



Responding to Sustainability Questions in Bids Guide

Western Procurement Services





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Introduction

A Guide to Success in Western's Sustainable Procurement Process

This guide is designed to help you, our valued supplier, successfully navigate and respond to the sustainability questions in Western University's Requests for Proposals (RFPs) across different ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) topics.

Why This Matters:

- **For Western:** Integrating sustainability into our procurements is a strategic commitment to our institutional values, our climate goals, and new legal obligations.
- **For Suppliers:** Your sustainability performance is now a formal, scored criterion in our evaluations. A strong response not only provides a competitive advantage to help you win business but also helps you identify your sustainability journey and identify opportunities for future improvement.

Purpose of This Guide: To provide clear, practical advice on how to interpret our RFP questions, craft high-scoring responses, and provide the necessary documentation to validate your claims.

Important note: You may not receive all questions in your RFP.



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Response & Documentation Requirements

Understanding
the Questions

Providing Relevant
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Documents



Question Topics

Jump straight to the relevant question

Environmental:

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Social:

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TOPIC: GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your organization measure, manage, or have verified targets to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with your product/service?*

We are looking for evidence that you track and are actively working to reduce your carbon footprint, directly supporting us to reduce ours.

Scope 1, 2, & 3 Emissions:

- **Scope 1:** Direct emissions from owned sources (e.g., company vehicles, boilers, outlets).
- **Scope 2:** Indirect emissions from purchased electricity.
- **Scope 3:** All other indirect emissions (e.g., supply chain, business travel).

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate a systematic and verified approach to carbon management, reflecting that it is an accountable part of your business.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates emissions awareness without a verified track record, showing intention through planning but not yet mature execution.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently prioritize measuring or managing their emissions, reflecting climate risk management.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Verified GHG inventory report (Scope 1, 2, and/or 3)
- Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) commitment or certificate
- Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) purchase records
- Emission reduction data and tracking reports

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Climate action plan
- Corporate environmental policy
- Carbon management strategy

TOPIC: ENERGY USE & EFFICIENCY

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your product/service contribute to reducing energy consumption during creation and/or operations?*

We need evidence that your product or service is energy-efficient in its manufacturing or in its use by Western. This includes demonstrating lower energy inputs for the same output, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and operational costs.

Kilowatt-hours (kWh):

A kilowatt-hour is the standard unit of energy measurement. Providing data in kWh saved (e.g., "our product uses 150 kWh/year less than the standard model") offers clear, comparable proof of energy efficiency.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate measurable energy efficiency gains, backed by quantitative performance data, product certifications, or detailed reports that conclusively demonstrate reduced energy consumption.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates energy efficiency commitment and initiative but lacks proof of implementation or performance improvements.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently prioritize energy use and efficiency, indicating a missed opportunity for cost savings.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Product energy efficiency specifications or data sheets
- Energy consumption and savings reports (e.g., kWh saved)
- Certifications: ENERGY STAR, EPEAT, ISO 50001, etc.
- Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) reports with energy data
- Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) reports for data centers

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Energy management policy
- Energy management strategy
- Energy efficiency action plans

TOPIC: WATER USE & EFFICIENCY

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Understanding the Question

Question: Does your product/service contribute to reducing water consumption and improving wastewater management during creation and/or operations?

We are looking for evidence that your product or service leads to less water being used or cleaner wastewater being discharged. This can be in your own manufacturing processes ("creation") or in how the product performs for the end-user at Western ("operations").

Wastewater Management:

How you treat and handle water after it has been used in an industrial or commercial process to minimize its environmental impact before it is released back into the environment.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate a proactive approach to managing water use and wastewater, supported by quantitative data or certifications that verify your performance against industry standards.



Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates water management commitment and initiative but lacks proof of implementation or measurable results.



Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently prioritize water use and wastewater management, indicating lack of water crisis risk management.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Quantitative data (e.g., liters saved per unit)
- Wastewater quality reports
- Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) reports
- ISO 14046 or AWS certification

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Water conservation policy
- Water conservation strategy
- Water management action plans

TOPIC: TOXICS MANAGEMENT & POLLUTION PREVENTION

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Understanding the Question

Question: Does your product/service contribute to reducing or eliminating toxic/hazardous substances and prevent their release into the environment during creation and/or operations?

