Executive Summary

This Report Examines whether various e-procurement activities are associated with the perceived success of a city’s sustainable purchasing policy. Sustainable purchasing policies and e-procurement are both fast becoming popular topics across city governments in the United States. As these two relatively new initiatives meet, the relationship they share has some promising implications that have gone mostly unexplored until now. E-procurement systems have gained a reputation of being one of the most effective ways to advance sustainable purchasing goals, but the belief alone may not be enough to create director buy-in throughout city governments.

A survey of city government procurement was sent to 851 directors from Finance, Public Works, and Environmental departments across 567 U.S. cities. These decision-makers answered questions relating to their assessment of how sustainable purchasing policies are implemented and the extent to which their city uses an e-procurement system. Questions on e-procurement referred to activities such as the use of an online bid process, e-procurement to train procurement agents, use of system to track purchases, and the housing of a database of environmentally friendly goods and services. Tests of independence were then performed to determine if a relationship between the different e-procurement activities and perceived success of cities’ sustainable purchasing policies existed.

The results show that 58 percent of city managers with an environmental database report that their SPP is successful, whereas 36 percent of city managers without an environmental database report that their SPP is successful ($p < .05$). The 22 percent difference in perceived implementation success offers strong initial evidence about the importance that a city's environmentally friendly database of goods and services.

An environmentally friendly database of goods and services was found to be the most salient e-procurement activity for increasing decision-makers’ opinions of their city’s SPP. Cities with e-procurement systems hoping to maximize the effectiveness of their sustainable purchasing policy should consider the implementation of an environmentally friendly database.