

**BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY**

GUIDE

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR CIRCULAR PROCUREMENT

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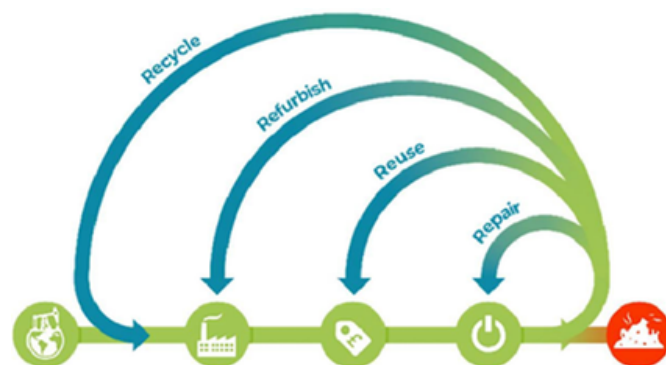
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The Business Case For Circular Procurement

A circular approach to procurement is a useful lever that businesses should adopt to increase their green credentials while delivering value benefits. In this guide we take a closer look at some of the product categories organisations should address, as well as give practical steps on how they can implement the principles in their business.



Source: Ricardo composition

Introduction

Customers, investors, regulators and employees are all demanding more sustainable ways to do business. Forward-thinking organisations are implementing changes now to maximise the reduction of their environmental impact, to increase resilience to future markets and legislation, and to create a positive market differentiator for increasingly environmentally savvy consumers.

What is a Circular Economy?

A circular economy is a more sustainable alternative to the traditional linear economy of make, use or consume and dispose. The aim of a circular economy is simple: keep products and materials in use for as long as possible, extract maximum value from them while in use, and then recover and regenerate valuable components and materials when products finally reach the end of life.

This is aligned with the concept of the waste hierarchy, embedded in domestic law, which requires those who handle waste to prioritise waste prevention followed by preparing for reuse, then recycling, and finally energy from waste and then landfill.

In a circular economy, materials and resources are kept in use for as long as possible at as high a value use as possible. A more circular economy would:

- Create new opportunities for growth through the development of new services.
- Enable companies to achieve carbon reduction targets, potentially in a lower cost way.
- Reduce waste and the costs of managing it.
- Deliver a more competitive economy through greater resource productivity, better positioned to address emerging resource security/scarcity issues in the future.
- Help reduce the environmental impacts of our production and consumption in both the UK and abroad.



Source: McKinsey (2015) Growth within: a circular economy vision for a competitive Europe. Report commissioned by Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

Circularity in business practices can take many forms, the key opportunities can be categorised according to the ReSOLVE Framework (above).

Procurement is one of the major levers with a role to play in the transition to a circular economy. Circular procurement is all about making the right choices throughout the procurement process to enable, encourage and enforce circular business model decisions throughout the supply chain. It can drive decision making and purchasing to bring benefits across three bottom line categories.

Financial and commercial benefits

- Reduce long-term resource costs through the retention of material and asset value and through avoiding unnecessary procurement costs and time.

- Reduce waste management costs.
- Reduce costs through purchase of reused or recycled materials instead of new.
- Extend and intensify long-term business relationships and collaboration with suppliers and customers.
- Promote innovative performance or usage-based business models that focus on access to services and products rather than ownership.

Environmental benefits

- Reduce impacts on nature and associated energy and water demands from extraction, processing and manufacture.
- Reduce waste to landfill, and associated methane emissions.
- Reduce carbon emissions from production as well as end of life.

Social benefits

- Increase local employment opportunities, for example, in repair and remanufacture.
- Overcome barriers to employment through skills development and employment of traditionally marginalised people.
- Support sectors are often led by small businesses or third sector organisations, such as repair and reuse.
- Encourage and develop public and private partnership working.

