



Section 1: PURPOSE:

The purpose of this guidance manual is to provide direction for County employees who are responsible for shopping for products and services and who will have to comply with the Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Policy (Travis County Code Ch. 38) The intent of Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) is to reduce and prevent environmental pollution and to reduce and eliminate risks to human health and the environment. This requires evaluating purchases based on a variety of criteria, ranging from the necessity of the purchase in the first place, through the Product Life Cycle, to the options available for disposal after procurement of a product.

Section 2: GOALS:

In line with reducing and preventing environmental pollution, Travis County has set specific EPP goals to determine the success of the EPP program:

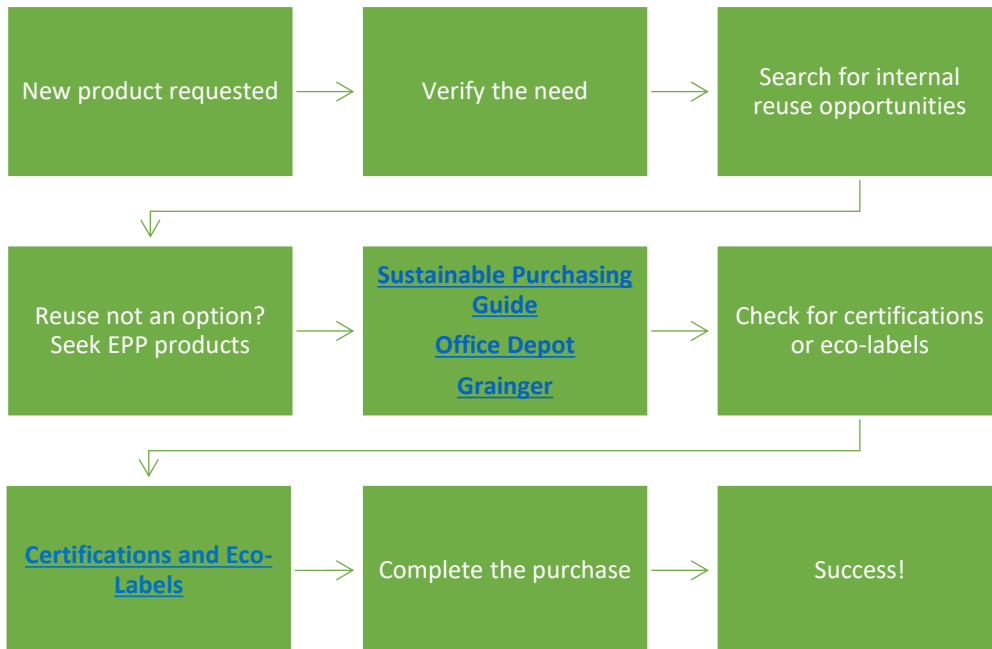
- a) County departments should strive for a minimum of 50% of office supply purchases to be environmentally preferable products unless these products do not perform satisfactorily or are unreasonably expensive. Where practical, when reviewing product price, the Shopper must evaluate long-term costs during the Product Life Cycle.
 - i. An example is reviewing energy savings over the Product Life Cycle for an energy efficient appliance versus a non-energy efficient appliance.
- b) County departments shall continue to employ EPP practices, such as working with technology vendors to ensure takeback of computers and other electronics, purchasing green cleaning and custodial products, achieving LEED silver or better certification when building new County buildings, and other EPP practices that become standard in County operations.
- c) County employees should try to influence vendor behaviors by requesting information on vendor EPP, sustainability or climate action policies or practices, products used, product certifications (see Section 7), and share Chapter 38, Travis County EPP Policy, with all vendors while preparing specifications .
- d) The Environmental Quality Program will collaborate with the Travis County Intergovernmental Relations team to request broader legislative authority for counties to consider Environmentally Preferable standards in the Purchasing and end of product life management processes.
- e) The Green Steering Committee, with the Green Team, will develop internal reuse networks, such as an online Reuse Store, for gently used internally available products.
- f) Shoppers will shop the online Reuse Store and the Purchasing Warehouse for products before spending money on products that are available internally.

