

**Know Your Worth: How to Make Informed, Sustainable Purchases**

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## Chapter 1: Executive Summary

The climate crisis is a global issue that affects everything and everyone on the planet. The disruption of natural ecosystems and the excessive burning of fossil fuels along with other greenhouse gas pollution has placed us face-to-face with a climate emergency. At this point, we must start making more sustainable choices in every part of our lives. There are many different habits and changes that individuals can make to help reduce our impact on the planet, but our team is focusing on one major area that needs to become more sustainable: consumption. In a high-income country such as the United States, people consume about ten times more than the average low-income country (*Goal 12 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.*). As such, in alignment with the United Nations twelfth sustainable development goal “Responsible Consumption and Production”, we believe that it should be a priority for consumers in the United States to make sustainable choices when it comes to the items that they must consume. And we believe that Western Washington University especially, in alignment with its own sustainability mission, should prioritize practicing sustainable procurement.

The least harmful choice a person can make would be to consume less, yet there are inevitable purchases that must be made, especially in a university setting. For those unavoidable purchases, there are choices that individuals can make that make their purchase overall more sustainable. While other guides exist within the state of Washington, Western Washington University has yet to build a webpage or tool to help guide Western faculty and staff specifically in how to make the most sustainable purchases. To fill this need, our team has procured content for a future sustainable procurement webpage, looking at 14 different product categories. These categories have been determined by what have previously been the most popularly purchased products by Western staff and faculty. We’ve organized these products into an excel sheet and have gathered a plethora of information about these products and their impact on the environment, among other sustainability related information, with the goal of making the creation of a user-friendly procurement guide streamlined and simple.

The majority of the content which we have gathered centers around recommendations and sustainable best practices related to specific product categories. We have formatted our content to provide two major tiers of information about sustainable purchasing for each product category. The first tier serves as a quick guide highlighting sustainable best practices for each product type, and the second tier provides more background information, or the “why” behind the practices that are recommended in the guide. Beyond specific product recommendations, we also make recommendations to our project sponsor and her team, both for now and moving into the future. Our team recommends that our sponsor come up with a set of sustainability standards that are used to evaluate new and existing vendors wanting to work with Western. These standards should be used to hold vendors to a certain standard of sustainability, with the potential for formal vendor sustainability audits in the future to help hold vendors accountable. Additionally, we recommend that business services work in tandem with vendors to ensure that changes be made to the Western Marketplace interface system so that finding sustainable products is more accessible to its users. These changes may look like adding ecolabels and filters or other tools to help users find the most sustainable items. Additionally, our team recommends that a student position be created within Business Services. This position would focus on adding to and updating the excel sheet containing the content for the guide over time, assuring that the guide becomes applicable to a broader variety of product categories, as well as making sure that the guide contains up to date information for existing and added product categories.

## Chapter 2: Introduction

Navigating sustainable purchasing can be an arduous process for plenty of reasons. Because Western is known for being progressive and dedicated to sustainability, there are endless positive impacts in the successful implementation of a procurement guide. Our school has the power to lead by example, showing the broader Bellingham community and other schools how to reduce their environmental impact and transition to more sustainable practices. Additionally, it will show companies of our purchasing power through the deliberate purchasing of products from sustainable companies. Purchasing power refers to the ability for consumers to sway and influence vendors, companies, and/or corporations through their purchasing habits. We are beginning to see increasingly negative effects from the production and disposal of hazardous products, such as harmful metals and toxins leaching into our water, air, and soil. These hazards are why it is absolutely critical that this transition takes place as soon as possible.

Before going into specifics of a sustainable procurement guide it is important to understand previous obstacles. Greenwashing has become a growing obstacle that prevents schools from truly purchasing products sustainably. Vague wording and fake eco labels on products can easily mislead companies from purchasing a sustainable product. The United Nations article, *Greenwashing – The Deceptive Tactics Behind Environmental Claims*, presents the most common tactics companies use to mislead the public. For example, companies can make claims towards completely removing their emissions but not have any established plans to accomplish this goal (United Nations). Additionally, companies can over exaggerate a minor improvement as something significant towards sustainability (United Nations). Other tactics include focusing on one aspect of sustainability while completely neglecting others, claiming to avoid illegal practices irrelevant to the project and being intentionally vague to avoid mention of hazardous materials used (United Nations). Lastly, for financial reasons, finding a sustainable product at a reasonable price can be a problem for some.

