

Cobb County Environmental Purchasing Policy

POLICY ESTABLISHING THE COBB COUNTY GOVERNMENT'S ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING PROGRAM

Approved by the Cobb County Government Board of Commissioners on August 26, 2008.

1.0 Purpose

Cobb County Government recognizes that it is a large consumer of goods and services. All of its purchases have an environmental impact resulting from the combined impact of a product's manufacture, use, and disposition. As a result, every day, the purchasing decisions of employees and contractors can positively or negatively affect the environment.

The goal of this policy is for County purchasing decisions to consider the merit of positive environmental impacts of buying goods and services from manufacturers and vendors who share a commitment to the environment. By including environmental considerations in purchasing decisions, along with traditional concerns with price, performance, and availability, the County will remain fiscally responsible while promoting practices that improve public health and safety, reduce pollution, conserve natural resources, and reward manufacturers and vendors that reduce the adverse environmental impact of their production and distribution systems.

2.0 Defining Environmentally Preferable

"Environmentally preferable" means products and services that have a reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products and services serving the same purpose. This comparison considers all phases of the product's life cycle, including raw materials, acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, operation, maintenance, and disposal, including potential for reuse or ability to be recycled.

In practice, "environmentally preferable" means those products or services that have reduced environmental impact because of the way they are manufactured, used, transported, stored, packaged, and ultimately disposed. It means products or services that do not harm human health, are less polluting, and/or that minimize waste, maximizes the use of biobased or recycled materials, conserve energy and water, and/or reduce the consumption or disposal of hazardous materials.

When determining whether a product is environmentally preferable, the following environmental attributes should be considered:

Biobased	Biodegradable
Carcinogen-free	Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC)-free
Compostable	Durable
Energy efficient	Heavy metal free (e.g., no lead, mercury, cadmium)
Less hazardous	Locally manufactured
Low-toxicity	Low volatile organic compound (VOC) content
Persistent, bio-accumulative toxic	Made from rapidly renewable materials (PBT)-free
	Recyclable

Recycled content
Reduced packaging
Resource efficiency
Upgradeable

Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
Refurbished
Reusable
Water efficient

3.0 Balancing Environmental Considerations with Performance, Availability, and Financial Cost

Cobb County is committed to buying more environmentally preferable goods and services as long as they meet the County's performance needs and are available within a reasonable period of time at a reasonable cost. Nothing in this policy shall be construed as requiring a purchaser or contractor to procure products that do not perform adequately for their intended use, exclude adequate competition, or are not available at a reasonable price or in a reasonable period of time.

When comparing cost, Cobb County will not focus exclusively on the initial price, but will evaluate and compare total costs over the life expectancy of the item/service, which includes the initial cost, along with maintenance, operating, insurance, disposal, replacement, and potential liability costs. Examining life cycle costs will save money by ensuring departments are quantifying the total cost of ownership before making purchasing decisions.

Cobb County recognizes that competition exists not only in prices, but also in the technical competence of suppliers, in their ability to make timely deliveries, and in the quality and performance, including environmental performance, of their products and services. Balancing these sometimes-competing factors means that initial cost is never the only consideration. It also means that at times the County will sometimes pay more for higher performing goods and services, including those with superior environmental performance.

4.0 Establishing an Environmental Purchasing Program

The Director of the Purchasing Department shall commence with the following, ongoing initiatives:

- (1) preparation of an environmentally preferable guidebook to be furnished to all departments and agencies to facilitate and aid the implementation of this policy;
- (2) preparing purchasing staff to be able to assist other departments' staffs in meeting the goals of this policy; and
- (3) assisting other departments in identifying appropriate goods and services.