

ACHIEVING THE FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK IN 12 MONTHS!

We have worked with the Flexible Framework (FF) for a number of years; as part of sustainable procurement training sessions or supporting organisations to implement it. We have recently decided to re-visit the framework with a fresh pair of eyes, as we believe progress across the sector in terms of its implementation remains mixed.

The Flexible Framework remains an excellent piece of work, however there are a number of challenges that emerge when trying to implement it. These include:

1. Where do you start? Do you need to complete level 1 before you move to level 2?

It seems obvious to start at level 1 with People (top left box) however, does this really make sense? We know that in reality you may have completed actions at levels 3 and 4 without having a recognised Champion in place, so where should you really start?

2. What is the definition of 'key'? (Suppliers, staff etc)

The term 'key' will relate to different people in different organisations. In reality you need to have completed a whole host of prioritisation to define 'key' - but when do you do this? And how?

3. There seems to be some repetition?

It doesn't necessarily look like repetition but the Flexible Framework does ask you to keep coming back to do fairly similar activities at level 1-4 with a slightly different focus, often just using slightly different language.

With these challenges in mind we set ourselves the goal of taking a fresh approach and creating an action plan that makes achieving Level 4 not only possible but achievable in a reasonable timeframe.

PRINCIPLES OF OUR APPROACH:

We have used these principles to guide the development of the action plan attached:

1. Start with Procurement Process and undertake actions at Level 4 in the action plan. This means you only do things once but you do them well. When you complete actions at a Level 4, by default you have completed other actions at levels 1, 2 and 3! If you have completed them thoroughly.
2. Identify a logical and simplified approach to the actions - we have identified all the actions across each of the 20 cells that take you up to level 4. We have then put these into a sensible order so that dependencies were not missed.
3. Actions need to be completed to the appropriate level. The Flexible Framework is to support implementing sustainable procurement; it is only a means to an end and not the end itself!

ABOUT THE ACTION PLAN

The action plan we have produced consists of two columns, each with a number of actions. These actions have been cross referenced back to the Flexible Framework.

Actions in the left hand column must be completed in the order they have been presented, as there are certain activities that logically need to be undertaken in a particular order. This ensures the Flexible Framework is not only completed comprehensively but also avoids wasting time and resources.

In the right hand column are a number of actions that we would suggest are completed in the time period allocated. This is because there are relationships to other actions in the Framework; these dependencies are less critical so these timings are just suggestions.

We are confident that, following the approach detailed in the action plan, Level 4 can be completed in 12 months; we are currently working with an institution which has set itself a target of achieving this in 5 months because it thinks that by using our approach this is possible! We think it is probably correct but 12 months is perhaps more manageable!

If you have any comments or feedback on this piece of work, or you would like some further support, do not hesitate to get in touch.

We are offering this to the sector not because we think it is perfect but because we hope it helps.

	FOUNDATION	EMBED	PRACTICE	ENHANCE	LEAD
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
PEOPLE	Sustainable procurement champion identified (PE1a). Key procurement staff have received basic training in sustainable procurement principles. (PE1b) Sustainable procurement is included as part of a key employee induction programme.(PE1c)	All procurement staff have received basic training in sustainable procurement principles. (PE2a) Key staff have received advanced training on sustainable procurement principles. (PE2b)	Targeted refresher training on latest sustainable procurement principles. (PE3a) Performance objectives and appraisal include sustainable procurement factors. (PE3b) Simple incentive programme in place. (PE3c)	Sustainable procurement included in competencies and selection criteria (PE4a) Sustainable procurement is included as part of employee induction programme. (PE4b)	Achievements are publicised and used to attract procurement professionals. Internal and external awards are received for achievements. Focus is on benefits achieved. Good practice shared with other organisations.
POLICY, STRATEGY & COMMUNICATIONS	Agree overarching sustainability objectives. (PSC1a) Simple sustainable procurement policy in place endorsed by CEO. (PSC1b) Communicate to staff and key suppliers. (PSC1c)	Review and enhance sustainable procurement policy, in particular consider supplier engagement. (PSC2a) Ensure it is part of a wider Sustainable Development strategy. (PSC2b) Communicate to staff, suppliers and key stakeholders. (PSC2c)	Augment the sustainable procurement policy into a strategy covering risk, process integration, marketing, supplier engagement, measurement and a review process. (PSC3a) Strategy endorsed by CEO.(PSC3b)	Review and enhance the sustainable procurement strategy, in particular recognising the potential of new technologies. (PSC4a) Try to link strategy to EMS and include in overall corporate strategy. (PSC4b)	Strategy is: reviewed regularly, externally scrutinised and directly linked to organisation's EMS. The Sustainable Procurement strategy recognised by political leaders is communicated widely. A detailed review is undertaken to determine future priorities and a new strategy is produced beyond this framework.
PROCUREMENT PROCESS	Expenditure analysis undertaken and key sustainability impacts identified. (PP1a) Key contracts start to include general sustainability criteria. (PP1b) Contracts awarded on the basis of value-for-money, not lowest price. (PP1c) Procurers adopt Quick Wins. (PP1d)	Detailed expenditure analysis undertaken, key sustainability risks assessed and used for prioritisation. (PP2a) Sustainability is considered at an early stage in the procurement process of most contracts. (PP2b) Whole-life-cost analysis adopted. (PP2c)	All contracts are assessed for general sustainability risks and management actions identified. (PP3a) Risks managed throughout all stages of the procurement process. (PP3b) Targets to improve sustainability are agreed with key suppliers. (PP3c)	Detailed sustainability risks assessed for high impact contracts. (PP4a) Project/ contract sustainability governance is in place. (PP4b) A life-cycle approach to cost/ impact assessment is applied. (PP4c)	Life-cycle analysis has been undertaken for key commodity areas. Sustainability Key Performance Indicators agreed with key suppliers. Progress is rewarded or penalised based on performance. Barriers to sustainable procurement have been removed. Best practice shared with other organisations.
ENGAGING SUPPLIERS	Key supplier spend analysis undertaken and high sustainability impact suppliers identified. (ES1a) Key suppliers targeted for engagement and views on procurement policy sought. (ES1b)	Detailed supplier spend analysis undertaken. (ES2a) General programme of supplier engagement initiated, with senior manager involvement. (ES2b)	Targeted supplier engagement programme in place, promoting continual sustainability improvement. (ES3a) Two-way communication between procurer and supplier exists with incentives. (ES3b) Supply chains for key spend areas have been mapped. (ES3c)	Key suppliers targeted for intensive development. (ES4a) Sustainability audits and supply chain improvement programmes in place. (ES4b) Achievements are formally recorded. (ES4c) CEO involved in the supplier engagement programme. (ES4d)	Suppliers recognised as essential to delivery of organisation's sustainable procurement strategy. CEO engages with suppliers. Best practice shared with other/peer organisations. Suppliers recognise they must continually improve their sustainability profile to keep the clients business.
MEASUREMENTS & RESULTS	Key sustainability impacts of procurement activity have been identified.(MR1a)	Detailed appraisal of the sustainability impacts of the procurement activity has been undertaken. (MR2a) Measures implemented to manage the identified high risk impact areas. (MR2b)	Sustainability measures refined from general departmental measures to include individual procurers and are linked to development objectives. (MR3)	Measures are integrated into a balanced scorecard approach reflecting both input and output. (MR4a) Comparison is made with peer organisations. (MR4b) Benefit statements have been produced (MR4c)	Measures used to drive organisational sustainable development strategy direction. Progress formally benchmarked with peer organisations. Benefits from sustainable procurement are clearly evidenced. Independent audit reports available in the public domain.

