



GSES

**GSES Sustainable Procurement Pillar
(version 4.7) Assessment Guide**

February, 2026

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 criteria 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 criteria 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 criteria in total. Most criteria are in 'closed-end format', so you can select your initial answer from a list.
- The criteria are grouped into five 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 criterion 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 4.7

SECTION 1 - PLAN (POLICIES AND GOALS)

Criterion 1: Policy Plan for Sustainable Procurement

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

Criterion 3: Code of conduct or a similar document

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

Criterion 4: Conditions relating to human and labor rights

Criterion 5: Safety and health of employees

Criterion 6: Prevention of harmful emissions

Criterion 7: Conditions relating to biodiversity

Criterion 8: Conditions relating to fair business practices

SECTION 3 – CHECK (EVALUATE)

Criterion 9: SP Performance

Criterion 10: SP Assessment audit

SECTION 4 – ACT (IMPROVEMENT)

Criterion 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 criterion explores how your organization addresses these critical aspects of sustainable procurement.

Criterion 1:

In its CSR policy plan and/or vision document, the organization specifically addresses its plan to implement the following matters:	Points
a Identification and engagement of stakeholders on the sustainable procurement policy.	2
b Continuous improvement of the sustainability of the organization’s procurement process.	3
c Monitoring the sustainability performance of the first-tier suppliers.	3
d Communicating about sustainability matters with both suppliers and customers.	2
e None of the above.	0

Observations

- This is a multi-select criterion, you can select one or more options that are applicable to your organization, from options (a) through (d) 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 policy, stakeholder report, code of conduct for suppliers, procurement policy, supply chain mapping, and communication proofs.
- If none of the options are applicable, select “None of the above.” In this case, no evidence is necessary.

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 criterion 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) This 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 criterion examines how your organization integrates these factors into its procurement strategy.

Criterion 2:

The organization prevents and limits its actual and potential negative impact on following subjects:	Points
a Human rights in the organization's supply chain.	6
b Labor practices in the supply chain.	6
c Environmental effects in the supply chain.	4
d The procurement of goods or services from conflicted or politically unstable areas (e.g. conflict minerals).	4
e None of the above.	0

Observations

- This criterion 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 criterion, you can select one or more options that are applicable to your organization, from options (a) through (d) 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: impact analysis/identification for each of the selected themes in the criterion; and reports showing progress made towards limiting identified impacts.
- If none of the options are applicable, select "None of the above." In this case, no evidence is necessary.

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 criterion explores how your organization incorporates these values into its supply chain.

Criterion 3:

The organization has drawn up a Code of Conduct for suppliers, with specific regard for:	Points
a Ethical conduct in the organization and promotion of such conduct in the organization's supply chain.	5
b Respect for legislation and international frameworks of conduct (e.g. ILO, OECD, UNDHR).	5
c None of the above.	0

Observations

- This criterion 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 criterion, you can select one or more options that are applicable to your organization, from options (a) through (b) and elaborate 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.
- If none of the options are applicable, select "None of the above." In this case, no evidence is necessary.

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 criterion assesses how your organization incorporates these safeguards into supplier agreements.

Criterion 4:

The following conditions relating to the safeguarding of human and labor rights are built into contracts with suppliers:	Points
a Adherence to child labor prevention protocols.	2
b Protection of freedom of speech.	2
c Equal opportunities for and non-discrimination of women and minorities.	2
d Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.	2
e Safe, fair and reasonable working conditions.	2
f Adherence to forced labor prevention protocols.	2
g None of the above.	0

Observations

- This is a multi-select criterion, you can select one or more options that are applicable to your organization, from options (a) through (f) 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, interviews, Code of Conduct for suppliers, and incident reports including all the points selected by the organization.
- If none of the options are applicable, select "None of the above." In this case, no evidence is necessary.

Helpful notes:

- This criterion 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 criterion explores how your organization integrates these critical conditions into supplier contracts.

Criterion 5:

The following conditions for the safety and health of workers are incorporated in contracts with suppliers:		Points
a	Quantitative targets for operational health and safety.	2
b	The availability of an effective complaints hotline for the suppliers' workers.	2
c	Implementation of general safety protocols and availability of training courses on health & safety.	2
d	Specific protocols to prevent workers' exposure to harmful substances.	4
e	None of the above.	0

Observations

- This is a multi-select criterion, you can select one or more options that are applicable to your organization, from options (a) through (d) 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, Code of Conduct, Contracts
- If none of the options are applicable, select "None of the above." In this case, no evidence is necessary.

Helpful notes:

- This criterion 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 criterion evaluates whether your organization’s suppliers have measures in place to prevent or mitigate harmful emissions as part of their sustainability efforts.

Criterion 6:

Environmental pollution is prevented or limited by the organization's first-tier suppliers according to reduction plans:		Points
a	Yes.	10
b	No.	0

Observations

- This is a single-select criterion, you can answer "Yes," or "No," 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 criterion assesses whether your organization includes such biodiversity protection measures in its agreements with suppliers.

Criterion 7:

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

Observations

- This is a single-select criterion, you can answer "Yes," or "No," 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 criterion evaluates whether your organization incorporates these principles into its supplier agreements.

Criterion 8:

Which of the following conditions relating to fair business practices are built into contracts with suppliers:	Points
a Combating corruption, bribery, and extortion.	2
b Responsible political engagement.	2
c Ensuring fair competition.	2
d Respect for property rights.	2
e Transparency.	2
f None of the above.	0

Observations

- This is a multi-select criterion, you can select one or more options that are applicable to your organization, from options (a) through (e) 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.
- If none of the options are applicable, select “None of the above.” In this case, no evidence is necessary.

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

Criterion 9:

The organization measures and monitors its sustainable procurement performance with quantitative targets.		Points
a	Yes.	10
b	No.	0

Observations

- This is a single-select criterion, you can answer "Yes," or "No," 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 criterion assesses whether your organization conducts audits to evaluate and improve its sustainable procurement processes.

Criterion 10:

Is the organization's sustainable procurement performance reviewed annually?	Points
a Yes, with an internal audit.	4
b Yes, with an external audit.	6
c No, it is not.	0

Observations

- This criterion asks about your organization's audit strategy with regard to SP performance assessment.
- This is a multi-select criterion, you can select one or more options that are applicable to your organization, from options (a) through (b) 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: 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 criterion examines whether your organization has implemented such a strategy to enhance its sustainable procurement performance.

Criterion 11:

The organization draws conclusions from its Sustainable Procurement performance monitoring and works towards continuous improvement:		Points
a	Yes.	10
b	No.	0

Observations

- This criterion asks about your organization's effort to learn from its experience and improve its SP performance.
- This is a single-select criterion, you can answer "Yes," or "No," 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.