

Chapter 38. Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

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38.001 Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy

This chapter is known as the "Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy" or "EPP Policy."

38.002 Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to define roles and responsibilities of County employees when procuring goods and services.

38.003 Definitions

In this chapter and the Travis County EPP Guidance Manual:

- (1) "EPP" means Environmentally Preferable Purchasing which includes purchasing and procuring products and services that have the least adverse effect on human health and the quality of the environment when compared to similar products and services and also taking into account factors such as the Product Life Cycle.
- (2) "EPP Manual" means the Travis County Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Guidance Manual.
- (3) "Product Life Cycle" means the consecutive and interlinked stages of a product including the extraction of raw materials, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, use, reuse, operation, maintenance, and final disposal. Each stage of the product life cycle uses resources and creates impacts such emissions caused by the transportation of products, or the extraction of raw materials.
- (4) "Recycled Content" means products manufactured with material that has been recovered or diverted from the waste stream. Recycled Content may be derived from post-consumer waste (material that served its intended end-use and has been discarded by a consumer), industrial scrap, manufacturing waste, or other recovered waste.

- (5) "Shopper" is a County employee who is responsible for purchasing and procuring a product or service to be used by the County.

38.004 – 38.009 [Reserved for Expansion]

38.010 Shopper Responsibilities

- (a) Shoppers shall consider environmentally preferable attributes when purchasing products or services such as products containing Recycled Content, EcoLabels or certifications (examples provided in the EPP Manual).
- (b) For purchases less than \$50,000, where practical and applicable, the Shopper shall evaluate long-term costs and consider the Product Life Cycle before making the purchase.
- (c) For purchases greater than \$50,000, where practical and applicable, when preparing the specifications for a solicitation and the evaluation factors for selection of a vendor, County staff shall include long-term costs throughout the Product Life Cycle as part of the criteria for reviewing the price of a product before making the purchase.
- (d) Shoppers and decision-makers should seek products that:
 - (1) Have the fewest adverse health effects such as skin, eye, nose, throat, and lung irritation from toxic compounds,
 - (2) Contain the fewest toxic chemicals,
 - (3) Contain either no or low levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can escape during product use,
 - (4) Avoid unnecessary additives such as fragrances and dyes,
 - (5) Can be recycled, composted, repaired, or reused at the end of the product's life, and
 - (6) Have environmentally preferable product certifications as described in the EPP Manual.
- (e) Shoppers and decision-makers should seek services such as printing, landscaping, or janitorial services that:
 - (1) Use the maximum Recycled Content possible
 - (2) Reduce energy use
 - (3) Use native plants
 - (4) Use non-toxic products
 - (5) Have environmentally preferable certifications or attributes (examples provided in the EPP Manual)

- (f) Shoppers and County employees shall continue to employ EPP practices, such as:
 - (1) Working with vendors to ensure end of life management such as takeback of products including computers and other electronics,
 - (2) Purchasing environmentally preferable cleaning and custodial products,
 - (3) Achieving LEED silver or better certification for new County buildings,
 - (4) Considering methods of transportation and shipment of products that are more environmentally conscientious, and
 - (4) Other EPP practices that have become standard in County operations.
- (g) Before purchasing new products, Shoppers shall verify the need and determine if the product requested is available within the department or through the County reuse outlets such as the Purchasing Warehouse or the Travis County Reuse Store.
- (h) Shoppers can notify Environmental Quality Program staff of EPP success stories as well as barriers to purchasing environmentally preferable products or other challenges. Environmental Quality Program staff shall provide assistance, and document successes and challenges.

38.011 Education

The Environmental Quality Program, with the assistance of the Purchasing Office and the Auditor's Office, shall educate and provide training for County employees on the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy and the EPP Manual.

38.012 Departmental Responsibilities:

- (a) All Travis County departments under the Commissioners Court shall:
 - (1) Allow staff time to complete EPP training provided by the Environmental Quality Program,
 - (2) Allow staff time to implement the sustainable purchasing strategies in the EPP Manual, and
 - (3) Encourage staff to follow the best practices and strategies in the EPP Manual.
- (b) The Commissioners Court encourages the elected officials to do the same with their employees.

38.013 Reporting

- (a) In April of each year, the Environmental Quality Program shall prepare and deliver an update on the implementation of this chapter to the Commissioners Court as part of the Annual Sustainability Report. The Auditor's Office will

assist with compiling items (b)(1) and (b)(7) of this report based on data available in SAP.

- (b) The report shall include:
- (1) The types, quantities, and dollar value of purchases of products that include Recycled Content;
 - (2) EPP success stories, shared with Environmental Quality staff;
 - (3) Barriers to the procurement of EPP products or services shared with Environmental Quality staff, or
 - (4) Instances where EPP was found impracticable as identified by Shoppers;
 - (5) Other EPP feedback and lessons learned;
 - (6) The number and type of EPP strategies undertaken, and examples of each strategy by category, commodity, supplier segment, agency, or division;
 - (7) The total contracting amount and percent spent on products and services that qualify as EPP based on strategies described in the EPP Manual; and
 - (8) The key environmental, social, and or economic outcomes associated with EPP strategies undertaken.

38.014 Continuous Improvement

- (a) The Green Steering Committee shall meet no less than once per year to evaluate the success and effectiveness of Travis County's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy. The Committee should review at least the following topics:
- (1) Analysis of total County spend on all goods and services,
 - (2) Total County spend on environmentally preferable products and services,
 - (3) EPP success, challenges, and lessons learned,
 - (4) EPP Guidance Manual and policy implementation, and
 - (5) Additional resources needed to achieve EPP goals.
- (b) The Green Steering Committee should identify opportunities for improvement and make necessary changes to the EPP Manual.

38.015 Exemption from EPP Policy

- (a) The EPP Policy does not require Shoppers to purchase products or services that do not perform adequately or that do not provide a good value for the amount paid, taking into consideration the Product Life Cycle. When it is

impractical to purchase an environmentally preferable product or service, the Shopper should document and provide a specific explanation why the purchase was impractical. The documentation and explanation should be shared with the Environmental Quality Program staff.

- (b) The EPP Policy does not require any action that conflicts with local, state, or federal laws or other legal requirements.