

## Case Studies: Organizational Change for Sustainability

People can significantly impact the environmental performance of their organization. Many factors influence an organization's use of resources, and changing an organization to improve environmental performance can be daunting.

The FEMP Institutional Change Team provides expertise grounded in social science principles to help organizations make the change to sustainability.

The case studies presented in this series build on this expertise. The studies are:

- specific to the unique aspects of federal workplaces
- descriptive of real-world conditions
- examples of strategies for institutionalizing change

We encourage you to contact the team (through Jerry Dion at FEMP) to discuss possible applications of the case study material to your organization's specific needs.

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## Summary

Using an Environmental Management System to review existing procedures revealed new opportunities for improvement through changes in procurement systems.



The U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, NM. Photo courtesy DOE/WIPP.

## Enabling Sustainable Acquisition by Improving Procurement Systems

The Department of Energy Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) is a repository for defense-generated transuranic waste. Recently, the site submitted a procurement lessons learned document to DOE headquarters. In the document, WIPP staff noted that periodic review of Environmental Management System (EMS) sub-systems is necessary to ensure that desired progress towards environmental objectives is being achieved.

An internal review of these sub-systems in early 2010 found that the Affirmative Procurement Program required review of environmentally preferable purchases made. In addition, the program required an assessment regarding the availability of green products. In order to conduct this review, WIPP examined a database of procurement card (p-card) purchases. The resulting program assessment identified areas for improvement in the electronic purchase systems.

P-card holders reported buying green products, but vendor surveys revealed that only 16% of dollars spent on office supplies were on green products. In the existing p-card system, purchasers had the option to indicate when they made a green purchase by clicking a check box. However, the system was unable to assist the purchaser in making a green purchase. In addition, the procurement system could not be queried to report on P-card purchases marked as green. Instead, each record had to be reviewed individually. This combination of issues made both purchasing green products and verifying those purchases time intensive and inefficient processes.

In response, WIPP staff developed 2011 environmental targets designed to improve the sustainable procurement process. These targets resulted in six primary procurement process modifications:

1. Development of a green catalog listing only those products designated as green to assist staff in searching for appropriate products.

2. Modification to the e-Procurement system to allow additional purchase database querying capabilities to aid tracking program progress.
3. Addition of a database field to indicate products with the potential to have green alternatives (for future consideration).
4. Inclusion of sustainability clauses for new contracts and the tracking of how many new contracts contained such clauses.
5. Improvement of sustainable product tracing for reporting and assessing program effectiveness.
6. Updated procurement procedures to include requirements to justify non-green purchases.

In order to support the transition to these new procedures, purchaser training programs were updated to reinforce the purchasing requirements. These trainings also made purchasers familiar with tools used to identify items with green alternatives. The staff also updated the WIPP website to link to the green catalog, exemption form, and tools to identify items with green potential as well as to external sources of information on environmental-

### Social Science Principles Applied

- **Social Network & Communications**
- **Multiple Motivations**
- **Leadership**
- **Commitment**
- **Information & Feedback**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Social Empowerment**
- **Continuous Change**

ly preferred products. A link to the GSA Green Products Compilation will also be added.

### Roles, Rules, and Tools

Executive Orders requiring the use of environmental management systems stimulated the review of acquisition procedures. This review identified the inconsistency between Executive Order mandates and the site-specific tools used to support their execution. By aligning the tool capabilities with the rule goals, WIPP enabled its employees to more easily achieve their sustainability goals.

### Principles Applied

WIPP's change to their sustainable acquisition process used three social science principles of institutional change:

#### Information & Feedback

A necessary component of implementing continuous change effectively is understanding the impact of policy changes on outcomes. WIPP's alteration of the procurement system to require purchasers to provide a rationale for purchase of a non-compliant product both provides immediate feedback to the buyer and aggregate feedback to WIPP procurement policymakers about overall purchasing practices.

#### Infrastructure

Changing the electronic procurement systems to bring their capabilities into harmony with the sustainable acquisition policies was critical to allow WIPP to meet its goals. Changing the infrastructure of procurement changes the outcome of the purchasing process.

#### Continuous Change

Several Executive Orders, most recently E.O. 13514, have been issued that call

for the use of environmental management systems (EMS) to manage progress toward meeting various environmental goals. The ISO 9001/14001 process used by environmental management systems is an excellent example of continuous change.

### Lessons Learned

The green product catalog is available in pdf format. Exemption requests have been received to purchase products where green alternatives do not meet the criteria or do not exist. More procurement requisitions are being received for environmental review.

In the procurement system, people are identifying items with the potential for buying green.

Continued improvements are planned for FY 2012, such as implementing reporting for two additional office supply vendors, ensuring that 20% of office products purchased are sustainable, and improving the green catalog to make it more useable.

### Supporting Documentation

Presentation to the US Department of Energy Sustainable Acquisition Workgroup. May 24, 2012.

### Keywords

procurement, electronic procurement systems, environmental management systems, contract clauses, tracking, reporting