

Sustainable Procurement in Health Care Guide



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About us

Health Care Without Harm seeks to transform health care worldwide so the sector reduces its environmental footprint and becomes a leader in the global movement for environmental health and justice.

Working closely with Health Care Without Harm, Practice Greenhealth is the leading membership and networking organization for sustainable health care, delivering environmental solutions to more than 1,100 U.S. hospitals and health systems.

Health Care Without Harm's Global Green and Healthy Hospitals is an international network of hospitals, health care facilities, health systems, and health organizations dedicated to reducing their environmental footprint and promoting public and environmental health.



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why sustainable procurement?

Sustainable procurement is preventative medicine that supports a high-performance healing environment, attracts new opportunities, models leadership values to communities, patients and employees, and can save your organization money.

The sustainable procurement guide will help your health system understand:

- The impact goals of sustainable procurement
- The benefits and business case for buying sustainable goods and services

You will also learn how to:

- Engage internal stakeholders and suppliers
- Build a best-in-class sustainable procurement program

1.1.1 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR BUYING SUSTAINABLE

Health care organizations have the opportunity to minimize negative impacts resulting from their operations and to create positive, lasting impacts for their staff, patients, and community. Your organization may already have a corporate sustainability strategy, and a sustainable procurement program makes it possible to deliver on these priorities.

You can expect to:

- 1. Gain efficiency and save time and money:** More efficient operations can save space, energy, and water; reduce waste and costs from waste management and treatment; and extend the useful life of many products. An operating room can save thousands annually through sustainable procurement (see [Figure 1](#)). Additional savings can be found by assessing the total cost of ownership of potential goods and services to identify costs beyond the purchase price. Sustainable products can reduce labor and increase worker efficiency. For example, energy-efficient LED surgical lighting lasts longer than compact fluorescent lighting, requires less maintenance, and generates less waste (and associated costs).

2. Support resiliency: Hospitals must be prepared for extreme weather and other interruptions to the supply chain, such as was experienced during the response to the coronavirus pandemic, in order to provide care. In 2016, the United States had [15 weather-related disaster events](#) (droughts, wildfire, inland floods, several storms, and a tropical cyclone) totaling more than \$46 billion in direct costs and leading to 138 fatalities. Hospitals like Mass General Brigham, with most locations in Massachusetts, are designing facilities and buying sustainable products to maintain uninterrupted operations through extreme weather and accommodate sea level rise.

3. Contribute to better patient, employee, and community health: Many hazardous chemicals are present in health care settings, which may pose an exposure risk for health care workers, patients, and the community, according to the [World Health Organization](#), [International Labour Organization](#), and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Health care workers have one of the highest rates of work-related asthma, which can be minimized with safer cleaners and low-emission products. Sustainable procurement prioritizes safer chemicals that contribute to healthier indoor air quality and facilitates compliance with regulatory requirements and clinical standards for health and safety.

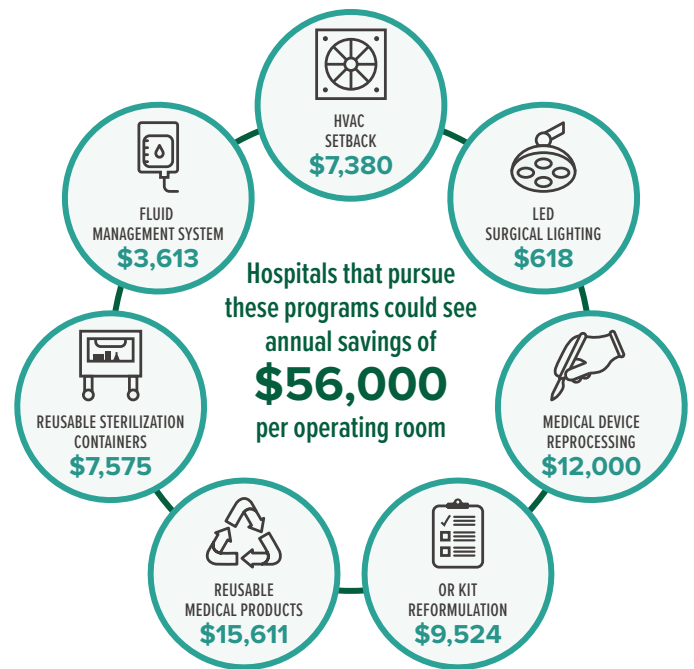
4. Get the best value from strategic suppliers: Sustainable procurement in health care seeks leaders who offer research, development, innovative solutions, and commitment to taking them to scale. Sustainable procurement emphasizes engagement with strategic suppliers, unleashing their knowledge and resources to help you maximize procurement for sustainability performance.

5. Foster engaged employees: Young professionals in many sectors want to work for organizations that have a strong sustainability focus. Sustainable procurement is often the cornerstone of broader programs that can help attract talent and retain employees. Your organization's commitment to leadership and innovation can create a powerful model that rewards staff for acting with integrity and responsibility and uncovering new sustainability opportunities.

6. Improve collaboration among internal stakeholders: Sustainable procurement can break down the historically siloed procurement decision-making process and broaden internal stakeholders when it comes to purchasing (see [Section 2.6](#) for more on how sustainable procurement builds a culture of cooperation and innovation).

7. Attract partnerships and resources: A commitment to sustainability can open doors to partnership opportunities. Your organization and potential partners can benefit from recognition as leaders and innovators. Although this benefit can be hard to quantify in the beginning, the

FIGURE 1: POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT IN HOSPITALS (PRACTICE GREENHEALTH)



inspiration, tools, resources, and recognition it brings will make your organization a valuable partner and a great place for patients, workers, and the community.

8. Improve environmental health: It is estimated that nearly [60 to 80% of a health system's greenhouse gas emissions](#) are embedded in products and services they buy. The National Health Service in England calculated that 60% of their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come from procurement. Health Care Without Harm's recent [report](#) on health care's climate footprint identifies that 71% of emissions are primarily derived from the supply chain (scope 3) through production, transport, and disposal of goods and services. A growing number of disposable products in health care and large amounts of packaging create significant waste. Hospitals can serve as responsible stewards by cutting down on their own impacts and encouraging suppliers to do the same.

9. Position your organization as a leader in your community: The heart of sustainable procurement is taking responsibility for your organization's impact on your community. Your city may have strategies to address many of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (see [Figure 2](#)). As "[anchor institutions](#)" health care organizations can contribute to these efforts. By collaborating with other sustainability leaders, you will deepen your impact and may also unlock new partnerships and resources. Focusing on procurement is one of the most powerful ways to address sustainability. Most importantly, it shows leadership for creating a more sustainable world.

1.1.2 WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

This guide has been written for sustainability champions in health care organizations, including health systems, hospitals, nursing homes, and primary care clinics. Step into your role as an advocate for sustainable procurement with confidence and the benefit of many years of practical experience in implementation. See [Section 3.2](#) for more on how sustainable procurement works.

Everyone in your organization has an important role to play, yet sustainable procurement may be new to many people. You will need to work with executives, procurement and supply chain staff, clinical product decision-makers, and suppliers in the design and execution of the program. Part of your role is to lead on coaching, influencing, and inspiring others to learn, take action, and get involved, as well as manage sustainability deliverables and operational responsibilities.

This guide is also for procurement professionals, who may need support to understand sustainability priorities, outcomes, and impacts. For more on sustainability, see [Chapter 5](#) for a deeper discussion of sustainability measurement and reporting.

Organizations experience the greatest success when sustainability and procurement professionals are clear on each other's roles and understand how to support each other. You are in this together. With some practice, it will become easy to consider sustainability when buying new goods and services.

HIGHLIGHT: Advocate Aurora Health

Mary Larsen, Advocate Aurora Health environmental affairs and sustainability director, was asked to review the purchasing calendar for contract categories where sustainability criteria should be explored. Acting as a consultant, she identified relevant request for proposal (RFP) questions, secured an RFP, and provided feedback on the critical analysis of environmental criteria. The outcome was the procurement of healthy furniture that met [Practice Greenhealth's healthy interiors criteria](#). Larsen and the sourcing and contracting managers collaborated to support the procurement process. This approach to partnership opened the door to future collaboration between sustainability and supply chain for the system.

1.2 What is sustainable procurement?

Many products and materials that come into hospitals may be harmful to patients, staff, and those in the community. Some products may contain or release carcinogens, reproductive toxins, or other hazardous materials, exposing patients, staff, and the community to harm. The health care supply chain contributes more than [70% in greenhouse gas emissions](#), according to our recent report on health care's climate footprint. The health care sector is the [second-largest user of energy](#) and [one of the largest users of water](#) in large part due to goods and services purchased. Products and packaging are thrown away after use, generating vast amounts of solid and hazardous waste. Sustainable procurement seeks alternatives that minimize human health and environmental impacts to support community health.

Aligned with the health care imperative to “first do no harm,” this guide shows how your organization can reduce supply chain impacts and transition away from a “take, make, waste” linear economy to a circular one that generates economic and business opportunities.

Sustainable procurement is commonly known as environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP); however, it involves social and economic aspects as well. In sustainable procurement, organizations meet their needs for goods and services while generating benefits for the organization, society, and the economy while minimizing damage to health and the environment. Sustainable procurement looks at how to achieve value on a [whole-life basis](#).

After reducing consumption and maximizing reuse systems, institutions buy products and services that integrate environmental factors (positive effects on the environment and health), social factors (fair labor, human rights, local employment), and economic factors (longevity, total cost of ownership, disposal cost, quality, innovation). The process examines what products are made of, where they come from, who made them, who is affected by their production, how they will be disposed of, and whether a product needs to be made or used at all. It involves supply chain management, materials management, logistics, procurement, and [strategic sourcing](#) activities.

FIGURE 2: UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 2030: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The international framework is the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), which provide a blueprint for prosperity for people and the planet. Sustainable procurement addresses [goal 12](#) on responsible consumption and production. Responsible consumption minimizes the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product. Health care spending represents almost 18% of the U.S. GDP, according to the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#), or 10% of the GDP in the [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) (OECD) countries by 2030. Sustainable procurement can leverage this purchasing power to help meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1.2.1 DEFINING SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

In everyday practice, it is helpful to consider sustainable procurement's three main dimensions: environmental, social, and economic.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Every product has an “[environmental footprint](#)” as a result of the energy and material resources used in its manufacture and delivery, as well as in its ongoing use and disposal. Product waste and its potentially toxic properties can undermine human health and the health of ecosystems. Yet, the purchase price of products often does not reflect their environmental

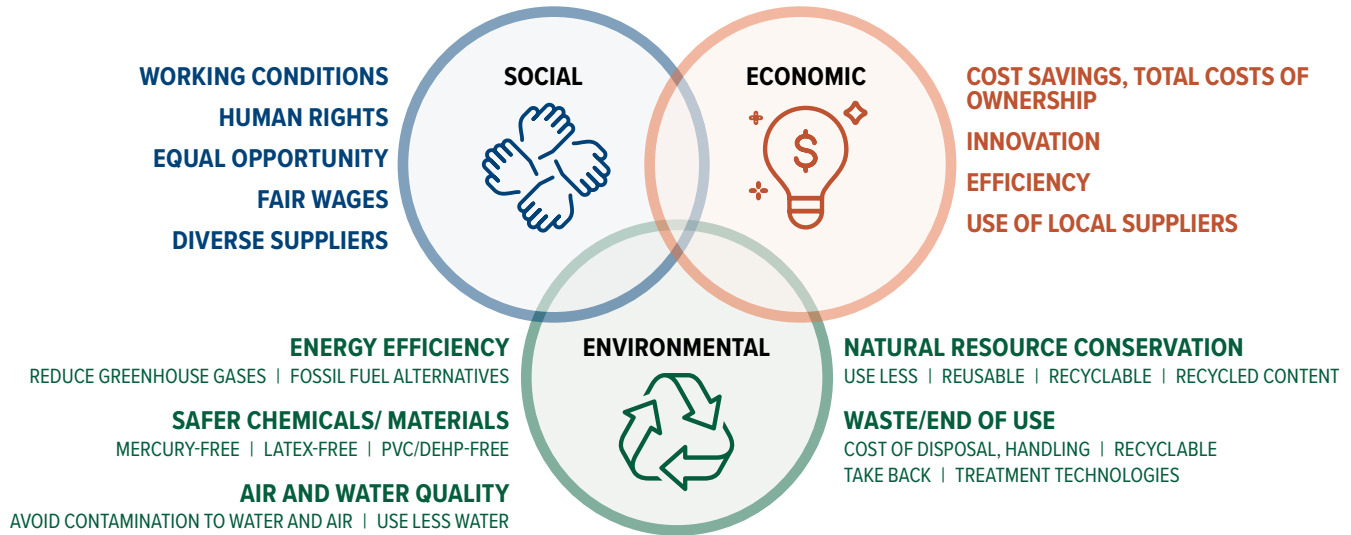
impact. Hospitals and health care organizations have an important role to play in promoting health by purchasing products and services that mitigate their environmental and health impacts on patients, staff, and surrounding communities.

Some products contain carcinogens or reproductive toxicants, some have outsized carbon and water footprints, and many are designed for single use and are excessively packaged generating a staggering amount of waste. Environmental considerations include reducing impacts on natural resources, air, and water; conserving energy; avoiding chemicals of concern; and minimizing end-of-use effects.

ECONOMIC

The economic aspect of sustainable procurement allows health systems to consider how their economic power can benefit all of society. For example, a health system can diversify supply chain vendors to promote economic wealth in underserved communities. Many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals focus on reducing inequality and poverty. Economic considerations include not only the purchase price of a good or service but also the total cost of ownership. Sustainability makes economic sense not only because it reduces inequalities across the value chain, but also because it supports financial sustainability. Value-based procurement helps minimize costs, resources, and reduce inefficiencies.

FIGURE 3: SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS (PRACTICE GREENHEALTH)



SOCIAL

The social dimension of procurement is concerned with the health and well-being of people while ensuring all partners in a supply chain uphold basic human rights in their employment and workplace practices. These rights are expressed in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) [fundamental conventions](#) and create a baseline for minimum standards in safe and healthy workplaces. Tools such as supplier codes of conduct (including the [UN Global Compact](#)) help communicate expectations on human rights to suppliers and often refer to ILO conventions.

Sustainable procurement can create social and economic capital through community benefit agreements. As anchor institutions, health care organizations can leverage procurement to contribute to the local economy, reduce poverty, and promote investment in community assets and natural resources.

Sustainable procurement encompasses environmental, economic, and social dimensions and can apply to all procurement activities. Successful organizations consistently consider all sustainability factors for potential relevance to make sustainable choices more often.

