



Sustainable Procurement Framework

1 July 2021

Annex 1 to the
Procurement Manual

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Abbreviations

CAPA	Corrective Action & Preventive Action
DRIVE	Delivering Responsibility in Vendor Engagement
EOI	Expression of Interest
EPP	Emergency Procurement Procedures
HLCM	High-Level Committee on Management
ITB	Invitation to Bid
LTA	Long Term Agreement
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
PG	Procurement Group
PQ	Pre-qualification
RFI	Request for Information
RFP	Request for Proposal
RFQ	Request for Quotation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound
SP	Sustainable Procurement
SPE	Supplier Performance Evaluation
TCO	Total Cost of Ownership
UNGM	United Nations Global Marketplace
UD	Universal Design
UP	UNOPS Possibilities
WOB	Women Owned Business
YOB	Youth Owned Business

1. Introduction

1.1. Preface

UNOPS provides infrastructure, procurement and project management services to help build the future. To support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNOPS responds to its partners' needs and helps increase the effectiveness of peace and security, humanitarian and development projects around the world.

Sustainable Procurement (SP) is defined as “practices that integrate requirements, specifications and criteria that are compatible and in favour of the protection of the environment, of social progress and in support of economic development, namely by seeking resource efficiency, improving the quality of products and services, and ultimately optimizing costs”¹.

In order to implement projects on behalf of its partners, UNOPS procures over USD 1.2 billion of goods, services and works on a yearly basis. It does so in a broad range of categories, through a global supplier base of over 6,000 suppliers from 150 countries. Considering this volume and context, UNOPS considers that there is an opportunity to, through an adequate and comprehensive approach to sustainable procurement, achieve economic, social and environmental benefits, including: local development and resilience, long term cost efficiencies, protection of human rights, improved labour conditions and gender equality, disability inclusion, reduced carbon emissions, development of innovative and sustainable technologies, etc. thus contributing to the achievement of the SDGs².

UNOPS believes that the implementation of sustainable procurement not only does not hinder, but in fact it supports, achieving its key procurement principles: best value for money; fairness, integrity and transparency; effective competition; and best interest of UNOPS and its partners. As such, and in line with the UNOPS OD Procurement Framework and the EOD on Occupational Health and Safety, and Social and Environmental Management, all UNOPS personnel involved in procurement activities shall consider sustainable procurement to the extent possible within the context of their work, the country, the industry, and the supply market, with the objective that in due time, sustainable procurement becomes the default modality of procurement in the organization.

UNOPS is generally considered a leading organization in SP within the UN, achieved through the progressive adoption of sustainability initiatives, policies, guidance and tools, which led to the creation of its first SP Framework on 1st January 2020, which for the first time included certain mandatory but flexible requirements, and which is hereby revised and expanded as of 1st July 2021. UNOPS will strive to continuously improve its policies and approaches to implement sustainable procurement, harmonizing it as much as possible with other UN and international organizations, including through the work of the HLCM Procurement Network's

¹ Sustainable Procurement Statement adopted by the HLCM Procurement Network meeting, Vienna, February 2009, and endorsed by UNOPS.

² Among the 17 SDGs, only one explicitly references public procurement—target 12.7 of SDG 12 highlights the need to “promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities”; however, as a 2020 paper by The Economist Intelligence Unit supported by UNOPS showed, public procurement can have an impact in most other SDGs.

<https://unops.economist.com/digital-essay-the-future-of-public-spending/>

Sustainable Procurement Working Group³, and in collaboration with its supplier community, which is indispensable in its success.

1.2. Purpose and scope of the SP Framework

The SP Framework sets out the principles and requirements for the implementation of sustainable procurement in UNOPS procurement activities. In doing so the SP Framework strives to:

1. Enhance the operationalisation and consistency of sustainable procurement at UNOPS by including in a single document all mandatory provisions, guidance, resources and relevant SP initiatives, including those for supplier sustainability and supplier diversity and inclusion;
2. Leverage the UNOPS purchasing power, in close collaboration with the supplier community, to drive market changes in favour of sustainable impacts;
3. Mitigate possible risks to the organisation and UNOPS beneficiaries from the purchase of harmful, outdated or otherwise unsustainable goods or services, or from unsustainable suppliers; and
4. Align procurement with applicable UNOPS and UN commitments, strategies and frameworks, such as the the global SDG Agenda 2030⁴, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy⁵, the UN Strategy for Sustainability Management (2020–2030)⁶, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights⁷ and the UNOPS Gender Mainstreaming Strategy⁸.

The SP Framework is structured into three main sections, in addition to this introduction: guidance for sustainable procurement implementation, the mandatory requirements for sustainable procurement implementation, and other UNOPS sustainable procurement initiatives. A list of resources is added at the end for further reference.

