

**Memorandum of Understanding  
among the  
U.S. Department of Energy (DOE),  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),  
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA),  
U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the  
National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)  
on the Federal Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) Commons**

## Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets forth the understanding between the DOE, EPA, USDA, DOT, and NIST to formalize and provide structure for the Federal LCA Commons as an interagency initiative intended to support the development, standardization, transparency, availability, and robustness of life cycle assessment (LCA) across the Federal government with the objective of providing consistent methods, data, and guidance for U.S. industrial and economic interests.

## Background

The Federal LCA Commons is a Community of Practice (CoP) and a data repository, hosted at <http://www.lcacommons.gov>. The CoP is open to representatives of federal agencies to share relevant LCA related updates and coordinate activities opportunistically across the federal government. The data repository hosts Federal and industry data from multiple sources. The Federal LCA Commons has designated existing resources, to include: a data handbook and submission guidelines; training resources; and data repositories that include existing inventory methods. In 2018, USDA, EPA, and DOE signed an [MOU](#) in which the agencies agreed to collaborate opportunistically to advance LCA data, research, and information systems in terms of consistency and public access to research outputs.

LCAs are increasingly required for use in public and corporate programs to enable the disclosure of environmental economic interests and risks in purchasing, investments, and operations. Industry groups require government support for developing standard methods, data criteria and background data sets to be able to compete fairly in these and other emerging climate-related initiatives. There is a need for the federal government to establish data quality criteria and standard methods and to collect and provide access to data and models by which to evaluate and qualify products and investments as a public service. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) appropriated funds for federal agencies to provide support for industries to be able to generate consistent and reliable Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs). In response to a formal EPA public Request for Information ([EPA-HQ-OPPT-2022-0924](#)) associated with the low embodied carbon construction materials program established in the IRA, the Federal LCA Commons was recognized as the most appropriate point of distribution for public data and the vast majority of respondents advocated for a federal government role in developing, maintaining and providing public access to consistent data.

## Goals and Objectives

The parties intend for the Federal LCA Commons to expand on existing resources and initiatives and develop additional standard products that compliment or improve the use of these resources across

Federal Agencies and support programs using LCA across the government. Collaborative activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Developing standardized background datasets and associated resources (e.g., electricity, transportation, common elementary flow list, impact methods)
- Recommending common data and approaches for use across federal agencies and federally-funded research
- Providing guidance to improve consistency in LCA modeling
- Increasing public access and usability of LCA-related data products and guidance

## Authorities

DOE enters into this MOU under the authority of section 646 of the Department of Energy Organization Act (Pub. L. 95-91, as amended; 42 U.S.C. § 7256).

EPA enters into this MOU pursuant to Section 8001 of the Solid Waste Disposal Act, 42 U.S.C. 6981.

USDA enters into this MOU in accordance with the National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, Pub. L. 95-113, Sec. 1410A, 7 U.S.C. Sec. 3125a.

DOT enters into this MOU in accordance with Leadership, Consultation and Cooperation, 49 U.S.C. 301.

NIST enters into this MOU pursuant to Title 15 U.S.C. §§ 272(b)(11), (13) and 273(c)(27).

## Roles and Responsibilities

The parties intend for a Steering Committee (SC) to be created. The SC's overarching purpose is to provide guidance, endorsement, and management of the Federal LCA Commons work products and activities.

The SC will include a chairperson, who convenes and moderates meetings, an alternate chairperson, and a secretary, who will take meeting minutes and develop internal and external communications of SC activities. These positions will rotate among the Parties annually. Each Party's technical point of contact will designate their respective representative when it is their Party's turn to assume one of these roles. Each participating Agency agrees to designate and support the participation of at least 1 person to serve an annual term on the SC.

The SC may designate LCA data, conventions, and guidance as an "endorsed" resource. These can be existing resources that are adopted, or new work products. New products must have one or more lead Agencies. Technical and scientific products must be subjected to one or more of the lead Agencies' quality assurance and clearance processes before being considered for approval as an "endorsed" resource. The SC endorsement or designation of Federal LCA Commons resources should be agreed to by a majority of SC members. Totals in favor and against shall be recorded in meeting minutes.