The first question in any procurement exercise should always be whether there is really a need to procure at all. Could existing assets be reused or redeployed from elsewhere in the business, or do assets exist which could be refurbished or repaired to meet current demand? If there is a need to purchase new, the procurement team should make every effort to do so according to circular design principles and business models.

This guide looks into what circular procurement can mean for five key sectors of the UK economy, where the opportunities are, what benefits they could bring and how they can be effectively seized.

Once the need to procure is established, you must assess the market and liaise with suppliers to develop a clear specification of your needs. Armed with your specification, you can award contracts that best meet the selected criteria. The journey does not stop there because contracts need to be managed to ensure you achieve your targets and continuously improve, and any learnings should be applied to future procurement cycles. It is also important to communicate your successes to investors, staff and customers.

The next section of this guide explores what circular procurement can mean for five key areas of procurement, highlighting where the opportunities are and how you could benefit from a planned circular approach.

In preparing this toolkit, experts from Ricardo analysed more than 45 case studies of circular procurements and suppliers against the ReSOLVE Framework and mapped these by product category. The categories which showed the greatest opportunity to incorporate circular procurement in a way that can demonstrate commercial benefits were selected for inclusion.

Construction

Many organisations will, at some point, commission a construction or refurbishment project. Early and consistent consideration of the design and use of materials on such projects can have a massive impact on cost and environmental impact.

The construction sector is one of the UK's largest, with an estimated gross value added in the year to June 2021 of £118.1 billion.ⁱ It is also the biggest waste producer, with an estimated 43.9 million tonnes generated in 2018.ⁱⁱ

Obviously, there are a huge range of commodities and services associated with the construction sector, but circular procurement principles can be applied in a wide array of contexts. Key to driving circularity throughout all phases of construction projects is clear communication of decisions made to all members of project teams, from designers and procurers through to all levels of contractors delivering the works. Appoint a 'circularity champion' to make sure the principles are kept in mind at all relevant project meetings, etc.

Key tips for specifications

- Employ the principles of designing out waste, including design for deconstruction and flexibility of layouts.
- Require reclamation and reuse of existing materials and assets on site, such as excavated materials, timber cut-offs, ironwork, pallets, and remanufacture of building components or equipment.
- Design for ease of access for maintenance and repair.
- Maximise the use of recycled or reused materials, designed for longevity and durability.
- Source materials where possible from internal or external existing sources via collaborative relationships and platforms.

What to ask your construction contractor

- Can they supply reclaimed or refurbished project components or materials?
- Do they have plans for retention, storage and reuse of suitable material on site, for example excavated land for eventual landscaping or foundation fill?
- Can they consider and supply deconstruction plans?
- Can they identify and procure key products or equipment that have durability and potential for repair, reuse, refurbishment or remanufacturing?
- Will key products or equipment be regularly maintained and serviced?
- Do key products or equipment include reused, refurbished or remanufactured parts and materials that meet quality and safety standards?
- Can key products or equipment, after being refurbished, be reused during or after the contract, either internally or externally?

Commercial benefits

- Reduce waste management costs through more efficient use of materials purchased.
- Reduce costs through purchase of reused or recycled materials instead of new.
- Avoid unnecessary procurement process costs and time through the consideration of existing assets and assessment of actual new materials needed.

- Are key products or equipment, at the end of their useful life, capable of cost-effective remanufacturing; will they go to a relevant contractor for this purpose; and thereafter be redeployed or sold?
- Is evidence available that no packaging, reusable packaging, or more sustainable packaging containing recycled content and recyclable end-of-life material is used?

Potential targets to include

- Percentage of recycled or reused content.
- Expected useful life of products extended by upgrade and maintenance where appropriate before replacement is required.
- Percentage of product packaging that is reused or reusable.
- Percentage of site materials retained and reused.
- Performance against waste and material use elements of recognised construction certification standards, such as BREEAM.
- Embodied carbon or life-cycle carbon, encouraging use of low-carbon materials as well as reuse and recycling.

