

## Single-use Plastics Elimination – Beverage Bottles

### 1. Policy

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**Applies to:** *Faculty (including part-time, adjunct and visiting faculty), postdoctoral scholars, staff and students (including graduate/undergraduate student workers and graduate assistants) employed by University of Southern California (“USC” or the “University”) and including those working for the University’s health system (“USC Employees”). This policy continues to apply to individuals who are on sabbatical or other leaves, or who are visiting other institutions.*

### 2. Policy Purpose

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The purpose of this university-wide policy is to eliminate Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottles from campus and medical enterprise operations. By shifting procurement practices, prioritizing reuse and increasing waste diversion and reduction measures, over the next few years, USC intends to transition away from all Single-Use Plastic Beverage Bottles on campus and reach its zero waste goals.

### 3. Scope and Application

The policy applies to:

- the use of USC Funds for beverage product purchases;
- any functions or events held in association with USC or on USC property, whether or not USC Funds are utilized; and
- all facilities and operations across HSC and UPC, as well as off-campus operations. USC Village retail and food venues are expected to make this transition over time as lease contracts are renewed.

USC policy owners with conflicting policies should reach out to the Office of Sustainability (OoS) to report the issue. OoS will work with policy owners to resolve any potential conflicts on an as needed basis (e.g. glass products forbidden for safety reasons at tailgating).

### 4. Definitions

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Term	Definition
Reusables	Reusables constitute any materials that are durable and intended for multiple uses, such as metal, bamboo, or multi-use plastics (safe for

	reuse, and usually designated with the product/packaging markings of plastic code #5 PP, or #7 Other).
<b>Compostable</b>	Compostable refers to products that are accepted as such by USC's waste haulers. This includes 100% fiber-based products, and bioplastics (made from plant-based resin and designated with product/packaging plastic code #7 PLA).
<b>Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottle</b>	Beverage bottles made from plastics that are designed for one time use and are not safe for long-term reuse. The most common single-use plastic for beverage bottles is Polyethylene, designated by plastic codes #1 PET, or #2 HDPE which is common in larger sized beverage bottles (e.g. milk jugs).
<b>Sustainable Alternatives</b>	Items that cause less environmental harm through reduced resource intensity, higher reuse potential, or the ability to repurpose the material. Alternatives include products made from materials that can be reused, safely, multiple times (see Reusables definition above for examples). Items that have increased recyclability will be continuously recycled without degrading (e.g. items made of glass or aluminum).
<b>Policy Transition Requests</b>	Instances where a Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottle product cannot reasonably be eliminated. Members of the USC community will report these instances to OoS, who will assess the situation and help develop a transition plan on a case-by-case basis.
<b>Essential Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottle</b>	Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottles that are necessary for health or accessibility purposes, where there are no reasonable alternatives

	available. Members of the USC community will report these instances to OoS who will assess the situation and determine legitimacy.
<b>USC Funds</b>	Any USC financial resources, including include direct payments, reimbursements, and third-party payments made as part of a financial or sponsorship agreement with the USC (e.g. purchases by an external caterer for a USC event).

## 5. Policy Details

All students, staff, and faculty using USC Funds are not permitted to use those funds to purchase beverages contained in Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottles. All USC facilities, events, departments, breakrooms/kitchens and purchases are subject to this policy. Users of USC Funds are required to ensure that contracted event planners and caterers adhere to this policy.

Instances where Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottles are believed to be essential or cannot be eliminated/converted to Sustainable Alternatives must be reported to OoS. Users will communicate an explanation of the situation, a proposed transition plan, and a timeline for compliance. OoS will assess these requests on a case-by-case basis to determine legitimacy and may work with users to develop an appropriate transition plan.

- Short-term transition plans will only be granted if there are unavoidable delays in transitioning to compliant alternatives, and where a clear timeline for achieving compliance has been established; and
- Long-term transition plans will only be allowed if a product is deemed an Essential Single-Use Plastic Beverage Bottle and currently has no suitable alternatives.

USC Real Estate and other USC departments with existing agreements through purchasing contracts, product sponsorships, or property leases, must encourage third parties to voluntarily transition to Sustainable Alternatives, and require that future agreements (including renewals) adhere to this policy.