LCA work products such as tools, guidance documents and standard datasets may be designated by the SC as Federal LCA Commons "managed" resource. The SC will develop and oversee plans to manage these work products to assure that they remain functional and relevant.

The SC will designate a Party to continue to maintain and operate the data platform hosted at <http://www.lcacommons.gov>. The SC will designate a Party to run regular meetings and keep summaries of a Federal Community of Practice on LCA. The SC may designate smaller focused working groups to assess or develop resources and make recommendations to support SC decisions and priorities as needed.

The SC will develop an Annual Work Plan (AWP) that will include plans on new work products, management of work products, management of the Community of Practice, development and approval of communications including an annual report of accomplishment and activities.

The SC will meet quarterly at a minimum on work products progress and approval, reports, plans, communications, and related matters.

The SC will authorize public communications on work products and endorsements.

## Funding

By participating in this MOU, each agency accepts responsibility for supporting its roles and responsibilities and participation in the SC. Nothing in this MOU, in and of itself, constitutes an authorization to enter into any contract, assistance agreement, or incur other financial obligations. As required by the Anti-Deficiency Act (*codified at 31 U.S.C. §§ 1341-42*), all commitments made by any party in this MOU are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and budget priorities.

## Limitations

This MOU does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or equity, by persons who are not party to this MOU, against the parties, their offices or employees, or any other person. This MOU does not direct or apply to any person outside of the parties. Nothing in this MOU is intended to conflict with current laws or regulations. If a term of this MOU is inconsistent with any such agency authority, then that term shall be invalid, but the remaining terms and conditions of this MOU shall remain in effect.

## Modification

This MOU may be modified or extended by mutually acceptable written amendment duly executed by authorized officials of the parties. Parties to the MOU will review the text annually.

## Dispute Resolution

All disputes arising under this MOU shall be referred in writing to the SC. The SC will consult and attempt to resolve all issues arising from the implementation of this MOU. If they are unable to come to agreement on any issue, the dispute will be referred to the signatories to the MOU, as appropriate, or their designees, for joint resolution after the parties have separately documented in writing clear reasons for the dispute.

## Duration

This MOU shall become effective on the date the last party signs and will remain in effect for a period of five (5) calendar years, unless modified or withdrawn earlier with the mutual written consent of each party. This MOU may be extended beyond the initial 5-year period by mutual written consent of each party.

Any party may unilaterally terminate their participation in this MOU by providing ninety (90) calendar days written notice to the other parties.

### Points of Contact

DOE: Timothy J. Skone, Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management, timothy.skone@hq.doe.gov

EPA: Wesley Ingwersen, Office of Research and Development/Center for Environmental Solutions and Emergency Response, ingwersen.wesley@epa.gov

USDA: Peter Arbuckle, Agricultural Research Services, National Agricultural Library, peter.arbuckle@usda.gov

DOT: James Hove, Office of the Secretary of Transportation, james.hove@dot.gov

NIST: Joshua Kneifel, Engineering Laboratory, National Institute of Standards and Technology, joshua.kneifel@nist.gov

### Approval

Approved and authorized on behalf of each Agency by:

For the U.S. Department of Energy



Geraldine Richmond, Ph.D.  
Under Secretary for Science and Innovation

August 13, 2024

Date

For the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

 August 12, 2024

Janet G. McCabe  
Deputy Administrator

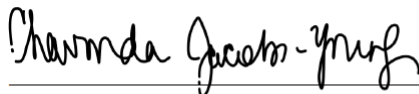
For the U.S. Department of Transportation



10/28/2024

Christopher Coes  
Acting Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy

For the U.S. Department of Agriculture

 08/12/2024

Chavonda Jacobs-Young, Ph.D.  
Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics

For the National Institute of Standards and Technology

CHARLES ROMINE

Digitally signed by CHARLES ROMINE  
Date: 2024.06.24 11:16:13 -04'00'

Charles H. Romine, Ph.D.  
Associate Director for Laboratory Programs