The SP Framework is an integral part of the UNOPS Procurement Manual and is issued by the Director, Procurement Group. It will continue to be complemented by additional guidelines, templates and tools to be developed and released by the Procurement Group.

1.3. Effective date

This Sustainable Procurement Framework comes into effect on 1st July 2021 and supersedes the Sustainable Procurement Framework from 1st January 2020.

1.4. What's new on this version of the SP Framework?

The main changes introduced in this version of the SP Framework, as compared to the previous version are:

³ <https://unsceb.org/sustainable-procurement-working-group>

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>

⁶ https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/INF_3_Strategy-for-Sustainability-Management-in-the-UN-System.pdf

⁷ https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf

⁸ https://content.unops.org/publications/UNOPS-Gender-Mainstreaming-Strategy-2018_EN.pdf?mtime=20180831160801&focal=none

- General formatting changes to align with the Procurement Manual.
- Expanded the scope of the SP Framework to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of its multifaceted nature: it now includes guidance on SP implementation (which was previously in the Procurement Manual, section 15.2 and has been substantially revised here), and it also details key sustainable procurement programmes and initiatives which underpin the SP Framework.
- Modified the mandatory requirements in Part 1:
 - Added the mandatory inclusion of the DRiVE supplier sustainability questionnaire for EOI and PQ processes to establish shortlists, and for processes for works following formal methods of solicitation (ITB, RFP).
 - Added the mandatory requirement for awarded contracts above USD 1 million to include at least 1 relevant technical sustainability criterion and 1 gender mainstreaming criterion.
- Expanded the mandatory requirements in Part 2 to include Medicines and Medical Devices as new categories covered.
- Removed content from the SP Framework document (pre-defined sustainability considerations for Part 2 categories, Special considerations; UNSPSC codes referring to consulting services) into the SP Framework Guidance & Resource Tool, which becomes the central tool on the framework's implementation.

1.5. Roles and responsibilities

The main responsibilities of UNOPS units and roles that intervene in procurement and supply activities are described in chapter 2 of the Procurement Manual. Effective sustainable procurement is integrated throughout the complete procurement cycle. It is therefore important that there is cooperation between the different roles in the execution of the procurement process (i.e. procurement and project management personnel) and that this is done as early as possible in the project (including the design or project development phase).

UNOPS business units or projects that carry out procurement processes are primarily responsible and accountable, through their respective Procurement Authority, for the implementation of procurement processes in compliance with the Procurement Manual and the SP Framework.

Procurement practitioners must complete the mandatory courses designed for their roles in the UNOPS procurement training strategy and available in the Learning Zone, within the specified completion time. In particular, procurement officials must complete the Procurement Operations Training, which does include key content on sustainable procurement, and are strongly encouraged to take the dedicated online courses on Sustainable Procurement and the UN Women-UNOPS course on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Procurement.

This SP Framework has been issued under the authority of the Director, Procurement Group (PG) who also has the authority to interpret and provide exceptions to it. Any questions, suggestions, requests for interpretation or exceptions to this SP Framework should be addressed to the Sustainable Procurement team of the Procurement Group (PG) through the email sustainable.procurement@unops.org.

2. Guidance for sustainable procurement implementation

2.1. General considerations

The following general considerations apply for SP implementation at UNOPS:

1. *SP should be considered early.* It is important to adopt a sustainable procurement approach as early as possible in the procurement process. Ideally this is done by identifying the needs and requirements at the project design stage or *at a minimum* the procurement planning stage. Furthermore, this should be supported with appropriate market research.
2. *SP should be dynamic and adaptable.* This means that it should be applicable, relevant and tailored to the circumstances that are present and the individual procurement needs as there is no “one size fits all” for SP. This may be due to availability, maturity or other conditions in the market or industry.
3. *SP should be evidence based.* When taking a sustainable procurement approach and considering requirements, it is important that they are based on existing and credible information collected from UNOPS or stakeholders in industry, civil society or international organizations.
4. *SP should be verifiable.* It is essential to ensure that any requirements or criteria that are considered for inclusion in the procurement process are able to be checked, measured or demonstrated to be true, accurate, or justified.
5. *SP should be data-driven.* In order to progressively implement sustainable procurement and to measure its impact, it is critical to be able to make decisions, monitor compliance, measure and report on the basis of factual information. This is done at UNOPS by leveraging data generated in its eSourcing and ERP systems, through dedicated dashboards, as well as through the adoption of the UNGM Sustainable Procurement Indicators⁹.

