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OFFICE SUPPLIES: MODEL EPP SPECIFICATIONS AND PURCHASING GUIDELINES

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document provides purchasers with environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) model specifications and purchasing guidelines for the environmentally preferable purchasing of certain office supplies. The information in this document is intended to be used in part or in its entirety by purchasers for bid requests and/or purchasing contracts.

NERC relied on the assistance of a team of experts consisting of professional purchasing agents, recycling specialists, and EPP experts to develop the document, rather than using a scientific approach. In addition, NERC consulted with office supplies distributors to get confirmation on the availability of EPP products in the marketplace. The Office Supplies Expert Team included: Karl Bruskotter, City of Santa Monica; Alicia Culver, Responsible Purchasing Network; Stacey Foreman, City of Portland, Oregon; and Mary Ann Remolador, NERC.

The following EPP specifications and purchasing guidelines focus on a subset of office supplies identified by public purchasers in a national survey conducted by NERC. They ranked the products listed in Table 1 as the highest expenditure and quantities purchased by their agencies.

Model EPP specifications for copy and multipurpose paper and monochrome toner cartridges are available at:

- [Model EPP Specifications and Purchasing Guidelines - Monochrome Toner Cartridges](#)
- [Model EPP Specifications and Purchasing Guidelines - Copy and Multipurpose Paper](#)

Note: The term vendor will be used throughout the document to refer to bidders and contractors.

II. EPP SPECIFICATIONS FOR OFFICE SUPPLIES

The following are the minimum and preferred EPP specifications for office supplies that often rank as the highest expenditures and quantities purchased by public purchasers. Vendors offering products with the preferred EPP specifications in Table 1 may be awarded greater points or achieve greater recognition in the vendor selection process.

Table 1. EPP Specifications for Office Supplies

| Product Categories | Minimum EPP Specifications | Preferred EPP Specifications |
|---|--|---|
| Paper Products Other Than Copy and Multipurpose Paper | | |
| Address, Shipping, and File Folder Sheet-Style Labels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC ¹ • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC² with a minimum of 50% PCRC • 100% water-based recyclable adhesive |
| Calendars (paper only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC paper with a minimum of 50% PCRC • 90% PCRC wire or no wire • 100% PCRC paper backing |
| Catalog Envelopes - Kraft, white, and colored (including manila) (paper only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% PCRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC with a minimum of 50% PCRC |
| Envelopes: Woven (paper only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC with a minimum of 50% PCRC |
| Envelopes: Kraft, unbleached (paper only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC with a minimum of 50% PCRC |
| File Folders, Hanging File Folders (paper only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC with a minimum of 50% PCRC |
| Post-it® Notes/Sticky Notes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC with a minimum of 30% PCRC • Plant-based adhesives |
| Writing Pads | 30% PCRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC with a minimum of 50% PCRC |
| Desktop Accessories | | |
| Desk Trays (Plastic) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% PCRC • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 50% PCRC • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Staplers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% RC • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If plastic, a minimum of 50% RC • If metal, 100% RC • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Tape Dispensers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC with a minimum of 30% PCRC • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Other Supplies | | |
| Binder (3-Ring): Chipboard or cardboard only | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% PCRC • Made of materials readily recyclable in residential programs* and are easily deconstructable • No antimicrobial coatings | |
| Binder (3-Ring): Plastic with chipboard or cardboard interior | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC • Made of materials readily recyclable in residential programs* • Easily deconstructable • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 40% PCRC • Made of materials readily recyclable in residential programs* • Easily deconstructable • No antimicrobial coatings |

*Identifying readily recyclable products in local recycling programs requires requesting the information from the State’s Environmental Agency.

¹ PCRC – Post-consumer Recycled Content

² RC – Recycled Content

| Office Supplies Continued | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Product Categories | Minimum EPP Specifications | Preferred EPP Specifications |
| Binder (3-Ring): Pressboard only | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC minimum • No antimicrobial coatings | |
| Binder (3-Ring): Solid plastic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made of materials that are readily recyclable in residential programs* • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 30% PCRC • Made of materials that are readily recyclable in residential programs* • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Clipboards: Hardboard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC • No antimicrobial coatings | |
| Clipboards: Metal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% RC • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Clipboards: Plastic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% PCRC • Made of materials that are readily recyclable in residential programs* • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 60% PCRC • Made of materials that are readily recyclable in residential programs* • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Correction Tape | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No antimicrobial coatings | |
| Dry-Erase Markers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% RC • ACMI AP³ • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 90% RC • ACMI AP • No antimicrobial coatings • Refillable |
| Highlighters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% RC • ACMI AP • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrel contains 100% RC with a minimum 30% PCRC • ACMI AP • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Hole Punches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If plastic, made of materials that are readily recyclable in residential programs* • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If plastic or metal, a minimum of 30% PCRC • If plastic, made of materials that are readily recyclable in residential programs* • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Mechanical Pencils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% RC • Refillable • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum 70% RC with a minimum 30% PCRC • Refillable • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Paper Clips | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% PCRC • Non-coated • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% RC, with a minimum 50% PCRC • Non-coated • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Permanent Markers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% RC • ACMI AP • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrel contains 100% RC with a minimum 30% PCRC • ACMI AP • No antimicrobial coatings |

*Identifying readily recyclable products in local recycling programs requires requesting the information from the State's Environmental Agency.

