Sustainable Procurement

INDIANA UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY
AMISHI KUMAR, GREEN PURCHASING INTERN
SUMMER 2014

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Introduction

As the reality of climate change and dwindling natural resources settle in on a global scale, societies have realized our current consumption patterns cannot be sustained. An important step to curbing our impact is through the adoption of sustainable procurement practices. A combination of purchasing ethically and environmentally sound products along with reusing and reducing consumption can help lessen greenhouse emissions and mitigate the stresses on our limited resources.

According to Fostering Sustainable Behavior, we must promote indivisible and end-state behaviors to create tangible improvements or concrete changes in behavior. Past interns created a wonderfully comprehensive wealth of information regarding vendors, products, and the overall concept of green purchasing. During this summer’s internship, the work focused on encouraging the end-state behavior of using these resources to actually purchase the greener products by facilitating sustainable purchasing decisions.

The main directive was to create a resource that streamlined key decisions a consumer could make to improve purchasing practices. This resulted in editing two web pages created by past interns. In addition, attention was focused on increasing awareness of among IU consumers.

History of Program

Madoka Yoshino was the first “green purchasing” intern for the IUOS in summer 2009. She created the Indiana University Office of Procurement Services (IUOPS) Green Purchasing page. This page was the first compilation of green product purchasing throughout the campus.

Orals Saulters, the 2012 summer intern, gathered a background understanding of green purchasing and how it applies to this university. Specifically, he provided background on the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) reporting process for procurement related data. Procurement data has been updated every year since for the STARS report. His pilot studies provided concrete support for the creation of a strategic IUOS green purchasing project. See Appendix 1 for a succinct summary of his recommendations.

From 2012-2013 Anthony Marletta worked with Mark Milby, another IUOS intern, to create the Green Purchasing Guide. This comprehensive guide is an educational reference for consumers to aid with decisions at every stage of a product’s life. In addition, Marletta created a university database system to evaluate products on the three tenets of sustainability- social, economic, and environmental.

The previous intern Mary Roper worked to create a laboratory-recycling program, aided the sustainable food internship, Angela Babb, with the Real Food initiative, and gathered purchasing metrics for the STARS report.
Impetus for Program

While IU has improved by great strides from the work of past interns and within many departments, there are huge gaps in both our efforts and vendor efforts. There is no universal system of "green flagging" within KFS; individual vendors completely lack any indication of sustainable practices or labeling at all. Many KFS users are unfamiliar with the existing infrastructure already in place to aid with sustainable purchasing. Ordering systems differ throughout campus so regulating and consolidating orders can be difficult. For example, multiple shipments maybe made to the same location that could have been condensed into one order with foresight and awareness. Previous interns have realized relying on vendors to respond quickly either with data or a change in practice is often a huge hurdle. Therefore increasing awareness within consumers then gaining momentum to approach vendors is perhaps a more effective pathway for change.

Methodology

KFS

The logical beginning was to assess the status of the KFS portal and general user proficiency. In short, Kuali Financial Services (KFS) is a giant online mall. Once a user enters the KFS mall, they can shop from a variety of individual stores. All the vendors within KFS have approved contracts with IU and therefore require less paperwork from users when making a purchase; the main reason IU consumers shop this selection. When a user clicks to enter a particular store, he or she is directed to the public online shopping site but with IU contracted prices. Since each store has a different online user system, there is a lack of uniform labeling. In addition, some product categories have an overwhelming large selection of products and sustainable alternatives such as office goods, paper, and cleaning supplies. On the other hand, some product categories lack any alternatives or the alternatives are not economically feasible options. The initial assessment also examined external certifications used by vendors and other sustainability objectives.

After understanding how to use KFS and examining the vendors, a user guide was created that showed the best approach to purchase greener products. The user guide needed to provide the easiest and most practical advice while being concise. A quick survey of KFS users revealed time was the biggest barrier when shopping; therefore the new guide would not utilize text-heavy reference materials rather simple steps and pictorials.