We are looking for proof that you minimize the use of hazardous materials and prevent them from polluting the environment during manufacturing or product use. This includes initiatives to replace harmful substances with safer alternatives and to manage chemical risks effectively throughout the product lifecycle.

Toxic/Hazardous Substances:

Chemicals or materials that can pose a significant risk to human health or the environment.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate active toxics reduction and pollution prevention, with quantifiable reductions in hazardous substance use and a systematic approach to preventing environmental releases.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates planning and commitment but will not be backed by performance data or third-party verification, showing awareness but not yet proven implementation.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently prioritize toxics management and pollution prevention, reflecting environmental risk.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for products
- Environmental audit reports (e.g., waste discharge)
- Data on toxic substance reduction (e.g., usage/spills logs)
- Certifications: Green Seal, EcoLogo, EPA Safer Choice, etc.

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Pollution prevention policy
- Chemical management plan
- Environmental Management System (EMS) documentation

TOPIC: WASTE REDUCTION - PRODUCT LIFE-CYCLE

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Understanding the Question

Question: Does your product/service contribute to reducing waste and supporting circularity during its creation, use, and end-of-life phases?

We want proof that your product is designed to minimize waste and support a circular economy throughout its entire life, from manufacturing to disposal. This means designing for durability, repairability, reusability, and recyclability to keep materials in use and out of landfills or incinerators.

Circular Economy:

A system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources, involves closing the loops of product lifecycles.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate circular economy practices and waste minimization outcomes, showing a closed-loop approach.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates strategic planning for waste reduction, but it lacks the operational data or third-party validation needed to confirm the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently prioritize circular economy practices, indicating lack of extended producer responsibility.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Waste audit reports and diversion rate data
- Product take-back or recycling program details
- Certification: Cradle to Cradle, UL Ecologo, etc.
- Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) reports
- Design specifications for disassembly/repair

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Waste reduction policy
- Circular economy strategy
- Waste reduction action plan

TOPIC: WASTE REDUCTION – PACKAGING

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does the packaging design and materials related to your product/service minimize waste and support circularity?*

We need proof that your packaging is designed to reduce waste, use recycled materials, or be reusable/recyclable/compostable. This is critical for reducing the environmental footprint of the products we purchase and supports waste diversion goals.

Recyclability:

Packaging is considered "recyclable" for Western when it is made of materials that are accepted in the City of London's recycling and composting programs.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate innovative and effective packaging waste reduction that supports measurable diversion from landfills.



Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates commitment, but it is not supported by specific data on material reduction or third-party certifications, indicating the initiative is still in development.



Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently prioritize packaging waste management, representing missed cost saving opportunity and direct contribution to landfill waste issues.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Packaging audit reports
- Data on reduced packaging weight/volume
- Certifications: How2Recycle label, FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification, Compostable certification (e.g., BPI)
- Reusable packaging system specifications

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Sustainable packaging policy
- Packaging reduction commitments
- Environmental policy addressing packaging

TOPIC: RESOURCE USE & IMPACT ON BIODIVERSITY

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your product/service contribute to sustainable management of scarce resources and protection of biodiversity during its creation and/or operations?*

We are looking for evidence that you source materials responsibly and minimize harm to ecosystems and species. This includes using renewable or sustainably harvested materials and implementing practices that protect and restore natural habitats.

Biodiversity:

The variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate responsible sourcing and active measures to conserve ecosystems.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates planning and commitment commitments, but it lacks the certifications or empirical data to verify its on-the-ground effectiveness and impact.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently prioritize resource conservation and biodiversity, indicating an unmanaged risk to natural capital.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Biodiversity impact assessment reports
- Sustainable sourcing reports
- Habitat restoration project documentation
- Certifications: FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), MSC (Marine Stewardship Council), etc.

