

NAGPI Conference Call (Teleconference)

Wednesday, 31 October 2003, 14:00–15:30

Minutes

1. Welcome to participants and roll call

Chantal Line Carpentier welcomes participants.

Attendees:

Participants

Dana Arnold
Archie Beaton
Sandra Cannon
Chantal Line Carpentier
Esther Maria Carrillo
Scot Case (and Lilian Case)
Eun-Sook Goidel
Alejandra Guzman
Brian Johnson
Loretta Legault
Amalia Lelo
Rahumathulla Marikkar
Israel Nuñez Birrueta
Madeleine Plouffe
John Polak
Mary Ann Remolador
Elizabeth Skinner
Jeff Stephens

2. Acceptance of proceedings to the 19 September NAGPI Meeting

Some participants did not receive the proceedings from the previous meeting. They should be presented.

3. Taking stock of the meeting

Scot Case suggested that the notion of “NAGPI” still needs to be clarified as well as “who we are” and “what are we trying to do.” This would bring real value to what we try to accomplish. He also suggested that the original documents should be re-sent to all new participants (especially the mission statement) and that a new list of members should be circulated.

Recommendations should be ready before the next Council Meeting in June 2004. Scot Case suggested providing an overview of what has been done so far, future plans and present examples of procurement policies.

Brian Johnson and Mary Ann Remolador said that the last meeting was really worthwhile and that it should be repeated; it was great to see people coming from different countries—all believing in the importance of green purchasing.

Elizabeth Skinner wanted to know what sort of participation should come from the private sector.

Chantal Line Carpentier asked what should be improved. She suggested the inclusion of the 19 September's "ideas" in a manner that would allow the promotion of green procurement. Statistics should be made available to the public as well as: 1) a list of different environmental procurement policies; 2) examples from the private sector; and 3) a brief overview of what has been done so far, all within the three North American countries (web site). Subsequently, a special focus should be made on what policy recommendations can result from the observations made to date. Another step would be to identify the different commodity areas where green purchasing can be done in a first stage. A decision on this should be ready before April, if possible.

Loretta Legeault suggested that such a decision would help if we included considerations of what is driving each government. A draft report exists at the OECD on this issue, and she suggested participants have a look at it.

Chantal Line Carpentier suggested the production in the future of a trilateral document answering the question, "What is driving governments?"

Israel Nuñez Birrueta informed participants about some changes in the purchasing situation in Mexico. The [Mexican] government discussed this at length recently. NAGPI had previously discussed the possibility of a pilot project to reproduce their findings in other offices. He said that Mexico was very interested in going along. They are interested in the consideration of life cycle dynamics. He added that this was good news, in anticipation of the next CEC Council meeting. NAGPI could present five to seven commodities to which governments could commit, and this in order to have a final agreement on three to four of them. He suggested goods such as office supplies. Mexico has already expressed interest, and he judged there was ground for this idea to grow.

Chantal Line Carpentier suggested that we need to find out if the initiative is really of interest to local governments, NGOs and the private sector.

Brian Johnson asked what exactly is NAGPI's legitimacy. Has the group defined a timeframe necessary to attain identified objectives? What are the effects desired in that frame? Is this clearly defined somewhere?

Scot Case recalled that the mission statement document he had just mentioned contains information in this regard. He added that a large part of the mandate is to inform. There are a lot of questions out there. People want to learn "where to begin green purchasing."

Mary Ann Remolador suggested that NAGPI obtain a good connection at government level. She added that there would be a need for government officials to better understand issues.

Brian Johnson suggested that NAGPI concentrate on finding a way to decide on an objective and rational procedure to pick a product and have an idea of its general profile and life cycle impacts. This would require the participation of the epistemic community. An approach strategy should be thought of.

Chantal Line Carpentier said that the private sector should also to be called upon to work in collaboration with scientists if this is the case.

