Meeting Notes
Recorded by Elias Platte-Bermeo

Meeting Attendees

Agenda
1. Introductions and goals of the meeting (9:30 to 9:40am)
   a. This meeting will be used to discuss procurement, specifically as it relates to the purchasing of goods rather than services
   b. Although some members of the Sustainability Steering Committee may not engage in procurement, we are all affected by procurement decisions each day
2. Procurement Discussion (9:40 to 10:30am)
   a. Policy Context
   b. Goal Setting: Goal #1: Develop and implement a university-wide Sustainable Procurement Program
      i. Strategy #1: Sustainable Procurement Guidelines/Policy
         1. Reference Guidelines and Frameworks
            a. Stanford and the University of California System each have Sustainable Procurement Guidelines
               i. Peer institutions have issued these as “guidelines” as opposed to “policies” because guidelines offer more flexibility in laying out criteria for sustainable products
            b. “Buy Clean California” Act
               i. One of the biggest and boldest pieces of state legislation to promote transparency in the sustainability of construction materials.
               ii. Specifically states that the California Department of General Services is required to establish and publish maximum acceptable
Global Warming Potential (GWP) which cannot be exceeded by certain materials.

iii. Intended to highlight and force disclosure of embodied carbon in products like structural steel, carbon steel rebar, flat glass, and mineral wool board insulation.
   1. Embodied carbon is the carbon involved in the harvesting of raw materials, manufacturing of a product, and transporting of the product to its destination site

iv. This policy has an implementation date of 2021

v. USC is not directly subject to this law but our peers will be, so it is likely worth keeping in line with this policy

c. The EPA has an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program that applies to all Federal Government operations

d. ISO 20400 Standard - less product-specific, more program-specific in terms of the operational components of procurement

e. LEED Reference Guide for Building Operations and Maintenance

f. Components of each of these programs and standards may be applicable to USC. Developing USC’s procurement policy or guidelines may require referring to a combination of these programs and standards.

2. Sustainable Product Categories:
   a. Office Supplies
      i. Paper: recycled content percentage requirements (e.g. 30% recycled content)
      ii. Third Party Standards
         1. Sustainable Forestry Initiative
         2. FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)
            a. More stringent requirements
   b. Electronics
      i. Third Party Standards
         1. Energy Star
a. Not particularly stringent by today’s standards; almost all products in California already meet the Energy Star standards

2. Epeat Standard
   a. Specifically for computers. Many big-name computer companies have already met this standard

c. Cleaning Supplies
   i. Most cleaning products (but not all) have a sustainable alternative
      1. In reality, there are some products for which it’s impossible or impractical to move to a sustainable alternative (example: bleach)
   ii. Decision-making about product use should incorporate the opinions of the end-user (i.e. hospitality cleaning staff, etc.)
   iii. Third Party Standards
       1. Green Seal
       2. EcoLogo
       3. Carpet and Rug Institute Seal of Approval
       4. US EPA Design for Environment

d. Furniture
   i. Off-gassing
      1. Materials used in production can release emissions into the indoor environment
      2. “New car smell” is an example of off-gassing
      3. Regulations limit certain chemicals from products used in projects that require building permits, like paint for a new development
   ii. Third Party Standards
       1. Level
       2. Indoor Air Quality Certification
       3. Greenguard

e. Construction Materials
   i. Third Party Standards
1. Cradle to Cradle
2. California Department of Public Health
3. Green Screen
4. Embodied Carbon

f. Other Sustainable Product Categories
   i. Transportation
   ii. Food
   iii. Merchandise

g. Arup recommends not specifying exact materials but requiring that products meet certain certification (e.g. Cradle to Cradle certification)

3. Proposed Initiatives
   a. Category Sustainable Spend Targets
      i. Electronics X%
      ii. General Office and Breakroom Supplies X%
      iii. Cleaning Supplies X%
      iv. Furniture X%
   b. Centralized campus delivery for preferred supplier shipments

4. Open Discussion
   a. Ellen asked if it may be to USC’s benefit to create a Procurement Policy instead of guidelines that includes a mandate and incorporates an accountability structure
      i. Implementing policy is ideal; however this will require senior leadership support. Historically, supplier and/or product mandates have not been possible here at USC (which is not uncommon in higher education). However, with President Folt’s goal of banning single use plastics, it will require some product and supplier policy/mandates. In order to truly drive against ambitious targets, some level of mandates/policy will be needed.
   b. Rebecca believes there needs to be a university-mandated procurement policy
      i. Implementation of this policy should begin with tackling easier areas of procurement in order to show the campus community that this is
feasible, and that alternative goods are comparable in price and functionality

ii. Arup agrees with this approach

iii. The categories initiatives listed are the most common areas where there is opportunity for change

c. To get past the issue of increased costing, there may be lessons learned from other programs that have used subsidies to promote sustainability

   i. Example: proposed Student Affairs “sustainability subsidy” for student groups planning zero waste events

d. Any efforts to centralize purchasing decisions and limit the number of end-users will require education of staff, faculty, and any other groups of end-users.

