



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

The Sustainable Supply Chain Pathway for Education and Research Institutions

Implementation guidance for
buying organisations

Executive summary

The Sustainable Supply Chain Pathway for Education and Research Institutions (the Pathway) is a structured approach that helps both suppliers and buyers build collaborative, fair and sustainable supply chains.

In accordance with the University of Edinburgh's Strategy 2030, we are driven to make the world a better place locally, regionally, and globally. Our role as an anchor institution in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal empowers us to collaborate with local schools, colleges and universities, public authorities, industry partners and government to deliver positive environmental and social impact.

To address the climate emergency and support national net-zero targets, it is essential to consider carbon emissions from all sources. Like many other organisations, carbon emissions from our supply chain account for around 55-65% of our emissions. These supply chains also impact on other environmental sustainability areas such as biodiversity as well as social impacts such as human rights violations and increased opportunities to build wealth in the community. We consider this to be responsible procurement.

The Pathway will be applied directly at the University of Edinburgh as one lever for reducing the environmental and social impact

of our supply chain. However, we see the Pathway as an opportunity for buying organisations across the Further and Higher Education (FHE) sector, as well as wider public bodies, to align their approach to responsible procurement. By taking a collaborative approach, we will:

1. Reduce the resource implications for buying organisations and for suppliers by standardising the ask of our supply chain, and setting out clear timescales to these.
2. Promote best practice by increasing knowledge sharing and use of shared tools or resources
3. Utilise our research, learning and teaching to support suppliers to set, and take appropriate action to achieve, pragmatic decarbonisation targets
4. Support local and national climate targets, maximising the possibility of staying within a 1.5 degree global warming scenario

This document sets out the rationale for developing a collaborative pathway, explaining the initial focus on supply chain carbon emissions, highlighting how the Pathway aligns to existing work in the FHE sector and wider public procurement landscape, and provides examples of how a collaborative approach will be implemented with other buying organisations and suppliers.

The Pathway consists of four strands:

- **Embedding:** This strand aims to build up the knowledge and skills of our internal buying community in relation to responsible procurement.
- **Commitment and action:** This strand supports suppliers to set science-aligned targets, underpinned by SMART action plans.
- **Data:** This strand focuses on improving the quality of data available from suppliers, enabling our buying community to make informed decisions on the products they require.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** This strand ensures suppliers are on track towards their commitments, highlighting good practice and notifying all partners when action is needed to realign.



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The Sustainable Supply Chain Pathway for Education and Research Institutions

The Sustainable Supply Chain Pathway for Education and Research Institutions: an overview

The Pathway is a structured approach that helps both suppliers and buyers build collaborative, fair and sustainable supply chains.

For buying organisations, this means making sustainable decisions when purchasing. To do this, the Pathway ensures that buyers have the required knowledge, skills and data on carbon emissions and wider responsible procurement themes before purchasing.

The initial focus for suppliers is the transition to net zero, in line with science-aligned targets. This means completing a timetable of actions to align to a net zero decarbonisation pathway. These progressive actions sit in the categories of commitment & action, data, and reporting and monitoring.

The Pathway is a lever to open up dialogue and explore collaborative opportunities with suppliers as we strive to decarbonise our supply chains.

The pathway focuses on suppliers with the highest material impact first. A 24-month extension is provided for lower-impact suppliers.



Embedding (buying organisations)

By 2028, our buying community will have the knowledge, skills and tools to recognise key responsible procurement themes. Our processes will ensure that sustainability is considered alongside cost and quality.



Commitment and actions (suppliers)

By 2028, our highest-impact suppliers will have set science-aligned targets, underpinned by SMART action plans. We will see an increase in innovative products that support our ambitions to achieve net zero.



Data (suppliers)

By 2028, the quality of data available from suppliers will have matured from a broad spend-based methodology to product-level environmental detail. This will enable our buying community to make informed decisions on the products they require.