2.2. Considerations during the procurement cycle

This section details specific considerations for SP implementation at key stages of the procurement process as identified in the Procurement Manual, thus highlighting how sustainability can be implemented across the procurement cycle.

2.2.1. Procurement strategy, planning and requirements definition

Sustainability requirements should start being considered when the project is preparing its procurement strategy and plan and when the requirements are being defined. It is therefore recommended that procurement officials do this in partnership with the project manager or requisitioner.

Specific considerations at this stage (refer to Procurement Manual, chapter 4 for general provisions):

1. Conduct a market analysis, as this will help understand:
 - a) What solutions already exist in the local market;
 - b) What has been done elsewhere (e.g. internationally);

⁹ <https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/SustainableProcurementIndicatorProject>

- c) What are the main social, environmental and economic risks/opportunities to be aware of for that specific product or service;
 - d) What third party environmental or social standards (i.e. eco-labels and social labels) are available for the product or service (if any);
 - e) If there is potential to consider alternative options that might be more sustainable.
2. Conduct a sustainability risk assessment. This will allow the identification of priority areas by assessing key spend data and specific procurement processes in the procurement plan. Prioritization should be done by identifying product or service groups that offer the best opportunities in terms of market response and potential for improvement. In doing so, focus should be on sustainability elements that are important and relevant (or considered a higher risk). For example, if the procurement process is for tents (and it is known that tents do not usually come with a lot of packaging), including a sustainable packaging requirement (e.g. packaging take back or reduced packaging) may not be very relevant.
3. Where relevant, incorporate the results of the market analysis and sustainability risk assessment into the procurement strategy. Remember that per the Procurement Manual, section 4.1, UNOPS projects, centres or hubs with a procurement volume estimated to exceed USD 50 Million in a year shall prepare a procurement strategy document using the corporate template, which does include a dedicated section on sustainable procurement implementation.
4. Re-consider the needs, i.e. consider specifically whether those goods or services need to be purchased. There may be an alternative solution such as leasing or purchasing fewer units that might be more cost effective, which in turn could lead to reduced waste and emissions. For instance, a total cost of ownership methodology to compare different categories that yield the same desired outcome (e.g. generators and solar panels) can be applied to identify the most cost-effective and potentially most environmentally friendly solution.
5. The requirements definitions shall address specific and relevant sustainability requirements through either precise technical, functional or performance specifications. Specific requirements should set a threshold to be met by all firms or which allows firms to propose innovative ideas, to address the sustainability risks/opportunities.
6. Procurement practitioners may specify both the materials to be used in production and/or the method of production or service delivery. However, technical specifications should bear a link to the subject matter of the contract, and should only include those requirements that are related to the production of the goods, services or works being procured. UNOPS shall not require production processes that are proprietary or otherwise only available to one firm, or to firms in one country or region, unless such a requirement is justified.
7. Consider requirements definition for disability inclusiveness and accessibility for relevant products and services including through the use of the Universal Design (UD) approach (see [section 4.4](#)).
8. Consider from the outset, the potential for applying a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) approach. TCO is a financial evaluation method that takes into consideration all of the costs that are incurred throughout the ownership period of a good, including the costs of purchase, training, operation, maintenance and disposal. TCO thus enables UNOPS to determine which solutions are best value for money in the long run, as well as helping to identify early on costs that may be passed on to the beneficiaries in the future. For detailed guidance, please refer to the [TCO intranet page](#).
9. In line with the the corporate commitment “Goal Zero - Together for Health and Safety” to operating safely, and protecting people from injuries and harm, UNOPS personnel must ensure that requirements, including those for infrastructure works, include relevant considerations on health and safety measures that UNOPS suppliers and contractors must comply with.

10. Always consider the beneficiaries and end users, it is important to take into consideration not only the expectations and the health and safety of the beneficiaries but also longer term sustainability. There are economic factors that might include unforeseen costs that they might have to bear with regard to energy or water consumption, specialised operators, decommissioning or disposal. Social factors that may require taking into consideration whether the human rights of the beneficiaries are being respected and upheld as well as environmental factors that may require the consideration of natural habitats or natural resources.

2.2.2. Sourcing

Sourcing is the process of identifying suitable suppliers that could provide required goods, services or works for UNOPS. The sourcing process also provides valuable information about products and specifications and is used to determine the appropriate solicitation method and type of competition. The sourcing process is crucial from a sustainability point of view as it could help identify sustainable solutions and/or sustainable suppliers.

