UNWTO
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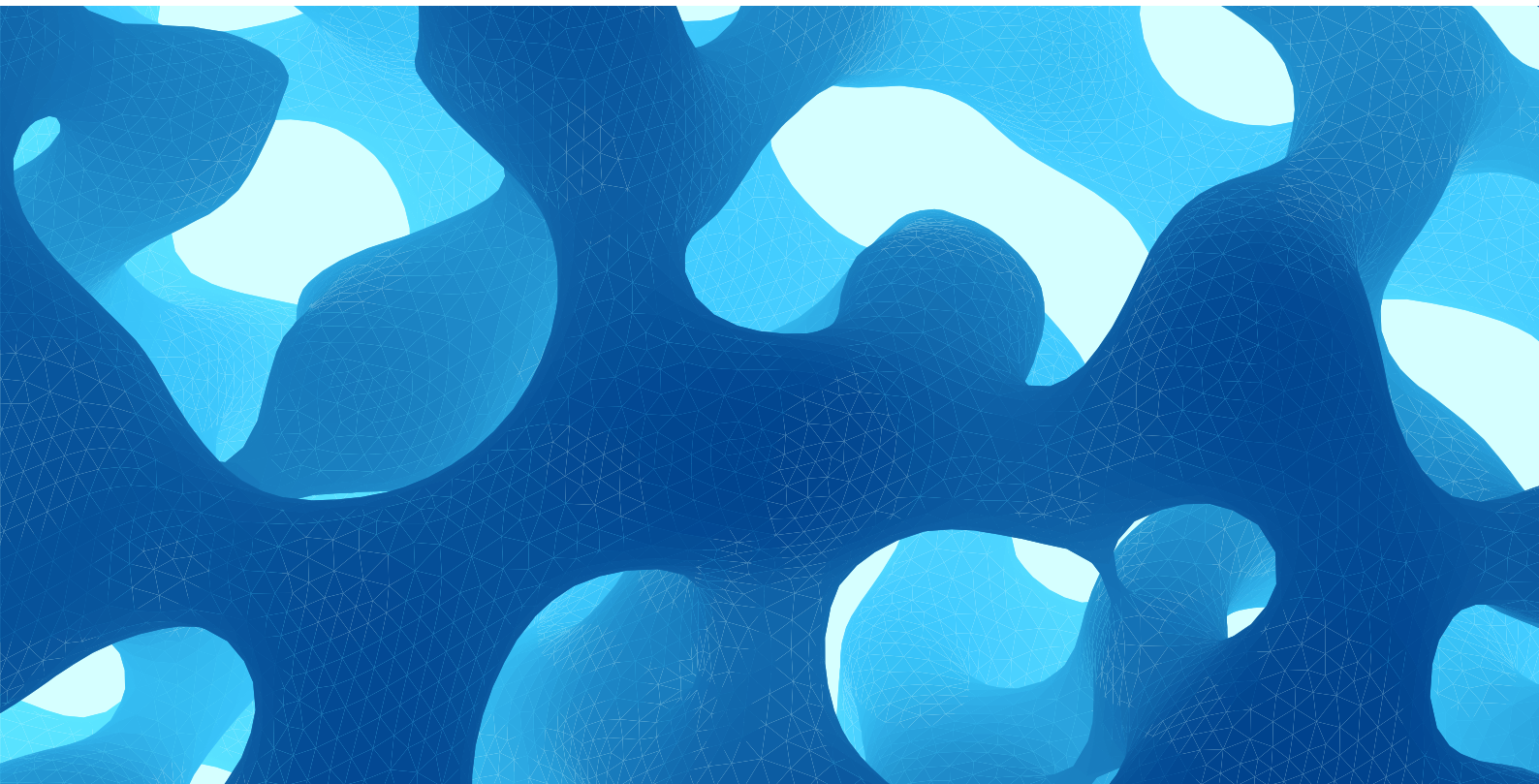
Global Tourism Plastics Initiative

UN environment programme

ADDRESSING PLASTIC POLLUTION IN TOURISM **THROUGH SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT**

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDANCE



Addressing Plastic Pollution in Tourism through Sustainable Procurement – Recommendations and Guidance

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Executive summary

In support of the fourth UN Environment Assembly Resolution 6 on Marine litter and microplastics, the One Planet Network committed to provide guidance on addressing plastic pollution in the different sectors and areas covered by its programmes, including tourism. This commitment supports the ambitious 2025 targets of the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to eliminate unnecessary and problematic plastic items; innovate so that all necessary plastics are designed to be safely reused, recycled or composted; and circulate everything used to keep it in the economy and out of the environment.

One of the key initiatives of the Sustainable Tourism Programme is The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative (GTPI), led by the UN Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and with the financial support of the French Government. The GTPI unites the tourism sector behind a common vision to address the root causes of plastic pollution. It enables businesses, governments and other tourism stakeholders to take concerted action and lead by example in the shift towards circularity in plastic use.

This guidance, developed within the framework of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, focuses on the procurement of plastic items and packaging (and its alternatives) in the tourism sector and aims to provide practical support for procurement practitioners within the range and global reach of tourism businesses that need to address the impact of single-use plastics and packaging within broader sustainable procurement practice.

The guidance draws from existing sustainable procurement good practices that, when implemented systematically throughout the whole procurement cycle, will help increase the circularity in the use of plastics. It provides practical support in identifying the potential for eliminating plastic packaging and plastic items where possible (as well as introducing reuse models as alternatives to single-use items and packaging), in addition to reducing the consumption of plastics where avoidance is not possible (including measures for purchasing recyclable and compostable plastics and plastics with recycled content). The guidance follows the procurement stages from pre-tender actions around planning procurement approaches including the consideration of elimination, reduction in consumption and adoption of reuse models within the operation of the tourism business.

The guidance includes practical examples for tendering, including actions relating to supplier engagement and setting tender specifications. It recognizes that procurement is a continuous cycle of action and therefore also covers contract management and performance improvement within the tourism businesses and their supply chains. A key aspect of the guidance is providing practical tools for procurers in tourism businesses. These include model wording for

tender criteria; a hierarchical decision tree for informing actions to eliminate and reduce the dependency on plastics within tenders; and a summary of procurement tools such as life-cycle costing and using standards and labels to help verify claims.

The guidance is also relevant to policymakers, as it recognizes that procurement actions play an important role in providing evidence for how to improve the implementation of plastic reduction strategies. Recommendations are therefore provided for key decision-makers in the tourism business to ensure that sustainable and circular procurement fulfils its potential to support the fourth UN Environment Assembly Resolution 6 on Marine litter and microplastics and deliver the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative vision.

Glossary of terms

Bio-based – Bio-based plastics are derived from biomass (renewable, carbon-based biological resources) such as organic waste material or crops grown specifically for the purpose. Some polymers made from biomass sources, such as maize, may be non-biodegradable.

Biodegradable – Susceptible to biodegradation, meaning the decomposition of a compound or material by micro-organisms into harmless products such as carbon dioxide, minerals, water and additional microbial biomass.

Compostable – Susceptible to decomposition and biodegradation in composting conditions (standards apply; see Table 2).

Composting – Aerobic process designed to produce compost (standards apply).

On-the go-waste and recycling – Refers to the collection of food and drink packaging in public spaces such as a street, train station or shopping centre, for recycling outside of the venue or workplace such as public spaces, events, transport hubs and so on.

Oxo-degradable – Oxo-degradable plastics contain additives that enable them to quickly fragment into smaller and smaller pieces, called microplastics, but do not break down at the molecular or polymer level like biodegradable and compostable plastics.

Plastic – Material consisting of any of a wide range of synthetic or semi-synthetic organic compounds that are malleable and so can be moulded into solid objects. Plastics are typically organic polymers of high molecular mass and often contain other substances. While they are usually synthetic, most commonly derived from petrochemicals, an array of variants are also made from renewable materials such as corn. The six main plastic polymers are:

- Polyethylene terephthalate (PET or PETE)
- High-density polyethylene (HDPE or PE-HD)
- Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
- Low-density polyethylene (LDPE or PE-LD)
- Polypropylene (PP)
- Polystyrene (PS) and expanded polystyrene (EPS).

Polymer – A natural or artificial substance consisting of large molecules made from many smaller and simpler chemical units (individual monomers).

Post-consumer waste – Waste generated after use by consumers.

Post-consumer recycled content – Proportion, by mass, of post-consumer recycled material in a product or packaging (Source: ISO 14021:2016 modified, Environmental labels and declarations — Self-declared environmental claims [Type II environmental labelling]).

Recyclable – Those (plastic) products, packaging or associated components that have characteristics enabling them to be diverted from the waste stream through available processes and programmes and that can be collected, processed and returned to use in the form of raw (secondary) materials or products (*Source:* ISO 18604:2013 – *Packaging and the environment – Material recycling).*

Recycling – Reprocessing, by means of a manufacturing process, of a used material into a product, a component incorporated into a product or a secondary (recycled) raw material; excluding energy recovery and the use of the product as a fuel *(Source:* ISO 18604:2013 – *Packaging and the environment – Material recycling).*

Re-use – Operation by which an item is refilled or used for the same purpose for which it was conceived without need for repair or remanufacture *(Source:* ISO 18603:2013 – *Packaging and the environment – Reuse).*

Reusable packaging – Packaging that has been designed to accomplish or proves its ability to accomplish a minimum number of trips or rotations in a system for reuse *(Source:* ISO 18603:2013 – *Packaging and the environment – Reuse).*

Single-use plastic items and packaging – Plastic items and packaging that are used only once before they are thrown away or recycled.

Virgin plastic – A virgin plastic is a plastic made from virgin raw material (namely, the extraction of crude oil). The term “primary” is often used interchangeably with “virgin”.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose

The One Planet network supports the global shift to sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the achievement of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12 for Sustainable Consumption and Production. The network was formed to implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP).[1] Within the One Planet network, the Sustainable Tourism Programme aims to accelerate SCP in tourism policies and practices to address the challenges of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change. It promotes knowledge sharing and networking opportunities to define collective priorities and identify solutions.

One of the key initiatives of the Sustainable Tourism Programme is the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative (GTPI), led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF) and with financial support from the French Government. The GTPI serves as a sectoral interface of the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment and unites the tourism sector behind a common vision to address the root causes of plastic pollution. It enables businesses, governments and other tourism stakeholders to take concerted action and lead by example in the shift towards circularity in the use of plastics.

In support of the fourth UN Environment Assembly Resolution 6 on Marine litter and microplastics[2] and of the 2019 Plastic Waste Amendments to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal that added plastic waste to the controls on global trade, plastics was also adopted as a theme across the One Planet network for 2020-2021. The One Planet Network committed to provide guidance on addressing plastic packaging in the different sectors and areas covered by its programmes in support of the ambitious 2025 targets to eliminate unnecessary plastic items; innovate so all necessary plastics are designed to be safely reused, recycled or composted; and circulate everything used to keep it in the economy and out of the environment.

This guidance on the procurement of plastics in the tourism sector aims to:

- identify and address the challenges around the procurement of plastics and their alternatives;
- recommend tools and provide practical support for procurement practitioners in addressing the impacts of problematic and unnecessary plastics within broader sustainable procurement practice;

1 One Planet network.

2 UNEA 4/6 Resolution on Marine plastic litter and microplastics adopted by the 2019 United Nations Environment Assembly.

- provide a step-by-step approach including actions relating to supplier engagement and setting tender specifications; and
- more broadly, help identify the role procurement plays in contributing to the circular economy and reduction of plastic pollution.

1.2 Who is the guidance for?

The guide is directly aimed at all those involved in the procurement process, from planning through to purchasing. Procurement practitioners within tourism businesses are particularly important, as they are responsible for implementing organizational policies to reduce the impact of problematic and unnecessary plastics through their procurement activities. These activities involve planning, market engagement and contract management, as well as the purchasing of plastic items and packaging.

