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Socially Responsible Procurement

CIPS L3M5

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Topic Break Down

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QUESTION NO: 1

OECD has written about the concept of a 'pyramid of CSR responsibilities'.

'Being a good corporate citizen' is described as being at the highest level of the pyramid, and falls within which of the following sets of responsibilities?

In other words, which of these options shown, is at the highest level of the CSR pyramid?

- A. Discretionary responsibilities
- B. Legal responsibilities
- C. Ethical responsibilities
- D. Economic responsibilities

ANSWER: A

Explanation:

Discretionary responsibilities is correct because it describes voluntary action that goes beyond an organisation's core obligation to be financially viable, comply with applicable law, and meet ethical expectations. At this highest level, being a good corporate citizen means choosing to contribute positively to communities and wider society—for example, through charitable support, employee volunteering, community investment, supplier-development initiatives, or other social programmes that are not simply required by legislation or normal commercial operation.

The wording follows the well-known corporate social responsibility pyramid developed by Archie B. Carroll, in which discretionary (also commonly termed philanthropic) responsibilities sit at the apex. They reflect society's expectation that businesses use their resources and influence constructively, while recognising that the activities themselves are voluntary rather than mandatory. In a procurement context, this can include initiatives that strengthen local economic opportunity or support social value in addition to contractual and legal requirements. Carroll's original article sets out the framework and explains the relationship between these layers of responsibility: [The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility](#). The OECD also frames responsible business conduct as businesses making positive contributions while avoiding and addressing adverse impacts: [OECD Responsible Business Conduct](#).

QUESTION NO: 2

Avoidance of the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance' is a definition of:

- A. Triple bottom line
- B. Corporate social responsibility
- C. Sustainability
- D. Responsible production and consumption

ANSWER: C

Explanation:

Sustainability is the correct term because it concerns meeting present needs while protecting environmental systems and natural resources so that future generations can meet their own needs. Avoiding the depletion of resources, such as raw materials, water, forests and energy sources, is central to maintaining ecological balance over the long term. In procurement, sustainability means considering the whole-life environmental and social impacts of what is purchased, alongside cost and quality. This can include selecting renewable or responsibly sourced materials, improving resource efficiency, reducing waste, and working with suppliers whose practices protect ecosystems. The widely used Brundtland definition establishes the intergenerational principle behind sustainability, while the UN Sustainable Development Goals translate it into practical aims, including responsible consumption and production. Therefore, the stated definition directly describes sustainability as the overarching principle of preserving resources and ecological capacity for the future. See the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) and the [Encyclopaedia Britannica definition of sustainability](#).

QUESTION NO: 3

UNFCCC negotiations led to which agreement in 2015, on the subject of limiting the extent of global warming? Countries agreed, in those discussions, to limit their emissions by 2030.

- A. Berlin Agreement
- B. Brussels Agreement
- C. Paris Agreement
- D. Amsterdam Agreement

ANSWER: C

Explanation:

The **Paris Agreement** is the international climate treaty adopted by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at COP21 in Paris on 12 December 2015. Its central purpose is to strengthen the global response to climate change by holding the increase in average global temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C. It establishes a framework in which countries submit and progressively strengthen nationally determined contributions: their own climate-action plans for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and adapting to climate impacts.

The reference to emissions action by 2030 aligns with the first generation of nationally determined contributions submitted under the Agreement, many of which set 2030 mitigation targets. The Agreement also uses a five-year cycle for countries to communicate updated contributions, supported by transparency arrangements and a global stocktake of collective progress. This makes the Paris Agreement a key foundation for socially responsible procurement, since organisational purchasing decisions can contribute to supply-chain emissions reductions and climate-related commitments. The UNFCCC's official overview is available at [UNFCCC: The Paris Agreement](#), and the treaty text is published at [Paris Agreement text \(PDF\)](#).

QUESTION NO: 4

A buyer is arranging an audit of a high-risk garment supplier. The purpose is to assess working conditions and identify any adverse labour practices that require remediation.

Select two practices which would strengthen the reliability of the audit.

