BIC Sustainability 101 Guides

BIC Sustainability 101 Guides are a series of short, introductory level, papers on sustainability topics of interest to BIC Members.
If there is a topic you would like to see as a BIC Sustainability 101 Guide, please contact info@bic.org.uk

Guide 5 – Sustainable Procurement

Guide 5 is going to be looking at sustainable procurement, what this means and how organisations are using it in practice.

What is sustainable procurement?

Sustainable procurement is a process by which organisations seek to achieve the appropriate balance between financial, environmental, and social considerations when procuring goods, services or works at all stages of the value- transformation cycle, while considering their costs. In this guide sustainability refers to the environmental and social considerations of procurement. The financial consideration is more about the actual price of the goods and services and not how sustainable they are.

As an example of what to consider sustainable procurement promotes value chain circularity, well-being, and long-term resilience – both in nature and among organisations. This will be specific to the organisation conducting the procurement process.

What you need to consider with a sustainable procurement policy

Any sustainable procurement policy needs to be aligned to the organisation's sustainability agenda. This should be explained in any tendering process, that is:

- Explain how the tendering process is linked to the organisation's sustainability agenda
- Explain how the tendering process is going to be conducted, with a clear timeline as to when things will happen
- What the organisation is looking for from those completing the tender process
- How much weight is given to the environmental and social sustainability aspects of the responses. For example, considering:
    - Any specific environmental and social risks associated with the type of product/service in the location
    - What action an organisation is taking to measure and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, in recognition of the wider regional or sector context in supporting/hindering sustainability initiatives and objectives
    - Any specific sustainability issues associated with the product/service important to the tendering organisations stakeholders
    - Any accreditations an organisation has to verify and support its sustainability agenda
    - The likely significance or volume of the supply on the tendering organisation's wider environmental/social impact
- The potential support and working relationship required with a supplier to achieve shared sustainability goals. This should not preclude a supplier from being able to gain a contract, but the conversation should be about what steps the tendering organisation would like to see from the supplier to see their improvement. This should allow a supplier time to come up to the required level.
- What data might an organisation have to provide and the frequency. This could relate to the contracting organisations scope 3 reduction requirements and needing to know how a supplier is changing their own scope 3.

Writing a sustainable procurement tender or Request for Proposal (RFP) document

It does not matter what title you give to the document you are using for your procurement assessment process. The more important part is what is included in the document:

- Why is this tendering process taking place
- What the timeline is for the tendering process
- How long is the contract for and are there any review processes during the life of the contract

- A clear description on how the tendering process is going to be managed
    - Are there various stages
    - Will there be site visits and/or will bidding organisations be required to make presentations
    - How feedback will be provided to the bidding organisations
- What factors will an organisation be measured against and how much weight is applied to each section
- The specifics around what goods or services are going to be purchased
    - That could be a detailed list of the product make-up, such as trim sizes, average page counts, paper choices and volumes for the various trim sizes
    - It could be about the volume of material that is to be recycled, reused or goes to landfill. What ideas, process or material changes can be made to reduce the amount of landfill material
    - Or looking at different ways the shipping of product could be done, i.e., through consolidation or an alternative transport method to reduce emissions
    - What services are the bidding organisation expected to provide and how are they going to achieve that
- A section on sustainability, tied to the tendering organisation's own sustainability journey. This could be around the organisation's emission goals and how it is looking to reduce its scope 3 emissions. Reducing scope 3 emissions is going to take a coordinated approach across the industry. Alternatively, it could be about reducing waste in the supply chain and trying to move to materials that can be more easily recycled or reused.
- Ensure compliance with legal requirements and industry standards
- Open questions around what extras a bidding organisation can offer

How to prepare for the analysis of the tendering process

It is important to have worked out who in the organisation is going to be involved with the tendering process:

- What each member of the team's role will be as part of the process
- There should be a clear division of labour as to whom is going to analysis what parts of the submission
- How are decisions going to be made as to which bidders will proceed to the next stage
- How feedback is going to be provided
- How unsuccessful bidders are going to be informed that they have not been selected for the next stage
- Foster a culture of continuous improvement

What to put in the contract

The contract should contain all the relevant information around how the two organisations are going to work together such as:

- The length of the contract
- Pricing scales (if applicable), such as for book manufacturing costs
- Service level agreements
- The escalation process if there is any disagreement over the service level agreements
- How often review meetings should take place and in what format (online or in person)
- The provision of sustainability data should detail what information is required and when is it to be supplied, and in what format. It should also be explained what the data is going to be used for.