Procurement personnel and roles will vary in scale and structure across different sizes and types of business. There are many relevant roles that may be held by separate people or combined within a particular procurement job description. For example, in small enterprises these may well be business owners and managers, whilst in medium and large businesses they may include procurement managers, heads of procurement teams and possibly also roles (such as a purchasing director) who define the long-term direction of strategic procurement processes and services for the procurement department.

Larger businesses may also have category managers or buyers who specialize in the management and planning of goods or services for a specific category such as catering, construction, transport and the range of products offered.

These procurement roles play an active part in helping tourism businesses to reduce plastic waste. Critically, they depend on input from many other roles and stakeholders in the business to determine what the optimal procurement approaches and actions should be. Using procurement to eliminate, reduce, reuse and recycle plastics in tourism businesses also requires other roles in the business to play their part in influencing the procurement decisions and managing the life-cycle impacts of plastics. For example, leadership from senior management; evidence and support from the sustainability manager; information from the technical or content manager and waste manager; and more sustainable consumption from the users of products and packaging containing plastics. These additional roles also need to apply the guidance to contribute towards more circular procurement of plastics.

Finally, the guidance may also be used by policymakers within tourism destinations in understanding the role sustainable procurement can play in mitigating problematic and unnecessary plastic in products, and contributing towards a more circular economy and sustainable consumption and production through the closure of plastic materials loops.

■ BOX 1

How to use the guide

The guidance document provides basic information on procurement solutions and approaches to address plastic pollution and transition to a circular economy for plastics. Its main focus is to provide recommendations on different steps that procurers should follow in order to ensure more sustainable procurement practices in tourism.

Section 2 provides an overview of the procurement context in relation to the circular economy and plastics. This is not intended to provide comprehensive guidance on these themes, as there is a significant body of authoritative information available and this guidance signposts users to those most relevant to procurement.

Section 3 provides a stepwise approach across six steps covering the three stages of the procurement cycle (pre-tender, tender and post-tender). This includes procurement wording for criteria (step 3), as well as examples of how plastics are dealt with in existing criteria.

Section 4 covers some key decision-making tools relevant to procuring plastics in tourism and also some general tips for good practice procurement.

Finally, **Section 5** recommends adoption of a broader framework on tackling plastic pollution as an enabling environment for the implementation of procurement solutions.

2 The circular economy of plastics and procurement

Plastics have been increasingly used across the global economy, playing an important role in sectors as diverse as packaging, construction, transportation, health care and electronics. Plastics and plastic-based products also play a significant part in the tourism sector, thanks to their combination of low cost, versatility, durability and high strength-to-weight ratio.

According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, in a business-as-usual scenario, plastic packaging volumes alone are expected to double within 15 years and more than quadruple to 318 million tonnes annually by 2050 — more than the entire plastics industry produces today.[3] The Global Commitment,[3] led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme, helps to address this challenging scenario by promoting a vision for circular economy of plastics. Through the Global Commitment, businesses and governments commit to change how plastic is produced, used and reused. Jointly, these stakeholders work to eliminate unnecessary and problematic plastic items; innovate so all necessary plastic packaging is designed to be safely reused, recycled or composted; and circulate everything used to keep it in the economy and out of the environment.[4]

The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative (GTPI) promotes the Global Commitment vision of circular economy for plastics in the tourism sector. The initiative proposes the following voluntary commitments for signatories:

- Eliminating problematic and unnecessary plastic packaging and/or items by 2025
- Moving from single use to reuse models or reusable alternatives by 2025
- Engaging the value chain to move towards 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025
- Taking action to increase the amount of recycled content (post-consumer recycled content) across all plastic packaging and items used by 2025
- Collaborating and investing to increase recycling and composting rates for plastics.

3 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2016). The New Plastics Economy. Rethinking the future of plastics.

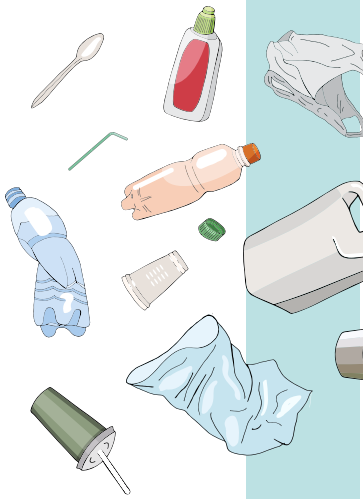
4 New Plastics Economy initiative.

BOX 2

Defining problematic plastics

There is no universal definition of what 'problematic plastic' is, but in general the term relates to plastic that is not easily dealt with via existing waste management infrastructure and is largely landfilled, burnt or littered. In other words, plastic that 'leaks' out of the regenerative plastic loop. The following list of criteria provided by the Global Commitment and the GTPI[5] can help identify problematic or unnecessary plastic packaging, plastic packaging components and items:

- It is not reusable, recyclable or compostable.
- It contains, or its manufacturing requires, hazardous chemicals that pose a significant risk to human health or the environment. Examples of such substances include Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), Bisphenol-A (BPA), UV-328 or cadmium, but many more have been identified.
- It can be avoided (or replaced by a reuse model) while maintaining utility.
- It hinders or disrupts the recyclability or compostability of other items.
- It has a high likelihood of being littered or ending up in the natural environment.



Examples include small plastic single-use items and packaging such as individual sachets, straws, stirrers, cutlery and so on that are difficult to capture in many waste management systems; certain types of plastics like Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and foamed plastics (such as expanded polystyrene); and multi-layer and / or complex formats that are currently hard to recycle and have no value in the recycling system.

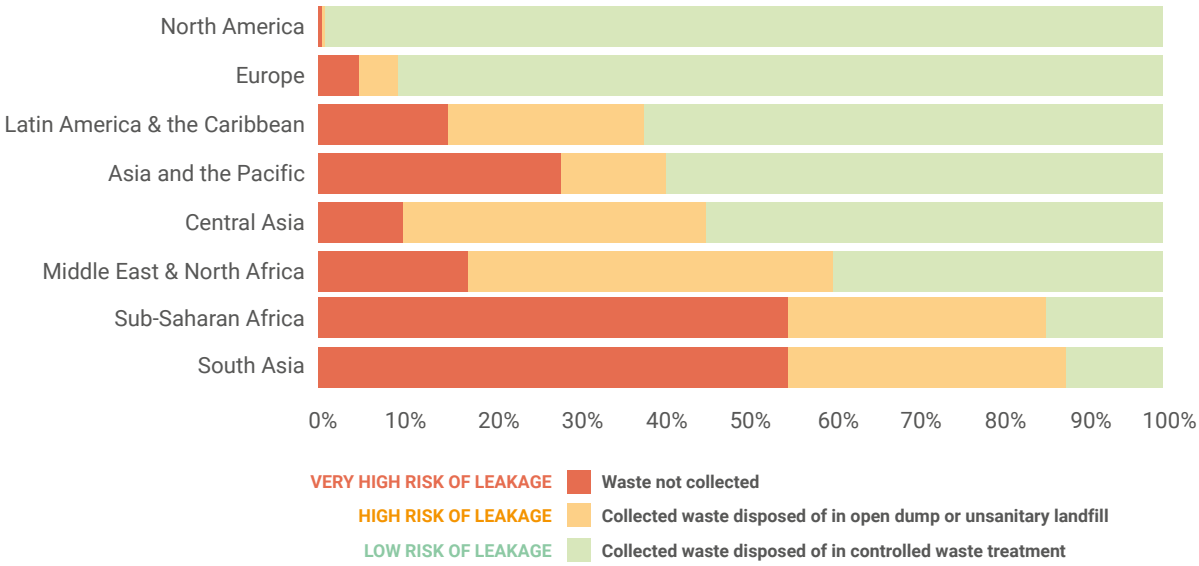
The exact definition of a problematic plastic depends on the context in which the item is being used (including geographic context and infrastructure in place). Decision-makers within tourism businesses need to assess their operations and identify what is problematic in their locations and what definition works best for them.

5 For Global Tourism Plastics initiative definitions, see https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/definitions_globaltourismplasticsinitiative.pdf.

Procurement plays an integral part in delivering tourism operations and achieving organizational goals, including to reduce dependency on plastic and eliminate waste. The way procurement is addressed also plays an extremely important role in helping to shift from a linear economy to a more circular economy.

An important point for procurers to consider is reducing the procurement impacts across the whole life cycle of the purchased products. This includes thinking about what happens to products at the end of their life and what risk there is for plastics leaking into the environment. The mismanagement of waste varies across different global regions (Figure 5). Mismanagement of waste is directly linked to the risk of plastics leaking into terrestrial and marine environments. It therefore becomes increasingly important to avoid or substitute plastics in initial procurement planning and in the tendering phases.

Figure 1. Mismanagement of waste and the risk of plastics leakage



Source: World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2021). Plastics in the Travel and Tourism Value Chain and its Hotspots and Trade-Offs.

A systematic and life-cycle approach to procurement is required to translate the circular principles of eliminate, innovate and circulate into procurement actions that help close the materials loop for plastic. The concept of 'circular procurement' takes sustainable procurement and applies it more rigorously across the whole life cycle of products from sourcing, through use to reducing impacts at end of life and in disposal. The European Commission definition of circular procurement emphasizes this whole-life approach by describing it as:

> "the purchase of works, goods or services that seek to contribute to the closed energy and material loops within supply chains, whilst minimising, and in the best case avoiding, negative environmental impacts and waste creation across the whole life-cycle."[6]

Adopting a circular approach to procurement will contribute to a number of the principles highlighted in the GTPI report on using a life-cycle approach (LCA) to addressing pollution from single-use plastics in the tourism sector.[7] These form the basis of the circular procurement priorities. Actions required to help address plastic waste are summarized in Figure 1 and set out in further detail in Section 3.

6 European Union (2017). Public Procurement for a Circular Economy.

7 UNEP/UNWTO (2021). Addressing Pollution from Single-Use Plastic Products: A Life Cycle Approach – Key Messages for Tourism Businesses.

Figure 2. Hierarchy of procurement priorities and actions

Eliminate

PRE-TENDER

- prevent unnecessary & problematic plastics to identify options for eliminating plastics where possible:
  - conduct a spend analysis and internal dialogue
  - conduct an audit of where plastics occur in purchases
  - review operational practices and challenge purchasing needs to identify alternatives
- identify key suppliers and conduct market dialogue to identify alternatives and options to reduce the amount of materials used e.g. options to replace single use items with reusable items
- internal dialogue to identify and determine how reuse models can be adopted within organisational practice and purchasing requirements

TENDER

- focus the technical requirements on allowable materials based on what can be eliminated and what the market can offer

POST-TENDER

- require suppliers to provide relevant and timely data on impacts and targets

Innovate

PRE-TENDER

- consult the market and existing suppliers to identify new solutions and alternative (e.g. reuse) business models to eliminate or reduce plastics items and plastics in products

TENDER

- substitute plastics where it is envoronmentally beneficial to do so

POST-TENDER

- work with suppliers to increase the eliminatioin and reduction of plastics in contract delivery and in future contracts

Circulate

PRE-TENDER

- aim to close the material loop where plastics can not be eliminated

TENDER

- ensure recyclability of materials through technical requirements
- require take-back of packaging waste where feasible
- specify recycled content of plastics to encourage markets for recycled materials

POST-TENDER

- ensure optimal recycling within waste contracts

3 Stepwise approach to plastics and alternatives in procurement

Procurement can be viewed as a cycle involving a number of stages from identifying the need, through tendering to contract management. The following 6 steps provide a checklist of actions for procurers within tourism businesses to consider when addressing the plastics challenge.

The overall approach is applicable to all tourism businesses regardless of size, location or sector. However, how to implement actions should be considered in the context of the procurement exercise location.

3.1 Pre-tender actions

STEP 1

Step 1. Planning a procurement approach to plastics and their alternatives

Tackling the plastics challenge through procurement requires initial planning before the tendering stage to determine actions, target areas for action and identify who within the procurement cycle is responsible for delivering the actions. Planning involves confirming the purchasing need, validating its objectives with internal stakeholders and identifying the related risks and opportunities for eliminating and reducing plastic packaging and items and introducing reuse models.

