$1 trillion** worth of goods and services per year, according to *Governing* magazine's *Sourcebook 1997*.
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts purchases more than **$300 million** worth of commodities each year.

EPA's Environmentally Preferable Guidance

EPA identified seven guiding principles to help federal agencies incorporate environmental preferability into their procurement practices. The following principles were proposed in the *Federal Register* (FR) in EPA's "Guidance on Acquisition of Environmentally Preferable Products and Services" (60 FR 50722):

1. Consideration of environmental preferability should begin early in the acquisition process and be rooted in the ethic of pollution prevention, which strives to eliminate or reduce, up front, potential risks to human health and the environment.
2. A product or service's environmental preferability is a function of multiple attributes.
3. Environmental preferability should reflect the lifecycle considerations of products and services to the extent feasible.
4. Environmental preferability should consider the scale (e.g., global versus local) and temporal reversibility aspects of a product or service's impact.
5. Environmental preferability should be tailored to local conditions where appropriate.
6. The environmental objectives of products or services should be a factor or subfactor in competition among vendors, when appropriate.
7. Agencies need to examine product attribute claims carefully.

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Introduction

A state government can significantly affect the kinds of products and services that are supplied through its large, influential purchasing power. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which purchases more than $300 million in commodities each year, opted to help the environment through its purchasing practices. Rather than simply awarding contracts to the lowest bidders, Massachusetts has taken a proactive stance toward purchasing and now incorporates environmental considerations into its purchasing decisions.

Massachusetts is one of the first states to go beyond a buy-recycled program by incorporating various other innovative environmental practices into its procurements, such as awarding points to bidders and vendors who meet specific environmental criteria. Since 1988, when Massachusetts first established its environmental purchasing program, the Commonwealth has devoted more of its resources each year to the procurement of environmentally preferable goods. In fact, in fiscal year 1997, the Commonwealth spent $34 million on dozens of products with environmental attributes, and in many cases, these products were less expensive than their conventional counterparts.

Traditionally, environmental purchasing programs are managed by state environmental officials who try to work with procurement departments to ensure that environmental attributes are incorporated in their specifications. Due to differing goals and distance between offices, however, this relationship has often been problematic for some states. Consequently, Massachusetts decided to try a different approach. Through funding provided by environmental agencies, the Operational Services Division (OSD), the central purchasing agency for the state, hired two staff members to work solely on environmental issues. These individuals, who are considered part of OSD's staff, attend procurement meetings and play a central role in writing specifications for statewide contracts. This unique approach has enabled the purchasing office to rely more on its own resources, communicate more effectively within the office, and produce the resulting environmental success.

Massachusetts' experience with this program provides useful tips for states, government agencies, and other organizations interested in applying EPA's guiding principles for environmental purchasing. This case study documents the lessons learned by Massachusetts about environmental procurement, including the need to do the following:

- Collaborate with other agencies that can contribute necessary skills and valuable perspective to the project.
- Interact directly with purchasers and utilize brochures, fact sheets, and other informational materials.

- Educate purchasers and end-users about environmentally preferable products rather than simply requiring them to buy the products.
- Make products with environmental attributes more easily accessible to purchasers.
- Be patient and persistent.

This case study provides background information on the Commonwealth's environmental purchasing program, an overview of the program and its successes, and a discussion of the challenges and opportunities Massachusetts is likely to encounter when it expands the program in the future. Information was obtained by conducting interviews with several key officials responsible for implementing the Commonwealth's program and by consulting annual reports and other documents published by Massachusetts.

Putting Environmental Purchasing Into Action

Setting the Stage

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' environmental purchasing efforts originated in its buy-recycled program. Launched in 1988 with a Commonwealth executive order on recycled products procurement, the buy-recycled program gained added momentum in 1992 with the publication of the Commonwealth's Solid Waste Master Plan. That plan established a 46 percent recycling rate goal by 2000 and acknowledged the importance of buy-recycled efforts in meeting that goal. The Commonwealth reached a milestone in its buy-recycled campaign in July 1994, when it included recycled-content requirements in its contracts for printing and writing paper.

Based on the success of its buy-recycled program, Massachusetts recognized it could purchase other products with favorable environmental attributes and began incorporating additional attributes into the procurement process.

Massachusetts' definition of products with environmental attributes is similar to the federal government's definition in Executive Order 12873. The Massachusetts definition reads, "Environmentally preferable products are...commodities or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. Such products and services may include, but are not limited to, those which minimize waste, utilize recycled materials, conserve energy or water, and/or reduce the consumption or disposal of toxic materials."