- A. Conduct confidential interviews with a representative range of workers
- B. Review records such as wages, hours and recruitment practices
- C. Allow site management to choose all workers to be interviewed
- D. Rely solely on the supplier's written code of conduct
- E. Treat a clean audit report as proof that no further monitoring is required

ANSWER: A B

Explanation:

Private worker interviews help workers speak without fear of management retaliation, and reviewing a range of records can reveal whether stated policies are being followed in practice. Relevant records may include working-time information, wage records, recruitment documentation and health and safety records. These methods provide evidence beyond a site tour or management presentation.

An audit is not strengthened by allowing management to select interviewees or by relying only on policies. A clean audit report is also not, by itself, proof that no labour risk exists; findings should be followed by corrective action and ongoing monitoring where necessary.

QUESTION NO: 5

What is being described here: 'supply chain management practices and strategies that reduce the environment and energy footprint of freight distribution'?

- A. Green warehousing
- B. Green logistics
- C. Green procurement
- D. Green marketing

ANSWER: B

Explanation:

Green logistics is the correct term because it covers the planning, implementation and control of transport, distribution and related logistics activities in ways that reduce environmental impacts. The reference to the environmental and energy footprint of *freight distribution* is particularly important: green logistics focuses on lowering transport emissions, fuel consumption, congestion, waste and other impacts associated with moving, handling and delivering goods. In procurement and supply-chain practice, this may include consolidating loads, selecting lower-emission transport modes, improving route and vehicle utilisation, reducing empty running, using alternative fuels, and designing distribution networks that require fewer or shorter journeys. These practices can support an organisation's wider social-responsibility and sustainability objectives while also potentially improving efficiency and reducing operating cost. The concept is broader than a single facility or purchasing decision because it addresses the movement of goods across the distribution system. The European Commission describes sustainable freight transport measures within its transport and emissions-reduction work, while the UK Government provides guidance on reducing greenhouse-gas emissions from transport operations. See the [European Commission's sustainable transport resources](#) and the [UK Government's freight carbon review guidance](#).

QUESTION NO: 6

'Environmental issues are just a part of CSR'. True or false?

- A. True
- B. False

ANSWER: A

Explanation:

True. Environmental responsibility is an important component of corporate social responsibility (CSR), but CSR has a broader scope than environmental management alone. In procurement, socially responsible practice considers the environmental effects of purchasing decisions, such as resource use, carbon emissions, waste, pollution, sustainable materials, and suppliers' environmental controls. This supports buying organisations in reducing negative environmental impacts throughout the supply chain and product life cycle.

However, CSR also addresses the organisation's responsibilities to people and society. Relevant procurement considerations include labour standards, human rights, health and safety, modern slavery risks, ethical business conduct, supplier diversity, community impacts, and fair treatment of workers. CIPS frames sustainable procurement around balancing environmental, social and economic factors, reinforcing that environmental concerns are one part of a wider responsible-procurement agenda. ISO 26000 likewise identifies the environment as one of several core subjects of social responsibility. Therefore, describing environmental issues as part of CSR is accurate, provided it is understood that CSR extends beyond them. See [CIPS: What is sustainable procurement?](#) and [ISO 26000: Social responsibility](#).

QUESTION NO: 7

In 2013, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that it is highly likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of global warming since the 1950's. What was their level of certainty?

- A. 95%+
- B. 50%
- C. 60%
- D. 75%

ANSWER: A

Explanation:

95%+ is correct. In its 2013 contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated that it was *extremely likely* that human influence had been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century. The IPCC uses calibrated language to communicate confidence and probability consistently. In this framework, “extremely likely” means a probability of 95–100%, which is commonly expressed in training and assessment materials as “95%+ certainty.”

This conclusion reflected multiple, independently assessed lines of evidence, including observed increases in atmospheric greenhouse-gas concentrations, measured warming patterns in the atmosphere and oceans, climate-model attribution studies, and analysis of natural influences such as volcanic activity and solar variation. The wording is significant: it does not merely identify a possible human contribution, but describes human influence as the dominant cause of warming over the stated period, with the IPCC’s highest routinely used probability category. This finding is set out in the Working Group I Summary for Policymakers of the Fifth Assessment Report. See the [IPCC AR5 Working Group I Summary for Policymakers](#) and the [IPCC AR5 Working Group I report page](#).

QUESTION NO: 8

Which two of these fuel types for cars are considered to be green?