There has been a lack of effort towards investing in sustainable products that could replace traditional harmful products. The Deloitte Insights article, *The Cost of Buying Green*, highlights some of the financial issues with purchasing sustainably. First, the article notes a recent study which discovered a significant decrease in purchases amongst individuals because of the significantly higher prices compared to traditional products (The Deloitte Insights). Additionally, a March 2022 study found that half the global population (49%) purchased at least one sustainable product within the past four weeks. Those who purchased a sustainable product said they paid far more for it compared to a traditional product (The Deloitte Insights). While the price for some sustainable products may be higher than their alternatives, our guide will highlight that there are other incentives for buying sustainable products besides saving money up front. If knowledge about sustainable purchasing becomes accessible and people effectively know the choices that are most sustainable, significant progress can be made towards reducing our impact on the environment. Furthermore, these efforts will help accomplish the 12th Sustainable Development Goal, 'Responsible Consumption and Production'. Focusing on aspects of production and disposal will allow us to transition to a much more sustainable lifestyle. However, with all these complications, the need to reduce complications for sustainable purchasing should become evident. The impact of our project will be seen in upcoming years with more sustainable products being accessible to students, faculty and staff who have been empowered with the knowledge on making sustainable purchases.

University of Washington’s sustainable procurement guide uses effective strategies that Western Washington University could take inspiration from. For example, they include and encourage products, “with post-consumer recycled content, recyclable, energy efficient, and/or bio-based product” (University of Washington). Additionally, the school includes a plethora of criteria to follow for certain products including trade-ins, reclamation services, waste reduction, and much more (University of Washington). Through recommended products, recommended services and various certified companies listed, University of Washingtons procurement guide offers copious amounts of relevant and beneficial tactics that could help us reach the goal of our project.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

To appropriately execute a sustainable purchasing guide, the research team and I communicated with Janette Rosebrook from Business Services and Max Bronsema who is the Director of Communication Technologies at WWU. They both provided thoughtful insight on the topic at hand. This allowed us to determine the most frequently purchased products at Western being batteries, computer servers, computers, display screens, electronics, food, imaging equipment, lamps/ lamp fixtures, mobile phones, office equipment, paper, printers, copiers, and recycled content in product and packaging. Additionally, we found the factors that must be considered to certify both the legality and legitimacy of sustainable purchases. The certification involves ecolabels and proof of sustainable production within their products. To determine legitimacy, our team looked at what materials are known to cause less harm to the environment. The legality of products includes looking at [State Guidelines](#), highlighted in the Department of Enterprise Services Green Purchasing Guide, which must be abided by due to state mandates.

Trade-offs are important as there are many aspects to consider when purchasing sustainably. For this reason, we are taking travel distance, material, and disposal into account. Travel distance can be determined by locating the closest facility to Western Washington University. Information on materials used and disposal methods can be found on the EPA’s website. Certification of eco-labels verify that companies purchased from are selling truly sustainable products. With each of these factors, we have implemented them into an excel spreadsheet in accordance with each of the products listed above. The most common products purchased at Western are listed vertically on the left and the factors to consider for each product are listed across the spreadsheet (See Appendix A for excel sheet format). Certain categories such as eco-labels are linked to websites to allow Western faculty and staff to effortlessly navigate to the websites relevant to their purchases. We chose the most state-vetted eco-labels, as state endorsement is the most reliable for avoiding greenwashing and purchasing sustainably. Additionally, using columns and headers format with bolded wording makes the appearance easily navigable.

By considering each of these factors, we have meticulously researched companies that align with our project's purpose. Our research was structured by investigating major environmental concerns with each product. After understanding the most significant issues, this helped our understanding of ways these products can be less environmentally damaging by using different materials. Next, we went into the specifics of each product by finding state laws and

recommendations as well as waste programs for these products at Western. This was done by looking at State and Western Washington Universities websites. Lastly, we took consideration from other organizations procurement guides to see effective strategies used by others. Specifically, we looked at King County, DES and AASHE procurement guides, which helped ensure the categories we were assessing are of most importance. With our findings, we make sustainable best practice recommendations on our excel sheet, offering purchasing guidance for Western's most purchased products.

