



# USC University of Southern California

## Business Services

### SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT GUIDELINES

#### **PURPOSE**

USC's Sustainable Procurement Guidelines lay out the sustainability requirements for products and services purchased by the university and identify those attributes that align with USC's goal to purchase sustainable goods and services that perform well and can be acquired at a reasonable cost.

It is critical that all campus constituents make best efforts to prioritize these guidelines when making purchasing decisions. The USC procurement department will seek to promote and contract with suppliers who prioritize sustainable practices in their product and service offerings, whenever practical.

To learn more about sustainable purchasing at USC, refer to the [Sustainable Purchasing](#) page on the USC Business Services website. Additionally, the university has waste goals that can be reviewed at [sustainability.usc.edu/2028-framework/goals](https://sustainability.usc.edu/2028-framework/goals)

#### **APPLICABILITY**

These guidelines are intended to apply to general business-related purchases.

#### **GUIDELINES**

##### **General Criteria**

All administrative and academic units should purchase Environmentally Preferable Products or Services where practical and when those products or services perform satisfactorily and at best value. For information on how to purchase Environmentally Preferable Products, please visit the [Buying Green](#) page on the USC Business Services website.

In support of the university's effort to increase procurements made through Diverse Suppliers, regardless of source of funds, awarding and contracting with diverse and/or local suppliers when possible is highly encouraged. A list of the diverse classifications and local ZIP codes that contribute to USC's Diverse Supplier usage goal can be found on the [USC Business Services website](#). USC's Diverse Supplier Guidelines can be found at [www.policy.usc.edu/diverse-supplier-guidelines](https://www.policy.usc.edu/diverse-supplier-guidelines).

## **Efficient Ordering Practices**

In support of the university's effort to minimize its greenhouse gas emissions, it is strongly encouraged to not only minimize the distance products need to travel to campus by purchasing from local suppliers, but to also minimize the number of deliveries to campus by adopting efficient ordering practices whenever possible.

Some examples of efficient ordering practices:

- Consolidating orders and maximizing order size
- Buy only what you need
- Reducing and limiting order frequency
- Standardize products and the number of suppliers to buy from

## **Category Specific**

### **A. Cleaning Supplies**

The university will work towards increasing the procurement of cleaning products with reduced concentrations of chemical contaminants, as well as janitorial paper products with certain environmentally friendly attributes (e.g., made with recycled content and/or post-consumer content, processed chlorine-free, and biodegradable).

Cleaning and janitorial paper products purchased by USC personnel and janitorial contractor(s) should meet one or more of the following certifications when possible:

- ECOLOGO (UL Environment)
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- Green Seal
- U.S. EPA Safer Choice or Design for the Environment (DfE)
- USDA Certified BioBased
- Cradle to Cradle

Cleaning products include general purpose bathroom, glass, and carpet cleaners; degreasing agents; biologically active cleaning products (enzymatic and microbial products); floor-care products (e.g., floor finish and floor finish strippers); hand soaps and hand sanitizers, disinfectants, and metal polish and other specialty cleaning products. Most of these products are provided by USC's contracted janitorial service provider so do not require purchase by USC departments.

Janitorial paper products include toilet tissue, tissue paper, paper towels, hand towels, and napkins.

Other cleaning and janitorial products and materials (e.g., cleaning devices that use only ionized water or electrolyzed water) are excluded.

## **B. Office and Breakroom Supplies**

The university will work towards increasing the procurement of on-going purchases such as paper and other office products with certain environmentally friendly attributes (e.g., post-consumer recycled content, processed chlorine-free, recyclable, etc.).

### **1. Office Paper and Printing**

All multi-use office paper purchased by the university shall be made from at least 30% post-consumer recycled content and/or be Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified (FSC 100%, FSC Recycled, or FSC Mixed).

Consider using toner cartridges that are “remanufactured” and/or high yield”, when possible depending on device specific instructions. Ensure the cartridge company guarantees that their remanufactured cartridges meet or exceed the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) standards. USC has negotiated pricing with Office Depot (ODP) for those that meet this standard, and they are available on the ODP punchout catalog. If utilizing a non-preferred source or Amazon Business, please first look for a remanufactured option before buying new.

Members of the USC community seeking to significantly reduce their office printing costs and minimize their environmental impact can take advantage of TrojanPrint, USC’s Managed Print Services. For more information, please refer to the [TrojanPrint \(Managed Print Services\)](https://itservices.usc.edu/trojan-print/) webpage at <https://itservices.usc.edu/trojan-print/>.

