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Applicability: All Faculty and Staff

**SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING POLICY**

**PURPOSE**

This policy is written to establish a common interpretation of what Sustainable Procurement encompasses within Lehigh University and to ensure University personnel consider social and environmental responsibility as factors in their purchasing decisions.

Sustainability is defined as, *“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”* (Brundtland Report, 1987)

This widely accepted definition pertains to decisions having impact on the future economy, environment or society. These impacts have greater/further/wider reaching effects compared to past or traditional “green” approaches to purchasing such as considerations for fair labor practices, ethical business practices, utilization of local businesses, etc. Execution of this policy will assist the University in understanding and responding to the strategic, reputational and operational implications inherent in its procurement decisions.

**Economy:**

Collaborative procurement increases sustainability and efficiency through leverage and shared costs; consequently increasing value while reducing risk.

**Environment:**

Lehigh University is committed to minimizing or reducing effects from greenhouse gases (GHGs) through the purchase of products and services that will save energy in their operation, transportation, and/or production, advancing the University’s overarching sustainability goals.

**Social & Ethical:**

Because sustainable procurement incorporates awareness of socio-economic factors, it recognizes for example, the social and ethical impact of local procurement and holds the potential to support economic regeneration. Sustainable procurement also embraces and fosters an environment built upon ethical codes of conduct and principled procurement practice.

**Environmental Aspects**

- Technology
- Energy & Water
- Recycling
- Chemicals
- Virgin Materials
- Transportation & Packaging

**Social & Ethical Aspects**

- Employment
- Diversity
- Labor Conditions
- Community
- Employee Health & Safety
- Non-discrimination

## **KEY PRICIPLES**

By implementing a policy of sustainable purchasing, the University recognizes the following principles:

- Purchasing activities have a fundamental role in minimizing environmental impact and managing risks.
- Investment decisions delivered through the purchasing process must establish resilient infrastructure and supply chains to both mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Economic, environmental and social objectives in purchasing activities cannot be viewed in isolation.

## **KEY OBJECTIVES**

Demonstrate the University commitment to sustainability through:

- Procurement goods and services that deliver long-term value for money for both the University and public sector as a whole.
- Selection of goods manufactured, delivered, used and disposed of in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.
- Supporting local and regional businesses to contribute towards a stronger and more vibrant local economy.
- Model sustainable environmental and social purchasing to our community of consumers and vendors.

## **POLICY**

Consistent with the University's goals, all University personnel shall conduct purchasing in accordance with the following principles:

- A. Utilize procurement of goods and services as a means to act on the University's values of social responsibility and environmental sustainability.
- B. Support the University policy of striving for zero waste by reducing overall consumption and shifting to products with reduced product lifecycle impact.
- C. Support the University commitment to eliminate and offset our greenhouse gas emissions.
- D. Consider total cost of ownership rather than low purchase price as the only factor when evaluating the financial competitiveness of purchasing decisions.
- E. Require sustainability standards and certifications whenever possible, with preference for those which are developed by third-parties and independently verified throughout a products total chain of custody.
- F. Continuously improve sustainable purchasing practices.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES**

Lehigh is committed to actions designed to conserve and protect the environment, and will continue to implement those actions whenever possible and economically feasible. In practice, the objective is to purchase products that have reduced environmental impact because of the way they are made, transported, stored, packed, used and disposed.

It is the responsibility of Procurement Services, in conjunction with all University departments, to promote the development and use of environmentally and socially acceptable products and services through the following activities:

