Sustainable Purchasing Guideline

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Sustainable UGA

Office of Sustainability

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The Sustainable Purchasing[1] Guideline aims to improve the social and environmental sustainability impact of procurement decisions at UGA.

This document lays out strategies for making sustainable product and service purchases. While recommendations in this document are not mandatory, they should be strongly considered when making purchases for the University of Georgia.

Keep in mind, some purchases are limited by state or federal laws or grants or contracts that require purchase from a particular vendor. This guideline does not apply to cases that are subject to limitations imposed by federal and state laws, rules, and regulations and DOAS, University System of Georgia, and University of Georgia policies. For reference, UGA procurement policies can be found at https://policies.uga.edu/Purchasing-and-Payment-Processing/.

Purpose: To provide information and resources to procure products that promote stewardship of resources and minimize negative impacts on society and the environment to the greatest extent practicable.

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[1] Sustainable purchasing is sometimes referred to as environmentally preferred purchasing, green procurement, sustainable procurement, affirmative procurement, eco-procurement, and environmentally responsible purchasing, particularly within United States federal government agencies, although those terms are not as comprehensive as sustainable purchasing.

2. Background

The UGA Finance and Administration Strategic Plan for 2011 to 2021 established a goal to evaluate current purchasing practices and develop guidelines and standards for environmentally-preferred purchasing by all campus departments. Similarly, the University System of Georgia is committed to providing sustainability leadership through responsible stewardship of the state's natural and physical resources through continuous improvement in campus operations (USG Board of Regents Policy Manual 9.11.11).

What is sustainable purchasing?

> Sustainable purchasing means considering a product's environmental and social attributes along with other traditional buying factors such as performance, quality, service, and price. In other words, it means choosing "products that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with other products that serve the same purpose."[2]

> Sustainable purchasing allows organizations to procure goods and services "in a way that achieves value for money on a whole-life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organization, but also to society and the economy, while remaining within the carrying capacity of the environment."[3]

What are the benefits?

> Sustainable purchasing can help natural systems flourish, social systems thrive, and markets prosper. Environmental benefits include more biodiversity and resource conservation and less pollution. Social benefits include more community engagement, human health, and diversity / equal opportunity. Economic benefits include more efficiency, innovation, and local job creation.

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[2] U.S. General Services Administration, Environmentally Preferable Products.
[3] The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply and National Institute of Government Purchasing, Inc. Public Procurement Practice, Sustainable Procurement Practice. (2012).

3. Responsibility of Departments

The recommended Responsibility of Departments and UGA purchasing agents include:

- Develop and maintain information about environmentally and socially preferable products typically used by your department.
- Inform employees of sustainable purchasing practices and resources.
- Submit new ideas, problems or concerns to UGA Procurement 706-542-2361 or e-mail procure@uga.edu.
- Demonstrate stewardship of resources through implementing best practices in sustainable purchasing.
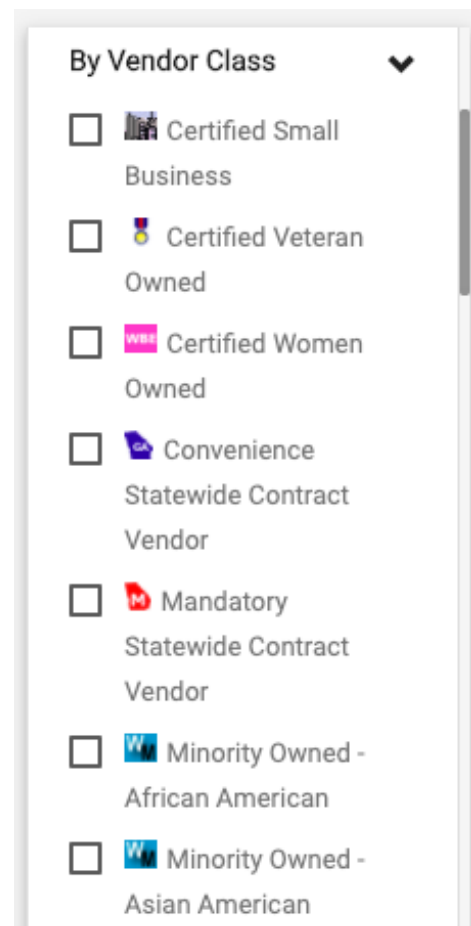
4. [UGAmart](#) Purchasing Strategies

Environmental Sustainability
When searching for environmentally sustainable products in UGAmart, look for the Product Flag checkboxes
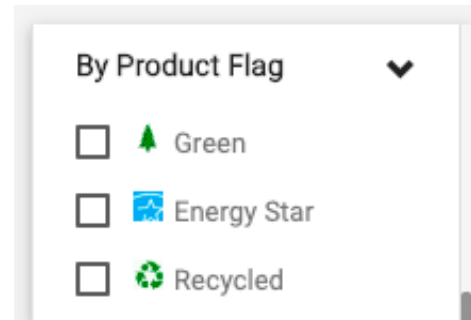
Social Sustainability
When searching for socially sustainable products in UGAmart, look for the Vendor Class checkboxes.