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHT: CommonSpirit Health

In 2016, more than 40 million people were victims of modern-day slavery around the world, and many of the victims were children. CommonSpirit Health has been working to address human trafficking in its supply chain. While uncertain how to start this work, Jeff Stoner, product line administrator, stated at CleanMed 2019, "Let's find out who the subject matter experts are, what has already been done, and gather resources." The centralized procurement and contracting division created and sent a letter of intent to suppliers. "Our message is: We don't want to purchase goods produced by forced labor," Stoner says.

1.3 How to use this guide

1.3.1 IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

Implementing a program requires leadership support and commitment. Sustainable procurement utilizes engagement strategies within your organization and with suppliers and [group purchasing organizations \(GPOs\)](#). Embedding sustainable procurement into the supply chain has become standard in organizations that understand how what we buy matters to improving health and reducing disease.

In this guide, your organization will learn best practices to measure success and share progress on reducing impacts to patients, workers, and communities. The guide describes the steps to sustainable procurement implementation. Sustainability and supply chain professionals can learn the elements of a best-in-class program and how to start a program or build on an existing program.

FIGURE 4: THE PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT CYCLE (PRACTICE GREENHEALTH)



1.3.2 THE PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT CYCLE

This guide uses the “plan-do-check-act” cycle as a framework for developing and implementing a successful sustainable procurement program. This cycle models the process of continuous improvement. It can help you build and assess elements of your program one step at a time while adapting to new experiences and lessons learned.

Each phase of the cycle corresponds to a chapter in the guide and has been color-coded accordingly. For example, if you would like to focus on sustainable procurement strategy, flip to the purple-colored chapter to learn more.

In each chapter, review the color-shaded boxes that highlight illustrative examples, quotes, and case studies.

1.3.3 THE 10 ELEMENTS OF A BEST-IN-CLASS SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT PROGRAM

The first step is making an organizational commitment to sustainable procurement. Many organizations have already defined priorities and enacted pilot sustainable procurement initiatives. According to a 2017 survey of the











KPMG International Cooperative, 93% of the world’s 250 largest companies in terms of revenue are practicing sustainability in their operations. Health facilities around the world have made a commitment to sustainability. More than 1,300 members in 69 countries who represent the interests of 43,000 hospitals and health systems are part of the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network, including more than 1,100 Practice Greenhealth members in the United States. Sustainable procurement is most successful with a program that provides direction and resources to create and sustain a new procurement culture.

A sustainable procurement program has the following 10 elements. The [Table 1](#) provides a brief overview of each element and associated sections of the guide.

The table’s color-coding connects each program element to a phase of the plan-do-check-act cycle.

This guide has been created to help you build or improve on each of these elements. Stakeholder engagement is an important success factor in each element and is discussed throughout.

TABLE 1: THE 10 ELEMENTS OF A BEST-IN-CLASS SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT PROGRAM

PLAN	
	<p>1. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY A sustainable procurement strategy sets out your long-term vision for positive sustainability impacts in your supply chain. For best results, this strategy should align with your organization’s mission, goals, sustainability commitments, and priorities. See Section 2.3 for more.</p>
	<p>2. ACTION PLAN A phased action plan with a monitoring and evaluation framework will help organize resources to reach your sustainable procurement goals. See Section 2.4 for more.</p>
	<p>3. HIGH-IMPACT PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES LIST A list of high-impact procurement opportunities identifies products and categories for sustainable purchasing, usually in industries with suppliers offering a range of sustainable alternatives. Such a list may be accompanied by specific information on sustainability opportunities, impacts, and certification or third-party labels. See Section 2.5 for more.</p>
DO	
	<p>4. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT POLICY Developing or adapting and updating sustainable purchasing policy or guidance provides clarity on the importance of sustainable purchasing to your organization, articulates specific sustainability commitments and priorities, and states how to consider them in procurement processes. See Section 3.1 for more.</p>
	<p>5. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES Up-to-date procedures provide staff with a standard approach to applying sustainability tools at the appropriate point in the requisitioning and procurement processes. Procedures help staff know when and how to use new tools. See Section 3.4 for more.</p>
	<p>6. TOOLS Sustainable procurement tools help users and procurement staff evaluate prospective products and suppliers in a standardized way. Tools may include sustainability checklists, product specifications, third-party certifications, request for proposals, quotes, lists of suppliers who meet proposed criteria, and bid language (also known as “RFX” and refers to various types of requests sent to suppliers), supplier questionnaires, inclusion/exclusion and weighting criteria for sustainability and a supplier code of conduct. See Section 3.4 and the annexes for more.</p>
	<p>7. TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION Purchasing decisions are made by many people across large organizations. People need orientation to new policies and guidelines around sustainable procurement to understand why the policy is relevant and how to apply it. Investing in communications and training will educate and engage staff, build support for sustainable procurement work, and accelerate success in implementation. See Section 3.7 for more.</p>
	<p>8. SUPPLIER AND GROUP PURCHASING ORGANIZATION ENGAGEMENT Engaging suppliers and GPOs on sustainability is a powerful way to deepen impact. Engagement begins with communicating your sustainable procurement strategy to prospective and current suppliers and GPOs and inviting them to work with you to achieve your goals. In some cases, suppliers may be able to help inform your expectations. In other cases, you may need to provide orientation and training or specify performance goals and measurement guidelines in contracts. Sustainability can become part of the business review process, which can yield sustainability data for impact monitoring and reporting and technical and financial resources. See Section 3.4.3 for more.</p>
CHECK	
	<p>9. TRACKING AND MONITORING It is important to take stock regularly on long-term progress towards sustainability throughout your supply chain. Your monitoring and evaluation plan may include adapting existing procurement tracking systems, gathering spending information, measuring program impacts and outcomes, and contract monitoring and verification, such as business reviews. See Chapter 4 for more.</p>
ACT	
	<p>10. REPORTING Monitoring will provide information to evaluate the impact of your sustainable procurement program. Share your results and successes in internal reports to leadership and other key stakeholders (engaged employees, green teams, community leadership, etc.). Commit to continuous improvement by revising your strategy where needed and heading into the next phase of implementation. See Chapter 5 for more.</p>

1.3.4 HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS GUIDE

This guide can help your health care organization create a sustainable procurement program and open doors to greater operational efficiency and improved patient, worker, and community health and benefits.

It presents a framework for developing a sustainable procurement program for health care facilities. The executive summary can be shared with senior leadership to present the business case and benefits of sustainable procurement.

This guide contains a practical, how-to discussion on each of the 10 elements of a sustainable procurement program. Each element has been linked to a phase of the plan-do-check-act cycle (see [Figure 4](#)). The plan-do-check-act cycle is a continuous quality improvement model frequently used in health care organizations.

If you have a particular interest or question about sustainable procurement, you can skip directly to the section most relevant to your needs. Here are some quick references:

TABLE 2: QUICK REFERENCES FOR USING THE GUIDE

<p>To learn about the best practice elements of a sustainable procurement program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See “plan” Section 2.1 assess the current state of sustainable procurement practice • Refer to the organizational benchmarking worksheet in Annex 2 to support organizational self-assessment
<p>To learn about setting sustainability impact goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See “plan” Section 2.3.1: choose sustainability impact priorities
<p>To learn about prioritizing specific goods and services for sustainable procurement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See “plan” Section 2.5: create a high-impact procurement opportunities list • For more information on how to prioritize items for your list, see Annex 3: how to create a high-impact procurement opportunities list • For sample categories and goals, see Annex 4: sample high-impact procurement opportunities
<p>To learn about integrating sustainability into the procurement of a product or service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See “do” Section 3.4.1 for relevant sustainability criteria to include in the procurement of a good or service • Refer to Annex 6: Practice Greenhealth’s standardized environmental criteria • Refer to Annex 8: how to assess sustainability impacts
<p>To learn about engaging with internal stakeholders to build a culture of sustainable procurement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See “plan” Section 2.4.1 on developing an action plan for an overview of key groups involved in implementation • See “do” Section 3.7 on building a culture of sustainable procurement, staff training, and communications
<p>To learn about engaging with suppliers and external stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See “do” Section 3.5 for a general discussion of supplier engagement • See “do” Section 3.4.2 on engaging suppliers on sustainability during the procurement process • See “check” Section 4.3 on engaging suppliers in sustainability impact measurement

This report includes the following sections and supporting annexes:

TABLE 3: HOW THE GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

<p>1. PLAN: Develop your sustainable procurement program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annex 1: Principles of sustainable procurement • Annex 2: Organizational self-assessment worksheet • Annex 3: How to create a high-impact procurement opportunities list • Annex 4: Sample high-impact procurement opportunities for health care organizations
<p>2. DO: Embed sustainability in your procurement process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annex 5: Model sustainable procurement policy • Annex 6: Practice Greenhealth’s standardized environmental criteria • Annex 7: How to assess sustainability impacts
<p>3. CHECK: Monitor progress and outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annex 8: Data collection template
<p>4. ACT: Assess impact and improve your program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annex 9: Common challenges and solutions

If you encounter a term that is new to you, refer to the [glossary](#) at the end of the report.



CHAPTER 2: PLAN

DEVELOP YOUR SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT PROGRAM

In the “plan” stage, you have the opportunity to mobilize a leadership team to create a sustainable procurement strategy and implementation plan. In this first stage of the “plan-do-check-act” cycle, you may need to conduct some research on your current state of sustainable procurement, how your organization compares with other health care organizations, and where you have the most potential to expand sustainable procurement.

Summary of “plan” steps

1. Assess the current state of sustainable procurement practice
2. Build support for your business case with senior leaders to resource your program
3. Develop a sustainable procurement strategy to prioritize desired sustainability outcomes
4. Create an action plan that sets goals and mobilizes organizational resources
5. Develop your high-impact opportunity procurement list of priority goods and services
6. Secure resources for implementation

2.1 Assess the current state of sustainable procurement

Benchmarking where your organization is in terms of a fully optimized sustainable procurement program allows you to take stock of your current practices and how they compare with peer organizations. It is an important part of building your business case and communicating your vision.

A fully optimized sustainable procurement program has 10 elements (see [Chapter 1](#)). This can serve as a framework for your organizational self-assessment and help organize what you learn about other health care organizations practicing sustainable procurement. Use the worksheet in [Annex 2](#) to get started on your organizational assessment.

Additionally, the [learn more webpage](#) lists health care-specific case studies of sustainable procurement from organizations like [Practice Green Health](#), [Health Care Without Harm’s Global Green and Healthy Hospitals](#) network, and others.

HIGHLIGHT: Seattle Children’s Hospital

Seattle Children’s Hospital engaged its supply chain to implement sustainable procurement with a benchmarking study and a focus on supporting children’s health. The project began with a team of two graduate students, who benchmarked the hospital’s environmental purchasing against leading programs that won Practice Greenhealth awards. A gap report demonstrated where Seattle Children’s ranked with others.

While the benchmarking study gave the supply chain department a desire to improve sustainable procurement performance, a focus on how procurement could support children’s health and well-being confirmed their collaboration. Sustainability leader, Colleen Groll reports, “When I talked about how safer and more sustainable products could reduce asthma triggers in children, I gained support for implementation. Asthma is the No. 2 reason for admissions to Seattle Children’s Hospital.”

Groll keeps supply chain leads informed of important issues and provides them with evidence and facts on priority procurement categories.

2.2 Customize the business case for your organization

Building support for developing and expanding a sustainable procurement program can happen formally or informally across the organization. A compelling business case will help you mobilize, engage, and inspire. To make a business case that is customized to your organization’s unique operations and opportunities, start with the general framework outlined in [Chapter 1](#).

You may have gathered information on past and current sustainable procurement initiatives and goals in your organizational self-assessment. If not, refer to [Annex 2](#) for a helpful framework to organize your findings. If existing sustainable procurements have brought value to the organization, document them.

Distill what you’ve learned into the most significant and measurable benefits of sustainable procurement, as well as the cost of not establishing a sustainable procurement program. This becomes part of your business case.

2.2.1 SHARE THE BUSINESS CASE TO BUILD SUPPORT FOR YOUR PROGRAM

To establish a program, you will need approval and support from senior leadership. This may include the vice president of supply chain, the chief finance officer, and hospital administration, as well as major budget holders and department managers. How do you approach senior leadership? Here are five ideas:

- 1. Build support among sustainability leaders in the organization.** Follow up with people who have been involved with past and current initiatives. Let them know you are interested in developing a sustainable procurement program and a pitch to senior leadership. Discuss who is best suited to lead the conversation and how others can offer support and expertise. You may want to create a formal advisory team.
- 2. Know your audience and tailor your content and language.** Consider what is important to your audience. Sometimes focusing on the cost of inaction to the organization works better than listing the benefits or vice versa. Consider the language you use, drawing on terms most likely to resonate with your audience: safety, quality care, costs, savings, health promotion, or community benefits. A chief financial officer will likely want to see numbers and figures. Alternatively, the head of human resources will care more about employee health and safety, retention, and talent acquisition. Anticipate questions and concerns and have information prepared to respond to them.

HIGHLIGHT: Hackensack Meridian Health

“Since cost is always a key driver for supply chain, a best practice is to identify ways the organization can save money in order to engage supply chain leadership,” says Kyle Tafuri, Hackensack Meridian Health sustainability director. Tafuri identified financial wins and made sure the vice president of supply chain knew about them, including a renegotiated contract for waste management, a contract for pigment-free basins, and a surgical kit reduction initiative. As a result of identified cost savings, the vice president championed a sustainable procurement initiative for meat raised without routine antibiotics.

3. **Do some internal research on how to make the pitch.** The process for designing and pitching the case will depend on organizational norms, expectations, relationships, and protocol. Consider approaching colleagues who have pitched a new program and ask them what worked, what did not work, and what they might do differently.
4. **Request communications support to demonstrate the case.** Work with your communications specialists to present your findings in simple and compelling ways. For example, the lion's share of emissions – 71% are primarily derived from the health care sector supply chain (Scope 3) through the production, transport and disposal of goods and services, according to [a report by Health Care Without Harm](#) in collaboration with Arup. Wherever possible, add numbers and illustrative examples from your research.
5. **Highlight the competitive landscape.** Drawing on your findings from your benchmarking research (see [Section 2.1](#)), summarize where your organization stands compared to peer organizations on sustainable procurement. For example, 61% of 207 facilities eliminated the purchase and use of antimicrobial hand hygiene products throughout the facility that contain triclosan or triclocarban. Check out Practice Greenhealth's annual [sustainability benchmarking report](#) to learn how leading organizations are implementing sustainable procurement.