Reporting and monitoring (suppliers)

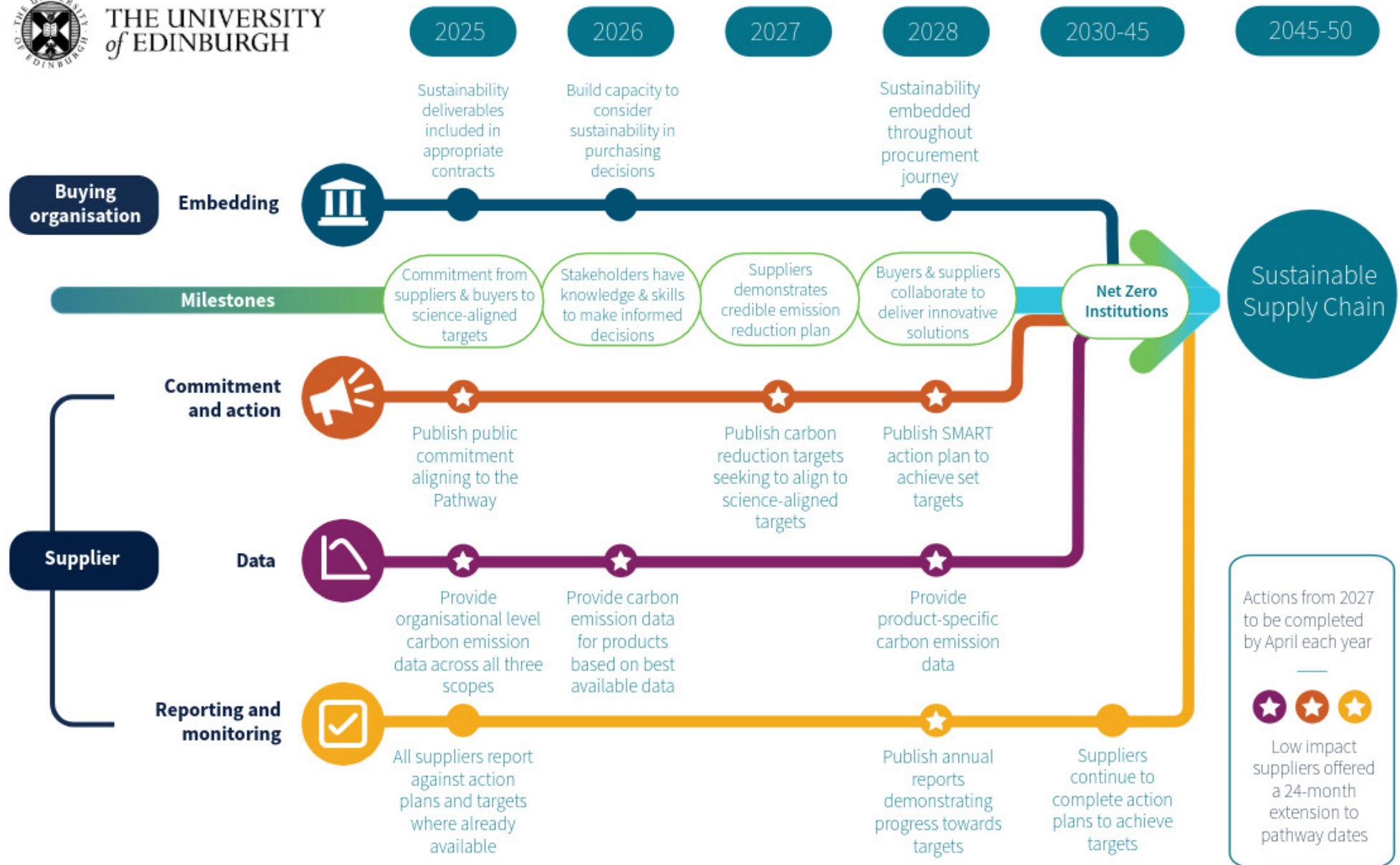
By 2028, we will be in position to track our suppliers commitments, highlighting good practice and notifying partners when action is needed to realign. We will use these to monitor the impact of our actions on scope 3 emissions.





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Sustainable Supply Chain Pathway for Education and Research Institutions



Visual representation of the Pathway for buying organisations and suppliers



Embedding

Buying organisations: embedding

This strand provides impact across all procurement routes, initially through including clear deliverables in contracts, working to build up stakeholder knowledge and skills in relation to the wider responsible procurement topic by 2028.

In addition, buying organisations have a duty to support suppliers to undertake their pathway steps and actions. Buying organisations will work together to provide suitable resources to suppliers throughout the pathway, using the abundant academic excellence that is available within the FHE sector as well as existing support programmes.

While the Pathway looks to align suppliers to a common decarbonisation pathway, buying organisations will also have to reduce the emissions associated with the goods and services they purchase through other levers including:

- Reducing overall purchasing via demand management and embedding of circular economy principles.
- Switching to more sustainable suppliers and products where purchases remain necessary and suppliers are unable to meet science-aligned decarbonisation pathways.