## Chapter 4: Results

Throughout this project, we have collected data from a vast number of sources all focusing on what makes a product sustainable or not. To start we created an Excel sheet that we broke into 7 sections, each focusing on a different layer of sustainability in product purchasing, and the guidelines and policies that relate to Western and Washington State. Below is an example of the computer product category.

### First Level Environmental (concerns quick guide/recommendations)

- This is what we want buyers to look at if they are feeling overwhelmed with how much is on the guide, you can look here for a quick guide on what to look for when looking for sustainable product.
- A quick bulleted list summarizing the other 6 sections in order for a purchaser to quickly look at our excel sheet and know what to look out for when looking for sustainable purchasing.

- 1) Look for E-Waste Recycling
- 2) Safe Disposal Methods
- 3) Donating or Selling your computer
- 4) Sustainable Sourcing
- 5) Renewable Energy Manufacturing
- 6) Energy Star Certification
- 7) EPEAT

### Second Level Environmental Concerns Associated with Product Type (in-depth/"why" behind environmental concerns)

- For a purchaser that wants to know exactly why we have recommended specific sustainable content
- More in-depth and detailed information about how this product causes harm to our environment and why it's important to make sustainable choices.

**Extracting raw materials:** Computers rely on many different raw materials including gold, copper, or rare earth elements. These materials are extracted through mining practices which can damage local ecosystems and contribute to deforestation and loss of biodiversity.

**Release of harmful pollutants during production:** During the material processing step these raw materials are processed and transformed into various components where is often high energy use and results in CO2 emissions.

**Energy consumption during usage:** Carbon emissions get released through excessive computer usage because it fuels the consumption of electricity. Encourages “throw away culture” because excessive use leads to demand for purchasing of upgraded devices.

**Electronic waste disposal:** In 2019, 53.6 million metric tonnes of e-waste were created around the world. E-waste contains various toxic chemicals such as lead, mercury, and cadmium. If these aren't disposed of properly then these toxics can leach into soil and waterways leading to environmental damage and health risks. Heavy metal contamination, chemical pollution, and resource waste all occur.

### What choices best meet sustainability/recommendations

**E-Waste Recycling:** Many parts of computers such as metal, plastic, and glass can be recycled. Recycling can lead to the manufacturing of new products and reduce the need to extract fresh raw materials.

**Safe Disposal Methods:** If you can't recycle, proper disposal methods need to be followed. Handing your computer over to an approved and regulated disposal facility. Donating or Selling your computer.

**Eco-design:** choosing computers that are designed with the end-of-life stage in mind by being easy to disassemble for recycling.

**Sustainable Sourcing:** Source raw materials by prioritizing recycled or responsibly mined materials. Alternative use bioplastics.

**Manufacturing:** Power manufacturing processes and data center with renewable energy.

### Ecolabels/certifications

**Energy Star Certification:** standard for energy efficiency.

**EPEAT:** premier global ecolabel for electronics and technology products.



### State of WA Required/Recommended Guidelines:

If you are a manufacturer of TVs, computers, monitors, laptops, tablets, and/or P-DVD players, you are required to participate in the E-Cycle Washington product stewardship program. Manufacturers must be listed on the Manufacturer Registration list, register annually with us, pay an annual administrative fee, and participate in a recycling plan, in order to sell in or into Washington.

### Recycling programs at WWU or WA State

From Western Website: "Contact Equipment Inventory and complete an unwanted equipment form. Equipment inventory staff work with EHS and arrange proper disposal."

<https://ehs.wvu.edu/waste-matrix>

## WWU or WA state surplus program

<https://www.des.wa.gov/services/buy-surplus>

We collected mainly secondary data through multiple websites all focused on the environmental concerns as well as recommendations on sustainability. One of our biggest struggles during this project was defining sustainability and how to do that in alignment with Western's mission statement. We decided to use western's sustainability statement but also add our own to help describe what we see as sustainability and this of course can be added to or changed, but the premise still remains clear that it is about multiple aspects of our society and focuses on environment, people, and economy.

Western's definition of sustainability is "Commitment to student success, critical thought, creativity, and sustainability. Commitment to equity and justice, and respect for the rights and dignity of others. Pursuit of excellence, in an environment characterized by principles of shared governance, academic freedom, and effective engagement. Integrity, responsibility, and accountability in all our work." (*Mission & Strategic Plan | President's Office | Western Washington University*, n.d.). We found this to be broad but still useful in crafting our own. We wanted to write our own so purchasers could see what metrics and criteria we decided to use to define sustainability and they could see how that determined what product recommendations we made.