The procurement approach to plastics should be guided by an understanding of how plastics are used across the organization's purchasing of goods, works and services. Procurers typically acquire products like laptops, catering consumables, packaging and so forth, rather than plastics as a material. The challenge is further compounded where products are purchased as part of a service arrangement. Answering key questions at the pre-tender stage will help identify the opportunities to eliminate or reduce the use of plastics .

BOX 3

Key questions and actions in procurement planning

1 Is there a need to purchase the current products used? . . . . . .

(a) Is there a more efficient and environmentally beneficial solution available? . . . . . .

2 What types of plastic items and packaging occur and in what context? . . . . . .

(a) Has the business already undertaken an internal plastics audit? If not, it should be possible to identify who needs to initiate this action. . .

(b) Are external data available that can help identify which plastic items and packaging are currently being procured and where they arise? For example, supplier information – it is worth considering market engagement if not. . . . . .

3 How effective is the local waste collection at managing plastics? . . . . . .

(a) What currently happens in terms of waste management from the business operation and how are plastics treated within existing contracts? . . . . . .

(b) Are plastics able to be recycled effectively locally, and if so which types? . . . . . .

(c) Is there evidence of plastic and / or waste leakage locally to the natural environment? If so, then the aim would be to avoid creating waste through procurement in the first place where practical. . . . . .

4 Is the organization in a position to determine what plastic items and packaging are avoidable and therefore should be eliminated, reduced or replaced with reuse models or other alternatives through the tendering process? . . . . . .

Actions

- A key priority at the planning stage is to **identify opportunities to avoid creating waste in the first place**, for example, through a spend review and / or needs analysis of goods and services.
- Assess what types of plastic items and packaging are problematic and unnecessary and **plan options to eliminate, reduce or substitute** these, where possible, with sustainable alternatives – prioritizing reuse models when possible.
- Understand where plastic items and packaging occur **within the procurement operations** of goods and services for the business.

Types of plastics and typical applications

Table 1 presents an overview of types of plastics and typical applications, with a view to increasing the understanding of plastics in use and developing a plastics audit. This overview provides a starting point for situations where plastics data are not yet available.

Table 1. Typical plastic products, lifetimes, impacts and examples

Functional lifetime	Industrial sector examples	Plastic types and examples	Size / weight of items	Examples	Notes
Very short: <1 day (small format)	• Accommodation/ Household • Packaging • Hospitality and catering	• PS, LDPE, PP, CA, PET, PP	• Small format • low size / weight	• Catering: • Coffee stirrers, coffee pods, straws, yoghurt pots, plastic stretch film, some teabags, condiment sachets, catering film. • Hygiene and cleaning: • Plastic waste bags and liners, cotton buds, face masks, sanitary products, wet wipes. • General: Plastic wrappers	• Single Use Plastic products. • Unlikely to be separated • and too small to consolidate and mechanically separate. • Avoidable in some cases.
Very short: <1 day, (medium format)	• Hospitality and catering • Primary and secondary packaging	• Cups: PP, PS, EP, bioplastic materials • Containers: EPS, PET, bioplastic materials such as PLA • Other catering consumables: PET, PP, PS, EP, bioplastic materials such as PLA • Plastic bags: LDPE, LLDPE • Packaging for shipping: LLDPE bubble wrap, EPS, bioplastic materials	• Medium • format – small • size / weight	• Catering: • Beverage (such as fizzy drinks and water) bottles, salad trays and bowls, disposable plastic cups, plates, commercial clingfilm wrap, takeaway containers, plastic cutlery. • Hygiene and cleaning: • Detergent and chemical bottles, some shampoo bottles. Single unit cosmetic containers • General: Plastic bags, foam, plastic wrappers and stretch film.	• Single-use plastic. • Separable, sortable. • Avoidable in many cases.

Functional lifetime	Industrial sector examples	Plastic types and examples	Size / weight of items	Examples	Notes
Short: >1 day <2 years	• Hospitality and catering • Primary and secondary packaging	• Food and drink containers: PET, HDPE, PP • Drinks bottles: PET • Plastic food film: LDPE, HDPE, multilayers • Packaging film: LDPE • PPE: PET, PA fibres	• Medium • format, small • size / weight	• Catering: • Food and drink • containers, soft drinks bottles, milk bottles, freezer bags, dip tubs, ice cream containers, crinkle food safe bags, confectionery wrappers. • Hygiene and cleaning: Bin liners, cosmetics, bathmats • General: Synthetic textiles and clothing, clothing tags, agricultural film, bags for life, crinkle heavy duty shopping bags, Flexible event signage such as banners, toys, marketing 'giveaways'.	• Separable and sortable • mechanically in many • cases, material types • easily understood. • Includes many single-use plastic items
Medium: >2 <12years	• Automotive • Accommodation/ household • Leisure equipment • Packaging • Agricultural • Electrical and electronic	• Automotive: PP, ABS, TPO, PC, PC/ABS, PA • WEEE: ABS, HIPS, PP, PC/ABS, PC, HIPS-FR, ABS-FR, others • Toys: ABS, HIPS, HDPE • Pallets/Crates/ Buckets: PP, HDPE • Catering: LDPE film, HDPE, PP, TPO ABS • Marine and leisure equipment: PA, EPS	• Large format	• Buildings: Carpet, carpet backing, pipes, fittings, cable and wiring, window and door frames (rigid PVC) • General: Car parts, vehicle upholstery, plastics in electronics and ICT, Signs and displays, reusable distribution crates, toys, leisure (such as fishing equipment, PA nets, EPS buoys).	• Less commonly recycled • thermoplastic polymers, • thermosets and composites. • Assemblies of items, often including non-plastic materials.
Long: >12 years	• Building and construction, • transport, • industrial machinery and equipment	• Building/ construction: PVC piping and trim, EPS insulating board, PA and • PET / PP/ PUR in carpets and flooring • Aeronautical and automotive: ABS-FR, PC/ABS interior components, Glass filled plastics, composites • Machinery and equipment: ABS, HDPE and others	• Large format	• Buildings: • Window frames, • electrical, plumbing, • insulating board, wall • panels, roof tiles, soffits	• Manufactured for • durability and performance over lifetime. • Not commonly recycled

Hidden plastics

Some products are not obviously plastic and can easily be missed. This can result in unintended consequences or "'regrettable" substitution. For example, "Paper" cups and some packaging and catering consumables that look like paper are made of paper coated with plastic, or paper coated with wax. These may be more difficult to recycle than conventional monomer plastics. For instance, face and hair masks, caps, shoe covers, disposable aprons and wet wipes are often made of plastic fabrics.

Plastics may also be 'hidden', for example in washrooms, as part of cleaning packaging and hygiene products or even as additives (microbeads) in cleaning products. A 2020 report on substances of concern in plastics[8] identified packaging (along with food and beverage contact materials, electrical and electronic equipment and related waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), textiles, furniture and construction) as relevant sectors in terms of public procurement. Additives include flame retardants, perfluorinated chemicals, phthalates, bisphenols and nonylphenols. Some of these are controlled under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. These may cause challenges for the life-cycle management of plastics in different life-cycle phases and particularly in effective waste management.

Plastics may also be "hidden in plain sight" within services contracts. For example, outside (third party) catering, cleaning or in vending machines (see Box 9). Procurement of services needs to consider the role that (plastic) items and packaging plays within the overall service contract and the opportunities to reduce these through appropriate and proportionate criteria within the procurement of the service.

Sources: HealthCare Without Harm. A Plastics Toolkit for Hospitals, 2019; UN Sustainable Lifestyles and Education Programme. Reducing Plastic Pollution: Campaigns That Work, 2020; Plastic's toxic additives and the circular economy. SCP/RAC, 2020.

Using the waste hierarchy to close the plastic loop

The waste hierarchy,[9] often associated with sustainable procurement, is closely aligned with the procurement hierarchy and provides the basis for procurement actions to address problematic plastics (Figure 2). The waste hierarchy contributes to the circular economy by retaining value at the highest levels and helping to close material loops. The waste hierarchy prioritizes the management of problematic plastics by ranking options according to environmental impact, with **prevention being the most preferable option and landfill as the least preferable.** Disposal is typically only considered as part of separate waste management procurement exercise – this does not prevent waste from occurring in the first place. However, thinking about the impacts that disposal of plastic items (such as single-use packaging) at the planning stage will help avoid issues for both the business and the environment downstream.

8 SCP/RAC (2020). Toxic Additives in Plastics: Hidden Hazards Linked to Common Plastic Products (in English/French/Spanish/Arabic).

9 European Union (EU) Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC.

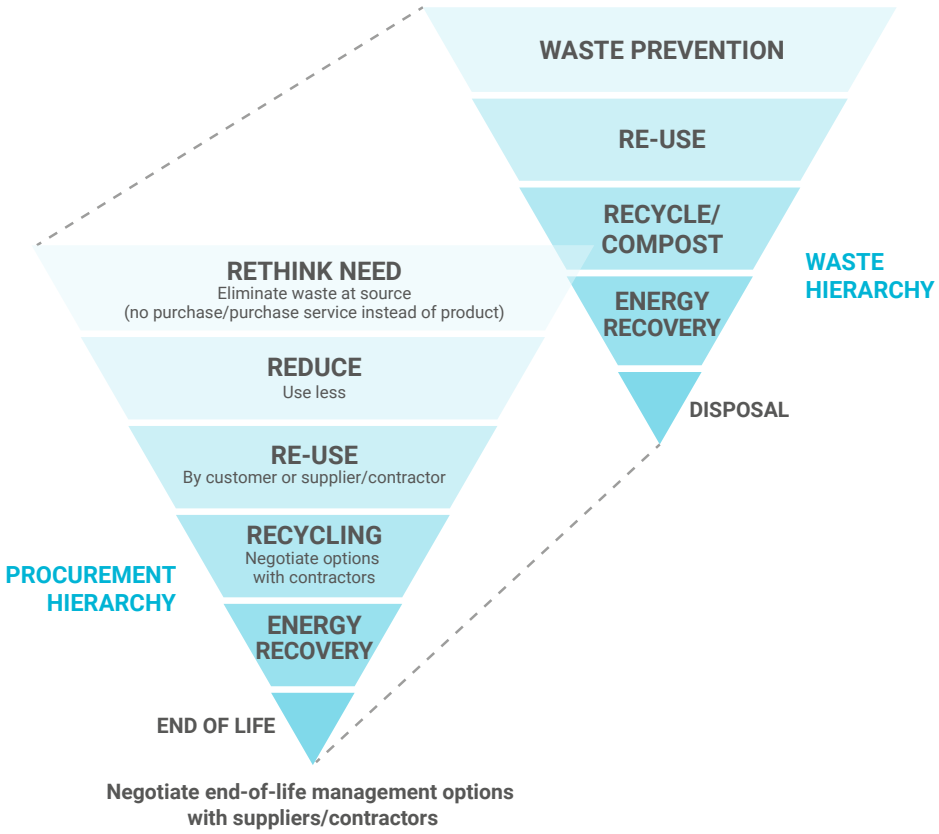
pre-tender

STEP 1

Procurers can take unilateral action or be part of a wider team addressing plastics use in support of organizational commitments. Actions should be prioritized according to waste hierarchy principles:

- **Reduce** – eliminate the use of problematic and unnecessary plastic in the first place by challenging the need to purchase items using plastic in packaging, for instance. This requires internal discussions with users and external discussions with suppliers. For example, moving to products with less packaging such as liquid soap to soap bars with recycled gloss paper wraps. Where plastics cannot be eliminated, then businesses should seek to reduce packaging requirements, for example through bulk buying and purchasing refillable containers for soap.
- **Reuse** – introduce reuse models, for example by opting for reusable rather than single-use items and challenging the use of single-use items such as reusable water containers, coffee cups and takeaway trays. Also, source and incentivize the use of durable and reusable containers, where possible.
- **Recycle** – ensure that only those polymers that are easily recycled within local waste systems are specified – typically PET, HDPE and LDPE. Also ensure that compostable packaging is only used where the right facilities exist.
- **Recover or landfill** – lastly, ensure that any remaining items that are unavoidable and difficult to eliminate or recycle (such as multi-layer films or laminated paper) are effectively captured for energy recovery (where it exists) or fully regulated and controlled landfill to avoid leakage through intentional or unintentional littering.

