



## Suggested Supplier Disclosure Questions for Commercial Printing Services

We encourage consideration of the following questions in the the RFP/RFI when contracting for commercial printing services. These questions apply to services providing commercial printing of annual reports, binders (loose-leaf/media), booklets, brochures/newsletters/flyers, calendars, catalogs/magazines/manuals, CD/DVD duplication & printing, direct mail letters, flyers, door hangers, packaging, labels/decals, pocket/presentation folders, POP displays, post cards & tickets/raffle books. If you have questions or comments on this resource, please email them to [gsc@practicegreenhealth.org](mailto:gsc@practicegreenhealth.org).

#	Supplier Disclosure Question	Preferred Answer	Rationale
1	Does your company supply recycled content paper for all applicable paper stock that meets or exceeds the minimum Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <a href="http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/procure/products/printing.htm">http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/procure/products/printing.htm</a> ? (Yes/No)	Yes	This should be easy for all suppliers to offer as recycled printing papers are readily available and have been successfully used for years. Many recycled printing papers may cost less than virgin papers.

2	Does your company provide paper in applicable paper stock that is Processed Chlorine Free (PCF) and Totally Chlorine Free (TCF)? (Yes/No)	Yes	Chlorine and its derivatives (such as chlorine dioxide) are harmful to the environment, particularly the aquatic environment. Chlorine-free paper is characterized as either (1) processed chlorine-free (PCF) or (2) totally chlorine-free (TCF). Lastly, paper may be elemental chlorine-free (ECF) which uses a chlorine derivative (least preferable option). "Processed chlorine-free" applies to recycled paper and means no chlorine or chlorine derivatives were used in the recycling/bleaching process yet the papers used as feedstock may have been originally bleached with chlorine. "Totally Chlorine-free" (TCF) is virgin paper produced with pulp that has been bleached without chlorine or any derivatives or has not been bleached at all. (Paper would be virgin and not contain recycled content.) "Elemental Chlorine-Free" (ECF) paper is produced from pulp that has been bleached with a chlorine derivative (such as chlorine dioxide) but without the most harmful elemental chlorine. Many paper mills have gone to ECF bleaching technologies. Preference would be for PCF or TCF bleached paper
3	Does your company provide tree-free paper in applicable paper stock? (Yes/No)	Yes	The most common plant fibers are kenaf, hemp, flax, cotton and combinations thereof. In addition to their environmental value, plant fiber papers—especially kenaf and hemp, with their combination of long and short fibers—tend to be more durable. Containing less lignin than trees, kenaf requires fewer chemicals, takes less energy to process, is naturally acid free and can be recycled.[1]
4	Does your company provide paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)? (Yes/No)	Yes	FSC-certified paper means the wood used to make the paper comes from sustainably harvested forests; certified papers have an FSC label. For a list of papers, visit, <a href="https://us.fsc.org/download.fsc-certified-papers.175.pdf">https://us.fsc.org/download.fsc-certified-papers.175.pdf</a> and of merchants <a href="https://us.fsc.org/paper-printing.212.htm">https://us.fsc.org/paper-printing.212.htm</a>
5	Does your company use low volatile organic compound (VOC) vegetable-based inks, such as soy, instead of petroleum-based inks? (Yes/No)	Yes	Soy is naturally low in VOCs and is easier to remove in the deinking process than petroleum-based inks. Waste inks are not considered hazardous. Soy inks come from soybeans, a renewable resource.[2]
6	Does your company use inks free of heavy metals (such as barium, copper and zinc)? (Yes/No)	Yes	Even vegetable based inks are harmful if they exceed EPA threshold levels of copper and/or barium. Metallic inks, particularly greens, oranges and opaque yellows have some of the highest levels of carcinogens [3]