How Environmental Purchasing Works in Massachusetts

Commonwealth agencies can purchase products in the following three ways:

- **Through statewide contracts.** These contracts are for high-volume purchases by multiple agencies on which the Commonwealth spends more than $50,000 each year. In addition to the approximately 70 Commonwealth agencies, municipalities and authorities (such as schools) also can buy products through statewide contracts. Massachusetts' central purchasing agency, OSD, does not track these purchases, however.
- **Through independent agency purchases.** If an individual agency identifies the need for a product that is not on a statewide contract, it can purchase the item through an independent agency purchase.
- **Through small purchases.** Agencies can purchase products as small purchases if they are buying less than $1,000 worth of a product, as long as the product is not on a statewide contract.

Agencies must purchase products through a statewide contract, unless the products are unavailable or do not meet the specifications for a particular use. Special

products required for certain types of equipment also are exempt from statewide contract purchasing.

OSD is responsible for establishing statewide contracts, writing product specifications, monitoring Commonwealth purchasing, and educating agency purchasers. OSD also coordinates Massachusetts' environmental purchasing efforts with help from two other Commonwealth agencies: the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Money from DEP's Clean Environment Fund supports two environmental purchasing positions within OSD: an environmental purchasing coordinator and an environmental purchasing trainer. These individuals attend procurement meetings and play a central role in writing specifications for statewide contracts, which has enabled the purchasing office to rely more on its own resources and communicate more effectively within the office.

In the past, DEP attempted to coordinate the Commonwealth's environmental purchasing efforts. DEP found, however, that staff members did not have the time necessary to devote to purchasing in addition to their other duties. Communication and interaction between DEP and OSD also was difficult because the two agencies were in separate buildings. The Commonwealth eventually realized that individuals were needed in the purchasing office to help incorporate environmental attributes into the procurement process.

An interagency workgroup comprised of representatives from OSD, DEP, and EOEA meets bimonthly to ensure cooperation among the various players in the environmental purchasing program and to share information. In addition, the environmental purchasing coordinator and trainer meet with OSD procurement staff on a regular basis. They attend team meetings, for example, with the procurement staff members responsible for writing specifications for products in a certain category. This type of interaction ensures that procurement staff learn more about environmental issues and environmental experts gain a better understanding of procurement. It also minimizes the difficulties encountered by both procurement and environmental staff members in communicating with one another and fosters better relations among the agencies involved.

Key collaborators in Massachusetts' environmental purchasing program include the following:

- Operational Services Division
- Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
- Department of Environmental Protection

The Main Event: Product Evaluation

Gathering Data

Together, the environmental purchasing coordinator and trainer identify products that appear to be good candidates for incorporation into their environmental purchasing program. In order to be a good candidate, a product should be available in the marketplace or information about its environmental attributes should be available. The coordinator and trainer then talk with other purchasers, determine whether any specifications or standards currently exist for the product, and analyze the cost of the product in relation to a competing conventional product that serves the same purpose. To gather this information, the coordinator and trainer contact other states and municipalities active in environmental purchasing, conduct searches on the Internet, and send out queries through the National Association of State Purchasing Officials (NASPO), an organization of state government purchasers that maintains a database of recycled commodities. (See the NASPO Web site at <www.naspo.org>.)

Verifying Product Information

OSD relies, in great part, on information provided by vendors when determining a product's environmental attributes. Vendors certify that the products they supply meet the specifications of the contract or bid. OSD depends on the accuracy and truthfulness of this information, as it does not verify the information provided by the vendors. OSD also does not conduct independent lifecycle assessments of products to determine their complete environmental impact.

> "We don't want to cause people stress. We want to make products available and encourage people to use them through marketing and education. We believe that if you force people to buy certain products, it will hurt the program in the long run."
>
> —Eric Friedman, Environmental Purchasing Coordinator, OSD

Vendors realize that the Commonwealth can cancel a contract at any time if the information they provide is inaccurate; thus, they presumably provide honest and accurate information. The environmental purchasing coordinator and trainer also occasionally visit manufacturers of some of the environmental products the Commonwealth purchases to see how the products are made and to ask for letters certifying the environmental attributes of the particular product. Recently, for example, the environmental purchasing coordinator and trainer visited a plastic bag manufacturer to observe how recycled plastic pellets are used to make the bags.

