

There's a lot to consider when it comes to purchasing, but the basics are simple. Reduce if you can. Reuse as much as possible. Refuse non-sustainable options, especially single-use plastic. Prioritize recyclable or compostable items, and look for certified options. If you have extra, share what you no longer need.

1 Reduce and combine orders.

U-M and LSA place many online orders. We recommend combining your orders as much as possible to reduce transportation emissions and make things easier for all the workers who need access to your building's dock. An aspirational goal for nonperishable items might be ordering once a term, or starting with once a month.

Pro Tip!

Select "**Amazon Delivery Day**" (Wednesdays) when checking out via Amazon to consolidate your orders with others across the college.



Pro Tip!

We stock compostable supplies for **Zero Waste Events**.

Learn more about how to host these events via the [OCSI website](#).

2 Check the [LSA Sustainable Stockroom](#) first.

This space offers certified sustainable office supplies for FREE for all LSA units and departments. The stockroom is in the basement of the LSA Building. For access, reach out to [Campus Access Controls](#) and request access control for room 00150-0202 LSA STORAGE RM M-F 7A-6P. Choose one or two folks per unit/department for access.

3 Reuse/Reimagine when you can.

As purchasers in your unit, you have expertise in identifying sustainable options specific to your team. Recent examples include teams that purchased reusable decorations for annual events, switched to reusable coffee pods, added reusable cutlery and plates for office kitchenettes, and more.

Pro Tip!

If you have an idea for your office, apply to the [LSA Sustainability Fund](#). The [Sustainable Office Certification](#) checklist is a great spot to get started. For other reuse opportunities, check [U-M Property Disposition](#).

Pro Tip!

There is a **Reuse Shelf** in the LSA Stockroom.

LSA Facilities often redistributes furniture between departments. For labs, check the [Lab Swap Shop](#) located at 5004 North University Building.

4 Donate what you no longer need.

If you notice office supplies in your space that are no longer helpful, consider donating them. U-M hosts annual [Office Supply Reuse Days](#) where supplies are offered first to other U-M units, then shared with regional educators.

5 Look for sustainable certifications.

Although CO2 emissions are the main way that U-M evaluates the sustainability of an item, many other certifications help us choose better options. Examples include Energy Star (energy-efficient products), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (paper products from sustainably managed forests), and Biodegradable Products Institute (ensures that products actually break down when composted).

Pro Tip!

U-M Procurement enables searching **Marketsite+** for items that meet preferred environmental certifications.

If you have a specific question about a type of item, [LSA Sustainability staff](#) are happy to help.

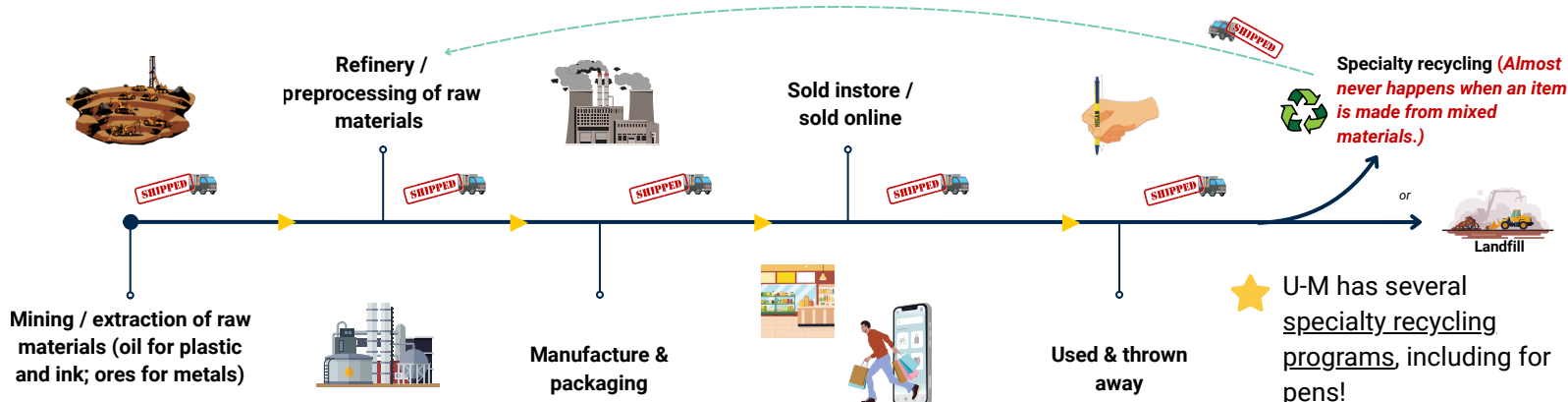


WHAT DO LSA'S PURCHASES HAVE TO DO WITH SUSTAINABILITY?