Accounting for differences in organisational readiness to adopt

The greatest challenge to a collaborative approach is the spectrum of readiness across buying organisations to adopt a single pathway. As such, there are two levels of commitment to the Pathway:

Adopting organisation

Endorsement from relevant senior leadership (e.g. Head of Procurement; Director of Finance) which commits the buying organisation to all actions in the Pathway and, as a minimum, to achieve the requirements in this document.

Supporting organisation

Where a buying organisation is unable to fully commit to all pathway actions but does commit to aligning their requests to suppliers in accordance with the steps set out for suppliers in the Pathway.

It is possible for supporting organisations to become full adopting organisations later by updating their commitment to the Pathway.

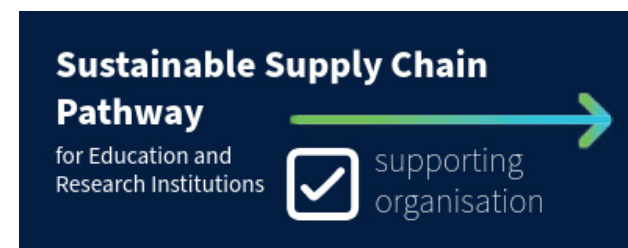
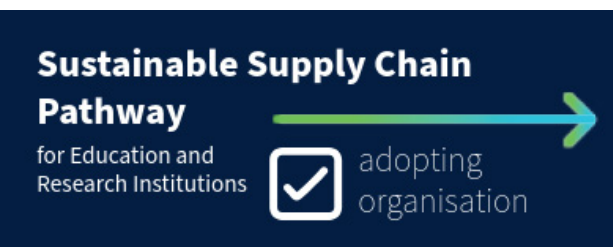
Actions for buying organisations

Actions set out in this document are for all adopting organisations (supporting organisations & adopting organisations).

These are displayed under the heading: Everyone (supporting and adopting).

Additional commitment for Adopting Organisations

There are further requirements for adopting organisations to take, shown in this style of box.



Steps for buying organisations

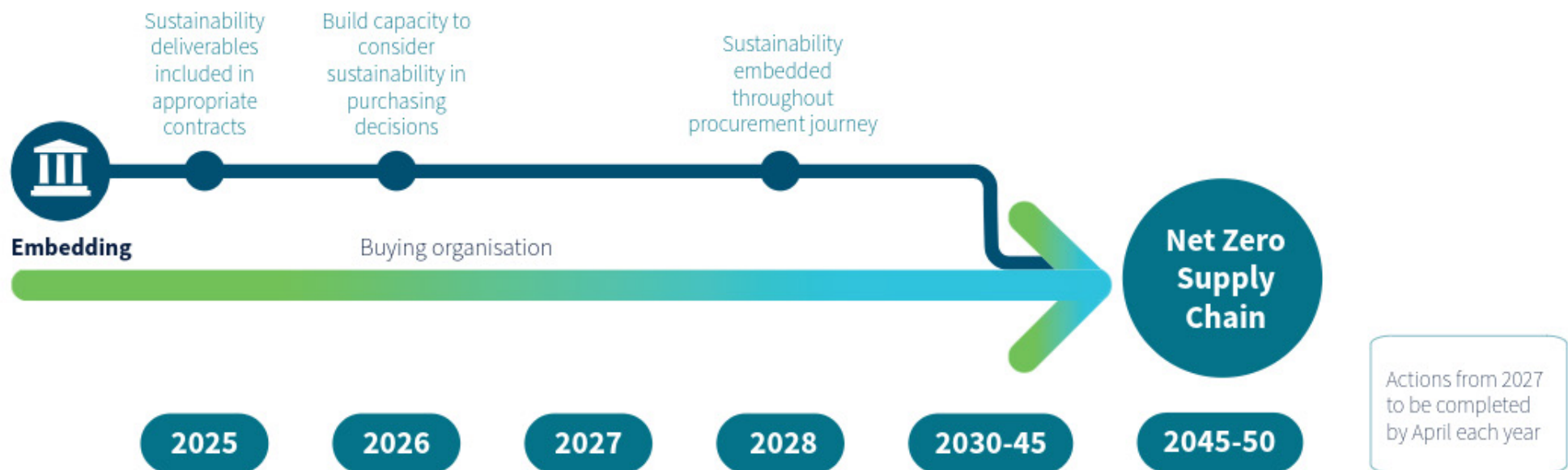
These steps are designed to provide impact through actions that can be started across all procurement routes, initially through including clear deliverables in contracts, working to build up stakeholder knowledge and skills in relation to the wider responsible procurement topic by 2028.

