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Executive Summary

The University of Colorado (CU) is a national leader in higher education sustainability practices. CU can expand its status as a leader in this field by fully developing its sustainable procurement program. Sustainable procurement recognizes that anytime someone from the university makes a purchase, that spend has three impacts – 1) economic, 2) social, and 3) environmental impacts. To maximize the amount of good from that spend, CU needs to have clear visibility into its supply chain to understand risk and to identify areas of strengths and needed improvements. The CU Sustainable Procurement Program is also an opportunity to collaborate with the University's strategic suppliers to build stronger partnerships around supporting sustainability on the campuses. It is also an opportunity to support CU departments to assess the "need" for the items it purchases and ultimately emphasize restraint over unbridled consumerism. The most sustainable purchase is one that is avoided entirely. This guideline lays out the vision and mission of the Sustainable Procurement program, sets goals for the next fiscal year, and outlines how to begin evaluating "sustainable" spending in a variety of categories.

Sustainable Procurement Program Vision

The University of Colorado fully integrates sustainability into procurement to be a force for good by supporting a healthy and thriving local economy and community, minimizing negative environmental, social, and economic procurement-related impacts, and developing a campus-wide culture that understands the power of sustainable purchasing. Through total cost of ownership reductions, CU Procurement will help enable broader sustainability initiatives across the CU system.

Defining Sustainability and Sustainable Procurement

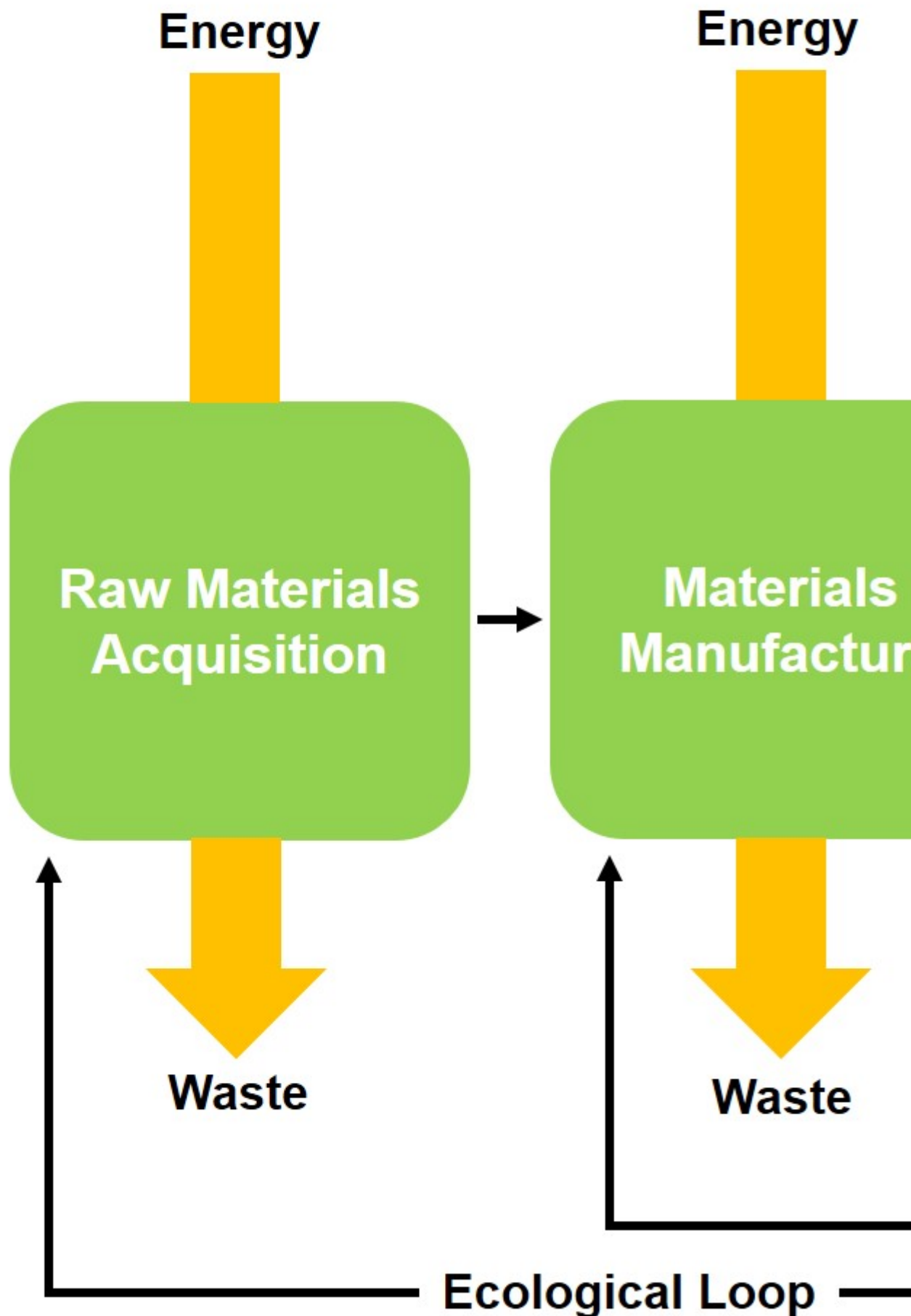
Sustainability -related issues have been increasingly in the spotlight in the past few years, but sustainability itself is not a new concept. In 1987, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development described sustainable development as meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Today sustainability emphasizes maximizing the benefits of any decision across social, environmental, and financial impacts.

