



PLANET BIDS

SUSTAINABILITY PLAYBOOK

for Public Procurement Professionals



Sustainability was once a buzzword – something that was popular to talk about but had little actual action behind it.

Now, sustainability is a critical priority for public procurement teams that aim to create long-term value for their communities. Whether it's **reducing environmental impact, supporting local businesses, or cutting costs through energy efficiency**, sustainable procurement is an achievable goal for all agencies.

But if you're just beginning to consider implementing sustainable procurement practices, where do you even start? **How can you embed sustainability into your procurement process in a way that is practical, measurable, and effective?**

This guide is designed to help procurement professionals like you **take real steps** toward implementing environmentally- and community-friendly purchasing practices. Let's dive in.

STEP 01

DEFINE YOUR SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT GOALS

Sustainability in procurement means different things for different agencies. The first step is to **define what sustainability means for your organization** and set clear, measurable, attainable, and actionable goals.



Environmental Goals

These goals could include reducing paper waste, lowering emissions, mandating the use of eco-friendly materials, and prioritizing products with energy-efficiency ratings like Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER), Energy Star, Lumens per Watt (LPW), etc.



Social Goals

Support small and disadvantaged businesses (Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Minority Business Enterprises, Women-Owned Business Enterprises, Veteran Owned Businesses), prioritize ethical sourcing with certifications like [Fair Trade](#), [SFI](#), [Union for Ethical BioTrade](#), and [BRCGS Global Standard](#), and promote fair labor practices according to the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#).



Economic Goals

Ensure long-term cost savings through [Total Cost of Ownership \(TCO\) analysis](#) and strategic vendor partnerships.

ACTION TIP

Engage key stakeholders, including department heads and vendors, to align sustainability goals with your agency's overall mission.

STEP 02

EMBED SUSTAINABILITY INTO YOUR PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Update Your Policies & Criteria

If your agency doesn't already have sustainability criteria in place, it's time to incorporate them into your procurement policies. **Start by adding sustainability requirements to bid evaluations and vendor selection criteria**, and by highlighting these requirements and practices on your web page.

- Require vendors to disclose their environmental impact and sustainability initiatives.
- Favor suppliers with green certifications (LEED, ENERGY STAR, Fair Trade, etc.).
- Specify environmentally friendly materials and energy-efficient product requirements or preferences in bid specifications.
- Highlight requirements and sustainability goals on your webpage for vendors and the public to see ahead of bidding.

Expand Your Supplier Base

Encouraging participation from **small, minority-owned, and environmentally responsible businesses** leads to a more competitive, diverse, and cost-effective procurement strategy.

- Offer training sessions to help small businesses navigate your procurement process.
- Use **vendor management systems** like the PlanetBids procurement platform to track supplier certifications and sustainability commitments and ensure compliance.
- Create outreach programs to recruit **DBEs, MBEs, WBEs, and veteran-owned businesses** into your supplier network.

Prioritize Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) Over Upfront Costs

A common mistake in procurement is focusing solely on **upfront costs** rather than the **long-term financial impact** of purchases. Sustainable procurement saves money over time by reducing **energy consumption, maintenance needs, and replacement costs**.

- Invest in **durable, high-quality goods** that require less frequent replacement.
- Choose **energy-efficient appliances and lighting** to lower utility bills.
- Consider **lifecycle costs** when evaluating bids.

ACTION TIP

Want more information on Total Cost of Ownership and how it can help you build a sustainable procurement strategy for your public agency? Get our [Sustainability Procurement in the Public Sector white paper](#) to see how understanding TCO can help you get eco-friendly options approved.

STEP 03

MEASURE SUCCESS AND CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE

Once you've implemented sustainable procurement practices, you need a way to measure success.

Tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) in your sustainability journey helps demonstrate progress and identify areas for improvement.



Key Sustainability Metrics to Track:

- **Percentage of sustainable purchases:** How much of your total spend is going toward environmentally friendly and ethical suppliers?
- **Line item spend:** Which of your purchases meet sustainability requirements, and what are those costs in relation to other line items?
- **Reduction in energy consumption:** Are you seeing lower energy costs due to sustainable procurement?
- **Supplier compliance rate:** How many vendors meet your sustainability requirements?
- **Spend with diverse suppliers:** Are you increasing contract awards to DBEs, MBEs, and WBEs?



Tools to Help:

- **Digital procurement platforms** like PlanetBids automate sustainability tracking and vendor compliance monitoring by allowing vendors to upload their certifications and pre-qualifications directly, notifying you of expiring or changing certifications, and centralizing all documentation for easy auditing and reporting. They also allow you to run comprehensive reports to analyze and showcase the impact of your sustainable initiatives.
- **Carbon footprint calculators** help track environmental impact.
- **ROI calculators** help you showcase the cost and resource savings of implementing digital procurement and sustainability programs.
- **Supplier scorecards** can assess vendors based on sustainability performance.



SMALL STEPS, BIG IMPACT

Sustainability in procurement isn't an all-or-nothing approach. Every small step your agency takes – whether it's sourcing from diverse vendors, switching to energy-efficient products, or using digital procurement software – can make a measurable impact.

By embedding sustainability in your procurement process, you're not only helping the environment and supporting local businesses in your community. You're also driving cost savings, improving efficiency, and creating long-term value for your agency.

Ready to take action? Learn how PlanetBids can help your agency integrate sustainability into procurement with powerful automation tools.

[Get in touch today!](#)