

PROCUREMENT MODULE

What Does it Really Mean to Use Items Sustainably?

Sustainable procurement is about more than just purchasing. It is a holistic approach that goes beyond consideration of up-front price. It encourages us to think through both our office's needs and the hidden costs to the environment, economy, and society. Every decision has an impact - positive or negative.

Reuse is a critical component of sustainable procurement. Just as you might borrow a bread maker from a friend or search thrift stores before buying an item at a big box store, this module encourages you to consider doing the same when it comes to obtaining items for your office. You may choose to reuse what you already have, borrow something from a colleague, repair it, or buy it second-hand. One option for reuse is the [UNC Surplus Store](#) which keeps approximately 13 tons of materials out of the landfill each month by selling gently used campus items to other departments, students, and the public.

Watch this video to learn more about what sustainable procurement means:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1P3IXP7iXY>

Why is Obtaining Items Sustainably Important at UNC?

Sustainable procurement is important because the process of extracting raw materials, refining them, and then manufacturing, transporting, selling, and disposing of products has a big [impact on the environment](#). UNC Departments are responsible for the purchase of over \$540 million of goods and services every year, meaning that the university has huge purchasing power. By choosing to procure items sustainably, we send a clear message about our values and stimulate further innovation.

How Can My Office Use Items More Sustainably?

For all purchases, it is important to consider the product's life cycle and how sustainability can be maximized at each step.

Key Questions to Consider:

- 1) Do I need this item? Could I do without it or borrow it from someone else?
- 2) How can I ensure that I get the most sustainable version of this product?
- 3) How many times will I use it and what will I be able to do with it after I have finished using it?

To help you with Question 2, we have created a [Sustainable Purchasing Decision Tree](#) and a guide to [Understanding Environmental Labels](#) that will guide you through the sustainable procurement process.

Lifespan and end-of-life: Question 3 is important to consider BEFORE you buy. The inverted pyramid below is a hierarchy to consider prior to purchasing. Landfills are the least desirable option because they generate methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and often pose [social justice issues](#).



Green Office Tasks

To green your office and complete the Procurement Module:

1. Complete the prerequisites.
2. Complete 8 out of 14 tasks.

Take Stock of Your Uses and Purchases

PREREQUISITE: Do this before tackling anything else!

Before you begin, it is important to know where your office currently stands, what materials your office mates use regularly, and what items you already have.

- 1) Meet with your department's office manager or procurement officer. Ask them for a list of the most commonly purchased items. Share the [Sustainable Purchasing Decision Tree](#) and

[Sustainable Alternatives to Popular Items](#) list with them and have a conversation about opportunities they see to make your department's purchases more sustainable.

2) Speak with your department head to ensure they are on-board with considering more than just up-front costs for office purchases.

Procurement Tasks

Complete 8 out of the 14 tasks below.

Task	Resources	Check
Ensure that your office mates know how to create, save, and share documents digitally. Although UNC's paper purchases fell 37% between 2016 and 2019, paper is still one of the most commonly purchased items.	Computers, Computing & Software	
Have a designated common area for office supplies (e.g. folders, binders, pens, paper clips, etc.). Make a list of products that are currently available in your supply closet and distribute it to the office. Update regularly.	Shared Supplies Sign	
Keep a used paper bin for easy reuse of scrap paper that would otherwise be thrown out or recycled.	Scrap Paper Sign	
Start a mug share program by asking coworkers to bring in a couple mugs from home. Share them and wash them after every use. Consider designating a spot for their return with signage or buying a drying mat.	Mug Share Sign	
Expand the mug share program to include reusable plates and utensils.		
Purchase reusable K-cup filters for the office Keurig (If Applicable).	Keurig Sign	
Request that suppliers use the minimum amount of packaging necessary.	UNC Purchasing Services	
When ordering takeout or catering, request NO plastic utensils. Instead use one from home or the office share!	Office of Waste Reduction and Recycling Green Events	

Work with purchasers of office supplies to substitute as many items as possible with sustainable alternatives.	Sustainable Alternatives to Popular Items Staples: Sustainable Products and Environmental Search Filters Understanding Environmental Labels	
Send out an email about steps each office member can take to reduce their personal consumption of single use products.	Sustainability Tips	
Purchase an item at UNC Surplus or borrow it from another office instead of buying something new.	UNC Surplus Property Retail Store	
Combine orders or order in bulk to limit the amount of packaging and transportation involved.	UNC Purchasing Services	
Host a lunch and learn to watch The Story of Stuff with colleagues	The Story of Stuff	
Wildcard: Have an idea for another task not listed? Reach out to Sustainable Carolina's Green Office Program to see if it will work!	Sustainable Carolina Contact	
TOTAL		

Community Based Social Marketing Campaign

Identify an ongoing procurement challenge in your office (Seed). Develop a plan to address the challenge (Sprout). Implement a campaign designed to address the challenge (Sapling). Evaluate and assess your next steps (Tree).

- [Link to CBSM Word Document](#)
- [Link to CBSM Worksheet PDF](#)

Contacts & Resources

[Sustainable Carolina](#) | [Green Office Program](#)
 Cindy Shea | greenoffice@unc.edu

[Office of Waste Reduction and Recycling](#)

919-962-1442 | recycling@facilities.unc.edu

[UNC Surplus Property Retail Store](#)

846 Estes Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27599 | Open from 8 AM to 4 PM M-F

Contact Al Jeter about Departmental Purchases | al_jeter@unc.edu

[UNC Purchasing Services](#)

Troy Morse | purchasing_team@unc.edu