- A. Purchasing Services shall define environmental certifications that are acceptable to the University and purchase products and services that meet these certifications (e.g. Energy Star, EPEAT, etc.) and integrate environmental factors into the University's buying decisions where certifications have not been defined.
- B. Developing tools to determine appropriate metrics and provide ongoing reporting; assist in identifying and financially justifying green products and services, make it easier to measure achievement of goals, and integrate sustainable purchasing into everyday decisions.
- C. Purchasing Services will carry out an environmental assessment to identify target product and service areas (major suppliers) and identify areas of opportunity for each.
- D. Consulting with all user departments to identify new environmentally friendly products and services as well as improvements/changes in industry standards that may impact the environment.
- E. Purchasing from suppliers that provide environmentally preferable products and services or suppliers that are environmentally sensitive in their daily operations.
- F. Seeking new suppliers and encouraging existing suppliers to review the manner in which their goods are packaged. Working with suppliers in the areas of reduction and reuse of packaging materials.
- G. Reviewing contracts, bids and specifications for goods and services to ensure that, whenever possible and economical, they are amended to provide for the expanded use of products and services that contain the maximum level of post-consumer reusable or recyclable waste / or recyclable content, without significantly affecting the intended use of the product or service.
- H. Using cost/benefit analysis to arrive at the correct sourcing decision; one that remains economically practical, reflects effective purchasing practices and satisfies the requirements of the user department.
- I. Making suppliers aware of the Lehigh's Sustainable Purchasing Policy and monitor critical suppliers on an ongoing basis with regard to their environmental policies and practices.
- J. Utilizing the Sustainable Purchasing checklist below for use in University purchasing.
- K. Ongoing evaluation of the efforts the department has made to help protect and preserve the environment and what the future goals are for the up-coming year.
- L. Liaise with other sustainability groups across campus to facilitate their sustainability goals.
- M. Defining procedures regarding exemptions from or non-compliance with the Sustainable Purchasing Policy
- N. Supporting local and diverse businesses (minority, woman, or veteran-owned, etc.)
- O. Make every effort to secure contracts with suppliers that are environmentally and socially conscientious whenever practicable. Examination of supplier's labor/working conditions and environmental practices when negotiating long term supply contracts: Is the company producing the product in compliance with all environmental laws and regulations? What is the supplier's record in handling environmental and safety issues? Can the supplier verify all environmental claims? Does the supplier have a company environmental policy statement? What programs are in place/planned for promoting resource efficiency? Are printed materials available documenting these programs? Has the supplier conducted an environmental or waste audit? Is the supplier equipped to bid and bill electronically? Has an environmental life-cycle analysis of the product (and its packaging) been conducted by a certified testing organization, such as Green Seal?

When determining whether a product is environmentally preferable, the following standards should be considered:

- Available locally
- Bio Based
- Biodegradable
- Carcinogen-free
- Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) free
- Compostable
- Durable, reusable or refillable
- Energy and water efficient
- Heavy metal free (i.e. no lead, mercury, cadmium)
- Low toxicity
- Low volatile organic compound (VOC) content
- Made from renewable products
- Persistent, Bio accumulative Toxic (PBT) free
- Post-consumer content
- Recycled content/recyclable
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduced packaging
- Refurbished/refurbish able Highly energy efficient in production and use
- Manufactured by suppliers with good environmental and social sustainability track records
- Cause minimal or no environmental damage during normal use or maintenance
- Replacing disposables with reusable or recyclable options
- Taking into account life cycle costs and benefits
- Shipped with minimal packaging, preferably made of recycled products

Examples of Environmentally Preferable Products include:

- LEDs
- Made of recycled materials, maximizing post-consumer content
- Durable, as opposed to single use or disposable items
- Non-toxic or biodegradable
- 30 - 100% recycled paper
- Computers w/EPEAT silver or better certification
- Energy Star rated appliance
- Office Supplies marked with environmental sign on catalog
- Non-toxic or minimally toxic, preferably biodegradable
- Compostable
- Waste-reduced products
- Water-saving products

When determining whether a supplier is socially sustainable, the following standards should be considered:

Fair wages for employees	Acceptable working time
Adherence to child labor laws	Occupational safety and health policies
Equal opportunity and non-discrimination	Inspection of suppliers' facilities
Protection of indigenous population rights	Human rights compliance
General compliance with other International Labor Standards	

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPARTMENTS

- A. Departments should use the information in this policy as a guideline for environmentally and socially preferable products and services being purchased for their department/mission.
- B. Prior to purchasing a product or service, consider the following:
- ✓ Is the product really needed?
  - ✓ Is the product size/magnitude necessary?
  - ✓ Are all the features of the product necessary? Can any features be eliminated, is there a suitable alternative that is less harmful to the environment and safe to use?
  - ✓ Is the product designed to be durable/long lasting?
  - ✓ Are recycled materials used to make the product?
  - ✓ Was the product produced locally? How far did it travel from where it was manufactured and where it is being used?
  - ✓ Does the product contain any banned or restricted substances?
  - ✓ Does the product contain any exotic/endangered materials? If wood is used in the product, what is the source and how is it harvested? Is the product manufactured from tropical rainforest wood?
  - ✓ Is the product reusable, compostable, or recyclable following use?
  - ✓ Does the product require special disposal considerations?
  - ✓ Is the product energy efficient?
  - ✓ Is the product designed for easy maintenance and repair?
  - ✓ Are replacement parts made from recycled materials and are they themselves reusable or recyclable?
  - ✓ Are the products designed to reduce consumption and minimize waste?
  - ✓ Is the product packaging minimal, made from recycled materials, and recyclable or reusable?
- C. Inform employees of their responsibilities under this policy; provide them with information about recycled products and environmental procurement opportunities. Check the Purchasing or university Sustainability Web Pages for more information and updates on program efforts.
- D. Submit new ideas or suggestions to Purchasing Services.

