

Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) Projects

Terms of Reference for 2015 /16 Open Call

Purpose and background

Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) is committed to partnering with producer groups to achieve improved business profitability and productivity outcomes. Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) aim to increase the rate of adoption of key management practices and technologies that improve business profitability and productivity, by shortening the time lag between technological innovation and adoption of practices by producers at a local level. The PDS program supports groups of livestock producers to adapt, validate and demonstrate the business value of integrating new management practices and associated skills into local farming systems. The key outcome of a PDS is producer adoption of the demonstrated management practices resulting in improved business performance.

MLA is calling for preliminary applications for PDS sites related to improved **sheep or goat business profitability and productivity** to commence between March and May 2016. Funding is available for up to 5 sheep focused and 2-3 goat focused projects this round. Additional open calls for applications related to sheep, beef and goat demonstrations may follow.

Who can apply?

Funding is available for producer groups to adapt, validate and demonstrate the business value of integrating new technologies and on-farm management practices into local farming systems. Groups will require a person experienced in group facilitation and extension, monitoring and evaluation of on-farm practice change and communication and reporting, to oversee the demonstration. This round of funding is open to goat and sheep producer groups. For contracting purposes, all producer groups are required to be a registered company or trust. Alternatively, producer groups can arrange for contracting through an affiliated registered company.

For an application to qualify as a PDS project it needs to:

- Be initiated by producer group enquiry and address a key adoption / practice change need.
- Have a suitably skilled facilitator to guide group activity and ensure protocols are implemented.
- Conduct demonstration activity on multiple properties and be at a commercially relevant scale.
- Be based on a known, scientifically proven technology/practice, i.e. not involve basic research on a problem/issue.
- Include extension and communication activities to extend key messages beyond the core group.
- Implement monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) processes to demonstrate producer engagement, practice change and business benefit. All projects will be required to develop an MER plan using MLA's standard framework within one month of commencing. Support will be available to assist facilitators develop M&E plans.

What is funded?

MLA will provide funding of up to \$25,000 per year for 3 years for PDS projects. MLA funding can be used for:

- Facilitator time and expenses (for example reporting, coordination, group activity)
- Operational aspects of the demonstration
- Extension and communications activities
- Conduct and reporting of monitoring and evaluation

MLA funding cannot be used for:

- Purchase of capital items (applicants should investigate sponsorship, share or leasing arrangements)
- Items of significant private benefit e.g. DNA testing of whole flocks

Priority areas:

MLA is seeking proposals that align demonstration and practice change with one or more business profit drivers and reducing business risk (priority areas). Proposals should align with one or more priority areas:

Priority areas	Example practices:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving reproductive performance 2. Pasture and grazing management 3. Meeting market specifications and compliance 4. Improving liveweight gain (productivity) 5. Enhancing enterprise efficiency (business management and reduced risk) 	<p><i>Animal Management Practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive management • Manage weaning and weaners • Manage ewe lambs • Improving market compliance • Reducing mortality <p><i>Feedbase</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match feed supply and demand • Grazing and stocking rate management • Pasture / fodder management & utilisation • Weed, & natural resource, management <p><i>People & Business</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data informed decision making • Measuring and managing Cost of Production • Measuring and managing whole of business performance • Risk management, including animal health and welfare • Labour efficiency

Preparing and submitting an application

The following steps should be followed:

1. Establish a producer group, supported by a facilitator (may be a partnership with an organisation that has a common purpose). All groups must include a person experienced in facilitation, communication and monitoring and evaluation of on-farm projects.
2. Define and describe what the PDS project intends to achieve i.e. what is the practical problem that the group aims to address? What is the current level of adoption of the targeted management practice(s)? How will the targeted management practices improve business profitability and productivity? What production systems is the targeted practice applicable to and what is the scale of these production systems? What is the potential scale of benefit to businesses?
3. Identify the PDS site management team and producer Chair.
4. Submit a Preliminary Application (max 2 pages) outlining your proposed project. The Preliminary Application should be submitted on or before **15 January 2015**. Application forms can be obtained at:
<http://www.mla.com.au/Research-and-development/Funding-opportunities/Producers>
5. All applicants will be notified of acceptance or otherwise by **22 January 2016**. If your Preliminary Application has been accepted, you will then need to prepare a Full Application using the PDS Application form and submit to MLA by **19 February 2016**.
6. If your PDS is to be contracted through a supporting agency, e.g. DPI or Landcare group, submit your PDS application to the management of the participating supporting agency, prior to submitting to MLA for review and endorsement.
7. All applicants will be notified by **4 March 2016**.

Further information about PDS eligibility criteria, guidelines and Application Forms are available at www.mla.com.au/producersupport

Selection Criteria

1. Potential impact on producer business profit drivers
2. Methodology to demonstrate the technology / practice / innovation
3. Methodology to achieve group engagement and adoption
4. Extension and communications plan and activities within the PDS group and more broadly
5. PDS team capability to undertake the requirements of a PDS
6. Value for money

Applications that demonstrate cash and in-kind producer support and sponsorship for capital items will be viewed favourably.

Additional commitments

- PDS project facilitators and / or chairs may be required to participate in MLA regional forums which will operate as a component of MLA's regional producer consultation strategy.
- Projects may be required to nominate a producer case study(s) for MLA communication activities.

For further information:

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