



## *Solutions for a Sustainable Supply Chain*



## Sustainable Furniture

Great furniture is both functional and beautiful. In public space, furniture expresses values and reflects a sense of place. Procuring sustainable furniture will send a strong message that sustainability is a priority for TRU while creating healthier indoor environments for the university community. It will also stimulate local and broader markets for more responsible products.

### What to look for in purchasing sustainable furniture:

- Made of responsibly sourced materials, e.g. wood and metal
- Made of recycled and/or biodegradable materials
- Free of toxic chemicals known to cause negative health impacts
- Free of microplastics in synthetic textiles which affect indoor air quality
- Manufactured under fair labour conditions
- Durable and repairable
- Designed to be adjustable for different users
- Designed to be modular and adaptable to new spaces and styles
- Delivered with minimal, recyclable or reusable packaging

### Why choose Sustainable Furniture?

Sustainable furniture reflects a more responsible use of material resources, from recycled content to wood from sustainably managed resources.

Sustainable furniture also contributes to healthier indoor air quality. Conventional furniture is known to off-gas toxins such as chemical flame retardants (e.g. polyurethane foam), toxic heavy metals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from paints, finishes and other coatings in or on office furniture. Flame retardants have been tested and shown to cause neurobehavioral, carcinogenic and immune effects, while VOCs can cause eye, nose and throat irritation, headaches, fatigue, nausea, dizziness and skin problems ([Healthlink BC](#)). Sustainable furniture aligns with green building standards, and can help organizations earn credits towards LEED or WELL certification of a new green building. Finally, sustainable furniture that is well-managed over time and has circular options can save money over the long run and conserve natural resources.






### Spotlight on Plastic Furniture

Leading furniture makers are innovating new and more sustainable plastic solutions. Look for items made with recycled or biodegradable plastic, and circular options to return items for remanufacturing at end of life.



## Which certification systems for Sustainable Furniture are available?

Furniture manufacturers may reference third-party certifications at the product level, or for base materials used in manufacture such as wood. Check the websites of the certification organizations in the table below for a database of suppliers that have achieved their certification.

Certification	Summary Overview
 <p><a href="#">LEVEL Certification</a> Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association (BIFMA)</p>	<p>LEVEL is a comprehensive certification that addresses Materials, Energy, Health, and Social criteria across corporate, facility and product impacts. Labour and human rights are included in the Social criteria. Level has three performance tiers: 1, 2, and 3. The higher the number, the more criteria considered and met.</p>
 <p><a href="#">Cradle to Cradle</a> Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute</p>	<p>This certification standard examines the health effects of construction materials, whether materials can be recycled and repurposed, and consumption of water and other resources, as well as issues of social fairness. There are four achievement levels: Basic, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum.</p>
 <p><a href="#">Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)</a> Canada Green Building Council (CGBC)</p>	<p>Furniture companies can work with the <a href="#">Interior Design and Construction</a> section of LEED to earn green certification. There are four levels of LEED ratings: certified, silver, gold and platinum. LEED version 4 has now launched.</p>
 <p><a href="#">Greenguard</a> Underwriters Laboratories Environment</p>	<p>Greenguard focuses specifically on identifying and certifying products that have low chemical emissions. Greenguard also has a Gold certification that goes beyond just measuring chemical emissions and evaluates health based criteria.</p>
 <p><a href="#">Forest Stewardship Certified</a> Forest Stewardship Council</p>	<p>This certification for wood products ensures a standard of responsible and sustainable forest management. FSC certification also requires legal compliance, upholding worker rights and Indigenous peoples' rights, and contributing to the social and economic well-being of local communities impacted by forestry activities.</p>

Refer to the Ecolabel index (<http://www.ecolabelindex.com>) for a selection of lesser-known certification labels for sustainable furniture.



## Putting Third Party Certification into Furniture Specifications

Specifications for furniture can express a preference for or require products certified by a specific third party certification system, as follows:

**PREFERENCE:** “It is strongly desired that the furniture and furnishings products proposed in response to this request for proposal are independently third-party certified as compliant with the **NAME OF STANDARD** at **LEVEL OF STANDARD** or higher. Those products certified at **LEVEL OF STANDARD** or higher would receive preference over non-certified product. Examples of acceptable documentation include signed certificates of compliance from a licensed third-party certification body. If the products are not certified, outline your efforts towards achieving **NAME OF STANDARD** certification for the proposed products.”

**REQUIREMENT:** “Furniture and furnishings products proposed in response to this request shall be independently third-party certified as compliant with the **NAME OF STANDARD** at **LEVEL OF STANDARD** or higher. Signed documentation of **NAME OF STANDARD** certification by a third-party certification body licensed to participate in the **NAME OF STANDARD** program shall be provided. Examples of acceptable documentation include signed certificates of compliance from a licensed third-party certification body. In the event there are not more than two manufacturers with **NAME OF STANDARD** certification on a required type of product at the time the responses are due, the requirement for Level certification on the affected product type(s) may be waived.”

## Towards Circular Office Furniture

Before going out to buy new furniture, review whether your existing furniture can be repaired or refreshed and returned to an as-new condition. There may be repair and remanufacturing services offered by the manufacturer or available in the local community.

If you've determined that you need new furniture, look for suppliers offering circular options such as:

- Furniture leasing, where items are maintained by the manufacturer and taken back and remanufactured at end of life;
- Furniture remanufactured from existing feedstock, and/or
- Buy-back options at end of life.

**TIP:** Consider developing standard product durability clauses to extend the life of products and materials (e.g., reparability, remanufacture, warranty, recycled content) for procurement documents.

## Get Circular with TRU-REUSE!

Did you know there is an online shop for claiming unused furniture on campus? There is no cost to the buyer for the item or delivery across all three campuses.

Check it out at: [LINK](#).



**To Buy:** New items are posted to the website on Fridays and an email notification sent to all TRU staff. Each item has a unique item number on the website listing. To purchase an item, send an email referencing the item number to [assetdisposal@tru.ca](mailto:assetdisposal@tru.ca). Orders placed first come, first served.

**To Donate:** TRU continually receives donated items into our warehouse. To donate, complete an Asset Disposal Form (online [here](#)) and email to [purchasing@tru.ca](mailto:purchasing@tru.ca). TRU warehousing staff will receive the item, determine if it is reusable and give it an item number. [Is there a pick up service?](#)