

Regional Procurement Coordination Boosting Local Green Economy

Alameda County leads regional forums and coordinates purchases to promote environmentally preferable products. By sharing innovative practices and contracts, we expand the local green economy.

Challenge: Alameda County purchases \$350 million in goods and services each year. Our Board of Supervisors is committed to making environmentally preferable choices that support health and jobs for our residents. We reduce pollution through purchasing choices such as switching to electric vehicles instead of fuel-burning vehicles, buying only recycled-content paper, and selecting healthier cleaning chemicals. However, we are only one of many major public purchasers in the region. We cannot reduce regional air and water pollution or build a sustainable marketplace based on only our procurement dollars. Therefore, we have invited other public buyers to apply our green purchasing strategies and collaborate on cost-effective, competitively-bid sustainable contracts.

Innovative Solution: The County's Office of Sustainability leads the Green Purchasing Roundtable, a regional forum for regular information sharing and application of green purchasing strategies, in partnership with the regional waste management authority. At the Roundtable we convene representatives from cities, utilities, public colleges and universities, and other regional institutional buyers to share strategies. Since its inception in 2013, we have used this forum to recommend the procurement of products and services that meet a high standard for human and environmental health, waste reduction, and climate protection. The Roundtable has highlighted common product categories, such as cleaning chemicals, computers, furniture, and asphalt, where greener options are available for efficient and sustainable use of public resources. We also promote general strategies for green purchasing such as toxics reduction and employee engagement. Participant organizations may not have the capacity to analyze products and services for sustainability, and the Roundtable fills this gap.

The County uses the Roundtable network to share negotiated terms for "green" contracts, allowing other buyers to take advantage of bulk pricing. Examples of green contracts include high-bar sustainability standards and competitive pricing for office supplies and copy paper, specifying recycled-content, reusable, and low-toxicity products, and vendor-managed consolidated deliveries to minimize packaging and pollution. Because competitively-bid County contracts are available for use by cities and other public purchasers within our jurisdiction, we enabled at least seven cities to "piggyback" on the office supplies and paper contracts; these cities might not otherwise have specified sustainable products in these categories. Additionally, several local preschools

have borrowed specifications from the County for janitorial cleaning chemicals and paper products such as paper towels, helping to promote safer, healthier, and greener products to be used around young children. The vendors that have provided all of these sustainable products are local, and two of them are certified through the Green Business Program, demonstrating how our purchases help to build the local green economy.

The County has also led large coordinated procurements. In 2014, we closed out a multi-year partnership of 10 local governments to purchase 90 electric vehicles for government fleets and procure over 50 charging stations. This investment in infrastructure advances sustainability, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, and pollution minimization throughout the region.

Originality: The Green Purchasing Roundtable is the only public-sector gathering in the country to focus specifically on sustainable purchasing. The Roundtable provides an opportunity to share our nationally recognized leadership efforts including recognition for the greenest government fleet in California (2017, Green Fleet Forum), and leadership initiative in sustainable purchasing (2015, Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council).

Cost Effectiveness: Through collaborative purchasing and utilizing economies of scale, our local government partners, including two other California counties, collectively saved over **\$349,000 on the purchase of new electric vehicles** (based on MSRP). The EV fleet of 90 vehicles is projected to achieve **fuel cost savings of \$500,000** between 2014 and 2019. The piggybacked contracts for office supplies and paper, totaling over \$600,000, resulted in business process savings for the public entities that did not have to go out to bid, in addition to securing competitively-bid, large-scale prices for small cities that could not have negotiated these on their own.

Results: As a result of the County's efforts, at least 13 local government jurisdictions, including nine cities, two counties, and two utilities - as well as several preschools - were able to take advantage of cost-effective sustainable purchasing opportunities. The purchases led to a projected **>1.5 million lbs. of net CO₂** pollution prevention (2014-2019), created markets for recycled-content and lower-toxicity products, and reduced waste by promoting remanufactured, reusable and durable products.

Contact: Carolyn Bloede, Sustainability Program Manager, Alameda County | www.acsustain.org

1401 Lakeside Drive, Suite 1115, Oakland, CA 94612 | 510-208-9521 | carolyn.bloede@acgov.org