Our definition is "With this guide, we are committed to fostering a sustainable future by prioritizing various sustainable facets of business practices. Our sustainability initiatives are centered around Reducing carbon emissions, promoting ethical labor practices, advocating for recycling and responsible disposal, harnessing renewable resources, avoiding harmful chemicals, supporting local communities, and championing sustainable alternatives." Although this definition is still broad, it is written to be specifically relevant to sustainability. Our statement is centered around the environment, people, and the economy, which are the three pillars of sustainability and are extremely important when purchasing sustainably.

We found that the most relevant data collected especially for viewers of the guide is the purchasing recommendation and the first row focusing on the quick guide/recommendation section. Our team spoke with Janette about how our guide is a bit wordy and although having in depth information about why these products can hurt the environment is important, it's also just as important to give a brief recommendation on what to look for in the marketplace so the consumer won't get overwhelmed and know what things to look for when purchasing items. We focused on ecolabels and how those can be influential for consumers to look at and we wanted to avoid greenwashing and emphasize the ecolabels that are trustworthy and make it easier for purchasers to know what to look for. We were able to research many ecolabels and a big indicator on which were trustworthy or not was if they were certified or endorsed by the state of Washington as being reliable. There is an ecolabel index website that showed us many ecolabel certifications that proved that they were through the state and were certified. (*"Who's Deciding What's Green?" Ecolabel Index, www.ecolabelindex.com/.*)



We are aware that there can be biases in our sustainability because sustainability is extremely broad and there are so many aspects to it. We really tried to step away from making one definition of it and instead acknowledge that there are many ways to be sustainable and these are just some of the options in how to be a part of that. Our emphasis on Eco certifications and labels also helps lessen our biases because these certifications are clear around these products and we didn't create them. They are beneficial to make purchasers know that the products they are purchasing have been certified not just by a couple of college students and faculty but by certification programs! It brings trust and reliability to our guide, while also helping reduce greenwashing!

Another aspect of relevant data is whether WWU has a surplus of specific products already. A simple note directing people to look for surplus items first is a simple recommendation for the web platform, but it wouldn't need much work beyond that. We wanted to include surplus items because the most sustainable choice would be to use items that are already available. Purchasing or using surplus items avoids the harms associated with new product creation. By reusing items, a consumer avoids contributing to the need for new resource extraction, emissions related to shipping and product manufacturing, and helps to keep waste out of the landfill. Giving a second life to items is overwhelmingly the most sustainable choice a consumer can make.

## **Chapter 5: Recommendations**

Moving into a more just and sustainable future will require both effort on an individual level while also holding companies and corporations responsible for the role they play in advancing a culture of harmful consumerism. At a university with a strong sustainability ethos, we have to look at the different aspects of sustainability and be mindful that our sustainable projects are reflective of all of these separate parts. Sustainability does not only refer to environmental harms, but also envisions a future with economic and social vitality. The exchange of goods and services is an important part of a healthy economy, yet the way that process happens can negatively impact the environment and its natural systems. Such practices also have social implications when we look closely at the labor practices employed to extract materials and manufacture products. Sustainable purchasing is only one small part in a much larger system of natural resources extraction, product manufacturing and transportation (at every part of the cycle), and the overall life cycle of a product once it has reached consumer hands. Our guide aims to look critically at this cycle so that we can make the best possible recommendations to those purchasing products as well as recommendations for the university at large to make the choice of purchasing sustainable products an easy one to make.

The UN's twelfth Sustainable Development goal, "Responsible Consumption and Production" highlights how in the United States, we consume much more than other places in the world, and this level of consumption has environmental, social, and economic consequences felt by the rest of the world (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal12>). The recommendations we make keep

this development goal in mind, focusing on the power that we have as consumers to reduce harm through the purchases that we make.

