



SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING POLICY

Effective Date: September 1, 2017
Applicability: University-wide
Revised: 8/1/21, 12/15/22, 3/6/26

PURPOSE

This policy is written to establish a common interpretation of what Sustainable Procurement encompasses within Lehigh University and to ensure University personnel consider environmental, social, and economic 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 an impact on the future economy, environment and society. These impacts have 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 leveraged and shared costs; consequently, increasing value while reducing risk.

Environment

Lehigh University is committed to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through the purchase of products and services that will save energy in their operation, transportation, and/or production, thus advancing the University’s overarching climate action and 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
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 of 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. Purchase goods and services that meet the standards and certifications as defined in the Sustainable Purchasing Criteria (Appendix A).
- B. Utilize procurement of goods and services as a means to act on the University's values of environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and economic prosperity.
- C. Support the University policy of striving for zero waste by reducing overall consumption and shifting to products with reduced product lifecycle impact.
- D. Support the University commitment to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- E. Consider total cost of ownership rather than low purchase price as the only factor when evaluating the financial competitiveness of purchasing decisions.
- F. Continuously improve sustainable purchasing practices.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PURCHASING 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 Purchasing Services and the Office of Sustainability, 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. Identifying the sustainability certifications in particular spend categories that are acceptable to the University and purchase products and services that meet these certifications and integrate environmental factors into the University's buying decisions. **Acceptable sustainability certifications are defined by spend category on the attached Sustainable Purchasing Criteria (Appendix A).** When procuring a

good or service that does not have a corresponding sustainability certification, see list below for sustainability criteria to consider when making your purchase.

- 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. Carrying 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/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 Lehigh's Sustainable Purchasing Policy and monitor critical suppliers on an ongoing basis with regard to their environmental policies and practices.
- J. Ongoing evaluation of the efforts the department has made to help protect and preserve the environment and what the future goals are for the upcoming year.
- K. Liaising with other sustainability groups across campus to facilitate their sustainability goals.
- L. Defining procedures regarding exemptions from or non-compliance with the Sustainable Purchasing Policy.
- M. Supporting local businesses
- N. Including a Sustainability Questionnaire in Requests for Proposals and as a vendor selection decision criterion (Appendix B).
- O. Ensuring contracts with suppliers include compliance with existing Lehigh policies as well as include standards relative to environmentally and socially conscious practices (e.g., Lehigh's Green Cleaning Policy and Lehigh's Design Standards both available [here](#)). Examine supplier's labor/working conditions and environmental practices when negotiating long-term supply contracts.

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 and emissions
- 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/social sustainability record
- 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 appliances
- Office supplies marked with environmental sign on catalog
- Non-toxic or minimally toxic, preferably biodegradable
- Compostable
- Waste-reduced products
- Water-saving products

When determining if a supplier is socially sustainable, these 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
General compliance with other International Labor Standards	

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPARTMENTS

- A. Departments should use the information herein as a guideline for environmentally and socially preferable products and services being purchased for their department.
- 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 Services](#) or [Lehigh Sustainability](#) webpages for more information and updates on program efforts.
- D. Submit new ideas or suggestions to Purchasing Services.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING (EPP) RESOURCES

- A. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (www.epa.gov/cpg/)
- B. EPA's EPP Web Site (www.epa.gov/oppt/epp)
- C. EPPNet (www.nerc.org/eppnet.html)
- D. Green Seal (www.greenseal.org)
- E. EnergyStar (www.energystar.gov)
- F. Lehigh University Sustainable Purchasing Criteria
- G. ISO 20400:2017 Sustainable Procurement Guidance (www.iso.org/standard/63026.html)
- H. GEN – certified by the Global Ecolabelling Network (www.globalecolabelling.net)
- I. EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG) Program, and CPG Product Supplier Director (www.epa.gov/smm/comprehensive-procurement-guideline-cpg-program)
- J. EPA's Safer Choice Label (www.epa.gov/saferchoice/learn-about-safer-choice-label)
- K. Ecologo Certified (www.ul.com/resources/ecologo-certification-program)

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 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:

Biodegradable Products Institute – The BPI Certification Mark indicates third-party verification of compostability for manufacturers and brand owners to use on products and packaging and for consumers, end-users, and composters to use when determining whether or not a product or package is compostable.

