Sustainable Procurement at the University of Edinburgh

A guide for our laboratory equipment suppliers

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Social Responsibility and Sustainability

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Introduction

This document aims to review sustainability and social responsibility risks in the lab equipment and supplies sectors. It introduces our procurement priorities and policies for these sector and suggests possible strategies for improving the sustainability of your business. Here we build on our general guidance about sustainable procurement at the University, for suppliers from all sectors.

Contents

Social responsibility and sustainability risks in the laboratory equipment and supplies sectors

Social responsibility and sustainability risks in the laboratory sectors include

- Risks to environmental sustainability and biodiversity
- Risks to fairness, safety and human rights in labour, operations and governance

Laboratory supply chains can be long and complex, involving multiple sustainability and social responsibility risks from raw materials extraction, manufacture, transport, use and disposal. Here we briefly highlight some of the biggest risk areas in the sector. Some risks may be directly relevant to your business, while others could be relevant to your supply chains or the use of your products.

Risks from raw materials extraction:

- Risks to biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions from conversion of natural habitats (e.g. deforestation)
- Pollution from extraction and refining
- Violation of local land rights in the conversion of land for production and extraction of natural resources
- Use of so-called conflict minerals (notably tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold) sold or traded by armed groups and used to fund conflict
- Human rights abuses, including forced labour and child labour
- Unsafe working conditions, such as in mining
- Unfair labour practices, including salaries that fall below living wage, excessive / involuntary overtime, use of insecure contracts and discrimination based on gender or other characteristics

Risks from manufacture:

- Use of finite raw materials such as rare earth minerals, helium and oil
- Pollution from industrial processes
- Energy and water used in manufacturing
- Human rights abuses, including forced labour and child labour
- Unsafe working conditions, including exposure to harmful chemicals or hazardous machinery
- Unfair labour practices, including salaries that fall below living wage, excessive / involuntary overtime, use of insecure contracts and discrimination based on gender or other characteristics

Risks from transport, use and disposal:

- Greenhouse gas emissions from transport, including cold chain
- Greenhouse gas emissions from use of energy-intensive equipment, including for freezing, cooling and incubation
- Use of hazardous materials and/or production of hazardous waste
- Water used to cool lab equipment
- Waste generated from disposable consumables such as pipette tips and gloves
- Waste generated from non-recyclable packaging

Our targets in procurement of laboratory equipment and supplies

In all procurements, where appropriate, we:

- Seek to embed our community benefits requirements in line with our Community Benefits in Procurement Policy
- Promote Fair Work through procurement (as an accredited Living Wage organisation, we strongly encourage our suppliers to pay UK-based workers at least the Living Wage, currently £9/hr, in our contracts)
- Engage with suppliers on strategic issues to promote innovation, social inclusion, and better environmental performance, for instance through work on the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, leading a programme of Data Driven Innovation (DDI). Please write to ddi@ed.ac.uk for more info about the DDI programme

Through our use of the Scottish Government's Sustainable Public Procurement Prioritisation Tool (SPPPT), we have identified key targets for improving the social responsibility and sustainability of our laboratory procurements. We want to **work with you** towards these targets:

Targeting environmental sustainability and biodiversity risks:

- Consolidating purchases to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport
- Procuring longer lifespan products
- Procuring more energy-efficient product
    - For example, we are promoting the use of more efficient ULT freezers and drying ovens
- Where appropriate, replacing temperature-sensitive products with products that can be stored at ambient temperatures
- Reducing use of finite raw materials where possible
    - For example, we are trialling helium capture and recovery technology in some of our laboratories
- Reducing use of hazardous materials where possible
    - For example, we are procuring Life Technologies' SYBR safe instead of Ethidium Bromide as a DNA dye
- Substituting disposable plastics for re-usable glassware while maintaining compatibility with scientific research
    - We are researching areas where re-usable glassware could sensibly replace disposable plastics
- Promoting reuse and recycling of equipment
    - For example, some lab equipment is reused within the University via a portal called WARPit.
- Reducing the amount of non-recyclable packaging on the products we buy, and seeking packaging made from recycled materials

Targeting risks to fairness, safety and human rights in labour, operations and governance:

- Following the University's lead, encouraging our suppliers to pay the living wage and eliminate the use of inappropriate zero hours contracts

- Researching human rights and labour rights risks in our supply chains and taking steps to reduce them
- Following our Conflict Minerals Policy, researching strategies to eradicate conflict minerals from our supply chains

Taking action to improve the sustainability and social responsibility of your business

Using these targets as a start, there are many ways to pro-actively work towards improving your own sustainability and social responsibility.

Talk to us about ways we could work together to improve the sustainability of products bought by the University.

Research the impacts of your products and supply chains:

- Contact us to participate in a Sustain supply chain sustainability assessment, which will provide tailored and confidential recommendations for your business
- Contact us about hosting a sustainability-themed internship or Living Labs project, to provide students with practical experience and research sustainability questions relevant to your business
- Look at some of the resources listed further down this page

Set standards for your own procurements, for example by choosing certified suppliers, or writing your own code of conduct for suppliers.

