

Defining Green Procurement Terms

— Reference Sheet

Term	Definition
Acid Rain	Acidic compounds caused by pollutants such as sulfur dioxide (SO ₂) and nitrogen oxides (Nox) that collect in the atmosphere, are absorbed by clouds, and create acidic rainfall.
Best Value Procurement	A procurement system that takes into account factors such as quality and expertise, not only price, when selecting vendors or contractors.
Bio based	Derived from plants, derived from living matter, derived from renewable biological resources such as forestry materials, or renewable domestic agricultural materials, including plant, animal, or marine materials; generally safer for the environment than petroleum-based counterparts. Products labeled as “Bio-based” are not necessarily compostable unless specified as such.
Biodegradable	Capable of disintegration by biological means. Typically, composed of organic matter that can be readily decomposed by a wide variety of microorganisms. Technically, composed of almost any material since with enough time, some microorganisms can decompose almost anything.
Biodiesel	A substitute for petroleum based diesel fuel that is produced from agricultural crops such as soybeans.
Biofuel	A fuel derived from renewable plant and animal materials. Examples include ethanol (often made from corn), biodiesel (vegetable oils and liquid animal fats), green diesel (e.g. from algae) and biogas (e.g. methane from animal manure).
Brominated flame retardants	Hormone disrupting chemicals such as polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) that are added to computers and office electronics to reduce the risk of fire.
B20	Bio-fuel composed of 20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent gasoline, see also biodiesel.
Carcinogen	A substance that causes or promotes the development of cancer. The carcinogen may act by altering or damaging the cell's DNA or by impairing the body's natural defenses that protect against the formation of cancerous cells.
Chlorine free	Manufactured without chlorine or chlorine derivatives.
CO₂	Carbon dioxide, an important greenhouse gas that absorbs infrared radiation in the atmosphere contributing to climate change.

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Compostable	The label “compostable” is regulated by industry standards that are measurable, verifiable, and certifiable. Meets D6400 composting standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM): Under a managed composting program, the product must 1) break down to carbon dioxide, water, inorganic compounds, and biomass at a rate similar to paper, 2) disintegrate into small pieces within 90 days, so that the original product is not visually distinguishable in the compost, and 3) leave no toxic residue. <i>Also see bio-based and biodegradable.</i>
Corporate Social Responsibility	Corporate social responsibility is a term used to express an organization taking responsibility for the impact of its activities upon employees, customers, citizens, communities and the environment.
De-Inking	The process that removes inks, clays, coatings, binders and other contaminants in preparing waste paper to be recycled.
Ecolabel	A voluntary labelling system for food and consumer products.
ECOLOGO	Multi-attribute environmental certification managed by the Government of Canada.
Ecosystem	A complex set of relationships among the living resources, habitats and residents of an area. It includes plants, animals, micro-organisms, water, soil and people. Everything living in an ecosystem is dependent on the other species and elements in that ecological community. If one part is damaged or disappears, it has an impact on everything else.
Efficacy	The ratio of the light output to the power input (lumens/watt). The higher the efficacy of a lamp, the more efficient it is.
Environmental impact	An environmental impact is any change to the environment, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from organizational impacts.
Environmentally Preferable Products	Products or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose.
Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Guide	Guidelines by the US Environmentally Protection Agency (EPA) used to assist federal agencies to purchase green, sustainable products.
Ethanol	Fuel type made by fermenting plant sugars; nearly all ethanol produced in the United States today are from corn sugars. See also “E85”.
E85	Vehicle fuel type composed of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline.

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Fibre	The smallest units of organic growth used in producing pulp due to characteristics of stiffness and tensile strength. In recycling, the fibre strands are recovered from waste paper and reprocessed on the paper machines.
Fluorescent lighting	A lamp that produces visible light by fluorescence, especially a glass tube whose inner wall is coated with a material that fluoresces when an electrical current causes a vapor within the tube to discharge electrons.
GREENGUARD	Independent standards developer authorized by the American National Standards Institute focused on indoor air quality.
Greenhouse gas emissions	Heat-trapping gas in the Earth's atmosphere responsible for climate change. Greenhouse gas emissions include carbon dioxide, methane, CFCs, HFC, and nitrous oxide.
Green Product	A product that is more environmentally friendly than comparable products.
Hazardous Material	A hazardous material (solid, liquid, gas) is a substance or a combination of substances with properties which, if not adequately controlled, could result in human illness or injury. Hazardous materials may contain hazardous chemical agents and/or hazardous biological agents (e.g., micro-organisms).
Lamp Life	Number of hours for 50 percent of an average batch of lamps to burn out on a well-defined operating schedule. In practice, some lamps will burn out before this time while others will operate much longer.
Leachate	A liquid that has been polluted or made toxic by percolating through garbage.
Lifecycle	All stages of the "life" of any process, product, or activity including raw material, extraction, processing, manufacturing, filling, packaging, transportation, use/reuse, maintenance, recycling, recovery and disposal.
Life cycle costing	The process of economic analysis to assess the total cost of system investment and ownership, taking into consideration the operational constraints and performance requirements of the system or product under study.
Low dollar Value Purchase	Low dollar value purchases such as office supplies.
Lumens	Total quantity of light emitted per second by a light source.