Specific considerations at this stage (refer to Procurement Manual, chapter 5 for general provisions):

1. Advertise a Request for Information (RFI) to gather information from the market on possible technical solutions, readiness for the adoption of sustainability requirements, potential alternatives, costing elements, etc.
2. Identify suppliers by reaching out to local corporate social responsibility networks (including UN Global Compact¹⁰ Local Networks), women-owned youth owned or disability-inclusive business associations; or search in public lists of producers of social and environmentally labelled products or of suppliers certified according to social and environmental standards.
3. Where low supplier capacity has been identified, consider, in an effort to increase competition, developing supplier capacity by arranging a local business seminar, encouraging suppliers to take the online course on Doing Business with UNOPS¹¹, arranging an UP Forum or directing suppliers to the UP Toolbox (see [section 4.2](#)).

2.2.3. Solicitation

The solicitation stage is critical for the implementation of sustainable procurement, as the solicitation documents will include the evaluation criteria against which the offers will be evaluated on.

Specific considerations at this stage (refer to Procurement Manual, chapter 6 for general provisions):

1. Consider creating a tender title that clearly identifies the desire to purchase sustainably.
2. Consider establishing longer term contracts as these will give suppliers a greater incentive to bid, and increase the opportunity to improve the sustainability of vendors over time. In the case of establishing a Long Term Agreement (LTA), as indicated in the Procurement Manual, 11.4.3 the business case shall include sustainable procurement considerations.
3. Consider dividing large procurements into smaller lots. Smaller lots may be more accessible to local MSMEs that may not have the capacity to bid for the entire requirement.

¹⁰ <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/about>

¹¹ <https://www.unops.org/business-opportunities/doing-business-with-unops>

4. When relevant, encourage the creation of joint ventures or consortia, to enable the participation of MSMEs or other suppliers that may not have all the expertise and experience required.
5. Consider including the possibility of enabling advanced payments, as that could facilitate contract awards to MSMEs or other suppliers that may face cash-flow challenges. Additionally, ensuring prompt payments will also help to address these possible financial challenges or constraints.
6. In cases where defining clear sustainability requirements is difficult, or the potential price impact of more sustainable options is unknown, consider allowing alternative offers that include enhanced sustainability considerations.
7. Ensure that you use the corporate solicitation templates, as these include provisions regarding UNOPS expectation that its suppliers adhere to the principles of the United Nations Supplier Code of Conduct of the UN Global Compact.
8. If the requirement entails the acquisition of innovative or sustainable technologies, consider availing the provisions on alternative procedures for the procurement of innovation, as set forth in the Procurement Manual, section 6.3.6.
9. Embed the minimum sustainability or gender mainstreaming requirements into the qualification, technical and financial evaluation criteria of the solicitation document, ensuring compliance with Part 1 and Part 2 of the SP Framework (see [section 3.2](#) and [section 3.3](#)). This should be based on the requirements definition developed previously and on the maturity of the local market. Sustainability criteria can be embedded in the tender document as either pass/fail criteria (mandatory, e.g. qualification criteria or technical criteria of RFQ and ITB), as rated criteria (only for technical criteria of RFP) or as a voluntary disclosure criteria (non-mandatory, for all tender types).
10. Ensure that where relevant, the DRiVE Supplier Sustainability Questionnaire is included in the solicitation process (see [section 3.2](#)).
11. Evaluation criteria may require sustainable procurement technical competence to be demonstrated. In practical terms, this may require that the bidder:
 - a. has previous experience in successfully executing contracts with similar requirements;
 - b. employs or has access to personnel with the required educational and professional qualifications, practices and experience to deal with the sustainable procurement elements of the contract;
 - c. owns or has access to the necessary technical equipment for environmental protection;
 - d. has the means to deliver on the sustainable procurement aspects of the contract.
12. As noted in section 2.2.3 above, financial criteria for certain product/service categories, can include a requirement that evaluation will be done using Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) methodology, and if that is the case, it should be clearly indicated in the solicitation document.
13. Consider conducting an open or limited national/regional competition, if relevant and justified and/or complementing an international tender advertisement with communicating the opportunity to local business associations or organizations that can encourage small and medium local businesses to bid.
14. Consider conducting a limited competition tender on the basis of other special interest groups. It shall also be permitted to designate a proportion of lots or subcontracts for businesses that meet the characteristics of other special interest groups such as MSMEs, women-owned, youth-owned or disability-inclusive suppliers.

In order to enable this option, either for it to be included in the engagement agreement with a partner or after the agreement has been signed, the business unit must send a request to the Director, PG outlining:

 - The procurement to be undertaken (when, what and for whom);

- Whether the procurement will include full or partial lots, or whether it will include a designation of a proportion of a subcontract;
- Confirmation of the willingness of the donor or funding source to support this requirement and limit competition;
- Which other special interest groups are to be considered (i.e. local, small women-owned business) and the required documentation that verifies and defines these characteristics for the local or regional context;
- Details regarding the ability of the market to respond to these provisions (i.e. market research);
- Details regarding how the other special interest groups of suppliers will be verified;
- Details regarding how these provisions will enhance the environmental or socio-economic outcomes of the project and the anticipated results.

