

Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) Projects

Terms of Reference for 2016 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 demonstrate and validate the business value of integrating new management practices, research and development outputs 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 improving **sheep enterprise and goat enterprise business profitability and productivity** and that are able to commence early 2017. Funding is available for up to 6 sheep enterprise and 1-2 goat enterprise projects this round. Additional open calls for applications related to sheep and beef businesses may follow.

What is a PDS?

- Be initiated by a producer group and address a key adoption issue limiting enterprise productivity and profitability and result in impact when adopted by producers.
- Of sufficient interest that it is demonstrated on 3 -5 (preferably more) different properties and be at a commercially relevant scale.
- Have a core group of producers directly involved in the project (10 producers minimum) with a larger network of producers (observers) keen to attend workshops or field days to learn about outcomes.
- Core producers are responsible for much of the in-field activities (e.g. measurements, stock rotations etc)
- Be based on a known, scientifically proven technology/practices, i.e. not involve basic research on a problem/issue.
- Have a robust method, including the use of controls for demonstration comparison
- Have a suitably skilled facilitator to guide group activity, coordinate extension activities and ensure protocols are implemented.
- 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 benefit to individual businesses and industry. 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. A copy of the MER plan guidelines is available on the [MLA website](#).

What is not a PDS?

- Based on an issue of limited interest to producers in the area or an issue that contributes only very marginal improvement in enterprise business performance
- Basic or applied research on a problem/issue (i.e. solution is not yet known)
- Demonstration of how commercial technologies operate and perform. Demonstrations involving commercial technologies must focus on the business / decision making value of the technology, not whether it works.
- Demonstration on only a small number of properties (i.e. less than 3) and not at commercial scale.
- A project where the facilitator does all the work including taking in-field measurements etc

Who can apply?

Funding is available for sheep and goat producer groups to validate and demonstrate the business value of integrating new technologies and on-farm management practices into local farming systems. All MLA contracts will be with a registered company or organisation that has an ABN. For unincorporated producer groups arrangements should be made for contracting through an affiliated registered organisation.

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 robust monitoring & evaluation plan (note: budget should be allocated for one trip to Sydney for training purposes)

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
- Purchase of animals

Priority areas:

MLA is seeking proposals for producer demonstration sites related to sheep enterprises that align with regional Southern Australian Meat Research Council (SAMRC) and West Australian Livestock Research Council (WALRC) priorities.

- Priorities for south-eastern Australia are on pages 16 to 18 of the [2016- SAMRC Plan Second Release](#) document which can be accessed at <http://www.samrc.com.au/samrc-plan/>
- For proposed projects to be undertaken in Western Australia please see [WALRAC priorities](#)
- For goat industry projects, applications should focus on improved feedbase utilisation, improved business/herd management and genetic improvement.

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. This should include:
 - a. What is the practical problem that the group aims to address?
 - b. What is the current level of adoption of the targeted management practice(s)?
 - c. How will the targeted management practices improve business profitability and productivity?
 - d. What is the potential scale of benefit to businesses?
3. Identify the PDS management team and producer Chair.
4. Submit a Preliminary Application (max 3 pages) outlining your proposed project. The Preliminary Application should be submitted on or before **21 October, 2016**. Application forms can be obtained at:
<http://www.mla.com.au/Research-and-development/Funding-opportunities/Producers>
5. All preliminary applicants will be notified of acceptance or otherwise by **4 November, 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 **25 November 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 **9 December, 2016**.
8. Projects will be contracted and ready to commence by late December / early January

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

Selection Criteria

Selection of preliminary applications and full applications will be based on the following criteria

1. A very clear and measureable objective
2. Alignment with goat industry, SAMRC and WALRC regional priorities
3. Number and enthusiasm of producers in the core group and opportunity for broader scale engagement across the observer group / district
4. Potential impact on producer business profit drivers & industry profitability
5. Methodology to demonstrate the technology / practice / innovation(s) and achieve practice change.
6. Extension and communications plan and activities within the PDS group (core) and more broadly (observer group and nationally)
7. Proposed monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) activities

8. PDS team capability to undertake the requirements of a PDS
9. 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
- Producers involved in projects may be required to participate in impact evaluation surveys in future years.
- Successful applicants will be required to participate in MER training prior to commencement of the project.
- Projects will be required to robustly estimate the potential scale of adoption beyond the core group and the potential benefits to individual producers and industry as part of their MER plan

For further information:

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