



**A PROJECT TO DEVELOP AN
ELECTRONIC PRODUCT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT TOOL**

Background The management of electronic equipment is becoming a problem of increasing national urgency. Solutions to this challenge are being addressed through multi-stakeholder dialogues, whose goals are to create a shared responsibility framework for effectively managing electronic products.

One of the dialogues, the Western Electronic Product Stewardship Initiative (www.wepsi.org), proposed that methods be explored to provide a marketplace reward for products that embody superior environmental attributes. Product design makes a great difference in the cost efficiency and environmental effectiveness of products over their life cycle.

Large public and private organizations are concerned about the total cost of ownership of their purchases, including the costs of EOL management. Some products retain substantial value at EOL, while others can be costly to manage. These organizations are also increasingly concerned about the environmental impacts of their operations, and they can, through their purchasing, send a strong market signal.

Yet today, purchasing officials lack a clear and easy-to-use method to evaluate products. Recognizing the maxim that “what gets measured, gets managed”, this project will work to develop a national assessment tool that will facilitate identification of environmentally preferable design in personal computing devices.

The Project Goals In short, the goal of the project is to develop a national assessment tool that:

- Rewards innovation by clearly recognizing well-designed products
- Is low cost and causes no delay in time-to-market.
- Is simple and clear to a purchasing agent
- Is voluntary but inviting for manufacturers
- Is transparent and allows flexibility
- Addresses the significant issues faced by manufacturers, purchasers users and the reuse and recycling community
- Effectively measures preferred environmental design

The project will call on dedicated stakeholders to help examine potential assessment methods, to identify the appropriate organizational structures to implement and operate an assessment tool, and to produce a plan for development and funding.

The Project Approach

Step 1 Engage Stakeholders: The project will begin with broad, national outreach to stakeholders through interviews and a workshop to learn their perspectives and concerns.

Step 2 Develop Implementation Plan: A Development Team of dedicated stakeholders will be assembled to examine potential assessment methods and to produce a plan to launch development of the assessment tool and to establish the parent organization.

Step 3 Establish a Parent Organization: Either an existing organization or a newly created one will be identified to house the assessment tool and to provide technical resources to manage product applications.

Step 4 Create the Assessment Tool: Technical guidelines and application procedures will be developed, and outreach will be made to procurement officials nationwide to encourage use of the tool.

The Project Team Zero Waste Alliance (ZWA), a non-advocacy non-profit organization dedicated to helping businesses and organizations achieve sustainability through reduction of waste and toxics, provides project management services. Full Circle Environmental and the Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center are working with procurement officials to assure the assessment tool meets their requirements. The work is being performed with programmatic and financial support from U.S. EPA.

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