HIGHLIGHT: Juan A. Fernández Hospital

At Juan A. Fernández Hospital, the commitment to safer chemicals began in 2007 when the facility became the first hospital in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to eliminate mercury-containing measuring devices. Led by Dr. Mirta Borrás, other substances were also replaced. In 2012, the digitalization of images replaced X-rays and associated chemicals. The use of glutaraldehyde caused respiratory, ocular, and dermal irritation in hospital staff and was replaced by peracetic acid, which is less toxic and is not irritating. Replacements were made in the areas of sterilization in external offices, surgery, gynecology, endoscopy, cleaning, and maintenance.

Borrás continues to champion chemical substitution in the hospital and throughout the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network in Latin America inspiring other hospitals to replicate the work. In 2019, Borrás received an award from Health Care Without Harm for “menos huellas, mas salud” (less footprint, more health).

2.3 Develop a sustainable procurement strategy and goals

Individual and ad-hoc sustainable purchasing activities are meaningful and can deliver benefits, but an approved strategy that guides a resourced program has the greatest chance of delivering on the business case for sustainable procurement.

A strategy articulates a long-term vision for the sustainable procurement program and outlines specific goals and objectives. Health Care Without Harm and Practice Greenhealth define several sustainable procurement goals (see [Table 4](#)) and provide implementation resources for members. For additional priority examples, refer to [Annex 4](#).

Setting specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (see “SMART goals” in the glossary) purchasing goals each year should be part of your strategy. For more, check out [HealthPartners' work plan](#) for sustainable procurement (see [Figure 5](#)).

To put a strategy in place or review and refresh a current strategy, consider these three tips:

1. Validate and align with existing sustainability commitments, goals, and practice (see [Section 2.1](#) for more on assessing existing sustainability priorities and practices).
2. Engage senior leadership and relevant staff in prioritizing the sustainable procurement outcomes and impacts that are most significant to your organization at this time. In preparation for these conversations, consider preparing a backgrounder that summarizes your research.
3. Connect sustainable procurement priorities with other priority organizational objectives, such as in cost savings or patient health and safety.

2.3.1 CHOOSE SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT PRIORITIES

While many health care organizations prioritize health and safety, many more sustainability impacts and opportunities may be considered in procurement. In everyday practice, it is helpful to consider sustainable procurement as having three main dimensions: environmental, social, and economic. [Chapter 1](#) provides a summary of these components and their relationship to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Procurement strategies include reducing GHG emissions, substituting carcinogenic building materials with less toxic ones, eliminating single-use plastics, reducing waste to landfill with zero-waste commitments, or encouraging local economic development to reduce poverty.

Practice Greenhealth recommends a set of sustainability impact priorities most relevant to the health care sector (see “Reducing energy consumption and safer medical devices.”)

Reducing energy consumption and safer medical devices

Practice Greenhealth helps health care organizations commit to sustainable procurement opportunities. Several health systems are prioritizing reducing GHG emissions and ensuring products are free of chemicals of concern. Setting purchasing goals for these impact priorities support measuring and tracking success. One goal is to buy 80% of all computers, monitors, and laptops registered to the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT), which meets reputable sustainability standards including being Energy Star certified. Another goal is to eliminate PVC and DEHP from at least two of a set of listed medical product categories. Practice Greenhealth uses these goals as a benchmarking tool and reports on the accomplishments of participating organizations. For more information, refer to Practice Greenhealth’s [benchmark reports](#). Additional goals are listed in [Table 4](#), and a full list can be found in the [sustainable procurement directory](#).

TABLE 4: SAMPLE OF PURCHASING GOALS FOR HEALTH CARE

STRATEGY	SMART GOAL
Reduce GHG emissions	Purchase 75% renewable energy with at least 25% of total energy purchases from local renewable sources by (insert date)
Use safer chemicals/reduce toxicity	90% of cleaning products (in five categories) purchased are Green Seal or UL ECOLOGO certified by (insert date)
Resource conservation and waste reduction	Single-use device reprocessing: collect and purchase 20% reprocessed non-invasive devices compared to total by (insert date)
Engage suppliers	Develop an engagement strategy to ensure supplier buy-in and create strategic partnerships with at least one supplier by (insert date)

HIGHLIGHT: Advocate Aurora Health

At Advocate Aurora Health, all procurement professionals are accountable for sustainable procurement goals and priorities. Collective goals are established, such as a target percentage of meat raised without antibiotics purchased per year or furniture that meets Practice Greenhealth’s healthy interior purchasing goals. A dashboard is used to align personal and departmental goals. Collecting the data drives the achievement of new goals and ensures the organization is not losing ground on areas where targets have already been met, such as third-party certified sustainable cleaning products.

A sustainable procurement strategy is not the same as a prioritized procurement opportunities list, which enumerates product categories identified for sustainable procurement. To skip to a discussion on prioritizing product categories for sustainable procurement, see [Section 2.5](#) and [Annex 3](#).

When setting your goals and targets, make sure they are realistic, specific, and achievable (see [Table 4](#) for specific examples).

2.4 Develop an action plan

An action plan will help you organize human and financial resources to deliver on specific objectives and goals within your sustainability procurement strategy.

A solid action plan covers the following six components:

1. Sequence of activities to meet selected objectives
2. Time requirement for each activity and target dates for completion
3. Estimated level of effort required (number of hours or days per person involved)
4. Human resources needed – staff, consultants, sponsors, and volunteers
5. Operational information – project manager, departments, or functional groups involved
6. Communication of results to key stakeholders

[Figure 5](#) illustrates a [sample work plan](#) for supply chain services at HealthPartners that divides action into topics: energy, waste, materials, and infrastructure development.

2.4.1 IDENTIFY WHO IS INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTATION

Action planning is most often led by a sustainability or sustainable procurement role in consultation with a team of key internal stakeholders. It may be useful to formalize this group into a sustainable procurement advisory committee. Here is a short list to help get you started with stakeholder mapping:

1. Procurement teams

This group includes staff in finance and procurement, materials management, supplier diversity, environmental health and safety, infection control, food service, and risk management. These departments can help develop tools and procedures to embed sustainability into procurement processes. Consider the current capacity of the procurement department and identify any competing priorities that may need to be considered.

2. Sustainability teams

This group includes staff tasked for the sustainability strategy and implementation and may include operational specialists in energy, chemicals, and other specific sustainability portfolios. Sustainability teams bring expertise on specific priorities and can help measure progress, outcomes, and impact from sustainable procurement.

3. Clinicians and other users

The term “clinician” refers to roles that involve treating patients and may include pediatrics, NICU, or oncology. They are the primary users of specialized products and equipment to engage in evaluation and selection of safer, more sustainable products.

4. Facility operations, housekeeping, and administrative staff

This group includes primary users of general products, cleaning chemicals, and equipment and may need education on impacts and sustainability opportunities.

A program’s success will rely on the participation of and collaboration with representatives from many internal and external groups. These groups likely have different cultures, expectations, and performance goals.

FIGURE 5: SAMPLE SUPPLY CHAIN WORK PLAN (HEALTHPARTNERS)

ENERGY Ensure Energy Efficiency				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an enterprise wide perspective on energy management Prioritization of projects that include energy efficiency components and that have a positive return on investment in a reasonable timeframe 				
DIMENSION DRIVER AND TACTICS	OWNER(S)	TIMING	STATUS	COMPLETED
Community Solar Garden Subscription Agreements	Vini	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of 2016: 20 million kWh/yr committed to Facilities include: Methodist Hospital, Inver Grove Clinic, Lakeview Hospital, and Westfields Signed an agreement for Regions Hospital for 11,413,000 kWh/yr Signed an agreement for Curve Crest clinic for 500,000 kWh/yr At the end of 2017: 33,660,833 kWh/yr committed to 	12/31/2017
Conduct fleet vehicle assessment to identify opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (rechargeable batteries, switching to gasoline	Bob S.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased one Nissan Leaf for TRIA East. This EV will be used for daily deliveries form Woodbury Clinic. 	12/1/2017

HIGHLIGHT: Western Cape Department of Health, South Africa

In a process for laundry and cleaning chemicals, Santie Roy, supply chain management director, identified stakeholders to participate in cross-functional bid specification and evaluation committees to develop the product criteria and test sample products. The participants included: infection prevention and control, facilities management, supply chain management, laundry operations, and specialist advisors on occupational and environmental health. The new specifications for the contract starting Jan. 1, 2020 included requirements for safety data sheets to be provided for all relevant items, the reduction of harmful/toxic substances such as quaternary ammonia compounds and adherence to the Code of Practice of the International Fragrance Association.

2.4.2 CREATE A MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

A monitoring and evaluation framework sets out the targets and performance indicators to measure progress on implementation, sustainability outcomes, and impact. Performance indicators should relate directly to the objectives in your organization's sustainable procurement strategy.

The following program-level measures are common among organizations implementing sustainable procurement and can be useful in measuring progressive implementation.

- 1. Sustainable expenditure:** The number of contracts, dollar value, and percent of spending on sustainable suppliers with advanced sustainability practices. This can also be reported as the number of products or services converted to more sustainable alternatives. For example, 75% of total spending on janitorial cleaning products will be certified to Green Seal, Nordic Swan, or UL ECOLOGO. Practice Greenhealth sets specific goals (refer to the [sustainable procurement directory](#)) for member hospitals and benchmarks their success.
- 2. Sustainable solicitations:** The number, dollar value, and percent of solicitations that include sustainability criteria for goods and services or supplier practices (as mandatory or desirable specifications). For example, the health system will include sustainability criteria in 80% of contracts for hand hygiene products.

- 3. Employee training:** The number of people in the organization who have participated in capacity-building programs such as orientation and training on sustainable procurement.
- 4. Supplier engagement or compliance:** The percentage of suppliers that signed off on a tool such as supplier code of conduct or completed a sustainability questionnaire.
- 5. Program cost and financial benefits:** The scope of the financial investment in the program and the savings and quantified benefits from shifting to more sustainable products or services.

A range of potential indicators is available to measure the outcome of your organization's specific sustainability objectives. It can be helpful to align your indicators with those in use by other organizations (see Practice Greenhealth's [sustainable procurement directory](#) and [Global Green and Healthy Hospital challenges](#)). Some indicators commonly used among health care organizations are:

- Reduction in energy or water use intensity (use/square foot/square meter) by building use/type
- Total pounds/kilograms of waste per patient day
- Percent of sustainable food purchased out of total annual food spending
- Total annual pounds/kilograms of meat purchased (to track progress on plant-based meals)
- Number of hazardous chemicals identified for substitution
- Percent of total annual spending on computers purchased that are EPEAT-registered products
- Percent or number of sourcing contracts completed that contain PVC/DEHP-free products for the neonatal intensive care unit

After selecting indicators, check to see if they are realistic. Can they be measured efficiently and relatively easily on an ongoing basis? If not, adapt or remove them from your indicator set.

Performance indicators tend to be quantitative and provide a statistical snapshot of organizational progress. For best results, try to capture qualitative information in your monitoring system as well. This will often come in the form of feedback, testimonials, or success stories from engaged staff, suppliers, and external stakeholders.

It's good to have diversity in your monitoring and evaluation system, but don't try to measure too much. A simple framework is easier to implement and stands a better chance of lasting. A good rule of thumb is to choose a few program-level measures and one or two specific measures for each of the main objectives in your sustainable procurement strategy. Once you have confirmed your monitoring and evaluation framework, advocate building your program metrics into the senior leadership dashboard.

HIGHLIGHT: Kaiser Permanente

Kaiser Permanente's sustainable procurement process is described in Practice Greenhealth's article "[EPP as easy as 1, 2, 3.](#)" In the article, Nestor Jarquin, Kaiser Permanente sourcing manager, says, "Incorporating our environmentally preferable purchasing practices in our sourcing model has dramatically improved our capability of identifying sustainable opportunities. The true integration of our [environmentally preferable purchasing] EPP program in this fashion has hardwired EPP. It's what we do at Kaiser Permanente, and it's not considered an additional step."

2.5 Create a high-impact procurement opportunities list

Hospitals and health care organizations purchase an enormous range of specialized products and services, including specialized and highly regulated medical devices, complex nurse call systems, and more common items such as furniture, office supplies, electronics, and building materials.

While a hospital could consider sustainability in all of its procurement, this is not recommended. Prioritizing contracts for sustainable procurement is the best practice. Certain procurement categories have more sustainable alternatives available on the market. Prioritization also allows staff to determine which contracts offer the highest sustainability value to the organization.

As part of your action plan, you may want to develop a high-impact procurement list, which documents the highest-priority categories for your organization. (For more information, see [Annex 3](#).)

“The breadth of environmental, health, community, and labor issues and considerations [in the supply chain] is a major challenge. It is complex and multifaceted. This complexity makes focus and prioritization so necessary. There is no one particular place to start, but you have to start somewhere and build on that.”

– Mary Larsen, Advocate Aurora Health System
director of environmental health and sustainability

To get started, review the contract work plan from your organization as well as from your [group purchasing organizations \(GPOs\)](#). You may find it helpful to work with your sustainable procurement advisory group or team to review and identify contracts to target from this list. This is discussed in detail at the beginning of [Section 3.3](#).

It is also helpful to gather or produce fact sheets or guidance that summarize research on impacts, opportunities, and relevant third-party certification options for each item on the list. Practice Greenhealth offers members a [sustainable procurement directory](#) that suggests many opportunities and summarizes guidance.

Your high-impact opportunity procurement list will evolve as some sustainable procurements become routine and new alternatives become available.

2.6 Secure human resources for implementation

Your sustainable procurement strategy and action plan may benefit from redistribution of or securing new human resources. There are emerging positions responsible for sustainable procurement in health care, but many facilities utilize existing staff or interns to support program goals. When dedicated staffing resources are not available, many health care organizations have established shared responsibilities between sustainability and supply chain staff.

It may be helpful to build an advisory team of supportive individuals in managerial or leadership roles. The committee becomes a respected team of ambassadors for the sustainable procurement program who can communicate updates to their departments. For best results, work together to formulate a mandate for your group, which may include collecting and sharing information, prioritizing product categories, and supporting implementation and training.



CHAPTER 3: DO

EMBED SUSTAINABILITY IN YOUR PROCUREMENT PROCESSES

In the “do” stage, you can enact a formal mandate for sustainable procurement, create procedures and tools, and provide training that will enable staff to integrate sustainability considerations into relevant processes. Part of the “do” stage is communicating your organization’s sustainability vision to [group purchasing organizations \(GPOs\)](#) and suppliers and engaging them as partners. The second part of the “plan-do-check-act” cycle is about creating simple and easy-to-use resources that offer a standardized, systematic process to build sustainability into procurement.