Business & Institutional Furniture Manufacturer’s Association (BIFMA) Level – Standards within the office furniture industry are managed by the Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturer's Association (BIFMA). Their job is to ensure office furniture is commercial grade and can stand 8+ hours of use per day. BIFMA sets out a variety of standards, including ergonomic measurements, textile characteristics, sustainability guidelines and performance testing.

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 Product Declarations - A transparent, objective report that communicates what a product is made of and how it impacts the environment across its entire life cycle. A verified EPD can earn your products credits for LEED v4 and other green building rating systems.

Fair Labor Association - A collaborative effort of socially responsible companies, colleges and universities, and civil society organizations, FLA creates lasting solutions to abusive labor practices by offering tools and resources to companies, delivering training to factory workers and management, conducting due diligence through independent assessments, and advocating for greater accountability and transparency from companies, manufacturers, factories and others involved in global supply chains.

Health Product Declarations - Provide a full disclosure of the potential chemicals of concern in products by comparing product ingredients to a set of priority “hazard” lists based on the GreenScreen for Safer Chemicals and additional lists from other government agencies. HPDs qualify for numerous green building schemes, including LEED v4, WELL, Google Portico, and Living Product Challenge.

UL 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 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, establishes performance requirements for public health and environment, and addresses 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.

Worker's Rights Consortium - An independent labor rights monitoring organization that investigates working conditions in factories around the globe. Their purpose is to document and combat sweatshop conditions; identify and expose the practices of global brands and retailers that perpetuate labor rights abuses; and protect the rights of workers who make apparel and other products.

Appendix A: Lehigh University Sustainable Purchasing Criteria

Category	Recognized Certifications and Standards	Required Level (minimum mandatory requirements)	Preferred Level
Appliances & Electronics	ENERGY STAR	100% of applicable purchases are ENERGY STAR certified.	100% of applicable purchases are ENERGY STAR certified (and are in the top 75% of the product category).
Computers	EPEAT	<p><u>Non-public site:</u> 100% of purchases are EPEAT Silver certified.</p> <p><u>Public site:</u> 100% of purchases are EPEAT Gold certified.</p> <p><i>*LTS consultants must approve the purchase for compliance to LTS computing standards prior to purchase.</i></p>	<p><u>Non-public site:</u> 100% of purchases are EPEAT Gold certified.</p> <p><u>Public site:</u> same as the required level.</p> <p><i>*LTS consultants must approve the purchase for compliance to LTS computing standards prior to purchase.</i></p>
Cleaning and Janitorial Paper Products*	Green Seal (for cleaning and janitorial paper products)	<p>A minimum of 80% of cleaning product purchases and 100% of janitorial paper product purchases are certified by one or more of the recognized certifications (see the second column of this table).</p> <p><i>*In addition to meeting these standards, cleaning products must still fulfill the basic requirements for cost, performance, health, safety and environmental impact.</i></p>	<p>100% of cleaning product purchases and 100% of janitorial paper product purchases are certified by one or more of the recognized certifications (see the second column of this table).</p> <p><i>*In addition to meeting these standards, cleaning products must still fulfill the basic requirements for cost, performance, health, safety and environmental impact.</i></p>
UL ECOLOGO (for cleaning and janitorial paper products)	Forest Stewardship Council (for janitorial paper products)		
Furnishings	Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturer's Association (BIFMA) Level		
Environmental Product			

