New York State Green Procurement Program
Response to Comments on

Proposed Specification on Copy Paper and Paper Supplies

Background: A specification for copy paper and paper supplies was given tentative approval by the GreenNY Council on December 14, 2022. This was a specification created to replace the requirement from EO4 on copy paper and other paper supplies that was not reiterated in EO22, which superseded EO4.

Commenting Entities: Responsible Purchasing Network; Healthy Schools Network

Issues Raised by the Responsible Purchasing Network and Healthy Schools Network during the Comment Period:

1. Follow "Office Supplies Specifications"

Comments: Urge the State to follow the harmonized *Office Supplies Specifications* that were developed by RPN and the Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council (SPLC) in collaboration with over a dozen public and private purchasing entities across the United States. They are based on market assessments of available products with recycled content, third-party certifications and other environmental attributes.

Response: The GreenNY Council has adopted similar – at times, stricter – specifications regarding paper supplies. The specification being proposed by the commenter covers two main kinds of paper: white copy paper and other office paper products. The latter is addressed in the next comment mostly, however, there is a note about restricting PVC (vinyl) components from other paper products that would make sense for us to adopt. The former requires copy paper to contain less post-consumer recycled content (PCRC) than the draft specification's requirement for paper (100% PCRC). Furthermore, RPN themselves acknowledges there are paper providers that meet the 100% PCRC requirement that are not third party certified. We do not want to limit the options for the affected entities given the higher standard to which they are being held. Additionally, this specification is a reiteration of an EO4 requirement, which has been in effect for years and the 100% PCRC requirement has not raised concerns for affected entities.

Recommendation: Keep the specification as is as it relates to white copy paper. Break the specifications into sections by paper type. Note that when restrictions for white coper paper per this specification cannot be met, affected entities should follow the restrictions laid out for non-white copy paper purchases below.

2. Broaden restrictions for non-white copy paper

Comments: Outside of white copy paper, there is a limited number of brands of office paper products with 100% PCRC, but there is wide availability of colored copy paper, manila file folders, legal pads, sticky notes and envelopes with at least 30% PCRC. Therefore, we recommend other office paper products contain at least 30% PCRC and have *elemental* chlorine-free bleaching with a preference for office paper products that either:

- Have 50-100% PCRC;
- Have 100% total recycled content, including at least 30% PCRC;
- Have a third-party certification by Green Seal or Forest Stewardship Council; and/or
- Are process chlorine-free.

Response: The point is well taken that outside of white copy paper there are limited 100% PCRC products available. In reviewing reporting data on non-white copy paper products, it is apparent that such a high percent of PCRC is difficult to find for affected entities. In contrast to the above comment, this comment makes third-party certifications preferable but not required. Given the high standard to which Green Seal and the Forest Stewardship Council hold their products, we are comfortable with implementing this suggestion. Regarding chlorine, it is difficult to obtain data on whether the other paper products purchased by affected entities in the past were elemental versus process chlorine free. However, it makes sense that if affected entities cannot find a product that is not process chlorine-free that they be directed to look for products of the next highest standard, elemental chlorine-free.

Recommendation: Include suggested language about PCRC, third-party certifications, and chlorine usage to mirror the suggestions.

3. Delay implementation due to a fire

Comments: Finally, we understand that there is currently a temporary supply chain disruption in the United States due to a fire at a major recycled pulp mill that occurred in October 2022. Consequently, the State of New York may want to consider delaying adoption of this specification until at least June 2023, when this supply chain disruption is expected to be resolved and/or other sources of recycled-content pulp are identified. Alternatively, the State could adopt this GreenNY specification with the understanding that covered entities may need to request an exemption in cases when recycled white copy paper is unavailable.

Response: The language included in the tentatively approved specification has been adhered to since EO4's passage in 2008. The GreenNY Council has not heard of any issues about compliance with these requirements since the fire occurred.

Recommendation: Do not delay implementation of the specification.