Suppliers offering circular solutions

- [Salvo](#), architectural salvage.
- [Globechain](#), business-to-business reuse marketplace.
- [Enviromate](#), business-to-business reuse marketplace.
- [Cleveland Steel & Tubes](#), buys process and sell tubular sections for repurpose and reuse
- [MacRebur](#) - uses plastic waste for roads and carparks

Spotlight

Land Rover Ben Ainslie Racing headquarters construction, UK

Land Rover Ben Ainslie Racing constructed a new headquarters in 2015, incorporating offices, workshop design team and support areas. With sustainability as a key ethos for the organisation, the procurement of the design and delivery of the building adopted circular principles throughout, aiming to achieve BREEAM excellent requirements.ⁱⁱⁱ

The building design was developed through the Building Information Modelling approach, which encourages life-cycle consideration of all materials and the consideration of longevity and end-of-life options such as reuse or recycling. Measures included in the procurement specification to reduce the impact of materials included reuse of excavated materials on site and stipulations on the recyclability of materials such as wall cladding, steelworks and concrete.

Among the key learning from the project was the importance for the client of early supplier engagement and collaboration between designers, material suppliers and all levels of contractors.

It is estimated that €2 million to €2.7 million savings were achieved on the project budget of €27 million through the implementation of sustainability measures, including waste prevention and the use of recycled content over virgin materials.



Professional clothing

There are opportunities to develop circular practice for all organisations who procure professional clothing, such as uniforms and workwear. A growing awareness and appetite for the need to move away from the fast fashion model of the industry, is fuelled by high profile cases of traders scrapping large volumes of stock deemed outdated, combined with heightened awareness of the fragility of global supply chains.

This provides significant opportunities for commercial textile procurers to investigate and enable circular options. Textiles in this context can range from workwear, uniforms and PPE to other clothing, and to materials used in related sectors, such as carpets and mattresses.

Procurers can look for stock designed to be durable and easily recycled, made from recycled materials, as well as suppliers who provide collection and recycling services for end-of-life stock.

Investigate the growing number of leasing and rental services which allow the materials involved to be well maintained and kept at as high a value for as long as possible.

What to ask your textiles supplier

- Do textile products meet minimum technical specifications? Refer to BITC's [Improving the Sustainability of Professional Clothing](#) report.
- Are textile products selected for durability and repairability?
- Are textile products regularly maintained and repaired?
- Do products used include reused or recycled materials that meet quality and safety standards?
- Are products designed to maximise reuse and recyclability at end of life, for example by using removable logos or being made from a single fibre rather than blended fibres?

Commercial benefits

- Reduce long-term resource costs through procuring for longevity and repairability.
- Promote innovative performance or usage-based business models that focus on access to services and products rather than ownership.
- Retain value of materials and assets at end of first life through consideration of alternative ownership, access models and reusability.

- Where products are capable of cost-effective repair or reuse at the end of their useful life, will they go to a relevant contractor for this purpose, and thereafter be redeployed or sold?
- Is evidence available that no packaging, reusable packaging, or more sustainable packaging containing recycled content and recyclable end-of-life material is used?

Potential targets to include

- Percentage of product packaging that is reused or reusable.
- Percentage of products supplied that are being reused.
- Percentage of products supplied that can be reused, repaired, remanufactured and recycled at end of life.

Suppliers offering circular solutions

- [Stuff4Life](#), closed-loop recycling for end-of-life workwear and work with workwear suppliers as part of a supply contract.
- [Project Plan B](#), collection and remanufacture of clothing, design for recyclability.
- [ACS Clothing](#), clothing rental and leasing models, as well as direct sales, collection, cleaning and remanufacture.
- [SMI Scotland](#), a workwear and PPE supplier, offers takeback and remanufacture services.

Spotlight

Circular workwear in the City of Herning, Denmark

The city of Herning shifted from an existing model where all city workers were issued with brand new work clothes and, at the end of the contract, all clothing was discarded without recycling. They investigated how to prolong the lifetime of the work clothes and incorporate reuse and recycling into daily operations in the purchase and supplier chains. This led to the roll-out of a new circular business model for work clothes in the municipality's technical operations department.