### 5.1: Product recommendations

Keeping an intersectional idea of sustainability that is aligned with Western's own message of sustainability has resulted in our team making numerous recommendations for several product categories that are popularly purchased by Western faculty and staff. These categories are as follows: Batteries, Computers, Computer Servers, Displays/Screens, Electronics, Food, Printers and Scanners, Lamps and Lamp Fixtures, Mobile Phones, Office Equipment, Paper, Furniture, Cleaning Supplies, and recyclable packing materials. Our list, presented in the form of an excel document, has two different tiers of information for each product category. The first tier makes bulleted recommendations and is intended for the person who has limited time to view the sustainable purchasing guide - someone who just wants to know the basics of how to make a more sustainable purchase and can apply the principles and recommendations quickly. Our excel sheet has outlined all of these recommendations. Drawing most of its inspiration from Washington State's Department of Enterprises Green Purchasing Guide (<https://des.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/GreenPurchasingGuide.pdf>), here is an example of first tier information for making a more sustainable battery procurement and disposal:

- Choose to purchase mercury-free batteries
- Choose rechargeable batteries over single use batteries
- Choose lithium batteries made with recycled materials
- Properly recycle old or unwanted batteries, which are classified as chemical and/or hazardous waste, with either Western's recycling program or Whatcom County's recycling program

The second tier of our recommendations will include more background information on the environmental concerns associated with each product category. This tier will give the consumer context for different sustainability-related concerns within that product category. Using batteries again as an example, this portion of the guide would explicitly state the environmental concerns associated with the materials used to produce batteries, the social consequences of the extraction of these materials, and concerns associated with improperly disposing of old or unwanted batteries. Here is an example of what our second tier of information looks like:

**“For lithium batteries:** The extraction process, known as fracking, required for getting the materials to manufacture batteries is harmful to the environment. The mines where materials are harvested leach toxic chemicals that are harmful to living organisms. Lithium extraction and

processing requires a lot of water, emits water and air pollutants, and is damaging to the communities who live near lithium mines because of these reasons. In some cases, the labor practices employed for the extraction of the metals used to create batteries are unjust, with the worst cases employing the labor of enslaved peoples and/or children (IER, 2020); (Gross, 2023); (*Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Republic of the Congo*, n.d.).

**General Battery Concerns:** Most household battery waste goes to landfills which leach metals and toxins that are harmful to both the environment and to people. These toxins can leach into the soil, air, and water.”

## 5.2 Recommendations for Sponsor

While we have made recommendations relevant to making sustainable purchases for consumers at Western Washington University, we also have recommendations for our project sponsor, Janette Rosebrook who works for Business Services. For Janette and her team, we recommend that they continue to apply, and even increase, the amount of pressure put on vendors that want to sell through Western’s marketplace. By “applying pressure,” our team means that Business Services should create a set of sustainability standards that new vendors must meet and existing vendors must strive to meet by the time they renew their contract with the university (*Sustainable Procurement 101 | Guide & Playbook | Sievo*, n.d.). Our team recommends that these standards include, but are not limited to, vendors clearly marking their products with any relevant ecolabels; transparency about their labor practices and material sourcing; and, using recyclable or compostable packing materials, both for the packaging of the actual product as well as the packing for shipping and transportation of the product. In the future, we see potential for an official “sustainability audit” being created around these standards, where vendors could be audited each year to ensure that they are meeting the sustainable criteria set by Business Services and the university. Beyond applying this pressure, it would be interesting to see policy be implemented, either within Western or Business Services, requiring that any new vendors must be making these strides to make sustainable purchasing more possible, or have a definitive date or amount of time (months, years) to see positive improvements in terms of overall sustainability. If Western can connect with other universities to make the same requests of their vendors, then vendors will begin to see the demand for sustainable practices and begin to make strides toward making internal improvements.

## 5.3 Future Recommendations

Throughout the duration of our project, our team, along with Janette, has been explicit in defining the sustainable purchasing guide as a living document, something to be expanded upon in years to come. These expansions may include, but are not limited to, adding more product categories to the guide as well as updating information for existing categories as new, more accurate information and recommendations surface. However, our team recognizes the

challenges that the Business Services office faces in relation to intense workload and lack of staffing. As such, we recommend that Business Services apply for a Sustainability Equity and Justice Fund (SEJF) grant to get funding to add a student staff position within the office to ensure that progress continues to be made on the sustainable purchasing guide. Our formal recommendation would be to hire a student worker who would work for 3 school year terms (fall, winter, and spring), for 10 weeks per term, 10-15 hours a week, making a wage of at least \$17.90 per hour. Looking at the student employment center's wage categories, our team has deduced that this work would be classified as a Level 2 undergraduate student position. The overall cost of this, assuming the student works 15 hours a week for 30 weeks total per year at \$17.90 per hour, would be \$8,055 per year. The mission of the sustainable purchasing guide aligns well with the mission of the SEJF and we feel optimistic that funding would be granted for this purpose.

