

Some organisations choose to have a separate environmental purchasing policy. A green procurement policy should sit under your environmental policy and detail the purchasing procedures you will implement to achieve environmental targets.

A green procurement policy can help to motivate staff, promote cooperation and dialogue with the supply chain, stakeholders and clients; and influences the market; resulting in sustainable production.

The green procurement policy can be broad, covering all procurement practices or specific, focussed on a single environmental aspect such as energy consumption, timber procurement or recycled paper. The policy statement should cover the same points, described in the next section, independently from its scope.

Drafting a green procurement policy

Two standard elements are required to make a green procurement policy understandable and efficient:

1. Commitment towards environmental protection and sustainable development

- General framework/commitment.
- Specific commitment.

2. Accompanying measures

- Implementation activities.
- Information, communication and training activities.
- Monitoring and reviewing activities.

Commitment to environmental protection & sustainable development

One option is to be specific without fixing any kind of objective or targets. In such cases commitments are vague but never become outdated, as there are no fixed dates.

Another option is to establish objectives and target, which you will work towards. These targets should be technically achievable, measurable, time bound and realistic but challenging.

In order to define them, you should consider the following issues as a minimum:

- What are the environmental priorities of your company?
- What regulation and legislation impacts on your business and which targets do they define?
- Which products/services are purchased in significant quantities and have significant environmental impacts?
- Are there more environmentally friendly options available on the market?
- Do you want to fix targets for certain products, services and works or targets for the procurement practices in general?
- What deadline is appropriate?

Examples of time bound targets are:

General target: By the end of 2010, ensure that 50% of tenders include environmental considerations.

Specific target: By the end of 2008, ensure that 10% of electricity purchased is generated by renewable sources.

Policies can also include a commitment not to do something, for example the purchase of products containing ozone depleting chemicals, non-independently certified tropical hardwood, or pesticides on the EU list. For example: *None of the cleaning materials purchased contains dangerous substances (dangerous must be defined).*

Accompanying measures

The accompanying measures that support the procurement requirements will help implementation and improvement of the policy.

Those measures can be independent of the policy and be introduced in the action plan. Inclusion in the policy statement is recommended in order to highlight its importance.

The accompanying measures should include:

1. Implementation activities

The policy should consider which actions are going to be carried out in order to implement the policy.

Examples of these actions are:

- To create a working group in charge of developing an action programme and guarantee application of the policy.
- To integrate green policies into other procurement systems, such as online procurement or product catalogues, so that non-green products are filtered out.
- To integrate green procurement policies and practices into the environmental management system of the company.
- To develop a monitoring and reporting process.

2. Information, communication and training activities

Commitment to supporting the process is necessary from the top down (eg your board/chief executive), as well as from the bottom up (on the ground staff to have ownership of the process). This bottom up commitment is particularly important as it is these staff members that specify and order goods.

To achieve that support, staff need to be trained. The policy must include the provision of training sessions and communication channels with employees. It could even include targets for the number of staff who will receive training.

Suppliers, especially local providers, need to be aware of the green procurement practices of the company to adjust to the new requirements.

3. Monitoring & reviewing process activities

Monitoring is not always a priority when drafting a policy but it is vital. Without a monitoring process in place, you cannot know whether you are making progress.

This aspect could be included in the implementation programme, but it is better if it is included in the policy to make it more relevant. Monitoring should occur on a continuous basis with an appointed person responsible for collecting information and preparing internal reports on achievements or targets. The appointed person should look for answers to the following questions:

- Have the planned measures and procedures been implemented?
- What has been achieved?

- What were the barriers?
- Is it possible to improve the integration of environmental issues into procurement operations?
- What corrective actions are needed?
- What new targets can we set?

Policy statement

Aspects a green procurement policy should cover are set out below:

Begin with a general commitment

By implementing this policy, we intend to procure our goods, services and works in a way that we have a continual, measurable progress in our environmental performance, by reducing our environmental impacts, whilst maintaining economic viability.

Become more specific, including targets and commitments

[Insert company name] aims to reduce the purchase of new goods, and procure them only when essential, by cutting down on waste and repairing or reusing existing products.

[Insert company name] intends to introduce environmental criteria in [insert percentage] of its procurement practices by [insert year].

No products shall be procured which contain ozone-depleting chemicals, non-independently certified tropical hardwood, or pesticides on the EU 'black list'.

Service contractors will undertake their services in line with our environmental standards.

State how you will implement the policy

A working group will be established to promote the implementation of the policy. A representative of each area of the business will constitute the advisory group. The advisory group will prepare an annual report on the activities carried out and a work programme.

Technical criteria will be developed to use in the call for tenders of contracts for works and supplies.

State how you will communicate and deliver the policy

[Insert company name] will provide supporting guidelines and resources to allow effective implementation of this policy, provide environmental training and awareness raising tools to our staff, and ensure there is effective communication between our central purchasing unit and individual departments.

[Insert company name] will work with our suppliers and contractors to help them improve their environmental performance (eg to reduce, reuse and recycle their packaging) and so spread environmental good practice through the supply chain.

The policy will be promoted to our stakeholders by various actions (eg a copy of the policy will be made available online).

State how you will monitor and improve the policy

An annual management review will be undertaken to control results, review and update our policy, setting new and aspirational targets wherever possible and as the old ones are achieved.

[Insert company name] will continually improve the procurement policy and our guidelines by regularly reviewing contracts and suppliers and benchmarking this strategy with other, integrate the standards and process with our environmental management system (where it exists), and monitor our performance using environmental performance indicators.

Further information on writing a green procurement policy:

Mayor of London's Green Procurement Code <http://www.greenprocurementcode.co.uk/>

A support service for organisations committed to reducing their environmental impact through responsible procurement.