The Director PG, in consultation with the Legal Group and other appropriate stakeholders if needed,, will review each request on a case-by-case basis and provide written approval as appropriate.

2.2.4. Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of assessing and comparing in accordance with the evaluation methodology and criteria stated in the solicitation documents, as such the sustainable procurement approach in this stage will largely depend on what was included in the solicitation stage above.

Specific considerations at this stage (refer to Procurement Manual, chapter 8 for general provisions):

1. Evaluate the sustainable criteria (whether on a pass/fail or rated criteria basis), in accordance with how these were set-up in the tender.
2. If the tender indicated that it would be evaluated according to the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) approach, avail the specific guidance and evaluation templates developed for this purpose.
3. Where relevant, consider conducting background checks on the vendor(s) recommended for award including verification of the responses provided in the DRiVE Supplier Sustainability Questionnaire or conducting an ethical reputation check.
4. Once the contract is awarded, consider debriefing unsuccessful local MSMEs and other suppliers so they can understand their areas of improvement for future procurement processes.

2.2.5. Contract finalization and issuance

Embedding sustainability considerations into the contract issued to the supplier will enable UNOPS to ensure that the outputs expected are achieved. The contract may include economic, social and environmental considerations in contract performance clauses, provided they were previously included in the solicitation document.

This is a crucial requirement, especially for longer-term contracts with suppliers, such as LTAs, where the relationship is expected to last several years, or where the risk to UNOPS is deemed to be higher.

Specific considerations at this stage (refer to Procurement Manual, chapter 11 for general provisions):

1. Include relevant sustainability clauses from the tender in the contract. These clauses should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound), for example, requiring packaging

improvements such as using bulk shipment, predetermined reporting on sustainability criteria for the purchase in question.

2. In the case that the evaluation or background check or identifies potential risks, these risks may be mitigated through the inclusion of proper clauses in the contract, or the engagement of the supplier through DRiVE Corrective Action & Preventive Action plans (CAPA).
3. Include relevant supplier performance evaluation metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) that will be evaluated. The KPIs should link back to key sustainable procurement aspects of the specification or the final contractual commitment made by the successful bidder and should be used to measure essential aspects of a contract.

2.2.6. Contract management

Including sustainability considerations in the contract management activities allows the monitoring of sustainability performance of the suppliers, measuring impact, identifying areas for internal improvements and enhancing their capacity to deliver against future contracts.

When and where appropriate, including sustainability considerations in the contract management activities can enable suppliers to enhance their own capacity to deliver against current and future contracts.

Specific considerations at this stage (refer to Procurement Manual, chapter 13 for general provisions):

1. Utilise the DRiVE programme to engage suppliers through site inspections, response verifications or voluntary CAPA.
2. Regularly monitor the performance of the supplier during the contract period, with a particular focus on the sustainability requirements or KPIs included in the contract.
3. Upon contract completion, complete the supplier performance evaluation (SPE) in oneUNOPS, including by rating and assessing the suppliers sustainability delivery.

3. Mandatory requirements for sustainable procurement implementation

3.1. Scope of application of the mandatory requirements

The SP Framework mandatory requirements apply to all UNOPS solicitation processes (RFQ, ITB, RFP) with an estimated value of USD 5,000 or above, and any request for expression of interest (EOI) or invitation for pre-qualification (PQ) used for short-listing purposes, with the exception of:

- Procurement processes done under Emergency procurement procedures (EPP);
- Procurement processes done further to an exception to the use of formal methods of solicitation under FRR 118.05(a) justification grounds (ii) to (x);
- Procurement further to pre-selection;
- Call-off orders against LTAs established by UNOPS prior to 1st January 2020 or against LTAs established by other UN Agencies;

- Procurement under FRR 118.04, where the Executive Director has agreed to apply the regulations, rules, policies and procedures on procurement of any partner or entity; and
- Advisory procurement projects where UNOPS conducts the solicitation but is not responsible for signing the contract or disbursing funds.

The mandatory requirements are divided into three parts, described in the following sections of this document:

- Part 1 - Requirements by solicitation and contract type ([section 3.2](#))
- Part 2 - Requirements for specific categories of goods and services ([section 3.3](#))
- Part 3 - Products that should not be purchased ([section 3.4](#))

Where market conditions are not deemed suitable for the implementation of the mandatory requirements – either due to lack of availability, for value for money concerns or other reasons– a waiver may be requested from the Director, PG, per details in [section 3.5](#).

