

Terms of Reference – expansion of Expert Panel pool

NOTE: Current Expert Panel pool members are NOT required to reapply

Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) is expanding its pool of independent, technical experts available for selection and appointment to an annual Expert Panel. The Expert Panel convenes once each year to review and rank research, development and adoption (RD&A) proposals submitted to the MLA annual call for sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A. This Expert (peer review) Panel process delivers independence, quality, objectivity and transparency to project review and selection by MLA.

Each year, the independent Expert Panel Chair and MLA select an Expert Panel from an established pool of “pre-selected” technical experts. The Charter of Operations for the Expert Panel (Appendix 1 in the Terms of Reference) describes the selection process for panel members, their roles and responsibilities and the Panel’s mode of operation. Selection of up to 10 technical experts from the pre-selected pool:

- provides an appropriate balance of skills and knowledge to assess and rank the technical merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to the MLA annual call
- minimises the risk of real or perceived conflicts of interest for Panel members.

MLA also welcomes Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from suitably qualified professionals with expertise in the range of disciplines listed in the ToR. MLA particularly invites EOIs from professionals with expertise in:

- commercialization of R&D outputs
- management of intellectual property
- agricultural extension and adoption.

Selection criteria - Expert Panel Members

MLA is seeking expressions of interest from technical experts to expand the pool of potential Expert Panel members with:

- a strong track record in their area of research, development and extension/adoption expertise relevant to grassfed beef and sheepmeat
- experience in peer review
- commitment to maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process
- an interest in and commitment to the on farm component of the red meat industry.

Panel members will have the required skills and knowledge to assess and rank the technical merit of sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A proposals submitted to the MLA annual call.

Pending the successful conduct of the 2017-18 MLA annual call from 21 March to 28 April 2017, the Expert Panel will convene in Sydney NSW 16-17 May 2017.

Submission of expressions of interest

EOIs of four pages or less, addressing the selection criteria should be submitted electronically to Phoebe Berry pberry@mla.com.au by 6.00pm EDST Friday, 21 October 2016.

For further information, please contact Mary Goodacre, Consultation Strategy Manager mgoodacre@mla.com.au

Appendix 1 – Expert Panel Charter of Operations

This charter of operations sets out the governance arrangements and decision making processes for the Expert Panel.

Objective

The Expert Panel will deliver quality, objectivity and transparency to the process of selecting research, development and adoption (RD&A) projects for investment of sheepmeat and grassfed beef levies by MLA.

Description

MLA has a regional consultation framework for directing RD&A investment for grassfed cattle and sheepmeat levies. The framework enables transparency in the process of priority setting, project assessment, external peer review processes and the achievement of outputs and outcomes from RD&A investment.

The regional consultation framework is based on four levels of consultation:

- red meat industry strategy, including the Meat Industry Strategic Plan (MISP 2020), the MLA Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (MLA 2020) and the Sheep and Beef Industry Strategic Plans (SISP 2020, BISP 2020) – broad strategic direction on RD&A investment
- Red Meat Panel – specific outcome advice on national RD&A priorities and portfolio balance
- Research Councils - the North Australia Beef Research Council (NABRC), Southern Australia Meat Research Council (SAMRC) and Western Australia Livestock Research Council (WALRC) – regional prioritisation of outcomes
- regional committees and coordinated producer groups – clear avenues for grass-roots producers to identify relevant RD&A priorities.