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Mandatory Environmental Standard	Mandatory environmental standard refers to the application of an ecolabel or criteria in agency procurement processes to achieve a minimum level of environmental performance.
Mill Broke	Waste generated during the paper making process which is regularly re-pulped and put back into finished products.
National Energy Code of Canada for Buildings (NECB)	Provides minimum requirements for the design and construction of energy-efficient buildings and covers the building envelope, systems and equipment for heating, ventilating and air-conditioning, service water heating, lighting, and the provision of electrical power systems and motors.
Ozone	1. Ground level pollutant that causes respiratory damage, 2. Component of upper atmosphere that prevents ultraviolet sunlight from reaching the earth's surface
Post-Commercial and/or Pre-Consumer Waste	Waste generated after the product leaves the manufacturer, but before the final end use of the product. Example, printers off cuts and trimmings.
Post-Consumer Material	Materials or items generated by households and commercial and institutional facilities, which have served their intended purpose and can no longer be used.
Post-Use Material	Materials generated by industry, commercial and institutional facilities, and households, which have served their intended purpose and can no longer be used. This does not include the in-plant utilization of materials such as re-work, re-grind, re-pulp and scrap materials, generated within the plant and capable of being re-used within the process that generated it.
Post-Consumer Recycled Content	Material recovered from a consumer product at the end of its life, diverted from waste destined for disposal.
Post-Industrial Recycled Content	Material generated in manufacturing and converting processes, recovered or diverted from solid waste.
Reclaimed	Useful products recovered from waste materials.
Recommissioned	Put back in service or use after having been previously decommissioned.
Recyclable	Products made from materials, which after use can be diverted from the waste stream and recycled into a new product. A product or package may be deemed recyclable where at least 33 percent of the population across Canada has collection or drop-off facilities for recycling for that product, or when a product is produced for a regional market, where 33 percent of the population has access to convenient collection or drop-off facilities for recycling.

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Recycled	The content in a material or product has been partially or fully derived from recycled materials versus virgin materials. See Post-consumer recycled content
Refurbished	Items that were returned to retailers and manufacturers due to blemish and/or functionality issues. The items are then repaired, either by the manufacturer or a reseller company, and resold to customers with a discount.
Reprocessed Manufacturing Scrap	Material generated as a result of the manufacturing process which is re-used by the same generator.
Re-Refining	The use of refining processes during recycling to produce high quality base stock for lubricants or other petroleum products. Re-refining may include distillation, hydro-treating, and/or treatments employing acid, caustic, solvent, clay and/or other chemicals.
Renewable Energy	Energy that comes from resources which are naturally replenished on a human timescale such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, waves and geothermal heat.
Renewable Resource	A natural resource which can replenish with the passage of time, either through biological reproduction or other naturally recurring processes.
Request for Proposal (RFP)	Solicitation through a formal bidding process to potential suppliers to submit business proposals. Includes preliminary requirements for the good or service and usually follows a structured evaluation and selection procedure.
Request for Tender (RFT)	Formal, structured invitation to suppliers to bid, supply products or services for a defined need.
Reuse	The direct reapplication of a product/package for the same or different purpose, in its original form.
Sustainability	Sustainability is the quest for more sustainable, productive and resilient ecological, economic, political and cultural systems that can persist over generations without destroying the social and life supporting systems that current and future generations of humans (and all other species on earth) depend on.
Sustainable Development	Sustainable development is growth that makes use of our earth's resources without impairing the ability of future generations to enjoy life on this planet.

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Sustainable Procurement	Sustainable procurement is a process whereby organizations meet their needs for goods, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organization, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimizing damage to the environment.
Total Cost of Ownership	A financial estimate intended to help buyers and owners determine the direct and indirect costs of a product or service, including the total cost of acquisition, operations, maintenance and disposal.
Value for Money	A utility derived from every purchase or every sum of money spent. Value for money is based not only on the minimum purchase price but also on the maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the purchase.
Volatile Organic Compound (VOC)	A group of organic compounds that evaporate easily and contribute to air pollution, mainly through the formation of secondary pollutants.

Sources: Responsible Purchasing Network, Whistler 2020 Sustainable Purchasing Guide