Museums are part of a supply chain to some extent. They interact with suppliers and subcontractors who offer raw materials, food and professional services. If you really want to integrate sustainable values into the operations of your institution, you should deal with businesses that limit their impact on the environment.
Any purchase of goods and services has an environmental impact. Life cycle analysis (LCA) gives a better understanding of personal or institutional consumption impact. The animated film *The story of stuff* [http://www.storyofstuff.com](http://www.storyofstuff.com) illustrates this well, and showing this film to your employees and suppliers is a good way to raise their awareness.

There are several definitions of LCA; some are quite complex, so a good starting point can be found on [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_cycle_analysis). The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines LCA as the: “Compilation and evaluation of the inputs, outputs and the potential environmental impacts of a product system throughout its life cycle.”

LCA is a holistic method that assesses the environmental impacts of a product or activity [a system of products] over its entire life cycle. It takes the following into account:

- Extraction and treatment of raw materials
- Educational tools
- Product manufacturing
- Transport and distribution
- Product use
- End of life

The main goal of the method is to lower the environmental impacts of products and services by guiding the decision-making process. For companies, designers, and governments, LCA represents a decision-making tool for implementing sustainable development.

1. What is a responsible procurement policy?

First of all, it is necessary to make the distinction between a green procurement policy and a responsible procurement policy (RPP). The first focuses on environmental protection only, as it can be seen in the following excerpt from the Policy on Green Procurement of Canada’s Office of Greening Government Operations:

Environmentally preferable goods and services are those that have a lesser or reduced impact on the environment over their life cycle, when compared with competing goods or services serving the same purpose. Environmental performance considerations include, among other things: the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and air contaminants; improved energy efficiency and water resources savings; reduced waste and support reuse and recycling; the use of renewable resources; reduced hazardous waste; and reduced toxic and hazardous substances.²

---

According to the Guide de mise en place d’une politique d’achat responsable, written in partnership by the Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO), the Coalition québécoise contre les ateliers de misère (CQCAM), and the Coalition étudiante Trans-Actions responsables (CÉTAR), a responsible procurement policy is defined as follows:

It is a policy adopted by an organization to govern all the purchases of goods and services made on its behalf. The Responsible Purchasing Policy (RPP) refers directly to fundamental labour rights, human rights and environmental standards. It requires the supplier to be transparent in disclosing the exact production sites of its goods. An RPP also obliges businesses and suppliers to establish an audit mechanism and provides for a procedure in case of non-compliance with the standards. Thus, suppliers who want to sell their products to an organization must comply with its responsible procurement policy.

The RPP, as opposed to the green procurement policy, accounts for human factors in addition to environmental factors. This more exhaustive policy should be preferred as it is a consistent tool for sustainable development policy implementation. By using your purchasing power, you support local business (when possible) and fair trade, contributing to a reduction in negative environmental impact.

Ideally, all your procurement should be governed by such a policy: housekeeping products, products sold in the shops (ban objects made of endangered species, such as ebony or ivory), food, beverages and various supplies (for food, office or maintenance services).

An RPP may result from a sustainable development policy: in such a policy, organizations integrate green and socially responsible procurement criteria. These criteria allow procurement to be consistent with the values endorsed by the policy:
- Reduce environmental impacts by taking the life cycle of goods and services into account
- Favour social economy enterprises to foster positive social spinoffs

---

2. How can you implement a responsible procurement policy?

Before implementing an RPP, it is essential to have a good knowledge of your organization's purchasing needs and set goals. Here are the eight steps of responsible procurement according to the Green Your Business: Toolkit for Tourism Operators.