3.2. Part 1 - Requirements by solicitation and contract type

UNOPS considers that irrespective of the categories being purchased (as covered in Part 2, see [section 3.3](#)) there are certain sustainability requirements that shall be implemented according to risks derived from the nature of the procurement process, i.e. depending on the solicitation or contract type used.

These mandatory requirements are as follows:

- a. For formal methods of solicitation for goods, services or works (ITB, RFP) as well as EOIs and PQ leading to the short listing of suppliers, and processes to establish LTAs:
 - Inclusion of the DRiVE supplier sustainability questionnaire (see [section 4.1](#)).
- b. For formal methods of solicitation (ITB, RFP) as well as RFQ for goods and services of categories listed in [Part 2](#) (see [section 3.3](#)):
 - Inclusion of at least 1 pre-identified sustainability criterion (i.e. sustainable procurement technical criterion or gender mainstreaming criterion) from the SP Framework Guidance & Resource Tool.
- c. For formal methods of solicitation (ITB, RFP) for goods and services of categories not listed in [Part 2](#) (see [section 3.3](#)):
 - Inclusion of at least 1 sustainability criterion (i.e. sustainable procurement technical criterion or gender mainstreaming criterion).
- d. For formal methods of solicitation (ITB, RFP) for goods and services with an expected award amount above USD 1 million, as well as for the establishment of LTAs:
 - Inclusion of at least 1 gender mainstreaming criterion and at least 1 relevant sustainable procurement technical criterion. If the category is listed in Part 2 (see [section 3.3](#)), the sustainability criteria should be selected from the pre-identified list in the SP Framework Guidance & Resource Tool.

For additional details and guidance please consult the [SP Framework Guidance & Resource Tool](#).

3.3. Part 2 - Requirements for specific categories of goods and services

While it is important to embed sustainability in as many procurement categories as possible, UNOPS has identified a number of categories where the SP Framework is of mandatory application, i.e. where certain sustainable procurement technical or gender mainstreaming criteria must be incorporated, as identified in Part 1 ([section 3.2](#)).

These categories, listed below, have been identified following an analysis taking into account the following factors, largely following the methodology included in the Buying for a Better World - Guide on Sustainable Procurement for the UN System¹², and relying both on UNOPS internal datasets and those of other credible external data sources:

- a. Sustainability risk, from an environmental, social, economic, and reputational perspective;
- b. Past procurement spend and planned procurement spend;
- c. Scope for improvement in terms of sustainability;
- d. Potential for positive sustainability impact, i.e. where appropriate interventions can yield a positive return from a sustainability perspective.

The current list of categories that have been identified under Part 2 are:

1. ICT equipment
2. Events and conferences
3. Consulting services
4. Medicines¹³
5. Medical devices
6. Vehicles
7. Generators
8. Furniture and furnishings
9. Office supplies - copy paper
10. Office supplies - printer ink
11. Office supplies - writing instruments
12. Cleaning products
13. Cleaning services
14. Clothing and uniforms

These 14 categories represented approx. 50% of the UNOPS overall procurement volume in 2020, or above USD 550 million, hence it covers a significant portion of the UNOPS spend¹⁴. UNOPS expects to continuously assess its procurement needs and market trends so that this list may be modified and expanded in future revisions of the SP Framework.

¹² https://www.ungm.org/Areas/Public/Downloads/BFABW_Final_web.pdf

¹³ For both the Medicines and Medical Devices categories, UNOPS personnel shall also refer to the quality and technical requirements included in Procurement Manual, Annex 2: Quality Assurance Policy for the Procurement of Medicines, Medical Devices and other Health Products.

¹⁴ For details on UNOPS (and UN) procurement data, refer to the Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement: <https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/ASR>

It should also be noted that infrastructure works represented an additional 20% of the total spend in 2020, or above USD 250 million. While such a category is not included per-se in Part 2 of the SP Framework, this does not mean that sustainability requirements are not considered. On the contrary, sustainability of infrastructure works is a priority at UNOPS, and is embedded throughout the project lifespan, starting on the design phase. For instance, in the case of the construction of buildings, the designs to be used in the procurement process and in the construction, need to comply with the UNOPS Design Planning Manual for Buildings, which covers sustainability aspects such as: green technology, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, environmental imperatives, access and egress (including accessibility considerations), etc. These designs then need to be approved following the UNOPS Design Review Compliance process prior to incorporating them into the tender, thus ensuring that sustainability considerations will be incorporated into the building's construction. This is in addition that, as stated in Part 1, the DRiVE programme does apply to certain works procurement processes.