### **2. Office Supplies**

Other paper office supplies – such as file folders, calendars, envelopes, and writing pads – should be made from at least 30% post-consumer recycled content. Preference shall be given to uncoated and non-laminated paper products whenever possible.

Preference should be given to items that are reusable or refillable. Non-paper office supplies – such as pens, mechanical pencils, highlighters, markers, scissors, staplers, and binders – should be selected from options with recycled content and be free of antimicrobial coatings, when available and possible.

### **3. Breakroom Products**

Food service ware – such as plates, bowls, cups, and cutlery – should be reusable/extended-use instead of single use. If extended-use is not feasible, choose items that are bio-based, BPI certified compostable, or USDA Certified BioBased.

Per USC’s Single-Use Plastics Elimination Policy, all USC purchased beverages must be in glass bottles or aluminum cans. Discard used glass and aluminum in the appropriate recycle container on campus.

## **C. Durable Goods**

### **1. Indoor Furniture**

The university will work towards increasing the procurement of furniture meeting specifications for certain hazardous chemical classes (e.g., flame retardants, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), polyvinyl chloride (PVC), heavy metals, etc.).

The following certifications and/or specifications should be considered when purchasing furniture:

- Cradle to Cradle
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- BIFMA level®
- PVC Free
- SCS Indoor Advantage
- UL GREENGUARD

Preference should also be given for durability of goods, refurbishing existing where practical and possible.

### **2. Electronics**

The university will work towards increasing the procurement of electronics with certain environmentally friendly attributes (e.g., reduced or no toxic constituents, recycled content, designed for recycling, reduced materials use, energy efficient, extended product life/upgradeable, remanufactured, etc.).

The following specifications must be considered when purchasing electronic equipment: EPEAT certified (verification level “Bronze”, “Silver”, or “Gold”) and ENERGY STAR qualified. All electronics purchased by the university should achieve EPEAT Gold or highest available certification and/or be ENERGY STAR certified, where applicable.

### **3. Information Technology (IT) Equipment**

All IT equipment purchased should meet the EPEAT criteria for certification at the Gold or highest available EPEAT level.

IT equipment includes all electronic product categories covered and defined by the current EPEAT ecolabel, including:

- Computers (desktop computers, notebook computers, integrated desktop computers, portable all-in-one computers, slates/tablets, small-scale servers, thin clients, and workstations)
- Displays (monitors and signage displays)
- Servers
- Imaging equipment (copiers, digital duplicators, facsimile machines, multifunction devices, printers, mailing machines, and scanners)
- Televisions
- Mobile phones
- Photovoltaic modules and inverters

#### 4. Non-IT Equipment

All electrical products purchased – such as ceiling fans, refrigerators, heating/cooling appliances, air purifiers, water coolers, and vending machines – should have ENERGY STAR certification if the ENERGY STAR label is available for the product category.

When the ENERGY STAR label is not available for the product category, products purchased are encouraged to meet or exceed the upper 25% of energy efficiency for their product category, as designated by the Federal Energy Management Program. Please refer to [www.energy.gov/eere/femp/search-energy-efficient-products](http://www.energy.gov/eere/femp/search-energy-efficient-products) for more information.

Please note that all EPEAT-registered products meet the ENERGY STAR technical specifications, however, not all ENERGY STAR qualified products (such as computers and displays) are EPEAT-registered because EPEAT includes additional environmental attributes rather than just energy efficiency.

#### D. Catering & Events (Food Service Providers)

As part of the university's Assignment: Earth goals of building a more circular economy by achieving zero-waste, USC will strive for sustainable catering events practices. Outlined below is a guide to ensuring your next catering event utilizes environmentally and socially preferable products and services that help the university reach the goal of being zero-waste. Be sure to communicate to your catering service provider that USC is a sustainable campus. Also, promote your event as a "green event" and encourage participation in sustainable practices.

Information regarding how USC is working towards the goals set in Assignment: Earth such as zero waste, water reduction, and carbon neutrality can be found in the [Facilities Planning & Management Sustainable Design & Construction Guidelines](#)

#### Making Your Event Sustainable

Hosting sustainable "green events" is a great way for you to advance sustainability on campus. Little behavioral changes can add up to a big environmental impact!