Cultural Changes

The main two methods to create a change in attitudes were to increase awareness about sustainable procurement practices on a broader scale and to quantify model behavior currently in practice.
Before reaching out to a large group of stakeholders, I felt it was important to understand the achievements in sustainable procurement for a few areas on campus: Chemistry, Biology, Architect’s Office, and Cleaning Products (within Building Services and RPS). By understanding the methodology used by these varying entities common barriers and drivers were discovered; this information was important in constructing a possible model for other departments to follow. Initial contact was done via email (see Appendix 2) to organize an opportunity to further discuss practices. In addition the questionnaire used during the meetings is attached (Appendix 3).

While communication with these leaders helped start more dialogue, it was important to then reach out to the critical, larger group involved in purchasing decisions but not so active the field of sustainability. The Campus Administrative Training Series (CATS) is a campus organization comprised of administrative personnel from purchasing to payroll to human resources. The monthly meetings are well attended with more than 150 participants and host small seminars. I worked with CATS to host a 30-minute presentation during the August meeting to briefly discuss the IUOS working groups and highlight sustainable procurement. I also submitted an informative section to the CATS August E-Newsletter describing sustainable procurement practices (Appendix 4).

**Results**

The implementation of the new user guide has just started. The resource use section on the IUOS website is designed around a new set of three R’s: Reuse, Recycle, and Reconsider. Consumers are suggested to reuse by purchasing from the Surplus Store, Hoosier2Hooiser sale, or setting up a departmental free shelf. The recycle option lists donating to these entities but additionally catalogs the individual vendor-sponsored recycling programs for various product categories. The Reconsider page is dedicated to promote greener purchasing habits and contains the “user guide” for KFS.

The main information on IUOS Green Purchasing page was simplified to only contain procedural changes consumers could when shopping on KFS. Previous resources were exceptionally well rounded however since KFS users usually did not want to spend their time shopping, these lengthier reference materials were less likely to be used. The most common third party seals and certifications were complied and described to provide a concise reference for users. A complete list of campus-wide sustainability purchasing policies was updated on the green purchasing page as well.

Roughly half way into my internship I realized any other major changes to KFS such as complete green flagging or having alternative products populate a search list first were infeasible during a summer internship. Afterwards my focus changed towards a large-scale awareness campaign for the IU consumers. My goal was to first understand what made certain practices work then to expand the use of those practices.
Both Chemistry and Biology had created a very streamlined ordering system through a central body. Their consolidated programs stemmed solely from utility and convenience. The Biostore and Chemstore only mass purchase basic lab items universally used such as solvents and gloves, and users go to these stores to restock their items rather than individually purchase them. A lab manager is responsible for keeping items ordered and stocked. Both entities capitalized on a product need and created a more sustainable method of procurement, even if it was not their original intention.

The Architect’s Office, Building Services and RPS had all elevated their standards without direct orders from higher authorizes or external pressure. Learning about the improvements made by Building Services and RPS was very enlightening. Their progress occurred after first having a group meeting where all the members discussed their best practices and past failures. Here is a possible model from their current successes and future goals.

1. Define common stakeholders and organize a meeting to discuss best practices for purchasing, ordering, and implementation.

2. Schedule quarterly meetings and define clear objectives from within the group.

3. Use the objectives to push for new policies and/or create amendments when vendor contracts are up for renewal i.e. a sustainability clause.

The CATS monthly meeting is the easiest and most effective way to reach out to a large influential group within IU. In the upcoming August meeting I am planning on giving a brief description of the various IUOS working groups to increase their publicity then discuss sustainable procurement practices. My goal is not only to bring the issue to people’s attention but also provide tools such as the user guide and the model above to help make simple and effective changes. Hopefully this meeting will be the first of many to promote a larger shift in attitude and increase sustainable behavior.
Recommendations

One area of focus is to keep encouraging the adoption of sustainability practices within the campus. This could be done a variety of ways:

- Continuation of short seminars with the CATS group
- Define key stakeholders for a product category and organize an initial meeting. (Step 1 of the model)
  - Paper would be great product category since it is universally used all over campus. Creating a space to discuss best practices, consolidating orders, and/or eventually creating a set policy would have great and far-reaching impacts.
- Re-evaluate the complied list of campus-wide sustainable policies thoroughly. Due to limited time, I was not able to meet with the Architect’s office. Discussing past achievements is a good way to bring up new possibilities.

