

MLA Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) Application Guidelines for Preliminary Applications

Planning your project and developing a preliminary application

Planning your project is an important step of your application. Your group should engage with all participating parties early in the planning phase. Appropriate technical support should be brought in to ensure a sound design (methodology), and effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER).

To assist in developing your application the following guidelines have been prepared. They should be read in conjunction with the relevant **PDS Terms of Reference (ToR)** and the **Levy and Co-Contributor preliminary PDS application forms**, available on the [MLA website](#).

It is important to ensure that the correct application form is used for the PDS funding option that your group is applying for.

Priority/Industry Target

For Levy PDS applications:

Identify the regional priority the application will address. Levy applications must align with at least one PDS priority outlined in the PDS Terms of reference (available at www.mla.com.au/pds).

Co-contributor PDS applications:

Identify how the project aligns to industry issues/priorities and targets (refer to [Red Meat 2030](#) and [MLA Strategic plan](#)). You will need to make a financial contribution under this project type (refer to Terms of Reference or [MLA Website](#)).

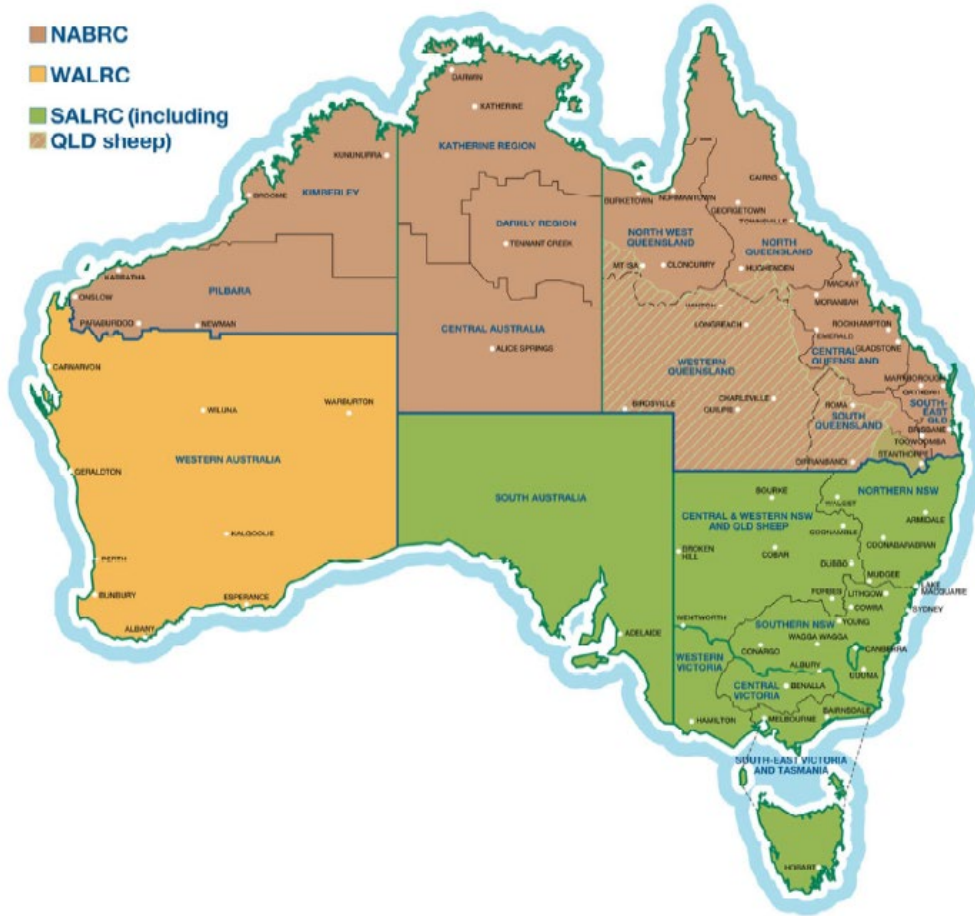
MLA Region

Please nominate the MLA consultation region & climatic zone, or zones, in which the PDS activities will be conducted. This is to be determined based on where demonstration site holders & field activities will take place. Refer to the maps below.