Figure 3. Applying waste hierarchy principles to procuring plastics



Source: Procuring the Future: Sustainable Procurement National Action Plan. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), United Kingdom, 2008.

Insights on the recyclability of plastics

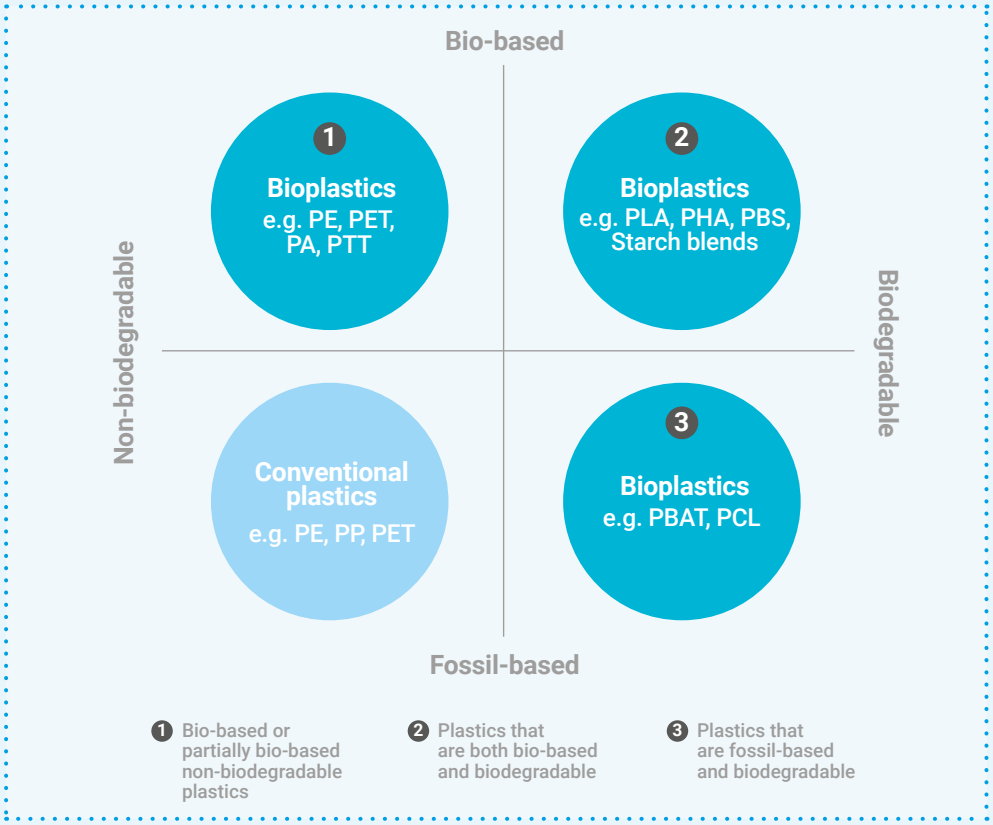
Having identified what types of plastics are being used and where within the business operation, the next step in planning for procurement is to understand where the plastic ends up. For example, the types of plastic, if any, that are recycled through the local waste collection and recycling infrastructure (see Box 5).

What type of plastics are recyclable?

The majority of plastics are fossil-based. These conventional plastics are non–biodegradable and can be recycled in conventional recycling systems, where available, if collected and sorted into separate material reprocessing streams.

Biodegradable plastics are materials that break down in a defined period of time in certain conditions. This does not mean that these materials should be freely released into the environment in an uncontrolled manner. Most biodegradable materials do not degrade fully or quickly in natural environments and can only be composted when treated to an appropriate composting standard, where facilities exist. Biodegradable products should not be confused with oxo-degradable materials, which are designed to break down more quickly in the short to medium term but create microplastics.
Oxo-degradable plastics are not compostable.

Compostable plastics are a subset of biodegradable materials and should meet the appropriate standard (such as EN 13432 for compostable packaging, ASTM D6400-99, AS4736-2006 and so forth) so that the material decomposes/biodegrades in industrial composting conditions such as in-vessel composting (IVC) or anaerobic digestion (AD) composting.



Source: Public sector guidance on the procurement of plastics. WRAP, 2019.

pre-tender

STEP 1

Although most plastic polymers may be technically recyclable, this does not mean they can or will be recycled at a local level. This is also true for any reusable plastic products, such as refillable bottles that will eventually need replacing. The reality depends on the availability and type of local waste collection, recycling and reprocessing infrastructure. It is therefore important to consider early in the planning how this availability and quality of the local waste and recycling system will affect the definition of unnecessary and problematic plastic. This may vary by venue, municipality, region and country across a single tourism operation in some cases.

Targeting actions at the pre-tender stage

Knowing what types of plastic are in the products purchased and understanding current purchasing patterns will help identify where plastics are problematic within any business operation. These may vary if the business has different locations and venues. Building this picture involves engaging with internal users and pre-tender market engagement with suppliers, so as to enable procurers to understand how waste materials are currently dealt with, what materials can be recycled and what the disposal routes are.

A simple approach is to undertake a rapid spend analysis of goods and services in order to identify categories likely to contain significant amounts of plastic and where hotspots such as packaging or consumables occur within those categories. The spend analysis of goods and services can also help identify whether purchasing is actually necessary (for instance to reduce unnecessary purchases of plastics in products). A more detailed analysis of plastics hotspots can help identify key suppliers to target in terms of eliminating, innovating and closing plastic loops on the road to a more circular economy. This step will help address any problematic plastic items and packaging. This information can then inform the requirements and specifications for the products and packaging related to different procurement categories.

Procurers should note that plastics in primary and/or secondary packaging are found across most procurement spend[10] categories, particularly where products and consumables are purchased regularly. A recent study on behalf of the European Commission found that office equipment and supplies, computer equipment, food and beverage products and cleaning equipment and supplies were four of the spend categories with the greatest potential for action.[11] Much of this plastic is in the form of single-use packaging.[12]

10 Procurement spend includes costs from a given period for the purchase of goods, services and works.

11 Eunomia Research and Consulting (in preparation).

12 UNEP/ World Travel and Tourism Council (2021). Rethinking Single Use Plastic Products in Travel and Tourism.

BOX 4

Key questions and actions at the pre-tender stage

1. Can the item/packaging be substituted with a reusable equivalent? . . . . . .
   . . . . . .
   . . . . . .

   ➜ Note that even reusable products should be fully recyclable to ensure they remain in the plastics loop at the end of their useful life.

2. Are the items and/or the packaging recyclable in line with the organization's own waste contracts and is infrastructure available for recycling? . . . . . .
   . . . . . .
   . . . . . .

   ➜ If not, these plastics should be targeted for elimination either through avoiding the product or, if that is not possible, seeking to substitute the problematic plastic material with a more favourable material.

Actions

- Leverage the company's circular economy strategy and commitments on plastic to make procurement decisions more circular. Define what full circularity looks like for the procurement strategy and target how it influences key sourcing needs. Identify the role plastics play in the procurement of goods, services and work across the business operation and be mindful that, for large tourism businesses, these may vary across spend categories, departments / divisions, venues and locations.
- Engage with internal stakeholders (users, sustainability manager and waste manager) and external stakeholders (suppliers, waste contractors and interest groups) to inform planning and procurement decisions.
- Challenge the procurement need, reframe purchasing requirements and identify options to reduce purchasing consumption and unnecessary plastics.
- Identify the potential for eliminating or substituting problematic plastics in products that are required.
- Ask suppliers for details about the recyclability of different products such as packaging. Recyclability is not just about the type of plastic but also the form and size of the product. Businesses should therefore aim to eliminate or reduce the dependency on these types of products.
- Speak to the waste team and/or sustainability team and aim to exclude any plastics in tendering that cannot be recycled locally. Identify how recyclable the different plastics are at a local level to inform tactical planning for procurement priorities, focusing first on what plastics to eliminate, reduce, replace with reuse models and ultimately to recycle (See step 3 for further details).
- Use the knowledge from the pre-tender stage to make tactical decisions regarding the tender process (see Section 3.2).

3.2 Tender actions

STEP 2

Step 2. Engaging with suppliers

There are two principal parts to this step:

- Engaging with markets – to communicate ambitions, understand what is currently available and what is potentially available.
- Supplier selection – the process by which organizations identify, evaluate and contract with suppliers.

Market engagement

Communicating early in the tender process with suppliers and markets encourages transparency and enables them to prepare to meet changing demands. It gives suppliers the opportunity to identify the potential for eliminating or reducing plastics used and to communicate any possible downstream impacts. It also empowers buyers and suppliers to identify potential areas for innovation, such as in packaging material substitution or changing product design to eliminate unnecessary and problematic plastics.

Early market engagement will facilitate procurers' understanding of the market's capability to meet circular principles around reducing the dependency on and impacts from plastics. This will help procurers assess whether to set more functional questions – based on outcomes – or more technical requirements around the products and services required for a given tender. The better the suppliers' understanding of circular economy principles is, the more likely it is that a functional question can be asked in the tender. This encourages the market to offer more innovative and circular solutions for addressing the plastics challenge.

There are various market engagement mechanisms including buyer events, requests for Information on what the market can offer and tender communication notices. Varying forms of market engagement are also relevant to different phases of the procurement cycle, depending on the regulatory framework governing the procurement. Further information on different types of market engagement and when to use them can be found within the Market Engagement Best Practices Report – SPP Regions (2018).[13]

Supplier selection

The most common evaluation criteria used to select suppliers tend to include financial health, expertise, operational performance metrics, business processes and practices, enabling behaviours or cultural factors and risk factors.[14] However, environmental or sustainability performance is also important and increasingly used, for example if selecting framework (multi-agreement) suppliers. This can include using environmental management systems and

13 SPP Regions (2018). Market engagement.

14 CIPS. Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply.

evaluating the potential supplier's capability to use sustainable materials, incorporate recycled content in their products and offer reuse and take-back models.

Asking potential suppliers scored questions about any initiatives, innovation and take-back schemes relating to packaging and plastics can help differentiate between those that are already engaging in good practices and those who are not. These questions can also help identify the potential for reuse solutions to be offered by potential suppliers. For example, replacing the supply of bottled water in single units with bulk supply or filtered water and reusable drinks containers.

Procurers should, however, weigh up the cost-benefit in consultation with internal stakeholders. For example, replacing single use cups and cutlery with reusable alternatives will require additional staff time and kitchen washing facilities. Specifying plastic plates and cutlery made from biodegradable materials will require separate collection and disposal in industrial composting facilities – which may or not be available locally. Working closely with operational managers and local waste management contractors will help identify what can be collected/accepted for recycling and which requirements should therefore be included in the tender to avoid, reuse or recycle.

Testing procurement decisions

In some cases, alternatives to plastics may be clearly defined, such as switching from plastic to paper straws or from PVC to nitrile gloves. In many cases, clear specifications will need to be defined in terms of functionality, compatibility with other equipment and acceptable polymers and additives. The first step is checking with existing suppliers to see what is available and to discover any variation. Wider market engagement will also help understand the broader range of alternatives available, cost variances, the scope for the market to supply new alternatives going forward and – importantly – to communicate goals and ambitions to reduce the impact of plastic through procurement. Early market engagement can include visiting trade exhibitions and interacting with trade associations or potential suppliers through meet-the-buyer events. Tender specific engagement can include requesting information on the subject matter and /or scored and non-scored questions in tenders.

