

Guide to Environmentally Preferable Products Purchasing Peer-to-Peer Business Mentoring

Written by Mary Ann Remolador, Northeast Recycling Council, Inc.
© October 2006

**This material is based on work supported by a grant from the Rural Utilities
Service, United States Department of Agriculture**

Disclaimer: Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Rural Utilities Service.

Acknowledgements

The Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC) would like to extend a special thank you to the USDA for funding its *Environmentally Preferable Products Purchasing Peer-to-Peer Mentoring* project through the Rural Utility Service, Solid Waste Management Grant program. NERC would also like to express its sincere appreciation to the following individuals from state agencies, private businesses, and business associations in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont for their participation in the project.

Maine

- Lisa Newcomb, Belfast Dance Studio
- Sanna McKim, Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility
- Peter Cooke, Maine Department of Environmental Protection
- Tom Miragliuolo, Maine State Planning Office
- Jason Wentworth, Washboard Laundry

New Hampshire

- Cleve Horton, Calef's Country Store & Gift Shop
- Wes Tator, Grubb & Ellis/Coldstream Real Estate Advisors, Inc.
- Boyd Smith, New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility
- James Robb, New Hampshire Division of Economic Development
- Bill Jones, North American Specialty Insurance

Vermont

- Dave Hanna, Roberta Barone, and Ann Marie DeSantis, Moretown Elementary School
- Carolyn Grodinsky and Doug Kievit-Kylar, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
- Spence Putnam, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
- Richard Schattman, Susan Dillon, and Joe Robinson, Waitsfield Elementary School

I. Introduction

Everyone's purchasing decisions impacts public health and the environment. Over the last ten years, there has been increasing interest in and efforts to promote environmentally preferable products purchasing (EPP – also known as “green” purchasing) to minimize these impacts. This has been most evident at the federal, state, and municipal government levels where EPP criteria are increasingly being incorporated into procurement decision-making and procedures. With greater accessibility to information through the internet and the increased availability of green products in stores, many individual consumers are also changing their purchasing habits and buying more green products.

On the other hand, the business sector is commonly viewed by EPP advocates as significant purchasers that have not incorporated green products and services into their operations. In addition, more and more financial institutions are looking at the measures businesses are taking to address the impact of their operations on the environment and surrounding communities as part of their investment criteria. EPP is one strategy businesses can easily incorporate into their operational purchasing procedures to show they are taking an interest in and responsibility for their footprint.

The *Guide to Environmentally Preferable Products Purchasing Peer-to-Peer Business Mentoring* (Guide) is primarily intended to provide businesses and entities working with businesses with a model for developing and implementing an EPP business mentoring program. It is based on the work NERC completed with state recycling and market development officials, and business partners as part of its *EPP Peer-to-Peer Business Mentoring Pilots* (EPP Pilots) in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. NERC's goal in implementing the EPP Pilots was to test a mentoring strategy for increasing business' use of EPP products and services that could be duplicated by other businesses.

The peer-to-peer approach NERC used included businesses mentoring other businesses to assist them with understanding what EPP products and services are, how they can make a difference in the impact of their operations, and how to incorporate EPP into their purchasing decisions. The participant businesses included one food service/retail sales operation, three service operations, and two elementary schools. The mentoring process included on-site visits, conference calls, and research on green products and services.

II. Steps to Developing an EPP Business Mentoring Program

A. Developing the Program

To initiate an EPP program an entity needs to take the lead in defining the goals for the program, developing the initial program content, and finding the appropriate funding source. This program organizer may take on several roles in the EPP program. In the EPP Pilots, NERC staff assumed the role of organizer and program coordinator (defined later in this document).

Before seeking funding, NERC used the following questions to flesh out and define its EPP program:

- **Goals of Program** - What is the purpose of the EPP program?
- **Program size** - How large will the program be? Will the program include one or multiple peers? If more than one peer, how many mentors will be required?
- **Required Funding** - How much funding is required to support the program? What is the term of the acquired funding? What are the available sources of funding for this program?
- **Type of Mentoring Program** - What will be the geographic area for the program? Will the program require the peer to develop an EPP program for their business (a comprehensive plan for integrating EPP into all of their operations), or will it allow the business to focus on specific EPP priorities--select EPP products or services?
- **Length of Mentoring Process Program** - How much time is required to form the mentoring team? How long will the mentoring process last—six months, eight months, one year?
- **Program Coordination** – Who will coordinate the program?
- **Partners** – What organizations or agencies would be appropriate partners for the program?