Supporting our suppliers

Adopting organisations commit to supporting suppliers along the Pathway through a variety of actions, including:

- developing a resource hub for suppliers, signposting to dedicated resources to help suppliers complete these actions, working with suppliers to ensure these remain relevant and effective
- discussing sustainability within Contract Management meetings, highlighting good practice and working together to overcome challenges.

- developing research projects with relevant academic or professional teams to work directly with suppliers on improving data quality
- sharing supplier- or sector-specific best practice methodology
- Ensuring that purchasing platforms are set up to share supplier data directly with our buying community
- providing a platform to share targets and action plans and data with all adopting organisations
- working with suppliers to develop appropriate reporting templates
- providing a single platform for suppliers to share these reports with all adopting organisations



Sustainability deliverables included in appropriate contracts

From December 2025

Pathway milestone supported: Commitment from suppliers & buyers to science-aligned targets.

This step ensures that key sustainability deliverables are included in contracts.

Exact deliverables would depend on the key thematic areas for the goods, services or works being procured, as well as the chosen procurement route (e.g. Non-Competitive Actions, Direct Award, Quick Quote).

This step is focused on “appropriate” contracts. These would be for suppliers with highest impact on sustainability. Steps to determine these are set out below. “Appropriate” also considers whether the supplier has already agreed to specific deliverables in existing contracts – ensuring these deliverables are built on in the new contract.



Actions overview for this step:

1. Determine high-sustainability-impact spend categories for your institution
2. Set out specific deliverables that are expected of high-sustainability-impact suppliers
3. Track suppliers' progress along the Pathway
4. Assess progress against these deliverables through contract management meetings.

Sustainability deliverables included in appropriate contracts

From December 2025

Action 1: Determine high-sustainability-impact spend categories for your institution

The aim of this action is to list the spend categories for goods, services, or works with the most material impact on sustainability at the institution, to focus resource.

Methods for everyone (supporting and adopting)

Two methods for identifying high-impact spend categories are set out below.

Should a buying organisation already have an alternative method for identifying high-impact spend categories in place this would also be acceptable.

The methodologies set out below use tools which are freely available to FHE institutions, and other buying organisations may have similar tools available to their sector. These use tools which are freely available to FHE institutions, and other buying organisations may have similar tools available to their sector.

Buying organisations should select the method which best aligns to their institutional strategies.

Method 1

Method 1 focuses on carbon emissions.

Method 1 assumes that future procurement will utilise the same primary supplier categories as the previous year.

Use tools such as the APUC Scope 3 Report or HESCET to determine the suppliers that make up the majority of the organisation’s previous years procurement emissions.

Stage 1: Using the APUC Scope 3 report or HESCET report, establish the suppliers accountable for the top 60% of carbon emissions from procurement. For a Higher Education institution, around 60 to 100 suppliers are expected.

Stage 2: Map these suppliers against categories of goods, services or works provided to the institution to make a list of high-sustainability-impact spend categories for the institution.

OUTPUT - DO NOT ALTER							
Environmental Sustainability							
Carbon / Climate Change	Biodiversity	Water Use	Novel entities (e.g. chemical pollution and microplastics)	Material scarcity & security	Waste/ Disposal	Circular Economy Opportunities	Environmental Data Maturity Opportunities
2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3
Social Compliance			Working Environment and Terms		Ethical Compliance & Economic Development		
Equality	Modern Slavery Risk	Social Opportunities (local)	Wages and Terms	Health and Safety	Bribery & Corruption	GDPR	Cyber Security
2	1	2	3	3	3	1	3
Total Score (Max = 48)	31		Number of High score themes (3)	8		Commodity Risk / Opportunity Classification	High

Example of UKUPC Responsible Procurement Mapping Tool output for a commodity.

Method 2

Method 2 considers wider sustainability themes.

Method 2 takes into account that purchasing behaviours may change year-on-year.

Use UKUPC Responsible Procurement Commodity Mapping Tool (2025) to focus on suppliers from high-impact spend categories of goods, services or work, according to the associated Proc-HE2 commodity code.

Through this method, it is expected that around 35% of spend categories will be classified as high-impact, 50% as moderate impact, and 15% as low impact. High-impact is defined as goods, services or works with a significant number of high-risk and/ or opportunity sustainability themes, in particular, in relation to the Environmental Sustainability theme.

