

## **Catawba County Green Purchasing Policy**

### **August 15, 2012**

#### **DEFINITION OF “GREEN PURCHASING”**

Sustainable purchasing often means “buying green”—that is, choosing products and services that are recycled, recyclable, energy-efficient, and/or non-toxic and that minimize environmentally harmful processes and products in their production. Catawba County will pursue green purchasing so that the products and services that the County acquires and provides are as sustainable as the County can make them—with the lowest environmental and most positive economic and social impacts. The County actively supports and encourages local manufacturers and businesses to enter the emerging recycled and green product markets and, when feasible, will purchase from local manufacturers and businesses.

Some key attributes of green products and services are:

- maximized use of recycled content;
- absence of hazardous chemicals;
- minimized energy consumption;
- reduction of solid waste;
- air quality enhancement;
- water conservation;
- maximized product useful life;
- minimized packaging; and
- recyclability or biodegradability.

#### **GREEN PURCHASING**

County employees will make every effort to identify and purchase green products, as long as those items meet or exceed specifications and required quality levels and meet appropriate cost guidelines. Emphasis will be given to products and materials made from post-consumer recycled materials and products sourced from local manufacturers and businesses, when available. Vendors and contractors who provide goods and services to the County are encouraged to follow this policy to the greatest extent possible.

When purchases are necessary, serious consideration will be given to durable items, reusable items, items that conserve energy or water, items having minimal packaging, and items that are readily recycled at the end of their useful life. Purchasing will identify green products that meet the specifications, quality levels, and cost criteria of the using departments. The following questions will serve as a guide for Purchasing:

1. Is the product made from recycled or repurposed materials?
2. Is it reusable or more durable or long-lasting than alternative products?
3. Does it avoid the use of unnecessary fragrances or dyes?
4. Does it have minimized packaging and/or use recovered materials in packaging?

5. Does it release pollutants or toxins during its use or storage?
6. Does it conserve energy or use a renewable energy source?
7. Does it conserve water?
8. What happens to the product at the end of its useful life? Can it be recycled? Will the manufacturer take the product back?

**TOXICITY AND POLLUTANTS**

County departments will make every effort to procure chemicals and products that have low toxicity or are non-toxic. Products that have the fewest adverse health effects—such as skin, eye, nose, throat, and lung irritation—and that avoid volatile organic compounds and unnecessary additives are to be preferred.

**PRODUCT SELECTION**

While acknowledging that the up-front purchase costs of some green products may exceed the costs of non-recycled or less energy-efficient products, departments should consider return on investment over the life cycle of the product as well as the environmental benefits, performance quality, and available budget before making a final purchasing decision.

**TRACKING**

Departments track and enter all purchases related to green products through a tracking program accessible through the County’s PeopleSoft Financial System. Reported information is used to gauge the County’s progress towards reducing its environmental impact and integrating practices that support sustainability into on-going operations.

**THIRD-PARTY CERTIFICATIONS AND LABELS**

Departments are encouraged to use independent, third-party environmental certifications or labels as a guide in choosing materials, products, and services for purchase. The following list highlights a few of the best-known national standards.

<p><b>EcoLogo:</b> wide variety of green products  <a href="http://www.ecologo.org/">(http://www.ecologo.org/)</a></p> 	<p><b>GreenGuard:</b> products for the indoor environment  <a href="http://www.greenguard.org">http://www.greenguard.org</a></p> 
<p><b>Energy Star:</b> energy-savings rating for appliances and electronics  <a href="http://www.energystar.gov/">(http://www.energystar.gov/)</a></p> 	<p><b>Green Seal:</b> wide variety of green products  <a href="http://www.greenseal.org/">(http://www.greenseal.org/)</a></p> 

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

Departments are expected to:

- Consider green products from the perspective of life cycle cost and environmental benefits when making procurement decisions.
- Become familiar with sources of quality green products and request green alternatives when feasible.
- Evaluate all goods and equipment requested to buy, lease, or rent for compatibility with the use of green products.
- Always look for environmental labeling, including those listed above.
- Report all purchases related to green products into the tracking program found on the County's PeopleSoft Financial System.

County Purchasing Manager is expected to:

- Provide guidance and support to departments by identifying green vendors, products, and services that meet the specifications, quality levels, and cost guidelines.
- Conduct "buy green" training program for county employees.
- Encourage the purchase of products with strong green qualities (e.g., high percentage of recycled content, high energy savings, little unnecessary waste).
- Ensure Bids/RFP's include the following language: "What measures will your firm take to minimize impacts to the environment in the delivery of services or products? What are the big environmental impacts in your industry? How will you mitigate these impacts in the delivery of your services? Please demonstrate your firm's commitment to green business practices; you may include copies of reports, policies or plans."
- Track County's total annual dollar purchases of green products and services.
- Compile the tracked information from county departments to assist in the development of the Buy Recycled Annual Report.
- Actively seek ways to educate and promote the intent of this policy.

County Waste Reduction Coordinator is expected to:

- Assist in any training on "buy green" purchasing and waste reduction.
- Assist in the development of the Buy Recycled Annual Report.
- Assist county departments, purchasing manager, and other purchasing staff in creating, maintaining, and improving recycling efforts.
- Work with purchasing manager and staff to meet the goals of this policy.