

Boston University Sustainable Purchasing Program

V. 1.0 Published November 2021

Introduction

Boston University strives to be an industry leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving Zero Waste, as outlined in [Boston University's Climate Action Plan](#) and [Zero Waste Plan](#), by embracing best practices for **sustainable sourcing and procurement of goods and services**.

For every ton of material burned or buried locally, 71 tons of material were disposed upstream through mining, manufacturing, and distribution of products.¹ The Zero Waste Hierarchy of Highest and Best Use recognizes that “more energy can be saved, and global warming impacts decreased, by **reducing waste, reusing products, recycling and composting** than can be produced from burning discards or recovering landfill gases.”²

The University seeks to identify, adopt, and promote measurable strategies to reduce its emissions from purchasing and waste-related activities. The University will rethink how it purchases goods and services. First, we will **prioritize reduction of product purchases** overall; then, **consider used and surplus goods** before considering new goods. BU aims to **avoid single-use products and packaging, buy remanufactured or durable goods, and lease/share equipment**.

The University defines **sustainable goods and services** as those which **deliver value (quality and cost) to BU, and for the environment and society**. The University is committed to the stewardship of the environment, fair labor practices, supplier diversity, reducing the risk of exposure to harmful chemicals, and minimizing adverse effects of the University's purchasing decisions. BU will source goods and services from strategic suppliers that are aligned with these goals.

The scope of the Sustainable Purchasing Program covers consumable goods, chemicals for cleaning and landscaping, appliances and equipment, electronics, furniture, vehicles, and transportation products. Separately, BU Dining and Auxiliary Services have developed goals and tracking sustainable purchasing of food and related non-food products.³

¹ Wasting and Recycling in the United States, 2000, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, page 3: ilsr.org/wasting-and-recycling-in-the-united-states-2000/

² ZWIA Zero Waste Community Principles: zwia.org/zero-waste-community-principles/

³ In FY20 nearly 29% of BU Dining's food purchases were either local – within 250 miles of campus – or third-party certified for environmental sustainability, humane animal care, fair labor practices, or diverse business ownership. More information on BU Dining's [sustainable food purchases](#) and [sustainable non-food purchases](#) can be found on the [BU Dining website](#).

Table of Contents

Purpose	3
Process	3
Guidelines for Shoppers	4
Guidelines for Suppliers	4
Sustainable Purchasing Categories	6
Multi-Category Guidance: Chemicals of Concern	6
Consumable Goods	8
Cleaning Supplies	10
Pest Control & Landscaping	11
Appliances & Equipment	11
Electronics	12
Furniture	12
Fleet	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Travel & Transportation	14

Purpose

This Sustainable Purchasing Program (SPP) is intended to **maximize University departments' budgets** through the reduction of natural resource usage, while improving environmental, social, and health impacts. The impacts of our purchasing decisions will help facilitate the reduction of waste generated by Boston University through empowering shoppers to make **informed purchasing decisions**.

University purchasing should be consistent with these **guiding principles**:

1. **Conservation of Resources**: Minimize the consumption of nonrenewable natural resources through showing **preference for used, salvaged, or borrowed goods, demand forecasting and evaluating the pros and cons of alternatives**.
2. **Sustainable Innovation**: Leverage the University's purchasing power to strengthen sustainable markets and support innovation by sourcing and procuring environmentally preferred products and services which deliver best total value to BU. The University shall **cultivate strategic supplier relationships** to identify opportunities to purchase products and services that are produced and sold by businesses with strong environmental management standards, policies, and practices.
3. **Supply Chain Practices**: Seek suppliers that adhere to fair labor practices and consider their products' and services' impacts on human health. Partner with strategic suppliers which employ **social equity business practices**, providing preference to diverse suppliers, suppliers with social-focused business models, Social Benefit Corporations (B-Corps), including capabilities to track and report spend to such suppliers to Boston University.
4. **Resource Lifecycles**: Boston University shall, whenever feasible, show contractual preference for **suppliers that strive to mitigate lifecycle impacts** through "closed loop" or cradle to cradle product stewardship programs and specify durable goods or those that can be reused or disposed of in a responsible manner. Prioritize suppliers with solutions to minimize waste from their products and delivery of their services.
5. **Measurement**: Establish a set of **measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) with strategic suppliers** to measure sustainable impact, for both end-products and processes that strive to mitigate life cycle impacts.