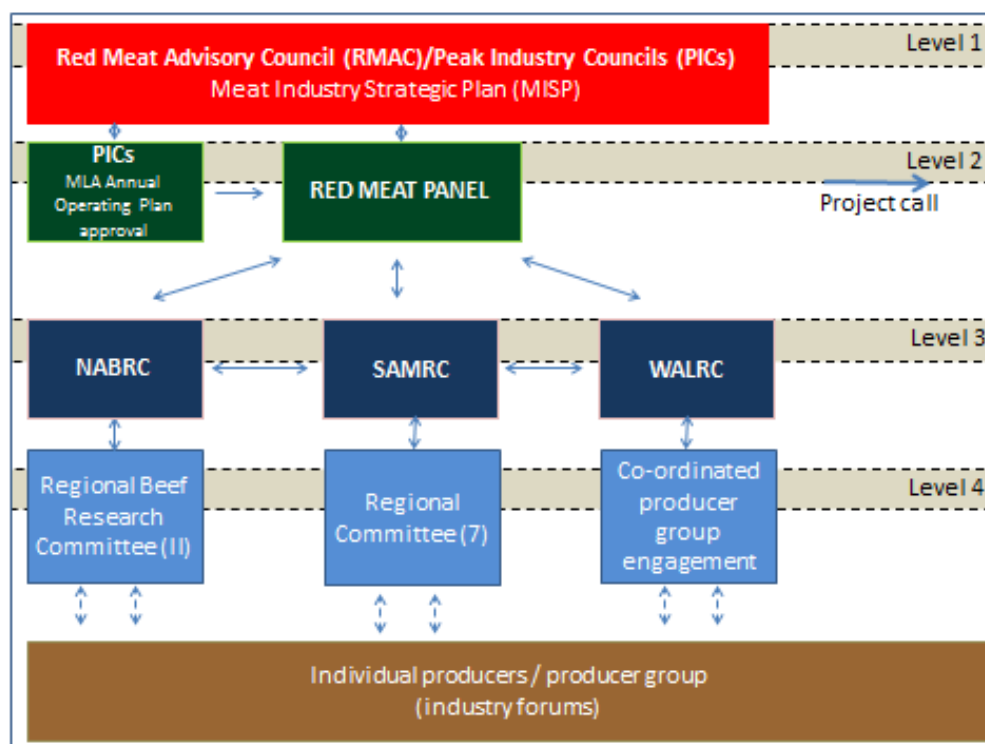


Figure 1: the regional consultation framework

MLA runs an annual call for sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A, in conjunction with the regional consultation framework. Table 1 illustrates the annual call process.

Table 1: 2017-18 annual call timelines

Stages in MLA annual call	Opening date	Closing date
Red Meat Panel convenes to identify national RD&A priorities and Terms of Reference for the 2017-18 annual call based on regional consultation	15-16 November 2016	N/A
National priorities for sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A published on the MLA website	Week commencing 21 November 2016	N/A
Annual call for projects in response to terms of reference for priority sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A published on the MLA website	28 November 2016	23 December 2016
Producer panels work with MLA to assess preliminary proposals for their fit with RD&A priorities and benefit to producers	2 February 2017	7 March 2017
Proponents of unsuccessful preliminary proposals notified	Week commencing 20 March 2017	N/A
MLA invites full proposals for projects that address national RD&A priorities for sheepmeat and grassfed beef	21 March 2017	28 April 2017
Expert panel reviews the technical merit, team capacity, innovation and significance of full proposals	16-17 May 2017	N/A
Red Meat Panel reconvenes to review and endorse the suite of 2017-18 projects that achieve a balanced RD&A portfolio for investment of sheepmeat and grassfed beef levies	18-19 July 2017	N/A
Proponents of unsuccessful full proposals notified	Week commencing 31 July 2017	N/A
New sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A projects commence subject to MLA approval processes and research provider acceptance of standard MLA terms and conditions	August 2017	N/A

The process will be a staged annual program management and approval process which involves evaluation of the RD&A portfolio balance by the Red Meat Panel, an annual project call for new short, medium and long term investments, as well as review of existing projects.

The Red Meat Panel will maintain a close focus on RD&A portfolio balance and targets for shorter term/smaller budget projects to longer term/larger programs ratio - initially 70:30.

The Expert Panel will provide an independent review of the technical merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to MLA following review of the preliminary proposals by producer panels and MLA.

Functions and roles

Other research and development corporations (RDCs) use specialist and/or regional panels to evaluate and assess RD&A proposals.

An Expert Panel will make formal, independent, scientific, peer review of full RD&A proposals a feature of MLA's project approval process. The Panel will assess and rank the technical merit of all full proposals submitted in response to the MLA annual call.

The Expert Panel will:

- use an evidence-based approach to assess the scientific merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to MLA through the annual call, including:
 - reviewing a benefit/cost analysis (BCA) for each project where appropriate, prior to the panel meeting
 - formal scoring/grading and ranking of each project
- develop and apply a clear decision making framework based on a terms of reference and guiding principles for engagement
- rank based on technical merit, the research projects and programs that address the terms of reference for MLA's annual project call for the investment of sheepmeat and grassfed beef levies in priority on-farm RD&A
- provide the information required for effective reporting of decisions to endorse or reject RD&A proposals to:
 - the proponents of the research proposals
 - the Councils and regional committees that form the regional consultation framework
 - the Red Meat Panel.

