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**Name of Organization:** INFORM, Inc.

**Type of Organization:** Other

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**Project Title:** PBT-free Purchasing in the Great Lakes States

**Project Category:** Pollution Prevention and Reduction - BNS

**Rank by Organization (if applicable):** 0

**Total Funding Requested (\$):** 66,400 **Project Duration:** 2 Years

**Abstract:**

INFORM's project, PBT-free Purchasing in the Great Lakes States, would focus on working directly with government agencies and institutions at the state level to minimize their procurement of products that contain select high-priority persistent, bio-accumulative toxins (PBTs) identified in the Great Lakes Binational Toxics Strategy (BNS) and by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). INFORM is targeting heavy metals -- primarily mercury and lead -- because they are a high priority for the region and are still used extensively in manufacturing processes. INFORM will also include other heavy metals from EPA's Draft RCRA PBT list, such as cadmium, beryllium, arsenic and copper, that are found in products that are used extensively and have a high potential to adversely affect the Great Lakes.

This initiative is part of a larger, multi-year Purchasing for Pollution Prevention project recently launched by INFORM, which currently involves several states in the Northeast. INFORM seeks funding to expand this project through aggressive education and outreach in the eight Great Lakes states.

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**Geographic Areas Affected by the Project**

**States:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New York     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indiana   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pennsylvania |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wisconsin    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minnesota | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ohio         |

**Lakes:**

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Superior | <input type="checkbox"/> Erie                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Huron    | <input type="checkbox"/> Ontario              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Michigan | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Lakes |

**Geographic Initiatives:**

- |  |                                  |                                     |                                      |   |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greater Chicago | <input type="checkbox"/> NE Ohio | <input type="checkbox"/> NW Indiana | <input type="checkbox"/> SE Michigan | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake St. Clair |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|

**Primary Affected Area of Concern:** Not Applicable

**Other Affected Areas of Concern:**

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***For Habitat Projects Only:***

**Primary Affected Biodiversity Investment Area:**

**Other Affected Biodiversity Investment Areas:**

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**Problem Statement:**

Research conducted by INFORM for its "Toxic Watch 1995" report demonstrated that in many cases, toxic chemicals contained in consumer products have played a much more significant role in environmental contamination and human health damage than those found in the waste streams of manufacturing facilities. Moreover, a soon-to-be-published report by INFORM on the industrial use of bioaccumulative toxins documents that more than 90% of these chemicals are leaving factories in products, not in waste. PBTs, a more narrow group of bioaccumulative toxins, are found in a wide range of consumer and industrial products including paints (used on boats, bridges, roads and automobiles), pesticides, chlorinated solvents, inks, dyes, solder, etc.

Toxic chemicals in consumer products can present risks both when products are used and after they are discarded into landfills and incinerators. Workers, consumers and the environment can become exposed to toxic chemicals contained in a wide variety of products that are used by government entities, businesses and individual consumers. Purchasers of these products are often unwittingly choosing products that contain PBTs -- some of the most dangerous chemicals known to science -- even though, in many cases, safer alternatives are available.

INFORM is taking this approach to promoting pollution prevention because government agencies can be directed to procure environmentally preferable products by law or executive order. In addition, EPA's national PBT policy issued in November 1998 urges states, localities and the federal government to reduce PBTs in waste by 50% by the year 2005 (see [www.epa.gov/pbt](http://www.epa.gov/pbt)).

While many states, localities and federal agencies have altered their purchasing practices to favor products that are recycled or energy efficient, far fewer have looked extensively for ways to reduce the toxicity of the goods and services they procure. Government procurement has the potential to be a major catalyst for innovative technologies because the public sector has substantial purchasing power. When added together, states and local governments spend about twice as much as the federal government, which is the largest single consumer of goods and services in the world. Consequently, many manufacturers and service providers design their goods and services to meet the specifications of the federal government and states. Altering the purchasing decisions of government agencies would, therefore, stimulate businesses to put more environmentally preferable goods and services on the market, making them more readily available to other businesses and consumers-at-large.

While several high priority PBTs (such as DDT and other organochlorine pesticides) can no longer be sold or used in the U.S., many others continue to be incorporated into products destined for commercial or consumer markets. We are designing this initiative to have an emphasis on BNS PBT chemicals that continue to be used by manufacturing facilities to make products that are purchased by government entities in the eight Great Lakes states. INFORM is targeting heavy

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metals -- primarily mercury and lead -- because they are a high priority for the region and because they have been highly recognized by the public as chemicals of concern. INFORM will also include other heavy metals on EPA's Draft RCRA PBT list, such as cadmium, beryllium, arsenic and copper.

Within each PBT category, INFORM will look for products that have a high potential to adversely affect the Great Lakes ecosystem as well as public health. These may include, for example, road and bridge paints that contain lead, as well as boat-bottom (anti-fouling) paints that can leach heavy metals into water bodies to concentrate in the sediments, where they can reach potentially dangerous levels. We will also include PBT-containing products that present environmental problems when they are disposed of in landfills or incinerators (such as electronics manufactured with leaded solder, or batteries containing mercury, cadmium or other heavy metals). We will establish a scientific advisory board to help us choose the most harmful products, on which we will focus our campaigns.

