



GSES Sustainable Procurement Pillar (version 4.0) Assessment Guide

January, 2025

INTRODUCTION

- The goal of this document is simple: to help new users start with GSES *Assessments*.
- The Assessments are, for each Pillar, the way to measure your organization against the GSES Enterprise standard. It contains all questions in the GSES standard and allows you to earn points for each by filling in the assessment.
- To guide you through our Assessments for each pillar, we provide Assessment Guides like the one you are reading right now. It elaborates on what each of the questions in an assessment means and provides practical suggestions on how to provide an answer.

GSES PLATFORM PRACTICALITIES

- Start an assessment by logging in and navigating to Assessment under Organization. For more Getting Started information on how to use the platform for measuring your organization, please read through our "Getting Started measuring your Organization" guide.
- Assessments consist of 10-15 questions in total. Most questions are in 'closed-end format', so you can select your initial answer from a list.
- The questions are grouped into four sections: 1. Plan (Policy and Goals), 2. Do (Actions, Implementation, Measurement, Communication), 3. Check (Evaluate) and 4. Act (Improve).
- There is additional room to elaborate on your answer. This is important for both your internal record keeping (what is the key rationale given for the answer) as well as the auditors performing the audit to evaluate your performance.
- When you're done with the assessment, you can request a verification by an independent auditor. The auditor will check if and to what extent the answers you have given are supported by the uploaded evidence.
- This audit transforms the assessment from an internal exercise into an audited evaluation of sustainability performance which can be the basis of internal and external communication.
- For your audit preparation, for each question there is a suggestion of what that 'supporting evidence' could be. The suggestion is a practical recommendation and contains the preferred answer for auditors. However, if you have a different type of evidence to support your answers, that is also acceptable.
- At any point you can save your (draft) assessment and continue at a later moment. Click 'save' in the top right corner of your screen.
- When you're done, you can click on 'submit assessment' in the top right corner of your screen. After which you can proceed to request verification.

USEFUL NOTES

- If you need help, email support@gses-system.com. This is the fastest and most effective way to get the help you need. Your email arrives in our support box where a team of people is ready to pick it up and help you.
- GSES recognizes that every organization is different. We do not require you use a specific type of format policy document as evidence to support assessment answers. Your internal documents suffice. An auditor has the responsibility to assess whether your evidence is proof of performance.
- The auditor will only evaluate to what extent the answers given are supported by the evidence documents uploaded. The content of the evidence document itself (e.g. a CSR policy) will not be evaluated.
- Evidence is sent directly to the auditors, GSES does not have access to your evidence. This safeguards confidentiality of your documents and the independence of the audit process.

ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT ASSESSMENT VERSION 4.0

SECTION 1 - PLAN (POLICIES AND GOALS)

Question 1: Policy Plan for Sustainable Procurement

Question 2: Limiting the actual and potential adverse effects of the organization

Question 3: Code of conduct or a similar document

SECTION 2 - DO (ACTIONS, IMPLEMENTATION, MEASUREMENT, COMMUNICATION)

Question 4: Conditions relating to human and labor rights

Question 5: Safety and health of employees

Question 6: Prevention of harmful emissions

Question 7: Conditions relating to biodiversity

Question 8: Conditions relating to fair business practices

SECTION 3 – CHECK (EVALUATE)

Question 9: SP Performance

Question 10: SP Assessment audit

SECTION 4 – ACT (IMPROVEMENT)

Question 11: Conclusions

SECTION 1 - PLAN (Policies and Goals)

Policy for Sustainable Procurement

A well-structured policy plan is the foundation of sustainable procurement and aligns with the principles outlined in ISO 20400. It ensures organizations take a strategic and systematic approach to embedding sustainability into procurement practices.

When developing such a plan, organizations should consider key focus areas, including stakeholder engagement, continuous improvement, supplier sustainability, and effective communication about sustainability and circular economy goals. The following question explores how your organization addresses these critical aspects of sustainable procurement.

Question 1: Respond to the following statement

In its CSR policy plan/vision document, the organization specifically addresses its plan to implement the following matters:				Points
	Yes	No	Not Applicable	
a Identification and engagement of stakeholders on the sustainable procurement policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
b Continuous improvement of the sustainability of the organization's procurement process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
c The sustainability of the first-tier suppliers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
d Communicating about sustainability matters with both suppliers and customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2

Observations

- This is a multi-select question, you can answer "yes", "no" or "not applicable" for options (a) through (d) and elaborate in the context box. Note, you can select "yes" for multiple answers if appropriate. If all the answers or the entire question are not applicable, select "not applicable" for each answer and explain in the context box.
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: Procurement policy, stakeholder report, code of conduct for suppliers, procurement policy, supply chain mapping, and communication proofs.

