

Category Guidance V2.0 Executive Summary



Scope

Covers furniture, flooring, ceilings, walls, and composite wood.

Top sustainable purchasing strategies

- **Optimize space design** by considering:
 - Share of the occupants that need to be physically inside the space on a daily basis.
 - Share of occupants that can function productively off-site, or on an as-needed basis on-site.
 - Other nearby locations that could house employees, files, collateral, or other materials.
 - Opportunities to reconfigure the current space that would allow for improved utilization, such as designated hoteling spaces, electronic storage of files, allowances for remote work, or greater use of video and teleconferencing.
- **Specify to extend the useful life of the product** by considering:
 - Use standardized products, use standing offers, and core lists.
 - Look for attributes that allow for widest use of products. Attributes like multilevel adjustability allows furniture to be ergonomically fit a number of body types and sizes, increasing the likelihood that the furniture will meet the health and safety needs of a variety of different users.
 - Standardize the model, make, and colors of furniture and furnishings to optimize for re-use.
 - For systems furniture, consider the way components are joined and the way edges are finished so they can be installed and moved to a variety of locations.
 - Specify durability and for extended product life.
- **Reuse existing materials and products:** repurpose furnishings to extend their useful life. If purchasing reused furniture, ensure it is certified under BIFMA Level.
- **Purchase products holding sustainability certifications:**
 - Use the U.S. Green Building Council [list of standards and certifications](#) and [EPA Recommended Ecolabels and Standards](#) as appropriate to the product category, including: BIFMA Level, CARB ultra-low emitting formaldehyde standard, Floorscore, GreenLabel Plus, NSF 332 standard, SCS Indoor Advantage Gold, UL GreenGuard Gold.
 - Ensure products meet appropriate testing methods for flooring, composite wood, ceilings, walls, thermal and acoustic insulation, and furniture.
- **Purchase products with hazardous chemicals reduced or eliminated:** see for example the Harvard University [Chemical Flame Retardant Free Toolkit and Buyers Guide](#); and Center for Environmental Health's [Healthier Furniture Guide](#).
- **Prefer manufacturers that use closed loop recycling or product take-back programs:** discuss the availability of product take-back with potential suppliers and prefer those that have closed loop recycling infrastructure in place.

Keys to implementing the strategies

- **Convene a team to develop strategy:** including architects, interior designer, and end user representative.

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Keys to implementing the strategies (continued)

- **Analyze current use and purchasing to establish baseline:** conduct a use analysis including data on furnishing type, manufacturer, lease or ownership status, cost to use, product use areas, ergonomically designed status, availability of Environmental Product Declaration for product, associated sustainability certification(s), hazardous chemicals present in the product, and VOC emissions associated with product.
- **Set a goal:** determine short- and long-term goals to reduce the impact of furnishings. Goals may address increased furnishings purchased with sustainability certifications, reduced furnishings purchased with hazardous chemicals present, and improved occupant comfort and productivity.

Key benefits

By purchasing and using furnishings more sustainably, organizations can:

- ✓ **Positively impact employee health, productivity and safety** through choosing low-VOC and low- or no- flame-retardant furnishings by improving indoor air quality in the use phase; and through purchasing furnishings designed for ergonomic performance and safety.
- ✓ **Reduce environmental degradation** during extraction, manufacturing and finishing phases. While impacts vary considerably by type of material used, reductions can be achieved in heavy metal releases into wastewater, chemical releases from dyes, pigments and fungicides, and exposure to potentially hazardous substances such as formaldehyde resins, melamine, epoxy, polyurethane resins, and ethylene vinyl acetate.
- ✓ **Decrease costs and waste** associated with collection, storage, handling, and transportation of furnishings, and decreased waste and loss of reusable/reclaimable materials by purchasing standard models and core features allowing for any surplus inventory to be easily used throughout the space.

More detailed guidance and case studies can be found in the **Furnishings Resources** within SPLC's Online Member Community:
https://community.sustainablepurchasing.org/guidance_category/furnishings/