### **Proposed Work Outcome:**

INFORM is embarking on an innovative, market-based project designed to safeguard health and promote pollution prevention by harnessing the purchasing power of government entities. The primary goal of this project is to alter decision-making policies and practices of the public sector so that products containing PBTs will be phased out. We will also work with government agencies to adopt contract specifications requiring vendors to "take-back" products containing PBTs when safer substitutes are neither readily available nor affordable.

INFORM's PBT-free Purchasing in the Great Lakes States project is modeled after the successful government "Buy Recycled" campaigns of the 1990s, which have had a significant impact on making recycled-content products available through mainstream channels and on stimulating markets for recyclables. INFORM's staff will combine its research and outreach expertise in an effort to convince government agencies to adopt new policies and practices that address the problems associated with using and disposing of selected PBT-containing products. We will build on the information resources and experience that we are gaining by working on a similar project in New Jersey, and yet we will tailor this initiative to the specific needs identified in the Great Lakes States.

Specific strategies for PBT-free Purchasing in the Great Lakes States will include:

- Forming partnerships with key government officials who are willing to improve their states' purchasing policies and practices. We will work with them to identify PBT-containing products they currently purchase and to test alternatives. (INFORM will build on our current partnerships with the Environmental Purchasing Coordinators of Massachusetts and Connecticut who have already agreed to collaborate with us in the Northeast.) We plan to involve purchasing officials, facility managers and policy-makers in the departments of general services, environmental protection (including state and regional mercury task forces), health, transportation, maritime and parks. We will disseminate information about relevant PBT-containing products to the appropriate agencies through direct contact (by telephone and personal visits), in training events, through contact with government associations, electronically and by other means. For example, we might conduct outreach to the department of transportation for each state in the Great Lakes region regarding alternatives to road and bridge paints containing lead.
- Creating and widely disseminating outreach materials on at least five selected PBT-containing products (based on use data and other criteria), highlighting both the risks they pose to the Great Lakes region and the safer alternative products and practices that are presently feasible.
- Researching and writing case studies of government entities that have successfully procured and used PBT-free products. INFORM will undertake this research primarily by conducting written and telephone surveys of project participants as well as other government entities. We will publicize success stories electronically.
- Working with purchasing agents and other relevant government officials in the Great Lakes states and other regions (funding for work in other regions will come from other sources), as well as other project participants and advisors, to evaluate and revise bid and contract specifications for products that typically contain PBTs. From this collaborative effort, we plan to create PBT-free specifications that can be used by states, federal agencies, local governments, schools, hospitals, and potentially by businesses.
- Producing and widely publicizing and disseminating "Purchasing Strategies to Prevent Pollution: A Guide to PBT-free Products." This publication will describe conventional PBT-containing products commonly used by the public sector and any environmentally preferable, reasonably priced substitutes. The guide will also include the model specifications and case studies described above. The purpose of the guide will be to educate, motivate and assist government officials to procure environmentally preferable substitutes to key PBT-containing products that are used by government agencies and

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other public entities -- particularly those which threaten the environment and public health of the Great Lakes states. Like most of our recent publications, it will be made available for free downloading off of INFORM's website. (This guide is a logical sequel to the EPA-funded report INFORM published in 1999 in conjunction with the Source Reduction Forum of the National Recycling Coalition. Entitled "Purchasing Strategies to Prevent Waste and Save Money," it provides recommendations and case studies on solid waste reduction.)

--Generating broader public awareness of the long-term risks to the environment and human health posed by the use and disposal of PBTs in consumer products, utilizing the press and electronic media to increase the effectiveness of this initiative.

INFORM will plan for and measure the success of this project in the following ways:

--Surveying project participants to track the number of policy changes and new specifications that are implemented to facilitate the procurement of products without PBTs. We will also document the number of cases in which government agencies and other public entities in the Great Lakes states eliminate their purchase of PBT-containing products. Whenever feasible, we will estimate the amount of money spent on PBT-free alternatives instead of PBT-containing products, in an attempt to measure the shift in the market that results from this initiative.

--Interviewing manufacturers of PBT-containing products to document any changes in manufacturing practices and policies (such as PBT-free product substitutions or other pollution prevention initiatives) that occur as a result of this project.

--Tracking our impact on making PBTs in products an issue of concern through our outreach to the media at conferences, via electronic communication, and by other means.

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<b>Project Milestones:</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
Project Start	10/2000
Great Lakes partnerships established	12/2000
Begin outreach with existing materials	03/2000
Product alternatives researched & tested	12/2001
Procurement specs for bids & contracts	03/2002
Case studies & recommendations	05/2002
Guide published & disseminated	09/2002
Project End	10/2002

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Project Addresses Environmental Justice

**If So, Description of How:**

Low-income populations tend to be disproportionately affected by PBTs in products when these goods are manufactured, used and discarded. Custodial and maintenance staff, for example, can often be routinely exposed to PBTs and other toxic chemicals found in paints, cleaning supplies and pesticides, and other products they are required to work with. Workers at chemical plants face occupational exposures while PBT-containing products are made and transported. Moreover, manufacturing operations that use PBTs are likely to be located in low-income areas; therefore the adults and children living nearby tend to be at higher risk of exposure to air emissions, water and fish contamination, and accidental releases. And it is now well known that hazardous substances emitted from disposal facilities often impact low-income, minority and indigenous populations whose communities tend to be closer to disposal facilities than the average public and thus face exposure risks via multiple routes.

