THE SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT GUIDE

FOR BUSINESSES

Coventry City Council

THE CLIMATE
CHANGE AND
SUSTAINABILITY
TEAM
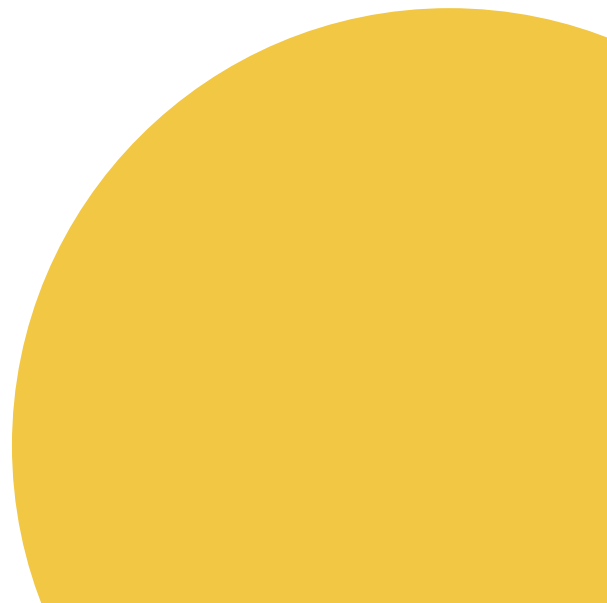
WHY SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT?

Sustainable procurement refers to how businesses can identify and reduce the negative social and environmental impacts of their supply chains. It ranges from prioritising ethical suppliers to minimising overproduction and waste by efficient supply and demand management. Market research over a variety of sources, over a number of years, has shown that consumers do want to take action to protect the environment. Good procurement practices can help businesses build their brand reputation, align themselves with the growing demand, and develop robust risk management. This article provides guidance on green procurement of goods and services. It is divided into two sections, one which lays out the core criteria for sustainable purchasing, and the second which contains more detailed advice on high-impact categories.

CONTENTS:

GENERAL GUIDANCE

LIFE-CYCLE COSTING

Life-cycle costing (LCC) considers all the costs that will be incurred during the lifetime of the product, work or service. This includes purchase price and associated costs of delivery, installation, insurance; operating costs which include energy, fuel and water use, costs of depreciation such as spares and maintenance; end-of-life costs, such as decommissioning or disposal; and cost of externalities, such as greenhouse gas emissions.

Adding these gives the LCC of an asset, which enables you to make more accurate budgets for your contracts and provides an opportunity for significant cost avoidance throughout the total product life.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Image credits and more information here
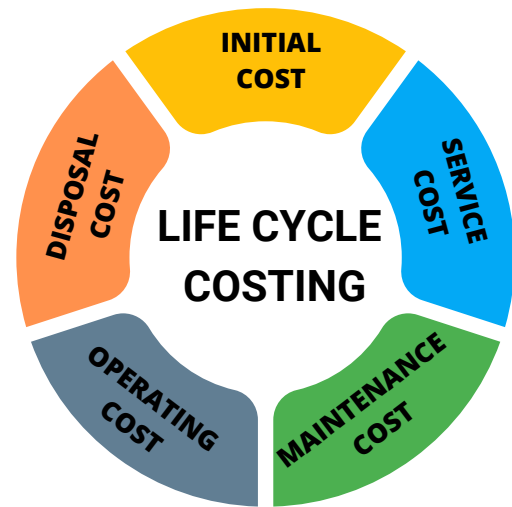
A circular economy is a model that extends the life cycle of products and emphasises reducing waste to a minimum. It entails redesigning products to be more durable, reusable, repairable, and recyclable, and therefore kept in circulation for as long as possible, and moving away from a 'take, make, throw away' culture. By committing to a circular economy approach, your business can maximise the value obtained from its purchase. This WMCA guide provides some great information.

CARBON FOOTPRINT

A carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gases that are generated by our actions. When making a procurement decision, one should consider emissions created at each stage: production, usage/ownership, and disposal/recycling. Minimising carbon footprint is the first and essential step towards achieving our climate goals.

IDENTIFYING GREEN PRODUCTS

Sustainability needs to be considered at every stage of procurement; at the needs assessment stage, you can set minimum environmental standards as a requirement for consideration. Here are some suggestions to make decisions that could reduce your carbon footprint and most often make some savings as well. Click the links for more information.
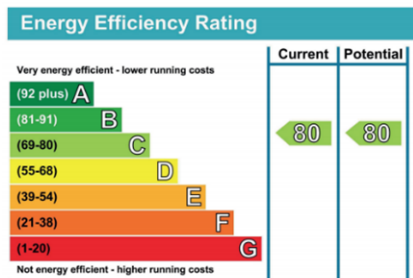
ENERGY CONSUMPTION

- Aim to use the most energy efficient products and services, and prioritise renewable energy sources
- Only buy new appliances if necessary; explore repairing first
- Prioritise alternatives to fossil fuels
- For services, ensure that the organisation prioritises energy-saving in its practises, and trains their staff to carry out the required service in the most energy efficient manner
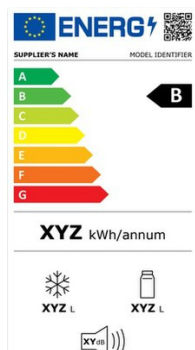
Standards to look out for

For properties:
EPC (Energy Performance Certificates) Rating

For appliances:
EU Energy Label   **Energy Star**

Others:
ISO 50001– Energy Management standard
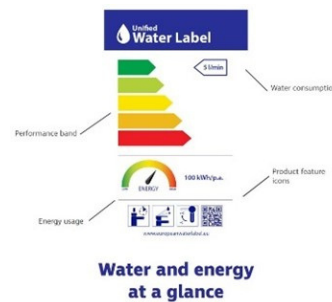

TRANSPORT

- Consider how products are being delivered - encourage alternatives to fossil fuels

WATER CONSUMPTION

- Reduce the operational water use of projects, and select products and services that follow water saving practises

Standards

European Water Label

UK's Waterwise Recommend Checkmark

WASTE

- Avoid single-use plastic products
- Choose products with minimal packaging or recyclable/reusable packaging, explore take-back provisions
- Consider end-of-life options such as reusability, recyclability, or compostability

NATURAL RESOURCES

- Choose products that contain recycled materials
- Ensure products are ethically sourced and do not contribute to the destruction of habitats elsewhere in the world (see section on Standards and Certifications) and also pollute etc.