Process

As this program develops, BU Sourcing & Procurement and Sustainability will work with departments and suppliers to:

- **Monitor spend on consumable goods** in order to measure our progress on source reduction and sustainable purchasing
- When practical, vet the sustainable practices of bidders on strategic initiatives through a **competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process** so that multiple award factors can be weighed to help achieve the best total value.
- Recommend allotting a **minimum of 15% of the available points** of the selection criteria on the supplier scorecard to sustainability when a competitive RFP is issued
- Promote **sustainably sourced products and services**
- Promote the use of **bulk shipping**

- **Reduce packaging**, utilize reusable delivery containers, and minimize product protection packaging
- Encourage the development of **take-back programs** for products at the end of their useful life
- **Pursue a reduction in delivery frequency** as a criteria in contract negotiations. **Consider restricting delivery days** to twice per week, on alternate days from recycling/waste pickups for any non-critical purchase
 - **Develop a tiered program for suppliers** based on how critical their goods and services are to daily operations on our campuses
- Encourage the use of **low- or zero-emission vehicles** for delivery of goods to BU, giving preference to suppliers that are/work with delivery service companies that are EPA SmartWay program partners

Guidelines for Shoppers

The SPP is intended to educate and inform the Boston University shopping community on our sustainability goals as an institution. Many shoppers have indicated that they want to purchase more sustainably, and are unsure how to do so. With the SPP, shoppers will have a better understanding of **sustainability standards** that are pertinent to BU. University departments shall **consider sustainability in every purchase** of goods and services made at Boston University.

When a competitive RFP is issued, a **minimum of 15% of the available points of the selection criteria on the supplier scorecard shall be allotted to sustainability**. Factors that may be considered include, but are not limited to, environmental preference, human health implications, or social equity business practices. University departments shall follow the procedures outlined in the [Request for Proposal \(RFP\) Process](#) [Policy 6.2.11].

Shoppers should determine if their purchasing need can be served by **used or surplus goods** before buying new. Check furniture product availability through **University Surplus & Exchange**. Additional product categories will be made available via exchange in the coming year.

When shoppers order new items through catalogs, the chosen **supplier should recommend sustainable choices** for the requested items.

Shoppers are encouraged to **consolidate orders and minimize purchase order requests** to reduce deliveries on campus.

The Sustainable Purchasing Categories below focus on popular product categories to assist shoppers with their purchases.

Guidelines for Suppliers

The SPP is an important tool to educate and inform suppliers on our sustainability goals as an institution. The University seeks to identify, implement, and promote measurable strategies to **reduce its emissions from purchasing and waste-related activities** (Scope 3 emissions). The University will work with suppliers to promote sustainably sourced products and services, implement bulk shipping, reduce packaging, utilize reusable delivery containers, and minimize product protection packaging. Additionally, we will be encouraging the development of **take-back programs** for products at the end of their useful life. Internally, BU will be **monitoring spend on consumable goods** in order to measure our progress in source reduction and sustainable purchasing.

Suppliers will be asked to **identify sustainable items** within their product catalogs. When shoppers order through catalogs, the chosen supplier should **recommend sustainable choices** for the requested items.

For all RFP's there will be a **section dedicated to supplier sustainability** which will require responses about the supplier's sustainability commitments, ability to support BU's commitments, third party or industry recognitions, product lifecycle, and logistics. Responses to these questions will be taken into consideration when making an award.

During the registration process for new suppliers, the University will request **partnership on our sustainability initiatives**. When establishing contracts with suppliers, a section in the business terms will be dedicated to sustainability. Supplier responses to sustainability RFP questions can be used as a baseline metric to incorporate into the contract.

In addition to a requirement for key strategic suppliers to provide sustainability data and metrics based on University purchases, suppliers will be encouraged to **promote sustainable products** to shoppers in advance of order completion. Strategic suppliers should also subscribe to [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) or [Product Stewardship guidelines](#) , thereby **sharing responsibility for end-of-life product and packaging management**.

The University will encourage suppliers to utilize **low- or zero-emission vehicles for delivery** of goods to BU. The University will give preference to delivery service companies that are [EPA SmartWay](#) program partners.

Sustainable Purchasing Categories

The following qualifications shall be incorporated into all Boston University solicitations for procurement of goods and services to the highest extent practical and where appropriate. Different types of products have unique certifications and standards regarding their impacts on sustainability, and have been organized into categories. These product categories, and the relevant benchmarks associated with them, are delineated in tables below each header.