## **EXEMPTIONS**

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as requiring a department to procure products that do not perform adequately for their intended use or are not available at a reasonable price in a reasonable period of time.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING (EPP) RESOURCES**

- A. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (<http://www.epa.gov/cpg/>)
- B. EPA's EPP Web Site ([www.epa.gov/oppt/epp](http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp))
- C. EPPNet ([www.nerc.org/eppnet.html](http://www.nerc.org/eppnet.html))
- D. Green Seal ([www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org))
- E. EnergyStar ([www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov))
- F. Lehigh University Sustainable Procurement Checklist

## **LEHIGH GREEN PRODUCT CERTIFICATIONS & DEFINITIONS**

Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) - CFCs are chemical substances that can deplete the earth's protective ozone layer in the upper atmosphere. In 1978, CFCs were banned for use as propellants in nearly all consumer aerosol products. They are gradually being phased out in all products and manufacturing processes.

Composting - The act of breaking down organic materials, such as food waste and yard trimmings, in the proper ratio in piles, vessels, or rows. The product, which is called compost or humus, can be used to provide minerals and nutrients for plants. Using compost can reduce the need for chemical fertilizers in landscaping and improve soil, water and air quality.

Energy Star - U.S. DOE and EPA's program to save money and protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices.

EPEAT - Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool was developed with an EPA grant and is managed by the Green Electronics Council (GEC). EPEAT uses 23 required and 28 optional criteria to evaluate desktops and laptops, thin clients, workstations, and computer monitors. EPEAT Bronze meets the 23 criteria; EPEAT Silver meets the 23 criteria and at least 50% of the optional criteria; and EPEAT Gold meets the 23 criteria and at least 75% of the optional criteria. The criteria by which products are rated are: the reduction of environmentally-sensitive materials, materials selection, design for end-of-life, product longevity, energy conservation, end-of-life management, corporate performance, and packaging.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) - The term "independently certified forest products" refers to those products originating in a forest that an independent third party has certified as well-managed and sustainable. Forest certification validates on-the-ground operations employing the best management practices at a specific forest to ensure the long-term health of the total forest ecosystem. A forestry operation that meets FSC standards protects forest ecosystems, water quality, wildlife habitats and local communities. To ensure the integrity of the certification, the wood and fiber from certified forests are tracked through the commercial chain from logging sites to retailers and to the end user.

U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) - 501(c)(3) composed of leaders from every sector of the building industry working to promote buildings and communities that are environmentally responsible, profitable and healthy places to live and work. USGBC developed the LEED building rating system. The USGBC Logo is governed by strict legal guidelines.

Green Guard - Green Guard has three product certifications: 1) Green Guard Indoor Air Quality product certification for low emitting interior building materials, furnishings, and finish systems, 2) Green Guard Children & Schools, which a similar certification, but with more stringent emissions requirements according to CA 01350, and 3) Green Guard Building Construction to prevent mold in the design, construction, and ongoing operations.

Green Seal - Works with manufacturers, industry sectors, purchasing groups, and governments at all levels to "green" the production and purchasing chain. The non-profit utilizes a life-cycle approach, which means it evaluates a product or service beginning with material extraction, continuing with manufacturing and use, and ending with recycling and disposal.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) - A third-party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings developed by USGBC.

Organic - The National Organic Program (NOP) develops, implements, and administers national production, handling, and labeling standards for organic agricultural products. The NOP also accredits the certifying agents (foreign and domestic) who inspect organic production and handling operations to certify that they meet U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards.

Practical - Concerned with voluntary decisions related to Lehigh's physical and financial capacity to use the product or service.

Recyclable - Relates to products made with materials that can be recycled, or the product can be broken down so individual parts can be recycled. Buyer beware that products with co-injected plastics, which are materials made of two types of plastic or a plastic and a fiber, make recycling difficult.

