
THE BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

One of the most effective ways to improve your environmental impact is to include sustainability in your procurement and purchasing procedures. This can help you prevent things that are harmful to the environment, such as hazardous chemicals or plastic straws, ever reaching your property in the first place. This immediately eliminates the need for you to worry about how to properly manage and dispose of them.

A good sustainable procurement that is well implemented and monitored can:

- Reduce operating costs
- Reduce legal risk
- Reduce reputational risk
- Improve operational efficiency
- Improve community relations
- Improve the local economy
- Increase guest satisfaction
- Improve staff loyalty

Travelife expects to see that you are taking steps to buy sustainable options wherever possible and this guide provides you with information and ideas about how to do that. First, we recommend that you spend some time understanding why procurement should be at the centre of your sustainability work:

Buying locally can reduce the carbon emissions generated by shipping products over long distances and supports your community. Even sourcing a product from a city in your region rather than from overseas can have a hugely beneficial impact on the environment and a positive economic impact on your region.

Replacing products used for cleaning, laundry and maintenance with ones that do not contain harmful chemicals can reduce your risk of a chemical accident or injury (depending on the product you have sourced), and reduce the amount of pollutants you are putting into the environment.

By properly **assessing and managing your waste you should identify ways to buy less** (including food) in the first place, thus reducing your operating costs and the overall environmental impact of producing items and shipping them to you.

Replacing equipment with modern and more efficient technology can sometimes seem like a big investment, but these purchases will pay off over time if they result in less energy, water or waste. Consider not only how much less energy an LED lightbulb uses, but also how much longer it lasts. Disposing of LED bulbs is much easier and less harmful to the environment than disposing of neon bulbs.

Finding suppliers that are committed to sustainability can reduce the amount of resources you have to put into waste management. For example, a sustainable supplier might use less packaging and a local supplier might agree to collect packaging for reuse.

Replacing single-use plastics with sustainable options will not only reduce the amount of waste you produce but reduce the effort and any associated cost of sorting and/or disposing of it.

There is a relationship between how well staff are treated and the quality of work they produce. By **using suppliers that are committed to fair labour practices and respecting human rights**, you are increasing your chances of sourcing products of a better quality and of receiving better service from your suppliers.

Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of environmental issues so many **guests want to see that you have made responsible choices** for the products they are consuming, such as **sustainably produced paper and coffee**.

Using **responsible suppliers and purchasing sustainable products** is an important factor in **risk management**. If guests find out you are contracting laundry services from a supplier engaged in modern slavery or use palm oil products that are causing rapid deforestation, then you are **vulnerable to public criticism on social media and on internet review sites**.

ASSESS YOUR CURRENT PRODUCTS, SUPPLIERS AND PROCEDURES

In order to make positive changes and the best decisions, you will need to understand your current situation. You should look at all of the goods and services that you procure and consider if there is a better alternative.

What should the assessment cover?

Everything you need to source for your business operations:

- Recruiting staff
- Sourcing contractors (entertainers, builders, waste disposal, transport, technicians, any other contracted service)
- Attractions, activities and tours that you offer, promote or sell to your guests
- Energy, gas and water suppliers
- Food and beverage purchasing
- Office/stationery supplies
- Cleaning and maintenance products (including grounds keeping)
- Linens and towels
- Equipment and machinery (appliances, vehicles, air-conditioning units, office and kitchen equipment)
- Guest room amenities
- Any other product or service you source

Questions to ask

As you review each area you should ask the following questions:

1. Could we source some or all of this locally?
2. Could we source this from a locally owned/operated business instead of a large corporate chain?
3. Could this be delivered to us over a shorter distance?
4. Could this be delivered in a more sustainable way? (e.g. by rail instead of by road).
5. Is there a way to reduce packaging or replace plastic packing with a sustainable alternative?
6. How can we reduce how much of this product we waste or consume?
7. Is there an alternative that is less harmful? (e.g. safer chemicals, paper instead of plastic).
8. Is there an alternative with a reputable sustainability certification (e.g. Rainforest Alliance coffee, FSC certified paper).
9. Can it be recycled?
10. Does the supplier/contractor/operator respect human rights?
11. Does the supplier/contractor/operator have a sustainability policy?
12. If the cost is higher, is this offset by other cost savings or operational benefits?

Example: Product cost vs other operational benefits

Buying meat or vegetables locally might cost more, however, you can order more frequently in the actual quantities you need, rather than ordering items 'just in case' because a wholesaler only delivers to your business once a week. In addition to environmental benefits and supporting local businesses, this offers five obvious operational benefits:

1. Less food being stored in refrigerators (saves energy)

2. Less processing of incoming goods (staff efficiency)
3. Less time spent rotating stock (staff efficiency)
4. Less food thrown away (cost and time spent on handling waste, money wasted on unused food)
5. Fresher food normally results in better quality dishes (guest satisfaction)

Start with the easiest solutions

If you are a large operation (or just a very busy hotel) then you might find a full review of your procurement and purchasing procedures is too much work to tackle at one time. At Travelife we simply want to see that you are taking action and continuously trying to improve. There are some easy ways to get started on that journey and we have provided some ideas in the table below.