e. Any mandate has to be enforceable and the purchasing activity must be visible and monitored. Examples:

   i. USC Procurement does not actually purchase on behalf of end users. USC Procurement assists end users with facilitating the procurement process (vetting suppliers, negotiation/bidding, analyzing, contracting..etc) and ensures university and government policies and regulations are adhered to. The primary potential control point is approval prior to purchase. However...

   ii. USC Procurement does not see, track or assist with most purchases under $10,000.

ii. **Strategy #2: Accountability Structure**

   1. Example: Top Management → Procurement Management → Staff → Individuals who are responsible for the actual procurement

      a. Ultimately requires some level of top-down support to give the program teeth

   2. Initiatives:

      a. Regulations for USC departments to purchase within formal policy for sustainable procurement
b. Regulations for purchasing from preferred suppliers, programs, and products where sustainable alternatives/redirects have been identified

iii. **Strategy #3: Sustainability Specification and Supply Chain Outreach**
1. Create written guidelines that precisely define the operational, physical, and/or chemical characteristics, as well as the quality and quantity of a particular item to be acquired
2. It's important to be proactive in signaling to suppliers that USC is committed to sustainability so there is no abrupt disruption for vendors USC has historically worked with
3. Initiatives
   a. Established contract suppliers with sustainable product options and return/take back programs
   b. Participate in manufacturer/product-specific sustainability initiatives (i.e., Office Depot Tree Up Program, Keurig recycling)
   c. RFP/Bidding Requirements and Specifications (incl. benchmark/targets from energy/waste/water)

iv. **Strategy #4: Digital Infrastructure**
1. Enabling online systems to facilitate sustainable purchases
2. Initiatives
   a. Robust Sustainable Purchasing Web Page (Category Level Recommendations and Guidelines)
3. Example: a direct product guide and/or purchasing portal redirects that make sustainable options the default choice

v. **Strategy #5: Training Strategy**
1. Initiatives
   a. Mandatory training for sustainable purchasing practices for all USC requisitioners/shoppers
2. Example: full training module on sustainable purchasing or adding a section to existing modules

vi. **Strategy #6: Support**
1. Tools/teams/programs to assist individuals or departments who need support in feeling enabled and empowered to make a sustainable purchase
2. Initiatives
   a. Incentive program for departments that have a sustainable partnership with OoS (Note:
suppliers/categories will need to be pre-identified and trackable via reporting)

3. 2028 Sustainability Plan - progress to date (10:30-11am)
   a. Ellen and Mark presented to Cabinet and received feedback on 2028 Plan goals that have been discussed
   b. The 2028 Plan will move away from rigid verticals; most will be framed as methods to reduce carbon from the university
      i. Energy
         1. President Folt is comfortable with striving for carbon neutrality by no later than 2028
         2. President Folt is interested in a “Clean Skies Program” to track and reduce emissions from airplane travel
         3. President Folt is clear that she does not want to rely heavily on carbon offsets; she wants to take bold steps to change the source of USC’s energy to renewables and is open to pursuing onsite solar where feasible
      ii. Transportation
         1. Transportation may no longer have its own section with discrete goals since most of the transportation goals are about decarbonization
         2. President Folt is interested in an EV subsidy program for those who will continue to travel in SOVs
      iii. Water
         1. President Folt is interested in encouraging the City to expedite recycled water delivery to UPC.
      iv. Waste
         1. President Folt believes USC should be zero waste by 2022 and that USC should not be using single-use plastics. Folt wants to take bold public leadership and be the first to hit a large campus goal like zero single-use plastics.
         2. Karen noted that eliminating single-use plastics will impact water usage
   c. Costing
      i. Cabinet was not too worried about large ROM costing estimates
      ii. President Folt described these initiatives as assets that, once the initiatives are announced, she can use in fundraising
   d. In January we will hold an Engagement meeting to set goals for how we want to engage and educate the USC community with regard to sustainability efforts
e. The 2028 Plan Proposal will be submitted to Cabinet by March or April. Cabinet will review and approve/deny components of the plan, then it will go through a process (that is somewhat unprecedented) to adopt the full plan by the end of 2020.

4. Open Discussion
   a. Rebecca brought up that USC has updated its drug formulary in employee benefits to only reimburse generic drugs. This is an example of bold change to procurement/spending where there is a perfectly viable alternative, so perhaps this has implications for sustainable procurement
   b. There are already criteria for products to meet in areas of procurement like construction materials, so incorporating sustainability could be as simple as adding another “bullet” to these criteria
   c. Peniel believes that change to university procurement policy and mandates at the scale we are discussing will be a huge endeavor, but that it is important if we want to be in the best position to achieve these sustainability goals. Higher education tends to have greater autonomy than many other large organizations in purchasing decisions. Policy and mandates on suppliers and/or products are typically not the norm.
   d. Dan believes there is an opportunity to incorporate Living-Lab projects into sustainable procurement. For example, other universities have in-house teams of students who work to vet products and companies
   e. Rebecca believes sustainability should be wrapped into the Culture Change initiatives for the university
      i. USC is already planning many town halls and smaller meetings across campus in 2020. This could be a good opportunity to incorporate sustainability as a high-level value in these discussions.
      ii. This fits Folt’s public statements about making change we are proud of at USC