The above list of categories in Part 2 should be looked at together with the requirements in Part 1 to understand what type of criteria would have to be applied to specific tender processes. For additional details and guidance, including lists of potential criteria to use under each category, please consult the [SP Framework Guidance & Resource Tool](#).

3.4. Part 3 - Products that should not be purchased

UNOPS considers that certain products and categories have a significant adverse impact on the environment or public health and as such should not be purchased by UNOPS business units.

These products or categories are the following:

1. Single-use plastics¹⁵.
2. Incandescent or fluorescent light bulbs¹⁶.
3. Tobacco products.
4. Diesel generators.

For alternatives to the listed categories please consult the [SP Framework Guidance & Resource Tool](#).

In cases where the purchase of these categories are deemed necessary for successful project delivery, a waiver must be requested (see [section 3.5](#) below).

3.5. Waivers to the SP Framework's mandatory requirements

Any waiver to the SP Framework mandatory requirements (Parts 1, 2 or 3) must be approved by the Director, PG. To request a waiver, procurement officials must apply for it using the [waiver request form](#) for either a

¹⁵ Health products where such technical requirements are mandatory, according to the adopted regulatory framework and/or the context, may be exempt from this provision. Medical Devices, IVD, PPE and health products, including disinfection and hygiene products, specifically required as such by the applicable regulatory frameworks are automatically exempt. Other exemptions should be sought using the waiver request form.

¹⁶ Health care products where such technical requirements are mandatory, according to the adopted regulatory framework and/or the context, may be exempt from this provision.

single procurement process, a series of procurement processes, or an entire project. Waivers must be requested prior to launching the tender.

Waiver requests must:

- Be endorsed by the head of office; and
- Identify the justification for the waiver; and
- Detail the specific circumstances applicable to the situation.

Possible waiver justifications could include:

- Unjustifiable increase in the price. Requires demonstrating that the inclusion of sustainability considerations in the procurement would lead to an unjustifiable increase of the price in comparison to a realistic, alternative offer.
- Unfair treatment of special interest groups. Requires demonstrating that the inclusion of sustainability considerations would negatively affect the ability of local Micro, Small or Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), women-owned, youth-owned or disability-inclusive businesses or other diverse supplier groups to bid on the tender.
- Significant limitation of the expected level of competition. Requires demonstrating that the inclusion of sustainability considerations would negatively affect competition in a significant way.
- Other justifications. In addition to the circumstances noted above, the Director, PG may grant a waiver on the basis of other justifications that are clearly demonstrated in the request.

For processes conducted on the eSourcing system, the procurement official must insert the waiver code in the SP tab of the tender. For processes conducted offline, waiver must be documented in the procurement file.

4. Sustainable procurement programmes and initiatives

Sustainable procurement is also operationalised at UNOPS through various programmes and initiatives under the SP Framework, the four main of which are described in this section, namely: supplier sustainability (DRiVE programme), supplier diversity and inclusion (UNOPS Possibilities), gender-responsive procurement, and disability-inclusive procurement.

It is important to note that these four programmes and initiatives are not independent from one another. Instead, they are closely linked and complementary and should also be considered together with Sections 2 and 3 of the SP Framework in order to achieve a successful implementation.

4.1. Supplier sustainability (DRiVE Programme)

UNOPS enhanced its supplier sustainability engagement in 2018 with the development of a dedicated programme called DRiVE (Delivering Responsibility in Vendor Engagement). DRiVE is a sustainability assessment, inspection and corrective-action planning programme, to ensure that suppliers operate responsibly and in accordance with high standards of integrity, in line with the United Nations Supplier Code of Conduct. Through DRiVE, UNOPS supports the promotion of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and it encourages suppliers to become participants of the UN Global Compact.

DRiVE assesses suppliers across 10 different sustainability areas:

1. Policy
2. Management Systems
3. Human Rights
4. Labour Standards
5. Equal Opportunity
6. Environment
7. Health & Safety
8. Quality Management
9. Sub-contractors
10. Code of conduct

DRiVE uses a data-driven approach to assess and improve the sustainability performance of our suppliers, in line with the principle of continuous improvement. The approach builds on three key streams:

1. *Data collection* - Data is collected from suppliers during the tender process through the DRiVE Supplier Sustainability questionnaire, and other relevant sources including eSourcing and UNGM; and is supplemented with global datasets representing the industry, market and local context.
2. *Assessment* - The datasets are assessed to identify suppliers and industries to engage with, following a risk-based approach.
3. *Action* - Identified suppliers are subject to an inspection or verification process after which a Corrective Action & Preventive Action plan (CAPA) is issued including corrective actions for suppliers to implement on a voluntary basis.

