



Western  
UNIVERSITY • CANADA

# From Purple to Green

Guidelines for  
more sustainable  
procurement



Introduction	3
What is Sustainable Procurement?	4
Sustainable Procurement in Action	5
Before you Buy	6
Tips for Total Cost of Ownership	7
Eco-Labels	8
Further Resources	9

# Introduction



Every dollar that is spent on Western's campus has social, environmental, and governance and/or ethical impacts-both positive and negative. With supply chains having a significant impact on our footprint, every Western staff and faculty involved in purchasing has the responsibility and opportunity to contribute to mitigating climate change, reducing waste, and supporting ethical business practices through purposeful spending.

Sustainable procurement is not new to Western. From becoming a Fair-Trade campus in 2016, to reducing our paper usage through switching to BONFIRE, an e-bidding system, Western's staff and faculty have been making meaningful environmental and socially beneficial purchasing decisions for many years.

In recent years, Procurement Services has established a more formalized Sustainable Procurement Program in an effort to transform Western's procurement activities to act as critical

enablers in achieving our environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals. In 2023, after review by the President's Advisory Committee on Environment and Sustainability (PACES), Procurement Services published Western's first **Sustainable Procurement Strategy 2023-2025**. The Strategy outlines a Program Mission of **enabling Western's staff and faculty to consistently integrate sustainability as a meaningful factor in purchasing decisions** and sets out goals and tactics to actualize this mission.

Western has an opportunity to become a leader in sustainable procurement, and in doing so contribute to a low carbon, circular and inclusive economy. To bring this vision to life, we need the entire Western community to consciously consider the social, environmental, and ethical impacts of their purchasing.

## About this guide

Everyday more high-quality sustainable products are becoming available as Suppliers begin to look at their own supply chain and impacts. Alongside this positive trend, it is crucial to address the risk of greenwashing, where companies make misleading claims about the environmental benefits of their products or practices. "From Purple to Green – Guidelines for More Sustainable Procurement" is intended to help members of the University community navigate through the complexities of sustainable procurement with confidence and clarity.

Updated in 2023, this guide complements Western's Procurement Policy and serves as a tool to help our community continue making responsible purchasing decisions. This guide begins by outlining Western's sustainable procurement definition, priorities, and successes so far. The guides continues on Procurement's Sustainable Procurement webpage with dynamic fact sheets and what to look out for and what to avoid for several common product categories.

The guide is designed to be modular as a stand-alone tip sheet or as one complete guide.



## What do we mean by Sustainable Procurement?

Sustainable procurement means prioritizing the purchase of products and services that have the lowest environmental impact and the most positive social results, while still achieving the best overall value. It is about embedding relevant sustainability considerations into processes for selecting goods and services, alongside traditional considerations like price, quality, service, and technical specifications.

In practice, this means considering sustainability in every stage of purchasing. This includes considering alternatives to purchasing such as repairing or reusing current inventory, considering a product's full life cycle and how the product will be disposed of at the end of its useful life and considering sustainability risks and opportunities for a product's materials, its manufacturing process and its delivery.

## What are our sustainable procurement priorities?

Every procurement has a different set of environmental, socio-economic, and governance (ESG) related risk or opportunities. We encourage staff to consider all ESG elements relevant to the procurement at hand. However, in line with Western's Sustainable Procurement Strategy Western's Strategic Plan **"Towards Western at 150"**, the issues below are of immediate priority.

### Environmental

- Carbon reduction
- Waste reduction

### Governance

- Responsible supply chain management
- Reduced risk of child labour, human trafficking, and labour exploitation

### Social

- Local economic development
- Prioritizing certified diverse suppliers
- Community investment
- Stronger relations with Indigenous communities

## Why is sustainable procurement important?

Sustainability is centered as an imperative in the strategic plan for Western's future in our Strategic Plan **"Towards Western at 150"**. Embracing sustainable procurement through our everyday purchases provides an opportunity for staff and faculty across campus to contribute to our sustainability goals. Additionally, it can also bolster Western's position as a sustainability leader and mitigate risks associated with our global footprint.

# SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT IN ACTION



Sustainable Procurement isn't new to Western. For many years staff and faculty have been implementing a wide range of practices to foster a more environmentally conscious and socially responsible approach to procurement. Here are a few examples that showcase Western's ongoing commitment to sourcing sustainable.

## Procurement Power

Alongside price and technical specifications, in all of Western's RFPs (Request-For-Proposals) sustainability is incorporated. These considerations are recommended to be weighted at 10 - 15% where feasible, with 5% as a minimum ensuring that vendors are evaluated based on their sustainability efforts and responsible practices.

