

Colorado Mountain College: Sustainable Purchasing & Procurement

Benefits of Sustainable Purchasing

Colorado Mountain College (CMC) has a large footprint, with 11 campuses across Colorado and innumerable stakeholders and communities invested in the organization. By incorporating sustainability into its purchasing and procurement decisions and contracts to ensure alignment with its values, CMC has the ability to leverage its influence and affect change in the surrounding communities. In addition, purchasing is interwoven with overall operations. Vendor relationships can support CMC's own efforts toward meeting sustainability goals, such as those related to groundskeeping and food, which are heavily reliant on third parties.

Incorporating Sustainability in CMC's Purchasing & Procurement Program

Colorado Mountain College (CMC) has a robust purchasing policy with a number of different elements. Currently, CMC purchasing documents include a detailed handbook, quick reference guide, facility use agreements, contractor agreements, clinical agreements, and a code of conduct that addresses legalities. CMC can enhance its processes and these documents by pursuing the following steps (note that the Plan-Do-Check-Act methodology is consistent with the steps for implementing an environmental management system [EMS] but with a more focused effort toward purchasing):

1. **Commitment and Policy:** Leadership within CMC will first need to commit to improving its sustainability program and establish CMC's environmental/social policies.
2. **Planning:** CMC should then identify environmental and social impacts affected by purchasing and procurement decisions. Once these have been identified and prioritized, CMC can set specific, actionable goals and targets related to procurement. Examples can encompass the entire program or specific elements, such as:
 - a. Support CMC's sustainability program by committing to 50% of purchasing (by spend) sustainability sourced by 2050. Timelines as described in the plan are as follows:
 - i. 10% of purchasing by spend sustainably sourced by 2020
 - ii. 25% of purchasing by spend sustainably sourced by 2035
 - iii. 50% of purchasing by spend sustainably sourced by 2050
 - b. Support CMC's sustainability program by requiring 100% of vendors over a certain dollar threshold participate in sustainability-related awareness and training initiatives by 2020.
 - c. Commit to sourcing 70% of copy paper with recycled content by 2020.
 - d. Commit to 100% EPEAT certification for computers by 2020.
 - e. Commit to eliminating first-class airline travel by 2020.

- f. ***Note that NCS has already presented broader recommendations for the Purchasing & Procurement Program in the Sustainability Plan that would relate to more specific targets.*
3. **Implementation:** CMC pursues and utilizes needed resources to attain sustainable purchasing goals, including hiring appropriate staff, training employees and other stakeholders (including students and vendors), and documenting and communicating operating procedures and progress. Each sustainable purchasing target should be supported with a timeline and identified responsible parties.
4. **Evaluation:** CMC must revisit its goals and targets to evaluate progress related to sustainable purchasing. If progress is not being made according to the established plan, CMC must take corrective action.
5. **Review:** CMC leadership will review the results of the evaluation to determine effectiveness of the sustainable purchasing policy elements. These elements should be revised as appropriate in tandem with raising awareness with vendors and staff involved in purchasing decisions, ideally resulting in continuous improvement of CMC's sustainable purchasing and procurement program.

Sustainability Guidelines: Examples

The recommendations described in the Sustainability Plan include completing a strategic spend analysis to identify opportunities for improvement and adding sustainability clauses in all purchasing agreements. Once a strategic spend analysis has been performed, CMC can use predetermined evaluation criteria for integrating sustainability into purchasing decisions for identified areas of significant spend.

AASHE STARS has published numerous sustainable purchasing policies from a number of different universities that can be used as resources. To start, CMC can review the following proposed draft statements for incorporation into existing purchasing documents:

Example language:

1. **General Sustainability Guidelines** are general statements without an associated numerical target used to manage criteria for purchasing decisions. Guidelines should be included in CMC's Purchasing Handbook.
 - a. Tailored statements based on Stanford policy¹ - note that language is exact other than the name of the institution and should be amended appropriately:
 - i. "All CMC personnel should purchase Environmentally Preferable Products (including services) whenever they perform satisfactorily and can be acquired at similar total value (taking into account quality and Life Cycle Cost)."
 - ii. "CMC will promote the use of Environmentally Preferable Products, services, practices and suppliers by developing and implementing

¹ AASHE STARS, "Stanford University Sustainable Procurement Guidelines"

Campus-Wide Agreements (CWA's) with preferred suppliers, and product and service standards.”