Note, it is not expected that 35% of all suppliers will be targeted though this method. Instead, these high-impact suppliers will be focused on when these goods or services are being procured going forward.

Once high-impact categories of goods, services or works are known using one of the methods outlined above, institutions can then target suppliers during the development of new contracts for these categories. It is also possible to direct resource to existing suppliers supplying these goods, services, or works.

Sustainability deliverables included in appropriate contracts

From December 2025

Adopting Organisations

In addition to the steps set out for everyone, including Supporting Organisations, Adopting Organisations commit to evaluating institutional procurement data to establish carbon emissions and other sustainability metrics at line-item level.

Exact mechanisms for this process are not set out in this document, but may include improving reporting from internal procurement systems to collate line-item data or working with academic colleagues or students to develop a dedicated report for this purpose.

While it is initially expected that this product-level data will be based on the best available data, which may be broad carbon factors, over time it is expected that Full Adopting Organisations will work with suppliers to provide specific product level data, for example through a detailed Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA).

This line-item granularity should then be used to determine high-sustainability impact goods, services or works to take forward (using the UKUPC Responsible Procurement Mapping Tool noted in method 2 above).

Mapping across these methods

While there is significant overlap between suppliers with high-carbon impact (Method 1) and those with high impact on wider sustainability (Method 2), this is not a perfect mapping.

At the University of Edinburgh, we estimate that around 75% of the same suppliers will be categorised as high-impact across the two methods.

Example categories

Spend categories raised in Method 1 (carbon) only

Utilities & fuel

Conference & event meetings

Tableware & Kitchen disposables

Spend categories raised in both Method 1 and Method 2

AV equipment

Capital projects

Clothing

Travel & vehicles

Spend categories raised in Method 2 (wider sustainability) only

Stationary

Textiles & floor coverings

Digital imaging & photography



Sustainability deliverables included in appropriate contracts

From December 2025

Action 2: Set out specific deliverables that are expected of high-sustainability-impact suppliers

The aim of this action is to ensure consistency when approaching new and existing suppliers that provide goods, services, or works to the institution. Setting standard deliverables should reduce resource demands in the Procurement team when concluding and then managing contracts while also providing clarity to suppliers on the requirements of them across multiple contracts with the same buying organisation.

Everyone (supporting and adopting)

Include the specific deliverables in new contracts for the goods, services or works noted as high impact. Examples of deliverables include:

- Supplier commits to aligning to the Pathway, and releasing a statement to this effect, within three-months of the contract start date.
- Supplier must complete Hunter Section 1 Questionnaire before the contract start date. The supplier agrees to update questionnaire when significant changes take place (e.g. modern slavery statement updated), or annually where no significant changes take place in 12 months.
- Supplier commits to completing an externally verified supplier assurance tool, and provide a report to the buyer, within six months of contract start. This assessment must be updated at least annually.
- Supplier must return signed copy of SUSTAIN Supply Chain Code of Conduct, or equivalent, prior to contract start date.

For suppliers with existing contracts, it may not be possible to enact new deliverables as part of these contracts. In this case, the supplier and buying organisation should establish what new deliverables they can commit to undertaking during the current contract. Where this is not feasible, adopting organisations should include deliverables in subsequent contracts with this supplier.

Adopting Organisations

Requirement to include the specific deliverable noted below in all new high-impact contracts within six months of adopting the Pathway. In addition, approach existing suppliers of high-impact goods, service, or works within 12 months of adopting the Pathway request suppliers complete this deliverable.

- Suppliers commit to align to the Pathway, and release a statement to this effect, within three-months of the contract start date.

Sustainability deliverables included in appropriate contracts

From December 2025

Action 3: Track suppliers' progress along the Pathway

The aim of this action is to standardise the management of suppliers in relation to sustainability. This will reduce the resource demand at the buying organisation manage these contracts and ensure deliverables are achieved. It will also reduce work for suppliers by enabling consistency of requests across institutions, and make sharing relevant information from the supplier to multiple buyers easier.

Full Adopting Organisations

In addition to the steps set out for Supporting Organisations, Pathway Adoptees commit to collaborating across organisations to review existing Supplier Management Platforms with an aim of agreeing a sectoral approach to Supplier Management Platforms going forward.

Everyone (supporting and full adopting)

Agree on the process for collating relevant supplier data. Two methods are provided below. Should a buying organisation already have an alternative method for collating supplier data in place this would also be acceptable.