Recycled content - Materials recycled from previous end-users for use in new products. Recycled content can be pre-consumer or post-consumer recycled content.

Reusable - Products that can be used more than once for repeated use or for alternative purposes.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) - The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) label is a sign you are buying wood and paper products from well-managed forests, backed by a rigorous, third-party certification audit. Based on several reviews, FSC-certification is more rigorous and effective than SFI certification.

### **Terms Commonly Used in the Industry:**

Carpet & Rug Institutional Green Label - Program to test carpet, cushions and adhesives to help specifiers identify products with very low emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Cradle2Cradle - Third-party company that certifies products based on five criteria: environmentally safe and healthy materials; design for material reutilization, such as recycling or composting; the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency; efficient use of water and maximum water quality associated with production; and instituting strategies for social responsibility.

Environmental Choice/EcoLogo™ Program - EcoLogo™ was originally founded by the Government of Canada in 1988. It is classified as a Type I eco-label, as defined by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). This means that the Program compares products and services with others in the same category, develops rigorous and scientifically relevant criteria that reflect the entire lifecycle of the product, and awards the EcoLogo™ to those that are verified by an independent third party as complying with the criteria.

ISO 14001 - Management tool enabling an organization of any size or type to: identify and control the environmental impact of its activities, products or services; improve its environmental performance continually; and to implement a systematic approach to setting environmental objectives and targets, achieve the goals, and demonstrate that they have been achieved.

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) - EPA-endorsed technique to assess a product, process, or service's relevant energy and material inputs and environmental releases and the potential environmental impacts associated with the identified inputs and releases.

SMART© Sustainable Textile Standard 2.0 - Provides a market-based definition for Sustainable Textile, establish performance requirements for public health and environment, and address the triple bottom line, economic-environmental-social, throughout the supply chain.

Scientific Certification Systems - Provides third-party environmental, sustainability, and food quality certification, auditing, testing, and standards development. SCS has developed internationally recognized standards and certification programs.

## **SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING CHECKLIST**

When purchasing, ask a supplier these questions. But first, determine if the product or service is truly necessary. Purchasing will need to be balanced with issues of product performance, cost, and availability.

(1) Waste reduction: Is the product durable? Can it be easily and economically serviced and maintained? Is the product designed to reduce consumption and minimize waste? Is the product reusable? Is the product technically and economically recyclable in the immediate area? Do facilities and internal collection systems exist to recycle the product? Can the product be returned to the supplier at the end of its useful life? Is the product compostable and are systems in place to compost the product on or off-site? Will the product biodegrade over time into harmless elements?

(2) Packaging: Is the product necessary? Can it be eliminated? Is minimal packaging used? Is the



product packaged in bulk? Is the packaging reusable or recyclable? Are recycled materials used to produce the packaging and at what percent post-consumer waste? Can the packaging be returned to the supplier? Is the packaging compostable?

(3) Material source: Are recycled materials used in the product? If so, what percentage? What percentage of post-consumer materials is used? If wood is used in the product, what is its source and how is it harvested? Is the product manufactured from tropical rainforest wood?

(4) Energy efficiency: Is the product energy efficient compared to competitive products? Can the product be recharged? Can the product run on renewable fuels? Does the product require less energy to manufacture than competing products?

(5) Supplier environmental record: Is the company producing the product in compliance with all environmental laws and regulations? What is the company's record in handling environmental and safety issues? Can the company verify all environmental claims? Does the manufacturer/supplier have a company environmental policy statement? What programs are in place/planned for promoting resource efficiency? Are printed materials available documenting these programs? Has the company conducted an environmental or waste audit? Is the product supplier equipped to bid and bill electronically? Has an environmental life-cycle analysis of the product (and its packaging) been conducted by a certified testing organization, such as Green Seal? Does the supplier have a history of engaging in fair and ethical labor and business practices?

*Are you confused about what makes a product green?*

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have several recommendations. If a product is labeled recycled, check how, and what percent is recycled. Products with claims, such as "environmentally friendly," "environmentally safe," "environmentally preferable," or "eco-safe," are not helpful without more information or a recognizable seal. Biodegradable products break down in nature; however, if they end up in today's landfills, they will most likely take decades to degrade. Many cleaning products labeled "biodegradable" always degraded in water before with no harm to the environment. Unlike the food industry, manufacturers of cleaning products are not required to identify ingredients. In sum, be sure to check labels and certifications when purchasing green products and services.