

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING

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The following elements are important to have in place to ensure the success of your sustainable purchasing program.

- 1. Commitment:** Demonstrable support from board and senior management to incorporate sustainability factors in the purchasing process is a fundamental requirement to get a sustainable procurement program off the ground.
- 2. Overarching Sustainability Policy:** An umbrella sustainability policy that communicates the organization's social and environmental priorities helps to focus and prioritize the sustainable purchasing program.
- 3. Walk the Talk:** Sustainability purchasers need to demonstrate their organizations have policies and plans in place to improve their own sustainability performance. It will be important, for example, to ensure your own procurement process is efficient and low impact (e.g. online solicitation and contracting process).
- 4. Understand the Business Benefits:** It is important to have a strong rationale for why your organization is pursuing sustainable purchasing.
- 5. Goals and Targets:** To implement a sustainable purchasing policy it is important to identify your priorities and objectives through goals and targets. This signals to the organization your plans over the near term, helping to foster take-up.
- 6. Legislative Alignment:** Local and national jurisdictions typically have legislative and regulatory frameworks that can have a bearing on sustainable purchasing, such as environmental by-laws, building codes, zero waste and climate targets, etc. Your program should leverage and align with these government requirements.
- 7. Develop Embedment Tools:** In addition to a general policy, buyers need to be given the tools to embed the policy, such as a supplier code of conduct/practice, RFP clauses, evaluation criteria, etc.
- 8. Dedicated Resources:** Having designated staff with responsibility for implementing the program is essential to ensure the program is not implemented off the side of someone's desk. Key staff should have access to educational support and courses on sustainability and sustainable purchasing.
- 9. Sustainability Expertise:** Integrating social and environmental goals into the purchasing process can be complicated, given the trade-offs and lack of certainty on some issues. It helps to have someone on staff who understands the issues and can help with decision-making.
- 10. Interdepartmental Coordination:** For larger organizations, it can be important to have a cross-functional committee with representatives from different departments with buying responsibility, and someone with sustainability expertise to ensure organizational buy-in and implementation.
- 11. Awareness and Training:** Once the policy has been approved it is important that staff, especially those with buying authority, are oriented to the policy and sustainable purchasing tools to build capacity and awareness of the new approach.
- 12. Supplier Communication and Engagement:** As you implement your program, you will want to ensure your suppliers are actively engaged. This includes communicating with them early, and seeking their participation to travel the sustainability journey with you.
- 13. Tracking and Monitoring:** In order to monitor your progress, a tracking and monitoring system is key. This can signal if you are on track to achieve the objectives you set for your program or can flag the need for a course correction. It is important to set the system up before you launch your program.
- 14. Supplier Monitoring and Compliance:** To ensure you are achieving your desired results, a system to check back with suppliers to confirm they are in accordance with your requirements should be in place.
- 15. Continuous Improvement and Celebration:** A good program will remember that the sustainable purchasing goals are only achievable over time; assess your progress, make improvements as necessary and remember to celebrate your wins.