Helpful notes:

- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: Procurement policy, stakeholder report, code of conduct for suppliers, procurement policy, supply chain mapping, and communication proofs.

- This question relates to the sustainability of your suppliers. This means that the sustainability of your supply chain is being assessed, not of your organization.
- Sustainability is used as an umbrella term for relevant sustainability matters, such as circularity, GHG emissions, or social responsibility. Different sustainability topics may be more relevant for different suppliers based on their sector.
- Option (c) encourages the organization to implement specific sustainability criteria towards its first-tier suppliers, as these are the ones that the organization has the most influence on.

SECTION 1 - PLAN (Policies and Goals)

Actual and potential impacts in the organization's supply chain

Organizations play a critical role in mitigating their actual and potential adverse impacts across the supply chain. Incorporating these considerations into decision-making and risk management processes is a key aspect of sustainable procurement and aligns with ISO 20400 principles.

This involves addressing issues such as human rights, labor practices, environmental impacts, and sourcing risks—such as avoiding procurement from conflict-affected or politically unstable regions. The following question examines how your organization integrates these factors into its procurement strategy.

Question 2: Respond to the following statement

The organization prevents and limits its actual and potential negative impacts with regard to the following subjects:				
	Yes	No	Not Applicable	Points
a Human rights in the organization's supply chain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
b Labor practices in the supply chain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
c Environmental effects in the supply chain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
d Preventing the procurement of goods or services from conflicted- or politically unstable areas (e.g. conflict minerals).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4

Observations

- This question asks about your organization's effort to limit negative social and environmental impacts in the supply chain, that is - outside your organization's direct control.
- This is a multi-select question, you can answer "yes", "no" or "not applicable" for options (a) through (d) and elaborate in the context box. Note, you can select "yes" for multiple answers if appropriate. If all the answers or the entire question are not applicable, select "not applicable" for each answer and explain in the context box.
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: impact analysis/identification for each of the selected themes in the question; and reports showing progress made towards limiting identified impacts.

SECTION 1 - PLAN (Policies and Goals)

Code of Conduct for suppliers

A Code of Conduct is a vital tool for fostering ethical and sustainable practices within an organization and its supply chains. It outlines the principles and standards that guide behavior, ensuring alignment with legal requirements and international norms.

By emphasizing ethical conduct and respect for established standards, such a document promotes accountability and integrity throughout the supply chain. The following question explores how your organization incorporates these values into its supply chain.

Question 3: Respond to the following statement

The organization has drawn up a Code of Conduct for suppliers, with specific regard for:				
	Yes	No	Not Applicable	Points
a Ethical conduct in the organization and promoting such conduct in its supply chain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
b Respect for law & legislation and international frameworks of conduct (e.g. ILO, OECD, UNCHR).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

Observations

- This question asks about your organization's effort to promote ethical conduct in the organization's supply chain by implementing a Code of Conduct.
- This is a multi-select question, you can answer "yes", "no" or "not applicable" for options (a) through (b) and elaborate in the context box. Note, you can select "yes" for multiple answers if appropriate. If all the answers or the entire question are not applicable, select "not applicable" for each answer and explain in the context box.
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: Code of Conduct or similar, including a list of relevant laws & regulation if applicable.

SECTION 2 - DO (Actions, Implementation, Measurement, Communication)

Human and labor rights

Embedding human and labor rights into supplier contracts is a critical step toward fostering ethical and sustainable supply chains. It ensures that suppliers uphold fundamental principles such as protecting workers' rights, promoting equality, and ensuring safe and fair working conditions.

From prohibiting child labor to supporting freedom of association and combating modern slavery, these measures align with international standards and reflect an organization's commitment to responsible procurement. The following question assesses how your organization incorporates these safeguards into supplier agreements.