Summary of “do” steps

1. Create a sustainable procurement policy
2. Learn how health care organizations typically procure goods and services
3. Review the contract work plan
4. Embed sustainability in your procurement processes
5. Engage suppliers
6. Advocate on sustainability to group purchasing organizations
7. Build a culture of sustainable procurement

3.1 Create a sustainable procurement policy

A sustainable procurement policy provides a mandate for sustainable procurement. The directive may be a stand-alone policy or a dedicated section in an organization’s general procurement policy. It is vital for the organization to communicate what is desired and what is required in terms of sustainability outcomes and impacts to all stakeholders. Consider reviewing what others have done and adapting to meet the needs of your own organization. See [Annex 5](#) for Practice Greenhealth’s model sustainable procurement policy.

From defining your organization’s true needs, to setting appropriate technical specifications and evaluation procedures,

to monitoring contract performance and results, a sustainable procurement policy will help by:

- Signaling commitment from the highest levels of an organization
- Providing a consistent approach and common language, which will be appreciated by procurers, users, and suppliers
- Linking sustainable procurement to other organizational goals and policies, as well as important national or local priorities and policies
- Ensuring sustainable procurement is monitored regularly and continuously improved

How can your policy be as effective as possible? Check for the following five features:

1. Communicates the value-based reasons for the policy and links to the organization's mission
2. Outlines the process the organization is committing to and the expected outcomes
3. Identifies which department and leader are responsible for implementing the policy and defines the duties (the program leader should have seniority to implement and coordinate with internal stakeholders and be either a procurement professional or a member of the sustainability staff)
4. Includes a mechanism for monitoring progress and performance
5. Includes how the policy should be communicated and updated over time

HIGHLIGHT: HealthPartners, United States

HealthPartners found their strategy for sustainable procurement in their mission to improve the health and wellbeing of the community. When the sustainability team approached senior supply chain leadership, the business case had been established. "Our CEO talks about sustainability. It's our day-to-day fabric," states Vini Manchanda, supply chain vice president. The mandate has also been established through an environmental procurement policy. With support from the vice president, the 2020 goals, and a clear policy directive, HealthPartners has the traction and accountability to implement sustainable procurement. According to Dana Slade, HealthPartners sustainability programs director, "formalizing the policy, procedures, and processes enables supply chain services to drive their own work."

HIGHLIGHT: Philippine Heart Center

In April 2012, the Green Procurement Team was formed under the supervision of the Eco-Friendly Committee. The Green Procurement Team is composed of representatives from different departments including engineering, housekeeping, infection prevention and control, emergency response, pulmonary medicine, central supply (nursing department), and human resources.

The Green Procurement Team led the institutionalization of a Green Procurement Standard into the Philippine Heart Center Policy Manual in 2012. The policy highlights three important components in the procurement of products and services and is consistent with the national policy for sustainable public procurement. These are product, process, and manufacturer-specific attributes.

Policy guidelines:

1. Green procurement standards shall be applied to all purchases made by the hospital.
2. The green procurement specifications shall be included in the users' specifications or terms of reference.
3. Suppliers shall be informed of the requirements and submit documents of their adherence to purchasing division as the basis of eligibility.
4. The suppliers shall also follow the existing standards of the hospital's procurement process.
5. The user shall strictly adhere to the specifications set by the Green Procurement Team under the Eco-Friendly Committee and duly approved by the hospital director.

HIGHLIGHT: National Health Service England, Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

The Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust's sustainable procurement procedure outlines the following four directives:

- Reduce need, find alternatives, and avoid purchases where possible
- Ensure suppliers operate in an ethical and environmentally sound way
- Ensure products and services purchased have minimal environmental, social, and economic impacts
- Take into account the total cost of ownership or life-cycle cost of the product or service, from acquisition through operations to disposal

HIGHLIGHT: Stockholm Region, Sweden

The Stockholm Region manages the health system for Stockholm County in Sweden. Their vision is to contribute to society's transition to a circular, bio-based economy by striving to purchase products that are sustainable in the long term, with the ultimate aim of minimizing the proportion of waste.

Stockholm has a long history of integrating sustainability into procurement starting in the 1990s with an environmental program adopted by policymakers. In 2004, the first list of hazardous chemicals to be phased-out was developed, and in 2008, a [supplier code of conduct](#) on human rights and environmental conditions were applied to the procurement process.

Charlotta Brask, sustainability director, shares her experience that “Our politicians have decided that we should be a leading player in Europe when it comes to sustainable public procurement. It is important to have clear and ambitious directives from policymakers, coupled with resources and tools to execute the needed actions.” Because of this support, performance indicators on sustainability are now embedded in the council's budget.

In your organizational self-assessment (see [Section 2.1](#)), you may have uncovered policy language on sustainable or environmentally preferred procurement. Sustainable procurement has evolved considerably over the last two decades, so it may be time to review and refresh your policy to make it reflective of your organization's current strategy and action plan. See the [learn more webpage](#) for resources.

3.2 Understand how health care organizations typically procure goods and services

If you are a sustainability professional, the procurement process may be new and unfamiliar. This section will help you learn more about who is involved in procurement, how procurement works, and some of the various processes you are likely to encounter.

In most hospitals and health systems, procurement can be characterized in three main ways:

- **Centralized or decentralized procurement structure:** Hospitals use a centralized or decentralized procurement structure (or a hybrid of both) that typically sets the agenda for medium and sometimes high-value contracts for medical and non-medical products and services. Ordering is performed by designated hospital staff or buyers using “catalogs” or [item files](#) that reflect authorized vendor contracts. These activities interface with materials management teams that oversee receipt, storage, and distribution of products. Many hospitals also use automated ordering systems for clinical areas, such as nursing units and operating rooms, that will generate orders based on “[par level](#)” established for many medical/surgical products. It's important to know which type of procurement structure your organization uses.
- **Group purchasing organizations:** A GPO leverages the purchasing power of a group to obtain discounts from vendors. In the United States, GPOs are used by more than 95% of hospitals and acute-care organizations, with participation by nonprofit community clinics and health centers as well. A GPO creates high-volume contracts with limited vendors in exchange for pricing advantages. Member hospitals access these contracts for procurement activities and are usually required to maintain a certain percentage of compliance in order to obtain advantaged pricing.

- **Local contract managers:** Some hospitals have staff to manage contract terms, conditions, and payments and do not lead or perform procurement. Contract managers develop custom contracts for high-dollar clinical products (such as implantable devices), capital equipment, and key outsourced services (such as food service and waste management). They also use standard language to develop local, low-dollar contracts for limited services and non-medical products. These staff have an important role in contract compliance. In a centralized structure, they may report up through a structured team that handles a specific contract category. A local contract manager may play more of a leadership role in a decentralized structure.

This section will focus on how sustainability can be embedded in a competitive bidding process, [tender](#) or request for proposal (RFP). These documents allow you to make a best-value selection based on multiple criteria, such as innovation, design, price, quality, service, and sustainability.

There are several other types of procurement processes you may encounter:

- **Single (sole) or multiple sourcing strategy:** This strategy seeks quotes to find the desired product or service at the lowest cost and will award the contract to one (sole source) or more than one supplier. The selection of more than one source helps minimize supply risk.
- **Requests for information (RFI):** An RFI is a solicitation for written information about various suppliers' capabilities to determine a procurement approach. It follows a format that can be used for comparative purposes. RFIs can be a great tool for engaging with suppliers on sustainability (see [Section 3.5](#) for more).
- **Request for quote (RFQ):** This is a document used to solicit vendor responses when a product has been selected and price quotes are needed from several vendors.
- **Request for proposal (RFP):** An RFP is a solicitation seeking proposals from interested or eligible suppliers. An RFP or tender or bidding document consists of the terms and conditions of the procurement along with technical specifications or questions for the category or service. These proposals provide the best opportunity to specify sustainability criteria.

- **RFX:** This refers to the different types of requests: requests for information, requests for quotes, and requests for proposal.
- **Contract renewals and long-term agreements:** Once contract agreements reach the end of their term, they may be extended or renewed instead of rebid or retendered as an RFP. For this reason, staying on top of the procurement or contracting pipeline is essential to embedding sustainable procurement (see [Section 3.3](#) for more).

3.3 Review the contract work plan

Contracts with vendors are negotiated for specified time periods. The most effective time to embed sustainability into procurement is when a product category comes up for renegotiation or revision. Procurement teams maintain a tool called the contract work plan, which can be made more actionable by including important dates and milestones for each procurement category. These may include expiration dates, data system integrations, supplier business/contract review meetings, and monitoring and reporting timelines.

A key opportunity for the sustainability professional is to evaluate the contracting pipeline to identify priority products or services for sustainable procurement. A great way to get started is by looking for items that align with your sustainable procurement strategy and action plan (see [Section 2.3](#) and [Section 2.4](#) for more), as well as departments that are actively engaged in the sustainable procurement program.

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHT: Sutter Health

Sutter Health's Chemicals Advisory Committee narrowed down contracts to prioritize by reviewing the work plan and speaking with supply chain representatives to assess timelines, milestones, and opportunities. The committee identified four contracts to prioritize and requested environmental criteria for each. The committee included internal and external technical expertise, such as from nonprofit organizations.

TABLE 5: SAMPLE CONTRACT WORK PLAN OR CALENDAR

CONTRACT NAME & NUMBER	CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	EXPIRY DATE	CONTRACT STRATEGY	SOURCING MANAGER	ANNUAL SPEND
Surgical custom packs	Custom packs of surgical supplies used for general surgery	12 months	Contract rebid	Howard J.	\$3.4M
Hand soaps	Non-sanitizer, non-surgical hand soaps	15 months	Contract rebid (strategic sourcing category)	Shantel W.	\$1.2M
Office supplies	Complete inventory of office and breakroom supplies	15 months	Contract extension	Noor T.	\$2.7M
NICU/PICU warming beds	Beds and accessories	9 months	Contract extension	Doug G.	\$400K
Disposable gowns	Isolation and general disposable patient gowns	2 months	Contract rebid (strategic sourcing category)		\$375K
Blood pressure cuffs	Disposable and reusable cuffs, all sizes	12 months	Contract extension		\$300K
Print services	Print management supplies for outsourced projects	6 months	Contract extension		\$1.3M

In the work plan in [Table 5](#), the best candidates for sustainable procurement are surgical custom packs and hand soaps. These two contracts are set to go out for bid (as opposed to a contract extension), allowing an opportunity to add sustainability criteria, and there is plenty of time (ideally at least 12 months) before expiration to embed sustainability in the process. The disposable gowns contract would have been a good candidate if discovered eight to 10 months earlier, but with contract expiration two months away the procurement process is likely almost complete. Depending on the length of the disposable gown contract, it may be time to discuss moving away from disposables and towards reusables.

It can be difficult but not impossible to advance sustainable procurement goals for products and services set for a contract extension. This can be used as leverage with an incumbent supplier. You may be able to ask for more sustainable product offerings, packaging improvements, bulk shipping, and better sustainability data and reporting. If the product is on your organization's high-impact procurement list, ask leadership to negotiate a short extension and put the contract on the [strategic sourcing](#) list to be rebid as soon as practical. Consider adding a column in the contract work plan to identify the high-level sustainability or environmental focus for that item (for example, chemicals of concern, energy use, packaging).

3.4 Embed sustainability in your procurement processes

The ultimate goal of embedding sustainability into procurement is ensuring your organization makes more sustainable choices more often. Your sustainability strategy and high-opportunity procurement list have clarified what factors and categories are most relevant. Now you need to determine what factors are essential to each individual purchase and how to ensure your process sends clear signals to prospective suppliers. You also want to reward proposals that offer the desired sustainability value.

This section will guide you through standard operating procedures for building sustainability into various stages of a procurement cycle using a framework adapted with permission from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This framework has three main stages:

1. Pre-purchasing
2. Purchasing
3. Post-purchasing

Each of these three stages contains several steps, which are illustrated in [Table 6](#).

TABLE 6: FRAMEWORK FOR EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY IN A TYPICAL PROCUREMENT CYCLE

STAGE	STEPS	SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS
PRE-PURCHASING	1. Identify the need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve sustainability leader • Explore more sustainable ways of addressing the need. • Ask “Is this necessary?” “Does this support sustainable procurement goals?”
	2. Identify sustainability criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Practice Greenhealth or Health Care Without Harm’s existing criteria • Use third-party labels and sustainability certifications • Use standardized environmental criteria for prioritized categories • Conduct your own research and craft your own sustainability criteria • Refer to Section 3.4.1 and Annex 7 on how to assess sustainability impacts
	3. Identify sustainable options available on the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct market research • Be cautious of misleading claims, greenwashing, or harmful product substitutions (refer to the learn more webpage)
	4. Develop request for proposal/tender specifications and build additional sustainability questions into the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine what criteria are mandatory or optional/desirable • Ask about product sustainability performance criteria • Consider how responses will be evaluated • Consider if/how responses can be verified • Ask about corporate sustainability performance and other initiatives • Communicate with suppliers to assess their level of awareness and engagement with labor standards on ethical procurement (refer to Ethical Procurement in Health on the learn more webpage); ask about actions taken to mitigate risks and tackle issues
	5. Select a sourcing strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which procurement process to use based on market readiness to deliver on sustainability specifications (refer to Section 3.2)
PURCHASING	6. Evaluate proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weigh and score responses to sustainability criteria and other sustainability information (refer to Section 3.4.2)
	7. Pilot products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure new products and/or solutions meet user needs
	8. Verify supplier responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify sustainability performance • Verify claims; be cautious of misleading claims
POST-PURCHASING	9. Review, finalize and award the contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write sustainability criteria into the contract • Write requirements to measure success into the contract; ensure product labeling in catalogs for users to able to identify products (refer to Section 3.4.3)
	10. Contract management and renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include sustainability performance in business reviews

Let's walk through each of these stages and steps in the following sections and how they can support the adoption of sustainable procurement as a standard operating procedure.

3.4.1 PRE-PURCHASING

The best time to influence sustainability is in the pre-purchasing stage, where you can exercise the most creativity to consider new solutions and innovative ideas. Your most important action in this stage is to ensure a sustainability champion is involved or provides input to the RFP, tender, standard, procurement, or value analysis team. In most cases, establishing this team will be the responsibility of the procurement manager. Your role as a sustainability champion is to advise the procurement manager to include allies and experts as team members, if appropriate.