1. List all your purchasing needs
2. Identify your motivation
3. Prioritize purchases
4. Define your goals and success indicators:
   - I will buy local products and materials
   - I will stop buying products that contain dyes, chemicals, chlorine, colouring and/or allergens
   - I will favour certified products that have been designed and produced according to environmental and social criteria
   - I will support social enterprises and co-operatives
   - I will speak with my service providers and identify eco-friendly and ethical products that I would like to purchase from them
   - I will incorporate organic and/or local food items into my operations
   - I will evaluate whether the products I am already using are safe for the environment and people's health
   - I will buy in bulk
5. Develop responsible purchasing criteria as the basis for decision making
6. Develop strategies to help you achieve your goals
7. Identify a timeline for implementation
8. Appoint a champion on your team to be in charge of implementation

When implementing an RPP, it should contain the following essentials:

- Social standards based on fundamental labour rights as defined by the International Labor Organization
- Minimum environmental standards
- Monitoring and audit mechanisms, including implementation of corrective actions
- An obligation of transparency on the part of businesses and suppliers; this means, among other things, the publication of annual reports and public disclosure of their manufacturing sites

Planning purchasing helps ensure the rigorous application of an RPP. When you buy an item at the last minute, you are inclined to take what is available. This increases the risk that the item does not fulfill all the RPP characteristics.
3. Examples of responsible procurement policies

City of Ottawa
http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/environment/workplace/procurement_en.html

Sandwell Council, Oldbury, West Midlands UK
http://www.laws.sandwell.gov.uk/ccm/content/corporateservices/regeneration/agenda21/consumption-and-production/sustainable-procurement-policy.en

Confédération des syndicats nationaux (French only)

### Responsible procurement at the CSN

The Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) has just adopted a responsible procurement policy\(^4\) to improve management practices within the CSN and within its supplier’s organizations. The policy was released in May 2009 during the seventh meeting of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Working Group on Social Responsibility (ISO 26000). The policy sets out four categories of purchasing criteria: working conditions, trade with a strong social contribution (fair trade), respect for the environment and the fight against climate change, and responsible management. The purpose of the policy is to promote respect for the rights of workers, improve environmental performance, and support increased transparency among managers, suppliers and subcontractors alike.

To demonstrate their compliance under this policy, suppliers will be required to fill out a questionnaire. Some of them could be asked to improve their social and environmental performance by a specified date in order to be able to continue to do business with the CSN. The policy covers a wide range of products and services: buildings, furnishings, office supplies, IT equipment, financial services, food services, etc. The CSN encourages all its affiliated organizations to follow suit.

\(^4\)Julie Lafortune, Novae weekly news, May 21, 2009 (French only), http://www.novae.ca/article.aspx?id=31225
4. What can you do with surpluses?

An organization can make available a centre where employees can drop equipment and office supplies for reuse by other people; it is a good way to reuse surpluses. Another way to redistribute surplus supplies is to make agreements with various players in your community, such as schools, community centres, artists' studios, etc. before holding one of your events.

For example, printer paper, office supplies, and foam core used for posters can be distributed in the schools, community organizations or local charities.

As for leftover food, you can raise awareness to responsible consumption and limit waste. It is a good idea to make an agreement with a shelter or another charity in your community to offer them any surpluses.

5. Gift shop and/or boutique management

Most museums have a gift shop, and most items tend to be souvenirs of the site, or perhaps somehow related to the institution. Ideally, these objects should be purchased locally, should be sustainably produced and should be coherent with the organization's mission. It is important to try to eliminate over-packaging.
6. References and tools

- Toolkit on implementing an RPP [French only]
  http://www.ciso.qc.ca/?page_id=444


- EcoLogo for certified products
  http://www.ecologo.org/en/

- PWGSC Office of Greening Government Operations

- Commission of Environmental Cooperation, Promotion of green purchasing

- Environment Canada's green meeting guide

- Wikipedia definition of life-cycle analysis
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_cycle_assessment

- CIRAIG: Interuniversity Research Centre for the Life Cycle of Products, Processes and Services
  http://www.ciraig.org/en/index_e.html

- Athena Institute
  http://www.athenasmi.org/about/lcaModel.html

- Example of an organization in the Quebec recreational and tourism industry sector that established an RPP [French only]
  http://www.ethipedia.net/lfr/node/223

- Greenpeace Shopper's Guide to Ancient Forest Friendly Tissue
  http://tissue.greenpeace.ca/about.php

- Ellipsos website [French only]
  http://www.ellipsos.ca/modules/content/index.php?id=25

- Environmental Claims: A Guide for Industry and Advertisers
  http://competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/02701.html