Directory of information

Glossary

Acronym	Full name	Description	Further notes
	1.5°C	Science has made it clear that we must limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We are currently at 1.1°C and are on track for 2.7°C according to the UNDP's Emissions Gap Report 2021. Every fraction of a degree matters. Wildfires, heavy flooding, intense heat, drought, and storms are becoming more frequent and devastating. Every bit of warming we avoid will reduce the climate risks we face. We need to keep global warming to 1.5°C to have a fighting chance of having a habitable and a thriving planet for all of us.	Net-Zero Jargon Buster - a guide to common terms - Science Based Targets
	Carbon neutral	Although often used interchangeably with 'net-zero', the two are not the same. In general, when companies claim carbon neutrality, they are counterbalancing CO2 emissions with carbon offsets without necessarily having reduced emissions by an amount consistent with reaching net-zero at the global or sector level. This may conceal the need for deeper emissions reductions that are in line with what the science requires for the world to keep global warming to 1.5°C. Carbon neutrality claims also do not necessarily cover non-CO2 GHGs. The SBTi does not validate carbon neutrality claims.	Net-Zero Jargon Buster - a guide to common terms - Science Based Targets
	CarbonNeutral®	CarbonNeutral® mark indicates you have followed The CarbonNeutral Protocol, which is the global standard, managed for over 20 years, to deliver clear, credible, and transparent carbon neutral programs.	https://www.climateimpact.com/business-solutions/carbon-offsetting/
	Climate change adaptation	Policies and measures which make societies and companies more resilient to the impacts of climate change such as flooding and heatwaves.	List of Sustainability Definitions - CDP
	Climate change mitigation	Policies and measures which aim to reduce greenhouse gases from companies and governments with the intention of lessening the global impacts of climate change, such as reducing the amount and intensity of fossil fuel burning.	List of Sustainability Definitions - CDP
	Carbon footprint	A carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gases (including carbon dioxide and methane) that are generated by our actions.	The Nature Conservancy

Acronym	Full name	Description	Further notes
GHGs	Greenhouse gases	Gases that absorb and trap heat (i.e. infrared radiation) from the Sun in the Earth's atmosphere. Includes the following gases that are covered by the UNFCCC/Kyoto Protocol: carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), sulphur hexafluoride (SF6) and nitrogen trifluoride (NF3). These gases are the direct cause of climate change. The term "GHGs" is often used interchangeably with "all UNFCCC/Kyoto GHGs," and these gases must be covered by targets set under the Net-Zero Standard. Water vapor is also a GHG but is not covered by the UNFCCC/Kyoto Protocol or GHG emissions targets because concentrations of this gas are self-limited by the atmosphere and thus not a direct cause of global warming.	Net-Zero Jargon Buster - a guide to common terms - Science Based Targets
	Greenwashing	The practice of falsely promoting an organisation's environmental efforts, or spending more resources to promote the organisation as green than are spent to engage in environmentally sound practices	List of Sustainability Definitions - CDP
	Net-zero	A state of balance between anthropogenic emissions and anthropogenic removals. In most cases, it is important to specify either net-zero CO2 emissions or net-zero GHG emissions, which also includes non-CO2 GHGs. Net-zero GHG emissions must be achieved at the global level to stabilise temperature increase, and targets set using the Net-Zero Standard must cover all UNFCCC/Kyoto GHG emissions. The SBTi's Net-Zero Standard outlines what companies need to do to enable the global economy to achieve net-zero. The Standard makes clear that for corporate net-zero targets in line with keeping global warming to 1.5°C require rapid and deep emission reductions. Companies must take action to halve their emissions by around 2030. Likewise, long-term deep emissions cuts of at least 90% before 2050 are crucial for net-zero targets to align with science.	Net-Zero Jargon Buster - a guide to common terms - Science Based Targets
	Paris Agreement	A legally binding international treaty on climate change, adopted at COP21 in Paris in 2015. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.	List of Sustainability Definitions - CDP
	Scope 1	Direct GHG emissions occurring from sources that are owned or controlled by the company, for example, emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers, furnaces, vehicles, etc. or emissions from chemical production in owned or controlled process equipment.	Net-Zero Jargon Buster - a guide to common terms - Science Based Targets

Acronym	Full name	Description	Further notes
	Scope 2	Emissions from purchased electricity, heat, and steam for use in business operations. Scope 2 emissions physically occur at the facility where electricity is generated, and so would fall into the scope 1 category for the power generator.	Net-Zero Jargon Buster - a guide to common terms - Science Based Targets
	Scope 3	Scope 3 is a reporting category that allows for the treatment of all other indirect emissions. Scope 3 emissions are a consequence of the activities of the company but occur from sources not owned or controlled by the company - typically as a result of supplier or customer activities. These can be up or down the value chain - for example, transport and distribution, or the disposal of goods or services after they reach the consumer. Some examples of scope 3 activities are extraction and production of purchased materials; transportation of purchased fuels; and use of sold products and services.	Net-Zero Jargon Buster - a guide to common terms - Science Based Targets
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals	17 social goals established by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. The goals are: No poverty; zero hunger; good health and wellbeing; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice and strong institutions; and partnerships for the goals	List of Sustainability Definitions - CDP

Written by Simon Crump, BIC Environmental Consultant
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