Innovate, for example finding creative ways to increase resource efficiency and reduce waste and packaging. Some of these organisations may be able to help**:**
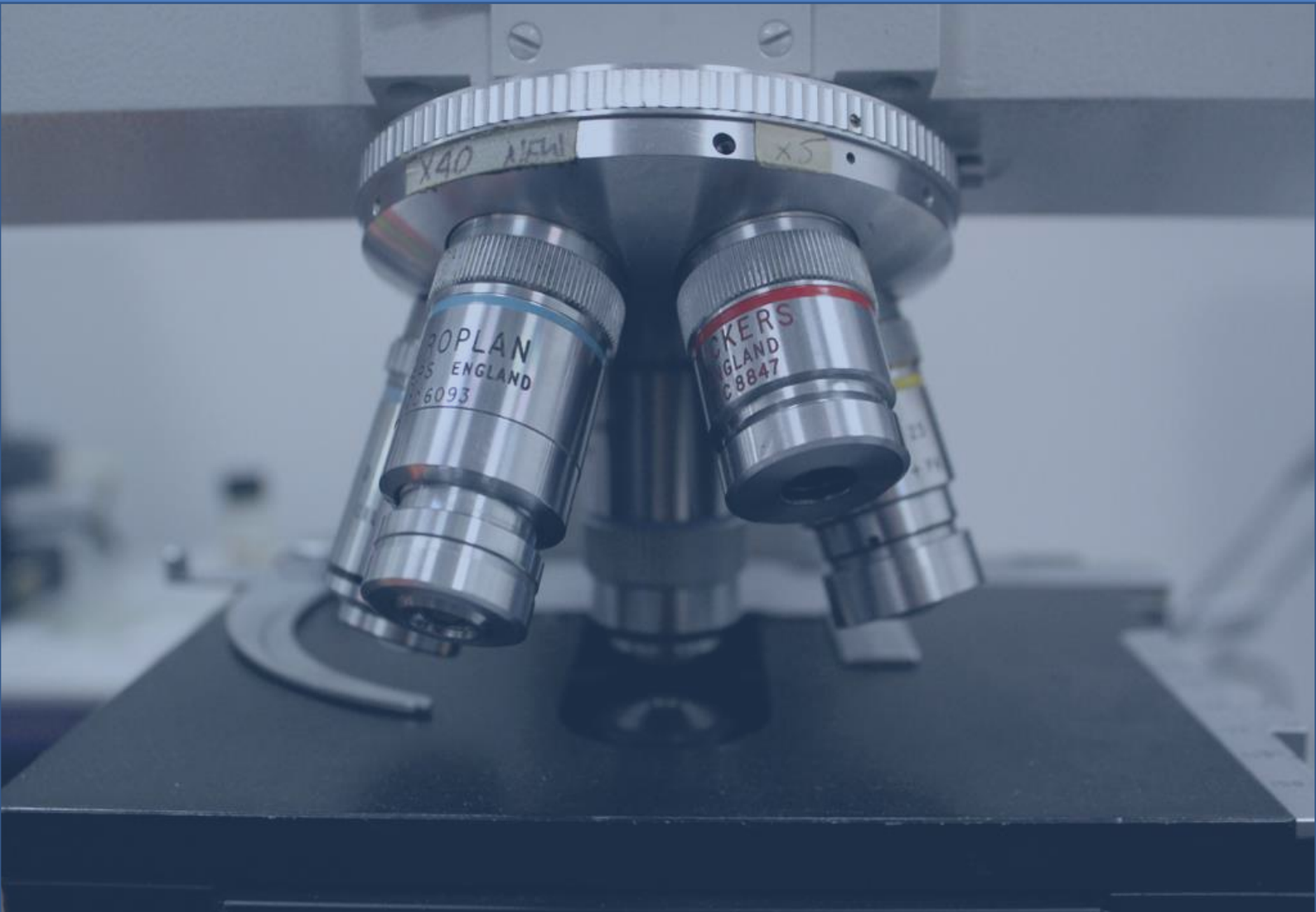
- The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation's projects to support low carbon innovation
- Resource Efficient Scotland's funding, loans and free consultations to help businesses save energy, save water and reduce waste

Make a pledge or become certified, for example to:

- The Responsible Minerals Initiative's Responsible Minerals Assurance Process
- The Ethical Trading Initiative's (ETI) Base Code
- Resource Efficient Scotland's Resource Efficiency Pledge
- The Scottish Business Pledge

Look at the resources and training offered by these organisations:

- The Responsible Minerals Initiative
- Resource Efficient Scotland's resources and training to improve resource efficiency and reduce waste from your business
- ECCI's training to reduce carbon emissions from your business

This publication can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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