Avoiding unintended consequences/regrettable substitutions by testing alternatives – this involves ensuring that plastic alternatives have a better environmental outcome.[15] For example, if replacing single-use aprons or protective clothing with reusable alternatives, checks should be made to ensure that additives do not increase the toxicity compared with single use (for instance through verification based on manufacturer data sheets). If synthetic reusable alternatives are offered, there should be some awareness that certain fabrics are also made from plastics such as polyethylene

and polypropylene, and petroleum-based fabrics of all types contribute to environmental microplastics contamination.[16]

15 See also UNEP/UNWTO (2021). Addressing Pollution from Single-Use Plastic Products: A Life Cycle Approach – Key Messages for Tourism Businesses.

16 Allen, S. et al. (2019). Atmospheric transport and deposition of microplastics in a remote mountain catchment. Nature Geoscience.

BOX 5

Key questions and actions in supplier selection

1. Can the supplier(s) substitute plastic in items and packaging with another material of lower environmental impact? . . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

For example:

- **Replacing** single-use items with reusable items (such as substituting single use aprons, caps, shoe covers and so on with washable natural fibre alternatives).
- **Targeting** particular polymers and formats (such as expanded polystyrene trays) through substitution of plastics with non-plastic, fully recyclable alternatives. Some quick wins include:
- **eliminating** disposable knives forks, spoons, straws and stirrers from the facility canteen immediately; and/or,
- **prohibiting** the use of disposable plates, bowls, single-use pouches and sachets and clamshell food containers in outsourced food services when the contract is renewed.

2. Can the supplier(s) deliver goods in reusable packaging, or offer take-back arrangements for packaging that facilitate an overall increase in recycling? . . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Actions

- **Discuss internally what would need to be done differently in terms of business operations. What are the impacts on cleaning and catering operations and what changes would need to be made in terms of existing contracts?**
- **Ensure adequate and timely market engagement to understand the potential of suppliers to reduce plastics in the supply of goods and services through avoidance, substitution, reuse and / or takeback (of packaging, for instance).**
- **Action: Consider asking for reduction and/or reuse and/or takeback schemes in tenders and rewarding bidders that offer such options with higher evaluation marks. Reduction of plastics can be built into contract management and performance.**

STEP 3

Step 3. Setting procurement requirements for plastics and alternatives

Following the circular and waste hierarchy principles (Section 3.1.1.2), procurers should ensure that the procurement of products containing plastics includes relevant requirements for:

- Eliminating overall amount of general plastics and plastics in products where feasible – for example by reducing plastic materials, substituting plastics with other materials of equal or better environmental performance and including reusable models and products where possible.
- Reducing use of harmful substances – for example by excluding plastics that exceed certain thresholds of harmful substances and/or mixtures.
- Extending the useful life of products – through reuse whenever possible, to optimize product lifetimes and to reduce the impacts of new plastic (including reduced carbon footprints of business purchases).
- Increasing recyclability – by avoiding composite materials, polymers that are hard to recycle and plastics with black/near black colour (except when made from recycled plastics), as these complicate recycling processes.
- Increasing demand for recycled plastic – by specifying inclusion of recycled content, where practical, to help increase the uses made of plastic reprocessed through recycling.

Procurement criteria relating to plastics may be covered within different parts of the tender process, for example, as part of:

- Supplier selection;
- Technical specification requirements;
- Award criteria; and
- Contract management and performance clauses.

Criteria relating to plastics may comprise one or more of the following elements:

- Packaging – avoidance or elimination of certain plastic polymers or formats;
- Recycled content – setting levels, where applicable, to avoid or reduce the use of virgin polymers;
- Recyclability – the marking of plastics over a given size (such as 25g) according to ISO 11469 of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 2016 (and ISO 1043, 2011) for the purposes of improving recycling; and/or
- Toxicity – to reduce the dependency on, and impacts from, additives such as colourants, fillers, plasticizers, stabilizers and flame retardants (see Box 4: Hidden plastics).

Packaging

The following 'model' wording for packaging can be used in the absence of existing criteria wording (see Box 9).

Example of model wording – plastic packaging

Appropriate levels of [single use] plastic packaging may only be used where alternatives with lower environmental impacts are not available. Where plastic packaging is required, preference should be given to reusable packaging. The tenderer *[should/must]* state:

- What percentage of the packaging is suitable for reuse;
- What packaging reuse models are available; and/or
- What packaging take-back arrangements can be offered.

When single-use packaging is used, the following shall apply:

- The packaging consists of one polymer or plastic polymers that are separate from each other (not composite or bonded), and other packaging materials.
- The [plastic] packaging materials are widely recyclable through the local collection and recycling infrastructure.*
- Specific requirements, for example:
  - Plastic packaging should consist only of [specify, for example PET, PP, HDPE, LDPE or PS];
  - Plastic packaging *[may/may not]* consist of both biobased and fossil raw materials;
  - Plastic items shall not include [where applicable list any banned products, materials and formats].
- A minimum *[specify%]* of recycled content for plastic packaging to help close material loops may also be set or assessed in the context of the award criteria.

* **On the basis of pre-tender research and/ or prior market engagement. This does not limit reprocessing to local infrastructure but means a cost-effective system for collection should be in place. This also addresses the use of compostable plastics with regard to ability to collect and recycle separately from non-compostable plastics.**

** **include only plastic polymers and packaging formats that can be recycled widely through the local collection**

Verification

Documentary evidence from suppliers including, but not limited to, Type 1, 2 and 3 ecolabels. [see Section 5.2 for further information]

The model wording has annotations in brackets, bold and italics to highlight where the wording may need either review and/or adaption, depending on the particular project circumstances, as follows:

- (where applicable) - text that should be deleted if not applicable;
- [insert targets, KPI or key client reference]; and
- [text that may need amending to suit the tender].

Services and vending machines

In venues, one easily overlooked area of plastic packaging is vending machines. This is partially because the products and packaging form part of a wider service provision. Procurement of services in general – and vending machines in particular – needs to consider the impact of plastics and the opportunities to reduce them, within the overall service requirement. Criteria should also cover any reporting requirements on key performance indicators and metrics, for example to demonstrate progress against commitments to eliminate plastics.

For further information, see *Food, catering and vending machines. GPP Criteria*. European Commission, 2019.

Recycled content

In order to create demand for recycled plastics, setting requirements for recycled content can help close the plastic material loop and reduce the consumption of virgin plastics (with the associated carbon reduction impacts). Recycled content can be specified as a target in criteria, where appropriate. Higher levels of recycled plastics in packaging may also be rated higher as part of the evaluation criteria to encourage increasing demand for recycled materials.Verification of recycled content and recyclability can be an issue, so evidence of standards or an ecolabel may be required (third party certified – Type 1; or, self-declared – Type 2 compliance) (see Section 4.2). Requirements for, inter alia, verifying both recycled content and recyclability of materials are part of ISO 14021:2016 Environmental labels and declarations — Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labelling). The European Union has also developed a specific standard (EN 15343) for plastics recycling traceability and assessment of conformity and recycled content. It aims to encourage proper recycling of plastics through standardization. In particular, it focuses on the process for the traceability and assessment of conformity and recycled content of recycled plastics.

The presence of recycled content should not limit the functional performance of the packaging. This also applies if requirements are set for 'lightweighting' packaging to reduce plastic waste (see Box 11: Rightweighting or lightweighting).

Rightweighting or lightweighting?

One approach often used to reduce the overall impacts of plastics is to reduce the weight and volume of plastics, leading to a reduction in material use. In terms of packaging, the key word is not 'lightweighting' but 'rightweighting'. Lightweighting is primarily focused on weight reduction of a product such as packaging. This sounds logical given that 70% to 80% of a plastic bottle's cost* comes from the material. Rightweighting, on the other hand, means reducing the packaging weight while ensuring it remains fit for purpose. Importantly, it also means that environmental impacts such as carbon reduction are balanced across the protection of the product and the ability to recover and effectively recycle the packaging at end of life.

A lighter pack may be less efficient at reducing carbon than a heavier pack. It can also potentially lead to unintended consequences, as lightweighting packaging may lead to an increase in composite plastic formats that are harder or impossible to recycle effectively. For example, beverages packaged in (composite) pouches rather than bottles have an 80% smaller carbon footprint but are ultimately still single-use products. However, PET drinks bottles are widely recycled in most regions (even though a lot of progress is still needed) whereas composite packaging is not and remains very difficult to recycle commercially.

* *Source:* Sidel Group.

As well as setting technical requirements for the use of plastics, criteria may also be used to evaluate offers and contract awards. This can encourage the supply of greener products, such as those that go beyond minimum levels of recycled content.

Labelling of plastic parts

The marking of plastic parts is intended to help identify plastic products for subsequent decisions concerning handling, waste recovery or disposal. For example, ISO 11469:2016 specifies a uniform system of marking products that have been manufactured from plastics materials. Generic identification of the plastics is provided by the symbols and abbreviated terms given in ISO 1043-1, ISO 1043-2, ISO 1043-3 and ISO 1043-4.

Substances of concern in plastics

The aim of these criteria is to reduce the potential impacts from additives of concern in plastic parts. These include certain flame retardants (such as PBDEs), some perfluorinated substances (including PFOA), certain plasticizers (such DEHP), heavy metals (like cadmium), certain UV-absorbers (such as UV-328) or certain bisphenols (including BPA). For example, this has been the main focus of planned substitutions of hazardous substances by leading manufacturers of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment.

BOX 6

Key questions and actions in the tender stages

1 Can functional questions be asked to allow suppliers to offer more innovative and circular solutions for eliminating, reducing plastics or introducing reuse models?

2 Can reusable packaging and items be purchased in preference to single use?

3 Can purchases be made of packaging and items that eliminate or use less plastic?

4 Can all plastics used be recyclable?

5 Can levels of recycled content for plastics be specified?

6 Can items made from renewable bioplastics be purchased?

7 Can problematic and unnecessary packaging be eliminated by working with suppliers to redesign and innovate in products containing plastics?

8 Can requirements be established to avoid materials, components or formats that:

- ✓ are not reusable, recyclable or compostable
- ✓ can be avoided altogether
- ✓ hinder or disrupt recycling
- ✓ have a high likelihood of being littered
- ✓ or contain hazardous chemicals?

Actions

- Ensuring that relevant national requirements are included in tender requirements as a minimum. There are various international conventions and restrictions on the inclusion of certain substances. These typically apply to electrical equipment and building products.

  Local restrictions should also be checked to ensure that manufacturer claims are fully verified at the tender evaluation and contract management stages.

- Action: Not specifying compostable plastics if they cannot be composted to a recognized standard locally. Where compostable materials are used, they should be captured separately from other plastics and recyclable materials and sent to composting facilities to avoid cross-contamination of material streams. Waste contractors should be able to confirm if this possible and how to avoid recycling stream contamination and increased waste going to incineration or landfill.

- Action: Also considering the impacts of accessories (cables, chargers, keyboards and so on in ICT products and other office products) and supplies (consumables). This is because they not only contain plastic components but also require additional packaging.

3.3 Post-tender actions

STEP 4

Step 4. Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting are fundamental to good contract management. They ensure that what was asked for during the tender process is delivered and that expectations are either met or exceeded. Timely monitoring will also enable corrective action to be taken where contract and performance requirements do not meet expectations. To ensure that outcomes of any procurement actions can be measured and communicated to relevant internal and external stakeholders, it is important to set out a clear framework for monitoring the impact of any interventions as part of contract management. This will also help in delivering GTPI reporting commitments.

STEP 5

Step 5. Building capacity

Addressing plastics in procurement is about more than just setting criteria and requirements in tenders. It involves shifting practices towards more sustainable procurement and adopting a more strategic role for procurement in terms of delivering rather than hindering policies and commitments. This requires an investment in people as well as processes. As a result, the wider impacts and benefits of sustainable and circular procurement can be viewed and addressed more strategically. It also enables sustainable procurement to be more clearly recognized as a strategy for policy delivery, for example in encouraging a more circular economy.[17]

A prime objective should be to integrate sustainable procurement training and knowledge into existing mechanisms that address training needs for procurement staff and all those involved in the entire procurement cycle. Building capacity around sustainable procurement is not just about the procurers but also the budget holders, the procurement commissioners or buyers, the contract managers, the users and those responsible for waste management.