There are five steps to considering sustainability in the pre-purchasing stage:

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE NEED

STEP 2: IDENTIFY SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA

STEP 3: IDENTIFY SUSTAINABLE OPTIONS AVAILABLE ON THE MARKET

STEP 4: DEVELOP REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL/ TENDER SPECIFICATIONS AND BUILD ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABILITY QUESTIONS INTO THE PROPOSAL

STEP 5: SELECT A SOURCING STRATEGY

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE NEED

It is common for individuals and organizations to restock familiar items or renew existing service arrangements without considering the needs these goods and services meet. Sustainable procurement may involve restocking a familiar item that has additional sustainability features, but it may also involve looking creatively at other ways the need could be met.

Some questions to consider:

- **Is this purchase necessary?** The most sustainable purchase can be one you don't make. You may be able to extend the lifespan of your current assets or have them repaired, refurbished, or reprocessed instead of replaced. It can be a bonus to your organization if the repair supports enterprise and employment in your community. Less consumption uses less raw materials and resources.

“Every purchase – every product or service bought – has some impact on the environment, the economy, and on people.”

— David McCombs, supply chain executive

High-efficiency sterilization equipment

Many central sterilization and processing departments have transitioned to high-efficiency sterilization equipment and now use steam instead of ethylene oxide as a sterilizing agent. The World Health Organization and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency warn that ethylene oxide is a carcinogen. Replacing ethylene oxide with steam reduces worker exposure to harmful chemicals. Steam sterilization ([autoclaving](#)) is an economic and excellent method of sterilizing the instruments that are not heat sensitive. Sterilization and processing departments report that these changes have saved on operating expenses.

- **Can we reduce the amount of the order?** What is the minimum amount necessary to meet your needs? Right-size your order to reduce your energy and material footprint and eliminate waste. An example of right-sizing is to revisit surgical kits to ensure they contain only needed materials. Practice Greenhealth member hospitals save an average of \$9,500 for each operating room by [reformulating existing surgical kits](#).

Life cycle cost and total cost of ownership

Sustainability not only helps you obtain the best value, it can also help you save money, especially if you consider the total cost of owning a product. This approach addresses tangible financial costs to your organization over a product's life cycle, including a wider spectrum of costs. Practice Greenhealth provides a publicly available [cost of ownership calculator](#) to support this evaluation.

This framing considers potential costs involved in the acquisition of a good or service through its useful life. It looks at the purchase price and hidden costs associated with a product, such as energy, water, repair and maintenance, storage, and disposal (including hazardous or solid waste). Through this approach, options can be compared to identify the most cost-effective product.

In some cases, a quick total cost of ownership analysis may reveal you are better off leasing or contracting with a service provider rather than purchasing the product.

To conduct this analysis, enlist the support of a finance or procurement colleague to gather and analyze the needed information. Available data will likely come from suppliers, product literature, and facility service departments. In procurement documents to suppliers, you can request the necessary data to determine [life cycle costs](#) or total costs of ownership.

- **Are there benefits to purchasing a service instead of a good?** You may find that a service provider is able to meet your needs more sustainably (and often at a lower cost) than purchasing and maintaining a product. Examples include the use and maintenance of reusable sharps containers and single-use device reprocessing. Maintenance can be handled by a service provider, which can be more cost-effective than disposing products that can be reused safely. By choosing services, you can ensure products are maintained optimally and that the manufacturer is responsible for product end of life, recycling, and disposal. To evaluate cost considerations and identify savings, look at the total cost of ownership, including acquisition, use, and waste.

At this stage (identifying the need), the procurement or value analysis team will seek to answer some key questions (illustrated using a hand soap contract):

- **What is in scope for this contract and what will not be addressed?** For example, is the contract solely for general hand soaps located in public bathrooms, nursing stations, and patient rooms? Does the contract include hand hygiene products for clinical areas?
- **What are the current and future institutional goals for this product category?** For example, a hospital's infection prevention team may receive frequent complaints about existing hand soaps causing skin irritations. Sustainability staff may know of healthier hand soap options to share with the infection prevention team. Through an identified initiative, the team can set clear goals on how to make improvements in this category. Alignment with institutional strategic priorities can advance sustainability goals.
- **What does the institution need from this category and what would be nice to have?** Through detailed discussion of the need for hand soap, the procurement team may decide that reducing consumption is not feasible. However, selecting products with safer chemicals may be desirable if the soap meets all infection prevention efficacy requirements.

HIGHLIGHTS: Total cost of ownership

At **Fundación Valle del Lili** in Cali, Colombia, staff changed the masks used to administer anesthesia during surgery from a disposable variety made of polyvinyl chloride to reusable masks made of silicone. The decision was based on a policy of replacing single-use products with reusable ones, but the hospital received additional benefits including cost savings and the use of less toxic material. PVC is hazardous throughout its life cycle from manufacture, to use, and disposal. The hospital compared the price of the two products, the cost of sterilization, and expected lifespan for the reusable masks. While the initial price of the reusable mask was more than 10 times the price of the disposable mask, after factoring in the number of expected uses, the results demonstrate a cost savings of \$2.52 per mask or 21% savings.

Cleveland Clinic assessed the costs associated with compact fluorescent light (CFL) surgical fixtures versus light-emitting diode (LED) surgical fixtures, focusing on total cost of ownership instead of acquisition costs. In the assessment, the acquisition cost of the CFL was \$83 and the LED was \$122 (not actual prices cited). But after calculating total cost of ownership over 20 years, including operational costs (energy use, replacing light bulbs) and disposal costs, the LED fixture would cost 25% less. The lifetime of the CFL fixture is 10 years lower than the lifetime of the LED fixture. While the purchase price of a CFL fixture was less, the total cost of ownership for a CFL fixture was more than the LED, justifying the purchase of LED fixtures.

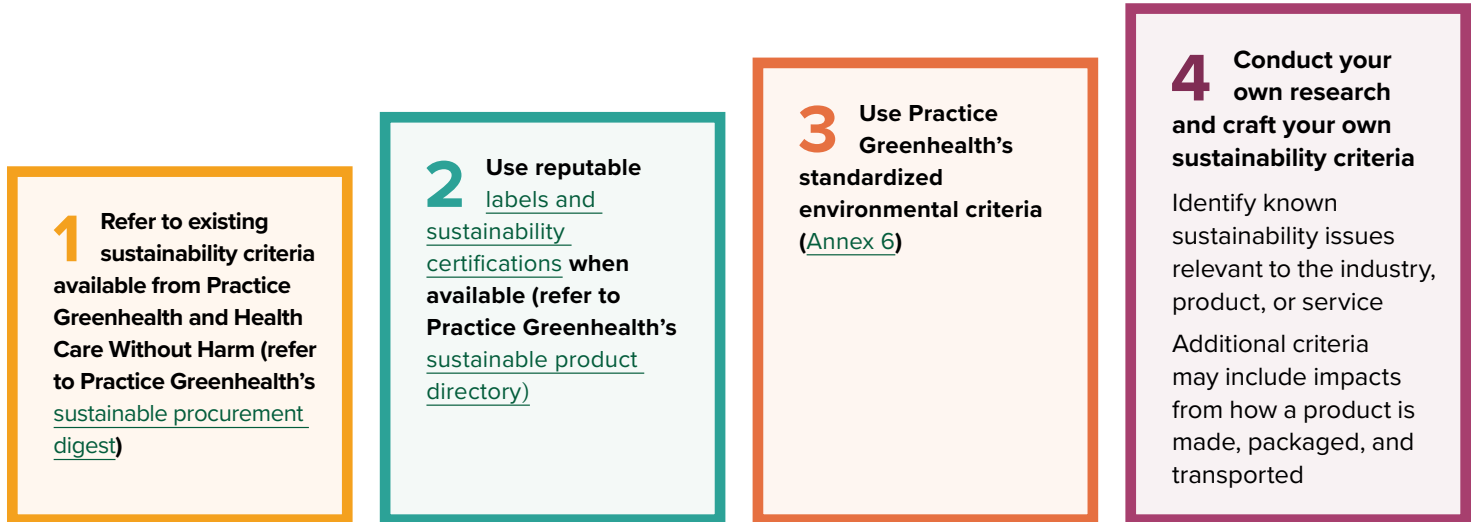
Dana Farber Cancer Institute used [Practice Greenhealth's cost of ownership calculator](#) to compare -80°C laboratory freezers: an energy-efficient freezer and several traditional freezers. While the traditional freezers had a lower purchase price, a total cost of ownership assessment identified that the energy-efficient lab freezer would save money over the product's life cycle.

“For hospitals purchasing equipment that uses resources, the calculator will provide them with the true cost of the device over its lifespan.”

— Dana Farber Cancer Institute

In the hand soap example, the team may decide on three goals: 1) finding a healthier hand soap that does not contain chemicals of concern that cause skin irritations, 2) creating a simplified change-out system for environmental services, and 3) meeting the needs of users for infection prevention.

FIGURE 6: PROTOCOL FOR IDENTIFYING SUSTAINABILITY OR ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA (PRACTICE GREENHEALTH)

**STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA**

We recommend following a four-step protocol, illustrated in [Figure 6](#), to take optimum advantage of existing sustainability expertise and to minimize your own level of effort:

Use existing sustainability criteria from Practice Greenhealth and Health Care Without Harm

Sustainability criteria are available from Practice Greenhealth and Health Care Without Harm for several health care products and services (refer to the [learn more webpage](#)). The criteria can be used in RFPs or tenders to identify sustainability attributes for each category of goods and services your program targets. Utilizing a common set of criteria shared by other health care organizations tells suppliers there is a business case to produce sustainable products to meet market demand. It also educates suppliers on key issues in order to respond to RFPs or tenders with accurate data.

Use third-party labels and sustainability certifications

Third-party labels are voluntary initiatives demonstrating the environmental and sustainable qualities of products. Although many focus exclusively on environmental impacts, an increasing number include ethical and social standards that relate to decent working conditions, worker health and safety, and fair market return on labor. Some identify businesses that are responsive to their stakeholders and communities and are striving to be good corporate citizens. Labels vary in quality and thoroughness. Practice Greenhealth and Health Care Without Harm seek to identify the strongest labels and criteria to protect health.

The [International Standards Organization \(ISO\)](#) classifies voluntary labeling into three types. While all of the labels may be useful to review, ISO type I ecolabels are considered to be the strongest for procurement purposes because they take into account all adverse environmental impacts of a

product throughout its life cycle and are awarded only after an independent process of verification.

Helpful resources include the [Ecolabel Index](#), which tracks more than 450 labels in nearly 200 countries and 25 industry sectors, and the [Global Ecolabelling Network](#), which lists labels by products and service categories in several countries. Most major labels maintain a website that provides technical information on the standards a product must meet to qualify and requirements on maintaining certification. Some provide proof of compliance with the standards. Refer to the Practice Greenhealth website for a list of where to find sustainable products and services and [recommended labels](#) specific to the health care sector.

Use standardized environmental criteria

Many credible resources with environmental criteria on health care goods and services take minimal effort to find and use. Begin by checking Practice Greenhealth's standardized environmental criteria (see [Annex 6](#)). Based on Kaiser Permanente's 2017 environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) standard (see highlight and [Table 7](#)), the standardized environmental criteria identify key purchasing process criteria to select products with a reduced impact on human health and the environment. The criteria are aligned with Kaiser Permanente's EPP standard with minor differences in nomenclature.

Refer also to Practice Greenhealth's [sustainable procurement directory](#). This resource has specifications, standards, environmental criteria for RFPs/RFIs, and metrics applicable to more than 120 medical and non-medical products and services health care organizations can target for sustainable procurement. The resource references many reputable labels and sustainability specifications.

Health care organizations also create their own internal lists of priority sustainability criteria. Check to see if your organization

TABLE 7: KAISER PERMANENTE’S ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING STANDARD

KAISER PERMANENTE’S ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING STANDARD

Products must meet all 11 of the following EPP chemicals of concern criteria and at least two of the waste criteria.

CHEMICALS OF CONCERN CRITERIA: PRODUCT DOES NOT CONTAIN	WASTE CRITERIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union restriction of hazardous substances directive (electronics) • Bisphenol A (BPA) • Bromine and chlorine-based compounds • Phthalates • Prop 65 chemicals • Polyvinyl chloride • Antimicrobial and antibacterial agents • Persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic chemicals • Non-halogenated flame retardants • Metals (mercury, lead, cadmium, or organotin compounds) • Perfluorinated chemicals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not create a hazardous waste product • 10% or more post-consumer recycled content product • Product is recyclable • Primary packaging contains more than 10% post-consumer recycled content • Secondary packaging contains more than 30% post-consumer recycled content • Packaging has received Forest Stewardship Council certification • Packaging is labeled with consumer-friendly recycling information • Packaging is recyclable

maintains such a list. You may also find the lists of peer organizations useful. See [Table 7](#) in the highlight about Kaiser Permanente’s environmental criteria, which are embedded in their EPP standard.

Research and craft your sustainability specifications

For many procurements, there may be no sustainability specification, standard, or label available. Begin with a rapid scan for any known sustainability issues relevant to the industry, product, or service you are investigating. Practice Greenhealth and Health Care Without Harm offer many resources to support this research (refer to the [learn more webpage](#)).

Civil society, nonprofit organizations, and industry leadership coalitions have raised broad-based awareness on industry-specific sustainability issues, such as plastic utensils clogging landfills and oceans, clothing and textiles produced in sweatshops, and deforestation accelerated by reliance on virgin wood and paper products. In addition to these more easily flagged issues, you may find it helpful to learn about sustainability issues relevant to your purchases and speak with end-users or sustainability experts within your organization.

For example, only 9% of plastic is collected for recycling globally. By 2050, oceans could contain more plastics than fish (by weight). Health Care Without Harm’s [plastics toolkit for hospitals](#) was developed to help the health care sector confront plastic pollution, change the narrative, and introduce solutions.

Experienced sustainable procurement practitioners focus additional research on what the product is made of and how it is packaged, which makes identifying environmental considerations easier. You may find it helpful to review environmental, social, and economic considerations (see [Figure 3](#) in Chapter 1). See [Annex 7](#) for a checklist to help create your own profile of the environmental impacts.

When summarizing your research from step 2, consider the following best practices:

- Reference peer-reviewed, independent science and research for credibility
- Reference the approaches of reputable, respected peer institutions (including nonprofits) and professionals
- Request suppliers provide scientific proof to validate sustainable marketing claims
- Understand and share environmental, social, and economic tradeoffs
- Admit what is not known

Your research profile will help you identify products and services available on the market and work with your sustainability and procurement team to develop requests for proposal specifications.