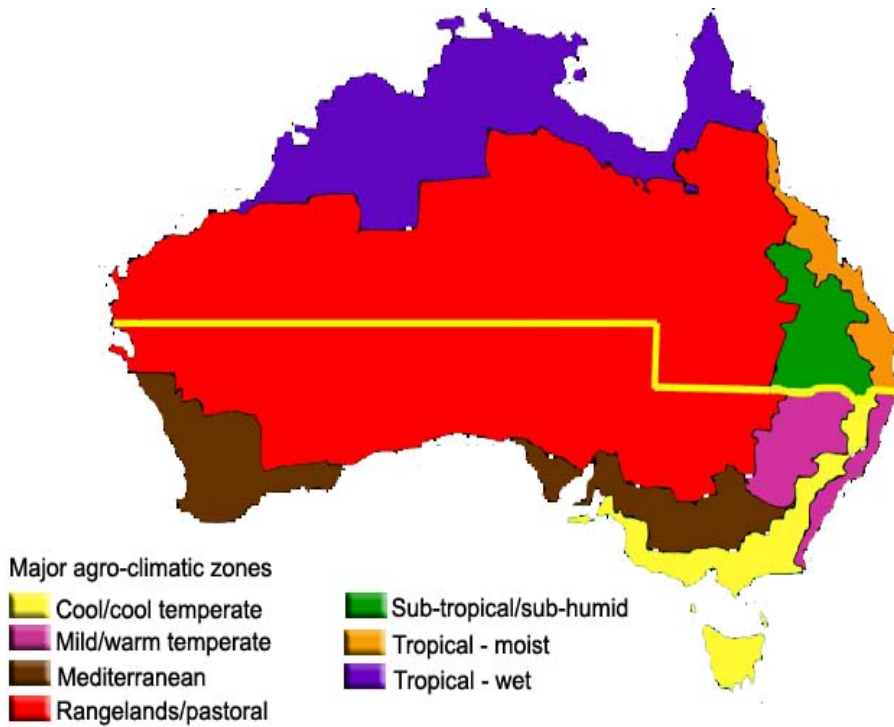
[MLA Consultation Regions Map](#)

MLA engage research advisory councils for directing research, development and adoption (RD&A) investment for grassfed cattle and sheepmeat levies. Producers are directly involved in setting priorities for the levy PDS investment stream from across the following three councils:

- [North Australia Beef Research Council \(NABRC\)](#)
- [Western Australia Livestock Research Council \(WALRC\)](#)
- [Southern Australia Livestock Research Council \(SALRC\)](#)



Climatic Zones Map



Applicant Information

Producer Group Name: Please provide the name of the producer group implementing the project.

Project Title: Please provide a title for your project that captures the essence of the work. This should be brief (**maximum of 6 words**) as it is the title by which the PDS becomes known. Consider a title that will also support search engine capability i.e. key words that reflect the project subject.

Contact Person & Contact details: Please provide the name of the person who is preparing and submitting the application on behalf of the group. These details will be used following the review of the application to advise the outcome of the review/feedback.

No. Members: Please provide the total number of members in the producer group.

No. Core Producers: Please provide the number of 'core' producers. These are the members who will be actively involved in the running of the demonstration site project. The core group must involve at least 10 producers, though flexibility is offered in extensive regions. A portion of core producers will have demonstration sites on their properties.

No. of Demonstrations Sites: Please provide the number of sites that will be used for the demonstration activity. These sites will have the key data collected from the on-farm activity throughout the life of the project.

Project Start Date/Project Completion Date: Please provide the proposed project start and completion date, minimum project period is two years, with a maximum project period of six years.

Contracting Organisation

An MLA PDS requires a contract with a single company that is responsible for reporting and invoicing. This is usually the organisation that the facilitator works for or the Producer Group. Please note MLA is unable to contract with entities registered as a sole trader.

For unincorporated producer groups, arrangements should be made for contracting through an affiliated company.

Where the intended contracted party is a Trustee (on behalf of a trust), MLA will require copies of ID for all Trustees along with a copy of the Trust Deed.

Insurance

The contracted organisation must provide details of current insurance policies held by it and each proposed subcontractor and supplier.

Purpose/role of group

Provide brief commentary about the producer group

- how many producers are involved (core and wider interest group),
- what are their areas of interest,
- did they form specifically for this project, (or already established)

- previous experience and capacity to undertake a PDS

This section should be a maximum of 300 words.