Section 3: EPP BEST PRACTICES

a) Product Life Cycle: while it may be difficult to determine the carbon footprint or Product Life Cycle of a product, all County employees should be mindful of the inputs and outputs associated with each product or service. These include the raw materials, energy needed to produce and use the product, transportation impacts, and ultimate disposal when the product or service can no longer be used efficiently. A generic example is provided below, or [click here](#) for a video example



b) Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Process



Have questions or need assistance identifying environmentally preferable products? Check out EPP examples and resources in Section 7 or contact conserve@traviscountytx.gov

c) Considerations and examples to use when purchasing products:

- i. Follow the steps in the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Process (above flow chart)
- ii. Think about the Product Life Cycle:
 - i. What is the product made out of,
 - ii. What were the impacts of manufacturing the product,
 - iii. What transportation impacts come with moving the product from where it was produced to Travis County,
 - iv. How long will the product last and
 - v. What will be done with the product when it can no longer be used –
 1. Can it be
 - a. Repaired,
 - b. Repurposed, or
 - c. Recycled, or
 2. Must the County pay for disposal in a landfill
- iii. Additional factors to consider could include worker safety, wages, treatment, and the vendor's safety record when purchasing.
- iv. For purchases less than \$50,000, instead of buying the first product that emerges from a search, determine whether local, durable, and sustainable alternatives that meet the need at a comparable price exist. A list of links to example environmentally preferable products is included in Section 7.

d) Considerations for solicitation language and working with vendors

- i. A contract scope of work is a great opportunity for Travis County to use its influence over prospective vendors to make all vendors aware of Travis County's EPP policy, as well requiring vendors to provide information about their EPP or sustainability practices.
 - o Additionally, during the contract relationship, contract administrators should ask vendors about the vendor's EPP or sustainability practices and, where applicable, contract administrators should educate and encourage vendor improvement.
- ii. EPP service examples are included in links listed in Section 7.

e) Documenting EPP lessons learned

- i. County staff should document lessons learned such as success stories, challenges, and instances where the County staff deemed it impractical to procure an environmentally preferable product. The staff member should send a specific explanation via email to conserve@traviscountytexas.gov

- ii. County staff should include the product specifications of both the procured product and environmentally preferable alternatives as well as a detailed explanation why the environmentally preferable product was deemed impractical.
- iii. Travis County Environmental Quality staff will track instances and examples of EPP challenges and identify potential solutions.

Section 4: END OF PRODUCT LIFE MANAGEMENT AND BUILDING/OFFICE MOVES

- a) Environmental Quality staff and Purchasing staff will explore options for expedited salvage designation for surplus products.
- b) Environmental Quality staff will develop a list of civic and charitable organizations within Travis County to contact about possible reuse. Per Local Government Code section 263.152 (a) (4) reuse must be “for a public purpose for adequate compensation such as relieving Travis County of the cost of transporting or disposal costs for the product if the Commissioner Court determines that attempting to sell the product would not produce any bids or would cost more than anyone would bid for it to avoid disposal as waste.”
- c) Facilities Plan Design and Construction staff and Purchasing Warehouse staff will designate communication channels and best practices related to large moves or other projects that could result in large volumes of materials going to the Purchasing Warehouse.
- d) Environmental Quality staff and Purchasing Warehouse staff will review process flow for opportunities for improvement and strategize a process for facility moves to manage materials and end of life planning for materials that end up in the Purchasing Warehouse.

Section 5: GREEN STEERING COMMITTEE ROLES

The Green Steering Committee will perform in the following roles:

- a) Seek continuous improvement by reviewing and revising the EPP policy and EPP guidance manual as appropriate.
- b) Analyze EPP metrics and reports to determine efficacy of the EPP policy and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
- c) Compare current end of life management processes to best practices for local governments.
- d) Identify positions and staff members that should be required to take the EPP online training module in addition to SAP Shoppers and Purchasing Office staff, if applicable.
- e) Examine County landscaping practices and contracts to determine alignment with the EPP policy.