HIGHLIGHT: Kaiser Permanente

As part of its 2025 environmental stewardship goals, Kaiser Permanente aims to purchase 50% of products and materials that meet its environmentally preferable purchasing standards. This required the organization to identify appropriate standards to utilize in sourcing processes. When available, Kaiser Permanente uses credible, transparent third-party environmental certifications or standards, such as Green Seal (GS-37) for cleaning products and the Green Electronics Council's electronic product environmental assessment tool (EPEAT) registry for computers and electronic equipment. A lack of applicable certifications for medical products prompted Kaiser Permanente to develop an "overarching" environmentally preferable purchasing standard to apply to this category. This standard details specific environmental criteria in the areas of chemicals and waste. In purchasing decisions, these criteria are evaluated in addition to other criteria such as quality, efficacy, assurance of supply, and outcomes.

According to Joel Sigler, national environmental health and safety director, "Kaiser Permanente wants to drive the end result: to improve health. Reducing chemicals of concern has a positive impact on communities. This aligns with our organization's mission to improve health."

STEP 3: IDENTIFY SUSTAINABLE OPTIONS AVAILABLE ON THE MARKET

This step involves assessing sustainable products and services available on the market that meet the primary function and technical requirements. You will compare what you learn from the market with existing standards, labels, and your own research. Most likely you will not be able to address every sustainability consideration in your purchase, and some tradeoffs may be needed. Success is feeling confident that your purchase meets your sustainability priorities.

You can also ask current and prospective suppliers to provide additional information to help assess impacts. Refer to [Annex 6](#) for environmental criteria to ask of suppliers.

Be cautious of misleading claims, "[greenwashing](#)," or harmful product substitutions. Greenwashing is the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service. If a company makes a sustainability claim, ask for scientific proof. They should be able to substantiate their claims with supporting information or a reliable third-party certification (see step 2 in this section). Reputable suppliers should meet standards for environmental claims in the Federal Trade Commission's [green guide](#).

Be aware of the potential for harmful product substitutions. In many cases, a specific chemical of concern is replaced with another dangerous chemical, commonly called a regrettable substitution. The public's reaction to bisphenol A (BPA), a hormone-disrupting chemical of concern, in baby and water bottles is one example. Some manufacturers replaced BPA in metal food cans with bisphenol S, which is equally toxic to the developing brain and immune systems of children. One way to avoid regrettable substitution is to target classes of chemicals, such as bisphenols. (Refer to the [learn more webpage](#) for additional resources.)

STEP 4: DEVELOP REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL SPECIFICATIONS AND BUILD ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABILITY QUESTIONS INTO THE PROPOSAL

Once you have identified sustainability criteria, note these as specifications for your purchase. Likewise, document features that add value, such as renewable energy, a program to recycle packaging, or full transparency on chemicals of concern. These may be mandatory or optional/desirable criteria or specifications that allow suppliers to earn additional points for their proposal. Distinguish between the sustainability performance of the product and the supplier. For example, energy efficiency may be a desired attribute of the product, while commitments to low-carbon modes of transportation may be a desired attribute of the supplier.

Criteria or specifications need to be written in a manner that elicits clear and quantitative responses. Many health care organizations prefer to utilize RFP criteria or questions, such as, “Is the product Green Seal certified?” Questions with a yes or no response are easier to assess. Avoid open-ended questions that may lead to vague environmental claims, such as “Do you provide sustainable products?” This question does not define what you are looking for and will be difficult to score.

It is also important to consider how supplier responses to questions will be verified. Where labels are referenced, it is often easier to prove that products or services meet sustainability standards. For example, Practice Greenhealth’s healthy interiors guidance outlines the requirements for each criteria. You may also find it helpful to refer to resources in the [learn more webpage](#).

In addition to sustainable RFP specifications, you can use other tools to collect sustainability performance information in proposals. You may want to consider asking questions about:

- Corporate sustainability performance, rating or certification
- Other sustainability initiatives or commitments
- Awareness of labor issues on ethical procurement and what actions have been taken to mitigate risks

Many companies have supplier or vendor codes of conduct that specify minimum standards for fair and decent labor set by the [International Labour Organization](#) or [Fair Labour Association](#) (for example, refer to the [UN Global Compact](#)). (For more information, see the discussion on the social dimension of sustainable procurement in [Chapter 1](#) and refer to the Ethical Procurement Guide on the [learn more webpage](#)).

Community benefit criteria are commonly used to fulfill social and economic dimensions of sustainable procurement (refer to [Chapter 1](#) for an overview). Suppliers can help build community capital and reduce poverty by:

- Creating training and work opportunities for people with barriers to employment, such as physical or mental disabilities
- Sourcing from local businesses and building the local economy
- Shifting to locally sourced products (such as food)
- Sponsoring community assets and resources, and
- Sourcing from social enterprises, cooperatives, or social purpose businesses that reinvest profits towards their social mission

For criteria on community benefits, check out the resources in the [learn more webpage](#) (refer to the Democracy Collaborative and the Healthcare Anchor Network) for further information.

STEP 5: SELECT A SOURCING STRATEGY

A sourcing strategy can be as simple as a direct purchase, one procurement process (see [Section 3.2](#) for various types of procurement processes), or a multi-stage process with multiple considerations. Here are a few examples of sourcing strategies that can help you obtain the best value by integrating sustainability:

- Choose to refurbish or repair existing goods rather than purchasing replacements.
- Issue a request for information to learn which prospective suppliers have the capacity to deliver on new requirements, including sustainability specifications.
- Incorporate new sustainability requirements (such as [labels or certifications](#)) as an optional or desirable specification that enables prospective suppliers to earn additional points on their proposals, and state in the bid this requirement will eventually become mandatory.
- When there is a critical mass of suppliers that can deliver on the sustainability specification, make the specification mandatory.
- Unbundle a large procurement into smaller contracts or multiple lots if you see an opportunity that may be suitable for local or social purpose suppliers, or negotiate potential subcontracts as part of your agreement with a larger prime contractor.
- Solicit bids from targeted local or social purpose suppliers. Be proactive in finding suppliers to bid on RFPs and reach out to them directly. Let them know that you evaluate bids using a sustainable procurement framework.
- Negotiate with suppliers to achieve desired sustainability criteria or requirements during the contract period. This means including specific terms and conditions in the contract.

These are only a few examples. We recommend that you learn from peer organizations and engage with suppliers to make the most of procurement processes.

3.4.2 PURCHASING

In the purchasing stage, you can communicate your sustainability performance expectations to the marketplace. Desired and required sustainability criteria or specifications will encourage prospective suppliers to tell you about the sustainability performance of their organization and their products and services.

There are three steps to considering sustainability in the purchasing stage:

- STEP 6: EVALUATE PROPOSALS**
- STEP 7: PILOT PRODUCTS**
- STEP 8: VERIFY SUPPLIER RESPONSES**

STEP 6: EVALUATE THE SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE OF PROPOSALS

Build sustainability into your scoring system to ensure the value sustainability adds is recognized with points. Your team can score each answer from a vendor’s line-item responses and rank each vendor based on your established criteria. For example, if three carpet manufacturers acknowledged at the stock-keeping unit level their product contains at least 10% [post-consumer recycled material](#), for the dozens of line-item products each vendor has available, the differentiator is the number of “yes” answers. One option is to calculate the percentage of “yes” answers to determine the highest-ranked vendor on that criteria (see [Figure 7](#)).

The procurement team will decide how each criterion will be weighted to prepare for final scoring. Each category may be weighted and scored differently, depending on its importance compared to other criteria. For example, given occupational health and safety concerns, sustainability criteria may be given a higher weighting in janitorial cleaners procurement than for nurse call systems.

See [Figure 8](#) for a scoring system that provides a weighting to sustainability performance.

In [Figure 8](#), each of the three sustainability questions is given a weighting of 15%. Scores, vendor responses, and questions would be modified to reflect the specifics of each contract category. Depending on the contract and impact on patient health and safety, adjust the points for sustainability accordingly. For example, if the product comes in contact with patients and may expose them to chemicals of concern, sustainability criteria may have a higher weight. When scoring suppliers and products, indicate the proportion that is most relevant to each purchase. Be sure to document your analysis to communicate the results and impacts of your purchase to your team. Final supplier selection will likely be a group discussion and require a thorough evaluation of all weighting and scoring.

FIGURE 7: SAMPLE SCORING OF SUSTAINABILITY RESPONSES (PRACTICE GREENHEALTH)

	QUESTION	SUPPLIER A	SUPPLIER B	SUPPLIER C
#1	Contains at least 10% Post-Consumer Recycled Content? Y/N (at least one yes?)	Yes	Yes	Yes
	#Yes	6	285	69
	#No	86	177	275
	%Yes	7.53%	61.68%	20.06%

STEP 7: PILOT PRODUCTS

Before entering into a contract, it is important to enable future users of the pilot products and verify that they align with user needs. Users must be confident that their medical or non-medical equipment allows them to deliver the best and safest care possible. Well-designed, blind, and fair product testing should take place to address any concerns about using new and less-familiar products or devices.

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHT: University of Maryland Medical Center

When evaluating expanded polystyrene alternatives, the University of Maryland Medical Center engaged users from various areas of the hospital. They relied on feedback from users to determine whether proposed options met their needs (in this case, minimal “sweat,” durability, and insulation). They found a cup that not only met these needs but also their sustainable procurement goal for a product that could be recycled after use.

FIGURE 8: SAMPLE SCORING SYSTEM WITH A WEIGHTING TO SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE (PRACTICE GREENHEALTH)

SECTION	QUESTION NUMBER	CATEGORY	QUESTION TEXT	VENDOR A RESPONSE	VENDOR B RESPONSE	VENDOR A SCORE	VENDOR B SCORE	WEIGHT	VENDOR A SCORE	VENDOR B SCORE
Section 1	1.1	Sustainability	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	2	0	15	30	0
Section 1	1.2	Sustainability	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	2	0	15	30	0
Section 1	1.3	Sustainability	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	2	0	15	30	0
Section 2	2.1	Pricing	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	0	2	5	0	10
Section 2	2.2	Pricing	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	0	2	5	0	10
Section 3	2.3	Pricing	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	0	2	5	0	10
Section 3	3.1	Clinical Acceptance	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	2	2	10	20	20
Section 3	3.2	Clinical Acceptance	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	2	2	10	20	20
Section 3	3.3	Clinical Acceptance	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	2	2	10	20	20
Section 3	3.4	Clinical Acceptance	Question Text	Reply Text	Reply Text	2	2	10	20	20
TOTAL SCORE									170	110
Total Points Available						20	Score as %	85.0%	55.0%	

STEP 8: VERIFY SUPPLIER RESPONSES

You may need to verify a supplier’s claims about the sustainability performance of their products and services and any claims about organizational sustainability performance. Be cautious of misleading claims, “greenwashing,” or harmful product substitutions (see discussion in step 3). A good first step is to request supporting documents (including scientific proof to support any environmental claims) with their proposal or before contracting. In some cases, a site visit or follow-up inquiry may be needed.

State of California restricts use of “biodegradable” claims

The state of California restricts the use of “biodegradable,” “compostable,” and related claims on all plastic products to ensure accurate consumer information and prevent litter. The wording implies the product will break down in a landfill or other environment. Unless the product meets [specified standards](#) and is substantiated by competent and reliable scientific evidence, the claim cannot be made. The law requires clear scientific evidence for environmental claims, noting biodegradation is a complex process dependent on physical and chemical structure, environmental conditions, and time. The state [sued plastic water bottle companies](#) over misleading claims of biodegradability.

3.4.3 POST-PURCHASING

In the post-purchasing stage, your organization ensures that sustainability requirements and commitments are captured in contracts to ensure sustainability performance is delivered.

There are two steps to considering sustainability in the post-purchasing stage:

STEP 9: REVIEW AND AWARD (WRITE SUSTAINABILITY INTO THE CONTRACT)

STEP 10: CONTRACT MANAGEMENT (INCLUDING BUSINESS REVIEWS) AND CONTRACT RENEWAL

STEP 9: REVIEW AND AWARD (WRITE SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE INTO THE CONTRACT)

The final step in the purchasing cycle is to ensure the sustainability benefits expressed in the proposal translate to a deliverable captured in the contract. This could mean adding a clause that refers back to the RFP or RFI or through an exhibit document. Make sure there are agreed-upon units of measurement and timelines for progress on sustainability requirements and that your organization will receive regular spend data reports based on the criteria defined in the contract. This will provide a structure for ongoing contract management and can lead to deeper engagement on sustainability challenges and opportunities.

In some cases, it may not be possible for your preferred supplier to meet your sustainability requirements, though they are committed to doing so. You may wish to write terms into the contract that the supplier develops a plan and meets the requirement in a specified period of time. For best results, include terms that encourage vendors to share sustainability performance data at regular intervals, such as business review meetings where vendors report on progress or where more collaboration is needed to reach targeted spending levels. This will help you monitor and evaluate sustainability outcomes and impacts at the procurement and program levels (refer to [Section 4.3](#) for more).

STEP 10: CONTRACT MANAGEMENT AND CONTRACT RENEWAL

Sustainability performance should be discussed at regular business review meetings and grounded in contract terms based on sustainability criteria in bidding documents and proposals.

Consider the following best practices for your vendor business review meeting:

- Consider applying a scoring methodology to the sustainability section that is similar to all other sections. Base the score on the vendor's progress in meeting the established goals, metrics, performance indicators, expectations identified during negotiation, and executed contract.
- Send sustainability questions to the vendor in advance of the business review meeting, such as "What did we spend last quarter on sustainable products?"
- Request a report on progress meeting established sustainability goals prior to the meeting.
- Ensure a person from the sustainability team is invited to the meeting.
- Use the review time to understand the sustainability impact and challenges, and collaborate on how both parties can support each other to achieve the goals of the next phase of activity.

An effective business review meeting should end with clarification on expectations and a workable plan for achieving them. In addition to the focus on compliance, consider these meetings an opportunity to leverage your supplier's specialized knowledge and experience (see [Section 3.5](#) for more). Discuss challenges with the adoption of the products or services and whether sustainability outcomes are as expected. Suppliers may be willing to invest in activities that support behavior change, such as program coordination, training, and communication tactics to educate users. In these conversations, you may learn about the supplier's research and development and new innovations in the sector more broadly.

3.5 Engage suppliers

Engaging suppliers on sustainability is a powerful way to deepen your impact. Once you are ready to begin procurement, start by developing a supplier engagement strategy and specific goals for each stage of the process: pre-purchasing, purchasing, and post-purchasing.

PRE-PURCHASING

Engagement begins with communicating your sustainable procurement strategy to prospective and current suppliers and inviting them to work with you to achieve your goals. Consider the following engagement tactics:

- **Supplier meetings or events:** If you are embedding a sustainability requirement into your process that is more innovative, comprehensive, or in-depth than others the health care marketplace has seen, consider hosting an engagement opportunity to orient, train, and support suppliers in responding as accurately and effectively as possible. Small and medium-sized businesses may require extra support. It is in your organization's best interest to ensure suppliers understand and participate equitably and fully in a competitive bidding process.
- **Consider combining purchasing power:** You can utilize your GPO or other groups of health care organizations to demonstrate collective purchasing power.