The **Required Minimums** are the basic sustainability certifications and practices required for the University to consider purchasing a product. The **Preferred Standards** are additional considerations that represent a higher level of sustainability but may be more difficult to achieve.

Multi-Category Guidance: Chemicals of Concern

An important and overarching aspect of sustainability focuses on **reduction of toxins** in our buildings and environment. The chemicals that are used in our consumer products are not (with few exceptions) required by law to be tested for toxicity before they are manufactured for commerce. Disposal cost for these materials typically far exceeds the purchase price. These chemicals of concern have negative health impacts on humans and other living beings which have been documented at every stage of life, as well as negative impacts on the environment, such as chemicals' **inability to break down in the waste stream**.

The University will source products that are free of the Six Classes of Harmful Chemicals as outlined by the [Green Science Policy Institute](#). Below is a list of these chemical classes, along with some common products that contain them.

- PFAS (Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances)
 - Outdoor gear
 - Food contact products
 - Carpet/textiles/furniture
 - Firefighting foam
- Antimicrobials
 - Cleaning and personal care products
 - Clothing and linens
 - Building materials and furnishings
- Flame Retardants
 - Furniture
 - Children's products
 - Electronics
 - Building materials
- Bisphenols & Phthalates
 - Plastic containers
 - Caulks and adhesives
 - Vinyl flooring
 - Food packaging
- Some Solvents
 - Oil-based paints
 - Paint strippers

- Adhesives
- Wood finishes
- Markers
- Aerosols
- Cleaning products
- Certain Metals
 - Mercury
 - Fish
 - Light fixtures
 - Older thermometers
 - Arsenic
 - Contaminated food
 - Pressure-treated wood
 - Cadmium
 - Rechargeable batteries
 - Metal plating and solder
 - Some decorative paints
 - Lead
 - Paint from before 1978
 - Plumbing and fixtures from before 1986
 - Dishware/cookware
 - Recycled vinyl products

Products and packaging shall be **free of hazardous additives** unless no feasible alternative exists, and it is determined that the benefits outweigh the risks. This includes disposable food containers⁴, of which some varieties have been found to contain the harmful “forever chemical” PFAS.

The University will continue to work towards eliminating products that use or result in the production of highly toxic compounds or ozone depleting substances such as chlorofluorocarbons, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and formaldehyde.

All goods and services purchased at BU should follow these guidelines for reducing the use of chemicals of concern.

Shoppers should take every chance to choose products that are free from the above chemicals. BU Sustainability and Sourcing & Procurement will work with suppliers to increase visibility of products that may contain harmful chemicals so that **safer alternatives** can be selected whenever possible.

⁴ Food and dining-related sourcing falls outside the BU Sustainable Purchasing Program. BU Dining Services has developed its own sustainability standards and goals.

Consumable Goods

Consumable goods are commonly used products that require relatively frequent replacement, which substantiates a need for them to be either made of **sustainable materials and/or able to be reused/easily recycled**.

Promotional products for use as giveaways can be helpful in garnering engagement, but often go unused or are duplicates of things people already have. Do your best to predict quantities and reduce waste by reviewing past events and asking for RSVPs. Alternatively, choose experiential items such as food or event tickets that align with your mission.

The certifications and standards listed in the second column are industry-recognized third-party certifications relating to a variety of different sustainability issues, but they all demonstrate a product's **positive sustainable impact**. Certifications awarded to a product can be used to reference the relative benefit of selecting that product for purchase, both for its utility and its effect on the sustainability goals of the University.

The **Required Minimum** represents the basic sustainability practices and certifications recommended by the University to consider when purchasing a product. The **Preferred Standards** are sustainable practices that can be more difficult to attain and represent the future state of the industry.

Category	Recognized Certifications & Standards	Required Minimum	Preferred Standard	Example products
Office/Copy Paper	FSC Recycled Post-consumer recycled content (PCRC) Processed Chlorine Free (PCF) Green Seal (GS-07) Environmental Paper Network	100% Post-Consumer Recycled Content or Agricultural residue content	100% Post-Consumer Recycled Content or Agricultural residue content	Copy paper
Janitorial Paper Products	GreenSeal Environmental Paper Network Conservatree	20% Post-Consumer Recycled Content	20% Post-Consumer Recycled Content	Paper towel, toilet paper
Office and Breakroom Supplies	GreenSeal	Recycled content and end of life recyclability	Recycled content and end of life recyclability	Binders, clips, folders, writing utensils