Additional information and background on the Green Steering Committee can be found in the [Recycling Participation Order](#).

Section 6: EDUCATION PLAN

- a) Environmental Quality Program staff, with the assistance of the Purchasing Office and the Auditor’s Office, shall educate County employees on the Environmentally Preferable

Purchasing Policy and practices within 60 days of an employee being designated as a Shopper or purchaser and at least once per year.

b) Roles:

- i. Auditor's Office staff will provide training and assistance for use of the Learning Management System, which can be used to host both online and classroom training. They will also assist with identifying County employees assigned shopping related roles in SAP, who are the target audience for education and outreach.
- ii. Environmental Quality staff will lead education efforts and conduct the trainings or presentations. Environmental Quality staff will also create, review, and update training materials.
- iii. Purchasing staff will ensure all Purchasing Office staff members complete EPP training, and offer Environmental Quality staff presentation opportunities during Purchasing-sponsored events, such as POW Purchasing Workshops, HUB training, and other applicable training outlets.

Section 7: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND EXAMPLES

a) Resources:

- i. King County Sustainable Purchasing Guide: search by product type (construction, electronics, office, etc.): https://kingcounty.gov/depts/finance-business-operations/procurement/for-government/environmental-purchasing/Purchasing_Guide.aspx
- ii. Environmental Benefit Calculators: <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/finance-business-operations/procurement/for-government/environmental-purchasing/resources.aspx>
- iii. List of EcoLabels/Certifications: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/finance-business-operations/procurement/for-government/environmental-purchasing/Ecolabels.aspx>
- iv. EPA List of EcoLabels/Certifications: <https://www.epa.gov/greenerproducts/recommendations-specifications-standards-and-ecolabels-federal-purchasing>
- v. EPEAT Registry for Sustainable Electronics: <https://epeat.sourcemap.com/>
- vi. GSA Green Products and Services: <https://sftool.gov/greenprocurement>
- vii. EPA Green Cleaning Products: <https://www.epa.gov/greenerproducts/greening-your-purchase-cleaning-products-guide-federal-purchasers>

b) Examples of environmentally preferable products and services:

- i. Office supplies:
 - o Office supplies from the Travis County office reuse program at no additional cost to the county
 - o Office paper with 30% or more Recycled Content and a third party sustainable forestry certification

- Other paper products (post-it's, index cards, folders) with Recycled Content and a third party sustainable forestry certification
- Recycled toner cartridges for printers and copiers
- Pens or pencils made with Recycled Content and/or refillable pens or pencils
- Rechargeable batteries
- ii. Building materials or supplies:
 - Recycled and/or low VOC paint
 - Recycled and/or low VOC carpet
 - Modular carpets where individual damaged carpet tiles can be replaced without replacing the entire carpet
 - Carpet should have face fiber of recyclable material and 100% recyclable material backing that, after discarded by the County, can be recycled into another carpet product.
 - Carpet vendors should provide a recycling service to include the takeback of all discarded carpet, including any manufacturer's carpet products, from any and all County locations.
 - LED lighting
 - Low-flow/water-efficient toilets and faucets
 - Furniture from the Purchasing Warehouse at no additional cost to the County
 - Greenguard or ecologo certified furniture
 - Water fountains with water bottle refill stations
 - Construction aggregates and/or insulation made with recycled materials
- iii. Fleet
 - Hybrid, electric, or SmartWay certified vehicles
 - Electric Vehicle charging stations
 - Re-refined or recycled motor oil
 - Lubricating oil and hydraulic oil with re-refined oil content
 - Anti-freeze without ethylene glycol
- iv. Technology
 - EPEAT certified computers and hardware
 - Energy-efficient appliances
 - Products that can be returned to or taken back by the vendor for reclaiming recyclable materials when determined obsolete by Travis County staff
- v. Cleaning/custodial products – refer to link in Section 7 a) vi for GSA Green Products and Services

