

# Virginia Tech Sustainable Procurement Policy

## 1. Background

In accordance with the Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment and Sustainability Plan, the Virginia Tech Procurement Department [the Department] recognizes its responsibility to support the university in its efforts to minimize negative impacts on health and the environment while supporting a vibrant campus community and local economy. The Department recognizes that the types of products and services procured have inherent social, health, environmental and economic impacts, and that the Department should make procurement decisions that embody the university's commitment to sustainability whenever possible.

## 2. Purpose

This Sustainable Procurement Policy will complement and strengthen our commitment to sustainability and intends to:

- Identify those sustainability factors that shall be incorporated into procurement decisions;
- Provide implementation guidance;
- Empower employees to be innovative and demonstrate leadership by incorporating sustainability factors into procurement decisions;
- Complement university wide and department-specific sustainability goals and related policies; and communicate the Department's commitment to sustainable procurement.
- Encourage vendors to promote products and services that they offer which are most suited to the university's sustainability principles;
- Reduce the spectrum of environmental impacts from the university's use of products, including greenhouse gas emissions, landfill waste, health and safety risks, and resource consumption;
- Communicate the Department's commitment to sustainable procurement, by modeling the best product and services choices to the campus community, and other institutions of higher education;

- Reduce the environmental impacts of materials acquired for use in the operation, maintenance and upgrades of buildings, new building construction; and,
- Facilitate the reduction of waste generated by building occupants that is hauled to and disposed of in landfills or incineration facilities.

### 3. Policy

#### 3.1 General Policy Statement

Procurement Department employees and those with delegated procurement authority will procure materials, products or services in a manner that integrates fiscal responsibility and environmental stewardship whenever possible within the guidelines of the Purchasing Manual for Institutes of Higher Education. Each university department shall comply with this policy and actively encourage procurement decisions that reflect the policy objectives. The Procurement Department shall actively promote and encourage product and service acquisitions compliant to the policies and guidelines adopted herein.

#### 3.2 Sustainability Factors

Procurement Department employees shall incorporate whenever possible the following factors when writing specifications for, or procuring materials, products, or services.

Environmental factors which may be considered include, but are not limited to, the life cycle assessment of:

- Pollutant releases
- Toxicity
- Waste generation
- Water efficiency
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Energy efficiency
- Packaging and shipping impacts
- Depletion of natural resources
- Recyclability
- Use of recycled content

Fiscal factors to be considered may include, but are not limited to:

- Product efficiency which minimizes need
- Product performance, quality, and durability
- Upfront cost
- Life-cycle cost
- Leveraging of buying power through the utilization of cooperative, group purchasing and consortium contracts
- Impact on staff time and labor, including operational and maintenance requirements

While not all factors will be incorporated into every purchase, it is the intent of this policy that Procurement Department employees will make a good faith effort to incorporate and balance

these factors to the maximum extent possible.

#### 4. Use of Best Practices

Procurement Department employees will utilize best practices in sustainable procurement as they evolve whenever possible. As it applies to this policy, best practices in sustainable procurement are those that utilize leading edge sustainability factors, standards, and procedures in an efficient and effective way that is successful and replicable. The Procurement Department will promote and encourage strategies to reduce consumption due to the societal and community costs, such as landfill waste handling, toxin exposures, resource depletion, and greenhouse gas emissions.

*The following guidelines and best practices are provided and required to the extent practical:*

##### General

- Always look for environmental labeling, including recycling symbols and qualifying assertions such as ENERGY STAR, WaterSense, EPEAT, and/or Green Seal certified.
- When purchasing materials, supplies or equipment, purchases must meet sustainability requirements as may be specified in the solicitation documentation.
- Waste stream management within the buildings and among the grounds must be compliant with ~~specific~~ requirements, specifically for consumable goods and facilities alterations and additions.

##### 4.1 Applicable Codes and Laws

It is the intent of this policy to complement existing codes and laws. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to conflict or be inconsistent with applicable federal, state, or local procurement codes or laws.

## 5. Environmental Standards and Product and Certifications

5.1 Standards: The standard for all acquisitions shall be compliant at least to:

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards whenever published for a product or services; and
- The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

5.2 Third-Party Certifications: The Procurement Department shall apply the most stringent third-party label standard available for a product or service being acquired. The Department shall use independent, third-party social and/or environmental (eco) product or service label certifications when writing specifications for procuring materials, products, or services, whenever a responsible label standard is available. Qualifying labels shall be:

- Developed and awarded by an impartial third-party (examples include: Green Seal, ENERGY STAR, EPEAT, Environmental Choice and Forest Stewardship Foundation);
- Developed in a public, transparent, and broad stakeholder process; and
- Represent specific and meaningful leadership criteria for that product or service category.

In addition, whenever possible, label standards used in product or service specifications should represent standards that consider multiple attributes and life-cycle considerations, with claims verified by an independent third party.

## 5.3 Specifications and Contracts

The Director of Procurement shall be responsible for:

- Ensuring that specifications written by the Department comply with this policy and incorporate sustainable procurement best practices.
- Ensuring procurement manuals and other internal procedures reference this policy and incorporate best practices for specifying products and services that meet the intent of this policy; and,
- Developing and integrating sustainable procurement boilerplate language into solicitation document templates.

## 6. Implementation and Responsibilities

### 6.1 Acquisition Responsibilities

Leadership of those areas with delegated procurement authority shall:

- Serve on specification or best practice teams, to collaborate with other university staff and the Procurement Department in standards, strategies and specifications;
- Ensure internal policies and procedures that reference this policy and incorporate the use of sustainable products and services that meet the intent of this policy; and,
- Encourage pilot testing for environmentally preferable/sustainable products.