Wherever practical, USC community members should move to de-materialized alternative solutions, such as water fountains, five-gallon water dispensers with reusable or compostable cups, water bottle filling stations, or counter-top water dispensers with reusable or compostable cups. For other beverages, USC community members are encouraged to choose catering by USC Hospitality or approved caterers who supply or purchase compliant products through USC preferred suppliers.

Where possible, USC users are encouraged to replace single-use plastic beverage cups with Reusables, aluminum, glass, compostable bioplastic or 100% fiber-based alternatives. Users should prioritize reuse, opting for beverage cups and containers that can be safely used multiple times.

## 6. Procedures

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### **Policy Transition Request Procedure:**

USC users must contact OoS to report instances where they believe Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottles are essential, or where they cannot have their product purchases converted or eliminated.

Users requesting a transition period must complete the [USC Single-Use Plastics Elimination – Beverage Bottles Policy Transition Request Form](#). Users will communicate an explanation of the situation, a proposed transition plan, and a timeline for achieving compliance. This transition plan may be developed with the help of OoS.

OoS will assess individual situations and determine the legitimacy and appropriateness of the transition plan on a case-by-case basis.

### **Non-Compliance Reporting Procedure:**

Instances of non-compliance should be reported to OoS, who will work with non-compliant departments to address the issue.

## 7. Forms

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[USC Single-Use Plastics Elimination – Beverage Bottles Policy Transition Request Form](#)

## 8. Responsibilities

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POSITION or OFFICE	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>USC Office of Sustainability</b>	Ongoing policy maintenance, submitting revisions/updates, and creating supporting documents, when appropriate. Defining sustainability criteria, guidelines and practices, and providing expertise for USC departments and central teams. Ongoing compliance and enforcement oversight, receiving and assessing instances of non-compliance, and working with non-compliant users to develop transition plans.
<b>Auxiliary Services</b>	Ensuring Auxiliary Services operations are compliant with this policy. Working with retailers and suppliers under contract/lease to encourage voluntary compliance and ensuring compliance upon agreement renewal. Offering catering services and vendors with Sustainable Alternatives to interested parties.

<b>Campus and Medical Enterprise Procurement Departments</b>	Providing USC users with purchasing guidance, including compliant products, and suppliers with Sustainable Alternatives. Working with suppliers to ensure Sustainable Alternatives are appropriate, available, and easily accessible. Reporting policy impact on purchasing to OoS (“policy impact” will be defined by entity and measured by what data might be available).
<b>FPM Waste</b>	Providing feedback to OoS on any compliance issues encountered, and policy impact to waste stream (“policy impact” will be defined by entity and measured by what waste stream data might be available). Working with campus and procurement teams and OoS upon request, to evaluate appropriateness of Sustainable Alternatives offered by preferred suppliers.
<b>Keck Medical Center-Support Services</b>	Providing feedback to OoS on any compliance issues encountered, and on policy impact (“Policy impact” will be defined by entity and measured based on what purchasing and waste stream data is available). Working with campus and procurement teams to recommend alternatives for preferred suppliers that are compliant with the policy.
<b>USC Real Estate</b>	Encouraging lessees to make an immediate voluntary transition from Single-use Plastic Beverage Bottles to Sustainable Alternatives. Requiring future leases and renewals adhere to this policy. Sharing feedback and any issues encountered with OoS.
<b>USC departments with existing purchasing agreements, product sponsorships, or property leases</b>	Encouraging an immediate voluntary transition to single-use plastic alternatives. Requiring future agreements/renewals adhere to this policy. Sharing feedback and any compliance issues encountered with OoS.

## 9. Related Information

- [USC Sustainability Website Landing Page for Single-Use Plastics Elimination](#)
- [USC Sustainability Website Page with FAQs](#)
- [Single-Use Plastics Elimination – Beverage Bottles FAQ’s](#)
- [USC Sustainability Website for Assignment Earth](#)
- [USC Sustainability Website Page for zero waste goals in Assignment: Earth](#)

**10. Contact Information**

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OFFICE	PHONE	EMAIL
Office of Sustainability <a href="https://green.usc.edu">https://green.usc.edu</a>		<a href="mailto:PlasticFreeUSC@usc.edu">PlasticFreeUSC@usc.edu</a>