HIGHLIGHT: Engaging suppliers through an international suppliers forum

Together with UN Development Programme (UNDP), Health Care Without Harm organized a sustainable suppliers forum in 2019 in Africa to set standards and engage suppliers about integrating sustainability into their production and distribution. Two suppliers of health care waste treatment technologies shared how they met sustainability criteria for RFPs established by UNDP, Health Care Without Harm, and World Health Organization in four African countries. During the African regional suppliers forum, the medical stores department of the Ministry of Health in Tanzania announced an agreement to provide pooled procurement for the Southern Africa Development Community for 15 countries that will incorporate sustainability into procurement.

Practice Greenhealth's market transformation group brings together member hospitals and health systems to drive change in the supply chain. The combined buying power of members creates significant demand for sustainable products and services and gives suppliers the incentive to make responsibly sourced materials available across the health care sector.

Pre-purchasing engagement will guide the development of your sourcing strategy (see [Section 3.4.1](#)).

HIGHLIGHT: Kaiser Permanente

Once they know about an opportunity, Kaiser Permanente aims to engage suppliers as early in the process as possible. They focus on two key opportunities, according to Elizabeth Eldridge, Kaiser Permanente sustainable sourcing director:

1. Moving existing suppliers in a positive direction, even incrementally. Example: A large supplier can change packaging from a quantity of one to a quantity of two to reduce waste. The majority of change is with existing suppliers.
2. Helping suppliers understand where they can make a difference. Kaiser Permanente continuously shares with suppliers that their organization is looking for product innovation.

PURCHASING

Engage suppliers with solid contract language in the purchasing stage. Be sure the RFP identifies your organization's commitment to sustainable procurement and includes criteria or specifications. Consider ensuring that your contract also includes:

- **Requirements for spend data reports:** Completed spend data reports are usually supplied by contracted vendors detailing spending on products and services. Reports on sustainable products provide a measuring/tracking tool. As mentioned in [Section 4.1](#), to get these reports, define in the contract what sustainability criteria should be met and ask the supplier to identify all products at the stock-keeping unit level that meet your criteria (such as Green Seal-certified janitorial cleaners).
- **Requirements for product catalogs:** Some health systems work with vendors to create a catalog of products that meet sustainable procurement goals and requirements.

POST-PURCHASING

Sustainability can become part of your business review process with suppliers (see [Section 3.4.3](#) and [Section 4.3](#)). In some cases, suppliers may be sustainability leaders and able to inform your expectations; in other cases, you may need to provide orientation and training. Business review meetings should yield sustainability data for impact monitoring and reporting and may lead to strategic partnerships and helpful resources.

3.6 Advocate on sustainability to group purchasing organizations

Sustainability value and benefits can also be negotiated by a GPO, and you can play an important role in advocating for sustainable procurement. Most GPOs have councils or committees that make recommendations and decisions on contracts. You can ask your GPO to create a sustainable procurement council to develop the elements of a sustainable procurement program, identify high-impact procurement opportunities, make recommendations on criteria, and support purchasing decisions. Here are four tips to engage your GPO on sustainability:

1. Find out whether your GPO shares your interests in sustainable procurement and specific product categories to focus on.
2. Volunteer to serve on an environmental council at your GPO.

3. Encourage your supply chain manager and sustainable procurement advisory committee (or other relevant staff) to communicate your sustainable procurement goals to your GPO.
4. Make presentations on sustainable procurement at GPO conferences or other initiatives.
5. Review sustainability impacts and opportunities in upcoming contracts with your GPO.

Sustainable procurement requests hospitals are asking of group purchasing organizations

- Add sustainable procurement criteria as a mandatory field in RFIs, RFPs, tender documents, or product specifications.
- Add contract language to facilitate spend reports.
- Add contract language to facilitate supplier sustainability responsibilities, such as take-back programs for products or packaging to reduce waste or emissions.
- Offer contracts, particularly for neonatal items, where products are free of polyvinyl chloride and phthalates, such as DEHP.
- Prevent companies from restricting participation in reprocessing.
- Pilot sustainable products for inclusion in contracts.
- Collect, validate, and publish sustainable procurement attributes and provide purchasing catalogs.

3.7 Build a culture of sustainable procurement

An active culture of sustainable procurement stimulates curiosity, creativity, innovation, and partnership. Start by engaging sustainability teams and champions. Remember that doctors and nurses play an important role as partners in sustainability initiatives.

Great engagement is a two-way street. Consult with staff to learn from their experience and harness their ideas as well as promote organizational change. Staff may want to ask questions and discuss what sustainability means and how it changes what they already do. They are also an invaluable resource in the evaluation and selection of products, feedback, and guidance to make sustainable procurement more practical and effective. You will want to provide orientation, training, mentorship, and tools.

For more information on mapping key audiences in your organization, refer to [Section 2.4.1](#).

3.7.1 CREATE A TRAINING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

A training and communications plan lays out the activities and resources you will need to create an active and engaged culture of sustainable procurement. Align your training and communications with the phases in your broader sustainable procurement action plan, focusing on the actions you want to take over the next year.

A basic training and communications plan covers the following topics:

- Target audiences
- Key messages
- Calls to action and prompts to change behavior
- A work plan

DEFINING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES

What groups in your organization can be partners in implementing sustainable procurement? Start with your stakeholder map, if you have one (see [Section 2.4.1](#)). You may want to consider the following groups:

1. Senior leadership
2. Procurement teams
3. Sustainability teams
4. Clinicians and other users
5. Facility operations and administrative staff
6. Marketing department

It may be helpful to find out how and when each group prefers to be informed, consulted, or engaged. Each group may have a distinct culture, expectations, and performance goals.

You may also want to consider communications to vendors (see [Section 3.5](#)).

Practice Tip

In large organizations, it can help to target departments in phases, beginning with those most concerned with sustainability. Demonstrating success within one department can make it easier to gain support for a rollout across the administration. This will also allow you to test and refine your approach with a participatory audience. Pediatrics, NICU/PICU, and oncology are some departments that tend to have a strong and natural interest in sustainability as it relates to the health of their patients.

DEVELOP CALLS TO ACTION AND PROMPTS TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

Each of the target audiences in your organization has an important role to play, and they can be more effective when they understand expectations. Provide this clarity by articulating specific calls to action for each group. [Table 8](#) is a quick example of what this might look like for one important target audience.

A call to action on its own may not be enough to prompt change. Creating a culture shift asks employees to change their own actions while also educating and encouraging their colleagues. There are many good resources on community-based social marketing. Refer to the [learn more webpage](#) for additional resources.

KEY MESSAGES

Once you have defined calls to action for your target audiences, you can craft key messages for each. Ask yourself what they need to hear to 1) understand the topic and 2) motivate them to action. The message may change depending on the audience. These can read like frequently asked questions. Keep them simple and streamlined to get started and build momentum.

Some questions to consider:

- What is sustainable procurement?
- Why are we doing this and what are the benefits? Will it improve health?
- How does sustainable procurement support the organization’s mission and values?
- How will product changes impact me? What training will be provided?
- Who is leading the sustainable procurement program?
- What does the sustainable procurement program apply to?
- How and when will sustainable procurement be implemented?
- How can you participate in the process of evaluation and selection of more sustainable alternatives?
- What resources are available?

TABLE 8: CALLS TO ACTION

AUDIENCE	CALL TO ACTION
<p>Senior leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly endorse and launch the sustainable procurement strategy and policy within the organization • Bring the implementation plan into the management performance and reporting frameworks of relevant business units • Resource the sustainable procurement program • Give license to try and test more sustainable alternatives, even where there are small price premiums on such products • Acknowledge within the organization the business units that show leadership in sustainable procurement • Champion sharing of sustainable procurement learnings and accomplishments with other organizations

TRAINING AND COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN

The “how” of training and communicating on sustainable procurement can be expressed in a simple work plan that bundles your target audiences, main tactics, who will be involved, and the general timeline for rollout. Keep this simple, high level, and aligned with the phases in your overall action plan.

[Table 9](#) details commonly used tactics.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Many communications and training tactics can become two-way channels for information exchange. Source success stories, feedback, and information on opportunities and challenges as relevant to the tactic. For best results, incentivize participation with fun prizes and opportunities for leadership recognition, friendly inter-departmental collaboration, and competition

TABLE 9: COMMUNICATIONS TACTICS

TACTICS	EXAMPLES
Digital communications	Social media, website, internal web pages with FAQs, and key documents including strategy, implementation plan, and policy (such as departmental and divisional intranet pages), explainer video, senior leadership endorsement video, screen saver message, content in corporate newsletters (such as success stories, new resources available), surveys, email communications to target audiences
Training seminars and presentations	Informational presentations to general audiences, interactive or annual mandatory training sessions to specific audiences (such as procurement teams), lunch-and-learn sessions for general audiences, presentations in departmental, divisional and business unit meetings
Promotional materials	Posters, postcards, reusable water bottles or other promotional products that are useful and consistent with sustainable procurement criteria and goals with key messages in promos: paycheck notices, a bulletin board for sustainability representatives
Awards and recognition	Employee awards, draws for feedback and participation (such as success story submission, completing an engagement tool such as a survey), leadership awards (such as Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence awards or Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH) Green Health Challenges awards)
Events	Product fairs such as the CleanMed exhibition where suppliers provide education about the sustainability aspects of their products; supplier summit to promote program expectations and demonstrate leadership support; sustainability summit to share successes and demonstrate leadership among departments

Once you've chosen your training and communications tactics, you can identify who will lead on each and the business quarter they will be rolled out in. See [Table 10](#) for a brief example.

Remember to build some monitoring and evaluation into your work plan. Learn more about this in the next section.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Look for key days to amplify the sustainable procurement message, such as international or local days of environmental awareness (see [Table 11](#)). This is a great way to energize staff and share your sustainability accomplishments with stakeholders and the public.

TABLE 10: SAMPLE WORK PLAN FOR A COMMUNICATIONS TACTIC

ACTION	DEPARTMENTS	TIMELINE
Produce an explainer video for the sustainable procurement strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications (lead) • Sustainable procurement coordinator (support) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q1 • Release on special event day

TABLE 11: SELECTED INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS DAYS

NAME	DATE	SPONSOR/HISTORY	FREQUENCY
World Water Day	March 22	Sponsored by UN Water, this event has a different theme each year	Annual
Earth Day	April 22	Sponsored by the Earth Day Network, this event has a different theme each year	Annual
World Environment Day	June 5	Sponsored by the United Nations, this day has a different theme each year	Annual
Global Recycling Day	March 18	Relatively new, this day was created by the Bureau of International Recycling in 2018	Annual
International Day of Climate Action	October 24	Sponsored by 350.org, an international environmental organization	Annual



CHAPTER 4: CHECK

MONITOR PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES

Integrating sustainability into organizational monitoring systems gives you the information you need to measure the sustainability outcomes from purchasing decisions. In the “plan” stage (see [Chapter 2](#)), we discuss setting measures and targets (see [Section 2.4.2](#) on creating a monitoring and evaluation framework). The “check” stage of the “plan-do-check-act” cycle is where we investigate how the program is functioning.

Summary of “check” steps

1. Adapt procurement tracking systems to measure the program
2. Gather data on program process and outcome indicators
3. Gather data on sustainable procurement through spend reports and business/contract review meetings
4. Measure sustainable procurement outcomes

4.1 Adapt procurement tracking systems to measure the program

Most likely your organization has well-developed data collection systems. The procurement department can help support the monitoring of sustainable procurement program-level indicators. Indicators can measure progress in a number of ways:

- **Program infrastructure and process indicators** to evaluate internal systems and process improvements, stakeholder engagement (including suppliers, [group purchasing organizations \(GPOs\)](#), users, education, and training

- **Program outcome indicators** to measure progress sourcing sustainable products, such as the number of solicitations that include sustainability criteria, the number of solicitations awarded with sustainable products and services, and sustainable product expenditure, such as percent spending on sustainable products compared to total spending on all products

After selecting program infrastructure and outcome indicators to track, you will need to identify if and how it is possible to measure the indicators. Consider meeting with the procurement team to learn more about what they are tracking and what systems they have in place. Explore how these systems could be adapted to measure sustainable procurement indicators (see [Section 2.4.2](#)).

For example, to verify your entire health system is using antimicrobial-free hand soaps, all hand soap purchasing channels in your organization should be identified. Those purchasing channels should then be assessed to determine if data can be analyzed on a regular basis to ensure the product conversion is complete and sustained.

What is good data?

Good data is:

- Transparent
- Accurate
- Replicable
- Consistent
- Reliable
- Relevant

4.1.1 KEY DATA TO TRACK

Many health organizations track spend data on sustainable products and services at the stock-keeping unit level based on sustainability criteria. For example, health systems may ask vendors to track purchases of reprocessed non-invasive medical devices compared to total spending and provide regular reports. Good spend data is actionable for purchasers and helps track the organization's strategic sustainable procurement priorities.

Be sure to track data that represents a truly sustainable product. Tracking and reporting on a single environmental attribute is the easiest method. Wherever possible, adopt existing standards or criteria (see [Annex 6](#) for Practice Greenhealth's standardized environmental criteria). Referencing an external standard can allow spend data tracking for one criterion.

While it is easier to track products meeting a third-party label or standard, many categories of goods and services do not yet have a label or standard available. Health care products typically have multiple sustainability criteria (such as chemicals of concern, energy efficiency, or recycled content). Reporting spending on only one attribute may not mean the product is sustainable and limits transparency. For example, the product may contain recycled content but also have chemicals of concern.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

When tracking spend data, clearly define what is needed from suppliers. For best results, include data requirements in the contract language. Describe how the data should be provided (such as at the stock-keeping unit level, in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet) and how often reports should be submitted. This ensures useful baseline data to support measuring success. Make sure the criteria used in spend data analysis is relevant to the product. For example, a spend analysis on mercury-free products should not include patient gowns, as mercury is not an issue in patient gowns.

Users may need to be involved in your monitoring system. Consider meeting with data analysts in your organization to discuss whether an existing protocol (such as for infection prevention) can be adapted to measure sustainable procurement. There may be helpful protocols or templates you can learn from to streamline your monitoring system and make it user friendly.

4.2 Gather data on process and outcome indicators

Process indicators may include the number of staff (full-time equivalents) assigned to work on sustainable procurement and committee meeting minutes that reflect stakeholders. Supplier and GPO engagement can be measured by the number of meetings with these stakeholders where sustainability criteria are discussed.