The Procurement Department shall:

- Promote and ensure that bid and contract strategies incorporate the most favorable standards and best practices in sustainable procurement;
- Stay current and informed on advances in sustainable procurement specifications and strategies; and,
- Consult with experts as needed when reviewing or designing specifications, to ensure progressive and emerging specifications for the product or service being solicited.

## 7. Education

Leadership of those areas with delegated procurement authority shall be responsible for:

- Building awareness of this policy through information dissemination and incorporation into routine employee trainings;
- Encouraging employee attendance at internal and external trainings related to sustainability; and
- Encouraging the use of environmentally preferable/sustainable products and services through information dissemination, development of internal procedures, pilot testing, and leading by example.

The Purchasing Department shall be responsible for:

- Developing employee sustainable procurement resources such as, but not limited to, standards, specifications, tools, and best practices;
- Developing buyer-specific training on sustainable procurement best practices that meet the intent of this policy;

- Developing buyer competency in communicating to other university departments about this policy and opportunities for incorporating sustainable procurement best practices into solicitations and contracts;
- Developing communication among higher education procurement professionals about sustainable procurement best practices; and
- Taking the lead in communicating to existing and potential vendors about this policy and related requirements.

## 8. Policy Review

The Director of Procurement shall be responsible for periodically bringing together internal stakeholders to review this policy for updates or to otherwise determine whether this policy is in alignment with other university sustainability efforts and policies. The policy review shall be completed at least every five years but may be done on a more frequent basis as needed.

## 9. Explanation of Sustainable Terms

Following are routine terms related to sustainability as they apply to this policy.

Alternative/Hybrid Fuel Vehicle - vehicles that are powered by fuels that reduce air pollution, reduce fossil fuel consumption, solid waste and/or hazardous waste that result from their manufacture, use, service, and maintenance. The term is used to refer to various types of vehicles, including compressed natural gas, biodiesel, ethanol, electric and hybrid electric, propane, liquefied natural gas, and hydrogen fuel cell.

Biodegradable - capable of readily decomposing under natural conditions.

Durable Goods - goods which do not quickly wear out, or more specifically, it yields services or utility over time rather than being completely used up when used once.

Energy Efficiency - refers to products that meet or exceed the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) federal energy management program's energy efficiency recommendations or that meet the energy efficiency criteria of the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ENERGY STAR program.

ENERGY STAR - A voluntary partnership among DOE, EPA, product manufacturers, local utilities and retailers. Partners help promote efficient products by labeling with the ENERGY STAR logo and educating consumers about the benefits of energy efficiency.

Environmentally Preferable - products or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or service that serve the same purpose. The product or service comparison may consider raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance or disposal.

EPEAT- the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool {<http://www.epeat.net>}

Integrated Pest Management- the coordinated use of pest information, environmental information, and available pest control methods to prevent unacceptable levels of pest damage by the most economical means and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

Ongoing Consumables - Goods that may be depleted or worn out by use and must therefore be regularly replenished.

Post-Consumer Material - refers to a material or finished product that has served its intended use and has been discarded for disposal or recovery, having completed its life as a consumer item. "Post-consumer material" is part of the broader category of "recovered material."

Practicable - means sufficient in performance and reasonably available at a competitive cost.

Reconditioned/Remanufactured - the process of restoring used durable products to meet original performance standards. Remanufacturing has many other names, including: rebuilding, retreading, reconditioning, and refurbishing.

Recycled Content - materials that have been recovered from the solid waste stream, either during the manufacturing process (pre-consumer), or after consumer use (post-consumer).

Recycling- placing used materials into channels that reuse them.

Waste Stream - The total flow of solid waste from homes, businesses, institutions, and manufacturing plants that is recycled, burned, or disposed of in landfills.

Xeriscaping/Sustainable Landscaping - an ecologically sound landscaping approach that is water conscious.

## 10. Additional Resources

This section provides university staff, vendors, and potential vendors resources for identifying suppliers of sustainable products as well as best practices which may be useful in the successful application of this sustainable procurement policy. The following lists of organizations and sites may be consulted when purchasing products and services.

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education: {<http://www.aashe.org>} AASHE empowers higher education faculty, administrators, staff and students to be effective change agents and drivers of sustainability innovation.

ENERGY STAR: {[www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)} - Develops energy efficiency guidelines and helps promote the utilization of efficient products through the ENERGY STAR logo.

EPA Green Resources: {[www.epa.gov/greenerproducts](http://www.epa.gov/greenerproducts)} Allows users to search for EPA programs related to greener products based on the type of user and their specific product interests.

EPEAT: {<http://www.epeat.net>} The Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool

consists of a set of voluntary environmental criteria for identifying energy efficient and environmentally preferable computers and other electronic components.

Green Seal: {[www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org)} Establishes environmental standards and awards its “green seal of approval” to products meeting its standards. Green Seal has created environmental standards for more than 30 product categories and regularly publishes its Choose Green Reports, which evaluate the environmental impacts of products.

My Green Lab: {[www.mygreenlab.org](http://www.mygreenlab.org)} Formed to unify and lead scientists, vendors, designers, energy providers, and others in a common drive toward a world in which all research reflects the highest standards of social and environmental responsibility.

New American Dream: {[www.newdream.org](http://www.newdream.org)} Provides extensive information on purchasing energy efficiency and environmentally preferable products via its Responsible Purchasing Network.

US EPA WaterSense: {[www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense)} Provides labeling, certification, information regarding water efficient products, contractors, and programs.

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality: {<http://www.deq.virginia.gov>}- The Department of Environmental Quality protects and enhances Virginia’s environment, and promotes the health and well-being of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Virginia Tech Office of Sustainability: {<http://www.facilities.vt.edu/sustainability>} The Office of Sustainability acts as a central hub to connect the many sustainability champions and efforts taking place all across campus.