- iii. “The University Procurement Department will seek to secure contracts with suppliers that are environmental leaders in their respective markets whenever practicable.”
- iv. “Where such criteria are available, CMC should procure Environmentally Preferable Products and services using criteria that have been established by governmental or other widely-recognized authorities (e.g., Energy Star, EPA Eco Purchasing Guidelines).”

2. **Evaluation Criteria** should be documented for inclusion in CMC’s Purchasing Handbook:

- a. Tiered criteria or Best Value Tradeoff approaches use specific environmental and social criteria ranked from most to least preferable to guide purchasing decisions. These hierarchies can be determined and used for certain procurement categories and disseminated in the purchasing handbook to guide decision makers.
 - i. Examples: distance from CMC campus, past performance, third party certifications, vendor sustainability plan specific to services or products requested in bid
 - ii. Draft language: “When respondents represent similar total values, CMC will award the contract to a vendor based on the following criteria, ranked from most to least preferable: third party certification, demonstrated success in incorporating sustainability factors into service delivery, distance from CMC campus.”
- b. Pass/Fail criteria: Require either a yes or no criteria for immediate decision making.
 - i. Examples: No third party certification for a copy paper, no contract awarded or purchase made. No demonstrated past performance in incorporating sustainability into a vendor’s service/product delivery, no contract awarded or purchase made.
 - ii. Draft language: “CMC will award contracts to vendors that have demonstrated success in incorporating sustainability factors into service/product delivery.”
- c. Best Value Procurement: Considers the overall life cycle of ownership of a product.
 - i. Example: LED lamps often requires a higher upfront cost, however the ongoing higher maintenance costs and reduced utility costs will likely result in the efficient lighting to represent better value for spend.
 - ii. Draft language as described above in Sustainability Guidelines: “All CMC personnel should purchase Environmentally Preferable Products (including services) whenever they perform satisfactorily and can be acquired at similar total value (taking into account quality and Life Cycle Cost).”

3. **Sustainability Clauses** should be included in RFPs and vendor contracts placing importance on sustainability criteria and promoting adherence to CMC policies.
 - a. Tailored statement based on Elon University policy² - note that language is exact other than the name of the institution and should be amended appropriately:
 - i. “Include in all RFP/bidding specifications: “CMC is committed to reducing the adverse environmental impact of its purchasing decisions; it is committed to buying goods and services from contractors who share its environmental concern and commitment. CMC encourages bidders to include in their responses economical and environmentally friendly products and service options that serve to minimize waste, reduce excess packing and packaging, recycle, reduce, reuse, prevent pollution, and/or offer resource efficiency. It is CMC’s goal to maximize environmental responsibility on our campuses.”
 - b. Proposed amended statement (in underlined red) for inclusion in Facility Use Agreements, #2 Facilities and Services Provided by College:
 - i. “After use of the facility, the Group shall be responsible for returning the facility to its original condition and configuration. The Group is responsible for ensuring that all trash and recyclables are placed in containers provided. The Group will be charged a custodial rate of up to \$50 per hour if the facility is not returned to its original condition or if sorting of recyclable vs waste is necessary.”
 - c. Statement for inclusion in Facility Use Agreements, Miscellaneous Provisions (broad, can be more detailed):
 - i. “The Group will commit to conducting a green event in accordance with CMC’s sustainability requirements listed in Exhibit A (provide list).”
 - d. Statement for inclusion in Contractor Agreement:
 - i. “Contractor Responsibilities; Sustainability. The Contractor agrees to perform the services in accordance with sustainability guidelines outlined in Schedule D.” – document specific expectations in Schedule and provide as Exhibit in Contractor Agreement

As CMC develops its sustainable purchasing program, establishing policies and procedures that explicitly describe expectations from the college, staff and faculty requesting products and services, and vendors will facilitate progress alongside CMC’s sustainability goals.

² AASHE STARS, “Elon University Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines”

Additional Resources

AASHE, "[Sustainable Procurement Toolkit](#)"

AASHE STARS, "[Stanford University Sustainable Procurement Guidelines](#)"

AASHE STARS, "[Elon University Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines](#)"

American University, "[University Policy: Sustainable Purchasing](#)"

EAUC, Sustainable Procurement Project, "[Example Policies & Strategies](#)"

Responsible Purchasing Network, "[Sustainable Purchasing Best Practices](#)"

SFTool, "[Sample Contract Language for Environmental Programs](#)"

University of California – Berkeley, "[Procurement](#)"

Wake Forest University, "[Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines](#)"

Winthrop University, "[Policy – Sustainable Procurement](#)"