

Procurement Policies Affecting Sustainable Change

By: Tisha Casida with Contributions from Alicia Archibald, Arleen Kinder, and Frank Kinder

A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to sit down with several folks involved with sustainable procurement in the federal government. Arleen Kinder, the Customer Service Director for the General Services Administration (GSA), shared information concerning the changing purchasing options of this organization, which acts as the Federal Government's procurement vehicle. Fort Carson Sustainability Planners Alicia Archibald and Frank Kinder (no relation) provided details on the installation's procurement actions and discussed how those actions benefit the whole community. Alicia summarized the background of the government's green purchasing initiatives. There are three main drivers supporting sustainable procurement. The first is the Executive Order 13423, which sets the environmental and socio-economic goals via Federal Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program (EPP). The second is the Department of Defense, which makes its own rules and guidelines based on these goals. The third is the local installation, in this case, Fort Carson, which has gone above and beyond these guidelines, and is making an incredible difference for our communities and economies.

The GSA provides a variety of products to all governmental agencies in an attempt to meet these goals. Modern green cleaning systems work effectively and are safer for users, building occupants and our environment. Recycled content and recyclable items help close the lifecycle loop and support recycling industries. Highly efficient appliances and other products ensure lower operating costs and smarter governmental fiscal

stewardship. Bio-based products made from natural sources reduce dependencies on limited resources and biodegrade easier. These various products offer benefits to the consumer, the environment, and the local economies in which they are created and/or recycled. During searches, GSA websites provide the most sustainable solutions to users first and require extra effort to purchase lesser-rated and lower-performing products. This overt favoritism and ranking helps ensure GSA users meet the federal and military procurement objectives while driving the market for better products and practices.

GSA itself leads by example and helps federal agencies meet environmental goals by using green products and services daily. From purchasing recycled paper and managing office waste, to buying renewable power and managing energy efficient buildings, GSA uses green solutions to operate efficiently. GSA helps federal agencies buy energy-efficient and recycled-content products through streamlined contracting vehicles on www.GSAAAdvantage.gov. From waste management services to hazardous material management to NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) analysis, GSA offers to help agencies meet their environmental needs.

GSA helps federal agencies maintain cost-effective waste prevention and recycling programs including waste collection, reuse assessments, disposal of excess inventory, and more. Check out these websites: www.GSAXcess.gov and www.GSAAuctions.gov to locate previously owned property items, ready to be reused/

recycled by the government and/or community citizens.

In discussing the ways and product types that are being purchased, I noted that both big and small businesses can benefit from the military's dedication to sustainability. Commodity products, like paper, benefit larger companies with access to distribution channels that supply a large volume of recycled content paper to the various branches and bases of the military. Services, like construction, benefit smaller businesses that have the local resources and knowledge to effectively create sustainable development at or near their local branches of the military.

Construction and design highlight these systemic impacts. Fort Carson is growing to accommodate current and future troops. Its buildings exemplify the adoption of sustainable products and concepts. Using the United States Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) criteria, many of its new structures include innovative building techniques. On the interior, water and energy-efficient systems, recycled content, recyclable, and low volatile organic compound (VOC) products all provide safer conditions for building occupants while reducing environmental impacts and operating costs. LEED's landscaping and construction techniques make smarter, more durable buildings that drive the contracting and product markets to support more sustainable designs and concepts. Businesses

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Special guest Doug Fine!
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capable of using these products and providing these services have a competitive advantage that supports Department of Defense and Army building goals. These actions capture upstream and downstream benefits of better products that ultimately benefit our community and those producing safer, more sustainable products overall. Knowing how to install, use, and repair these solutions helps local business compete and contribute to sustainable endeavors on local installations and eventually, in their own communities.

After construction, companies that use green cleaning products and sustainable landscaping practices help ensure the performance and impacts of these 'green' buildings, supporting similar adoption of better practices by those providing ongoing maintenance that continue contributing to Fort Carson, Department of Defense, Federal Government, and ultimately our local community goals.

These examples demonstrate how our very own Army post has many opportunities for our small businesses and our community to benefit from the positive influences of their procurement policies. I encourage you to look at these opportunities more, if you are involved with sustainability and green products, visit <http://sems.carson.army.mil/> and www.usgbc.org for more information.

In summary, the government and entities operating with it have the buying power to affect the marketplace in a positive manner when they choose to support environmental and socio-economic goals. The quality, supply, and prices of these sustainable goods are improving due to the positive demand actions of Fort Carson, other bases, and branches of the military and federal government. As the availability of these items increases, and as greater demand spurs new economic development – new businesses and new value chains to satisfy the consumers' demand provides opportunities for us to create new and innovative

solutions. I encourage you to look for and try these new products in your personal and business life, and support this business evolution. You can see many products, ideas, and learn more at the upcoming Southern Colorado Sustainable Communities Technologies Conference and Expo to held at the Pueblo Convention Center on July 31 and August 1, 2009. Join us Friday for the Sustainable Business and Economic Development session "The Competitive Advantage of a Sustainable Business". I welcome you to take part and learn more about what's available in our region and how to be more involved in sustainable procurement. See www.southerncoloradosustainability.net for event details. Hope to see you there!

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