Western Marketplace, one of the marketplace interfaces staff and faculty engage with, currently does not have any ecolabels uploaded and there is no way to filter purchases to specific sustainability metrics. Navigating Western Marketplace with the intention to make a sustainable purchase is currently inaccessible. This is why, in addition to hiring a part-time student staff position, our team recommends that the marketplace interface that Western currently uses be updated and improved upon, a feat that would require collaboration between both Business Services and vendors. Updates could include, but are not limited to, uploading relevant ecolabels, creating sustainability metric filters ("made with recyclable materials"; "fair trade certified labor practices," etc.), or creating another webpage within marketplace that centers around highlighting sustainable products. To make these changes will require a lot of labor, time, and energy and will require consistent and clear communication with vendors.

While our team spent time exploring and looking for alternative marketplace options, our results were inconclusive. Other universities, according to the response received on an Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) bulletin post, other schools share in the struggle of marketplace interfaces not being conducive to sustainable purchasing. Yet, there is no clear solution or alternative marketplace that we know of to make sustainable purchasing more accessible. We recommend that more time and energy go into exploring alternative marketplace interfaces. A switch in marketplace interface could be costly up front but may reap many benefits in the future related to accessibility, and even money saved in wages and hours spent on making the current interface work for sustainable purchasing.

#### **5.4 Timeline**

Our team recognizes that the recommendations we made will be costly, especially in terms of labor and time. Still, we stand strongly behind our recommendations and feel confident that if they are applied, sustainable procurement can become more accessible university wide. We see the updates and additions to webpage content in the excel sheet as being a perpetual job,

one that could go on for years. As such, we recommend that each year, at the end of spring quarter, the position be reevaluated for necessity, based on whether the position is adding value to the purpose of the project. The actual launching and creation of the webpage will also take time. If prioritized, this is a task that could be completed in a matter of months (<https://www.wix.com/blog/how-long-does-it-take-to-build-a-website>).

The stride toward sustainable procurement will be one that should be continued in years to come. As changes are made with vendors, product types, and purchasing habits, updates will always need to be made. The excel sheet with content, plus the actual webpage, should be considered living documents that will always have the potential for needing updates. There is no definitive timeline for accomplishing these tasks, but work and progress should be made each year toward making sustainable purchasing accessible to Western staff and faculty.

## **Chapter 6: Monitoring and Evaluation**

For the last two months we have created an excel sheet highlighting 14 products highlighting their environmental concerns, what choices best meet sustainability, and Washington and WWU recommendations and programs that influence purchasing. As we get to the end of our excel sheet and complete it, this doesn't mean that this is the end of the purchasing guide but is actually just the beginning. We want the eventual guide created from our content to not just be a guide for staff and faculty to use before purchasing products, but also a living document to which more products categories are added over time.

One way to monitor the success and progress of the guide is to witness it grow over time. We recommended creating a student employee being hired to expand upon the guide, and if this comes to fruition, then the guide can be expanded upon. Seeing the guide grow and change will also show whether the formatting is effective and user friendly. We hope our content helps create a guide that can be simple enough for purchasers to understand and know what to look for when heading to the marketplace. If possible, purchasing data can be reviewed to see if there is an increase in sustainable purchases being made by staff and faculty. Tracking the frequency in sustainable purchases being made and evaluating a positive or negative trend could serve as a reliable way to see the effectiveness of the eventual guide.

There is also hope that Max will use our data to create a search engine similar to the work they are doing right now on the local minority vendors website. Janette has goals to have our sustainable purchasing guide align with the new vendors website and hopefully connect them and make them both accessible. Seeing whether a webpage or search engine is created is another way to track the success of our project. The creation of a website similar to the local vendors one using our content will show us that the work we did was meaningful and effective.

Our team would love to see ecolabels added to Western Marketplace so that their inclusion in future guides and websites is useful for staff and faculty. Seeing these changes happen provides another indicator of success. Our team recognizes that creating a guide with ecolabels is only effective if the places staff and faculty have to shop have ecolabels uploaded.