Addressing plastics should be considered as part of a broader sustainable and circular procurement approach in order to maximize the opportunities and avoid single-issue approaches that could potentially compete with rather than complement each other. In thinking about the impacts of plastics and products, it is important to consider a life-cycle approach to procurement. Similarly, when building capacity it is vital to think in terms of the broader procurement cycle to identify the wide range of roles and stakeholders that are relevant to different stages and decision points throughout the cycle.

Training should be made accessible and provided to all staff, so that they are aware of their training requirements. This should include creating a knowledge baseline of sustainable and circular procurement principles across the organization – not just within the procurement function.

17 UN Environment (2018). Building Circularity into our Economies through Sustainable Procurement.

STEP 6

Step 6. Link procurement actions to policy drivers

Procurement should be used as a strategic instrument within organizations to deliver existing policy objectives and leverage circular economy goals across the business. Relevant organizational policies, such as Corporate Social Responsibility, sustainability and /or carbon reduction should explicitly identify sustainable procurement as a delivery mechanism to create transparency and a clear mandate for embedding sustainable procurement within procurement. Procurement Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should include sustainability outcomes as part of the procurement KPI suite to enable the benefits of sustainable procurement to be captured, reported and to clearly contribute to corporate goals and commitments. This will also help influence policy in two ways:

- Influencing waste policy by creating an evidence-based approach to improving the management of plastics waste in line with the waste hierarchy and maximizing value retention.
- Using existing procurement tools (carbon, sustainability, life-cycle costing and so on) to ensure that future procurement of waste collection infrastructure and waste management services provides the best environmental outcomes.

Procurement and carbon emissions

Reducing plastics can also contribute to delivering low carbon targets. Estimates of plastic produced in 2015 using conventional fossil fuels amounted to 1.8 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent of global emissions (3.8%). A business-as-usual scenario estimates this could go up to 6.5 gigatonnes (15%) of the global carbon budget by 2050, with yearly plastic production expected to be over 1,600 megatonnes. Reducing plastic demand would cut emissions, especially if combined with renewable energy. Recycling has also been identified as the most straightforward way to cut emissions according to research.[18] Recycling all plastic waste would reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions to 4.9 gigatonnes (25%) in 2050 (compared with business-as-usual emissions).

Greenhouse gas emissions are classified into three scopes according to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, a collaboration between the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from company-owned assets, controlled resources and activities such a production. Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy. Scope 3 emissions, also known as value chain emissions, are indirect GHG emissions both upstream and downstream of an organization's main operations.

18 Zheng, J. & S. Suh. (2019). Strategies to reduce the global carbon footprint of plastics. Nature Climate Change, Volume 9.

Scope 3 includes emissions from the goods and services the business purchases, as well as from sources including waste, business travel, employee commuting and the products it sells.

Scope 3 emissions are typically the largest proportion of an organization's carbon footprint, and the procurement of goods and services is typically the largest contributor. Estimates for Scope 3 emissions are limited and vary across different parts of the tourism industry and depending on whether goods and services have been included. This is reflected below with the inclusion of goods and services in parentheses:[19]

- Accommodation – 55% (partial inclusion)
- Asset light tour operators, which means those that do not own hotels, airplanes or cruise ships – 92% (partial inclusion)
- Asset heavy tour operators, which means those that own hotels, airplanes and cruise ships – 4% (excluded goods and services from estimation)
- Aviation 20% (fully included but reflects dominance of Scope 1 carbon fuels)
- Tourism intermediaries, such as travel agencies and online services – 36% (fully included)

19 World Travel and Tourism Council (2021). A Net Zero Roadmap for Travel and Tourism.

BOX 7

Key questions and actions in post-tender stages

1. Can sustainable and circular procurement be embedded within any corporate sustainability and circular economy strategies to create a mandate for procurement action? . . . . . .
2. Can communication channels with suppliers be opened to routinely evaluate how well they fulfil the GTPI targets and circular economy needs?
3. Have plastic reduction targets been included in contract performance management? . . . . .
4. Do all staff involved across the whole procurement and product life cycle understand and feel committed to their role in reducing the impact of plastics through procurement? . .

Actions

- **Establish performance levels to encourage achievable and sustained implementation of (plastics) goals and to demonstrate progress to all relevant stakeholders.**
- **Action: Ensure that all relevant sustainability key performance indicators are embedded in contracts along with reporting requirements. These should relate to corporate goals and include GTPI-related indicators where relevant.**
- **Action: Training should be made accessible and provided to all staff as part of wider staff training commitments.**

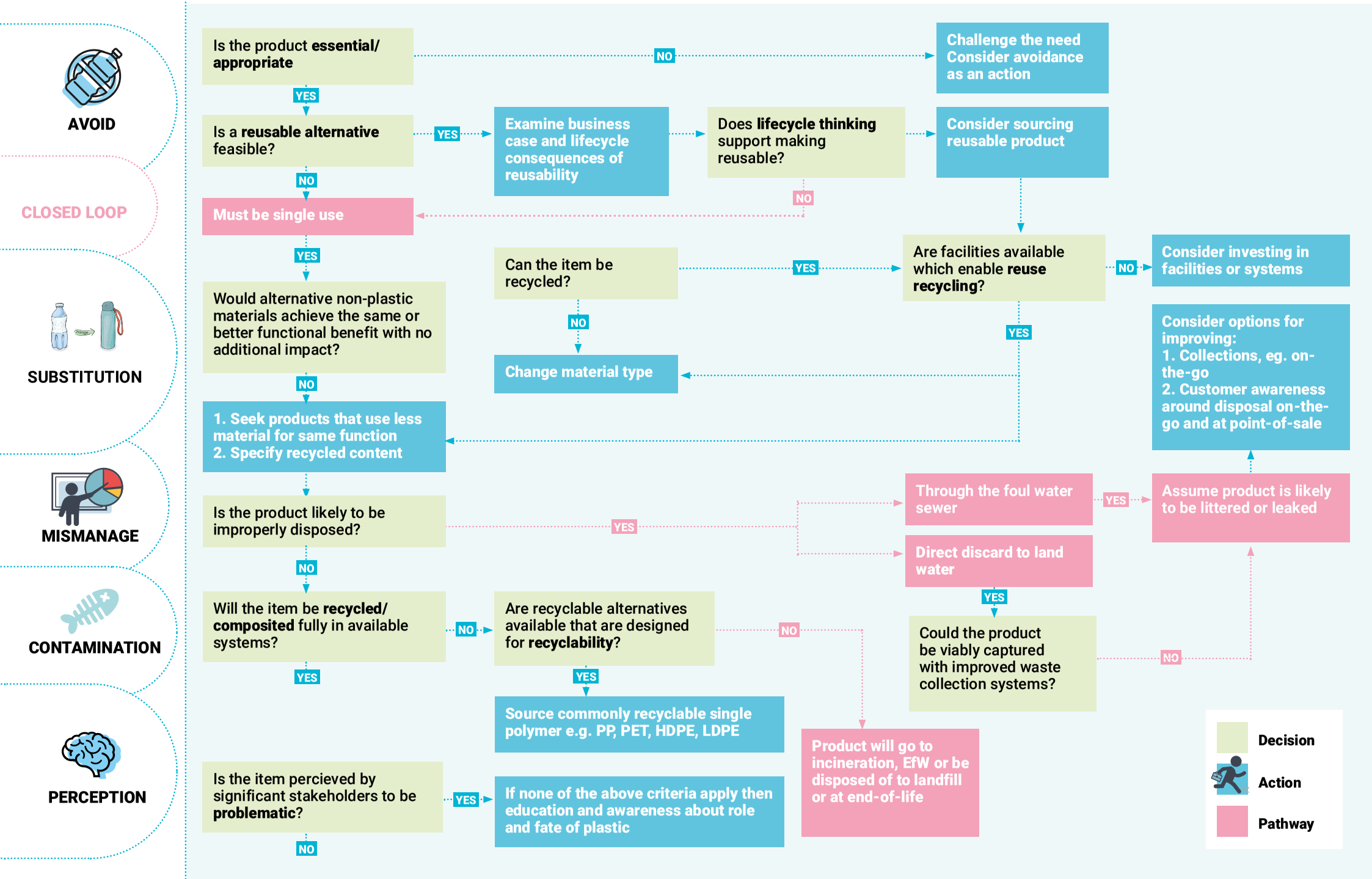
4 Procurement tools

4.1 Informing decisions / evidence-based decision-making

The options for managing plastics in procurement depend on a combination of factors including where the plastics occur, existing regulatory conditions regarding plastics and the options available. Using a basic decision tree (as shown in Figure 3) can help identify some tactical actions at key decision points in the procurement process. The decision-making process will need to take account of any regional variations and desired goals relating to plastics (such as bans and restrictions) and to wider sustainable procurement goals such as reducing carbon. The aim is to ensure that key decision points (Figure 3 – green boxes) lead to potential actions (Figure 3 – blue boxes) to address problematic plastics during the procurement cycle.

In practice, many of the decision points will trigger a whole series of more detailed actions directly related to the tender in question. Other actions will require thinking more strategically about the life-cycle impacts of plastics and, by extension, the life-cycle impacts of procurement choices in general. A strategic approach to sustainable procurement is all the more desirable since many of the impacts from procuring plastics (within products and as packaging) are downstream at end of life. Where avoidance is not an option, impacts can only be mitigated if there is an effective waste management infrastructure in place. The waste management services and infrastructure may be the subject of other contracts that will need to be evaluated at the planning stage (step 1, Section 3.1.1).

Figure 4. Plastics procurement decision tree



4.2 Life-cycle costing in procurement

The cost of sustainable products is often perceived as one of the main barriers to removing single-use items and packaging from tourism operations. Requirements can be set for cost reduction or same price. Even where costs may be marginally higher, there may be a whole-life cost benefit if this is calculated up front. When purchasing goods and services, the least cost offers are rarely the most economic, "best value" ones. Inexpensive products might cause higher follow-up costs compared to "more expensive" alternatives. Such higher costs may include the consumption of auxiliary materials or energy during the usage phase, the installation and maintenance costs and waste management costs. The costs arising from external effects of the environmental pollution in the case of plastics, including loss of amenity, should also be factored in.

Life-cycle costing (LCC) can be used to compare the economic efficiency of products by taking into account all relevant costs over the whole life cycle – sourcing, use and disposal. Another life-cycle costing tool is the total cost of ownership (TCO). Analysis based on TCO looks at the hidden costs beyond price and places a single value on the complete life cycle of a capital purchase throughout the whole supply chain. This value includes every phase of ownership: acquisition, operation and maintenance, and the softer costs of change management that flow down from acquisition such as documentation and training.

The Regional Network for Sustainable Procurement (SPP Regions)[20] has produced comprehensive guidance for procurers on LCC in a state-of-the-art report.[21]

4.3 Standards and labels

Standards and labels are useful procurement tools and lay the foundations for a range of more sustainable products and services. They also help with verification of sustainability claims within tender submissions. There are three primary international bodies: International Organization for Standardization (ISO), ASTM International (ASTM) and the European Committee for Standardization (EN). However, there are many national standards bodies that have significant outreach since they cover the manufacture of products like packaging, for example the China Environmental United Certification Center (CEC).[22]

Environmental labelling standards stipulate giving due consideration to all relevant aspects of the product life cycle when claims are developed. Self-declared environmental claims may be made by manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers or anyone else likely to benefit from such claims. Environmental claims made in regard to products may take the form of statements, symbols or graphics on product or package labels, or in product literature, technical bulletins, advertising, publicity, telemarketing, as well as digital or electronic media, such as the internet.

20 https://sppregions.eu/about-spp-regions.