	<p>Post-consumer recycled content (PCRC)</p> <p>Non-antimicrobial</p>			
Stationery	<p>GreenSeal</p> <p>Environmental Paper Network</p> <p>Conservatree</p>	100% Post-Consumer Recycled Content or Agricultural residue content	100% Post-Consumer Recycled Content or Agricultural residue content	Notepads, envelopes, business cards
Uniforms/Linens	<p>Fair Trade</p> <p>Global Organic Textile Standard</p>	Recycled content and/or organic materials, without added flame retardants, and from ethical suppliers	Recycled content and/or organic materials, without added flame retardants, and from ethical suppliers, and consideration of the ability to reuse and repair	
Commercial Print	<p>GreenSeal</p> <p>Environmental Paper Network</p> <p>Conservatree</p> <p>Sustainable Green Printing Partnership</p> <p>EcoLogo</p>	Green alternatives, such as chemicals reduction, soy-based inks, recycled content paper, and alternatives to foam project boards	<p>Green alternatives, such as chemicals reduction, soy-based inks, recycled content paper, and alternatives to foam project boards</p> <p>Minimal Styrofoam</p> <p>Maximum recycling of materials used in printing process</p> <p>Use of alternative energy sources</p>	Large volume print orders, magazines, brochures
Promotional Products	<p>GreenSeal</p> <p>Fair Trade</p>	Purchased with consideration to durability, recyclability,	Purchased with consideration to durability, recyclability,	T-shirts, drinkware, apparel

	B-Corp Certified Global Organic Textile Standard	reusability, <u>and</u> minimal packaging Purchased through University-approved vendors with CLC licensing and sound labor practices	reusability, <u>and</u> minimal packaging Purchased through University-approved vendors with CLC licensing and sound labor practices	
Laboratory Supplies	ThermoFisher Green Leaf Label ACT Label LabConscious Endorsement ACS Solvent Selection Tool OSHA Green Chemicals Guidelines	Purchased with consideration to toxins and waste minimization, durability, recyclability, and reusability	Purchased with consideration to toxins and waste minimization, durability, recyclability and reusability Chemicals absent from the TURA hazardous chemicals list	Glassware, gloves, chemicals/reagents
Toner	EcoLogo	Use high-capacity cartridges	Use high-capacity and remanufactured cartridges	

Cleaning Supplies

BU Custodial Services will continue to follow and improve upon the Boston University Sustainable Cleaning Program and use **GreenSeal and EcoLogo certified green cleaning products**. As part of this program, disinfectants should meet the EPA criteria and should also be compliant with the [Toxics Use Reduction Institute's](#) list of less toxic chemicals. University departments are encouraged to **work with BU Custodial Services for cleaning and disinfecting** in lieu of purchasing cleaning supplies of their own. This reduces the chance of harmful chemical interactions that could be detrimental to human health and streamlines procurement of supplies.

Category	Recognized Certifications & Standards	Required Minimum	Preferred Standard	Example products
Cleaning & Janitorial Supplies	GreenSeal EcoLogo	BU Sustainable Cleaning Program (last updated)	BU Sustainable Cleaning Program (last updated)	Disinfectants, laundry detergent,

	TURI Less Toxic Chemicals EPA Safer Choice/DfE Cradle to Cradle Forest Stewardship Council	March 2020), and either GreenSeal or EcoLogo	March 2020), and either GreenSeal or EcoLogo, and TURI's less toxic chemicals	dishwashing detergent, hand soap, general purpose cleaners, floor care products
--	---	--	---	---

Pest Control & Landscaping

BU Grounds and its service partners will continue to follow and improve upon the Boston University Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM).

Category	Recognized Certifications & Standards	Required Minimum	Preferred	Example products
Pest Control		BU Integrated Pest Management Plan; as a last resort, use the least toxic pest control substance available	BU Integrated Pest Management Plan; as a last resort, use the least toxic pest control substance available	
Landscaping	NOFA guidelines	BU Integrated Pest Management Plan; as a last resort, use the least toxic pest control substance available	BU Integrated Pest Management Plan, and NOFA guidelines for organic landscaping, including reduction of water use, pesticides, and fertilizer	

Appliances & Equipment

Appliance and equipment suppliers should subscribe to [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) or Product Stewardship guidelines, thereby sharing responsibility for end-of-life product management.

