

# Supporting Your Sustainable Procurement

**While sustainable procurement is no easy task, it is becoming increasingly important to higher education institutions in the UK, and is now a tenet of UK public sector procurement policy. As a key service provider of collaborative procurement solutions to the higher education sector, SUPC is exploring a range of ways to support members in the procurement of goods and services that provide value for money and benefit society and the economy, while also minimising damage to the environment.**

Sustainability is high on institutions' priority lists not only because it's the right thing to do, but also because it supports secure supply chains, improved product quality, and the best use of scarce resources. Sustainable procurement can also encourage competitive supply markets and vibrant local communities, but it can be difficult for institutions to keep up-to-date and regularly implement all the suggested advice when it comes to sustainability. As a partner to institutions in providing collaborative procurement solutions, SUPC is pursuing several avenues to support members in the procurement of goods and services that provide value for money and benefit society and the economy, while also minimising damage to the environment.



## How SUPC Supports Sustainable Procurement

- Through our Sustainability Advisory Group, we provide a vehicle to share and discuss best practice, while developing and implementing activities that will improve sustainability within member institutions.
- We include sustainability criterion (if appropriate) when evaluating all of our tenders, and provide the option for institutions to give sustainability criterion further importance when conducting a mini-competition through our agreements.
- We outline the sustainability aspects of all agreements in buyer's guides and on agreement overviews, so you know exactly how using one of our agreements supports sustainability.
- We have developed statements on sustainability, modern slavery and working with small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These statements cement our commitment to upholding the highest standards of sustainability in our agreements.
- We work with our suppliers to ensure they adhere to our Sustainability Policy (read on to see examples of what some suppliers are doing to support sustainability).
- We are working to embed sustainability experts within each of SUPC's commodity groups; our groups discuss sustainability at all of our meetings so members can share challenges and learn from others.
- We are working to include sustainability experts on each tender working party.

One of the most impactful ways of contributing to sustainable procurement is to use suppliers who embed sustainability throughout their operations. SUPC meets twice a year with all of

our suppliers to ensure they are adhering to our Sustainability Policy (hosted on the SUPC website) - you can see examples of the sustainability initiatives implemented by laboratory supplier Smith Scientific and facilities services supplier OCS.

Smith Scientific is a supplier on the nationally available Inter-Regional Laboratory Agreement for Consumables. Like the other suppliers on this agreement, Smith Scientific has a solid approach to sustainability that works to provide value to SUPC members while protecting society and the environment. Smith is a carbon neutral company, and one of the ways the company has achieved its carbon neutral status is by fitting 231 solar panels to the roof of their warehouse. These panels supply enough power to cover Smith's energy requirements and also contribute back to the electrical energy grid.

Smith also supports sustainability by ensuring all of its suppliers use recycled packaging and that any packaging it sends to its end users is recyclable; this creates a closed-loop system for waste produced. The company has cemented its approach by creating a partnership with courier *DPD/Interlink* through its Total Zero Programme, which ensures that every parcel sent via the *DPD/Interlink* network will be carbon neutral. Whenever possible, Smith also consolidates shipments to reduce the impacts of handling, loading and transporting on the environment and cost to the buyer.

Smith's approach goes beyond the most visible aspects of sustainability that may impact institutions, and extends to supporting the local community and reducing the impact on the immediate environment. Smith employs 50% of its staff from within a five mile radius, provides a cycle-to-work scheme for employees and undertakes voluntary work within the local community.

For more information on how SUPC and our suppliers can support sustainable procurement at your organisation, please contact SUPC Head of Operational Procurement Paul Mander at [p.mander@reading.ac.uk](mailto:p.mander@reading.ac.uk) or on 0118 935 7081.

Sean Kinkade, Director at Smith Scientific, has overseen the implementation of many of the sustainability activities and says, **“We understand that sustainability is a key issue for our higher education customers. We’ve found having a sustainable approach benefits both the environment and is a sound business practice.”**

Another SUPC-supported supplier, OCS, which provides service through the national Portable Appliance and Fixed-Wire Testing (PAT) Agreement, is also supporting sustainable procurement. OCS is ISO9001 and ISO14001 certified, meaning they meet international standards for quality and environmental management. OCS embeds sustainability in its activities by using sustainability criteria in the selection of contract services, and working with its own suppliers to reduce environmental impacts.

OCS has placed a considerable emphasis on supporting the well-being and economy of the local communities it serves. Through its work experience programme, OCS hires and trains local post-secondary students – this supports the student populations of the institutions it serves. The company also has a strong history of supporting charitable causes through the OCS Family Foundation and routinely donates a percentage of its profits to local charities.

**“Providing social value and ensuring we support our local communities is incredibly important to us - the OCS Family Foundation and our work experience programme is an example of how we do this. OCS implements a host of technologies and strategies to ensure we, and our clients, take tangible steps towards greater sustainability.”** Says Lois Heywood, Managing Director at OCS.