- To reduce your carbon foot print, reduce the amount of meat you serve and/or consider serving a vegetarian menu.
- Stop waste before it starts. Consider not giving away swag.
- Go digital by sending invitations through email lists and social networking sites. Don't print your materials. Use computers for presenting.
- Reduce single occupancy car trips and use [Traveler](#) to find alternative transportation options.
- A day or two before your event, connect with local organizations such as [St. Francis](#) or the [Trojan Food Pantry](#) to set up leftover food donations.
- Food leftovers end up in landfill, so be mindful of portion control. USC has eliminated [single-use plastic beverage bottles from campus](#). Use [hydration stations](#), water coolers/dispensers, and water fountains instead.
- Work with vendors who supply reusable service ware such as plates, glasses, cutlery, stir sticks, platters, and serving materials.

- Provide composting bins and contact FPM a day prior to the event to schedule compost pickup post-event. Assign volunteers to help guests recycle and compost properly.
- FPM can provide waste bins with “landfill” and “recycling” signage. Check out [RecycLA.com](http://RecycLA.com) for more waste sorting instructions and signage. Place waste diversion bins in high-traffic areas during the event, including set-up and breakdown. Make sure recycling items are clean and dry so they don’t contaminate the recycling bins.

## **Caterer Selection**

When choosing to do business with a catering service for an event at the university, it is important to share with the vendor that USC is a sustainable campus. Considering the above bullet points, ask about ways in which the vendor can help USC achieve it’s goal of zero-waste.

Look for caterers with certifications such as the [Green Restaurant Certification \(GRA\)](#) or [Fair Trade USA](#). Additionally, the below food categories are considered sustainable if it meets at least one of the criteria. Insist that your caterer uses one of these sustainable food sources.

- **Seafood**
  - Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Certified
  - Monterey Bay Aquarium Watch Sustainability Ranking System (MBA Sustainable)
  - Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP)
  - Sea Pact Member (sustainability improvement within seafood industry)
- **Protein**
  - Never Ever Program Member (hormone free/antibiotic free/not fed animal by-products)
  - Certified Humane Raised & Handled
  - American Grassfed Association Certified (AGA Certified)
  - Pasture Raised
- **Produce**
  - Locally sourced within 275 mile radius or within the state
  - Antibiotic free
  - USDA Organic
  - Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)
  - Protected Harvest Certified
  - Non-GMO Project Certified
  - Farm Sustainability Assessment
  - Sustainably Grown Certified
- **Groceries**
  - USDA Organic
  - Fair Trade Certified
  - Non-GMO Certified
  - Global Growers
  - Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)
- **Dairy**
  - Locally sourced within 275 mile radius or within the state
  - USDA Organic
  - Non-GMO Certified

- Antibiotic Free
  - Pasture Raised
  - USDA Graded Cage-free
  - rBST free
- **Disposable Items**
    - Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) Certified Compostable
    - Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) Certified
    - Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified
    - USDA Certified Biobased Product
    - EcoLogo Certified
    - Green Seal Certified

### **E. Promotional Garments and Products (excludes resale)**

The university will work towards purchasing promotional items with environmentally friendly attributes (e.g., made from organic and/or recycled materials) as well as those made with respect to fundamental individual and employee rights.

When cost effective, look for garments and products made from organic and natural materials like cotton, hemp, linen, or wool which are biodegradable, as opposed to synthetic materials derived from plastics such as polyester and nylon.

When purchasing promotional garments and products made from synthetic materials – such as polyester, nylon, rayon, or spandex – preference should be given to those made from recycled materials.

Additionally, garments dyed with natural materials are recommended, when available.

Several of USC's Preferred Suppliers for promotional goods publish a sustainable product listing to make selection of these options easier for purchase. Requesters and Requisitioners can go to the Buying Green page of the Business Services Website for links to supplier specific eco-conscious product offerings.

## DEFINITIONS

**Environmentally Preferable Product:** A product that has a lesser or reduced negative effect on human health and the environment when compared to competing products that serve the same purpose.

**High-yield:** Regarding a printer cartridge, it indicates that the cartridge contains about twice as much ink or toner as an equivalent standard-yield cartridge.

**Post-consumer Recycled Content:** Material from finished goods that have been used and then tossed into the recycling bin, such as paper, shipping boxes, empty plastic bottles, and aluminum cans.

**Recycled Content:** Material that may be derived from post-consumer waste, industrial scrap, manufacturing waste, or other waste that would otherwise have been wasted.

**Remanufactured:** Indicates the product (such as a toner cartridge) has already been used before but has been refurbished to use again. Please note that a “refilled” cartridge is not the same as a “remanufactured” cartridge.

## SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT RESOURCES

- A. [USC Office of Sustainability](#)
- B. [EPA’s Sustainability Resources](#)
- C. [EPA’s Comprehensive Procurement Guideline Program](#)
- D. [The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education – \(Aashe\)](#)  
<https://www.aashe.org/>