	Declarations (EPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formaldehyde and VOCs ○ Per and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) ○ Antimicrobials ○ Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) ○ Heavy metals 	<p><i>*Reference Lehigh Design Standards</i></p> <p><i>**This percentage shall be evaluated one year after launch of the updated Sustainable Purchasing Policy (by December 31, 2022) to ensure it is appropriate given the data available to substantiate the defined criteria.</i></p> <p><i>Purchasing, Facilities and Office of Sustainability teams will annually evaluate furniture suppliers utilizing the Sustainability Questionnaire, to select a pre-qualified pool of furnishings providers based on their best in class cradle to cradle sustainable furniture manufacturing and distribution programs.</i></p>
	Health Product Declaration (HPD)		
	GREENGUARD Gold		
Copy Paper	Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Recycled	<u>Non-public sites</u> : A minimum of 50% PCRC or GS-07 certified.	<u>Non-public sites</u> : A minimum of 100% PCRC, SFI, or FSC Recycled certified.
	Green Seal (GS-07)	<u>Public sites</u> : A minimum of 100% PCRC.	<u>Public sites</u> : same as the required level.
	Post-consumer recycling content (PCRC)	<u>MHPD</u> : A minimum of 30% PCRC.	<u>MHPD</u> : A minimum of 50% PCRC.
	Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)		
Paper Office Supplies	Total recycled content	A minimum of 30% PCRC.	100% recycled content with minimum 50%

(other than copy paper) - pending LVAIC consortium efforts	Post-consumer recycled content (PCRC)		PCRC; and additional preference for FSC, Green Seal (GS-07), and/or SFI labelled products.
	Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)		
	Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) - Chain of Custody		
	Green Seal (GS-07)		
Non-Paper Office Supplies (coarse paper)	Post-consumer recycled content (PCRC)	Meets the minimum CPG recycled-content levels for Non-Paper Office Products , and a minimum 30% recycled content for all writing utensils or other plastic-based Accessories. <i>*Refer to Amazon Catalog curated list of LTS-supported sustainable products</i>	Meets the recycled content specifications in the Preferred EPP Specifications as listed by the Northeast Recycling Council. <i>*Refer to Amazon Catalog curated list of LTS-supported sustainable products</i>
	Total recycled content		
	EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG)		
	Northeast Recycling Council (NERC) Model EPP Specifications and Purchasing Guidelines for Office Supplies		
Toner	Remanufactured	Meets ONE of the recognized standards (see the second column of this table).	Meets BOTH of the recognized standards (see the second column of this table).
	High yield		
Food Service Ware	Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI)	At least 60% of purchases are certified compostable by BPI. <i>*This applies to consumer service ware</i>	75% of purchases are certified compostable by BPI. <i>*This applies to consumer service ware</i>

Apparel <i>*Applies to all licensed vendors</i>	Worker Rights Consortium (WRC)	Lehigh University to maintain an affiliation with the WRC - an independent labor rights monitoring organization.	Same as the required level.
	Fair Labor Association (FLA)	Licensees must be a member of the FLA. Through an FLA affiliation, Lehigh commits to sourcing all apparel from licensed vendors who affiliate with the FLA, as applicable.	

Appendix B: Sustainability Questionnaire

1. What sustainability guidelines or environmental statement does your company have to guide your company as a whole?
2. Describe how your company will work with, and support, Lehigh in meeting its sustainability goals, as outlined in Lehigh's Sustainability Strategic Plan 2030. Detail how this would apply to this project or services.
3. Describe what policies, programs, memberships, or certifications your company has in place to manage its environmental impact and to become more sustainable.
4. Describe how your company works to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.
5. Describe how your company works to reduce waste in its daily operations and what plan is in place to reduce waste to landfill generated in the future.
6. Describe your plan to minimize packaging and/or describe your packaging "take back" program. What kind of reusable, recyclable, and/or compostable packaging materials do you use? What do you do to encourage/require your supplier to minimize packaging and/or use reusable, recyclable, or compostable packaging materials?
7. Describe how your company works to reduce its water consumption in its daily operations.
8. Describe how your company works to be more energy efficient.
9. What programs do you have to encourage your employees to use alternative transportation while commuting to work and traveling locally?
10. What kind of effort does your company make to reduce the use of environmentally harmful materials?
11. Has an environmental lifecycle analysis of your company's products been conducted by a certified testing organization?
12. Has your company been cited for non-compliance of an environmental issue in the past ten years?
13. Describe any other initiatives your company has taken to integrate sustainability practices and principles into your operations.
14. Are your products or services made using responsible labor/social practices, including paying workers standard wages and benefits? Please describe.