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March 12, 2024

Sylvester Fadal
Interim Director of General Services
Sacramento County Department of General Services
9660 Ecology Lane
Sacramento, CA 95827

Subject: Sacramento Environmental Commission (SEC) Recommendations on the Sacramento County Environmental Purchasing Policy (EPP)

Dear Mr. Fadal,

The SEC received a comprehensive presentation addressing the Sacramento County EPP at its meeting on January 22, 2024. Sarah Lee and Kelli Sequest, from the Department of General Services, provided us with a detailed understanding of the current EPP and how it enables compliance with Senate Bill 1383.

Based on this presentation, several SEC Commissioners collected and reviewed the EPPs from multiple California jurisdictions to determine how the Sacramento County EPP compares with other authorities to encourage the use of recycled or reusable products, providing guidance to County departments purchasing environmentally preferred products, and identifying a range of other products and acceptable recyclable content that exceed State-mandated minimums.

The SEC requests that the Department of General Services consider the following eight recommendations to supplement the current EPP. We believe that these recommendations will increase the use of recycled or reusable products, expand the number and types of products that have mandatory limits, provide a basis for making purchasing decisions, and create a process for monitoring and evaluating compliance with the environmentally preferable guidelines and procedures.

If you have any questions regarding our recommendations or wish to discuss further, please contact Jill Koehn, SEC Secretary at 916.875.8584.

Thank you for considering our recommendations.

Signed,

Laura Nickerson

Laura Nickerson
SEC Chair

Stephanie Holstege

Stephanie Holstege
SEC Vice Chair

Sacramento Environmental Commission Environmental Purchasing Policy Recommendations

1. The EPP does not define how environmentally preferred products are to be evaluated while considering fiscal and sustainability criteria.

Recommendation: The SEC recommends that the EPP encourage and promote environmental considerations in purchasing decisions, along with the traditional concerns of price, performance, and availability. This would include the EPP offer clear thresholds and objectives for purchasing materials and products. There needs to be a definition of what the selection preference consists of when evaluating the multiple sustainability considerations identified in Section B of the EPP.
2. The EPP lists ten sustainability considerations that County departments and employees should consider while making purchasing decisions. However, the EPP does not provide any guidance to address these considerations, pursue further analyses, or identify additional information that may contribute to the purchasing process.

Recommendation: The SEC recommends that the EPP identify and refer to specific data, websites, and other information sources that can direct employees to products that comply with state and federal environmental certifications, such as Green Seal, Ecologo, Cradle to Cradle; and provide websites or links to other County departments, or state and federal sources that have technical expertise in matters pertaining to possible impacts from products purchased, such as toxicity, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions when such information is needed.
3. The EPP lists ten practices to reduce consumption of resources, however, no support or methodology to guide the departments or staff in the implementation of these practices is available.

Recommendation: The SEC recommends that the EPP specifically identify resources and mechanisms that would enable County department and staff to implement the ten identified waste prevention practices. For instance, the EPP could call for establishing a website/intranet to foster and coordinate the use of surplus County property by other departments, thereby avoiding the new purchase of materials. A website/intranet could also facilitate the use of common specifications, solicitation language, and purchasing regulations to expand the use of more environmentally preferable products.
4. The EPP (Mandatory Procurement Practices Section A) requires all purchased printing and writing paper contain a minimum 30% postconsumer recycled content.

Recommendation: The SEC recommends that the EPP require purchased printing and writing paper to contain a minimum of 50% postconsumer recycled

content if available in the marketplace at competitive costs and is equal in performance and other requirements of Attachment 3, Paragraph 1.B

5. The EPP requires the purchase of recycled products, including other paper products, instead of non-recycled products whenever recycled products are available at the same or a lesser total cost than non-recycled items, if fitness and quality are equal.

Recommendation: SEC recommends that the EPP require the purchase of recycled products instead of non-recycled products when the cost of recycled products does not exceed 5 percent more than the cost of the virgin product.

6. The EPP currently does not address a preference for purchasing food products produced and packaged in the United States.

Recommendation: The SEC recommends that the EPP include a purchasing preference for food products produced and packaged within the United States that does not exceed 5 percent more than the cost of food products not produced in the U.S. to minimize pollutant emissions associated with product transportation.

7. The EPP currently does not address the use of disposable food service ware, including those containing polystyrene foam or single-use plastic utensils by County-food providers, concessionaires or contractors serving the County.

Recommendation: The SEC recommends that the EPP include provisions prohibiting the use of disposable food service ware containing or utilizing polystyrene foam, plastic straws or stirrers, or single-use plastic utensils. Disposable food ware and accessories must consist of fiber-based compostable material. These requirements should apply to County-food providers, concessionaires or contractors serving the County. Exceptions to these requirements can be made available to accommodate needs of persons with disabilities.

8. The EPP lacks measures to monitor, evaluate, and report the County's compliance with the environmentally preferable guidelines and procedures.

Recommendation: The SEC recommends that the EPP include provisions for establishing and conducting routine monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the County's successful compliance with the EPP goals. Such reporting would be informative to each department and used as part of the purchasing education and training by the Department of General Services.