SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING GUIDELINES

Purpose

Elon University is committed to sustainability and to serving as a positive example through sustainable operations and education. Purchasing products and services that are environmentally preferable is an essential component of that commitment in that it supports implementation of the University's Sustainability Master Plan and Climate Action Plan. These Guidelines have been established to aid decision makers in purchasing environmentally preferable products and services.

Definitions

Sustainable [Green] Purchasing: the method wherein environmental and social considerations are taken with equal weight to the price, availability and performance criteria that colleges and universities use to make purchasing decisions. It is a serious consideration of supply chain management. Sustainable [Green] Purchasing minimizes negative environmental and social effects through the use of environmentally friendly products. It attempts to identify and reduce environmental impact and to maximize resource efficiency. Sustainable [Green] Purchasing is also known as 'environmentally preferred purchasing (EPP), green procurement, affirmative procurement, eco-procurement and environmentally responsible purchasing.' (National Association of Educational Procurement)

Biodegradable: capable of being decomposed by biological activity, especially that of microorganisms such as bacteria; the ability of a substance to break down into harmless elements.

Post-consumer recycled content: material collected after consumer use and used to make new products. For example, post-consumer recycled content paper is made from paper that has been reclaimed through the recycling process.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs): organic chemicals compounds with a high vapor pressure at normal room temperatures, many of which have short- and long-term adverse health effects.

Responsibilities

All University Departments

- Utilize these Guidelines when making all purchasing decisions.
- Request vendors to report the environmental attributes of their products.
- Submit new ideas, concerns or problems to the Purchasing Department 278-5580.

The Purchasing Department

- Inform departments of their responsibilities in utilizing these Guidelines.
- Provide departments with information about sustainable purchasing opportunities.

- Assist departments in balancing fiscal responsibilities with the purchase of socially and environmentally responsible products and services.
- Compile records to produce an annual summary of the University's sustainable purchasing actions to help evaluate the effectiveness of the Guidelines.

The Environmental Advisory Council

- Help spread awareness of these Guidelines and encourage their use.
- Provide recommendations for revisions to the Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines.

Strategies

- With every purchase, large or small, ask critical questions about the environmental sensitivities of the product before buying.
- Include in all RFP/bidding specifications: "The University is committed to reducing the adverse environmental impact of its purchasing decisions; it is committed to buying goods and services from contractors who share its environmental concern and commitment. The University encourages bidders to include in their responses economical and environmentally friendly products and service options that serve to minimize waste, reduce excess packing and packaging, recycle, reduce, reuse, prevent pollution, and/or offer resource efficiency. It's the University's goal to maximize environmental responsibility on its campus."
- Make vendors aware of Elon's Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines. Send a clear message that Elon will give consideration to those vendors whose products and services meet the University's environmental objectives.
- Give preference to environmentally preferable products, where quality, function and cost are equal or superior. Choose products based on efficient use of energy, natural resources and potential for safe, non-hazardous disposal.
- Consider short-term and long-term costs as well as quality when comparing product alternatives. Include evaluation of total costs expected during the time a product is owned, including, but not limited to, acquisition, extended warranties, operation, supplies, maintenance, disposal costs and expected lifetime compared to other alternatives.
- Give preference to manufacturers that have policies in place that support sound labor practices.
- Per the University's Green Building Policy, integrate sustainable purchasing concepts into the design, construction and landscape of buildings and renovations. These Guidelines should serve as additional reference and guidance for such projects.
- Give preference to locally (within a 100 mile radius) and/or regionally (within a 250 mile radius) manufactured products in the purchasing decision process.
- Give preference to locally (within a 100 mile radius) and/or regionally (within a 250 mile radius) grown food and utilize organic and other third-party certified options, when feasible, in the purchasing decision process.

Source Reduction

- Purchase durable, as opposed to single use or disposable, items. Choose reusable, rechargeable or refillable products, where available.

- Request vendors to review the manner in which their goods are packaged, and work with them in the areas of reduction, reuse and recyclability of packaging materials.
- Reuse and/or recycle packaging materials and pallets.
- Purchase remanufactured goods or use refurbishing services. For example, purchase remanufactured toner cartridges and refurbish equipment and appliances, when feasible.
- Purchase products that contain recycled content and that are able to be reused or recycled. Give preference to products containing post-consumer recycled content such as paper and office supplies (paper clips, folders, labels, etc.).
- Ensure that photocopiers and printers purchased or leased are capable of duplex copying and printing and can be used with recycled content products.