21 SPP Regions (2017). Life Cycle Costing: State of the art report.

22 For example, CEC Environmental Label (2017). The technical requirement for environmental labelling products: Plastic packaging products (HJ 209-2017).

Selected standards and ecolabels relating to plastics (and packaging) are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Selected international standards relating to plastics packaging

Plastics issue	International standards
Packaging reuse	• ISO 18603 specifies the requirements for a packaging to be classified as reusable and sets out procedures for assessment of meeting the requirements, including the associated systems. The procedure for applying this International Standard is contained in ISO 18601.
Materials and recyclability	• ISO 18604 Material Recycling – gives guidance on which packaging can be classified as recoverable by material recycling
Compostable and biodegradable	• ASTM D6400 Standard Specification for Labelling of Plastics Designed to be Aerobically Composted in Municipal or Industrial Facilities, and/or ASTM D6868 Standard Specification for Labelling of End Items that Incorporate Plastics and Polymers as Coatings or Additives with Paper and Other Substrates Designed to be Aerobically Composted in Municipal or Industrial Facilities. • ISO 18606 Packaging and the environment — Organic recycling. • EN 13432 Packaging – Requirements for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation. Note: home compostability is not currently addressed through international or European standards.
Biobased	• ASTM D6866 Test Methods for Determining the Biobased Content of Solid, Liquid and Gaseous Samples Using Radiocarbon Analysis.
Recycled content	• EN 15343, for plastics recycling traceability and assessment of conformity and recycled content.
General eco-labels	• These can also cover the categories above, depending on the nature of the claim. • ISO 14020 Environmental labels and declarations — General principles • ISO 14024 Environmental labels and declarations — Type I environmental labelling — Principles and procedures. The definition of an ISO 14024 Type 1 label is: "a voluntary, multiple-criteria based, third party programme that awards a license that authorizes the use of environmental labels on products indicating overall environmental preferability of a product within a particular product category based on life cycle considerations".[23] • ISO 14021:2016 Environmental labels and declarations — Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labelling). Type II claims made by manufacturers, importers, retailers, or distributors about environmental characteristics of a product or service. • ISO 14025 Type III environmental declarations — Principles and procedures. Type III environmental declarations as described in ISO 14025 are primarily intended for use in business-to-business communication. • Further information on ecolabels can be found through a variety of consolidated sources, for example the Ecolabel Index.

23 ISO Environment (2019). Environmental labels.

Procurers should always be aware there are variations across standards, just as there are across certification labels. For example, the requirements and calculations for recycled content percentage of packaging vary according to the different certifiers. Further, while standards provide the testing requirements for specific claims, they are often disconnected from real-life practice as they do not consider accessibility or availability of necessary infrastructure or how real-life conditions may impact the potential for the claim to be fulfilled. One example is the mismatch in timeframes on composting. Most industrial composting standards use 12 weeks as the maximum amount of time it can take a plastic item to fully biodegrade. However, many composting facilities have accelerated their processes and composting times to drive greater throughput and financial viability. This often means that composters either no longer accept 'compostable' plastic items or they may be screened out as contamination from the compost product and end up in landfill or incineration.24 It is best to check first with waste contractors before relying on a standard or label (Section 3.1).

There are also numerous 'on-pack' and plastics product labels – not to be confused with ecolabels – that are common, recognizable consumer communication tools. These typically cover six main themes, and understanding the scope and limitations of these types of labels is important from a procurement perspective if they are referred to in requirements or specifications:

- Recycled content
- Biobased plastics
- Recycling guidance
- Recycling financing
- Compostability and biodegradability.

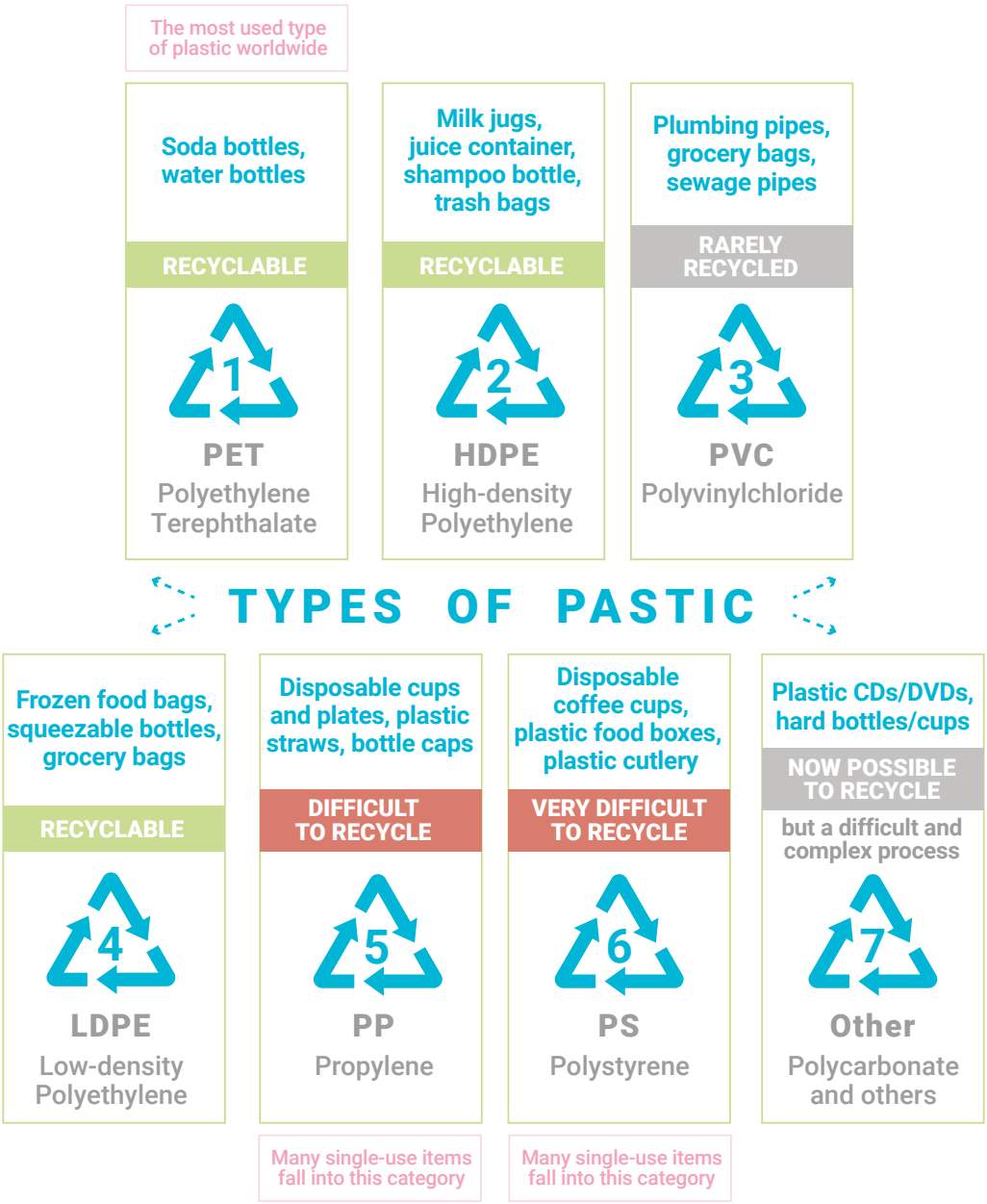
The 2020 Consumer Information Programme of the One Planet Network on recycling guidance covers the strengths and weaknesses of these types of consumer information label in depth.[24]

4.4 Types of plastics in typical products

Figure 5 provides a simple summary for procurers of the main types of plastics and where they are likely to arise. Where a spend review and plastics hotspots analysis of goods and services (step 1, Section 3.1.1) has not yet been conducted, this provides a useful starting point when considering requirements in tenders (step 3, Section 3.2.2).

24 UN Environment Consumer Information Programme of the One Planet Network (2020). "Can I Recycle This?": A Global Mapping and Assessment of Standards, Labels and Claims on Plastic Packaging.

Figure 5. Plastic use in products in the tourism industry



Source: Plastic Reduction Guidelines for Hotels. TUI, 2019.

A more comprehensive analysis of single-use plastics in the tourism value chain is provided in the UNEP and World Travel and Tourism Council report on Rethinking Single-Use Plastic Products in Travel and Tourism (2021).

4.5 Summary and examples of procurement actions

Table 3 provides a summary of practical tips and examples across the circular procurement principles of avoiding, optimizing functional life of products, closing material loops and disposing of residual waste responsibly.

Table 3. Summary of actions and potential benefits

Circular procurement ambition	Circular procurement action	Requirement	Examples	Internal benefits	Wider benefits
Buy less	**Eliminate plastics** • Avoid new products, where possible • Avoid packaging where practical, for example in primary fresh food produce packaging • Substitute single-use plastics with other recyclable materials – note that there may be cost implications so check with suppliers. • Avoid single-use plastic event / marketing giveaways	• Avoid products supplied in individual portions or single units • Avoid hard to recycle and problematic plastics including, but not limited to, expanded polystyrene (EPS), PVC and halogenated packaging. • Avoid complex packaging formats where possible • Avoid any oxo-degradable plastic packaging. • Avoid problematic single-use plastic items like straws, stirrers, in line with national bans on specific items. • Avoid non-recyclable plastic cups in take-away and vending machines. • Buy fresh and seasonal produce with minimal packaging.	• Use of refillable water stations and reusable water bottles, where water quality allows, in preference to single unit plastic bottles. • Reusable hand soap dispensers – note that these contain many pieces made from different materials. • Pressed paper or sugarcane bagasse containers are potential replacements for hot food Styrofoam (PS) type containers. • Use alternatives to plastics where disposable cutlery is necessary such as wood, bamboo and bagasse options. • Avoiding the use of straws is the best option	• Optimizes the functionality and lifetime of existing assets • Reduces organizations' carbon footprint of packaging and procurement • Contributes to increased recycling rates and reduction in waste to landfill or incineration/ energy recovery. • Reduces waste disposal costs.	• Reduces virgin non-renewable material use • Reduces microplastics in the terrestrial and marine environments
	Reduce consumption • Select the reuse model (in-house, third-party, mixed) that fits the business. • If plastics items and packaging cannot be avoided, reduce plastics where possible ('rightweighting') • Consider refill (reuse) solutions in place of single-use items • Reduce consumption of virgin materials • Consider bulk buy options to reduce packaging need	• Use reusable primary packaging where possible. • Use concentrated products that can be diluted during use, if needed. • Use recycled content in packaging • Require evaluation of condiments (sugar, salt pepper, sauces and so on) in individual units to avoid problematic single use formats. • Require the use of reusable tableware (cutlery, glassware, crockery, tablecloths and so forth) instead of single-use items.	• Reusable cleaning dispensers with bulk refill. • Foam hand soap dispensers. • Washing liquid and soap concentrate. • Replace wrapped single-use with reusable cups or hard plastic (polycarbonate or other) • Avoid PVC wrapping of marketing, brochures and so on • Regular (stainless steel) cutlery instead of disposable cutlery items in canteens, restaurants and the like.	• Reduces waste arising through procurement actions • Implements policies on reduction of single use plastics	• Reduces waste to landfill and associated environmental impacts • Increases more sustainable consumption and production