Additionally, Procurement Services maintains a "High Impact Procurement Opportunity" (HIPO) list to prioritize high-value and high-risk spend categories for additional sustainability considerations.



## Freezing Energy Waste

Since 2019, Western has been working with researchers to replace old, energy-intensive ultra-low freezers with new, energy-efficient Thermo Scientific TSX Freezers. The program brought 34 new TSX freezers to campus so far, each using up to 70% less energy than older ultra-low freezers. The change is also expected to be saving the university approximately \$25,000 annually in energy costs!



## Sustainable Dining Revolution

Hospitality's purchasing is strongly guided by a **Sustainability Action Plan** committed to responsible sourcing, supporting local vendors, and waste reduction and diversion.

### A Cleaner Future

Caretaking Services reduced cleaning products by partnering with a preferred vendor and implementing the ES65 Program, which uses a single product with varying dilution ratios.

### Lighting the Way

During a renovation in 2021, energy efficient LED lighting was installed on two turf fields behind Western's stadium. The purchasing decision was made after the Sports and Recreation Department used Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) data to make a long-term case for their purchase. Not only does LED lighting have a longer lifespan, can also produce energy savings of up to 80%. The lights are preprogrammed to turn on at sunset and off immediately after play to increase energy savings.



The most sustainable purchase is the one we never make! The first step in the sustainable procurement decision is to ask yourself, “Do I really need to buy this?”. Each stage of product development, manufacturing, use, and disposal has big impacts. Rethink your true needs and aim to reduce consumption wherever you can. Simple changes can have a big difference. For example, printing double-sided cuts your need for office paper in half.

## Before you buy, ask yourself these 5 questions

# 1

### **Do I actually need to purchase this item?**

The best time to influence the sustainability of your purchase is before you buy. Set aside some time to consider: what need are we supporting? This is where some creative thinking, planning and research can help you make a more sustainable choice.

# 2

### **Is there an alternative approach?**

Think about the intention of the purchase and ask, “what is the best strategy to fulfill this intention?” Is there opportunity to procure a service instead of a product? You may find that a service provider can meet your need more sustainably (and often at lower cost) than purchasing and maintaining a product.

# 3

### **Is the good or service seasonal or temporary?**

If so, can it be rented instead of owned? You may also ask your colleagues: could the need be met with existing (repurposed) resources? Plan your purchases strategically so that they are sustainable and deployed towards your team's priorities.

# 4

### **Have I used this to the end of its useful life?**

You may be able to extend the lifespan of your current assets or have them repaired or refurbished instead of replaced. Bonus if the repair supports enterprise and employment in your community.

# 5

### **Can I reduce my rate of consumption?**

What is the minimum amount necessary to meet your need? This can help right-size your order, so your footprint is as small as possible. Check your inventory and plan for upcoming needs that will require specific materials and supplies. You are looking for the sweet spot where you can obtain discounts from an increased order size, while avoiding any increased waste.

# TIPS FOR TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

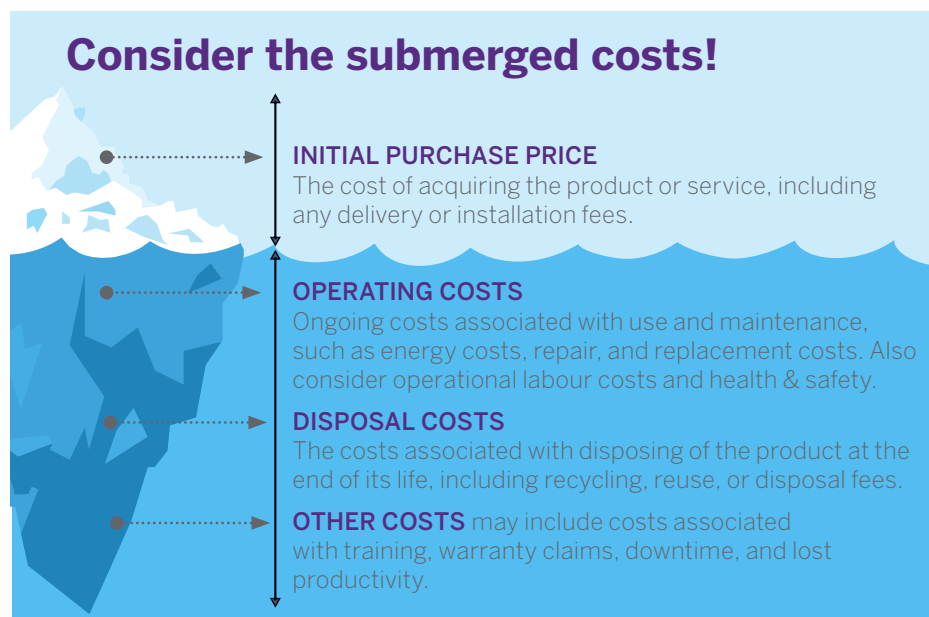
When making a purchase, it's crucial to factor in not just the initial cost but also any post-purchase costs like maintenance and operation expenses. A Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) assessment evaluates the profitability and sustainability of purchases throughout the entire product lifecycle, taking into account the financial costs incurred at each stage. Social and environmental impacts like energy consumption, worker safety, and waste disposal are among the additional costs that TCO considers. Utilizing TCO in procurement can benefit both our finances and our sustainability efforts.