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Sustainable sourcing policy
- Biodiversity commitment statement
- Environmental policy with biodiversity elements

TOPIC: ETHICAL SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your organization ensure ethical labor practices and respect for human rights in your operations and supply chain (including subcontractors)?*

We want evidence that you actively work to prevent issues like forced labor, child labor, discrimination, and unfair wages in your own operations and your suppliers'. This involves due diligence, monitoring, and remediation processes.

Human Rights:

The basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death. They apply regardless of where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate robust human rights due diligence and ethical oversight, proving that ethical practices are monitored and enforced throughout your value chain.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates ethical commitments, but it lacks audit or performance data that show these commitments are effectively implemented and monitored.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently have systems to ensure ethical practices, indicating a risk of human rights violations in your operations or supply chain.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Third-party compliance audit reports (e.g., SMETA)
- B Corp, SA8000, or FairTrade certification
- Supplier code of conduct
- Human rights policy
- Worker grievance mechanism documentation

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Draft supplier code of conduct
- Ethical sourcing commitments
- Human rights statement
- Modern slavery report

TOPIC: WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your organization ensure a safe, healthy, and supportive working environment for all workers in your operations and supply chain?*

We need proof that you have formal, implemented programs to protect the physical and mental well-being of your employees and supply chain workers. This includes proactive risk assessment, training, and robust incident management systems.

"Supportive Working Environment": Extends beyond physical safety to include psychological health, prevention of harassment, and worker well-being.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate a robust and effective health & safety management system, showcasing a proactive culture of worker protection.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates health and safety intentions without demonstrated performance needed to prove its successful implementation.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently have formal worker health & safety programs, representing lack of fundamental duty to human rights.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Safety performance metrics and reports
- Health & safety training records and programs
- Incident reporting and investigation procedures
- ISO 45001 certification
- COR/SECOR (Certificate of Recognition)

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Health & safety policy
- Emergency response plans
- Commitment to workplace safety

TOPIC: INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your organization actively uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensure their meaningful participation in decisions that affect them?*

We need evidence that you respect and uphold Indigenous rights for projects that may impact their lands, territories, or resources.

FPIC (Free, Prior, and Informed Consent): A principle protected by international human rights standards that allows Indigenous peoples to give or withhold consent to any project that may affect them, their territories, or their rights. It must be granted freely, without coercion, before project commencement, and with full understanding of the project's scope and impacts.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate respecting Indigenous rights and implementing FPIC, showing a deep commitment to partnership and free, prior, and informed consent.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates a commitment to Indigenous rights principles, but it lacks the formal policies or agreement documents that demonstrate how this commitment is put into practice.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently have formal practices regarding Indigenous rights, reflecting a gap in human rights due diligence.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- FPIC (Free, Prior, and Informed Consent) policy
- Impact benefit agreements
- Indigenous rights policy
- Community consultation reports and records

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Commitment to FPIC principles
- Draft Indigenous engagement policy
- Statement on Indigenous rights

TOPIC: INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your organization promote economic development and create partnership opportunities for Indigenous communities and businesses?*

We are looking for proof that you proactively create tangible economic opportunities for Indigenous peoples. This is a key part of Western's commitment to reconciliation and can include procurement from Indigenous-owned businesses, employment, and skills training.

Reconciliation:

A meaningful and active process of addressing historical wrongs by building a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples based on respect, partnership, and economic inclusion.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate active and measurable contributions to Indigenous economic prosperity, showcasing a genuine and impactful commitment to reconciliation.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates strategic intent to support Indigenous economic development, but it lacks measurable outcomes that show active implementation.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently have no active initiatives in this area, indicating a lack of alignment with reconciliation goals.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Procurement spend data with Indigenous businesses
- Partnership agreements (MOUs) with Indigenous communities
- Indigenous employment and training data
- Benefit-sharing agreement documentation

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Indigenous procurement strategy
- Reconciliation action plan
- Commitment to Indigenous economic development

TOPIC: LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your organization have strategic practices to actively invest in and contribute to the resilience and growth of the local economies where you operate?*

We are looking for proof that you proactively support the local communities where you do business, beyond just being physically located there. This includes sourcing from local suppliers, investing in community projects, and supporting local workforce development.