B. Forming a Successful Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Team

Having the right group of people to serve on the mentoring team makes all the difference for a successful mentoring program. The team format NERC employed for its EPP Pilots consisted of a:

- **Coordinator** - the person to drive and manage the mentoring process—identify mentors, peers, and EPP experts for the mentoring team; facilitate team discussions; coordinate and monitor the mentoring team's efforts and progress; and research specific EPP products and services. The coordinator is the first person to be identified for the team.
- **One or more EPP experts** - individuals who have significant expertise in EPP and are willing to share this knowledge and experience, are willing to work as a team participant, and are willing to assist with the identification of specific EPP products and services for the peer. These experts are identified by the coordinator in the early stages of the program so they may assist with the identification of the mentor and peer businesses. NERC solicited the participation of state employees specializing in EPP as the experts.
- **Mentor** - an employee from a business (i.e., manager or someone else with decision-making capability) that is willing and able to share their knowledge about EPP, their experiences with incorporating EPP into purchasing decisions, and the methods used for identifying appropriate green products and services; and is willing to assist with the identification of specific products or services for the peer business.
- **Peer** - an employee from a business that has decision-making capabilities or has the backing of the business' decision-makers (i.e., business owner or manager), has expressed interest in being mentored on EPP and incorporating green

purchasing into operational purchases, and is willing to be an active team participant.

The important part of working successfully as an EPP mentoring team is to make sure that all of the roles and responsibilities are accepted by the different team members. However, the team has the freedom to determine which team member will be responsible for each task based on participants' expertise, skills, and availability. As the mentoring team fully forms, it may also be necessary to revise the program goals to better reflect the resources and needs of the team participants.

Having descriptions of each team members' roles and responsibilities is vital for clarifying how the team members will work through the mentoring process. These descriptions can also be distributed to potential team members when soliciting their participation on the mentoring team. The description can also be tweaked as new members join the team and individual roles are further defined.

C. Identifying Appropriate Mentors and Peers

The process of identifying appropriate mentors and peers is the most difficult part of forming the mentoring team. It is important for the coordinator and EPP experts to combine their efforts to accomplish this task. Before starting the search, the following questions should be discussed by the team.

- What EPP networks do the coordinator and EPP experts have that can be used to identify the mentors and peers?
- Are there specific strategies the team should use to find mentors?
- Are there specific strategies the team should use to find peers?
- What are each team members' tasks for this search?

D. Strategies for Finding Potential Mentors and Peers

It is much harder to find the EPP peers than mentors. Generally speaking, businesses that have incorporated EPP into their operations publicize it to gain greater recognition. As a result, it is possible to create a short list of potential mentors from businesses that have been talked about on the radio or television, or have been featured in the newspaper.

The process for identifying the peer business has to be an all out effort made by the team. This should include talking with as many contacts as possible, posting announcements on appropriate listservs, distributing a press release to the local papers, and networking, networking, networking. Appendix A includes a sample press release.

Several methods proved very effective for NERC when identifying potential mentors and peers for the EPP Pilots. The EPP experts attended EPP events and networked directly with businesses and people working with businesses to spread the word about the program. In addition, the Businesses for Social Responsibility in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont are very active business associations and maintain listservs for their members. These associations partnered with NERC by distributing emails to their

members that announced the EPP pilots and the search for interested businesses. Appendix B includes sample announcements.

Another network we tapped into for the New Hampshire team was the business real estate industry. This industry sector has the advantage of knowing many businesses throughout the state. The wonderful part about the real estate agent we contacted was that he had a special interest in EPP. He quickly identified a business that later became the peer in the EPP Pilot. And in Vermont, there was an EPP initiative for schools that the EPP expert alerted us to. Through his participation in this initiative and his existing contacts, we were able to identify the participant schools for NERC's EPP Pilot.

E. Matching Mentor and Peer

The process of matching the mentor and peer businesses requires identifying as many potential project participants as possible so you have a pool to choose from. The conversations team members have with potential peer and mentor businesses helps to create a brief profile on each of them. This will allow the Team to narrow the pool for matching the businesses by comparing and contrasting the needs and interests of the potential peers with the skills and experience of the potential mentors.