Here are two methods:

Method 1

Allocating resources internally to collate and review supplier documentation. This option is only recommended where adopting institutions have resource available with experience of auditing sustainability documentation. A suitable system already needs to be in place to be adapted to incorporate:

- Organisational information such as calculated carbon emissions and turnover
- Documentation such as carbon emission reduction targets and action plans
- Product-level carbon emission values.

Method 2

Use a dedicated Supplier Management Platform for this purpose. No specific platforms are outlined in this document, but these platforms must:

1. Allow suppliers to input information directly (e.g. through a supplier portal)
2. Allow buying institutions to quickly review progress of suppliers against the Pathway
3. Allow for suppliers to easily share this information with other buyers when requested
4. Be low- or no- cost to suppliers
5. Allow suppliers to update these values on at least an annual basis.

Buying organisations should request information from suppliers through a dedicated questionnaire either directly from the institution or through the supplier portal of the chosen platform. Suppliers should be requested to update their responses to these questionnaires at least annually.

Note, questionnaires should avoid duplication across the sector to reduce resource requirements for suppliers to complete multiple questionnaires. A questionnaire, which could be used as a standard template, is provided in Annex 1. This questionnaire is a copy of the Section 1 questionnaire, available through the Hunter Supplier Management Platform.

Sustainability deliverables included in appropriate contracts

From December 2025

Action 4: Assess progress against these deliverables through contract management meetings

The aim of this action is to support ongoing progress by suppliers against sustainability deliverables. This ensures suppliers remain on track with the steps outlined in the Pathway and realign if they divert from the original agreement.

Everyone (supporting and adopting)

Raise Sustainability during regular contract management meetings with the supplier, to highlight its importance. For suppliers that have specific deliverables related to the Pathway in their contracts, request updates from suppliers to track progress. The frequency for raising sustainability in these meetings and tracking updates against the Pathway should be decided by the buying organisation. This action may be suitable to be undertaken as a collective effort by adopting institutions, increasing efficiency for buying organisations and suppliers.

Adopting Organisations

In addition to the actions for Supporting Organisations set out above, Pathway Adoptees commit to arrange dedicated sustainability-themed contract management meetings with their top 10 most impactful suppliers at least annually, with relevant sustainability leads from the buying organisation and supplier included in these meetings.

Initial contract management meetings must confirm the sustainability-related deliverables agreed on in the contract, and the supplier must give an action plan for achieving the deliverables. Following meetings must focus on progress towards the sustainability-related deliverables set as well as explore innovative opportunities to enhance the goods, services or works being provided by the supplier.

Where possible, it is recommended that adopting institutions arrange collaborative supplier meetings to discuss sustainability, though noting that these would not be undertaken as part contract specific meetings.



Build capacity to consider sustainability in purchasing decisions

From 2026

Pathway milestone supported: Stakeholders have knowledge & skills to make informed decisions

This step looks to ensure that budget holders, requisitioners, and those that support throughout the purchasing journey across the institution (e.g. Procurement lead; the User Intelligence Group - UIG) have the knowledge, skills and tools to make informed decisions on how best to incorporate sustainability when considering purchasing new goods, services or works.



Actions overview for this step:

1. Upskill buying community on key tenets of responsible procurement
2. Share tools and resources that support buyers to make informed decisions
3. Supporting suppliers along the Pathway.

Build capacity to consider sustainability in purchasing decisions

From 2026

Action 1: Upskill buying community on key tenets of responsible procurement

The aim of this action is to ensure that the wider buying community have the skills and knowledge to recognise:

- the importance of sustainability in their purchasing
- the impacts their decisions have on key sustainability themes
- the opportunities available to them through embedding sustainable thinking
- the role they play in this process.

Everyone (supporting and adopting)

This could be through enhancing existing programmes at the Supporting Institution or through setting up new initiatives, including:

- Providing access to a range of relevant training courses on topics including circular economy, modern slavery, climate change, and biodiversity. These could be delivered through e-learning modules or face-to-face. Consider which of these should be essential/mandatory learning for all staff and include these in onboarding processes, with relevant refresh cycles.
- Promoting Responsible Procurement through events such as drop-in sessions and online webinars targeted at requisitioners and the wider buying community, as well as by including information on how to incorporate responsible procurement on internal and externally facing webpages.