Incorporating Products Into Statewide Contracts

Once information about environmental products is collected and analyzed, the environmental staff brings it to the attention of the procurement team writing the contract specifications. Often, an existing product specification is brought to the procurement team to use when writing the state's specification. OSD maintains a library of existing product specifications, as well as other product information, such as performance and cost.

The environmental staff works with procurement teams to determine whether they can change an existing product specification or if a separate specification is needed. In some cases, OSD establishes dual contracts for items. OSD maintains one contract for recycled paint, for example, and another for virgin paint. The environmental staff recommends taking this approach if a product is relatively new to the marketplace or if its performance is still being evaluated. In addition, OSD might establish a dual contract for a product if less than three vendors offer the environmentally preferable product or if the cost of the environmental product is significantly higher than its conventional counterpart.

Two products for which Massachusetts currently has dual contracts are paint and motor oil. Massachusetts has found that recycled paint is not available in the variety of colors and types required by some purchasers. The state, therefore, has a dual contract for recycled and virgin paint. While motor oil is currently purchased using a similar dual contract, the state is investigating the use of a single contract that would specify that all motor oil must contain a minimum of 50 percent re-refined oil base stock. (Motor oil typically consists of base stock and additives.) For many purchases, the state already exceeds this 50 percent requirement; it purchases motor oil containing 75 to 100 percent re-refined oil base stock.

The Challenge of Multiple Environmental Attributes

The Commonwealth finds it challenging to consider multiple attributes on an individual product basis for several reasons. Among these reasons is a lack of available information on multiple attributes. Product information tends to focus on single attributes, and sometimes individual attributes are at odds with one another. Some paper products, for example, are available either with recycled content or chlorine-free content, but are not available with both of these environmental attributes.

Most of Massachusetts' program has focused on considering single attributes of products, with a few notable exceptions. OSD is currently considering more than one environmental attribute in two of its paper contracts. Its janitorial paper contract requires that paper be made with recycled content and that it not be bleached with elemental chlorine. The two-way envelopes Massachusetts buys are made with recycled content and prevent waste by eliminating the need for return envelopes. In addition, Massachusetts is in the final stages of development for bid specifications involving multiple attributes for cleaning products. The specifications will address attributes such as biodegradability, volatile organic compounds, skin and eye irritants, carcinogens, and toxic ingredients.

Although OSD has found it more difficult to integrate multiple attributes than single attributes, it plans to continue to consider more than one environmental attribute on a product-specific basis as it learns more about other agencies' and organizations' environmental purchasing successes.

Spreading the Word About Environmental Purchasing

Rather than issue a mandate, Massachusetts adopted an educational approach for its environmental procurement program. OSD believes that allowing customers to make well-informed decisions based on available information is as efficient as, if not more so, than requiring customers to comply with strict program guidelines. As OSD has realized, a satisfied customer is the best marketing tool.

Educating Vendors

In addition to indicating its preference for products with environmental attributes through contract and solicitation language, OSD communicates with vendors through its Internet home page, <www.magnet.state.ma.us/osd/enviro/enviro.htm>. OSD also calls vendors directly to express its interest in environmental products and to request information about product attributes. Vendors are generally receptive to OSD's request for information and frequently call OSD to promote particular products.

Educating Customers (End-Users)

OSD has worked to broaden its definition of "customer" in order to spread the word about environmental purchasing to entities other than Commonwealth agencies. Its customer base now includes all executive agencies; authorities such as the Massachusetts Port Authority; universities; municipalities, including local schools; and purchasing cooperatives on both the municipal and county levels. OSD educates its customers about environmental purchasing in the following ways:

- **Commonwealth vendors' fairs.** OSD considers vendors' fairs one of the most successful ways to spread the word about its environmental purchasing efforts. OSD held three fairs in the past 3 years. At the fairs, Commonwealth purchasers can speak directly with vendors. OSD also offers training seminars on purchasing products in different categories as well as on writing product specifications. OSD has no direct measure of the impact of the fairs on purchasers; the fairs are popular, however, drawing increasingly large numbers of attendees. Participation has grown from 40 vendors and 140 purchasers at the first fair to 85 vendors and 400 purchasers at the most recent fair.
- **Workshops.** OSD holds periodic workshops that address general environmental purchasing issues. In fiscal year 1995, OSD held 11 such workshops, but attendance was low and the workshops required a tremendous amount of time to organize. As a result, OSD decided to contact other organizations holding workshops or conferences in Massachusetts to incorporate sessions on environmental purchasing into their events, thus saving valuable time and effort. In addition, if an agency or municipality in the Commonwealth approaches OSD and requests a workshop on a specific topic, OSD will organize the event. This process allows OSD to focus its efforts on educating a targeted audience without going to the trouble of sending out invitations, finding a workshop site, and coordinating other meeting logistics.