Panel membership

In 2016, MLA conducted an open and transparent recruitment process based on responses to a terms of reference and was applied to the selection and appointment of the Expert Panel Chair. The Chair was appointed for a three year (renewable) term (2016-2018) and:

- has a very strong track record of achievement in an area of research, development and extension/adoption expertise relevant to grassfed beef and sheepmeat
- significant experience leading independent, quality, objective and transparent peer review processes
- demonstrates commitment to the on farm component of the red meat industry and to maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process
- professionally and proactively chairs panel meetings and tele-conferences, including managing meeting agendas, facilitating or leading discussions
- works with MLA to develop meeting and tele-conference agendas and manage the completion of action items and correspondence
- participates as an observer in Red Meat Panel meetings where required to address specific technical questions on scientific merit.

MLA will conduct an open call for expressions of interest from technical experts to be considered for pre-selection to a pool of potential Expert Panel members with:

- a strong track record in their area of research, development and extension/adoption expertise relevant to grassfed beef and sheepmeat
- experience in peer review
- commitment to maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process
- an interest in and commitment to the on farm component of the red meat industry.

The call for expressions of interest for panel member positions will require response to terms of reference developed by MLA and the independent Chair of the Expert Panel.

MLA managers and the independent Chair of the Expert Panel will review EOIs and recommend appropriately skilled and experienced applicants for addition to a pool of pre-selected technical experts. The pool will be reviewed annually, and expressions of interest called to expand the pool and to fill any existing or new skills gaps.

Each year, MLA will convene one Expert Panel of technical experts from the pre-selected pool of technical experts. The independent Chair of the Expert Panel and MLA General Managers of the Producer Consultation and Adoption (PCA) and Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) business units will recommend up to 10 panel members. Panel membership will ensure an appropriate balance of skills and knowledge to assess and rank the technical merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to the MLA annual call, and minimise real or perceived conflicts of interest.

Expert Panel members and their roles are described in the table below.

Member/s	Role
Independent Chair	Ensure reporting, consistency and equity
Up to ten technical experts from the pool of pre-approved technical experts with track records in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • animal health • animal welfare • natural resource management • climate adaptation/methane production • plant breeding • pasture agronomy • soil science • pest animals • animal nutrition • animal genetics • meat science • reproductive science • whole farm systems • extension and adoption • other on-farm RD&A areas. 	Determine and rank the technical merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to the MLA open call that address the terms of reference for investment of sheepmeat and grassfed beef levies

MLA PCA and RDI managers will address any points of clarification identified by the Expert Panel in the course of the Panel's assessment of the technical merit of full proposals. This may include (but not be limited to) advice on the existing MLA portfolio of RD&A within each discipline and the fit of projects with past and current sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A and industry plans.

The Panel may choose to invite observers to Panel meetings to address industry priorities, RD&A capacity and portfolio balance. Observers may include the Chair of the Red Meat Panel and other MLA managers.

Panel operation

Groups of up to three Expert Panel members will be assigned a suite of full proposals to assess, matched to their area of expertise or broad industry knowledge. Panel members will assess each proposal using a 50:25:25 weighting based on:

- scientific quality and innovation (50)
- outcomes are achievable and deliver against industry RD&A priorities (25)
- team quality, performance relative to opportunity and contribution to career development, particularly early career researchers (25).

The Panel will rank each full proposal as High, Medium or Low based on technical merit. Ranked full proposals will be presented to the Red Meat Panel for review and endorsement.

Meetings

The Expert Panel will convene for up to three days each year in Sydney to align with the MLA annual call. The Panel may also conduct teleconferences if required.

MLA will provide the following secretariat services to the Expert Panel:

- plan and organise face to face meetings including meeting venue and accommodation for members
- plan and organise teleconferences as required
- record and distribute meeting minutes and action list for all Expert Panel meetings
- provide additional support and communications as required.

MLA will provide funding support for venue hire and catering for meetings. MLA will also pay sitting fees for the independent chair (\$1,200/day ex GST) and panel members (\$1,000/day ex GST) to attend face to face meetings along with out-of-pocket expenses including travel and accommodation.