**Terms of Reference**

**Livestock Genetics Early Researcher – Projects & Capability Development Program**

**National Livestock Genetics Consortium (NLGC)**

**Summary**

Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) is establishing a program within the Livestock Genetics research sector to build advanced research capabilities, alongside professional development. This program will be supported by the National Livestock Genetics Consortium and MLA, who are requesting project proposals to answer research questions from early career individuals working in livestock genetics research with the capability to undertake research, development and adoption (RD&A) activities in the Livestock Genetics sector. The aim is that alongside fostering development & capability in industry the outcomes of the projects will be in line with the priorities of the NLGC and industry genetic progress.

**Background**

This program is designed to target postdoctoral researchers, final year PhD candidates or early career individuals looking to pursue a research career, with a focus on livestock genetics R&D in the red meat industry. There will be 4x positions available within the program.

The key objectives of the program are as follows:

* Build advanced research capabilities in livestock genetics
* Foster collaboration and innovation
* Enhance leadership, communication, and grant-writing skills
* Provide exposure and networking opportunities
* Support career progression into independent research roles

The primary aim of the NLGC is to increase the rate of genetic progress achieved for traits that drive value chain productivity & sustainability in the sheep and beef industries. The Terms of Reference (ToR) is based on the RD&A priorities from the NLGC, [NLGC Strategy to 2030](https://www.mla.com.au/globalassets/mla-corporate/research-and-development/program-areas/genetics-and-breeding/mla-nlgc-strategic-plan-23-web.pdf) as well as the [MLA Strategic Plan 2030](https://www.mla.com.au/globalassets/mla-corporate/about-mla/documents/mla-2030-strategic-plan-web.pdf) and [Red Meat 2030](http://rmac.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/RedMeat2030.pdf).

**Program Structure & Timeline – Research Project & Capability Program**

1. Competitive Proposal Submission to ToR *(Sept 2025 – Jan 2026)*

* Submission of proposals to the NLGC *(Nov 2025)*
* Selection of successful candidates *(Nov-Dec 2025)*
* Successful candidates will be matched with academic & industry mentors *(Jan 2026).*

2. Research Project Development & Start *(Jan – Dec 2026)*

* Each participant leads a livestock genetics research project (project duration 12-18 months).
* Access to lab facilities, data, and field trials.
* Progress reviews with mentors across the duration of the project.

3. Networking and workshops *(Jan 2026 – Jun 2027)*

* Mid-project presentation to the National Livestock Genetics Consortium.
* Industry roundtables and stakeholder engagement across program.
* Facilitation of attendance at relevant industry workshops.
* Annual workshop with industry representatives to foster networking & collaboration.

4. Final report and presentation of outcomes *(Jun 2027)*

* Showcase research outcomes to NLGC/industry.
* Integrated into an NLGC Alumni network.

**Project Call Priorities**

MLA and the NLGC are seeking research projects and associated proposals that support genetic progress and should contribute to achieving goals of the NLGC and Red Meat 2030.

Themes for research projects to consider:

* Reference populations
* Multibreed evaluation
* Genomics/Sequencing
* Novel Traits
* BREEDPLAN & OVIS Efficiency
* Indexes
* Novel phenotyping

In addition to the above investment themes, R&D projects that also successfully address the strategic industry outcomes set by the NLGC will be viewed favourably. These NLGC strategic priorities to 2030 include:

* An industry improvement of 2% in the rate of genetic gain annually through access to world leading genetic/genomic technologies.
* Genetics is an established long-term enabler for achieving productivity and sustainability goals.
* Genetics tools addressing sustainability outcomes are available to users across the supply chain.
* Data platforms that enable genetic data to be leveraged in R&D to underpin continual data capture are established.

**Scope**

The scope of the Genetics Project Call is national, although individual projects may be specific to certain regions, enterprises or species if beneficial to the industries overarching goals. The acceptable duration of projects will be 12-18 months.

**Funding breakdown**

**Project funding will consist of 25% levy, 30 % MDC, 45% Participant Contribution**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Funding pathway**  | **Amount**  |
| Levy  | $50,000 |
| MDC  | $60,000 |
| Participant Contribution | $90,000 |

**Funding Allocation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Estimated Allocation** |
| Research Project Funding including operating expenses | $150,000 |
| Travel | $10,000 |
| Mentorship & Coaching – Allocated supervisor  | $10,000 |
| Workshops x 4  | $15,000 |
| Networking & Meetings | $5,000 |
| Administration & Reporting for the project and program  | $10,000 |
| **Total** | **$200,000** |

**Confidentiality and intellectual property**

Applicants must identify any background intellectual property (BIP) brought to the project and bring any background IP required that is not owned by MLA. All data and cited references must be acknowledged in the final report and it is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure copyright laws are not breached. Any Project IP may be incorporated and used in the Breeding Values Services and any National Genetics Data Platforms, or for further research consistent within the MLA Livestock Genetics R&D program.

The successful applicant will be required to enter into a [standard umbrella agreement](https://www.mla.com.au/globalassets/mla-corporate/about-mla/documents/umbrella-research-agreement---final.docx) with MLA if there is not already such an agreement in place.

MLA will share and discuss this proposal with members of the NLGC Taskforce. Please acknowledge this freedom to operate in the application.

**Project video pitch**

In addition to the Preliminary proposal submission as part of this project call a video pitch is also required to be submitted.

A 2 minute pitch outlining the key outcomes of the proposal, your career goals in the livestock genetics sector and why you would like to be involved in this program of work, is to be included with the submission.

**Project call timelines**

1. September 2025 – Project call for proposals opens
2. 7th November 2025 – Proposals due
3. Late November 2025 – Proposals reviewed by NLGC and feedback provided (within 15 business days of meeting)
4. Successful applicants to develop proposals further with MLA project managers to proceed to contracting.

**Deadline for submissions and further information**

Proposals must be received by MLA before 11:59pm AEDT, 7th November 2025. Late proposals will not be accepted. All submissions must include the following and be submitted electronically to MLA: livestockgenetics@mla.com.au :

* ***Early Career Researcher – Application Form***
* ***CV***
* ***Preliminary Project Proposal***
* ***2 minute video pitch***

Submissions will be acknowledged on receival, and applicants will be advised in writing of the next steps for their submission within 15 business days of the next NLGC Taskforce meeting scheduled in late November 2025.

If you have any questions regarding the project call or would like to discuss possible project applications, please email livestockgenetics@mla.com.au or contact:

*Clara Bradford*

*Program Manager – Genetics R&D*

*Meat and Livestock Australia*

*cbradford@mla.com.au*