Adopting Organisations

Pathway Adoptees commit to proactive engagement across the institution's buying community. This includes setting targets to increase awareness of Responsible Procurement, and outlining key actions staff can take to reduce the environmental & social impact of purchasing.

Exact mechanisms for achieving this are set by the adopting institution but should include dedicated training and events (as noted above) with dedicated targets, action plans and reporting mechanisms against these.

Build capacity to consider sustainability in purchasing decisions

From 2026

Action 2: Share tools and resources that support buyers to make informed decisions

The aim of this action is to build on the base knowledge set out in the previous stage and provide the organisation's buying community with tools to put into practice the knowledge gained, and to take ownership of their buying decisions to support sustainability.

Everyone (supporting and adopting)

To share tools and resources developed by the sector with the institutions buying community. This includes:

- Access to the UKUPC Responsible Procurement Mapping Tool for buyers to search for goods, services or works being purchased. This will highlight key sustainability themes to be considered by the buyer before making a purchasing decision. Ensuring the version provided is the most recent update (currently version 1.0 as of March 2025)
- Access to HESCET, the APUC Scope 3 report or equivalent report, at institutional level. Alternatively, institutions publish a review detailing key findings from these reports, on an annual basis.

Adopting Organisations

In addition to the actions set out for supporting organisations above, Pathway Adoptees will be expected to:

- Provide carbon emission data and other sustainability metrics in product catalogues, highlighting these to the buying community so that buyers can make informed decisions at the point of purchase.
- Proactively support the development of new tools or resources to support buyers and procurement colleagues to embed sustainability considerations throughout the procurement journey, and share these with the wider sector.
- Actively share knowledge and engage with the wider sector through groups such as the EAUC & HEPA Responsible Procurement Group (RPG), UKUPC working groups, or by joining User Intelligence Groups for framework tenders by purchasing consortia used by the sector (e.g. UKUPC, CCS, TUCO etc.).

Build capacity to consider sustainability in purchasing decisions

From 2026

Action 3: Supporting suppliers along the Pathway

The aim of this action is to utilise the professional experience and academic excellence available within the FHE sector to enhance suppliers' knowledge and skills in relation to sustainability.

Everyone (supporting and adopting)

To share tools and resources developed for suppliers. This includes:

- Training and appropriate programmes which are relevant to suppliers. These may include calculating carbon emissions; circular economy; and effective carbon reduction methods.
- Directing suppliers to sectoral webinars and other events which are designed to support suppliers in relation to the Pathway.
- Sharing good practice from other suppliers where it is applicable to others within sectors.
- Development of research projects with relevant academic colleagues

Adopting Organisations

In addition to the actions set out for supporting organisations, Pathway Adoptees will be expected to work with other adoptees to develop a toolkit for suppliers. This toolkit should include:

- Dedicated supplier webinars, to support understanding of the Pathway and the steps suppliers are asked to take as part of this
- Training modules for suppliers specifically in relation to calculating carbon emissions and effective carbon reduction methods
- New resources for suppliers such as a database of external programmes which support suppliers to reduce carbon emissions

Sustainability embedded throughout procurement journey

By April 2028

Pathway milestone supported: Pathway milestone supported: Buyers & suppliers collaborate to deliver innovative solutions

This step ensures that the whole procurement journey – from identifying a need through to contract management – is considered through a sustainability lens. Where this is not possible, a mitigation statement is provided to explain the clear rationale.



Actions overview for this step:

1. Buyers consider their purchases through a sustainability lens alongside economic and other requirements.
2. Maintain tools and templates used in previous Pathway steps
3. Update product-level sustainability data as these are available, including relevant data at point-of-purchase for buyers to make informed decisions. Ensuring this data is reviewed and updated by the supplier at least annually
4. Examine opportunities to consolidate supplier catalogues to promote sustainable options, with sustainability metrics such as embodied carbon clearly displayed alongside goods, services or works provided in quotes or in supplier catalogues.
5. Continue to have regular contract management meetings which include discussions on relevant sustainability themes and achieve sustainability-related deliverables.

Sustainability embedded throughout procurement journey

By April 2028

Action 1: Buyers consider their purchases through a sustainability lens alongside economic and other requirements.

The aim of this action is to ensure that any new contract is guided towards being sustainable from the outset.

