



The Sustainable Purchasing Policy was introduced in 2014 as part of AET Group's *Sustainability Policy*. The purpose of this policy is to provide a purchasing framework that will advance the sustainable use of resources utilized by AET Group. This document provides background information, considerations to be addressed during the procurement process, and a decision-making framework to help evaluate the economic, environmental, and social merit of different options. This document is designed to incorporate and evaluate responses from the Vendor Questionnaire.

## 1.0 Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines

Please refer to Appendix A for a series of reference questions to help guide general procurement decisions. Not all of the questions will be applicable for all products and services, however they should provide a framework for making decisions guided by sustainability. Appendix B summarizes some of the most common ecolabels found on products and services sold in Canada. These are labels that identify a product that has a lower impact on the natural environment, which is verified through objective third party analyses and testing. Appendix C provides common definitions related to sustainable purchasing.

It is recognized that in some cases the selection of environmentally preferable products and materials may be less competitive in terms of pricing. AET Group shall implement a price preference of 10% to encourage the purchase of recycled and environmentally preferable products.

The following sections provide suggestions for considerations and questions to ask when purchasing Office Supplies, Project Equipment, Furniture, and Catering.

AET encourages all staff to follow these sustainable purchasing guidelines for any necessary purchases while working from home.

## 2.0 Considerations for The Purchase of Office Supplies

This applies to the purchase of office supplies including paper, toner, pens, etc. Please refer to the Printing Policy for further information on the use of office supplies.

1. Purchase items with a high percentage of post-consumer recycled content (plastic, paper, metal).
2. Purchase paper that is FSC certified, 100% post-consumer recycled, chlorine-free and produced using renewable energy (e.g., Biogas energy).
3. Look for reusable items (e.g., refillable pens, pencils and highlighters, rewritable CDs, and DVDs, remanufactured or reusable).
4. Consider circular economy when purchasing to avoid single use items and packaging.
5. Choose items that are made of non-toxic and biodegradable ingredients.
6. Request minimal packaging material.
7. Purchase in bulk to reduce transportation and packaging waste.



## 3.0 Considerations for The Purchase of Project Equipment

This applies to the purchase of equipment used for project work including personal protective equipment, garbage bags, bins, etc.

### Clothing:

1. Look for clothing that has been manufactured in Canada, with materials from Canada.
2. If clothing manufactured in Canada is not available, look for reputable brands that adhere to fair and safe labour laws and practices.
3. Purchase in bulk to reduce transportation and packaging waste.
4. When possible, choose clothing made from natural versus synthetic materials.

### Other equipment:

1. When possible, repair, upgrade or refurbish existing equipment.
2. When possible, rent equipment.
3. Look for products with relevant ecolabels (see Appendix B for more information).
4. Look for products made from refurbished or recycled materials.
5. Purchase in bulk to reduce transportation and packaging waste.
6. Choose durable products.

## 4.0 Considerations for The Purchase Of Furniture

This applies to the purchase of new and used furniture for the office.

1. Purchase only what is required.
2. Purchase re-used or re-furnished furniture if possible.
3. When possible, look for products that:
  - a. Are made in Canada, using materials from Canada.
  - b. Have associated ecolabels (see Appendix B for further information)
  - c. Are made using non-toxic adhesives, paints and coatings (e.g., low/no VOC)
  - d. Are made to be durable and modular so that they may be used for multiple purposes and in different configurations.

## 5.0 Considerations for The Purchase of Catering

This applies to the purchase of food and beverages for team meetings and events.

### **Food**

- Request local, fair trade products.
- Choose locally owned restaurants that use local ingredients.
- When possible, choose vegetarian or non-beef protein options.
- Request that condiments be provided in bulk if not available at the office.
- Request pitchers of water rather than bottled water.
- Request that single use items are not included in orders.



Reviewed by: Sustainability Team Chair

Approved by: Managing Director

## Waste Disposal

- Provide organics diversion and recycling at events.
- When possible, use non-disposable cutlery, mugs, glasses, and dishes.
- Encourage staff to bring their own water bottles and mugs.

## 6.0 Review

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the Sustainability Team, revised accordingly, and approved by the Owner Representative.

## 7.0 Revision History

Rev. #	Description of Change	Revision Date
00	Initial Release	
01		2020-01-10
02	Updated to new format. Changed wording.	2021-07-07
03	Yearly Review. Added additional Sustainability Certifications	2023-03-27
04	Yearly Review. Added single use plastics. Updated name of policy.	2024-03-19



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## Appendix A – Procurement Considerations

### Need for the item

- Have repairs, upgrading or refurbishing been considered as an alternative?
- Can the product(s) be rented?

### Vendor

- How does the vendor address energy conservation and efficiency with respect to the production of manufactured goods, delivery of services, and/or within their organization?
- Does the vendor have sustainability goals for their own organization?
- Does the vendor take actions to minimize nearby green space?
- What does the vendor do to lower carbon emissions through operations, and by staff, clients and suppliers?
- What is the vendor doing to minimize waste?
- Does the vendor do anything to decrease water use, and improve water quality?