Local:

Refers to businesses within Canada, with priority given to those based in Ontario, and the highest priority given to our immediate community in London.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate strategic local investment and partnership, showing a proactive and measurable commitment to local economic resilience.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates strategic intent to local economic development, but it lacks the data on local spending or partnership details that prove the strategy is actively implemented.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently have local economic development practices, indicating a missed opportunity to contribute to the community.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Local procurement spend reports
- Community investment projects or reports
- Partnership agreements with local organizations
- Local hiring and training data
- Certifications: BuySocial Canada Certification, Canada Made, etc.

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Community engagement policy
- Local economic development strategy
- Commitment to local sourcing

TOPIC: EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION (EDI)

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Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your organization have active programs to recruit, support, and empower people from equity-deserving groups within your workforce and supply chain?*

We need evidence of your commitment to creating a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace and supply chain. This involves measurable actions to remove barriers and create opportunities for equity-deserving groups.

Equity-Deserving Groups:

Include, but are not limited to, women, racialized persons, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and others who have historically faced underrepresentation and economic disadvantage.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate active and measurable EDI initiatives, showcasing accountable and results-oriented approach to building an inclusive organization.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates EDI planning and commitment without measurable results that show tangible outcomes and the effectiveness of your programs.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently have formal EDI programs, reflecting a lack of commitment to equity and inclusion.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Workforce diversity data reports
- certification
- EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) progress reports
- Pay equity analysis reports
- Certifications: CAMSC, CGLCC, WBE Canada, etc.

If you answer PARTIAL:

- EDI strategy or policy
- Diversity and inclusion statement
- Commitment to equity goals

Understanding the Question

Question: *Does your organization self-identify as a social enterprise or non-profit-distributing organization with any objectives that support social wellbeing, and any specific goals set in this regard?*

We are asking if your organization's primary, legally defined purpose is to achieve specific social, cultural, community, economic, or environmental outcomes. Any profits are principally reinvested towards that purpose rather than being distributed to shareholders.

Social Enterprise:

A business that has specific social or environmental objectives as its primary purpose. Surpluses are reinvested for that purpose in the business or community.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Provide verified proof of your legally defined social purpose and a clear explanation of your social mission.

Answer NO

This is a binary question. If your organization's primary purpose is not social or environmental, you must answer "No".

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- B Corp certification
- Legal registration as non-profit/charity
- Social enterprise certification
- Articles of incorporation stating social purpose
- Social mission statement
- Community benefit report

TOPIC: RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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Understanding the Question

Question: Does your organization have clear governance structures, accountability mechanisms, and a strategic approach to manage its sustainability performance?

We want proof that sustainability is integrated at the highest levels of your organization, with clear accountability, dedicated resources, and a strategic framework for continuous improvement. This demonstrates that sustainability is a core business priority, not a side activity.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Your response should demonstrate that sustainability is integrated into corporate governance and strategy, showcasing that sustainability is a core business priority.

Answer PARTIAL

Your response demonstrates sustainability intentions without robust governance including reporting, board oversight, or accountability mechanisms.

Answer NO

For organizations that do not currently prioritize sustainability, indicating a lack of strategic management of ESG risks and opportunities.

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Annual Sustainability/ESG Report
- Board committee charters with sustainability oversight
- Organizational chart showing sustainability team
- Executive compensation tied to sustainability KPIs
- Green investment projects

If you answer PARTIAL:

- Corporate sustainability policy
- ESG strategy document
- Sustainability commitments statement

Understanding the Question

Question: *Is your business at least 51% owned by an individual or group that is part of a traditionally underrepresented or equity deserving group? Or is it at least 51 percent owned through an employee ownership model?*

We want to understand the ownership structure of your business to support our supplier diversity and inclusive economic development goals. This helps us track our spending with businesses that are owned by equity-deserving groups.

Equity-Deserving Groups:

Include, but are not limited to, women, racialized persons, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and others who have historically faced underrepresentation and economic disadvantage.

Providing Relevant Responses

Answer YES to maximize your score

Provide definitive proof of your ownership structure and clearly specifies the equity-deserving group(s) and percentage of ownership, or the type and percentage of employee ownership.