INFORM's PBT-free Purchasing in the Great Lakes States Project is designed to directly benefit workers at public facilities by giving them less dangerous products to use and work around. It also aims to protect workers at factories that manufacture PBT-containing products by encouraging these businesses to make products with lower levels of PBTs or with safer chemical feedstock. In addition, by reducing the amount of PBT-containing products that are disposed of (through environmentally preferable purchasing and initiatives that send products back to vendors to foster product stewardship), this project also promotes environmental justice by protecting communities that live and work near waste incinerators and landfills.

Project Addresses Education/Outreach

**If So, Description of How:**

INFORM will be conducting a pro-active outreach effort to change the behavior of government purchasing agents, facility managers and other appropriate officials to facilitate the procurement of environmentally preferable alternatives to PBT-containing products and services. In order to accomplish this, it will be necessary to provide the target audience with accurate, user-friendly information about PBTs in products and the availability of safer substitutes. We will also reach out to other environmental, public health and consumer organizations in the region to promote government procurement of PBT-free products in the Great Lakes region.

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**Project Budget:**

	<b>Federal Share Requested (\$)</b>	<b>Applicant's Share (\$)</b>
<b>Personnel:</b>	24,400	2,000
<b>Fringe:</b>	0	0
<b>Travel:</b>	4,600	400
<b>Equipment:</b>	0	0
<b>Supplies:</b>	1,600	100
<b>Contracts:</b>	0	0
<b>Construction:</b>	0	0
<b>Other:</b>	7,600	700
<b>Total Direct Costs:</b>	38,200	3,200
<b>Indirect Costs:</b>	28,200	2,400
<b>Total:</b>	66,400	5,600
<b>Projected Income:</b>	0	0

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**Funding by Other Organizations (Names, Amounts, Description of Commitments):**

INFORM has secured initial funding for its Purchasing for Pollution Prevention Project from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation (\$100,000) and the Schumann Fund for New Jersey (\$25,000). This existing funding will enable INFORM to conduct basic research on PBTs in consumer products and to undertake outreach to government agencies in the state of New Jersey, which will create a replicable model for other states (such as those in the Great Lakes). These grants run from January to December 2000.

By October, when the EPA Great Lakes Program grant period would begin, our work in New Jersey will be at a stage where it will be easy to transfer many of our research findings to the Great Lakes states. For example, we will have identified several products purchased by state government entities that contain significant quantities of PBTs (particularly mercury and lead). We will also have identified alternatives to the key PBT-containing products about which we plan to conduct extensive outreach, and our project partners in the Northeast will have begun testing these alternatives. Therefore, by October, INFORM will be well-positioned to start surveying state agencies (and other government entities) in the Great Lakes states about their use of PBT-containing products and forming additional partnerships for this initiative. At that time, we may find some additional research needs in the Great Lakes states, since some of their products of chief concern may be different. However, because much of the basic research for this project will have already been undertaken in New Jersey, an EPA Great Lakes Program grant would primarily be used to conduct outreach in the Great Lakes region. Thus, an EPA grant would allow us to build smoothly upon the work from our current funding sources.

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**Description of Collaboration/Community Based Support:**

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INFORM has already begun to form partnerships with key government agencies and community/environmental organizations in the Great Lakes states. Some of these partnerships were formed during our current project analyzing the flow of bioaccumulators through commerce in the Great Lakes region using data from the National Toxics Release Inventory. Alicia Culver, project director of INFORM's PBT-free Purchasing in the Great Lakes States, is also drawing upon her contacts as former director of the Government Purchasing Project, which promoted federal and state procurement of recycled and environmentally preferable products. While INFORM will conduct outreach to all of the Great Lakes states, the State of Minnesota's Office of Environmental Assistance in particular has expressed interest in collaborating with us to identify PBT-containing products purchased at the state level and to find state agencies that will test potential alternatives.

INFORM will also collaborate with environmental, public health and consumer organizations that have a concern about toxic chemical hazards in the Great Lakes region. These groups include (but are not limited to) the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (MN), the Lake Michigan Federation (IL) and the Ecology Center of Ann Arbor (MI). We have also formed partnerships with several national organizations that are concerned about this issue and willing to collaborate on outreach to their members and other contacts. These groups include the Children's Health and Environment Coalition, Green Seal, Second Nature, and Mothers and Others for a Livable Planet.

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We will also collaborate with key government organizations such as the National Association of State Purchasing Officials, the National Institute of Government Purchasing, the National Association of Counties (which has an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program), the National Association of Purchasing Management, and the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Network.