The following two questions are important for the team to discuss when in the process of matching the businesses:

- Should the participant businesses be from the same industry sector (e.g., retail sales, manufacturing, schools, and services)?
- Should the participant businesses be of the same sized operation—small, medium or large—or does it matter?

Industry Sector

The factors relating to specific industry sectors that can impact the success of the mentoring process include:

- **Level of competition between Mentor and Peer** - If the businesses are direct competitors, most likely they will not feel comfortable divulging any information about their operations with each other. In this scenario, the businesses should not be matched.
- **Regulations or requirements governing the business' operation** - In NERC's work on the Vermont EPP Pilot, it was important for the mentor and peer to both be schools, so they could understand the working parameters of their operations.
- **Preferences of the Peer and Mentor** - When considering a potential match, the coordinator should discuss the possibility with the businesses before finalizing plans.

NERC's EPP Pilots included the following mentor and peer matches:

State	Mentors	Peers
ME	Laundromat (service)	Dance Studio (service)
NH	Insurance Company (service)	Country Store & Gift Shop (food service/ retail sales)
VT	Elementary School	Elementary School ¹

Size of Participant Businesses

In NERC's experience with the EPP Pilots, the size of the mentor and peer businesses does not have any impact on their ability to work effectively together. For example, a small business that has put a lot of energy into researching and finding the right EPP products and services for their operations could be a valuable resource to a medium or large company. The experience of changing purchasing habits and how to integrate those changes into the existing system are crucial pieces of information to share with an interested business of any size.

III. Mentoring Process

Once the mentor and peer businesses have been matched, the following steps are necessary to initiate and implement the mentoring process.

A. Sign Memo of Commitment

Both the peer and mentor should be asked to sign a memo of commitment for the length of the program's mentoring process. This memo serves as an informal contract between the participant businesses, and provides a greater level of assurance that the participant businesses are serious about EPP and the time to be spent on the mentoring process. Appendix C includes a copy of the Memo of Understanding NERC used in its EPP Pilots.

One aspect of participating with an EPP mentoring team that should be specified in the memo and discussed with the participant businesses is that it is a team process. The coordinator and EPP experts, as part of the team, will participate in the discussions with the businesses throughout the term of the project. This may raise confidentiality issues for the businesses. If it does, an agreement can be drawn up and signed by all the team members. Although NERC did not run into this problem with the EPP Pilots, it could be viewed as a barrier to participation by some businesses.

B. Identify Best Method(s) for Working Together

Once the peer and mentor have committed to participating in the EPP project, soliciting team members' preferences on the best strategy and frequency for working together is crucial for making the process work. Some may want to work primarily by phone and email as often as they feel necessary, while others may want to work in person once a month. In NERC's experience, finding a common ground among team members was easy to achieve.

¹ For the purposes of this project, USDA considered schools as businesses.

C. Identify Peer's EPP Priorities

Depending on the EPP program goals and prior to the first official team discussion, the peer needs to be asked to either clearly define their business' EPP priorities or to start thinking about the process in which they will develop their EPP program. This will make the most use of the time the team has to work together. In NERC's EPP Pilot, peers were asked to identify three priority EPP products or services that they would focus on for the duration of the program.

If the EPP program goal is for the peer to identify EPP priorities and they need more general information to help focus their decision-making, the coordinator can provide a list of potential EPP products and services to start the process. Appendix D includes a sample list of EPP products and services that NERC used for its EPP Pilots.

D. Facilitate First Discussion

The first discussion may be the hardest to schedule until team members' schedules become more familiar and the team becomes used to working with each other. Some of the important agenda items to include in this discussion include:

- **Introductions of All Team Members** - It is important for all team members to have a chance to describe who they are and their interest and experience in EPP. This will make it easier for the members to get to know each other and to engage more fully throughout the mentoring process.
- **Review Project Goals and Timeline** – It is important to review the program goals, how the mentoring process will be implemented, and the length of time everyone is expected to work together at the beginning of the mentoring process. This will also set the stage towards building a good working relationship among the team. If sufficient time is not allotted for this step, the team members may participate in the program with different expectations. This could lead to communication problems later in the program.
- **Discuss Peer's EPP program development or priorities** - This part of the initial discussion will give the team a chance to review the peer's goals and how they fit into their business' operations.
- **Initiate Mentor's Involvement** – This initial meeting is a wonderful opportunity for the mentor to begin conveying their EPP experience and skills, and providing recommendations to the peer.

