

GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards FAQ

What are the GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards?

The Sustainable Procurement Standards is an open-source library of sustainability (People + Planet) questions to support the selection and assessment of business travel suppliers. The standards align with industry frameworks for sustainability and carbon emissions calculation, and are organized by travel vertical.

Why were the Standards developed?

Sustainability has become a strategic focus for both buyers and suppliers of business travel. There is mounting pressure from customers, legislators, investors, and even employees, to prioritize sustainability and climate action. However, creating more responsible business travel programs requires close collaboration with the entire travel supply chain. Corporate travel buyers are not always sure how to integrate sustainability into their procurement programs, and suppliers are receiving a wide array of questionnaires without transparency into how that information will be used. The GBTA Foundation and GBTA Sustainability Committee identified a strong need for a resource that would help buyers understand the important sustainability factors to integrate into their procurement and evaluation processes, and create more consistency and transparency for the entire business travel ecosystem.

Why People & Planet?

The [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) are 17 ambitions for a peaceful and prosperous future, including both People & Planet considerations, such as Reduced Inequalities, Decent Work & Economic Growth, Climate Action, Gender Equality, Responsible Consumption & Production, etc. Sustainability in a business context means the ability for the business to “sustain” its economic growth, while also managing risks like climate change and supporting its community and workforce. Global and regional standard setters for sustainability are also incorporating both People & Planet into their criteria, and companies often tackle People & Planet initiatives together under their CSR or ESG programs.

How were the Standards developed?

Over 18 months, the GBTA Foundation and GBTA Sustainability Committee collaborated with corporate travel buyers, suppliers, standard setters, and industry experts to validate the Standards’ concept, framing, and content. The GBTA Foundation started with commonly used RFP and supplier evaluation questions, and compared these against existing frameworks for sustainability and emissions calculation, like [IATA’s Net Zero 2050 methodology](#), or the [Sustainable Hospitality Alliance’s Pathway to Net Positive](#).

Over 50 leading business travel companies, non-profits, and industry associations were consulted, as well as the relevant GBTA committees and stakeholder groups such as the [Sustainability Leadership Council](#) and [Corporate Advisory Board](#). You can read these organizations’ supporting statements [here](#), and please reach out to the GBTA Foundation if you are interested in lending your support to the Sustainable Procurement Standards.

How should corporate travel buyers use the GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards?

The GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards acts as a guiding document and educational tool for the business travel industry around the sustainability factors that should be weighed during the procurement and supplier management process. Buyers should work with their sustainability teams to understand their sustainability priorities and targets, and carefully choose questions from the library based on the relevance to their programs. Reasons that buyers might include a question in their RFP or supplier evaluations might include:

1. Ensuring suppliers meet minimum sustainability criteria so the buyer company can avoid greenwashing
2. Confirming that buyer companies can meet their sustainability and emissions reduction targets by working with the supplier
3. Sending a demand signal for sustainability requirements that the buyer company will have in the future
4. Making procurement decisions that go beyond cost.

There are more than 40 questions in the GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards for Aviation Version 1.0. Do buyers need to include this many questions?

No. Buyers just starting their sustainability journey might use only 10 or 20 questions, depending on what information they need from their suppliers. Buyers should use this resource as a library or question bank, and choose the questions that work for them. We don't recommend asking questions that you might not have a clear use for, as it places a burden on suppliers who are being inundated with sustainability questionnaires.

Are these questions just for the RFP, or do they have other uses?

They can be used across a wide variety of tools in the procurement process, including RFIs, RFPs, and even evaluations of existing suppliers.

Can I change the wording of a question if it doesn't meet my needs?

While we strongly encourage buyers to use the proposed wording, we ultimately cannot control what buyers include in their supplier RFPs or evaluations. If a buyer's sustainability questions are unique, suppliers may not be prepared to respond as quickly. We encourage buyers to reach out to the GBTA Foundation with recommended changes, should the questions not meet your needs.

Should I use the spreadsheet of questions to collect my data manually, or should I integrate the questions into my own RFP or evaluation template?

To get the best use out of this resource and to have all the information you need in one place, we recommend integrating the relevant questions into your existing RFP or evaluation templates, rather than treating it as a separate questionnaire.

How does this integrate with GBTA's existing RFP templates?

GBTA Foundation involved the Aviation Committee and Accommodations Committee in developing the Standards to ensure that they were fit for purpose in the updated RFPs. The Aviation Committee and the

RFP Task Force for accommodations are now both working to update their RFP templates so that the sustainability questions match.

When will the accommodations questions be available in the RFP technologies?

Every RFP provider will have a different timeline to update their systems to align with the GBTA accommodations RFP. Users should reach out to their RFP provider for a specific update. In the meantime, buyers should review the questions with their teams, work with their sustainability colleagues to understand their sustainability priorities and targets, and prepare to utilize the relevant questions in upcoming RFP seasons.

Should I add the GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards as user-defined questions in the accommodations RFP while we wait for the technology to update?

If you are using an RFP tool that has GBTA's existing RFP questions or other sustainability questions, we do not recommend adding user-defined questions or introducing a manual process at this time. This will create a significant burden on suppliers who are simultaneously preparing to respond to the new Standards. Instead, buyers should review the questions with their teams, work with their sustainability colleagues to understand their sustainability priorities and targets, and prepare to utilize the relevant questions in upcoming RFP seasons.

How should suppliers use the GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards?

Suppliers should update and house their responses to all questions on an annual basis so that they can respond to procurement requests in a streamlined manner. Meanwhile, TMCs, corporate travel booking tools, and RFP providers should align their criteria, scorecards, procurement guidance, and RFP questions with the questions provided.

Where do the Standards live and how are they accessed?

The GBTA Sustainable Procurement Standards for Aviation Version 1.0 are now available for free download at gbtafoundation.org/sps. The Standards will also be available in the GBTA Hub for members.

What other verticals are in the pipeline?

The Sustainable Procurement Standards for Aviation Version 1.0 are now available for download. The GBTA Foundation plans to release Standards for accommodations and ground transportation by the end of 2024. If you would like to request other verticals, please reach out to the GBTA Foundation.

More questions? Please reach out to sustainability@gbta.org.