Another area would be to focus on KFS and vendor data metrics:

- Asking for consolidated (velocity) invoices from vendors
  - HP products has great data reports for sustainable metrics
  - The Real Food Initiative is also working to improve how they gather data.
- Populate a timeline of key contract renewals so interns can prioritize which product categories or departments to focus on
- Work on creating sustainable contract language with the help of IUOP contract managers and consumers
::Appendix 1::
Anthony Marletta, Summer 2012 Intern, Top 5 Recommendations

2. Support Communication on data needs and information resources between, IUOS, CSAB Working Groups, and OPS.
3. Follow-up on pilot study efforts in concert with OPS to address paper and cleaning production—contribute to development of a green purchasing dashboard.
4. Explore the role of stronger intergovernmental policies including leadership commitments at IU Bloomington, across IU campuses, and State of Indiana.
5. Planning and coordination of a Green Purchasing Summit to support dialogue and share tools/training opportunities for new procurement system.

::Appendix 2::
Draft Email for Initiating Dialogue

Hi __________,

My name is Amishi Kumar and I’m the summer intern for Green Purchasing in IU’s Office of Sustainability. Currently, I’m working to understand what measures are taken on campus by users to promote and utilize the greener alternative products available from our vendors with my mentor, Tim Rice. I understand the ___ department/office [insert sentence about what you want to discuss]. I would really appreciate if we could have a quick meeting or to talk over the phone to assess current sustainable procurement practices. Please let me know if you would be willing to talk!

Thanks,

Amishi Kumar

::Appendix 3::
Questionnaire Used in Meetings with KFS Users

- What is the culture within your purchasing environment? D
  - Does the department regularly purchase greener, alternative products?
  - Do users actively discuss or promote sustainable practices?
• Do approvers ever scrutinize certain orders? Is there pressure to purchase particular items?
• Are the product orders for multiple users consolidated?
  o Is there a central ordering system in place?
    ▪ Who orders and how are the orders timed?
  o Is there an active effort to minimizing shipments (reduce costs, lower GHG emissions)
• What are the biggest barriers/drivers for ordering more alternative products?
• [Optional question to gauge existing commitment level] What will the department/user be willing to commit towards this sustainability goal? Any of the following are options:
  o Incorporate sustainable practices into purchasing behaviors
  o Act as extension of the IUOS- start conversations about alternative choices, act as a liaison for any green purchasing questions from users/improvements from IUOS
  o Public commitment (either personal or on behalf of a group) to become more sustainable
Sustainable Procurement

Definition: A process whereby organizations meet their needs for goods, services, works, and utilities in a way that achieves value … in terms of generating benefits not only to the organization, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimizing damage to the environment.

(UN Environment Program, 2012)

What Should I Do Here At Indiana University?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reuse</th>
<th>Recycle</th>
<th>Reconsider</th>
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| • Purchase from the Hoosier to Hoosier Sale this August 23rd and 24th | • IU can recycle:  
  ○ Paper/paperboard  
  ○ Cardboard  
  ○ Magazine, Books, & Catalogs  
  ○ Mail  
  ○ Aluminum, Steel, & Tin  
  ○ Glass  
  ○ Plastics #1-7  
  • The IU Surplus Store has a great electronic waste recycling program | • Try to switch two or three of your commonly ordered products to greener alternatives  
• Consolidate orders to reduce shipping wastes and emissions  
• Look at the IU Office of Sustainability Green Purchasing Page for help with finding new products and recycling programs |
| • Before buying new, check out the huge selection at the IU Surplus Store | • Set up a donation shelf in your work area where people can put items they don’t want but still are usable | |

For questions, concerns, or advice please contact amikumar@indiana.edu
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