E. Support Mentoring Process

It is important for the peer and mentor to be the focus of all the team discussions—the true intention of the peer mentoring process. The experience of the EPP experts can be solicited during the discussions when they are obviously needed.

F. Research Specific EPP Products and Services

Depending on the peer's EPP priorities and the mentor and EPP experts' knowledge and experience, research may be required to identify specific EPP products or services.

The mentor, experts, and coordinator can all take part in the search for information by contacting their product and service vendors and colleagues, researching the internet, and posting detailed questions on listservs such as EPPnet.² The peer can also partake in this process by discussing green products and services with their existing vendors and searching for them through other outlets in their towns.

Another EPP resource for businesses is the *Green Purchasing Resources for Businesses* <http://www.nerc.org/GreenPurchasing/greenpurchasingresources.html>. NERC developed this resource as part of its work on the *Peer-to-Peer EPP Project*. This site provides businesses with lists of vendors that sell green products and services throughout the Northeast region, steps to developing a green purchasing program, purchasing self-assessment tools, and tools for quantifying the impact of a green purchasing program.

G. Document Mentoring Process

One of the team coordinator's key roles is to document the mentoring process. Meeting minutes, including tasks to be completed by each team member and related deadlines, provide each team member with a reference for tracking their responsibilities. The meeting minutes also serve as a reference for tracking the progress made throughout the mentoring process.

H. Provide recognition for mentors and peers

One way to recognize the peer and mentor's participation in the EPP program is to provide them with public recognition. This can easily be accomplished by distributing a press release at the end of the program that highlights the EPP achievements made by the peer and the assistance provided by the mentor. Depending on the future plans of the mentoring team, the press release could also announce a new round of EPP mentoring and the search for peers and mentors. Appendix E includes a sample press release.

Lessons Learned

- The EPP mentoring process works well as a team approach. To instill an atmosphere of participation for team members, the coordinator needs to be sure to include all the team members in the team's decision-making.
- The mentoring process works best when one business agrees to be the peer and another as the mentor. In NERC's experience, when two businesses both want to work with each other and assume the same role, it considerably slows down the progress of either business making advances on EPP.

² EPPnet is a free international listserv, administered by NERC, that is dedicated to discussions about EPP. Information on subscribing to EPPnet can be found on NERC's website at <http://www.nerc.org/eppnet.html>.

- If participants are unwilling to sign the Memo of Commitment, they probably would not be fully engaged in the mentoring process. In this situation, the mentoring team should consider other potential mentors or peers.
- The mentoring team needs to support the peer by allowing them to work through their EPP priorities or program at a pace that is appropriate and feasible for their operations. If the team tries to force its own pace or direction on the mentoring process, it can have a negative effect on the peer's EPP achievements.

Next Steps

The key to replicating NERC's EPP peer-to-peer business mentoring model is to have knowledgeable and dedicated people to serve as the project coordinator and EPP experts. Developing partnerships among organizations and agencies is one way to achieve this core mentoring team. Potential partners could include the state chapters of the Businesses for Social Responsibility, state EPP specialists, Small Business Development Centers that focus on environmental issues, and other entities interested in reducing a business' environmental footprint.

APPENDICES

- A. Press Release Announcing Search for Peer and Mentor
- B. Sample Peer and Mentor Announcements
- C. Sample Memo of Understanding for Peer and Mentor
- D. Sample List of EPP Products and Services
- E. Press Release Recognizing Achievements of Peer and Mentor

Appendix A

For Immediate Release

January 28, 2005

Contact: Mary Ann Remolador, Northeast Recycling Council, Inc., 802-254-3636

Businesses Invited to Participate in Environmental Project

New Hampshire Companies to Work Together in Developing Environmentally-Friendly Programs

CONCORD, NH – The Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC) in cooperation with the New Hampshire Business Resource Center (NHBRC) and the New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility (NHBSR) invites New Hampshire companies to participate in an innovative pilot project that promotes environmentally-friendly purchasing practices by New Hampshire companies, which could result in less solid waste generated and greater energy efficiency by the rural business sector.