Additional UGAmart Tips
1. In Staples, browse by "Eco & Diversity Products". Click Browse by Category, select Eco & Diversity Products, and search within that category.
2. Before purchasing paper through an external vendor, verify pricing at [UGA Bulldog Print + Design](#) to ensure best value.

5. General Best Practices

Whenever possible, UGA employees should prevent waste by reusing materials. When purchasing new, prioritize materials that are local, durable, energy and/or water-efficient, made from recycled materials, and reusable, recyclable, or compostable.

Do you need it?
- Ensure that a need exists; consider reusing existing items versus purchasing new.
- To repurpose used or surplus items at UGA, email property@uga.edu to join the [Surplus Property Listserv](#).

Life Cycle
- Consider total cost of ownership when evaluating a purchase.
- Seek durable products that can be recharged, repaired, refilled, or reused.
- Prioritize water and energy conserving appliances and equipment.
- Purchase products made from recycled or repurposed materials and that can be recycled or repurposed after use.
- Departments should utilize [Asset Management - Surplus Property](#) for disposing of unwanted state property. Asset Management will redistribute, recycle, or dispose of surplus property by bidding it out over the Internet through surplus on-line bids, redistribution to schools/charitable organizations, or landfilling.

Delivery and Packaging
- Consolidate orders to reduce packaging and deliveries.
- Provide feedback to suppliers regarding packaging materials and practices, and request alternatives such as take-back programs and reusable and/or recyclable packaging.
- Set a minimum order value of $50.

Disposal
- Assess disposal requirements of each product and prioritize items that can be reused, recycled, or composted.
- Seek products with minimal packaging and prioritize vendors with take-back policies.

Hazards
- Avoid products containing particularly harmful substances whenever possible.
- Seek alternatives to products and processes that may be detrimental to the environment and the community.

Sourcing
- Prioritize materials and products harvested, extracted, or manufactured within Georgia.
- Prioritize vendors that are small, veteran-owned, women-owned, and/or minority-owned businesses.
- Consider the vendor's sustainability, environmental, and corporate social responsibility practices.
- Consider state contracts and coordinated bulk purchasing to ensure best value and economy of scale. For example, [UGA Bulldog Print + Design](#) purchases large quantities of paper at a discounted rate and passes that savings on to UGA departments.

Education / Outreach
- Develop and maintain information about environmentally and socially preferable products typically used by your department.
- Share lessons learned with others on campus.

Following are additional practices to consider based on various purchasing categories:

Office Supplies	• Locally and sustainably farmed paper products, such as those certified by SFI, are encouraged as well as products made from plant-based contents such as agricultural crops and residues. • Recycled, remanufactured, or refilled toner cartridges along with soy or vegetable based ink should be explored. • Certifications and standards to consider include Cradle to Cradle, FSC, GreenGuard, Green Seal, SFI, and others; products with the highest recycled content; and vendors that are small, local, B-Corporations, and/or minority-owned.
Appliances, Electronics, & Equipment	• Electrical products should meet the US EPA Energy Star certification when available and practicable. • Electronics, computers, and imaging equipment should meet EPEAT standards when available and practicable. • Copiers and printers purchased should be compatible with the use of recycled content and remanufactured products. • Water-using equipment should meet EPA WaterSense standards when available and practicable.
Laboratory Supplies	• Prioritize energy and water-efficient equipment and appliances with US EPA Energy Star and WaterSense certification. • Look for equipment, consumables, chemicals and reagents with the ACT Label. • Electronics, computers, and imaging equipment should meet EPEAT standards when available and practicable. • Prioritize safer chemical ingredients as identified by the US EPA to enhance safety and reduce hazardous waste. Whenever possible, products and equipment should not contain lead or mercury. If necessary, select products with as little of those elements as possible. • Vendors that offer take back programs for hard to recycle materials such as technologies, styrofoam coolers, or chemically contaminated plastics should be prioritized to reduce waste.
Cleaning Supplies	• Note: In most cases, these products will only be purchased by appropriate facilities management staff. • Cleaning solvents, surfactants and detergents should be biodegradable and safe for human health and the environment. • Preference should be given to products certified by Cradle to Cradle, Ecologo, GreenSeal, Safer Choice, or comparable.