Brian Johnson underlined that this is why we are trying to get new ideas brainstormed in order to improve the model. Another consideration is the harmonization of standards; there is a theory that says this may dilute previously existing standards that had a better impact on the environment.

Scot Case remarked that some commodity areas will contain more information than others. In some cases, politics are spotlighting certain products and commodities or services over others. This is the case with all energy-related issues since the mainstreaming of the Kyoto Protocol's implementation strategies. He added that different procurement policies exist at local, federal and private-sector levels.

Dana Arnold suggested that we use what is easily accessible, quantifiable and under our control.

Chantal Line Carpentier agreed and added that the new ministers are very interested in renewable energies. This can be a strong point on which to revamp a strategy.

Brian Johnson said that in the future, it would be interesting to develop a mechanism that would give the observer a long-term picture of green procurement practices. The ability to acknowledge people who practice green procurement would be part of that.

Chantal Line Carpentier said that governments could also give certificates of recognition for the best, or three best, entities/individuals that have integrated a green procurement strategy into their purchasing practices. In parallel, another such certificate could be provided by TerraChoice that would recognize the "greenness" of a product.

Scot Case agreed and said that getting a certification cannot be only through a self-assessment by the procurer/buyer. He suggested that a real and independent certification could indeed come from TerraChoice.

Brian Johnson reiterated the importance of longer-term thinking, as with the objective behind this kind of effort.

Dana Arnold continued with this idea by reminding everyone of the differing political contexts in Canada, Mexico and the US; that capitalizing on such political opportunities will not always bring the same results. Climatic changes are important

to the Mexican political agenda, but the strategies for addressing this challenge may not be the same as those considered by a northern country like Canada.

Israel Nuñez Birrueta concurred that climate change alleviation is a priority for Mexico. NAGPI agreed to decide on how legislation can be viewed as indicative of what capacities can be developed to attain our objectives. For instance, he mentioned that Mexico has an agreement by which a certain percentage of federal expenditures go for green products. Mexico has identified, in the case of energy, the need to include regeneration in the country's energy portfolio. Mexico also has a small project worth looking into in Oaxaca.

4. Report on the work of Madeleine Plouffe

Madeleine Plouffe has created two checklists: one on infrastructure (policy making at the managerial level) and the second on process (assessment of the procurement process). This can lead to an agreement on standardization of the certification processes. She has also created a guide (at the moment, in the form of a completed draft) that will be a list of best practices in each industry sector. She will send a draft to all participants (by 14 November). John Polak should give feedback on the draft. All other comments on the draft are welcomed.

Chantal Line Carpentier said that the draft will be circulated. She also expressed the need for a procurement policy guideline document to be presented along with the result of this draft.

Scot Case called for a broader community review following the official draft.

Chantal Line Carpentier concurred, saying that this would come as an incentive for a more thorough green procurement reflection in North America.

Madeleine Plouffe said that the checklists cover issues such as "greening your office" and is intended for policy makers. It covers the development of a "scoring system." Another section covers the self-assessment of green procurement achievements. Madeleine Plouffe continued by explaining the TerraChoice certification procedure.

Chantal Line Carpentier asked to have an outline of that procedure sent to her.

5. Time running out, postponed presentations (D. Arnold & R. Marikkar)

Time was running out and the section of the agenda scheduled for Dana Arnold's presentation was skipped. Instead, it was decided that she would e-mail work on a terminology for procurement to the CEC, and it will be distributed on the NAGPI listserv.

As the time planned for the conference was ending, Chantal Line Carpentier asked Rahumathulla Marikkar, who was supposed present his work on life cycle analysis, if he could send his paper to the others before the next conference call.

Chantal Line Carpentier asked whether there were any comments to be filed prior to closing or any comments for the next agenda.

Brian Johnson suggested that for future conference calls, a more productive way to proceed would be to send more relevant documents in advance (papers discussed, reports, work in progress, even if in draft form).

6. Next Meeting

Next conference call: Thursday, 4 December, 14:00 EST.

Meeting adjourned at 15:30.