More information is available in the Procurement Manual, section 1.5.4., the DRiVE [intranet](#) page and the UNOPS Supplier Sustainability Guidelines.

4.2. Supplier diversity and inclusion (UNOPS Possibilities)

UNOPS aims to enhance the diversity and inclusion of our supplier base, to ensure that the suppliers we work with share and reflect the values of the people and communities we serve. This effort has been articulated since 2015 through the UNOPS Possibilities (UP) programme which has a focus on: local Micro, Medium, Small Enterprises (MSMEs), women owned businesses (WOB), disability-inclusive suppliers and other diverse suppliers e.g. youth owned businesses (YOB), or those belonging to indigenous or LGBTQI+ groups.

UNOPS Possibilities consists of guidelines, partnerships, reporting tools and reference materials for UNOPS procurement practitioners to utilise. It also includes resources to engage with our supplier community, including:

- *UP Forums*: supplier engagement and capacity development events;
- *UP Toolbox*: a suite of targeted resources for suppliers, following a self-assessment;
- *UP Portal*: a portal for diverse suppliers to submit innovative solutions.

More information is available in the UNOPS Possibilities [intranet](#) and [internet](#) pages, as well as on the UNOPS Supplier Diversity Guidelines.

4.3. Gender-responsive procurement

Gender-responsive procurement is defined by UN Women¹⁷ as “the selection of services, goods and civil works that considers their impact on gender equality and women’s empowerment”.

Gender-smart procurement policies also mitigate economic and business risks by rendering supply chains more diverse. Gender considerations should be considered across the procurement cycle, starting at the strategy, planning and requirements definition stage to understand the levels of participation, market maturity, as well as the challenges and barriers to women’s participation.

Gender-responsive procurement is enabled at UNOPS through the guidance included in the SP Framework (see [section 2.2](#)), through the inclusion of gender mainstreaming criteria in Part 1 ([section 3.2](#)), the UNOPS Possibilities programme ([section 4.2](#)) and the UNOPS Gender Mainstreaming Strategy. In addition, procurement practitioners are encouraged to take the UN Women-UNOPS course on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Procurement available in the Learning Zone.

4.4. Disability-inclusive procurement

Disability-inclusive procurement is procurement that addresses disability inclusion through:

1. Procurement policies that consider accessibility and do not create new barriers for persons with disabilities;
2. A procurement process that is accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities;
3. Accessibility targets for procurement;
4. Promotion of purchasing from disability-inclusive suppliers.

There are numerous ways in which procurement can support disability inclusion, particularly by:

- Procuring accessible goods and services, i.e. ensuring that that everyone, including persons with disabilities, benefit from features in our environment that prevent or remove barriers to our functioning or using a service.
- Making the procurement process accessible, i.e. ensuring that the procurement process itself is accessible for people with disabilities, by for instance issuing accessible solicitation documents and making the supplier-facing procurement systems accessible.

Disability-inclusive procurement is enabled at UNOPS through the guidance included in the Procurement Manual and the SP Framework (see [section 2.2](#)), through the inclusion of certain disability criteria or considerations in certain categories in Part 2 ([section 3.3](#)), and the UNOPS Possibilities programme ([section 4.2](#)). In addition, UNOPS practitioners should consult the UN Disability Strategy Guidance on Indicator 8, endorsed in 2020 by the HLCM Procurement Network.

¹⁷ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/procurement/gender-responsive-procurement>

Resources

UNOPS policies	EOD on Occupational Health and Safety, and Social and Environmental Management OD Procurement Framework OI Procurement Procedures Procurement Manual Procurement Manual, Annex 2: Quality Assurance Policy for the Procurement of Medicines, Medical Devices and other Health Products OI Design Review of Infrastructure Works UNOPS Design Planning Manual for Buildings
Guidelines and internal resources	SP Framework Guidance & Resource Tool SP Framework Waiver Request Form SP Framework tab guidance on the eSourcing system Supplier Diversity Guidelines Supplier Sustainability Guidelines UNOPS Gender Mainstreaming Strategy Doing Business with UNOPS online course UNOPS Learning Zone Intranet site: Sustainable Procurement Intranet site: DRIVE Intranet site: UNOPS Possibilities Programme (UP) Intranet site: Gender Responsive Procurement Intranet site: Total cost of ownership (TCO) Intranet site: UNOPS Procurement training strategy Intranet site: Goal Zero
Other useful resources	The Sustainable Development Goals The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy UN Disability Strategy Guidance on Indicator 8 Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System 2020-2030 The future of public spending HLCM Procurement Network UNGM Sustainable Procurement Indicators Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement UN Global Compact The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights UN Supplier Code of Conduct Buying for a Better World - Guide on Sustainable Procurement for the UN System

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