Question 4: Respond to the following statement

The following conditions relating to the safeguarding of human and labor rights are built into contracts with suppliers:				
	Yes	No	Not Applicable	Points
a Adherence to child labor prevention protocols.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
b Protection of freedom of speech.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
c Equal opportunities for and non-discrimination of women and minorities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
d Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
e Safe, fair, and reasonable working conditions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
f Adherence to forced labor prevention protocols.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2

Observations

- This is a multi-select question, you can answer "yes", "no" or "not applicable" for options (a) through (f) and elaborate in the context box. Note, you can select "yes" for multiple answers if appropriate. If all the answers or the entire question are not applicable, select "not applicable" for each answer and explain in the context box.
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: Procurement conditions, interviews, Code of Conduct for suppliers, and incident reports including all the points selected by the organization.

Helpful notes:

- This question addresses human and labor rights issues for the organization's suppliers, and not the organization itself.
- Option (b): This option encourages a specific focus on the freedom of opinion and expression, as enforced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR)
- Option (f): This option encourages a specific focus on modern slavery and forced labor, and checks whether protocols on forced labor (such as those of the ILO) are built into contracts with suppliers.

SECTION 2 - DO (Actions, Implementation, Measurement, Communication)

Ensuring safety and health of employees

Protecting the safety and health of employees is a cornerstone of responsible procurement practices. Establishing clear expectations for suppliers regarding workplace safety and health standards helps foster safe and supportive environments across the supply chain.

Key measures include setting quantitative safety targets, providing effective complaint mechanisms, implementing safety protocols, and offering training on health and safety. The following question explores how your organization integrates these critical conditions into supplier contracts.

Question 5: Respond to the following statement

The following conditions for the safety and health of workers are incorporated in contracts with suppliers:		Yes	No	Not Applicable	Points
a	Quantitative targets for operational health and safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
b	The availability of an effective complaints hotline for the suppliers' workers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
c	Implementation of general safety protocols and availability of training courses on health & safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
d	Specific protocols to prevent workers' exposure to harmful substances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4

Observations

- This is a multi-select question, you can answer "yes", "no" or "not applicable" for options (a) through (d) and elaborate in the context box. Note, you can select "yes" for multiple answers if appropriate. If all the answers or the entire question are not applicable, select "not applicable" for each answer and explain in the context box.
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: Procurement conditions, Code of Conduct, Contracts

Helpful notes:

- This question focuses on occupational health and safety practices within the suppliers' organizations, rather than within your organization.
- Therefore, it follows that each of the options refers to the implementation of these practices within the suppliers' organizations.

SECTION 2 - DO (Actions, Implementation, Measurement, Communication)

Prevention of harmful emissions

Managing and reducing harmful emissions is a vital aspect of sustainability and responsible supply chain management. Ensuring that first-tier suppliers implement reduction plans for key environmental impacts, such as GHG and chemical emissions, demonstrates a commitment to environmental stewardship.

The following question evaluates whether your organization's suppliers have measures in place to prevent or mitigate harmful emissions as part of their sustainability efforts.

Question 6: Respond to the following statement

Pollution is prevented or limited by the organization's first-tier suppliers according to reduction plans for their most important impacts:		Points
a	Yes.	10
b	No.	0
c	Not applicable.	-

Observations

- This is a single-select question, you can answer "Yes," "No," or "Not applicable" and elaborate in the context box
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: supplier assessments, supplier (sustainability) reports

Helpful notes:

- Pollution is an all-encompassing term, which includes pollution to air from Greenhouse Gas emissions, as well as other non-GHG pollutants such as VOCs, CO, NOx, SO₂, and particulate matter. Pollution also includes pollution to water, with pollutants like heavy metals and excessive nutrients, and pollution to soil, including from pesticides or POPs, and microplastics.

SECTION 2 - DO (Actions, Implementation, Measurement, Communication)

Protection of biodiversity

Safeguarding biodiversity within the value chain is a crucial element of sustainable procurement. By embedding conditions into supplier contracts, organizations can ensure efforts are made to avoid, minimize, mitigate, and, if necessary, offset adverse impacts on marine, freshwater, and terrestrial ecosystems.

The following question assesses whether your organization includes such biodiversity protection measures in its agreements with suppliers.

Question 7: Respond to the following statement

Conditions relating to protecting biodiversity are built into contracts with suppliers, and these conditions follow the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy.		Points
a	Yes.	10
b	No.	0
c	Not applicable.	-

Observations

- This is a single-select question, you can answer "Yes," "No," or "Not applicable" and elaborate in the context box
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: Procurement conditions, FSC, OEKOTEX, GOTS etc.