Criteria were established for the reuse and recycling of used clothing, using official legislative standards as a starting point. Then a circular model was designed whereby clothes were reused and their value therefore retained for as long as possible.

The circularity choices made in the procurement phase led to estimated savings for the city of around £6,000 over four years, and approximately 1,000 tonnes of CO₂.

Alongside these benefits, the city also used their experience to develop a guide for other similar purchasing exercises to consider circular economy principles.



Furniture

The use and furnishing of workspaces are significant considerations for the majority of businesses and getting it right can be vital for cost-effectiveness and staff wellness and morale. 80 to 90 per cent of furniture in Europe ends its first life either in landfill or being incinerated for energy. This represents a huge waste of materials and embedded carbon, meaning there is great potential for improvements to be made through introducing circularity.^{iv}

Procurement professionals can stimulate and support this shift in two stages:

1. Initially, investigate if business needs can be met by purchasing second-life products, such as refurbished or remanufactured furniture.
2. If second-life products are not suitable, specify products which meet circular design principles, such as modular design, durability, ease of repairability and inclusion of recycled materials.

Another innovative idea for the circular procurement of furniture is to purchase furniture-as-a-service, whereby products are leased rather than purchased outright, with the supplier retaining ownership and taking responsibility for any repair, remanufacture or replacement required.

What to ask of your furniture supplier

- Evidence that furniture is durable and repairable.
- Can the furniture be regularly maintained and serviced?
- Does the furniture include reused, refurbished or remanufactured parts and materials that meet quality and safety standards?
- Can the furniture be reused after being refurbished, during or after the contract has expired, either for internal reuse or externally?
- At the end of its useful life, can it go to a relevant contractor for cost-effective remanufacturing, and thereafter be redeployed or sold?

Commercial benefits

- Avoid unnecessary procurement process costs and time through the sourcing of existing assets within the organisation, or investigation of second-life options.
- Retain value of materials and assets at end of first life through consideration of reuse possibilities or procurement for longevity and repairability.

- Evidence that no packaging, reusable packaging, or more sustainable packaging containing recycled content and recyclable end-of-life material is used.

Potential targets to include

- Expected useful life of the furniture under the contract, extended by upgrade and maintenance where appropriate before replacement is required.
- Percentage of redundant furniture from the contract that is reused, refurbished or remanufactured rather than recycled, with appropriate evidence from service records.
- Percentage of product packaging that is reused or reusable.
- Lifecycle carbon emissions of products.

Suppliers offering circular solutions

- Crown Workspace, remanufacturing and refurbishing office furniture.
- Warp It, online platform facilitation network for organisations to donate, loan and find furniture and other assets.
- Interface, carpet tile and flooring provider with sustainability as a core business value.
- Elite Contract Furniture, furnish manufacturer with circular line of products designed for longevity, using recycled and reclaimed materials.
- IKEA, committed to circularity through initiatives such as designing out waste, use of recycled materials and offering a buy-back service to facilitate second life.

Spotlight

Circular furniture in City Hall Venlo, Netherlands

For the new city hall furniture procurement, circularity was built in through whole-life costing, residual value, non-toxic materials, design for disassembly and refurbishment, and ten-year supplier take-back schemes. Suppliers' circularity was embedded in the scoring criteria, ensuring long-term environmental and financial benefits were considered:

- Quality - 10%
- Cradle-to-cradle assessment - 30%, with bidders required to score at least 60% of the highest-scoring bid. This assessed whether:
 - product's chemical composition was known down to 100 parts per million;
 - components could be separated without additional substances or materials;
 - materials could be recycled at end of life without loss of quality, or were biological, compostable or degradable;
 - materials were rapidly renewable or recycled.
- Total cost of ownership - 30%, calculated as the price minus the residual value of the products after ten years.
- Aesthetics - 30%, with bidders required to score at least 60% of the highest-scoring bid.