Circular procurement ambition	Circular procurement action	Requirement	Examples	Internal benefits	Wider benefits
Buy smarter	**Optimize product lifetimes** • Prioritize reusable products and packaging • Repair existing products • Reuse internally or externally	• Require reusable cutlery in place of disposable cutlery where these can be checked. • Require reusable secondary (transport) packaging where feasible. • Require suppliers to provide take-back schemes for primary and secondary packaging where relevant.	• Reusable transport packaging options include totes, boxes, and bins, reusable pallets, and pallet pooling (including lease hire).	• Improves resource efficiency • Extracts maximum value from existing assets • Reduces carbon footprint of packaging and procurement • Reduces carbon footprint of packaging and procurement • Contributes to carbon neutrality goals	• Reduces environmental impacts • More sustainable consumption and production • Reduces waste to landfill and associated carbon emissions • Decouples consumption from carbon
	Close the plastic loop • Select more recyclable materials • Recycle materials • Displace virgin materials • Reduce landfill	• Require packaging and disposable items to be made of materials compatible for recycling with local as well as national reprocessing technology in your area (such as PET, HDPE and PE). • Require compostable materials only where local recycling infrastructure can deal with it. • Require contractors to provide take-back recycling schemes for their packaging. • Require waste separation by contractors to maximize recycling and material value. • Require contractors to set a minimum and a target level for packaging waste in contracts with high generation of packaging waste, as in construction. • Require recycled content in packaging and products containing plastics	• ASTM D6400 Standard Specification for Labelling of Plastics Designed to be Aerobically Composted in Municipal or Industrial Facilities, and/or ASTM D6868 Standard Specification for Labelling of End Items that Incorporate Plastics and Polymers as Coatings or Additives with Paper and Other Substrates Designed to be Aerobically Composted in Municipal or Industrial Facilities. • ISO 18606 Packaging and the environment — Organic recycling. • EN 13432 Packaging. Requirements for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation. • ISO 14021 For Self-Declared Environmental Claims, including Recycled Content and Recycled Material. This standard provides definitions for "Recycled Content" and "Recycled Material" that certifiers such as SCS and UL reference in their standards.	• Robust framework to ensure partners aligned with organizational aims • Reduces waste disposal (including landfill) costs • Contributes to GTPI commitment • Improves reputation / reduction of reputational risk • Alignment with wider CSR goals	• Reduces environmental impacts from virgin material extraction • Bulking homogeneous wastes for more efficient, higher quality recycling • New (Green) training and job opportunities throughout the supply chain • Reduces demand for landfill space • Creates demand for secondary materials and increase commercial viability of recycling infrastructure Increased social value

Circular procurement ambition	Circular procurement action	Requirement	Examples	Internal benefits	Wider benefits
			• EN 15343 Plastics. Recycled plastics. Plastics recycling traceability and assessment of conformity and recycled content.		
Reduce waste and eliminate pollution	• Preventing waste by reducing single-use plastic from the entire operations chain. • Ensure effective waste collection system is in place. • Ensure compostable plastics are collected separately from other wastes and transferred to regulated composting facilities. • Ensure transparency in residual waste transfer to designated energy from waste and/ or regulated landfill facilities	• Ensure adequate on-the-go collection facilities in outdoor areas and public spaces • Require waste transfer notes to regulated treatment, landfill sites, incineration or energy recovery facilities. • Check local and national waste management regulations and ensure adherence	• Refillable water stations in preferences to bottled water, where water quality allows such as Refill Wales, Refill Deutschland. • 2019/904 EU Single Use Plastics Directive • Plastic Waste management Rules (Draft 2021), India	• Reduction of on-the-go waste. • Transparency and legal compliance - reduces risks of non-conformity and penalties. • Reduces potential for reputational risk	• Reduces waste to landfill, emissions and associated environmental impacts

Source: Public Sector Guidance on the Procurement of Plastics. WRAP Cymru, 2019; Can I Recycle This? UNEP, 2020; Plastic Reduction Guidelines for Hotels. Tui, 2019; Recommendations to the Saint Lucian Hospitality Sector for alternatives to Single Use Plastic. SLHTA, 2019; Circular Approaches to Procurement. EU ProCirc, 2021; Guidelines to Address Single-Use Plastics through Public Procurement in the Mediterranean. SCPRAC, 2020; The Plastics Landscape. PRI, 2019.

5 Summary and recommendations

Addressing the plastics challenge requires a consistent approach within the procurement of goods and services in the tourism sector. A framework that clearly links procurement actions to organizational policies and objectives on plastics, sustainability and the transition to more circular business models is needed. Without such a framework, there is no clear mandate for changing procurement practice or ensuring a consistent approach to addressing plastics across different areas of spend within tourism businesses. The present guidance provides a framework based on the stages within the procurement cycle – not just the tendering stages. This approach supports the GTPI vision for circular economy of plastics by seeking to eliminate plastic waste and close plastic materials loops to avoid further leakage into the natural environment:

➔ **Tourism businesses should recognize the strategic role procurement plays in delivering corporate objectives and ensure that procurement policies are clearly linked to wider CSR, circular and carbon reduction ambitions in order to create a mandate for circular procurement actions, including but not limited to, addressing the challenge of plastics.**

Understanding procurement spend is central to identifying the scale of impact arising from plastics within different tourism organizations. Combining a spend analysis with an audit of plastic materials in products, for example through the GTPI reporting methodology, will enable procurement teams to target areas for supplier engagement and for action throughout the procurement cycle.

➔ **Identify a procurement spend baseline to identify product 'hotspots' where plastics impacts need to be addressed. Use the baseline spend and hotspots to target spend areas for action in future tendering and also to identify key stakeholders to work with.**

Understanding the roles and engaging with internal and external stakeholders are fundamental for delivering circular procurement. Procurement involves senior management decisions, budgetary decisions, technical input, purchasing, contract management and ultimately waste management within all organizations regardless of size. By definition, a circular approach requires input across all stages of the life cycle and from other value chain actors to identify innovative solutions and business models and stimulate the market to offer more sustainable products and services.

Identifying and engaging with all relevant stakeholders within the organization and the supply chain should be undertaken as early as possible to maximize the sustainability gains and plastics impact reduction potential within procurement exercises. For example, engaging with operational managers to determine what plastics can be eliminated at no additional environmental impact and with engaging with waste managers early in the procurement process will determine what and how plastics waste can be reused recycled. This will inform specifications and requirements about what plastic materials should be avoided and what end-of life requirements through collection and waste treatment are required where they are unavoidable.

The procurement cycle does not stop at the contract award stage. It is important to ensure that all the work to tackle the plastics challenge at the tender stage is followed through into practice within contract management. This further highlights the role of different stakeholders, such as catering managers or waste managers, in addressing the plastics challenge. Ensuring that requirements are translated into contract performance clauses will accelerate performance improvement within the supply chain, as well as contributing to more robust monitoring and reporting against sustainability targets, for example through the GTPI. Measuring and reporting on the benefits and impacts of sustainable procurement will enable all value chain actors to understand how such practices can benefit businesses throughout the value chain.

Organizations should ensure that requirements set out in tenders are translated into appropriate contract performance management clauses and set out a clear framework for monitoring and reporting of performance against measurable and achievable KPIs over the contract lifetime.

Tender exercises should not be treated as one-off exercises but recognized as part of a continual cycle of renewal for goods and services provision that is central to delivering the mission and values of tourism organizations (regardless of size or sector). Certification and consumer information tools play an important role, as they streamline available information, guide procurers and consumers in making better choices and acknowledge progress already made in offering more sustainable options. Responding to changing market opportunities and new innovations within the supply chain requires regular reviews of procurement practices and underlines the strategic importance of procurement within the overall operation.

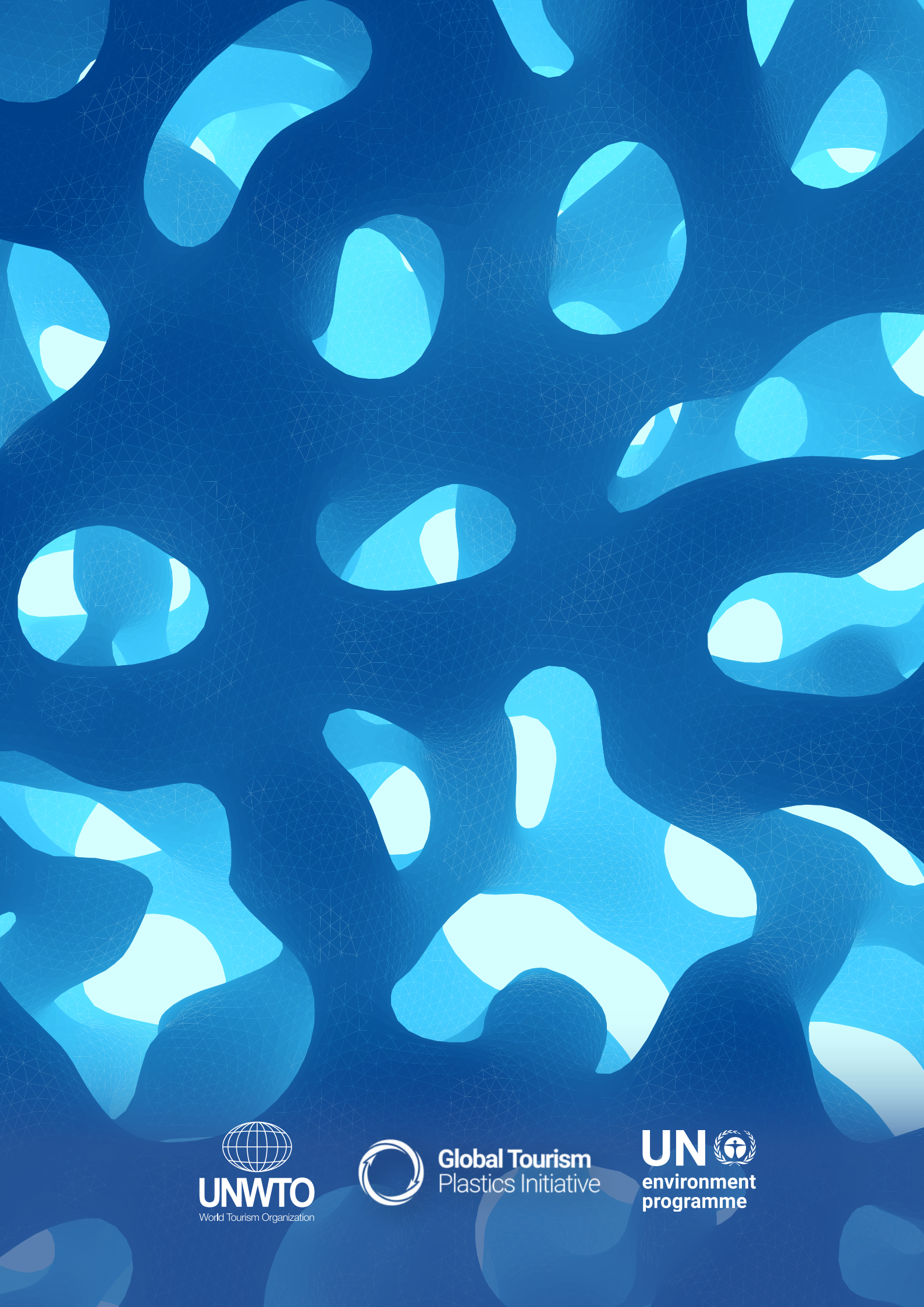
Building capacity around circular procurement within the organization and key supply chains ensures continual improvement and accelerates the transition to more circular outcomes. Education and raising awareness on the potential impacts of sustainable procurement among stakeholders is critical for all relevant stakeholders. Ensure that lessons learnt from tender exercises are captured are incorporated into future procurement practice.

Finally, within tourism businesses procurement should be used as a strategic instrument that is closely linked to delivering policy objectives and leveraging circular economy goals across the business.

Relevant organizational policies should explicitly identify sustainable procurement as a delivery mechanism to create transparency and a clear mandate for embedding sustainable procurement practices within the procurement process. Procurement KPIs should include sustainability outcomes as part of the procurement KPI suite to enable the benefits of sustainable procurement to be captured, reported and clearly contribute to corporate goals and commitments.

Linking procurement practice to policy will help influence the latter in two ways:

- By influencing waste policy through an evidence-based approach to improving the collection and management of plastics waste in line with circular principles, value retention and the waste hierarchy.
- By using existing procurement tools (carbon, sustainability, life-cycle costing and so on) to ensure that future procurement of waste collection infrastructure and waste management services provides the best environmental outcome across the business operation.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Plastics Initiative
UN
environment
programme