For best results, build sustainable procurement program metrics into the senior leadership dashboard. Once leadership is paying attention to the outcomes, data sources will be more willing to establish effective sharing systems. Your sustainability advisory team can also play a role in fostering inter-departmental relationships to support data gathering and dialogue on outcome measurement.

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHT: Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center tracks sustainable purchasing efforts by utilizing third-party managed software for data collection. The facility ensures vendors know relevant data to report, such as spending on meat raised without antibiotics, and the importance of providing this data to support their business relationship. Every quarter, the spend data is compiled in structured dashboard reports, which are reviewed and evaluated by a cross-departmental team to address inconsistencies. The facility adopted specific food goals (local and sustainable food) and continually measures their success to communicate progress to internal stakeholders and senior leadership.

Here are five tips to streamline regular data gathering cycles:

- 1. Clearly communicate specific data needed:** Ensure the monitoring and evaluation framework is accessible to staff (for example, hosted on an intranet site) and suppliers as needed, and provide orientation to what the indicator sets intend to measure.
- 2. Request data from those best positioned to provide it:** Determine who has access to the most reliable source of a data set. Request data in a standard format: Provide a template for data collection with instructions on the scope (what should be included or excluded), units of measurement, and relevant time period (see [Annex 8](#) for a data collection template).
- 3. Set timelines and reminders:** Create reporting timelines and deadlines, then circulate reminders with lots of lead time to allow your colleagues to gather and submit their data.
- 4. Track data sources:** Ensure data sources are well documented.
- 5. Invite qualitative stakeholder feedback on the program:** This includes challenges, successes, good practice examples, new opportunities, and testimonials from participation in the sustainable procurement program. Provide a separate template or online survey for this type of feedback and invite people to use it while their attention is focused on the topic at regular data reporting intervals.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

To standardize data collection, Practice Greenhealth suggests supplier spend reports contain calendar year spend data from January to December (even if purchases were not made or the contract was not signed by the beginning of the year) and be completed and returned by February/March of the next year.

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHT: Hackensack Meridian Health

Hackensack Meridian Health obtains spend reports directly from vendors and through third parties for the Practice Greenhealth award application. Kyle Tafuri, sustainability director, recommends three good practices on how to obtain spend reports: The buyer, senior supply chain leadership, or sustainability leader (1) tells a key supplier representative verbally or through contract language to provide these reports, (2) makes sure the supplier uses the same baseline of information, and (3) utilizes support from third-party vendors to collect data. In Tafuri's experience, supplier spend reports are not always accurate. This can affect baseline data.

Hackensack notified vendors early in the process about the need for spend data to measure success. Tafuri recommends having a sustainability program leader identify what the organization will do with the information. The leader can share the data with leadership to illustrate progress in meeting goals and ensure the data is used effectively to drive change and communicate progress.

One challenge for Hackensack was to make sure vendors measure data in the same way. The best practice is to be clear on needs and define terms. For example, their food vendors had different definitions of "local" food that Hackensack had to ensure were standardized.

4.3 Gather data on sustainability impact through business/contract review meetings

The vendor business cycle is an excellent framework for checking sustainability terms in your contracts. These meetings are also an opportunity to leverage suppliers' knowledge and experience.

BEFORE THE MEETING:

- Utilize and build on request for proposal (RFP) sustainability criteria (and contract language) to measure progress on sustainable procurement and hold the vendor accountable
- Develop and send questions to the vendor that define the elements expected (ideally they are in the contract) and request a vendor report before the meeting

DURING THE MEETING:

- Invite the sustainability lead to the meeting
- Review vendor report and discuss measures to improve
- Collaborate on what should be measured and goals to be achieved over time
- Determine what more the facility can do to support the vendor

SAMPLE ITEMS TO RAISE WITH VENDORS:

- What upcoming sustainability programs is the vendor developing that the facility can incorporate?
- What new goals has the facility launched that the vendor can incorporate into the current contract/program?
- Identify and agree on expected social responsibility elements
- Identify and agree on expected business practices
- Identify and agree on sustainable procurement goals
- Identify and agree on ways the vendor can reduce their carbon footprint
- Identify and agree on ways the vendor's products can support a [circular economy](#)
- Identify and agree on ways the vendor will support the facility's success, such as education programs

Invite your group purchasing organization and vendors to become actively engaged in your monitoring and evaluation framework by sharing relevant targets and performance indicators. Explore the most efficient and effective ways of collecting data. Most importantly, approach stakeholders as partners in data interpretation (see [Section 5.1](#)).

Stakeholders are far more likely to provide quality and timely data if an organization is clearly using it for action, change, and improvement.

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHT: Cleveland Clinic

According to Jon Utech, Cleveland Clinic Office for a Healthy Environment senior director, although almost all of their contracts contain clauses requiring suppliers to report sustainability criteria and outcomes, the health system aims to be very deliberate about the data they request, manage, and analyze. For example, they prioritize data on categories such as local food, furniture, and computers. Cleveland Clinic is cautious not to burden their supply chain with reporting requirements that will not be put to good use. Instead, they measure and manage sustainable supply chain outcomes within a reasonable scope until data management and assessment systems become more robust.

FIGURE 9: SNAPSHOT OF THE EPEAT ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS CALCULATOR (GREEN ELECTRONICS COUNCIL)

REDUCTION IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND COSTS RESULTING FROM PURCHASING EPEAT												
	Energy savings in megajoules (MJ)	Energy savings in kilowatt hour equivalents (k/Wh eq)	Greenhouse gas emissions reduction, expressed as global warming potential (kg CO2 eq)	Non-hazardous solid waste reduction (kg)	Water consumption savings (liters H2O)	Acidification potential savings (kg SO2 eq)	Smog formulation potential savings (kg O3 eq)	Eutrophication potential savings (kg N eq)	Toxic substances avoided in the product (kg)	Material conservation (kg)	Cost savings for non-hazardous solid waste disposal (US \$)	Cost savings for energy use (Dollars)
Purchasing EPEAT Products	9,481.04	2,633.62	552.31	51.65	2,333.69	2.54	46.64	0.26	0.33	12.42	2.88	30.24
Optional Extended Life, Reuse, Recycling	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

4.4 Measure sustainable procurement outcomes

Once you have a dataset for each indicator in your monitoring and evaluation framework, you may need to combine it with data from various suppliers and identify exclusions and information sources. Refer back to your [SMART goals](#) and determine the indicators that will allow you to measure your progress (see [Section 2.3](#)).

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHT: University of California

The University of California, which includes five health systems, identified sustainable food as an objective in their sustainable procurement strategy, and set a target to purchase 20% sustainable food by 2020. Hospital sustainability teams are tracking indicators on the amount of local food procured, purchases of sustainable foods carrying third-party certifications, and plant-based foods. They are also prioritizing purchases of compostable food service ware.

Some [labels and third-party certifications](#) provide a built-in framework for measuring sustainability outcomes, as well as online tools to measure environmental impacts. For example, let's consider the indicator "percent of total annual computer purchase spend on electronic product environmental assessment tool (EPEAT) gold products." What does this mean in terms of the sustainability performance of the organization? The Green Electronics Council provides an [online environmental benefits calculator for the EPEAT label for sustainable electronics](#). The calculator demonstrates that the purchase of 100 EPEAT gold computers as opposed to conventional computers produces the following environmental benefits (see [Figure 9](#)).

Many labels, such as [EPEAT](#) or [TCO Certified](#), also provide robust verification to ensure sustainability standards are met throughout the supply chain.

Finally, you will need to aggregate the results of individual procurements to determine how they contribute to specific objectives in your sustainable procurement strategy, such as overall energy savings in the organization by percentage, cost, and greenhouse gas implications.



CHAPTER 5: ACT

ASSESS IMPACT AND IMPROVE YOUR PROGRAM

Evaluation helps us determine if our sustainable procurement program is fulfilling the potential business case and benefits for our organization and beyond. The final stage of the “plan-do-check-act” cycle is where we reflect on our impact, report on our results, and refresh our sustainable procurement strategy and approach as needed.

Summary of “act” steps

1. Evaluate the impact of your sustainable procurement
2. Share the results
3. Revise your strategy and approach

5.1 Evaluate impact

It is important to bring internal and external stakeholders together to evaluate the impacts of your sustainable procurement program. Think of it as a two-part strategic planning process, beginning by assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of program implementation and concluding by determining whether the strategy needs reframing, revision, or expansion. You may want to consider the following impact-level questions:

- Are we fostering a culture of sustainable procurement in our organization? What is working well? What could be done to accelerate the culture shift?
- Are sustainability considerations integrated into procurement and supply chain management in a

strategic manner that aligns with implementation plans? Which teams, products, and procurement categories are leading the way? How can we utilize the champions from successful units to help and/or expand to new teams and processes?

- Are we capturing the highest-value opportunities for sustainability benefits in our supply chain? Are we making the most of our suppliers’ knowledge and resources?
- Are we delivering on the business case for sustainable procurement? Have we gained efficiency, new partnership opportunities, better patient and employee health, and a more productive and engaged workforce?

These questions will help you investigate data and frame your reporting.

5.2 Share results

A first step in driving continuous improvement is to communicate effectively within and outside of the organization on your progress on implementing sustainable procurement.

5.2.1 SHARE RESULTS INTERNALLY

Share your results with your sustainability advisory committee and make them available to all staff on a quarterly basis. A report on the sustainable procurement program can be included in an annual update to senior leadership and the board of directors. Brief case studies of successful sustainable procurements will illustrate the program's positive impact. Your report can be hosted on an intranet site where it is accessible to all staff and featured on social media and other channels (see [Section 3.7](#) for more ideas on communications tactics).

5.2.2 RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT LEADERSHIP

Sustainable purchasing and supply chain successes may come slowly, and adoption of a new purchasing mindset and culture may take time. Celebrate small and incremental wins along the way to sustain momentum. Creating a culture of fun, celebration, mutual support, and learning will help your program flourish. The celebration can be a party, a recommendation for a spot bonus, an article in internal communication, or an invitation to share experiences in a conference or learning forum.

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHT: Victoria Hospital

In Africa, the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network has grown steadily to 95 members representing more than 1,700 hospitals and health centers committed to reducing their ecological footprint and promoting environmental health locally and globally. The network is based on members' commitment to implement a comprehensive environmental health framework in their institutions. At [Victoria Hospital](#) in South Africa, cleaning staff members were empowered to turn off lights in rooms that are unoccupied. As a result, the hospital saved on average \$700 per month on electricity. Staff members were rewarded with new uniforms for their efforts, increasing pride in their work, and a sense of being a valued member of the health care team.

5.2.3 EXTERNAL RECOGNITION

Consider sharing success with peers outside your organization through professional associations, sector networks, speaking opportunities, and award applications. These opportunities will reward the hard work of staff through recognition and celebration. One excellent opportunity for recognition is Practice Greenhealth's Environmental Excellence Awards that recognize health care systems for their commitment to sustainability and provides the opportunity to compare and benchmark their progress against other invested organizations. Health Care Without Harm's Global Green and Healthy Hospitals provide Green Health Challenge Awards on climate, energy, and waste, recognizing procurement strategies that advance energy efficiency and waste reduction. Other opportunities for recognition may exist through specialized programs referenced on the [learn more webpage](#).

5.3 Revise strategy

You have come full circle to understand your impact and untapped potential waiting to be captured. Now it's time to determine whether your strategy needs reframing, revision, or expansion.

At the strategy level, you may wish to consider a revision to your overall vision or specific sustainability objectives (refer to [Section 3.3](#)).

At the implementation level, you may wish to adapt or build on your sustainable procurement program. The 10 elements of a successful sustainable procurement program (see [Chapter 1](#)) can serve as your quick reference guide. In particular, the guiding questions for each element in the self-assessment and benchmarking chapter ([Section 2.1](#)) can help you plan where to focus your resources and efforts. You may find it helpful to consult [Annex 9](#), which lists common challenges in implementing sustainable procurement programs and possible strategies to overcome them. Revise your implementation plan to keep it a living document in your organization (see [Section 3.4](#)).

GLOSSARY

Anchor institutions	Anchor institutions are enterprises such as universities and hospitals rooted in local communities by mission, invested capital, or relationships to customers, employees, and vendors.
Environmental footprint	Environmental or ecological footprint is a measure of human demand on nature or the quantity of nature it takes to support a population or an economy. The ecological footprint framework is supported by an ecological accounting system.
Circular economy	An economy based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems, transforming the “take-make-waste” system of a linear economy to design, make, and keep products and materials in use.
Group Purchasing Organization (GPO)	A group purchasing organization (GPO) is an entity that helps health care providers – such as hospitals, nursing homes and home health agencies – realize savings and efficiencies by aggregating purchasing volume and using that leverage to negotiate discounts with manufacturers, distributors and other vendors.
Item files	These files include the listing of specific products (items) included in the contract a hospital establishes with its preferred vendors. This list has descriptions of every item by size and feature contained in a contract. A significant percentage of what is ordered is from these item lists.
Life cycle costs	Life cycle costs are the costs of an asset incurred over its lifespan (see Section 3.4.1)
Par level	Par level (or periodic automatic replenishment levels) have been used in industry for decades to help businesses of all kinds keep just the right amount of inventory on hand without suffering from excess. Par level is the minimum amount of inventory needed to meet the demand from customers.
Post-consumer recycled material	A material or finished product that has served its intended use and has been diverted or recovered from waste for disposal. This does not include manufacturing or converting wastes.
SMART goals	SMART goals usually refer to goal criteria that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
Strategic sourcing	An institutional procurement process that continuously improves and re-evaluates the purchasing activities of a company. Strategic sourcing aligns procurement efforts with other significant benefits, such as cost reduction and improved inventory management.
Supplier code of conduct	A document that outlines the minimum standards expected of suppliers for safe and healthy workplaces that often reference the International Labour Organization’s fundamental conventions: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor; the effective abolition of child labor; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (see Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 1998 in the UN Global Compact .)
Tender	A term commonly used in UN and governmental procurement processes to invite bids for a product, project or service. Tender means any of the following procurement methods: request for quotation, invitation to bid, request for proposals, request for information, request for expressions of interest, and prequalification.

LEARN MORE

Practice Greenhealth and Health Care Without Harm are the health care sector's go-to sources for information, tools, data, resources, and expert technical support on sustainability initiatives that help members meet sustainability goals. In addition to the resources listed, they offer practical and cost-effective programs to members and educate, motivate, and engage the entire sector to move toward higher standards of care.

Please visit our website:

practicegreenhealth.org/sustainableprocurementguide/learnmore