- Greenguard or ecologo cleaning supplies
 - Toilet paper or paper towels with 30% or more Recycled Content
 - Washable/reusable cleaning towels for wiping up spills or cleaning surfaces (rather than disposable wipes)
 - Reusable cleaning products such as brooms, mops, feather dusters rather than disposable alternatives such as Swiffers
- vi. Breakroom supplies
- Reusable coffee mugs
 - Reusable flatware and dishes
 - Bulk creamer and sugar (avoid single-serving items)
 - Bulk coffee (avoid single-serving items)
 - Metal or reusable stir sticks or spoons (instead of plastic stir sticks)
- vii. Considerations for working with vendors and EPP Services refer to link in Section 7 a) vii for EPA green cleaning products
- Vendors should recycle and conserve resources when performing services for or on behalf of Travis County
 - Vendors should have an EPP or sustainability policy
 - If the vendor hosts a public event or meeting with or for the County, recycling should be provided. If food is provided, determine whether the vendor will ensure any leftover food is put to beneficial use such as feeding people, feeding animals, or composting
 - All printed documents from the vendor should be printed on paper with no less than 30% Recycled Content and eliminate use of the following types of non-recyclable or non-reusable materials: plastic report covers, plastic dividers, vinyl sleeves and GBC binding. Three-ringed binders, paper clips and staples are acceptable
 - Vendors should be enrolled in Austin Energy’s GreenChoice program, or otherwise use renewable energy – especially for cloud-computing, or other energy-intensive operations
- viii. Food contracts/catering
- Seek local, healthy, organic, and/or seasonal food when possible and/or participate in the Good Food Purchasing Program.
 - Vendors at County facilities should use reusable flatware and dishes or compostable products if the vendor has composting service available.
 - Vendors should employ practices to reduce food waste such as cooking to order, forecasting, using leftover ingredients to create daily specials, and formal inventory.
 - Vendors should ensure leftover food or food scraps go to a beneficial use such as feeding people, feeding animals, or being composted.
 - Vendors should not use Styrofoam products of any kind.

ix. Packaging

- As much as possible, vendors should strive for reusable packaging such as shipping boxes, shipping blankets, and reusable pallets that the vendor will take back.
- When reusable packaging is not possible or practical, the vendor shall use packaging that can be recycled in single-stream recycling such as paper product wrap and cardboard boxes.
- As much as possible, vendors should take back, back haul, and reuse packaging that cannot be recycled in single-stream recycling.
- Vendor shall not use Styrofoam products of any kind.
- Avoid packaging that is not readily recyclable or reusable and will be landfilled at cost to the County

x. Landscaping

- All landscaping renovations, construction, and maintenance by the County shall employ sustainable landscaping management techniques whenever possible. Any contracted landscaping services should follow the same practices.
- Sustainable landscape resources are available through the City of Austin Grow Green Program or LEED SITES.
- Plants should be selected by choosing species that are appropriate to the local climate and can grow to their full potential with the minimal use of water on a regular basis as established as indigenous and preferred to local environment.
- Hardscapes and landscape structures constructed of Recycled Content materials are encouraged.
- Where necessary, the County should use compost to add nutrients and increase water retention for County landscapes.
- County staff and vendors should use integrated pest management strategies and use pesticides only as needed. Pesticides should be used only after monitoring indicates they are needed according to established guidelines, and treatments are made with the goal of removing only the target organism.
- Discontinue use of neonicotinoids and other chemicals that can harm pollinators.

c) For other related policies, see:

i. [Travis County Code Chapter 32 – Purchasing Rules and Purchasing Procedures Guide](#)

ii. [Travis County Code Chapter 306 – Valdez Principles](#)

iii. [Travis County Code Chapter 307 Travis County Conservation Plan](#)