Item/Service	Possible quick fix
Coffee, tea and sugar	Buy products that are Rainforest Alliance or Fairtrade certified.
	 
Electricity	Switch to a supplier that sources some or all of its electricity from renewable sources.
Paper products and cardboard	Buy paper products (printer paper, toilet paper, napkins, hand towels, tissues) that are FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified.
	
Alcohol	Find a regional wine, beer or other type of alcohol to add to your bar menu.
Activities	Review the list of activities you promote to guests to make sure they do not involve any of the Travelife Animal Welfare List of Unacceptable Practices. If they do, immediately stop promoting them to guests.
Recruitment	Check that any recruitment agencies you use are not breaching Travelife requirements by asking staff to pay for recruitment services or withholding things like passports and other important documents. If they are, you should take steps to change that by asking them to eliminate those practices, ensuring that you are paying for your own recruitment costs and if necessary, change to a recruitment agency that complies with human rights laws.
Air-conditioning and refrigerator technicians	Check that the contractor that services your air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment is properly qualified to safely service equipment containing ozone-depleting substances.

These are just a few ideas to get you started and with some research you will be able to find many more.

MEASURING AND RECORDING YOUR PROGRESS

This is not currently a Travelife requirement but we recommend that you keep track of your progress so you can include it in your internal and public sustainability reports. The more detail you can provide, the more useful this information is. For example, if you switched to a local supplier, you might be able to estimate things like:

- How much money this put into the local economy
- How much fuel was saved due to the shorter delivery route and convert that to carbon emissions

These are great stories to tell your guests, your staff and your community.

SETTING TARGETS AND GOALS

Every year you should set procurement targets and goals.

Targets are usually numbers and they will need to be measured against a starting point and have a measurable deadline. Ideally, you should have at least one short-term and one long-term target. Here are some examples:

Reduce the amount of straws you purchase from 3,000 per year to 500 per year by the end of 2020.

Purchase 100% of your food from local businesses by 2025.

Goals can still include numbers, but they are usually about projects or actions. You still need to know your starting point, have a deadline and be specific so it is easy to see if you succeeded. You should also include a mixture of short and long-term plans. Here are some examples:

Include human rights clauses in all of our supplier contracts by 2020.

Replace all of our air-conditioning units with less harmful equipment by 2025.

Your targets and goals should be:

- ✓ **Specific** and easy for anybody to understand.
- ✓ **Easy to measure** so that you can clearly see if they have been achieved.
- ✓ **Relevant and achievable**. For example, there is no point in setting a goal that you cannot afford to implement or spending time on an area where you cannot have a lot of impact.
- ✓ **Have a deadline**. This will help keep everyone on track.

MAKE IMPROVEMENTS

We have provided some tips and ideas to help you think about how you can procure more sustainably.

QUICK FIXES

These are all either low cost, no cost or low effort.

- Consider ordering foods that you use in high volume in bulk to reduce packaging but at the same time, check that you are not throwing away unused food because you are ordering it in bulk but not using it quickly enough.
- Before eliminating plastics from your kitchen or stores, research the possible benefits they have on food waste. For example, a plastic-wrapped cucumber lasts significantly longer than an unwrapped one.
- Review your options for sourcing food locally instead of using suppliers in other towns/cities so that you can purchase products as you need them rather than ordering things 'just in case'. Any cost increase will almost certainly be offset by reducing the amount of food you purchase that is wasted. Remember that there is a cost involved in disposing of waste too.
- Ask the suppliers of things like bathrobes and slippers to stop using plastic wrapping.
- Replace plastic laundry bags with washable fabric bags that can be reused.
- Review your consumable guest room amenities and look for sustainable alternatives that do not use plastic and/or are easy to recycle. For example, soap that is wrapped in sustainably sourced paper instead of plastic or replacing plastic pens with sustainably produced pencils.
- LED lights are always more efficient and better for the environment than halogen or fluorescent bulbs. As you replace lightbulbs, source only LED options in the lowest wattage possible. Make sure they all come from the

same supplier because using different types and makes of lighting on the same circuit reduces the life span of bulbs, so always purchase the same brand and technology.

- Buy recycled ground glass for pool filters instead of sand.
- Verify that any waste collection suppliers are disposing of your waste in a sustainable manner. If not, you might be able to change to a different supplier or pressure your existing one to improve their performance.
- Ask your suppliers to reduce, reuse or eliminate packaging. If that is not possible then ask them to find more sustainable alternatives, e.g. using recycled shredded paper to protect fragile items instead of polystyrene. You might be able to return the shredded paper to them so they can reuse it.
- Dedicate some time to checking that products that claim they are environmentally friendly or biodegradable definitely are. For example, some plastics claim to be biodegradable yet still take decades to degrade or do not degrade at all in marine environments and/or release toxic chemicals during the process.
- Buy recycling bins with clear signage that it is easy for anyone to understand how to separate their waste. Graphics work much better than text. If you would like to use text, you need to make sure it is available in the main languages of your employees and guests.
- Research product labelling in your destination so you know how to find reputable labels for things like free-range eggs or meat, eco-friendly cleaning products and so on. Be sure to investigate this thoroughly as some products make misleading claims. For example, in some countries the definition of 'organic' includes things that can still be harmful, it is just that they are of natural origin.
- If your destination has more than one water supplier, check to see if you can switch to one that takes water conservation seriously.
- If you provide a hose to rinse salt off scuba diving equipment or other items used in marine activities, consider buying a tank to dip the items into that is refilled as required. This will still remove salt from equipment and save a significant amount of water.
- Conduct a thorough review of why you are using products containing hazardous substances. Unless there is a legal or hygiene reason you should ask yourself if there is a less harmful alternative and whether you are sure that staff are using the minimum amount required.
- Spend some time researching less toxic alternatives to your cleaning products. For example, white-distilled vinegar makes an effective, cheap and environmentally friendly cleaner for glass, mirrors and to prevent or remove limescale.
- Verify that any waste collection suppliers are disposing of hazardous waste in a sustainable manner. If not, you might be able to change to a different supplier or pressure your existing one to improve their performance.