The challenge/problem

- Describe what the problem is.
- Quantify its impact on producers and the industry
- How many producers does it impact in your region?
- How is it being addressed now, if at all?
- Provide an estimate of number of producers already adopting the proposed practices
- Describe how the project will address relevant MLA regional priorities of SALRC, NABRC or WALRC (applicable to Levy PDS only). For Co-contributor PDS, identify how the project will address current industry adoption issues and work towards achieving industry targets.
- Advise if proposal has been reviewed and endorsed by the supporting partner organisation/s, or the relevant regional committee.

Project Aim

Maximum one short sentence.

This should be a broad umbrella statement such as:

- (a) Demonstrate the uptake of perennial grasses and associated management practices to increase the carrying capacity and meat production per hectare by 10%.
- (b) To improve members' skills in live assessment so they are more confident with OTH trading

Consider using words such as optimising, profitability, productivity, sustainability.

The aim cannot be to conduct basic or applied research. PDS projects must aim to demonstrate the implementation of best practice management, known research outputs or outcomes and/or technologies to increase producer knowledge, skills and adoption.

Example demonstration aim:

Demonstrate that dual-purpose canola increases pre-joining liveweight gains, condition scores, and the conception rate and reproductive rate (measured by pregnancy scanning) of ewes relative to current forage options and can be harvested in its second year to produce a seed/oil crop in the central & western NSW and QLD sheep regions.

Objectives (Measurable Outcomes)

This is probably the most critical element of your application form.

Develop objectives that meet your project aim. The measures will be the specific results from your project. Objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based) and address the selection criteria found in these Guidelines.

Take some time to clearly develop your projects objective(s). Use criteria such as number of producers developing a certain skill or a stretch kg/ha production target (eg. increasing from X kg/ha to Y kg/ha). There may be more than one objective.

For example, “

By date in the Region of ... state:

1. Demonstration trials across ... *number of sites* ... will have ... *increased / decreased* *the trait or issue you are trying to change or impact*
2. Analysis of the costs and benefits of the *trait or issue you are trying to change or impact* shows a positive return on investment (estimated)
3. xx% of core producers and xx% of observer producers will have adopted (or intend to adopt) *the trait or issue you are trying to change or impact*
4. xx% of core producers and xx% of observer producers will have improved their knowledge, skills and confidence in relation to *the trait or issue you are trying to change or impact*.
5. The results of the PDS will be widely disseminated with targeted extension and adoption activities such as

As a group it is worth developing a range of objectives (measurable outcomes), and then ranking them in order of importance to your group and evaluating how many of the objectives it would be feasible to complete within the project time frame and budget. Don't try to over-commit and make the project too complex.

It is better to have a small number of clear measurable objectives than to have an extensive but hard to quantify list. Please ensure you cover both core and observer producers and remember PDS should be designed to achieve demonstrable practice change and impact.

A detailed example is provided in the application template.

Method

Provide a summary where, how and when the project will be undertaken. Include the number of sites involved in the demonstration. Minimum of 3-5 sites preferred. (e.g. 4 demonstration sites will be established in year one, with an additional 4 new sites each year, totaling 12 sites by completion of the project).

Summarise:

- Project design and treatments: Describe the type of demonstration design and treatments used. Include the management practices producers will be developing. What will you be comparing to i.e. a control treatment?
- Animal management: Describe how you will manage your animals or will, for example, meat production be modelled? What animals will you use, how many, for how long will they be measured and for what etc.?
- Pasture management: Describe what is the type or cultivar of the pasture or crop used, and how will you manage it?
- Measurements: identify what & how the measurements will be taken
- Economics: Describe how the impact or value of your project will be demonstrated
- Producer engagement: What activities will the group implement to engage producers outside the core group i.e. observers and when?

Communication activities to engage the project and broader livestock production community

PDS progress, findings and benefits should be communicated to the core and observer producers and to the broader producer and industry audience.

Please provide details in relation to proposed communication & extension activities which could include farm visits, property field days, workshops, webinars / seminars, forums, visiting speakers, case studies, producer case studies / guidelines or videos etc.

All PDS projects will be required to provide content and producer interviewees for MLA communication channels.