Sustainable procurement is the adoption and integration of sustainability principles into procurement processes and decisions, while also ensuring they meet the requirements of the University and its stakeholders. It means that purchased goods and services generate benefits, not only for the organization, but also for the environment, society, and the economy. It encompasses both: product/materials sustainability as well as the sustainability of supplier

practices and supply chain transparency.

Every day, thousands of CU employees purchase goods and services that have economic, social, and environmental impacts. CU must assess the entire product life cycle through sourcing of raw materials, manufacturing, packaging, transportation, distribution, retailing, use of the product, and then management of the product when it is no longer needed – through reuse, repair, or safe recycling and/or disposal and transparently communicate the results.

Product Life Cycle



Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines Overview

CU recognizes its responsibility to minimize negative impacts on human health and the environment while supporting a diverse, equitable, and vibrant community and economy. CU acknowledges that the products and services the University buys have inherent social, human, health, environmental, and economic impacts and that CU should make procurement decisions that embody, promote, and encourage the University's commitment to sustainability. These guidelines intend to:

- Encourage the prudent purchase of products found to be necessary to buy and the use of materials, products, and services that best align with CU's fiscal, environmental, climate change, social, community, and performance goals;
- Reduce the spectrum of environmental and social impacts from the use of products, including reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, reduction of landfill waste, health and safety risks, and resource consumption;
- Empower department and university purchasing staff to be innovative and demonstrate leadership by incorporating progressive and best-practice sustainability specifications, strategies and practices in procurement decisions;
- Encourage vendors to promote products and services that they offer which are most suited to CU's sustainability goals;



A. Source Reduction and Waste Minimization

CU will institute practices that reduce waste and result in the purchase of fewer products

whenever practical and cost-effective, but without reducing safety or workplace quality, including but not limited to maximizing the following:

- Minimize packaging or use preferred forms of packaging;
- Conserve natural resources;
- Communicate electronically instead of printing;
- Use washable and reusable dishes and utensils;
- Use rechargeable batteries;
- Lease long-life products when service agreements support maintenance and repair rather than purchasing;
- Share equipment and occasional use items;
- Choose durable products rather than disposable;
- Reduce product weight or thickness when effectiveness is not jeopardized in products such as, but not limited to, paper and compostable plastic liner bags;
- Eliminate the use of fossil-based plastic;
- Buy in bulk, when storage and operations exist to support it;
- Reuse products such as, but not limited to, file folders, storage boxes, office supplies, and furnishings.

B. Environmental Factors

Environmental factors to be considered in product and service acquisitions include, but are not limited to, the assessment of:

- Pollutant releases and toxins, especially persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs), air emissions, and water pollution;
- Waste generation and waste minimization;
- Greenhouse gas emissions;
- Recyclability and recycled content;
- Energy consumption, energy efficiency, use of renewable energy;
- Depletion of natural resources;
- The potential impact on human health and the environment;
- Impacts on biodiversity
- Environmental practices that vendors and manufacturers have incorporated into their office and production process.

C. Social Equity Factors

Product and service acquisitions shall consider and incorporate other university policies of social equity, responsible purchasing, and justice, as appropriate to each acquisition, in a way that supports each of the policy initiatives holistically and in concert with each other:

- Small, local, and minority-owned business opportunity and participation
- Fair labor practices, health and retirement benefits, safety, livable wages, and worker rights;
- International Fair Labor Code of Conduct, including prohibitions on forced overtime, child labor, health and safety equal to the laws of the country of the manufacturer;
- Environmental justice (disproportionate environmental and health impacts on different population groups)

D. Environmental Standards, Products, and Certifications

CU shall apply the most stringent third-party label standard available when applicable for a product or service being acquired. CU shall use independent, third-party social and/or environmental (eco) product or service label certifications when writing specifications for, or procuring materials, products, or services, whenever a responsible label standard is available. In addition, whenever possible, label standards used in product or service specifications should represent standards that take into account multiple attributes and life-cycle considerations, with claims verified by an independent third party.

See Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines for guidance on specific environmental standards for purchasing categories ^[2]

Source URL: <https://www.cu.edu/psc/procurement/sustainability/about>

Links

[1] <https://www.cu.edu/psc/procurement/sustainability/about>

[2] <https://www.cu.edu/psc/procurement/sustainability/sustainable-purchasing-guidelines>