Food	- Preference should be given to food and food service suppliers that provide local and or community-based products. - Preference should be given to food products that are locally, sustainably, and/or ethically produced as determined by recognized food and beverage sustainability standards such as Georgia Grown, Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, USDA Organic, or comparable.
Packaging	- Packaging that is reusable, recyclable, or compostable is preferred, when suitable uses and programs exist, as is eliminating packaging or using the minimum amount necessary for product protection to the greatest extent practicable. - Buy goods in bulk or concentrated form to reduce waste and save money. - Preference should be given to vendors who offer an Extended Product Responsibility (EPR) program, especially take-back, recycle, and disposal, and whose packaging is certified by Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) or comparable.
Vendor Selection	- Prioritize vendors from Georgia and whose materials and products are harvested, extracted, or manufactured within Georgia. - Prioritize small, veteran-owned, women-owned, and/or minority-owned businesses. - Prior to making a purchase, consider the vendor's sustainability, environmental, and corporate social responsibility practices. Preference should be given to vendors that are B-Corporations and/or maintain relevant third-party product certifications such as Cradle to Cradle or comparable. - Consider potential for an operating lease or rental - rather than a purchase or capital lease - in which vendors have the responsibility for upkeep of goods and proper end-of-life management.

6. Common Certifications and Standards

Listed below are some of the most common certifications used in sustainable purchasing. In an attempt to make it easier to understand when certifications might apply, this list is divided into general categories, but note that some certifications could apply to multiple purchasing categories. For a comprehensive list of ecolabels, visit: http://www.ecolabelindex.com/ecolabels/

Office and Cleaning Supplies			
Certification	**Logo**	**Description**	**Examples**
Cradle to Cradle		Certifies products based on performance in material health; material reuse; carbon footprint; water management; & social fairness.	Any manufactured product
Ecologo UL		Multi-attribute certification to ensure the products, service, or packaging reduces negative environmental impacts.	Cleaning products/services, papers, office supplies, electronics, building materials, personal care products, paints/sealants, & electricity
Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)		Promotes environmentally sound, socially beneficial, & economically prosperous management of the forests.	Wood/bamboo products, paper/pulp products, & cardboard

Greenguard		Ensures that a product has met some of the world's most rigorous and comprehensive standards for low emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) into indoor air.	Furniture, flooring, textiles, window treatments, paints/stains, sealants, surface finishes, & other building/construction products
Green Seal		Certifies products & services to help manufacturers, purchasers, & consumers make environmentally-responsible choices.	Hotels, restaurants, cleaning service providers, paper products, cleaning products, & construction materials/equipment
Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)		Promotes responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands and throughout the chain of custody.	Wood, paper, print, packaging, & bioenergy
US EPA Safer Choice		Helps consumers, businesses, & purchasers identify products that perform well & are safer for human health & the environment.	Cleaning & sanitation products

Appliances, Electronics, and Equipment			
Energy Star		Helps businesses & individuals save money & protect our climate by rating products with superior energy efficiency.	Appliances, electronics, office equipment, building products, heating/cooling, food service equipment, & lighting
EPEAT		Environmental performance rating that that address the full product lifecycle, from energy conservation and toxic materials to product longevity and end-of-life management of high-performance electronics	Computers, displays, imaging equipment, TVs, & mobile phones
WaterSense		Helps consumers find verified water-saving products.	Showerheads, faucets, toilets, urinals, spray-values, & irrigation controls
Laboratory Supplies (also see Appliances, Electronics, and Equipment)			
ACT Label		Helps laboratory personnel select products with minimal impact on the environment. Lower score = lower environmental impact.	Laboratory products

Food			
Fair Trade		Products that promote safe working conditions, protect the environment, enable transparency, & empower communities.	Apparel, home goods, beans/grains, body care, cocoa, coffee, flowers/plants, fruits/vegetables, herbs/spices, honey, nuts, spirits, sports balls, sugar, tea, & wine
Georgia Grown		Food and agricultural product businesses that are Georgia-based and/or produce manufactured goods whose key ingredients are grown in Georgia.	Fruits and vegetables, livestock, seafood, forestry products, restaurants, retail, distributer/broker, specialty products, horticulture, agritourism
Quality Assurance International (QAI)		Identifies food products that have been produced in a way that reduces negative environmental impacts.	Whole & processed foods
Rainforest Alliance		Recognizes products from farms, forests, & businesses that meet rigorous environmental & social standards.	Building materials, flowers/plants, food/beverages, furniture, health/beauty, home/kitchen, instruments, office supplies, printing, & sporting goods

USDA Organic		Identifies food products that have been produced in a way that reduces negative environmental impacts.	Whole foods & processed foods
Vendor Selection			
B Corporation		Recognizes businesses based on social & environmental performance, transparency, & legal accountability.	For-profit businesses