Think about:

- How will you achieve skill development & adoption of the results with the core producer group?
- How will you promote the outcomes to the wider producer community?
- Opportunities to link to other groups and organisation events to communicate and extend your PDS results and message and how your communication activities will help to drive impact and adoption

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) activities

Provide a summary of the monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities that will take place throughout the project. Consider the following:

- How will you measure success at the demonstration sites e.g. economic, social & environmental benefits?
- How will you measure producer change (knowledge, skills and adoption)?
- What practices are being demonstrated and as result what data will be collected (metrics) to determine the benefit or impact of implementing the practice.
- General statistics on producer numbers and animals and area potentially impacted by the project
- Benchmark current practices in relation to the subject and undertake exit surveys to enable assessment of changes in reactions to the project (knowledge, skills, confidence etc) and changes in practices
- Extent of and impact from communication / extension activities beyond the core producers

Budget

The project budget is recorded as GST exclusive. MLA will pay GST, in addition to the budget, on presentation of a tax invoice from the contracted organisation.

Operating Expenses

Include testing fees, equipment hire, advertising for workshops, etc. that you have identified as being necessary for the completion of your project. However please seek sponsorship support or use members' equipment/materials and return afterwards. Sponsorship and use of members equipment/materials is viewed favorably as it demonstrates buy-in from commercial parties and producers.

Capital items & private good

MLA PDS funding will not cover the costs of capital items or items that have substantial private benefit. In all cases, commercial partnerships (including sponsorship, equipment loans, etc) are encouraged.

Example of items not covered by PDS funding include animals, fencing (temporary and permanent), extensive hardware, eID Tags, etc.

If you are unsure whether items should be budgeted for contact the Project Manager or National PDS Coordinator to discuss.

Travel

Car travel costs for professional support will be reimbursed. Producers need to be prepared to pay for their own travel.

Car travel will be reimbursed at the ATO standard mileage rate, please refer to the [ATO website](#) for the latest rate (72 c/km at January 2021).

Any other travel should be at economy rates.

Professional project support (Salaries) - (such as facilitation, report writing, etc.)

Please provide the estimated budget for professional support to assist with project delivery.

MLA PDS funding will **not** cover the costs of on-farm labour of the PDS project or for the purchase of animals. The animals and on-farm labour required for running the project are deemed an in-kind contribution from the group members. Direct producer involvement is a key component of skills development among the group members.

MLA PDS funding can support the cost of the group engaging a project facilitator (and/or other professional support) who is experienced in delivering on-farm research and demonstration projects and is responsible for project design, set up, overseeing monitoring, data recording, data analysis and reporting.

PDS funding is not available for the facilitator to conduct routine monitoring and data collection.

In-kind Contribution

Provide an estimated budget for in-kind contributions from supporting organisations.

For example:

- Group – Number of in-kind days that members are contributing to this PDS - on their own property, at other trial site(s), attending workshops, courses etc. Define as number of days.
- Sponsors - PDS groups are encouraged to obtain sponsorship for inputs where possible.
- Other funding sources - Will your group be applying for, or already have, funding from other sources for this project?
- If Government Department Officers are assisting in your project on an unpaid basis please estimate their time.

Simply complete the summary tables in the application form. See examples below for further assistance.

For Levy PDS projects:

A simple table that combines the values provided in sections 15.1 – 15.3 to provide the total contract value. Example below.

BUDGET ITEM*	TOTAL (\$)
Salaries* (MLA requests funds)	40 000.00
Operating* e.g. field days costs,	25 000.00
Travel*	10 000.00
TOTAL MLA cash requested:	75 000.00
In-kind – from supporting organisations	15 000.00
In-kind - for producer time and resources	50 000.00
PROJECT TOTAL:	140 000.00

For Co-Contributor PDS projects:

An 8% access fee, for producer contributions, is included to cover costs associated with providing and operating MDC programs. Example below.