Suppliers also had to set out preventative maintenance plans, service-level response times and temporary replacement arrangements for defective assets. As a result, the purchases contained a very high level of cradle-to-cradle or equivalent materials, minimal virgin timber and toxic materials, and delivered an 18% cost-saving through retained residual material value after ten years.



Transport

The use and or supply of commercial vehicles is a huge operational factor for almost all sectors of the economy. Purchased vehicles are heavily underutilised; therefore, the first question should be whether a leasing or rental option can provide adequate provision, allowing the vehicle materials to achieve valuable usage. There is a strong hire market for most vehicle types, prices are very competitive and offer good value to purchasers.

Organisations can make use of car clubs and mobility-as-a-service offerings. The former gives access to vehicles in small increments, such as hours at a time, and the latter allows users to book journeys using multiple modes of transport.

Whether leasing, sharing or purchasing, a vehicle or fleet's overall environmental impact will be dominated by fuel efficiency, whether internal combustion engine, electric, hybrid or hydrogen. The policy shift to electric vehicles has focused manufacturers' plans in that market, and many are now investigating differentiators to give a competitive edge, which could empower procurers to push for the use of recycled materials, design for ease of remanufacture, and recyclability and reusability of all components.

What to ask of your transport supplier

- Can you provide vehicle leasing, sharing or mobility-as-a-service options?
- What is the fuel efficiency and embedded environmental impact from material use of selected vehicles?
- Are there opportunities for inclusion of reused and remanufactured vehicle parts?
- Is there potential for end-of-life reuse, remanufacture and recycling of vehicle parts provided, including electric vehicle batteries?

Commercial benefits

- Reduce long-term resource costs through investigation of leasing and sharing options and minimisation of maintenance responsibility.
- Promote innovative performance or usage-based business models that focus on access to services and products rather than ownership.
- Avoid unnecessary procurement process costs and time through reconsideration of actual need to purchase.

- Have vehicles been designed for ease of disassembly and recovery of parts for remanufacture and recovery of critical raw materials, with minimum waste to landfill and incineration?
- Have vehicles been designed for ease of maintenance and repairability?

Potential targets to include

- Estimated long-term cost and environmental savings of leasing or sharing options instead of outright purchase, backed up with robust calculation methodology.
- Percentage of recycled or reused content in vehicle components.
- Service level agreements for leasing and sharing arrangements.
- Lifecycle carbon emissions, including embodied carbon.

Suppliers offering circular solutions

- [Co-wheels](#)
- [Enterprise Car Club](#)
- [Hiyacar](#)
- [Hertz 24/7](#)
- Local car share clubs

Spotlight

Highland Council using Enterprise Car Club, Scotland

The Highland Council local authority covers some 25,000 square miles in the north of Scotland, incorporating around 700 individual council sites and necessitating large amounts of staff travel. In a drive to minimise the environmental and cost impact of this grey fleet travel, the Council partnered with Enterprise Car Club.

They analysed the staff travel mileage in detail to identify why, how, when and where trips were taking place, whether alternative options were suitable, and where it would make sense to have dedicated car club vehicles located on-site. A fleet of 60 Enterprise Car Club vehicles located across 21 Highland Council offices was introduced, available for booking online or via mobile app, by the hour or day by employees who would have previously used a private car and claimed mileage reimbursement.

As a result of this initiative, The Highland Council reduced its annual business mileage by more than 825,000 miles and made cost savings of more than £400,000 in the first 12 months.



Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Smooth access to, and usability of, reliable ICT equipment is an integral and ever-increasing aspect of most businesses' operations. Due to the high rate of development in ICT equipment, there is a well-developed and highly competitive leasing and managed service market already. However, with the supply of critical raw materials, such as those used in laptops, mobiles and other smart appliances, becoming more uncertain, the value retention and reusability of this type of equipment is coming under more and more focus.