NERC, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, in partnership with the New Hampshire Division of Economic Development, the Maine State Planning Office and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has developed an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) pilot program, which encourages northern New England companies to purchase products that have less adverse impacts on the environment while improving overall community and employee health and safety. Through a unique peer-to-peer initiative, companies with an existing EPP program (referred to as a “mentor business”) will assist businesses interested in developing an EPP program (referred to as a “participant business”) by offering peer-to-peer collaboration via weekly emails, phone calls and on-site visits, as needed. As part of this mentoring project, and respecting the participating companies’ confidentiality, NERC will develop a guidance document to be used for future EPP programs.

“The purchasing practices of the business sector directly impact the environment and public health,” states Project Advisor James Robb of the NHBRC. “By participating in an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing program and by using more environmentally

friendly products, businesses can decrease the toxicity and overall amount of their solid waste stream, as well as improve their energy efficiency. For example, a company could use recycled plastic lumber for a construction project, or a company could require a vendor to take back, or minimize the packaging materials used in the delivery of products, thereby reducing the company's solid waste disposal. Through the Northeast Recycling Council's unique, peer-based Environmentally Preferable Purchasing initiative, mentor businesses will share how their existing EPP programs can also help participant businesses realize the economic benefits of being more environmentally responsible."

NERC is currently seeking a New Hampshire company with an existing EPP program to serve as a "mentor business" for this innovative peer-to-peer EPP project; and also, a New Hampshire company interested in developing an EPP program and located in a municipality with fewer than 10,000 people is invited to become a "participant business" in this project.

For additional information or to participate in the peer-to-peer EPP project either as a "mentor business" or a "participant business," please contact the Project Manager, Mary Ann Remolador of NERC at 802-254-3636, maryann@nerc.org.

#

Appendix B

Peer Announcement

Seeking Businesses Interested in Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

The Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is seeking businesses interested in participating in an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) pilot project. EPP products have less impact on the environment and/or improve worker health and safety, thereby adding value to the bottom line. Examples of EPP products include: recycled content paper, energy-efficient office machinery and equipment (e.g. computers and photocopiers), and non-toxic cleaning agents.

What Does it Mean to be a Peer in this Project?

The peer business will be requested to select three EPP priorities for their business and to be mentored by another business on how to integrate EPP into their business purchasing decisions, and to research the EPP products and services being sought. The results of this pilot will be monitored and shared with other interested parties. The opportunity exists for public presentation of the process and results at different industry forums during the demonstration period.

How Much Time Will This Take?

Over a nine-month period (provide specific dates), the peer business will be expected to communicate with the mentoring team by email (as needed) and telephone conference call (monthly). Additional phone calls and meetings may be arranged between the participant businesses, as needed.

If you are interested in starting an EPP program in your business, and becoming a peer in this EPP pilot, please contact Mary Ann Remolador of NERC at 802-254-3636, or by email at maryann@nerc.org.

Project Funding: USDA's Rural Utility Service Solid Waste Management Grant Program

Mentor Announcement

Seeking Businesses to Mentor Other Businesses on Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

The Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is seeking businesses interested in mentoring other businesses on making their operational purchases to be more environmentally-friendly (For example: use recycled content paper, energy-efficient computers and photocopiers, and non-toxic cleaning agents). If your business has implemented such a purchasing program and you are willing to share this experience with another business to help them understand the importance of reducing their impact on the environment and improving worker health and safety, please contact Mary Ann Remolador of NERC at 802-254-3636, or by email at maryann@nerc.org.

What Does it Mean to Be a Mentor for a Business Interested in Starting an EPP Program?

Over a nine-month period (provide specific dates), the mentor business will assist one peer business from your state on how to develop and implement a purchasing program that focuses on using products that are less toxic and/or have less impact on the environment – Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP).

How Much Time Will This Take?

Mentors will be expected to communicate with the peer business by email (as needed), and participate on a monthly phone call. Additional phone calls and face-to-face visit(s) may be arranged if the mentoring and peer businesses are in agreement.

