



Oslo

How and why to use Standardized Requirements in Green Public Procurement



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What are standardized requirements?

Standardized requirements are centrally determined climate and environmental requirements mandatory for all public procurements for a specific procurement category. These can be a set of requirements adopted through a governing body or through national legislation. The set of requirements can be adopted as technical specifications, contract performance conditions or award criteria, or a combination of these based on the applicable scenario. They can be introduced through a light version with, for example the use of award criteria, with a long-term goal of gradually increasing the ambition level up to minimum requirements.

How to determine the appropriate procurement category for standardized requirements?

The prioritized procurement categories for standardized requirements should be selected based on the procurements with the highest greenhouse gas emissions, such as:

- Building & Construction
- Transport
- Food & Catering services
- IT Equipment and Software
- Batteries
- Furniture
- Textiles
- Plastic products & Products containing plastic

How has Oslo implemented standardized requirements?

The City of Oslo has adopted a Climate Strategy towards 2030, with the goal of significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions while promoting sustainable practices across all municipal activities. As part of this strategy, Oslo introduced standardized climate and environmental requirements for public procurement for:

1. Transport (products and services that include transport activities)
2. Building & Construction services

The requirements were first adopted through a City Government Decision in 2019 and updated in 2025. The selected procurement categories were chosen because these were the largest sources of direct greenhouse gas emissions from municipal contracts. By adopting long-term requirements, the city also provided the market with a clear and predictable signal for investment and innovation.

Why did we choose this approach?

Standardized requirements ensure that all municipal agencies use the same climate and environmental requirements in their procurement processes. Common instructions, templates, and guidance materials support agencies in implementing and monitoring the requirements effectively. Adjustments can be made where necessary to address specific project needs. In this way, the agencies do not have to come up with new green requirements for each procurement, but can build upon the existing requirements, templates and guidelines.

By creating a consistent, long-term system for all city agencies to work within, standardized requirements create predictability for suppliers, encouraging long-term investments in low- and zero-emission technologies.

Strategy	Purpose	Benefit
Standardized requirements across all agencies	Ensure a consistent approach to climate and environmental procurement.	Greater efficiency, stronger implementation, and a clearer market signal.
Shared guidance, templates, and support	Help procurers apply and monitor the requirements correctly.	Reduced administrative burden and improved compliance.
Long-term, predictable requirements	Provide certainty about future demand for low-emission solutions.	Increased supplier investment and faster market development.

What type of requirements did we choose for sustainable transportation?

The type of requirement depended on the maturity of the market and the findings from preliminary market consultations. When markets were still transitioning towards zero-emission solutions, a combination of procurement tools was used:

1. Technical specifications
2. Award criteria
3. Contract performance conditions

For example, when certain vehicle technologies were not yet widely available, environmental performance could be rewarded through award criteria while gradually introducing stricter contract requirements.

As the market in Oslo has matured, we have moved towards primarily using contract performance clauses, such as the following example:

“1. Vehicles and Fuel

The supplier shall use only electric bicycles (where relevant), zero-emission vehicles (100% battery-electric or hydrogen-powered), or biogas vehicles meeting at least Euro Class 6/VI standards when carrying out the contract and performing the final transport leg ("last mile").”

Where a specific vehicle type is not yet available on the Oslo market, or delivery times are exceptionally long, the requirement may include a phased implementation period during the contract term.

Obstacles to introducing standardized requirements on zero-emission solutions, and how we handled them

There were of course certain challenges to overcome when Oslo introduced standardized requirements on zero-emission solutions. We had to adapt and find good solutions for the following obstacles:

Obstacle	Why it was challenging	Our approach
Charging infrastructure	Suppliers could not always operate zero-emission vehicles due to limited charging availability.	Identified infrastructure gaps and worked to enable the transition to zero-emission operations.
Market readiness	Suppliers needed time to invest in vehicles, equipment, and new solutions.	Used ongoing market dialogue and phased requirements where appropriate.
Political commitment	Ambitious climate requirements required strong political backing over time.	Built support through pilots and examples of what was possible, a gradual approach based on reference to national legislation and the city's adopted climate goals.
Implementation across agencies	Different agencies faced varying operational and budgetary challenges.	Provided training, guidance, and tailored support to ensure consistent implementation.

Key Recommendations for other cities

1. Assess the potential for standardization

Review how procurement is organized within your administration and assess whether standardized requirements could be applied across agencies.

2. Assess and build political support

Assess the level of political commitment and readiness for change. Engage decision-makers early and demonstrate how standardized requirements can support climate and policy objectives. Ideally, the finalized set of standardized climate and environmental requirements for your city should be adopted as mandatory for all city agencies.

3. Consider financial implications

Analyze budget impacts, resource needs, and potential funding requirements to ensure the approach is financially sustainable.

4. Develop practical implementation tools

Prepare common guidance documents, templates, instructions, and monitoring tools to support procurers throughout the organization.

5. Establish support structures

Provide dedicated resources, expertise, or central support functions to help agencies implement and follow up on the requirements.

6. Engage the market early

Conduct preliminary market dialogue before adopting requirements. Use these discussions to understand:

- Market maturity
- Availability of compliant technologies
- Potential implementation barriers
- Infrastructure challenges outside suppliers' control, such as charging facilities

7. Tailor requirements to market readiness

If the market is not yet ready to meet mandatory requirements, consider starting with softer procurement tools, such as award criteria, before gradually introducing contractual requirements. But make sure you clearly communicate your city's long-term targets.

8. Communicate clearly and early

Provide suppliers with a clear and predictable signal about future requirements. Early communication gives the market time to adapt, invest, and develop the solutions

needed to meet your ambitions. Preferably, standardized requirements should include long-term targets for the upcoming years.

9. Create long-term predictability

Maintain a consistent direction over time. Stable and predictable requirements encourage supplier investment, support market transformation, and accelerate progress towards climate goals.

Key takeaway

Standardized requirements create consistency, accelerate market transformation, reduce administrative burden, and help public organizations achieve their climate objectives. Success depends on political commitment, market dialogue, practical support for procurers, and a clear long-term signal to suppliers.