Operations Efficiency

- Utilize energy efficiency as a prerequisite when purchasing all appliances, electronics and fixtures.
- Purchase Energy Star products in all areas where such designations exist. When Energy Star products are not available, choose energy-efficient products that are in the upper 25% of energy efficiency as designated by the Federal Energy Management Program.
- Choose energy efficient and low mercury lighting where such options exist for current fixtures and properly recycle all bulbs at the product's end of life.
- Purchase electronics that are labeled Silver or higher under the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT), when such a rating exists for the product.
- Purchase vehicles and equipment (maintenance, landscaping, etc.) which maximize fuel efficiencies and have the lowest emissions possible for the desired function taking into consideration life-cycle costs. Utilize alternative fuel and/or alternative environmentally responsible energy methods, when feasible.
- Purchase water-saving fixtures and products.

Toxics and Pollution

- Choose cleaning chemicals that are Green Seal certified, certified under the EcoLogo Program of Environmental Choice or certified by the EPA's Design for the Environment Formulator Program (DfE) when their use will not compromise quality of service.
- Purchase environmentally responsible and ergonomically designed furniture and furnishings including floor coverings and window treatments. Select products with verifiable third-party certification (see Resources for examples), when feasible.
- Purchase products with low or no amounts of VOCs and low or no amounts of formaldehyde, such as floor coverings, paints, adhesives, solvents, window treatments, furniture and casework.
- Avoid the purchase and use of all potentially hazardous chemicals including pesticides and wood preservatives for which safety evaluations to current standards have not been carried out and which are known to be persistent in the environment. If no suitable alternative exists, such substances should be used under strictly controlled conditions and subject to a full environmental, health and safety assessment.

- Reduce or eliminate the use of products that contribute to the formation of dioxins and furans, including, but not limited to: paper, paper products, and janitorial paper products that are bleached or processed with chlorine or chlorine derivatives and products that use polyvinyl chloride (PVC), including, but not limited to, office binders, furniture, flooring, and medical supplies
- Phase out chlorofluorocarbon-containing refrigerants, solvents and similar products.
- Purchase products and equipment with no lead or mercury. For products containing lead or mercury, give preference to those with lower quantities of these metals and to vendors with established lead and mercury recovery programs.
- Give preference to wood products such as lumber and paper that originate from forests harvested in an environmentally sustainable manner. Give preference to wood products that are certified to be sustainably harvested by a comprehensive, performance-based certification system. When feasible, purchase local or regional, sustainably harvested wood.

Resources

Carpet and Rug Institute Green Label Plus Program – a program to identify carpet, cushions and adhesives that have been tested by an independent, certified laboratory to meet criteria for low VOC emissions.

Certified Humane – a certification and labeling program that requires the humane treatment of farm animals from birth through slaughter.

Chlorine Free Products Association – an independent not-for-profit accreditation and standard setting organization that focuses, among other things, on implementing advanced technologies free of chlorine chemistry.

Design for the Environment (DfE) – a program of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designating products that can help protect the environment and are safer for families.

EcoLogo – a third-party environmental standard and certification mark based on the lifecycle of a product or service.

Energy Star – U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and EPA 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 Bonze 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.

Fair Trade USA – the leading third-party certifier of Fair Trade products in the United States. Fair Trade products come from farmers and workers who are justly compensated.

FloorScore – a certification program that tests and certifies hard surface flooring and flooring adhesive products for compliance with indoor air quality emission requirements. It was developed by the Resilient Floor Covering Institute (RFCI) in conjunction with Scientific Certification Systems (SCS).

Food Alliance – provides third-party certification for social and environmental responsibility in agriculture and the food industry.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) – FSC certified products are verified from the forest of origin through the supply chain and are from responsibly harvested and verified sources.

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 is a similar certification, but with more stringent emissions requirements according to CA 01350, and 3) Green Guard Building Construction to prevent mold in design, construction and ongoing operations.

Green Seal – An independent non-profit organization dedicated to safeguarding the environment and transforming the marketplace by promoting the manufacture, purchase and use of environmentally responsible products and services. Green Seal certification ensures that a product meets rigorous, science-based leadership standards.

Marine Stewardship Council Blue Ecolabel – products with this label come from a certified sustainable fishery.

Rainforest Alliance – the Rainforest Alliance Certified seal assures consumers that the product has been grown and harvested using environmentally and socially responsible practices.

SCS Indoor Advantage – a certification program that certifies manufactures on the basis of compliance with specific indoor air quality emission requirements. It was developed by the Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) for non-flooring products intended for use within an enclosed indoor environment.

Seafood Watch – a program that advocates for ocean-friendly seafood through its recommendations on which seafood to buy or avoid.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) – SFI certified products are from responsibly managed forests.

USDA Organic – indicates the food or other agricultural product has been produced through approved methods that integrate cultural, biological and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity.