

Solution Strategies for Sustainable Purchasing

Leadership organizations employ a range of solution strategies for addressing challenges to leadership in sustainable purchasing. This list is intended to spark ideas for discussion internally and with stakeholders. Not all strategies will be relevant to all challenges, organizations, or purchasing categories, nor is the list exhaustive. For more information about how to think about environmental, social, and economic impacts, please refer to the *Principles for Leadership in Sustainable Purchasing v1.0*, available on the SPLC website.

Strategy	Description	Example
Efficiency	Reduced impact through reduced use	Implementing a procure-to-pay IT system reduces impacts associated with printing and transporting paper documents.
Process change	“Design the impact out” of a process	Air pollution from incinerating disposable surgical tools is eliminated by switching to steam sterilized reusable tools.
Behavior change	Implement programs to shift practices and attitudes	Break habitual purchasing by setting e-catalogs to suggest sustainable products; recognize buyers for switching.
Combining Actions	Combine multiple projects into a single high ROI project	An energy efficiency project is combined with a solar project. Energy savings offset the solar costs for a good overall ROI.
Standardization	Reduce the number of product choices available	Streamlining to 3 laptop configs improves repair and surplus, reduces prices, and eases product sustainability vetting.
Supplier engagement & accountability	Engage and hold accountable suppliers with regard to a specific impact	Some universities require apparel manufacturers to permit independent audits of factory conditions and provide retribution-free grievance and remedy processes.
Product substitution	Choose a different product with better impacts	“Green cleaning” products are safer for custodial workers and the environment, and improve indoor air quality for all.
Supplier substitution	Choose a different supplier with a better sustainability record	Making evidence of bribery or extortion automatic grounds for suspension of business with a supplier.
Aggregation	Leverage collective purchasing power	Use cooperative contracting, GPOs, or enterprise-wide agreements to get volume pricing on novel products
Servicizing	Convert a product acquisition to a long-term service relationship	Instead of owning copiers, establish a pay-per-copy service relationship so that the price of each copy reflects the true cost.
In-source	In-source a function to better reduce impacts	Hiring LEED expertise in-house to optimize and streamline green building across all of org’s construction and renovations.
Out-source	Outsource when an external party can better reduce impacts	Contract out utility bill management to firms that leverage energy market expertise to cut energy <i>and carbon costs</i> .
Offsetting	Pay for an impact reduction to offset impacts elsewhere	Buying carbon offsets; paying to put land in permanent conservation to offset development of other land.