



# **Environmental Guidelines for Business Partners**

## **Summary**

This policy outlines environmental standards that should be reached by “business partners” working with Green Mountain College, as well as standards for business partners aspiring to become “preferred” partners. The minimum standards require reasonable efforts to disclose information that can help the College understand the environmental impact of its purchases and have an opportunity to purchase more environmentally-friendly products or services if it chooses to. In order to reach preferred status, a business partner must go beyond the effort to disclose information and show sustained commitment to high environmental standards in products and services. The criteria for each of these standards are outlined below.

### **I. Definition of a Business Partner**

A “business partner” is an entity involved in the production, distribution, and/or sale of products or services on campus, for which there is a contractual arrangement with a value greater than \$50,000 for the duration of longer than one year.

Leasing contracts, such as those affiliated with housing or classroom space, may be exempt from this policy with permission of the College. Exemptions may also be granted in the event that a product or service is essential to College activities or operations and cannot be obtained from a supplier in compliance with the guidelines.

Vendors who do not meet the expenditure threshold may opt to be business partners or preferred business partners if they can prove that they meet the requirements.

### **II. Minimum Environmental Standards for All Business Partners:**

Ability & Willingness to Share Knowledge of Products & Services:

- Willingness to assist the college in calculating the embodied greenhouse gas emissions in the products purchased through the business by providing data that are readily available

and/or easy to obtain (e.g. if data exist on shipping distance or names of raw resources used in construction of a product)

- Willingness to assist the college in calculating the answers to STARS-related questions, such as the quantity of specific cleaning products purchased in a given year, for example (STARS is the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's Sustainability Tracking and Rating System)
- Ability to find and present the College with the more environmentally-preferred options available out of the general category of product or service the College is purchasing, even when there is no clear standard in that industry (i.e. even when there is no E-PEAT, Green Seal, Eco-logo, FSC, or equivalent certification for the product type). In order to know which products are environmentally-preferable, a business must have the ability to estimate key environmental characteristics of a product relative to other options (e.g. how much recycled material it contains, how much embodied energy it contains, how much embodied water it contains or whether or not it contains chemicals known to be harmful to human and ecological health).

Businesses that are classified as “disadvantaged,” “social enterprise,” or “local community-based,” as defined in the inclusive and local purchasing policy, may have extra time to comply with these standards provided they provide a sufficient explanation about why they need more time (e.g. They have a small number of staff).

### **III. Preferred Business Partner Environmental Standards:**

In addition to complying with the minimum environmental standards, the business partner must comply with two or more of the following for a majority of their products or services sold to the College in order to be considered a “preferred vendor”:

- Exceed industry averages for maximizing percentage of recycled material in products
- Exceed industry averages for minimizing embodied energy in the supply chains of products or services
- Exceed industry averages for minimizing embodied greenhouse gas emissions in the supply chains of the products or services
- Exceed industry averages for minimizing embodied water in the supply chains of the products or services
- Exceed industry averages for minimizing virgin inputs in the creation of products
- Exceed industry averages for environmental and human health standards related to the toxicity of products or services
- Exceed industry averages for the “green performance” of the office or factory where the majority of the product or service is produced (e.g. LEED Gold building)

In order to prove achievement, the business partner must provide sufficient documentation and/or third-party certification to Green Mountain College in the form of written correspondence or a scheduled oral presentation. In cases where the industry average is unknown, the burden is on the business partner to find a reasonable proxy. The College may automatically grant preferred status to partners who have sufficiently proved that they've excelled in more than two

of these areas before this policy was drafted. The College reserves the right to deny any request for preferred status if it has doubts about the achievement.

Businesses that are classified as “disadvantaged,” “social enterprise,” or “local community-based,” as defined in the inclusive and local purchasing policy, may attempt to prove achievement more than once per year. Other businesses should limit achievement requests to once per fiscal year, unless otherwise directed.

After preferred status is granted, a business may advertise this status, but an official certification will not be granted.

#### **IV. Implementation**

The Business Office will be responsible for ensuring that the guidelines are followed. The Sustainability Office will manage the policy, working with business partners to help them comply.