- **Awards program.** To provide an incentive to Commonwealth agencies to purchase environmentally preferable products, OSD created an awards program to acknowledge agencies and municipalities that have been particularly active in environmental purchasing. Awards are presented in each of the following seven categories: 1) best overall agency program, 2) best overall municipal program, 3) most innovative program, 4) best targeted program, 5) best facility program, 6) best university program, 7) best written policy, and 8) best environmentally preferable purchasing program. In November 1997, OSD presented awards to six agencies and two municipalities in the Commonwealth.

- **Web site.** OSD dedicated a page on its Web site to environmental procurement. The site contains various procurement annual reports and publications (that can be downloaded), includes updates on the Commonwealth's environmental purchasing efforts, and promotes upcoming events.

- **Fact sheets.** OSD produced six fact sheets on buying re-refined oil, recycled paint, remanufactured toner cartridges, recycled paper, recycled envelopes, and recycled office supplies. Designed to educate Massachusetts purchasers, these fact sheets include information on cost comparisons between environmental products and their conventional counterparts, case studies of Commonwealth entities currently using the environmental products, and facts about the products' performance and standards. OSD distributes the fact sheets to agencies, municipalities, and authorities and makes them available on its Web site. OSD plans to develop additional fact sheets over the next several months.

- **Guidebook.** OSD developed a 24-page *Recycled Products Guide*, which lists all the statewide contracts that offer environmental products. The guide also includes tips for writing product specifications, instructions on how to use state contracts, and steps to follow in order to start a buy-recycled program for municipalities. Although the primary audience for the guide is agencies and municipalities, any Commonwealth purchaser can request a copy.

- **Informational mailings.** Periodically, OSD sends information to Commonwealth purchasers about specific products or contracts. OSD uses mailing lists developed by other agencies or departments in Massachusetts as well as a list of purchasers who attended the most recent vendor fair.

The address for OSD's Environmental Procurements Web site is:

www.magnet.state.ma.us/osd/enviro/enviro.htm

Massachusetts customers who have purchased products based on their environmental attributes—including cleaners, recycled paint, recycled-content plastic lumber products, remanufactured toner cartridges, energy efficient lighting, and retread tires—are pleased with the Commonwealth's educational efforts. According to many customers, vendor fairs and *The Recycled Products Guide* are particularly helpful in raising awareness about these products. Many customers also state that the Commonwealth's list of environmental products saves them time and resources they would have spent identifying products. Some customers recommend, however, that Massachusetts more clearly communicate the cost-effectiveness of buying certain environmental products.

> "The Commonwealth is dedicated to getting the word out on environmentally preferable products and making them available on statewide contracts. OSD has made it easier to purchase these products, and OSD staff members are accessible to communities that have questions about purchasing the products."
>
> —Sharon Byrne Kishida, Regional Recycling Coordinator, Essex County

Procurement Reform and Its Impact on Environmental Purchasing

Massachusetts recently conducted an evaluation of purchasing process costs and the performance of products purchased under statewide contracts. The Commonwealth performed the evaluation because the procurement staff were spending 80 percent of their time processing only 20 percent of Massachusetts' purchases. The state was also concerned that, by awarding contracts only to the lowest bidders, it was sacrificing product quality and durability and, therefore, not meeting agency needs. As a result, Massachusetts changed several aspects of its procurement process.

Instead of always awarding a contract to the lowest bidder, OSD now tries to include value and environmental considerations in its award criteria. Massachusetts focuses on environmental criteria when appropriate and makes every attempt to incorporate a purchasing preference for products with environmental attributes. OSD considers a procurement to represent the best value when it performs well, provides the best quality and economic value, encourages competition among vendors, and ensures the continuing participation of quality vendors. In addition to considering the best value and assuring that procurements meet contract specifications, OSD awards points to bidders who meet various environmental criteria including recycled content, energy or water conservation, and toxic or other waste reduction. OSD is beginning to award contracts more frequently to vendors who meet environmental criteria and has established a goal to make this a standard practice.