Flexible Framework Action Plan to Achieve Level 4 in 12 Months

	THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS SHOULD BE COMPLETED IN THE NUMBERED ORDER	THESE ACTIONS SHOULD BE COMPLETED ANYTIME WITHIN THE ALLOCATED TIME PERIOD
MONTHS 1 - 3	1. Detailed expenditure analysis undertaken (PP1a, PP2a, ES1a, ES2a, ES3c, ES4a)	<p>A formal champion for Sustainable Procurement is identified and communicated to the University (PE1a)</p> <p>A one-day training course is held for all procurement staff (central team) on sustainable procurement (PE1b, PE2a)</p> <p>Undertake a simple review of how other institutions are delivering sustainable procurement and setting targets (MR4b)</p> <p>Procurer adopt quick wins where appropriate (PP1d)</p>
	2. A risk analysis process should be undertaken across the commodity areas. One approach can be found here http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/procurement/sustainableprocurement/sustainable-procurement/srs-risk-matrix It is important that the Procurement Team can demonstrate how they respond to these risks (PP1a, PP2a, PP3a, PP4a, PSC3a, MR1a, MR2b, ES3c)	
	3. Establish (or use an existing) steering group to manage sustainable procurement within your organisation. Identify management actions related to high risk/impact goods or services (PP4b and PP2a)	
MONTHS 4 - 7	4. Review institutional documents (other policies and strategies, link to EMS if appropriate for your institution) to identify priority environmental, social and economic considerations to use as filter criteria for prioritisation of actions and the development of your procurement policy; also consider use of new technologies. (PS4a, PS4b)	<p>Sustainable procurement is included as part of all employee induction programmes, sustainable procurement competencies are included in recruitment of procurement staff. (PE1c, PE4a, MR3)</p> <p>Commit to regular communication to celebrate progress on sustainable procurement, to communicate with staff and to reward and incentivise colleagues and suppliers. (ES4c, PSC2b, PE3c and MR4c)</p> <p>Performance objectives and appraisal include sustainable procurement factors. (PE3b)</p> <p>Refresher/advanced training session for all central procurement staff is undertaken (PE2b, PE3a)</p>
	5. Update or develop procurement policy and strategy in line with your institutional sustainability or environmental strategy; this needs to be endorsed by your strategic sustainable Procurement Champion/CEO (PS1a, PS1b, PSC3a, PS3b, PSC2a, PS4a, PS4b)	
	6. SMART sustainable procurement targets are set for all staff involved in procurement – this is included in the strategy. (MR3, MR4a)	
MONTHS 8 - 12	7. Using the procurement cycle from PQQ through to contract review and management identify how to embed priority sustainability issues in the procurement process. Develop guidance for how key procurement staff can include sustainability as part of the procurement process. Contracts awarded on value for money not just cost. (PP1b, PP1c, PP3b)	<p>Include in job roles specific sustainable procurement competencies and activities, commit to add sustainable procurement as a topic for discussion when recruiting procurement staff (PE4)</p> <p>Adopt a life-cycle approach (cost and impact) on contracts of a suitable expenditure and impact (PP2c, PP4c and MR4a)</p> <p>Deliver training or produce a briefing note on sustainability for internal purchasers and high risk/impact suppliers – Procurement Champion is involved in the activity and the training also has senior management involvement - the outcomes are communicated through the newsletter or other communication and the process is used to consult on your sustainable procurement policy. (ES3, ES2, ES1b, PE2a, PE2b)</p>
	8. Produce a list of suppliers linked with the high risk products and services – establish a programme of target setting with suppliers based around purchasing cycle for high risk products and services (PP3a, ES4d, MR3)	
	9. Work with high risk/impact suppliers to embed sustainability performance indicators in contracts, involve your CEO or other strategic lead in the process. (PP3c, ES1b, ES2b, ES3a, ES3b, ES4a)	