

General Services Administration understands that federal government contracting personnel are working hard to add environmentally friendly aspects to their procurements. We too are aggressively analyzing the various options. In this document, we are providing a template that you can use to evaluate proposed contractors operating procedures and compare how their actions are working toward a more sustainable environment. We hope that you find this information useful. We would also invite you to share with us any best practices that are being used within your agency.

Procuring sustainable and environmentally friendly services has two dimensions – direct and indirect. This template gives you a framework by which to compare “how” services are provided – which highlights the indirect environmental impact of your purchase.

As you consider whether to use the template on page 3, also take the following into consideration:

Guiding Principles from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The Environmental Protection Agency has developed [five guiding principles](#) which provide a framework for making green contracts. They are:

- **Environment + Price + Performance = EPP**
Include environmental considerations as part of the normal purchasing process.
- **Pollution Prevention**
Emphasize pollution prevention as part of the purchasing process.
- **Life Cycle Perspective/Multiple Attributes**
Examine multiple environmental attributes throughout the service's life cycle.
- **Comparison of Environmental Impacts**
Compare environmental impacts when selecting services.
- **Environmental Performance Information**
Collect accurate and meaningful environmental information about environmental performance of products and services.

Environmental considerations for services requirements relate to three distinct areas: **supplier environmental attributes, supplier operations when delivering services, and goods and equipment used in service delivery**. Each of these is described in further detail below.

A. **Supplier environmental attributes** include criteria that demonstrate a supplier’s commitment to implementing environmental practices. This could include the implementation of standardized environmental policies and practices within the supplier’s organization or certifications covering the supplier’s general operations. In general, they are actions that exceed regulatory requirements for operation. Examples include:

- ISO 14000 certification;
- Environmental management policies and practices that are geared to continuous improvement;
- Regular completion of waste audits;
- Sound waste disposal programs;
- Inclusion of environmental considerations in the corporate travel policy, including minimization of travel and selection of environmentally preferable modes of transportation;
- Action programs in place to address major environmental impacts associated with service delivery;
- Action plans and performance measurement programs for environmental improvement initiatives associated with the suppliers’ general operations.

B. Considerations related to **supplier operations when delivering a service**, including the contractual performance requirements. Examples include:

- Eco-labels that indicate a certification of the supplier processes as being environmentally preferable;
- Policies minimizing travel during service delivery; and
- Administrative practices that result in reduced paper use.

C. **Considerations relating to goods used in service delivery** address the environmental features of the goods and equipment employed by the supplier to provide the service. Further examples of environmental considerations related to goods associated with service delivery include:

- Eco-labels that indicate a certification of the goods and/or equipment as being environmentally preferable;
- Environmental features of consumables used in the delivery of services i.e. minimum recycled content, recyclable and/or free of hazardous chemicals; and
- Environmental features of equipment used during service delivery i.e. energy efficiency rating, low air emissions.

Environmental Considerations	Specific Considerations to be addressed
General Printing and Publishing Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft reports to be sent electronically • Restrict number of hard copies or eliminate hard copies required • Any paper used must have a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content • Hard copies should be printed front and back – two pages per sheet if possible.
Billing and Communication Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoices and correspondence should be sent electronically • Use electronic signatures to reduce the dependence on paper documents
Packaging	<p>Where applicable, packaging specifications for consumables should minimize environmental impacts through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimization of packaging; • Recycled content in packaging; • Re-use of packaging; • Provision of take-back program for packaging; • Separability and recyclability of packaging; and • Reduction/elimination of toxics in packaging.

GREEN PROCUREMENT - BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE FOR USE IN RFI'S

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist _____ in understanding RFQ respondent's progress in greening its supply chain and operations. _____ wants to understand how the proposed contractors have greened their own supply chain and operations and the goods and services it provides.

General Environmental Considerations Required for All Services				
	Yes	No	Expected Completion Date	Additional Comments
Invoices, correspondence and/or draft reports are sent and processed electronically				
Uses electronic signatures to reduce paper				
Paper is certified as originating from a sustainably managed forest and/or has a minimum of 30% recycled content				
Travel policy includes environmental considerations (e.g. Statement of preference for travel type that minimizes environmental impact including use of hybrid vehicles and environmentally preferable fuels).				
Supplier Environmental Attributes				
Policies and Programs				
	Yes	No	Expected Completion Date	Additional Comments
Environmental management policies and practices				
Effective waste disposal programs				

Action programs and performance measurements in place to address major environmental impacts associated with service delivery. If yes, please provide examples.				
Regularly reporting on greenhouse gas emissions. If yes, please provide sample report.				
Regular completion of waste audits				
ISO 14001 certification or an equivalent (please specify) that indicates certification of supplier process				
Supplier Operations When Delivering a Service				
Minimization of travel during service delivery (e.g. via use of video/telephone conferencing and/or use of local employees)				
Accommodation preference for greenrated hotels				
Electronic/online availability of manuals and support materials.				
Vehicles used for service delivery use lower emission fuels such as biodiesel, ethanol, propane or natural gas. Gas / electric hybrid				

vehicles and fully electric vehicles are also recommended.				
Goods and Services Used When Delivering a Service				
	Yes	No	Expected Completion Date	Additional Comments
ENERGY STAR qualified products such as Office Equipment, Lighting, Products, HVAC Equipment, Consumer Electronics, Appliances, etc.				
Reduction of packaging material				
Recycled material used in packaging (specify %)				
Take back programs for recycling available?				
Reduction/elimination of toxic materials in packaging				

How to Get to a Greener RFI

State your goals clearly and ask bidders to respond to each of them. Give bidders who can't meet your goal an opportunity to explain their circumstances. For example, "Our #1 priority is reducing landfill waste. Please tell us what your company is doing to achieve this goal. If you cannot achieve this goal, please tell us why."

In a separate section of the RFI, ask questions that expose how committed a bidder is to going Green. This way, you'll be able to identify Greener companies, even if circumstances prevent them from sharing your top priorities. Here are the questions that will let the Greenest bidders rise to the top.

- **Ask to See the Plan**

What are their top Green priorities? A well thought-out sustainability plan is the sign of a strong commitment. But if the plan is vague and lacks any metrics, it might just be for show. Try this: "Has your company developed a sustainability plan? Please explain your top priorities and how are you measuring progress."

- **Trust but Verify**

Some Green actions come with third-party verification. For example, any company that joins "The Climate Registry" or partners with a provider of carbon offsets must measure their carbon emissions and have them verified every year. This is a voluntary step, but it indicates a commitment.

- **Ask How**

Bidders might be making all sorts of Green moves from conserving energy to reducing waste to

eliminating toxic chemicals. These Green initiatives could be rock solid or they could just be window dressing. The key questions to ask are how and why. For example, “In addition to our top priorities, tell us what other Green initiatives your company has undertaken. What resources are you utilizing to achieve them, and how are you measuring progress?”

Measurement is the only way to know whether a Green program is working. Many utility companies offer help with free evaluations and incentives on conservation programs. Some companies keep logs of their VOCs from paints and glues. Employee mileage reports can be used to track a shift from travel to e-meetings. Shops can measure the amount of waste they are throwing away vs. recycling.

Finding the Greenest Suppliers

We are all subject to something called “single action bias” — we do one thing and we think we’re done. It’s human nature, but it isn’t very Green. A bidder that hangs its Green hat on just one solution might be falling into this very natural trap, or they might be trying to baffle you with Green hype.

Look for suppliers who are going Green in more ways than one. They’ll be able to explain their reasons and show you how they’re measuring progress along the path to sustainability. In the end, demonstrating a commitment to going Green is the metric that counts.