Demand circular options, such as life extension through reparability and ease of upgrade, design for durability and the sourcing of remanufactured, reused or pre-owned equipment. These latter two options can be considered where you do not need state-of-the-art equipment performance levels for a particular function.

What to ask of your ICT supplier

- Can they provide service agreements as an alternative to purchasing equipment?
- Does the equipment meet the minimum technical specifications?
- What are the durability, reparability and upgradeability of the equipment?
- How will equipment be maintained and serviced?
- Does equipment include reused, refurbished or remanufactured whole items or meet quality and safety standards with appropriate certification?
- Will equipment, where possible, be reused after being refurbished or data destruction completed, during and/or after the contract has expired, either for internal reuse or externally?
- Will equipment capable of cost-effective remanufacturing at the end of its useful life go to a relevant contractor for this purpose and thereafter be redeployed or sold?

Commercial benefits

- Reduce long-term resource costs through investigation of leasing and service options rather than outright ownership.
- Reduce costs through purchase of reused or recycled materials instead of new.
- Extend and intensify long-term business relationships and collaboration with suppliers and customers.

- Evidence that no packaging, reusable packaging, or more sustainable packaging containing recycled content and recyclable end-of-life material is used.

Potential targets to include

- Expected useful life of the equipment under the contract, extended by upgrade and maintenance, where appropriate, before replacement is required.
- Evidence to be provided in terms of testing or simulation and design calculations.
- Percentage of redundant equipment from the contract that is reused, refurbished or remanufactured.
- Percentage of product packaging that is reused or reusable.
- Lifecycle carbon emissions.

Suppliers offering circular solutions

- Crown Workspace IT Resale, online platform for purchasing quality used IT equipment.
- Circular Computing, laptop remanufacture specialists.
- Re-Tek, full lifecycle services, including collection and refurbishment, of all IT equipment.
- Computers4Charity, refurbish and donate to charitable causes unwanted or redundant IT equipment and fund their service by selling refurbished IT equipment.

Spotlight

Balfour Beatty purchasing remanufactured IT equipment, UK

As a large organisation with a continual requirement for IT equipment, Balfour Beatty decided to engage with current and potential suppliers to investigate options to meet this demand with a minimal environmental impact, while still delivering the highest possible technical performance within their budget range.

The chosen supplier, Circular Computing, was able to deliver high-spec remanufactured laptops that met all customer performance requirements. During the procurement phase, there was a two-way dialogue to make sure Balfour Beatty was satisfied that technical requirements could be met, and a number of trial units were supplied before any purchase commitment.

As the remanufactured units were cheaper to purchase than brand new alternatives, a higher specification unit was available within the price range, and staff feedback showed high levels of performance satisfaction. Purchasing 6,000 carbon-neutral remanufactured HP laptops, Balfour Beatty saved over £1 million and significantly impacted their sustainability goals.



Applying circular principles across the procurement process

There are opportunities across all the sectors discussed here to introduce and increase circularity of procurement decisions and exercises, thereby acting to retain materials at as high a value use as possible, for as long as possible.

Many of the opportunities follow similar principles, such as:

- Specifying the inclusion of recycled or reused and remanufactured products or materials
- Specifying or using evaluation criteria regarding design for longevity, durability and ease of reuse at the end of life
- Investigating options for leasing or sharing rather than outright purchase and ownership.

The standard model for a procurement exercise will follow some or all of the following seven stages.