Helpful notes:

- **The biodiversity mitigation hierarchy follows the following step-wise approach:**
 - **Avoidance:** The first and most effective step, involves measures to prevent impacts entirely, such as careful placement of infrastructure or sensitive timing of activities (e.g., avoiding rare habitats or breeding grounds).
 - **Minimization:** Reducing the intensity, duration, or extent of unavoidable impacts through strategies like noise reduction, pollution control, or wildlife crossings.
 - **Rehabilitation/Restoration:** Addressing impacts by improving ecosystems post-disturbance. Restoration aims to return ecosystems to their original state, while rehabilitation focuses on restoring basic ecological functions or services.
 - **Offset:** The last resort, compensating for residual impacts through actions like habitat restoration or protection to achieve no net loss (NNL) or net positive impact (NPI) on biodiversity.

SECTION 2 - DO (Actions, Implementation, Measurement, Communication)

Fair business practices

Promoting fair business practices within supplier contracts strengthens ethical and transparent operations throughout the supply chain. This includes addressing key areas such as preventing corruption, bribery, and extortion; fostering responsible political engagement; ensuring fair competition; and respecting property rights.

Transparency, whether in business dealings, reporting, or compliance, is integral to these practices. The following question evaluates whether your organization incorporates these principles into its supplier agreements.

Question 8: Respond to the following statement

Which of the following conditions relating to fair business practices are built into contracts with suppliers:	Yes	No	Not Applicable	Points
a Combating corruption, bribery, and extortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
b Responsible political engagement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
c Ensuring fair competition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
d Respect for property rights.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
e Transparency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2

Observations

- This is a multi-select question, you can answer "yes", "no" or "not applicable" for options (a) through (e) and elaborate in the context box. Note, you can select "yes" for multiple answers if appropriate. If all the answers or the entire question are not applicable, select "not applicable" for each answer and explain in the context box.
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: Procurement conditions.

Helpful notes:

- Transparency refers to an organization's responsibility to disclose in a clear, accurate and timely manner, the policies, decisions, and activities for which it is responsible including their known and likely impact on the environment.

SECTION 3 – CHECK (Evaluate)

Sustainable Procurement Performance

Measuring and monitoring the performance of sustainable procurement is essential for ensuring that goals are met and progress is made. Setting quantitative targets allows organizations to track improvements and identify areas for further development.

The following question assesses whether your organization actively measures and monitors its sustainable procurement performance against defined targets.

Question 9: Respond to the following statement

The organization measures and monitors its sustainable procurement performance with quantitative targets.		Points
a	Yes.	10
b	No.	0
c	Not applicable.	-

Observations

- This is a single-select question, you can answer "Yes," "No," or "Not applicable" and elaborate in the context box
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: CSR/procurement report.

SECTION 3 – CHECK (Evaluate)

Sustainable Procurement audit

Auditing is an essential tool for evaluating the effectiveness and compliance of sustainable procurement practices. Regular audits provide valuable insights, ensuring that sustainability goals are being met and that the organization is aligned with its commitments.

The following question assesses whether your organization conducts audits to evaluate and improve its sustainable procurement processes.

Question 10: Respond to the following statement

Is the organization's sustainable procurement performance reviewed annually?		Yes	No	Not Applicable	Points
a	Yes, with an internal audit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
b	Yes, with an external audit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6

Observations

- This question asks about your organization's audit strategy with regard to SP performance assessment.
- This is a multi-select question, you can answer "yes", "no" or "not applicable" for options (a) through (b) and elaborate in the context box. Note, that you can select "yes" for multiple answers if appropriate. If all the answers or the entire question are not applicable, select "not applicable" for each answer and explain in the context box.
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: internal or external audit report or similar.

SECTION 4 - ACT (Improve)

Monitoring

A strategy for continuous improvement is key to advancing sustainable procurement efforts over time. By regularly assessing performance and drawing actionable conclusions, organizations can refine their approaches and ensure ongoing progress in sustainability practices.

The following question examines whether your organization has implemented such a strategy to enhance its sustainable procurement performance.

Question 11: Respond to the following statement

The organization draws conclusions from its Sustainable Procurement performance monitoring and works towards continuous improvement:		Points
a	Yes.	10
b	No.	0
c	Not applicable.	-

Observations

- This question asks about your organization's effort to learn from its experience and improve its SP performance.
- This is a single-select question, you can answer "Yes," "No," or "Not applicable" and elaborate in the context box.
- The context box may be used to provide relevant details on the company's choices and actions.
- Evidence that you can upload to support your answer can include any of the following documents or similar: CSR report / Sustainable Procurement report.