For **laboratory equipment and appliances**, behavioral practices are essential for decreasing energy and water consumption alongside the use of efficient equipment. Some beneficial practices are sharing

freezer space, sharing equipment, shutting fume hood sashes when not in use, closing doors to lessen the ventilation load, powering off equipment when not in use, and only using purified water when necessary.

Category	Recognized Certifications & Standards	Required Minimum	Preferred	Example products
Appliances	EPEAT EcoLogo Energy STAR	Meet the US Environmental Protection Agency's Energy STAR certification	Meet the US Environmental Protection Agency's Energy STAR certification, Ability to be easily repaired or refurbished	Data center equipment, dishwashers, refrigerators, heating and cooling appliances, ULT freezers, vending machines
Laboratory Equipment and Appliances	Energy STAR ThermoFisher Green Leaf Label ACT Label LabConscious endorsement	High efficiency	High efficiency and Energy STAR Certification	Fume hoods, biosafety cabinets, centrifuge, microscopes

Electronics

Strategic IT suppliers should subscribe to [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) or Product Stewardship guidelines, thereby sharing responsibility for end-of-life product management.

Category	Recognized Certifications & Standards	Required Minimum	Preferred	Example products
Electronics & IT Hardware	Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) Energy STAR Scientific Certification Systems (SCS)	Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) criteria designated as "Bronze"	Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) criteria designated as "Gold" and Energy STAR	Computers, monitors, printers, copiers, servers, televisions

Furniture

Boston University is developing **Design & Construction Standards for renovations and new buildings**. For those smaller upgrades, we recognize that furniture is acquired by multiple levels within the organization.

Boston University offers a robust furniture program including surplus, remanufactured, and new furniture options. Help reduce the University's carbon footprint and consider **buying from or donating to our surplus furniture program** with preferred supplier, Spike Inc. (Olympia Moving).

When purchasing new, the below guidelines apply.

Category	Recognized Certifications & Standards	Required Minimum	Preferred	Example products
Office Furniture	Carpet and Rug Institute Green Label Plus Forest Stewardship Council Greenguard Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) Indoor Advantage Rainforest Alliance BIFMA Level Cradle to Cradle GOTS Standard 100 by Oeko-Tex STeP Oeko-Tex Health Product Declaration Declare Label Facts Certification	Purchased with consideration to toxins and waste minimization and durability; without added flame retardants, and one of the following certifications: GreenGuard Gold or BIFMA Level	Purchased with consideration to toxins and waste minimization and durability; without added flame retardants, recycled content and/or organic materials, and one of the following certifications: GreenGuard Gold or BIFMA Level	Task chairs, desks, tables

Fleet

The University will look to purchase Electric Vehicles for **vehicle acquisitions**, as the technology becomes available for the various types of vehicles in the University fleet.

Category	Recognized Certifications & Standards	Required Minimum	Preferred	Example products
Vehicles	UL safety certifications	Hybrid, plug-in hybrid	Battery electric	Sedan/SUV, pickup truck, passenger van, cargo van
EV Charging Stations	Energy STAR	Networked charging station with data tracking services, in alignment with Massachusetts and Eversource standards		

Travel & Transportation

Help reduce the University's carbon footprint and consider alternative methods for meetings, such as **virtual meetings** in lieu of traveling for University business. For necessary travel, all University travel should be either booked and/or paid for through [proper University methods](#). Boston University partners with Direct Travel to assist travelers with reservations. Concur Travel is the preferred online booking and expensing tool to arrange your travel reservations preloaded with BU's program discounts. If you need assistance outside of the Concur booking tool, **Direct Travel has a team of agents** who are ready to assist you with your booking needs. Additional information can be found on the Sourcing & Procurement [website](#). Specifically regarding air travel, the University will identify a **carbon offset program** for students, faculty, and staff which will begin to collect and report greenhouse gas emissions data in order to offer carbon offsets.

Category	Recognized Certifications & Standards	Required Minimum	Preferred	Example products
Air Travel		Book all University travel through Concur & Direct Travel	Book all University travel through Concur & Direct Travel	Flights
Transportation Products		Contain the highest post-consumer recycled content practical	Contain the highest post-consumer recycled content practical	Signs, cones, parking stops, delineators, channelizers, and barricades

Conclusion

The practices and standards outlined above aim to inform purchasing decisions, bringing BU closer to its goals for climate action and Zero Waste. By complying with these standards, the BU community has a means of direct participation in environmental stewardship, supplier diversity, fair labor practices, and risk reduction.