### Product

- Is there a sustainability certification with, or ecolabel identifier on, the product or service?
- What is the efficiency of the product?
- Are there more efficient options?
- Does the product have any additional energy-saving features?
- Is the product or service going to have any impact on AET's green space?
- Is the product or service going to have any impact on the surrounding community's green space?
- Have all aspects of the product or service been evaluated to ensure there are no potential negative impacts on the health and well-being of staff?
- What method(s) will be used to deliver the goods and services?
- How far must they travel?
- How frequent are deliveries? Can they be less frequent? Can bulk orders be made?
- Will the purchase impact water quality at a local or regional scale?

### Product end-of-life

- Does the vendor have a take-back program?
- Is the product made of recovered or recycled materials?
- How is the product packaged?
- How will the packaging be disposed of?
- Will any waste be generated as by-products of the good or service?
- How long will the product last?
- How will the product be disposed of?
- Are the packaging and product recyclable within the Region of Waterloo?



## Appendix B: Relevant Ecolabels

### Sustainability Certifications

- EcoLogo - assurance that the products and services bearing the logo meet set standards of environmental leadership.
- Blue Angel - awarded to products and services which - from a holistic point of view – have considerably less environmental impact.
- Green Seal - product has passed rigorous scientific testing, works as well as or better than comparable products and that it was evaluated without bias or conflict of interest.
- BCorp – designation that a business is meeting high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving to supply chain practices and input materials.
- Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) – defines standards of responsible forest stewardship that are supported by environmental, social, and economic stakeholders, taking care of both the forests and the people and wildlife that call them home.
- Fair Labor Accreditation – assurance that a company is actively fulfilling the highest standards in labor rights.

### Social Justice

- Fair Trade - goal is to provide farmers in developing nations with the tools to thrive as international business people, using a market-based approach.

### Food Products

- Canada Organic - agricultural products that contain at least 95% organic ingredients.
- USDA Organic- same as above, but two levels of certification (100% organic or 95%).
- Marine Stewardship Council - wild-caught in a manner addressing three principles: sustainable fish stocks, minimizing environmental impact, and effective management.

### Electricity and Energy

- EnerGuide – label reports annual energy consumption in kWh/year for electrical appliances, allowing for users to approximate annual operating costs.
- Energy Star - appliances that achieve above-average levels of energy efficiency.
- EPEAT - global registry for lower impact electronics, combining comprehensive, objective criteria for design, production, energy and materials use and recycling.

### Indoor Air Quality

- GreenGuard - certifies products and materials for low chemical emissions and provides a free resource for choosing healthier products and materials.

### Paper and Wood Products

- Forest Stewardship Council – verified by third-party Certifiers to meet FSC's requirements through the FSC Forest Management and Chain of Custody certification systems.
- Sustainable Forestry Initiative - addresses key environmental, social, and economic forest values



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## Product Life Cycle

- Cradle to Cradle - *evaluates product design and manufacturing practices in five categories: Material Health, Material Reutilization, Renewable Energy Use, Water Stewardship, and Social Responsibility*

## Sustainable Building

- LEED – *third party certification program for sustainable building design. The LEED program is an international standard that governs the design, construction and operation of high performance, energy efficient, sustainable buildings.*



## Appendix C: Definitions

**Post-consumer** - material generated by households or by commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities in their role as end users of the product, which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain.

**Pre-consumer** - material diverted from the waste stream during the manufacturing process. Excluded is re-utilization of materials such as rework, regrind or scrap generated in a process, which is then capable of being reclaimed within the same process that generated it.

**Practicable** - satisfactory in performance and available at a reasonable cost.

**Reduce** - using less in the first place and avoiding waste. Examples of this include purchasing in bulk to reduce packaging and the purchase of printing equipment that prints double sided.

**Reuse** - using the same item more than once. Examples of how this may be achieved are leasing arrangements or refurbishment of existing furniture and equipment, adopting a practice of replacing excess stationery and consumables and ensuring that new purchases are durable, have a long service life and are easy to maintain and upgrade.

**Recycle** - purchase products that contain materials that can be recycled or that have been made from recycled or remanufactured materials.

**Recycled materials** - materials that have been reprocessed from recovered material by means of a manufacturing process and made into a final product or into a component for incorporation into a product.

**Recycled products** - materials that have been recovered, processed, and used as a raw material for the manufacture of a useful new product through a commercial process. These products will contain a specified percentage of material that would otherwise have been disposed of as waste.

**Re-manufactured** - to renew or restore a used product into its original form or into a useful new product through a commercial process.

**Reclaimed** - to bring into or return to a suitable condition for use; to recover (materials) in a pure or usable form from refuse, discarded articles, etc.

**Sustainable use of resources** - use of resources that meets the present needs of the purchaser while balancing the social, economic, and environmental impacts, including costs to the environment and depletion of resources.

**Value for money** - the identification and inclusion of all direct and indirect costs associated with a particular product or material. This includes the initial cost of purchase, length of warranty, product efficiency, anticipated maintenance and repair, and the direct and indirect costs associated with disposal or removal of the product at the end of its useful life.