Massachusetts also is beginning to award points to vendors that use products and services with environmental attributes in conducting their business. For its grocer contract, for example, Massachusetts offered additional points to vendors who submitted an environmental plan in which they agreed to initiate source reduction of primary and secondary packaging, recycle packaging materials, examine the cost of adding a line of cleaners and disinfectants with environmental attributes, provide automatic dispensing systems to minimize excess spillage and use of cleaners, and investigate the use of alternative fuel vehicles for the grocer fleet. Massachusetts is currently reviewing the effectiveness of its new points system.

OSD finds that the cost-competitiveness of environmental products differs according to the product category. Recycled-content paper products, for example, are often priced competitively to virgin products. Some products with environmentally preferable attributes, such as remanufactured toner cartridges, are cheaper than their counterparts. In some cases, where vendors submitted bids for environmental products that were not priced competitively, OSD successfully renegotiated with the vendor for a lower price.

In one instance, after an award was made to a recycled paint vendor, OSD discovered that end-users were not purchasing the recycled paint because it was approximately 10 percent more expensive than virgin paint. OSD approached the vendor, explained why end-users were not buying the recycled paint, and asked whether the vendor could lower its prices. In order to keep the Commonwealth's business, the vendor reduced its price to within a few cents of the price for virgin paint.

Due to these and other changes brought about by procurement reform, OSD revised its *Procurement Policies and Procedures Handbook* to include a section on environmental purchasing. The new section describes procuring departments' responsibilities regarding environmental purchasing, lists the environmental products available on statewide contracts, and recommends methods for promoting the use of products and services with environmental attributes.

Measuring Success

One important measure OSD uses to gauge the success of its program is the amount of money it spends on environmental products. Massachusetts increased its spending on products with environmental attributes from approximately $2 million in 1992 to approximately $34 million in 1997.

Other indicators of success include the variety of products purchased (at least 45 types) and the number of environmental product contracts. Aside from recycled-content products, OSD finds it rather difficult to track the use of products with other environmental attributes. OSD can track the number of Energy Star computers purchased in a year, for example, and estimate the associated energy savings. This estimated figure, however, might not be representative of actual savings since OSD has no way of determining whether the energy saving feature on the computers is actually being used. This uncertainty derives from accounts of computer support staff members disabling the energy saving feature when the computer is set up and then forgetting to reactivate it. OSD is hoping to rectify this problem by considering ways to educate computer support staff members about the importance of using the energy saving feature.

OSD also measures success in more qualitative ways, namely by attempting to gauge the level of support for the program within the Commonwealth and the extent to which awareness about products' environmental attributes has been raised. In order to conduct these evaluations, OSD solicits regular feedback from end-users about product performance and addresses their responses accordingly. If responses are negative, the environmental purchasing coordinator and trainer attempt to determine the source of the customers' dissatisfaction. An attempt also is made to ascertain whether the dissatisfaction is based on the product itself or on how the product is being used. If an end-user expresses dissatisfaction with a remanufactured toner cartridge, for example, OSD tries to determine if the problem is the actual toner cartridge, the way the cartridge is used, or the maintenance of the laser printer.

Questions for the Future

OSD is currently considering a number of key questions to help shape the future of its environmental purchasing program. These questions include how to consider multiple attributes, how to address issues inherent to procurement reform, and how to maintain program interest and momentum. Massachusetts hopes to find answers to these questions by looking at other local, state, and federal government efforts as well as companies' experiences of purchasing environmental products.

How Can Multiple Attributes Best Be Incorporated?

Massachusetts is committed to expanding its environmental purchasing activities beyond single-attribute products such as recycled-content plastic lumber. As previously described, the Commonwealth is currently purchasing recycled-content, chlorine-free paper products, and recycled-content two-way envelopes that prevent waste by eliminating the need for return envelopes. The state also is finalizing bid specifications for cleaning products that will consider multiple attributes including biodegradability, volatile organic compounds, skin and eye irritants, carcinogens, and toxic ingredients. OSD continues to research ways to incorporate multiple attributes into purchasing decisions on a case-by-case basis. OSD understands that, when multiple attributes are involved, it needs to determine which of them to consider and when, as well as how to prioritize them.

How Will Procurement Reform Affect Environmental Purchasing?

