

Executive Summary

The Japanese Ministry of Environment is promoting green purchasing policies across all levels of Japanese government. A primary reason is that green purchasing policies have the potential to significantly reduce carbon impacts across the globe and can help Japan achieve its carbon emissions goals.

However, at the local level, many municipal governments have struggled to implement green purchasing policies. Consequently, green purchasing has not reached its potential to help municipalities mitigate their environmental impacts. These are significant concerns that the United Nations Environmental Programme, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council (SPLC), and others suggest must be resolved if we are to move toward an environmentally sustainable economy.

Researchers at the Arizona State University's (ASU's) Sustainable Purchasing Research Initiative (in the ASU Center for Organization Research and Design, or COD) and Waseda University's Research Institute for Environmental Economics (RIEEM) have sought to address these issues with the assistance of a grant from the Social Science Research Council. Our three broad objectives are to:

- Determine the facilitators and barriers to adoption and implementation of green purchasing policies in Japanese municipalities
- Recommend actions for advancing green purchasing practices more effectively
- Encourage Japanese municipalities that lack green purchasing policies to adopt and implement them within their jurisdictions

To accomplish these objectives, we conducted a national survey of finance, municipal engineering and environmental directors in Japanese municipalities. The survey generated 1,504 individual responses from 860 municipalities with at least 25,000 residents. These municipalities were representative based on their population, income and geographic dispersion by prefecture.

Our results show that 53 percent of directors report that their municipalities have a green purchasing policy, 29 percent reported they have no policy, and 18 percent did not know if their municipality had such a policy.

How are municipalities that have adopted green purchasing policies different from nonadopters?

Department directors indicated that municipalities that adopt green purchasing policies differ in five ways from those municipalities without such policies:

1. Complementary policies and practices
2. Purchasing criteria
3. Information access
4. Leadership, employees and resources
5. Vendor roles

What factors are related to implementation success?

Of the 53 percent (771 total) of department directors who reported that their municipalities had adopted green purchasing policies, more than half (65 percent, 495 total) indicated that their municipalities have implemented the policy successfully.

By contrast, 34 percent (254 total) of the department directors considered the implementation of their green purchasing policies to be either “neutral” (neither successful nor unsuccessful) or “unsuccessful.”

Directors in municipalities who reported successful implementation of their green purchasing policies noted that their departments are more likely to have five general features:

1. Complementary policies and practices
2. Information access
3. Leadership and implementation responsibility
4. Vendor roles
5. Innovation culture

Recommendations:

Based on these findings, we have developed eight recommendations aimed at increasing municipalities' green purchasing policy adoption and implementation success:

1. Build on complementary policies and practices
2. Use information about environmentally preferred products such as those that receive Japan Environment Association's Eco Mark certification or certifications created by other environmental nonprofits that promote green purchasing
3. Utilize e-procurement systems that integrate environmental product information
4. Track spending related to green purchases
5. Enhance collaborative vendor relationships
6. Assign accountability to top-level management
7. Foster a culture for innovation
8. Participate in professional networks to share best practices

Research Collaboration

This report was developed in collaboration with researchers at the Arizona State University (ASU) Center for Organization Research and Design (CORD) and Waseda University's Research Institute for Environmental Economics and Management (RIEEM).

CORD is an ASU research center that promotes, supports and conducts fundamental research on public, private, nonprofit and hybrid organizations and their design. To achieve its mission, CORD has identified five areas that have high potential for improving societal conditions, one being environmental policy and sustainability.

RIEEM is a research institute under Waseda University's Organization for University Research Initiatives. It assesses organizations' voluntary actions to improve the environment and evaluates public policies for energy conservation, renewable energy and emission trading. RIEEM serves as a research hub in the Asia-Pacific Region for environmental economics and management, and policy studies.

Additional Resources

Please visit our website spa.asu.edu/greenpurchasing for additional resources, including:

- Project updates
- Survey materials
- Related research papers and reports
- Video clips
- Podcasts
- Slide decks
- *ASU Now* news articles
- Links to other green purchasing resources

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Advancing Green Purchasing in Japanese Municipalities

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