## 6 Steps to TCO

1. **Define the scope:** Identify your needs, prioritize objectives, and verify the resourcing available.
2. **Identify costs:** Determine all associated costs, including upfront costs and those more hidden.
3. **Ask your vendors:** If possible, ask vendors to provide data on the life cycle costs of the product.
4. **Make the calculation:** Use the gathered data to calculate the total cost of each option.
5. **Make the decision:** Weigh the costs and benefits to arrive at a final decision.
6. **Measure the Impact:** After implementation, monitor and evaluate the impact of the decision.

## When to use TCO?

- When procuring a product, not a contract with multiple products.
- When procuring products that use resources and create waste (energy, water, etc.).
- For products that are disposable but have reusable alternatives.
- Products requiring regular maintenance or replacement.



# ECO-LABELS & VENDOR CERTIFICATIONS

How do we know if a product, service, or vendor is “walking the walk” when it comes its sustainability claims? One way is through looking for eco-labels or certifications that verify a product or vendor meets or exceeds a set of standards.

Not all eco-labels are created equal! There are considered to be three types of product eco-labels, Type I (independently verified), Type II (self-declared) and Type III (independently verified but require the consumer to have a high level of knowledge to assess). While all three types of eco-labels are worth considering, Type I Eco-labels tend to be more widely available, easy to identify and credible as they are certified by a third-party entity.

Below are some of our recommended Type I Eco-labels to look out for in your next purchase. You can also check out the following resources for more information: [ecolabelindex.com](http://ecolabelindex.com), [spot.ul.com](http://spot.ul.com), [scsglobalservices.com](http://scsglobalservices.com).

## LOOK FOR THE LABEL



**ECOLOGO Certification Program**  
Certifies reduced environmental impact across various products.  
*Example Products: building materials, cleaning supplies, electronics, office*



**Cradle to Cradle**  
Global standard for safe, circular, and responsibly made products.  
*Example Products: Construction, furniture, textiles, paper & plastic, packaging.*



**Canada Organic**  
Certifies that agricultural products meet organic standards, free of synthetic fertilizers/pesticides.  
*Example Products: Food and beverage, agricultural products, textiles.*



**Fairtrade**  
Focuses on ethical production practices and fair treatment for workers.  
*Example Products: Food, coffee, artisanal made products, textiles.*



**Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool**  
A leading environmental standard for technology products.  
*Example Products: Electronics*



**Forest Stewardship Council**  
Leading certification for responsible forestry products.  
*Example Products: Paper and wood products.*



## Where to look for more Information?

- Western's Sustainable Procurement Strategy
- Natural Resources Canada
- Circular Innovation Council – buying tools
- United States Environmental Protection Agency – Greener products

## Get Involved with Sustainability at Western!

Getting stuck in is the best way to perpetuate sustainability on campus. Most of our initiatives are powered by people. The more people that get involved, the more effective we will be. Please visit **Western Sustainability** to see a list of opportunities with which to be engaged.

## Contacts

### Procurement Services

Suite 6100, Support Services Building 1393 Western Road, London ON, N6G 1G9

T: 519-661-2111 ext. 85442

E: [procurement@uwo.ca](mailto:procurement@uwo.ca)

[www.uwo.ca/finance/procurement](http://www.uwo.ca/finance/procurement)

### Western Sustainability

Room 2301, Support Services Building 1393 Western Road, London ON, N6G 1G9

T: 519-661-2111 ext. 88300

E: [sustainability@uwo.ca](mailto:sustainability@uwo.ca)

[www.sustainability.uwo.ca](http://www.sustainability.uwo.ca)

### Client Services

Facilities Management, Support Services Building 1393 Western Road, London ON, N6G 1G9

T: 519-661-2111 ext. 83304

E: [fm-help@uwo.ca](mailto:fm-help@uwo.ca)

[www.uwo.ca/fm/client\\_services](http://www.uwo.ca/fm/client_services)