³ [The Art and Creative Materials Institute, Inc. Approved Product](#)

| Other Products, Continued | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Product Categories | Minimum EPP Specifications | Preferred EPP Specifications |
| Pens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% RC • Refillable and refills available with 50% RC • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum 70% RC with a minimum 30% PCRC • Refillable and refills available with 70% RC and 30% PCRC • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Scissors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% RC • No antimicrobial coatings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic Handles minimum 70% RC with minimum 30% PCRC • Metal 30% RC • No antimicrobial coatings |
| Tape | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic Core – a minimum 100% RC • Plant-based adhesives |
| Wood Pencils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% reclaimed or FSC⁴-certified wood • Allergen-free erasers • No antimicrobial coatings | |

III. PURCHASING GUIDELINES

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PURCHASING ENTITY - The purchasing entity shall:

1. Use Minimum Specifications as Starting Point with Potential Vendors

The specifications above are intended as a guide for working with potential vendors. Once a vendor has established that they can supply the *Minimum EPP Specifications* in Table 1, it is suggested to inquire if they can provide products with greater levels of recycled content and additional EPP criteria, as indicated in the *Preferred EPP Specifications* column of the Table. Vendors that can provide more than the minimum may be given more points or recognition in the vendor selection process.

2. Use a Market Basket List

Since office supplies contracts include such a large number of products, it is advisable to create a Market Basket List of products including the purchasing entity's highest expenditures and/or quantities of products purchased. The Market Basket List is most effective when included in vendor bid requests where the greatest discounts for the products on the List are required. The Market Basket List can also serve as the greatest-discount list in the resulting contract.

In addition, the Market Basket List can be used as a tool for increasing the purchase of EPP products at competitive and affordable prices. By only including EPP products in the List, the purchasing entity is provided reduced rates that will encourage the purchase of EPP products over traditional ones.

B. RECOMMENDED VENDOR REQUIREMENTS – The vendor shall:

1. Allow for Market Basket List Changes Beyond Volume/Spend Patterns

The vendor is expected to allow for changes to the Market Basket List during pricing updates. This will allow new EPP items to be added to the Market Basket List and old or outdated products to be removed. By allowing for the List revisions beyond traditional changes in volume/spend patterns, you can achieve competitive pricing on new EPP items and improve the end-user incentive for buying green.

⁴ [Forest Stewardship Council](#)

- 2. Clearly Identify, Define, and Make EPP Products Easily Identifiable in Vendor’s Hard Copy and Online Catalogs**
 - a. Identify EPP items in product catalogs along with prominent information about how the vendor defines EPP (e.g., if the vendor uses a symbol/icon to identify a “greener” product, provide information about what the symbol/icon represents).
 - b. Ensure that any EPP symbols/icons are displayed along with EPP attribute details per product (e.g., a product with a recycled content symbol would also have in its product description details about the % total RC and % PCRC).
 - c. Make EPP items easily found within online product catalogs through effective search tools, search filters, and related navigational tools.

- 3. Consolidate Deliveries**
 - a. Set up a plan with the purchasing entity whereby all purchases from the office supplies vendors are delivered on a certain day of the week, or will identify another consolidation method.
 - b. Are able to document or illustrate how their delivery consolidation methods reduce the purchasing entity and the vendor’s carbon footprint (e.g., reduction in fossil fuel use, carbon emissions, packaging materials, and on-site vehicle traffic).

- 4. Minimize Use of Shipping Packaging**
 - a. Minimize shipping packaging used (“right-size” order packaging).
 - b. Use reusable shipping materials.

- 5. Use Recycled Content and Readily Recyclable Packaging Material**
 - a. Use shipping and packaging materials that contain 100% recycled content and facilitate reductions in carbon emissions during transport (e.g. lightweight materials).
 - b. Use shipping/packaging materials that can easily be recycled in the purchasing entity’s local recycling program.
 - c. Work with product manufacturers to improve the recyclability of product packaging.

- 6. Provide Annual Purchasing Reports with EPP Data**
 - a. Provide annual purchasing reports to the purchasing entity on all office supply purchases, with breakdowns on total EPP purchases.
 - b. Provide details on how they define EPP and developed the EPP portion of the report.
 - c. Include the following information in the report: list of items purchased (SKU number and product description), EPP attributes, the total quantity purchased per item, and the total expenditure per item.
 - d. Provide a breakdown of the EPP data by department, delivery location, or other demographics that are most applicable to the purchasing entity.

- 7. Use EPA Smartway Participants**
 - a. Only use delivery service companies that are participants in [EPA’s Smartway Program](#).

- 8. Require No Idling of Delivery Trucks**
 - a. Require delivery drivers to turn off their engines upon stopping at the delivery destination, or not allow an engine to idle at any location for more than 20 seconds, except in the following situations:

- The health and safety of employees, sub-contractors or public would be compromised by turning off the vehicle.
- The engine is required to power auxiliary equipment (e.g., hoist, lift platforms, hydraulic tools, inverters, compactors, medical equipment, specialized public safety radio communication or computer systems, etc.). Or,
- Vehicle/equipment manufacturer requires additional idle time for warm up or cool down for efficient and proper mechanical or functional operation of the unit.

C. PREFERRED VENDOR REQUIREMENTS – Preference will be given to vendors that:

1. Participate in Green Vendor Fairs

- a. Provide or participate in a green vendor fair so staff can see the different EPP products the vendor sells, can speak directly to the vendor, and have their questions answered.

2. Provide Additional Online Catalog Features

- a. Have additional online catalog features that support the purchasing entity's EPP program, such as:
 - Display EPP items first in online catalog search results.
 - Auto-substitute pre-identified conventional products with EPP products on the Market Basket List when end-user places conventional item in online cart. And,
 - Block/restrict pre-identified (traditional) items from being purchased online so staff members are compelled to purchase the EPP products.