BUDGET ITEM	TOTAL (\$)
Fees	\$39,300
Operating Items	\$19,300
SUB TOTAL PROJECT COST	A
Plus 8% of SUB TOTAL (MDC Access fee) <i>N.B.: Applicable to Co-Contributor Applications only</i>	B
TOTAL CONTRACT VALUE	A+B

Producer Funding Co-Contribution

	Funding percentage	Cash Contribution to the project (ex GST)	Access Fee	TOTAL (ex GST)
Producer	25% of A above	\$14,650	25% of B above	\$1,172
MLA / MDC	75% of A above	\$43,950	75% of B above	\$3,516
TOTAL		\$58,600		\$4,688

For more information on cash flow and invoicing for Co-contributor PDS projects please refer to the Co-Contributor Cash flow Frequently Asked questions (FAQ) document available on the [MLA website](#).

The FAQ has been developed to assist producer groups to understand the mechanics of cash flow with MDC, including when producer contributions are required to be paid.

Other Important information relevant to PDS Applications

Animal Welfare Committee Approval

Supporting Partner Organisations are responsible for obtaining any relevant Animal Welfare Committee approval from their respective organisations prior to approval of PDS funding. If animal welfare committee approval is required, please advise once approval has been received. Consider the cost of obtaining animal welfare committee approval in your project budget.

Intellectual property (IP)

a. Ownership

Project IP Interests will be outlined in the contract.

You must ensure you own or have permission to use any Background IP used in the project

b. Provision of information

The Contracted Organisation must provide MLA with all information in its possession regarding Project IP which has been developed or is in the process of being developed.

c. Personnel

The Contracted Organisation must ensure that those of its employees, agents and contractors who participate in the Project:

- (a) identify Project IP generated or developed by them;
- (b) promptly communicate details of Project IP to MLA; and
- (c) assign ownership of all Project IP in accordance with the provisions within the MLA agreement

Acknowledgement and project review process

A completed application includes a signed declaration (see Terms of Reference) and the relevant application form submitted electronically via email to: Russell Pattinson PDS Coordinator, Miracle Dog Pty Ltd, email: miracladog@bigpond.com (Ph 0419872684); Maria Thompson PDS Coordinator, AgStar Projects, email: maria@agstarprojects.com.au and pds@mla.com.au.

For Co-Contributor projects, in addition to the standard Tender declaration, the source of funds declaration (See [Terms of Reference](#)) must be completed and submitted.

Once received, applications will be acknowledged and recorded on the MLA project information system.

Levy PDS application Review:

A panel of NABRC, SALRC & WALRC producer representatives, MLA RD&A Managers, Technical Experts and the PDS National Coordinators will assess preliminary applications.

Co-Contributor PDS applications:

MLA RD&A Managers, Technical Experts and the PDS National Coordinators will assess both preliminary applications.

All projects will be ranked against the selection criteria and competing applications. Applicants will be advised by email of the outcome of their submission.

Supported projects will be invited to submit a full application.

Key Roles, Responsibilities & Contacts

Producer Group Chair/Lead Producer - is the key contact for the producer group.

Core Producers- are those directly involved in the project. The core producers are committing to the project and the expected outlined practice change by undertaking and participating in the project. A number of core producers will be demo site owners.

Observer Producers - producers who will receive regular updates on progress of the PDS, through communication activities, as well as attending workshops and field days

Group Facilitator - is experienced in delivering on-farm research and demonstration projects and is responsible for project design, set up, overseeing monitoring, data recording, data analysis and reporting.

Contracted Organisation - holds an executed agreement with MLA to deliver the project and is responsible for the management of the project budget. The contracted organisation may be the Producer Group, the Group Facilitator or another company that is directly involved in the PDS project.

National PDS Coordinators - are contracted on MLA's behalf to drive the development and implementation of the PDS program.

Russell Pattinson, Miracle Dog, Ph: 0419 872 684, Email: miracladog@bigpond.com

Maria Thompson, AgStar Projects, Ph: 0411 961 545, Email: maria@agstarprojects.com.au

MLA Project Manager - The MLA project manager responsible for the contracting, and ongoing management of the PDS Program, including managing the annual open call for projects.

Hilary Connors, Project Manager Producer Demonstration Site Program, Ph: 0427 467 608 Email: hconnors@mla.com.au

MLA Adoption Program Manager - is responsible for overseeing the management and implementation of MLA's producer adoption and extension activities, which the PDS program falls under.

Sally Leigo, Program Manager Producer Adoption, Ph: 0447 634 044 Email: sleigo@mla.com.au