Project Funding: USDA's Rural Utility Service Solid Waste Management Grant Program

Appendix C

MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING FOR MENTOR BUSINESS

As a mentor for NERC's Peer-to-Peer Project, you agree to:

- Mentor one peer business on developing or expanding their Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Program from (provide timeframe);
- Identify the appropriate staff person(s) to be the contact for and to participate in this Peer-to-Peer project;
- Actively participate on a monthly conference call with the mentoring team to discuss the peer's EPP priorities. NERC staff will develop the agenda for these calls, and will schedule them;
- Communicate with mentoring team by email, as needed for duration of project;
- Participate in additional phone calls and/or face-to-face visit(s), if necessary;
- Share the mentoring process by allowing NERC to document it in the project Guidance Document; and
- Participate in project evaluation, which will be conducted by NERC staff.

Name, Title

Date

Company Name

MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING FOR PEER BUSINESS

As a peer for NERC's Peer-to-Peer Project, you agree to:

- Participate in further developing or expanding your business' Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Program from (provide timeframe);
- Identify the appropriate staff person(s) to be the contact for and to participate in this Peer-to-Peer project;
- Be willing to select and work on three EPP priorities for your business;
- Actively participate on a monthly call or meeting with the appropriate representative(s) from the mentoring team to discuss EPP priorities. NERC staff will work with mentoring team to develop the agenda for these calls/meetings, and will schedule them;
- Communicate with other mentoring team members by email, as needed for duration of project;
- Participate in additional phone calls and/or face-to-face visit(s), if necessary;
- Share the process of participating in this project by allowing NERC to document it in the project Guidance Document; and
- Participate in project evaluation, which will be conducted by NERC staff.

Name, Title

Date

Business Name

Appendix D

Sample List of EPP Products and Services

- Less Toxic Cleaning & Maintenance Products
- Less Toxic Chemistry Lab and Medical Products
- Recycled Content Office Paper Products
- Recycled Content Bathroom Paper Products
- Materials Reduction (e.g., use less toilet paper by installing a tensioner on the roller, double-sided copying, using scrap paper for note taking)
- Energy Efficient Lighting
- Energy Efficient Heating Issues
- Energy Efficient Office Equipment (e.g., copiers and computers)
- Composting
- Green Landscaping Products (e.g., benches, tables, playground surfaces)
- Purchasing previously used items from Materials Exchanges (e.g. furniture, sports equipment, building supplies)

Appendix E

May 30, 2006; Brattleboro, Vermont

From: Northeast Recycling Council, Inc.

Please contact: Linda M. Bland, Cahoots Writing Services, 802-644-6535 or cahoots@together.net for assistance.

Business Mentoring Program Helps Belfast Dance Studio Save Costs *and* the Environment

Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC) announces a success story that other Maine businesses can learn from—while saving costs *and* the environment: With U.S. Department of Agriculture funding, NERC paired businesses in an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) project in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Peer-to-peer mentoring connected businesses who have successful EPP programs with rural businesses who want to improve.

Last June, Jason Wentworth of **Washboard Laundry in Portland** began mentoring Lisa Newcomb, owner of **Belfast Dance Studio in Belfast**. Six months later, Lisa had halved the amount of toilet paper she purchases, and switched from one EPP supplier to another—halving the price. She also switched to Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap for cleaning her studio's floor; it cleans as well or better—even with more traffic. Belfast Dance Studio's project team still seeks an energy audit and a salt alternative for walkways in the winter.

Jason Wentworth was surprised when his mentoring benefited him, "I expected to do more teaching than learning but I found myself looking more carefully at my own business practices and finding areas for improvement. The effort gave me confidence and incentive to make changes that have reduced my business' environmental impact. I

also now offer my customers some healthier choices for cleaning their laundry."

The mentoring program showed businesses the environmental impact of their existing purchasing practices; the step-by-step process for developing an EPP program; ways to gain management support; criteria for environmentally preferable purchase of products; measurements to document impact; and strategies for transitioning and maintaining an EPP program.

If your business would like to explore an environmentally preferable purchasing plan, contact Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. at Tel: 802-254-3636; Fax: 802-254-5870; MaryAnn@nerc.org or 139 Main Street, Suite 401, Brattleboro, VT 05301. Their web site www.nerc.org will offer how-to guidance, so businesses can replicate this program.

NERC thanks for their assistance **Tom Miragliuolo, Maine State Planning Office; Peter Cooke, Maine Department of Environmental Protection; and Sanna McKim, Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility.**

NERC's mission is to advance an environmentally sustainable economy by promoting recycling, source and toxicity reduction, and purchase of environmentally preferable products and services.