- A. Electricity
- B. Diesel
- C. Hydrogen
- D. Petrol / gasoline

ANSWER: A C

Explanation:

Electricity and hydrogen are commonly considered green vehicle energy sources because, when used in battery-electric and hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles, they do not produce tailpipe carbon dioxide emissions. Battery-electric cars have no exhaust emissions during driving, while hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles combine hydrogen with oxygen to generate electricity, with water as the direct exhaust product. In socially responsible procurement, selecting these technologies can support an organisation’s objectives to reduce air pollution and operational greenhouse-gas emissions, particularly where vehicles are charged using renewable electricity or supplied with renewable, low-carbon hydrogen. Their full environmental benefit depends on lifecycle factors: electricity generation, battery manufacture, and hydrogen production methods all affect total emissions. Nevertheless, they are widely recognised as greener alternatives to conventional internal-combustion fuels and are central to lower-emission transport strategies. The UK Government identifies battery-electric and hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles as zero-emission vehicles because they produce no exhaust emissions, and the International Energy Agency highlights electrification and low-emissions hydrogen as important routes for reducing road-transport emissions. See [UK Government guidance on zero-emission vehicles](#) and the [International Energy Agency’s cars and vans overview](#).

QUESTION NO: 9

A procurement team wishes to reduce the environmental impact of regular deliveries between a supplier and its regional warehouses.

Select three actions which would directly improve freight-distribution efficiency.

- A. Consolidate compatible orders into fewer deliveries
- B. Plan return loads to reduce empty running
- C. Purchase carbon offsets without changing delivery operations
- D. Use rail for suitable high-volume, longer-distance movements
- E. Increase the frequency of partly filled deliveries

ANSWER: A B D

Explanation:

Consolidating compatible orders can increase load utilisation and reduce the number of vehicle movements. Planning return loads reduces empty running, while using rail for suitable high-volume, longer-distance movements can reduce road mileage and associated emissions. Each action addresses the way goods are moved through the distribution network.

Purchasing carbon offsets may be part of a wider climate strategy, but it does not directly improve the operational efficiency of the freight movements themselves.

QUESTION NO: 10

A buyer is tendering for office printers and wishes to support a more circular approach to the use of equipment and materials.

Select three requirements which would most directly support this objective.

- A. Require modular components that can be repaired or replaced
- B. Require spare parts and repair information to be available during the contract
- C. Require collection of end-of-use printers for refurbishment, remanufacture or material recovery
- D. Require full replacement of each printer when a minor component fails

ANSWER: A B C

Explanation:

Designing equipment so that components can be repaired or replaced extends useful life and reduces unnecessary disposal. Requiring spare parts and repair information supports this in practice. A take-back arrangement for refurbishment, remanufacture or material recovery helps retain value when equipment is no longer needed.

Replacing an entire printer whenever a minor component fails encourages premature disposal and is inconsistent with circular-economy principles.

QUESTION NO: 11

Which of the following should be given consideration as part of a 'whole life approach' to sustainable procurement decisions? Select all that apply.

- A. Manufacturing methods
- B. Product design
- C. Re-use and recycling options
- D. End of life disposal

ANSWER: A B C D

Explanation:

A whole-life approach to sustainable procurement considers environmental, social and economic impacts throughout the full life cycle of what is being bought, rather than focusing solely on the purchase price or point of purchase. Manufacturing methods are relevant because the resources, energy, emissions, labour conditions and waste associated with production can materially affect sustainability outcomes. Product design should be considered because design choices determine durability, repairability, material efficiency, hazardous-content risks and the potential for products to remain in use longer. Re-use and recycling options are central to circular-economy thinking: arrangements for return, refurbishment, remanufacture and material recovery can reduce demand for virgin resources and avoid waste. End-of-life disposal also requires consideration, including whether waste can be safely treated, recycled or recovered, and the environmental consequences where disposal is unavoidable. Considering these connected stages enables procurement specifications and supplier decisions to support value over the item's life and reduce adverse impacts. CIPS describes sustainable procurement as balancing environmental, social and economic considerations in procurement decisions, while the UK government's life-cycle guidance similarly addresses impacts from raw-material extraction through to end-of-life treatment. See [CIPS: Sustainable procurement](#) and [UK Government: Sustainable procurement environmental issues](#).