MODERATE COST AND EFFORT

- Review the items that are being shipped to your property over long distances and check for options to source them locally or from a supplier with a lower environmental impact. For example, a supplier using rail freight may have a lower carbon footprint than one using road freight.
- When replacing equipment, always buy the most modern and efficient alternative.
- Replace individual bathroom amenities, such as soap and shampoo, with dispensers that can be refilled from a bulk supply. This will reduce plastic waste and operating costs.
- Many guests are now used to using personal phones, tablets and other devices to get information they need. Consider sourcing technology that can present information you currently print on screen. For example, having an app developed that guests can install on their phone or installing touch screens in central areas. You still need to have information available for guests who do not have personal devices.
- Replace decorative outdoor lighting with solar powered options, leaving electric lighting for emergency lights and those required to stay on all night for health and safety.

- Using timers and sensors to control lighting, air conditioning and equipment is an investment that will pay off over time in energy savings. You can start in back-of-house and central areas before investing in technology for guest rooms.
- If you decide to install or replace an automatic key card activation system for guest room electricity, choose a system that is linked electronically to the unique room key. This will prevent guests from using other types of cards to override the system and thus leave the power on when they are not in the room.
- Consider using a liquid pool cover that not only reduces the loss of heat and water, but can also reduce the depletion of pool cleaning chemicals.
- Install aerators and flow restrictors in all bathrooms to reduce water flow. It is important that you have both a procedure and budget for regularly checking and replacing these as they do corrode over time.
- Installing water meters on things like irrigation systems and swimming pools is a reliable and cost-effective way to check for leaks. If you regularly record the readings and suddenly notice an increase, it is highly likely that you have a leak and can fix it quickly, thus preventing water waste and potentially a more costly repair.
- Invest in automatic chemical dosing systems to control chemical use.

HIGHER INVESTMENT WITH LONG-TERM REWARDS

- Using salt to keep pool water clean is an excellent solution for smaller pools and prevents the production of more harmful waste from pool chemicals.
- Install technology such as motion sensors and/or timers in guest rooms, central areas, outdoors and in your grounds to ensure that lighting and equipment is only used when needed. Do thorough research when sourcing the best solutions for your property to ensure you are using the most efficient technology that will have the highest impact for the longest amount of time. These generally work better than key cards to control energy use in guest rooms.
- Replace older equipment with the latest most efficient technology and develop a plan and budget to continue doing this indefinitely. This applies to large equipment like air-conditioning units and restaurant fridges through to small items like kettles and coffee makers, but you should prioritise equipment that draws the most power or emits the most pollutants.
- Install air curtains over entrances and large windows that are continually open to the outside in hot weather. This will trap cold air inside resulting in lower energy costs from regulating the room temperature.
- Consider installing solar panels and other renewable energy solutions that best suit your property.

Research options for installing waste water or grey water recycling systems, including any relevant legislation and permits you might require.

ASSESSING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

Travelife expects Certified Members to have a continuous improvement cycle. This means that you will need to complete the following steps at least once every year:

- Reassess your procurement each year to look for ways to make improvements.
- If you are keeping records, compare your performance to previous years.
- Review how well you are doing with reaching your targets and achieving your goals.
- Recommend improvements to make over the next year.
- Set new short-term goals and targets.
- Include your findings in an annual report that is reviewed and discussed by senior management.
- Include the appropriate parts of your findings in your annual public sustainability report. This normally includes progress against current goals and targets along with any new goals and targets.

The procurement assessment

- ✓ **What improvements have we made since last year?**

How many products have you replaced with sustainable alternatives? Has sustainable procurement improved your energy, water and chemical use? Has procurement reduced your waste? What about human rights issues and community engagement?

✓ **What is currently being done to procure more sustainably?**

You should list the things you are currently doing and try to assess how well they are working.

✓ **Are there ways to further improve or a new issue you should address?**

For example, if you have already made some core changes, should you focus on one area where you can make a real impact in the next year, such as human rights, plastics or biodiversity?

✓ **What short and long-term improvements could you make?**

This will help you plan for making further improvements. You should group these into short-term and long-term initiatives, along with ones that are low cost and ones requiring a bigger investment.