Recent changes in Massachusetts' procurement process are affecting the Commonwealth's environmental purchasing efforts in two ways:

- Statewide contracts are being consolidated into "mega" contracts, which include broad specifications for thousands of items. The number of products covered under one contract will make it more difficult to ensure that environmental criteria are specified for individual products.
- Purchasing authority is being granted to more Commonwealth agencies who are then able to solicit items through their own bids. Ensuring that all buyers include environmental criteria in their purchasing decisions will be more difficult because of the number of individuals involved.

As these changes take effect, OSD will need to increase its efforts to educate purchasers, even though these efforts can be resource-intensive. OSD realizes that challenges posed by future changes in procurement processes will need to be addressed as well. OSD believes that education and outreach will continue to be an important component of its environmental purchasing program.

How Will OSD Maintain Program Interest and Momentum?

Officials involved in the Massachusetts purchasing program acknowledge that these programs typically require an investment of resources to sustain interest and to inform and train purchasing staff. Although DEP has no plans to stop funding the two environmental purchasing positions within OSD, the department originally intended to become less involved over time, assuming that environmental expertise would become institutionalized within the purchasing division. Some DEP officials, however, are concerned about the program's continued viability without long-term DEP involvement, given the promotional and training needs inherent in such voluntary programs.

Helpful Tips From Massachusetts' Experience

Although the Massachusetts program is still in its developmental stage, the insight gained thus far by program managers can help other states, agencies, and businesses seeking to incorporate environmental criteria into their purchasing process. Here are some tips:

- **Seek support and involvement from other agencies.** One of the keys to the success of the Massachusetts program is the cooperative arrangement among its environmental division, purchasing division, and executive environmental office. When representatives from the three agencies meet to keep one another informed of their efforts, both progress and objectives remain clear. Working together, and with senior management support, these government agencies have been able to ensure that environmental criteria are effectively incorporated into the purchasing process.

- **Look for opportunities for face-to-face interaction with purchasers.** OSD learned that fact sheets, guidebooks, and informational mailings, although useful, are usually not as effective as a face-to-face conversation with a purchaser. OSD staff members, for example, met on several occasions with Massachusetts Highway Department personnel. That effort resulted in the Highway Department's decision to buy recycled-content plastic lumber products and re-refined oil.

- **Use vendors' fairs to help spread the word about environmental purchasing.** OSD realized that its annual vendors' fair is an important element in Massachusetts' environmentally preferable purchasing program. Vendors' fairs provide an opportunity for purchasers to talk directly to vendors about their environmental products. The fairs also increase the credibility of the products by demonstrating that a broad range of items are readily available from numerous sources. Vendors' fairs create greater visibility and interest in the entire program.

- **Focus on education rather than requiring purchasers to buy certain products.** Massachusetts focused on making products with environmental attributes available and encouraged people to use them through marketing and education. OSD found that a satisfied customer is the best marketing tool. The Massachusetts Highway Department, for example, is currently promoting environmental products to other agencies because it is so pleased with the environmental products it purchased through the Commonwealth's contracts. OSD relies on these kinds of success stories, as well as user testimonials and pilot tests, to show that the products perform well.

- **Acknowledge mistakes and take steps to remedy them.** OSD acknowledges that it is breaking new ground by trying to incorporate environmental criteria into purchasing. When products do not perform up to par, OSD tries to remedy the situation by investigating the cause of the product dissatisfaction and brokering a relationship between the product vendor and the user to correct the problem.

- **Do not expect change overnight.** Overcoming purchaser resistance takes time and energy, but can be accomplished with persistent education, outreach, and the willingness to be flexible.

Opportunities for Growth

OSD currently plans to add other products and product attributes to its environmental purchasing program. OSD is considering the purchase of Energy Star fax machines and copiers, in addition to computers and printers, and is in the process of writing specifications for cleaning products with environmental attributes. In addition, OSD hopes to expand its program to include products purchased indirectly through service contracts, which involves a far greater number of products than those purchased directly. Examples of indirect service providers include companies that offer cleaning or construction services.

As these efforts indicate, OSD and its cooperating agencies are committed to expanding the environmental purchasing program and look forward to future successes in environmental procurement.

For More Information

For more information about Massachusetts' environmentally preferable purchasing program, visit the Commonwealth's home page on environmental purchasing at <www.magnet.state.ma.us/osd/enviro/enviro.htm>. You also can contact:

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EPP

We want to hear from you! Please tell us about your environmentally preferable purchasing activities and efforts. We are collecting and sharing information, tools, and hints about what works and what doesn't, as environmentally preferable purchasing evolves and expands. Please contact the EPP program by e-mail, regular mail, or fax:

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