

## Four Years of President Biden's Federal Buy Clean Initiative

President Biden's Federal Buy Clean Initiative (Buy Clean) leverages the purchasing power of the U.S. Government, as the single largest buyer on Earth, to catalyze demand for clean American-made construction materials that are the backbone of American infrastructure and manufacturing. Since its launch in 2021, Buy Clean has demonstrated the impact of strong demand for the low-carbon industries that are helping to revitalize American manufacturing and build a clean economy. This post details Buy Clean's progress under the Biden-Harris Administration as well as opportunities to expand Buy Clean to further spur markets for clean American-made construction materials.

Construction materials like steel and concrete are some of the most essential, ubiquitous, and yet, emissions-intensive materials in the world. For example, concrete—the world's second most used resource after water—is responsible for approximately eight percent of global climate pollution. Though long considered difficult to decarbonize, President Biden took ambitious actions to reduce emissions from these indispensable materials while supporting good manufacturing jobs and industrial communities. The President's climate law—the Inflation Reduction Act—includes the largest clean manufacturing investment in U.S. history: billions of dollars in investments to help American manufacturers deploy game-changing technologies that cut emissions from steel, concrete, and other construction materials.

The Biden-Harris Administration paired this supply-side push with an equally emphatic demand-side pull by launching Buy Clean. For the first time ever, the Federal Government is prioritizing clean construction materials—those that release fewer emissions during their production—in Federal procurement and infrastructure projects. With the public sector representing nearly half of all concrete and one-quarter of all steel procured in this country, Buy Clean provides a much-needed demand-signal to expand and decarbonize American industrial manufacturing.

Through Buy Clean, Federal agencies have published tools—from definitions of clean construction materials to improved verification systems that help manufacturers report a product's emissions—that make it easier for others to build on Buy Clean's success. Indeed, state and local governments and private buyers are developing their own Buy Clean policies, expanding the initiative's impact. Federal, state, and local governments can further boost clean manufacturing by applying Buy Clean to additional agencies' purchases and to public grant programs that support private purchases of construction materials. This next phase of Buy Clean will strengthen demand for clean manufacturing, supporting America's industries, workers, manufacturing communities, and climate goals.

President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act supercharged Buy Clean with \$4.5 billion to support the initiative. Federal agencies have moved swiftly to implement these programs:

- The **General Services Administration (GSA)**, the Federal Government's landlord, is investing \$2.15 billion to buy low-carbon construction materials, with plans to use clean materials in [150 projects](#) across nearly 40 states.
- The **Department of Transportation (DOT)** has announced [\\$2 billion of funding](#) for states, Tribes, localities, and others to procure low-carbon construction materials in local infrastructure projects. In November 2024, DOT awarded [\\$1.2 billion](#) to 39 state departments of transportation to purchase low-carbon materials.
- The **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** is improving the quality and quantity of construction materials' emissions data by [labeling](#) the cleanest products on the market and funding enhancements in Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), a standardized, independently verified tool for manufacturers to report embodied emissions. In July 2024, EPA

[announced](#) more than \$160 million in grants to 38 recipients to improve the measurement of embodied carbon in construction materials.

Companies are responding to Buy Clean. In the first year of GSA's Buy Clean program, suppliers published over **23,800 additional North American EPDs**, with over 153 companies—including two major U.S. steel companies—publishing their first-ever EPDs. EPA's EPD Assistance Program has supported these companies' data transparency efforts with funding to make it easier to produce EPDs, like a web-based tool to rapidly produce concrete EPDs for new mixes. Suppliers are also shifting to cleaner production processes. GSA, EPA, and DOT have all collaborated with suppliers—from leading steel producers to small mom and pop concrete suppliers—to adopt cleaner processes to compete for Buy Clean procurements.

This success has inspired others to adopt similar policies. Earlier this year, state governments and companies across **real estate, construction, tech, and other industries made [public commitments to low-carbon materials](#)**, leveraging billions in spending power to spur markets for clean construction materials.

Buy Clean has demonstrated the impact of demand-side policies to spur markets for clean, American-made construction materials. And while the Federal Government is the largest buyer of construction materials, there are other significant buyers like state and local governments. That's why the Biden-Harris Administration and the U.S. Climate Alliance launched the [Federal-State Buy Clean Partnership](#) in 2023. The Partnership brings together Federal agencies and 13 states to collaborate on Buy Clean and send a larger, more harmonized demand signal to the market. The Partnership has already spurred new state-level Buy Clean action, like [Washington State's Buy Clean Buy Fair Act](#) and [New York's Buy Clean concrete guidelines](#). **The U.S. Climate Alliance will [continue supporting](#) participating members to advance further state-level Buy Clean action in the years ahead.**

To support states and other buyers, the Federal Government has developed tools and resources that enable others to establish and implement Buy Clean policies:

- ***Environmental Product Declarations*** (EPD) to measure the embodied carbon in construction materials. EPDs report the embodied emissions of a product based on how it was produced.
- ***Product thresholds*** to set embodied carbon targets for construction materials. Thresholds dictate the acceptable levels of embodied carbon in a material.
- ***Procurement pilots*** to integrate embodied carbon into procurement systems. Pilots help establish procurement practices that prioritize embodied emissions.

To advance clean American manufacturing, a harmonized, sizeable, and durable demand-signal is needed to bolster markets for clean construction materials. Buy Clean has demonstrated the power of demand-side policy solutions to meet this challenge. Governments at all levels and private companies now have the opportunity to build on this success in a next, expanded phase of Buy Clean.

- **The Federal Government should continue Buy Clean.** Buy Clean has demonstrated its ability to decarbonize and onshore manufacturing while creating good paying American jobs.
- **Additional Federal agencies, states, and local governments should adopt Buy Clean procurement incentives to prioritize clean, American-made materials**, thereby multiplying Buy Clean's success in supporting good manufacturing jobs, U.S. industrial competitiveness, and a clean economy.
- **Federal, state, and local governments should expand Buy Clean to include grant programs.** The Executive Order establishing the Federal Buy Clean Initiative stated that Buy Clean should

apply to both procurement (i.e., direct government purchases) and federally funded projects, such as public grants that enable companies to construct buildings or private infrastructure. Agencies at all levels of government provide billions of dollars in grants each year for companies to undertake projects that use large amounts of steel, concrete, and other construction materials, such as the construction of affordable housing or projects to rebuild after natural disasters. By requiring grantees to meet Buy Clean benchmarks for low embodied emissions, governments can multiply the initiative's boost to clean American manufacturing.

- **The private sector should prioritize clean solutions in their own procurements.** While the U.S. government is the largest single buyer of most construction materials, the private sector represents a larger swath of the entire market. By adopting Buy Clean commitments that align with Federal and state Buy Clean programs, companies can meaningfully reduce their carbon footprints and support clean American manufacturers.

Thanks to President Biden's Federal Buy Clean Initiative, the market has already started to shift in favor of clean American manufacturing. In the years to come, governments and companies have the opportunity to build on this success, consolidate the market transformation, and foster an American manufacturing sector that supports competitive industries, good jobs, clean air, and a livable climate.