POLLUTION

Choose products with fewer toxic substances such as persistent, bio-accumulative, and toxic (PBT) chemicals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), carcinogens, and reproductive and developmental toxins

BIODIVERSITY

Pursue projects that protect open-space and biodiversity and, where possible, deliver measurable net gains in biodiversity, in accordance with the UK's Good Practice Principles on Biodiversity Net Gain

SERVICE AND WORKS CONTRACTS

Products are not the only thing that your business may need to source externally. Certain services and construction are often outsourced, making it difficult to control for sustainable practices. Here are some additional considerations to keep in mind in such cases.

Service contracts

- Technical expertise and qualifications of staff to carry out the contract in an environmentally friendly way
- Products/materials used in carrying out the service (are they sustainable?)
- Management procedures incorporated to minimise the environmental impact of the production processes or operations, and to encourage environmentally positive practices
- Energy and water consumed, and waste generated in carrying out the service
- Social responsibility - efforts to address workers rights, human rights, and community engagement

Standards

International Labour Organisation

Ethical Trading Initiative

Business in the Community's Corporate Responsibility Index

Works contracts:

- Consideration of land use – impact on biodiversity and pollution in region – as well as the materials used
- Consideration of water consumption - flood management, water percolation capacity, etc. when choosing sites and materials

GENERAL GUIDANCE ON STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Looking for standards and certifications is a reliable way to ensure that the products you source are environmentally sustainable.

The Ecolabel Index is the largest global directory of ecolabels, and is a good source of verification. For further information on verifying green claims, read this government guidance published by the Competition and Markets Authority.

Below are some popular certifications that are useful to know with links to further information.

GENERAL

Blue Angel scheme

FairTrade Mark

European Eco Label

Ethical Company Organisation: Ethical Accreditation Scheme

Nordic Swan

Canadian Standards Association

FOOD

Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

Rainforest Alliance

FairTrade Mark

Red Tractor

Soil Association Organic Standard

The Soil Association has a set of 'Food for Life served here' standards which has been adopted by National Trust and a number of other venues – can be used for catering services

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

BREEAM Certifications

BES 6001

NATURAL PRODUCTS

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Environmental management systems enable organisations to mitigate environmental impacts during their operations

ISO14001

Green Dragon

Labels are not limited to the ones mentioned. More specific ones exist depending on the metric measured. More ethical accreditation schemes can be found here.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Canadian Standards Association

Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification

Rainforest Alliance

Soil Association Organic Standard

Further information: Central Point of Expertise for Timber Procurement

Guide of different types of wood and level of endangerment – Friends of the Earth

HIGH IMPACT CATEGORIES GUIDE

Sometimes, the problem at hand can seem too overwhelming. There are changes to be made everywhere, so where to begin? Here is a summary for the high impact categories that your business can tackle first when it comes to your own procurement.

OFFICE SUPPLIES

- Avoid single use plastic products and promote re-usable products like refillable pens, markers, etc.
- Go digital where possible
- Purchase products made of recycled materials (preferably 75 to 100% recycled waste products)
- For any paper-based stationery products that aren't 100% recycled, check that the paper originates from a sustainable and legal source and choose unbeached paper products

TRANSPORT

- Consolidate your deliveries.
- Consider the fuel source of your delivery methods - prioritise renewables
- Reduce travel when possible and encourage active travel/ use of public transport
- Consider a carpooling scheme
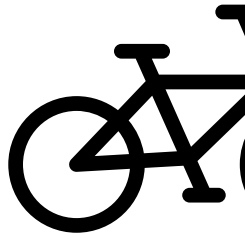
CLEANING SUPPLIES

- Buying concentrates and biodegradable products, whenever possible
- Reduce the amount of packaging or buy containers that can be reused/refilled
- Train staff on the appropriate use and 'dosage' of products to minimise wastage
- Cleaning products should be 90% biodegradable in 5 days and should not have been tested on animals, where available
- Products must not contain toxic substances, where possible

FOOD AND CATERING

- Choose locations that are environmentally certified/energy efficient
- Public transport accessible sites with connections to active travel routes.
- If outdoors, ensure that biodiversity is not disturbed
- Use responsibly sources materials for temporary scaffolding, etc.
- Make use of as many Fairtrade/ ethically sourced products as possible for catering at events

FINAL CHECKLIST

Does the product, service, or work satisfy the following criteria?

- ☐ Is it fit for the purpose and provide value for money?

- ☐ Is it energy and resource efficient?

- ☐ Does it use minimum amount of virgin materials?

- ☐ Does it contain any hazardous chemicals?

- ☐ Does it make maximum use of post-consumer materials?

- ☐ Is it non (or reduced) polluting?

- ☐ Is it durable, easily upgraded, repairable, or refillable?

- ☐ Is it recyclable or biodegradable?

- ☐ Has it been dispatched with minimal packaging materials?

- ☐ Has it been delivered in a sustainable fashion?