Answer NO

This is a binary question. If your ownership does not meet the 51% threshold for either category, you must answer "No".

Supporting Document Options

If you answer YES:

- Business registration documents
- Corporate ownership structure chart
- ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Plan) documentation
- Signed ownership declaration form
- Certifications: CAMSC, CGLCC, WBE Canada, etc.

How Responses are Scored

All Requests for Proposals (RFPs) issued by procurement services have been systematically reviewed for opportunities to incorporate sustainability as a core criterion, carrying a weight of 5-15% in the overall evaluation process.

To ensure a fair and transparent evaluation, your sustainability responses are scored against a clear rubric. The goal is to reward demonstrated performance and actionable commitment.

Strong sustainability performance is not just a requirement—it's a competitive differentiator that can help you win business with Western!

Scoring Rubric

Score	Level	What It Means For Your Response
10	Yes (Exemplary)	You provide strong, verifiable proof of action and results. Your answer includes specific data, respected certifications, or audit reports that directly prove your claims. You show that sustainability is a core, well-managed part of your business.
5	Partial (Developing)	You show commitment and planning but cannot yet prove results. Your answer includes policies, plans, or goals, but lacks the supporting data or verification to show they are fully effective. You are on the right path but still building your track record.
1	No (Unsatisfactory)	You provide little to no meaningful evidence . The response may be missing, vague, or irrelevant. Generic marketing claims without proof will not score. This indicates sustainability is not yet a priority for this specific topic.

Dos and Don'ts

For a Top-Scoring (10/10) Response:

- 1. Be Evidence-Based:** Back claims with specific data points, metrics, or verifiable reports.
- 2. Use Verified Proof:** Strengthen your case with third-party certifications or audits.
- 3. Ensure Relevance:** Provide documentation that directly answers the question asked.
- 4. Demonstrate Integration:** Show sustainability is part of your long-term strategy and daily operations.
- 5. Provide Clear References:** In your written answer, explicitly name the supporting document and provide the specific page number where the evidence can be found (e.g., "Refer to page 12 of our 2023 Sustainability Report").

Scores Will Be Reduced If:

- Answers are vague or do not directly address the question asked.
- Supporting documents appear to have been created solely for this RFP rather than being part of your regular business operations and reporting (e.g., a one-page statement vs. an annual report).
- A document is provided without a clear description in your answer of what it proves and where to find the evidence.
- Any information is misleading, false, or creates confusion, which may disqualify your submission.

Submission Checklist

Before You Write:

- ✓ I have reviewed the “Responding to Sustainability Questions in Bids Guide”.
- ✓ I understand the scoring rubric (Yes=10, Partial=5, No=1) and what is required for a high score.

Sustainability Related Sections to Complete:

- 1. Technical Submission Appendix:** The sustainability section is fully completed as per this checklist.
- 2. Declaration Appendix :** I have read, understood, and signed Western’s Commitment to Sustainability in Procurement.
- 3. Proponent Checklist Appendix :** I have completed this checklist accurately to the best of my knowledge.



Appendix E Checklist

For Each Sustainability Question:

- ✓ I have read the question carefully and understand what is being asked.
- ✓ I have selected the most accurate answer choice: Yes, Partial, or No.
- ✓ My written answer provides a detailed justification for my choice.
- ✓ I have explicitly named the supporting document and provided the page number where verifiable evidence can be found (e.g., “Refer to page 8 of our ESG Report”).
- ✓ I have uploaded the correct, corresponding document to the Sustainability folder in Bonfire.
Alternatively: I have included a functional, public-facing link to the evidence in my written response.

External Links

- [Bill S211 – Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act](#)
- [Bill C59 – Anti-greenwashing update to Competitions Act](#)
- [AODA - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)
- [BOBI - Building Ontario Businesses Initiative](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada : calls to action](#)

Western Links

- [Towards Western at 150](#)
- [Western's Sustainable Procurement Page](#)
- [Western's SP Strategy](#)
- [EDIDA Strategic Plan](#)
- [Western's Supplier Code of Conduct](#)
- [Western's Bill S-211 Report](#)