

Washington Toxics Reduction Strategy Group

Draft Ideas about Incentives for Safer Alternatives - 11/15/2012

This document contains a working draft of ideas the TRS group has raised about how safer alternatives might be advanced in products to reduce exposures to toxics and related discussion questions.

Overarching Observations

- There are many existing products and chemicals, and new products and chemicals are being developed all the time. It is difficult to imagine a regulatory program that will effectively keep up with this pace without risking a stifling of innovation.
- Using incentives and market factors to encourage safer alternatives may be a way to get them to market faster and to enlist more actors in the work to reduce toxics.
- Providing support for producers, manufacturers, and retailers to identify and develop safer alternatives is consistent with the idea of shared responsibility for toxics reduction.
- This could be an area that supports economic growth and innovation and competitiveness of Washington State businesses.

Ideas for Discussion

Safer Alternatives Resource Center

- Establish a resource center to:
 - Provide ready access to information about safer alternatives, in products and in supply chains
 - Assist producers and manufacturers with green chemistry and green design approaches
 - Consolidate testing information about toxics in products and conduct independent testing and verification and research
 - Support toxics-free manufacturing efforts, consistent with cradle-to-cradle approaches
 - Identify barriers to safer alternatives, and work with stakeholders to develop strategies to overcome barriers and to reduce transaction costs of getting safer alternatives to market
- Could be modeled after the Stormwater Center (<http://www.wastormwatercenter.org/>) or the NanoTech center in Albany, NY (<http://cbsn.ws/Tm5TCZ>).
- Could be established as a public/private partnership and coordinated or run through the university system to take advantage of university expertise and convening.
- Could be combined / complementary to labeling and education programs (discussed in separate briefing sheet).

Discussion questions:

1. Who would fund / manage such a center? What would incentivize investment in a center?
2. What other roles might they have? How would dissemination of benefits and knowledge take place?

3. How would the center agenda for testing and research be established? Map to current and / or future industrial or manufacturing activity in the state? Leverage ongoing work such as the University of Washington biomimicry and Design for the Environment (DfE) work? Other?
4. What incentives could be offered to producers and manufacturers to work with the center? Tax incentives?
5. Is there a way to leverage ongoing interest and efforts related to the Interstate Chemical Clearing house work (<http://www.newmoa.org/prevention/ic2/>) or the green chemistry center which Ecology has seed funding from the NEP grant to create in Washington?
6. Can the state marshal sustained interest and investment in such a center?
7. What would be the first step in implementation of such an approach?

Sponsor a Contest to Draw Attention to the Need for Safer Alternatives and Reward Development

- Identify a product / product ingredient where a safer alternative is needed, compile relevant information, sponsor a contest to develop safer alternative. For example, getting PCBs out of yellow dyes and pigments.
- The contest prize could be a monetary honorarium and/or another sort of award.
- The contest could be aimed at students and/or other audiences.

Discussion Questions

1. Are there other products/product ingredients that might be a priority, based on the situation in Washington? How should product/product ingredients be identified?
2. How might the contest award be funded?
3. Should the audience be students (high school, college, graduate?) or others?
4. Who would determine the contest winner?
5. Can the state marshal sustained interest and investment in a contest?
6. What would be the first step in implementation of such an approach?

Create Advantages for Safer Alternatives in the Market

- Identify a product / product ingredient where a safer alternative is needed and specify that, once a safer alternative is developed and available, the current alternatives will be banned from sale in Washington within a given period of time which allows sufficient time for scaling up commercialization of the new safer alternative.

Discussion Questions

1. How should priority products / product ingredients be identified?
2. How would the advantages be put into place – through regulations?
3. What other incentives could be offered to producers and manufacturers who create safer products / processes? Tax incentives?
4. Can the state marshal sustained interest and investment in such an approach?
5. What would be the first step in implementation of such an approach?