1. Pre-procurement

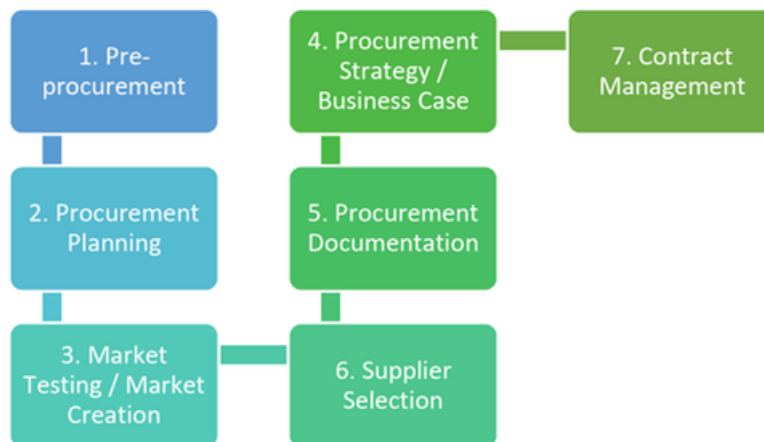
Determine whether there is a need to procure at all.

- Can assets be reused or redeployed from elsewhere in the organisation?
- Can assets be refurbished or repaired?
- Can assets be shared with a third party?
- Is there an asset register and is it up to date?

2. Procurement planning

Early consideration of the intended circular economy outcomes, the actual procurement needs and the required functions that need to be delivered.

- Can reused or refurbished items be procured instead?
- Is suitable infrastructure in place or required to reuse items?
- Can design for longevity be considered in procurement?



- Can products be designed for reuse?
- Can the products go back to the supplier at end of life?
- Can the functionality required be achieved in a better way through circular business models such as leasing, sharing or take-back schemes?
- Could any of the goods, works and services to be purchased be resource or energy efficient?
- Are there any opportunities for the use of recycled and recyclable, reused and reusable, reclaimed and renewable or sustainable materials and products?
- What are the environmental and other benefits of a sustainable option?
- Consider what quantitative metrics can be used for evaluating bids, for example lifecycle carbon emissions.

3. Market test / creation

Before procurement commences, understand the capacity of the market to deliver the outcomes of the procurement strategy, especially when requesting innovative solutions:

- Undertake desktop research, including trade journals and the internet.

- Hold market engagement days or meetings as part of the procurement process.
- Look at market trends and industry best practice, consulting end users, similar sectors or industry leaders outside the sector. Analysis should look at alternative suppliers, leverage points, alternative products or services and new technology.
- If there is a current lack of market capacity to provide the required products or services, work with the market to stimulate demand and innovation.

4. Procurement strategy / Business case

It is important to have a very strong strategy and policy, to communicate to the supply chain your circular ambition and metrics you will use to stimulate innovation. In some cases, you may want to link up with other procurers to create joint statements of demand. The procurement strategy should consider the type of contract and type of specification (for example, technical or performance) and may need to be updated depending on the outcomes of market testing or further steps.

5. Procurement documentation

This is the stage where your circular ambition and strategy is translated into specific requirements for each procurement exercise. A strong, unambiguous specification will allow suppliers to provide clear and accurate information as to how they can meet your requirements.

Setting specifications intended to deliver circular outcomes clearly communicates to suppliers the requirements of the procurement, and will define the scope of the goods, works and/or services, and how they will be delivered.

It is also important to give circularity considerations sufficient weight in evaluation criteria and communicate the criteria you will use to evaluate bids, explaining how you will compare bids against each other.

This is where you can introduce some of the sample considerations mentioned in the individual product category sections above.

6. Supplier selection

A robust and transparent evaluation of supplier proposals is key in assessing not only its technical and financial elements, but to be able to assess the ability and capacity of a supplier to deliver the required circularity outcomes.

The evaluation criteria must be designed so that the onus is on the supplier to provide sufficient information to allow the effective evaluation of the innovative products or delivery models proposed, including independently verified estimates of their potential benefits.

7. Contract management

Ongoing improvement throughout the contract can be achieved by building requirements into the contract and managing the contract appropriately once awarded. This approach is particularly useful where markets are developing quickly and the full performance requirement is not available to the buyer at the time of the procurement, thereby allowing the desired performance to be met over the term of the contract.

Effective contract management will also ensure that circular outcomes are actually delivered as specified, and related service/quality requirements are met and exceeded, and not just referenced at a high level in a proposal.

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