Our recommendations being implemented in this regard will be extremely beneficial for making sustainable purchasing more accessible to Western Marketplace users. While there is hope to redesign the WWU marketplace, it is a huge task. We see a higher likelihood that an alternative search engine be created in order for purchasers to see the sustainable products on there and then be able to go to the marketplace and make their purchases. Either way, the overall success of our project can be evaluated based on the application (or not) of the recommendations we make in our guide as well as recommendations made to our sponsor, both for the present and into the future.

### 6.1 Budget

Budget Item	Cost per item	Quantity	Total	Description
<b>Year 1</b>				
New Marketplace software subscription estimate	\$15,000	1	\$15,000	One recommendation is that the university change the marketplace interface they currently use. The current software is not conducive for making sustainable purchases, and making a guide for this marketplace would be time and labor intensive.
Student Employee	\$17.90	15	\$8,055	Someone to develop content for the guide over time.
Max Bronsema	unknown		unknown	Max's time spent on developing the guide will be important and we want to acknowledge his labor being a key component of this budget
<b>Ongoing Annual</b>			\$8,055	
<b>Total</b>			\$23,055	

Even with the subscription to a different marketplace interface, a student employee position will be necessary. The student employee’s focus is adding content to the excel sheet and increasing the amount of product categories overtime. As stated in the recommendations section, each year, based on progress made on the excel sheet, the position should be reevaluated for usefulness, adjusting hours worked as needed, or eventually eliminating the position when the content cannot be meaningfully expanded upon any further.

### Chapter 7: Conclusion

Making sustainable purchases is one of the ways that consumers can exercise their purchasing power in an effort to make the world and their community more sustainable. The transition to a more sustainable and just future will require holding companies and corporations accountable for the role they play in climate change, and we can make an immediate impact by committing to practicing sustainability on an individual level as well. When individual consumers increase their purchasing of sustainable products, the amount of pressure vendors experience increases greatly, especially when many individuals make this choice together. By deliberately spending money on sustainable items from sustainable companies, consumers essentially force vendors who do not currently practice sustainability to make more sustainable choices in how they create, package, and transport their product. Anyone can purposefully wield

their spending to show companies where their values lie, and force vendors to think about the consequences of their least sustainable choices.

Since consuming products and making purchases is a real and important part of a lot of jobs at Western, the content we've procured to make a Sustainable Purchasing Guide will simply help guide those who wish to make more sustainable purchasing choices. Our guide is a living document to be expanded upon and improved over time, which is why our team recommends applying for an SEJF grant to fund hiring a part-time student position whose job would be to add and improve the guide over time.

Unless the places consumers go to make purchases are easily navigable and clearly denote sustainable items, the creation of a sustainable purchasing website will not be enough. Our team recognizes that Western Marketplace is currently not the most user friendly and makes denoting sustainable products and purchases difficult. We recommended that the university update their current marketplace, adding accessibility features like ecolabels and sustainability focused filters. Our team sees potential for moving to a new marketplace interface within the next two or three years that is more user friendly and sustainability accessible. This change would be costly up front but could save time and labor that would be spent on changing the current marketplace interface in the long run.

Additionally, we recommend that Business Services continue to put pressure on vendors to make more sustainable choices in their own business practices. This "pressure" is applied through the creation of firm sustainability standards for any new vendors wishing to work with the university, and existing vendors must plan to meet the standards within a certain period of time as determined by the university. To enforce sustainability criteria, we recommend that Business Services work with the university to create policy that will formally assert that vendors must meet or be working to meet sustainability standards. Our team sees the potential for future sustainability audits of vendors so that the university can evaluate if their values are compatible with those wanting to sell products to the university.

There is no perfect way to be a consumer in a world where excessive consumption is a social norm and many parts of the process of product development are out of the control of the individual. Our project team recognizes this notion and aims at helping people make the least harmful choices possible. In a world and society that greatly favors the health and vitality of our economy, one of the most powerful things consumers can do is use their spending power to put pressure on companies to make the most sustainable choices possible. While it may seem at times like we have no control over the situation, if we act en masse as a campus and broader university community, we can show companies and corporations that our values lie with the overall health and well-being of our communities, our land, our air, and our sea.





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