From pens to computers, all consumer products have an environmental impact. Below, we provide a quick overview of sustainability in procurement, how to measure it, and what institutions like LSA can do to leverage their purchasing power in a more planet-friendly way.

1 Let's start with a pen.

What is it made of, where did it come from, and what happens to it when it's empty?



2 What makes an item sustainable?

Look to the whole lifecycle!

Almost every manufactured item undergoes a process that is at least a little similar to this diagram.

Refining raw materials and the manufacturing process are typically the most energy-intensive steps in making a product. This is especially true for plastics because of the amount of thermal energy needed to synthesize plastic from fossil fuels. For metal products, mining might be the most energy-intensive.

Transportation impacts stack up at different stages of the value chain before and after the item gets to you. Whether or not an item was manufactured in North America makes a difference.

Some consumer items can be recycled by the end user. The ones that cannot are usually made of mixed materials that are not easily separated at a recycling facility, though sometimes they can be recycled in different processes supported by the manufacturer. Disposal in a landfill is the "best last" option.

3 How do we measure impact?

Greenhouse Gas Accounting!

The emissions from U.S.-based manufacturing facilities are tracked by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This includes air pollutants that are regulated because of health impacts and carbon dioxide, which is one proxy for how sustainably something was made.

The EPA maintains a database with general emissions factors for most major categories of manufacturing (for example, furniture vs. paper products) with a high-end and low-end range. Multiplying these factors by the total amount spent by a group in each category gives a good starting point and is part of a strategy called greenhouse gas accounting.

4 Why track something outside of our operational control?

Indirect emissions are still the result of U-M's decisions.

The companies can directly influence how sustainable their overall business is. Some have their own sustainability goals or make their greenhouse gas accounting public. Some may pursue and publish certifications that signal that a product is sustainable, like Energy Star for appliances, or a recycled content disclosure.

When U-M buys sustainable products, it's a positive signal to the market; for example, buying recycled products at scale helps drive the global economics that make plastic recycling an option. We need to avoid products that look sustainable but are not, referred to as "greenwashing". Supporting products with clear and/or third-party certified data is a good choice for our sustainability strategy.

Purchased Goods & Services

SCOPE 3 OVERVIEW

This is a slightly deeper dive on the carbon emissions associated with purchasing, so you can see how U-M measures impact. To learn more about U-M's goals in this area, visit the Office of Campus Sustainability and Innovation's [website](#).

1 Emissions from procurement are "Scope 3," or indirect emissions.

Best practices in greenhouse gas accounting divide institutional impact into three categories.

Scope 1 emissions are the direct result of equipment we own. This includes U-M buses the generators at the on-campus power plant.

Scope 2 emissions come from the electricity we buy from the grid.

Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions that come from other operational choices, such as business travel or purchased goods and services.



Planet Blue
Ambassadors

2 This is one of 15 defined categories of Scope 3 emissions.

Organizations typically complete Scope 1 and 2 emissions inventories early in their sustainability journey, as these are usually simpler to measure because they are already metered. For Scope 3, most organizations will focus on whichever categories are most relevant to their operations first, instead of starting with all 15. For higher education, this usually includes Capital Goods and Purchased Goods & Services.

UPSTREAM	DOWNSTREAM
1. Purchased Goods & Services	9. Downstream Transportation & Distribution
2. Capital Goods	10. Processing of Sold Products
3. Fuel & Energy Related Activities	11. Use of Sold Products
4. Upstream Transportation & Distribution	12. End-of-life Treatment of Sold Products
5. Waste Generated in Operations	13. Downstream Leased Assets
6. Business Travel	14. Franchises
7. Employee Commuting	15. Investments
8. Upstream Leased Assets	

3Degrees

3 Scope 3 emissions can be calculated based on primary or secondary data.

Organizations can sometimes collect procurement emissions data directly from the suppliers that make the products. It's more common to calculate an estimate based on industry averages, total financial spend, [Extended Input-Output](#) supply chain models, and other activity data. The U.S. EPA is one source for these sector-level estimates.

4 For many institutions and companies, Scope 3 emissions are the largest source of emissions.

Operating in a global supply chain means that all purchases for ourselves or for LSA have a traceable environmental impact. For an institution to reach carbon neutrality, Scope 3 emissions must be inventoried and addressed. Lab supplies, office supplies, and furniture are areas LSA Sustainability hopes to work on.

5 The College of Literature, Science, and the Arts is full of opportunities.

Let [LSA Sustainability](#) know if you have ideas, questions, or resources to support this work.