7	Does your company use copiers and printers compatible with the use of recycled content paper? (Yes/No)	Yes	Printers are encouraged to be successfully using recycled paper and have machines capable of running with recycled paper.
8	Does your company use EPEAT- registered printing devices where applicable? (Yes/No) If yes, please provide details.	Yes	EPEAT®-registered products meet a number of environmental criteria. From fewer toxicants in the product, to use of recycled content and design for easier recycling, EPEAT requires manufacturers of registered products to provide end-of-life take-back or the use of certified recycling services. EPEAT's requirement that registered products meet the latest ENERGY STAR specifications means these products will consume less energy throughout their useful life. More information at <a href="http://www.epeat.net">www.epeat.net</a> and search the registry for products at <a href="http://ww2.epeat.net/searchoptions.aspx">http://ww2.epeat.net/searchoptions.aspx</a> .
9	Does your company use ENERGY STAR labeled printing devices? (Yes/No)	Yes	
10	Does your company use PDF digital proofs in place of paper printouts? (Yes/No)	Yes	This reduces the use of paper
11	Does your company recycle waste paper from your operations?	Yes	Demonstrates corporate environmental commitment
12	Does your company minimize packaging or take back any shipping or packaging materials?	Yes	Demonstrates corporate environmental commitment; reduces waste
13	Does your company use recyclable packaging materials when sending completed jobs out? (Yes/No)	Yes	This corporate responsibility question demonstrates corporate commitment to support waste reduction by using recyclable packaging materials.
14	Does your company have a policy or commitment to support customers in using less paper, such as purging mailing lists to eliminate duplicates, copying on both sides of paper, etc? (Yes/No) If yes, provide examples of successful projects to use less paper.	Yes	This corporate responsibility question demonstrates corporate commitment to reduce the use of paper which may save on printing costs.
15	Is your company a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified Chain of Custody printer? (Yes/No)	Yes	Printers can sell FSC paper but cannot label the paper with FSC label without an FSC Chain of Custody certification. In order to use the FSC label on a product, it must go through the FSC "Chain of Custody," from a certified forest, to a paper manufacturer, to the merchant, and to the printer. For a list of FSC-certified printers, visit <a href="https://us.fsc.org/download.fsc-certified-printers.136.pdf">https://us.fsc.org/download.fsc-certified-printers.136.pdf</a>

16	Does your company have an Environmental Management System in place such as ISO 14001 certification? (Yes/No)	Yes	ISO 14001 is a standard for environmental management. Companies attaining an ISO 14001 certification have developed both a comprehensive system to minimize harmful effects on the environment caused by manufacturing, and a process to continually improve environmental performance. For a list of certifying organizations or more information about ISO 14001, visit <a href="http://www.iso.org">www.iso.org</a> .
17	Can you company provide alternatives to binding, packaging and other materials free of polyvinyl chloride or PVC? (Yes/No)	Yes	Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) is a common synthetic thermoplastic resin made by polymerizing vinyl chloride. The properties of the plastic depend on additives, including plasticizers. A number of health and environmental risks are inherent in the life cycle of PVC. Manufacture of PVC requires hazardous chemical inputs. The manufacture and incineration of PVC can generate dioxins, furans, and other hazardous chlorinated byproducts. PVC requires additives to impart properties like flexibility and heat resistance. Some of these additives pose risks. Alternatives are available in commercial printing.
18	Is your company Green-e certified as generating or purchasing a qualified amount of renewable energy? (Yes/No)	Yes	For more information on Green-e, see <a href="http://www.green-e.org/">http://www.green-e.org/</a> . For a list of certified printers and paper companies, see <a href="http://www.green-e.org/base/pl_products?dd_74=20&amp;test=y#results">http://www.green-e.org/base/pl_products?dd_74=20&amp;test=y#results</a>
19	Has your company been recognized by a regional agency as a Green Business? (Yes/No)	Yes	In some areas of the country, regional agencies have programs to recognize businesses as a certified Green Business. One example is the Bay Area Green Business Program which sets strong criteria and recognizes many types of businesses, including printing services.
20	Describe your design services to help each project achieve optimal sheet size, reduce paper waste, and design in the most ecologically way, such as downsizing to allow for trim on bleeds without upgrading to an oversize sheet of paper[4]? (Yes/No)	Sentences	Print design services could be a critical service to achieve a more efficient use of paper and printed materials.

[\[1\] A Field Guide to Effective Eco-Friendly, Efficient, and Effective Print, Third Edition, Monadnock, pg.](#)

<sup>[2]</sup> Soy Ink Benefits, Soya webpage, <http://www.soya.be/soy-ink-benefits.php>, viewed February 24, 2010

[\[3\] A Field Guide: Eco-Friendly, Efficient and Effective Print, Monadnock Paper Mills](#)

[\[4\] A Field Guide to Effective Eco-Friendly, Efficient, and Effective Print, Third Edition, Monadnock,](#)

*Practice Greenhealth thanks its EPP Supporters for their contributions to the creation of this resource.*