Everyone (supporting and adopting)

Buyers should use the tools and resources available through previous stages to highlight sustainability considerations through each stage of the procurement journey. Examples of this in practice include:

- a specification of requirement that outlines the need to purchase a new equipment, but notes that there are opportunities to purchase refurbished or remanufactured units, which are being actively explored
- a pre-procurement strategy which highlights the need for a new supplier to service equipment to maintain efficiency, but with the opportunity to reduce the frequency of emissions by developing a service agreement across multiple contracts from the same supplier.

Adopting Organisations

Staff across the organisation are empowered to enact the circular economy principles, ensuring:

- That purchasing only happens when no other options are available. Assets are managed across the institution, with processes in place to allow for asset sharing within or between institutions.
- Where purchases must take place, buyers have the knowledge to choose the most sustainable option available, avoiding new items (e.g. through refurbishment, product as a service models) and ensuring that agreements enable life-extension of any products purchased.
- Where new goods, service or works are purchased, these are considered across multiple sustainability metrics to ensure that they minimise the impact on the environment and have suitable circular routes at the end-of-useful life at the institution.

Sustainability embedded throughout procurement journey

By April 2028

Action 2: Maintain tools and templates used in previous Pathway steps

The aim of this action is to ensure buyers and requisitioners continue to develop their knowledge in-line with current thinking on the topic. They will integrate best practice at each stage of the procurement journey.

Everyone (supporting and adopting)

Provide most up-to-date resources to the organisation's buying community and procurement team, and signpost to relevant training or webinars on the topic where available.

Adopting Organisations

Proactively support updates to existing tools or resources and the development of new tools or resources, and share these with the wider sector. These support buyers and procurement colleagues to embed sustainability considerations throughout the procurement journey

Actively share knowledge and engage with the wider sector through groups such as the EAUC & HEPA Responsible Procurement Group (RPG), UKUPC working groups, or by joining User Intelligence Groups for framework tenders by purchasing consortia used by the sector (e.g. UKUPC, Crown Commercial Services, TUCO etc.).

Action 3: Update product-level sustainability data as these are available, including relevant data at point-of-purchase for buyers to make informed decisions. Ensuring this data is reviewed and updated by the supplier at least annually

The aim of this action is to ensure buyers and requisitioners have access to up-to-date data to make informed decisions when purchasing goods, services or works.

Everyone (supporting and adopting)

Request product-level data from suppliers in new contracts, and make this data available to buyers at the institution at point-of-purchase.

Adopting Organisations

Require product-level sustainability data in new contracts, and approach existing suppliers to request product-level data is provided in future product catalogues or annual price files. Embed this information in procurement platforms and highlight it to buyers before they make a purchasing decision.

Sustainability embedded throughout procurement journey

By April 2028

Action 4: Examine opportunities to consolidate supplier catalogues to promote sustainable options, with sustainability metrics such as embodied carbon clearly displayed alongside goods, services or works provided in quotes or in supplier catalogues.

The aim of this action is to streamline the choices available to buyers, supporting them to make the best purchasing choice for goods, services or works.

Everyone (supporting and full adopting)

Examine the highest-sustainability-impact suppliers, and consider what goods, services, or works could be removed from catalogues to streamline these. Decisions should be made based on sustainability considerations as well as the cost, quality, and suitability of the commodity.

Adopting Organisations

Review existing supplier catalogues for all high-sustainability-impact suppliers to remove high-impact goods, services or works where:

- an equivalent, lower-impact, alternative is provided by this supplier or another supplier already contracted to the institution
- the whole-life costs of the goods, services or works are comparable between the low-impact and high-impact goods, services, or works in question.

Action 5: Continue to have regular contract management meetings which include discussions on relevant sustainability themes and achieve sustainability-related deliverables.

The aim of this action is to ensure that suppliers maintain their commitments to the Pathway throughout the lifetime of their contract.

Everyone (supporting and full adopting)

Sustainability is raised during regular contract management meetings with the supplier, as outlined in step Sustainability deliverables included in appropriate contracts above.

Adopting the Pathway

Adopting the Pathway as a buying organisation

The University of Edinburgh formally adopted the Pathway in late 2025. We welcome discussions on how other buying organisations, whether from the Further and Higher Education (FHE) sector or wider public body sectors, can adopt the Pathway.

If you are interested in adopting the Pathway at your organisation, to the standards set out in this document – either as a supporting organisation or a full adopting organisation – please contact the University of Edinburgh's Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability using the email address below.

Responsible.Procurement@ed.ac.uk



The Pathway

**A collaborative route to a
sustainable supply chain**

**Implementation guidance for
buying organisations**

www.ed.ac.uk

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