



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 in 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, Co-Contributor** and **Partnership 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](#)). The producers will need to make a financial contribution under this project type (refer to Terms of Reference or [MLA Website](#)).

Partnership PDS applications:

Identify how the project aligns to industry issues/priorities and targets (refer to [Red Meat 2030](#) and [MLA Strategic plan](#)). Applicants are also encouraged to consider the regional priorities set by through the consultation process outlined as the Levy priorities in the terms of reference. A financial contribution is required 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 \(SALRC\)](#)

Applicant Information

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. of Members: Please provide the total number of members in the producer group.

Location of Group: Please provide the general location of the group members.

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 of the group and supporting delivery partners to undertake a PDS.

This section should be a maximum of 300 words.

The challenge/problem/opportunity

This section of the application should specify as objectively as possible:

- What the challenge/problem/opportunity is.
- Quantify its impact on producers and the industry, include reference to previous research where possible.
- 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 the relevant priority/ies and/or adoption issues and work towards achieving industry targets.
- Outline what benefits the project will deliver to producers, their businesses and the industry in the longer term.
- 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 commercially available 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> region of <state>, engaging x core producers and a minimum of x observer producers the project will establish:

1. Demonstration trials across ... *number of sites* ... will have ... *increased / decreased* *the trait or issue you are trying to change or impact*
2. Simple 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 of 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 and Extension activities

The communication and extension activities are designed to maintain engagement in the project with the core and observer producers, as well as extend the project progress, outcomes and outputs 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/project summaries, in-depth articles 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 knowledge and skill development & adoption of the results with the core producer group?
- How will you increase the awareness of the demonstrated practices
- How will you promote the outcomes to the observer group and 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.
- Include the 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 the presentation of a tax invoice from the contracted organisation.

Operating Expenses

Includes 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 PDS Coordinators 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 (88 c/km for 2024/25).

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.

Example budget table Levy PDS projects:

BUDGET ITEM	TOTAL (ex GST)
Salaries (MLA requests funds)	\$55,000
Operating e.g. field days costs,	\$35,000
TOTAL MLA cash requested:	\$90,000
In-kind – from supporting organisations	\$15,000
In-kind - for producer time and resources	\$50,000
PROJECT TOTAL:	\$155,000

Example budget table for Co-Contributor PDS projects:

BUDGET ITEM	TOTAL (\$)
Fees*	\$100,000
Operating Items (including Travel Costs)*	\$80,000
SUB TOTAL PROJECT COST	A \$180,000

An 8% access fee, for producer contributions, is included to cover costs associated with providing and operating MDC programs. Where additional third-party contribution (non-producer dollars) is being matched by MDC, the access fee is 12% of the contribution amount. Examples below.

Producer contribution only:

In this scenario, the producer contribution is 30% of the project costs, based on this the funding split of: 50% Levy, 30% producer contribution & 20% MDC. The access fee is calculated at 8% of the contribution values.

	Funding percentage	Cash Contribution to the project (ex GST)	Access Fee	TOTAL (ex GST)
Producer	30% of A above	\$54,000	8% of the contribution	\$4,320
MDC	20% of A above	\$36,000	8% of the contribution	\$2,880
MLA (Levy)	50% of A above	\$90,000		
TOTAL CASH CONTRIBUTIONS		\$180,000.00	TOTAL ACCESS FEE	\$7,200
TOTAL CONTRACT VALUE (TOTAL CONTRIBUTION + TOTAL ACCESS FEE)			\$187,200	

Producer + third party contribution:

In this scenario the producer contribution is 15% of the project costs, based on this the funding split is: 45% Levy, 15% producer contribution, 18% third party contribution, 22% MDC. The access fee is charged at 8% on the producer contribution and 12% on the third party contribution.

	Funding percentage	Cash Contribution to the project (ex GST)	Access Fee	TOTAL (ex GST)
Producer	15% of A above	\$27,000	8% of the contribution	\$2,160
MDC (Producer)	10% of A above	\$18,000	8% of the contribution	\$1,440
Third party	18% of A above	\$32,400	12% of the contribution	\$3,888
MDC(Third Party)	12% of A above	\$21,600	12% of the contribution	\$,2592
MLA (Levy)	45% of A above	\$81,000		
TOTAL CASH CONTRIBUTIONS		\$180,000	TOTAL ACCESS FEE	\$10,080
TOTAL CONTRACT VALUE (TOTAL CONTRIBUTION + TOTAL ACCESS FEE)			\$190, 080	

Partnership PDS contribution:

In this scenario the minimum contribution is 60% of the project costs, based on this the funding split is: 60% contribution, 40% MDC. The access fee is charged at 8% if the contribution is originator from a producer/levy payer and 12% on other third-party contributions.

	Funding percentage	Cash Contribution to the project (\$ ex GST)	Access Fee	TOTAL (\$ ex GST)
Partner	60% of A above	\$180,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 8% / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 12% of the contribution	\$21,600
MLA/MDC	40% of A above	\$120,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 8% / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 12% of the contribution	\$14,400
TOTAL CASH CONTRIBUTIONS		\$300,000	TOTAL ACCESS FEE	\$36,000
TOTAL CONTRACT VALUE (TOTAL CONTRIBUTION + TOTAL ACCESS FEE)			\$336,000	

For more information on cash flow and invoicing for Co-contributor and Partnership PDS projects please refer to the PDS MDC Cash flow Frequently Asked questions (FAQ) document available on the [MLA website](#). The FAQ has been developed to assist applicants to understand the mechanics of cash flow with MDC, including when cash contributions are required to be paid.

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 the examples below, based on a three-year project using maximum budget, for further assistance.

In-kind contribution:

In-kind from supporting organisations	25,000
In-kind for producer time and resources	100,000
TOTAL IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION:	125,000

Other Important information relevant to PDS Applications

Animal Welfare Committee Approval

Contracted parties 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 pds@mla.com.au.

For Co-Contributor & Partnership PDS 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 via return email 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 Coordinators will assess preliminary applications.

Co-Contributor & Partnership PDS applications:

MLA RD&A Managers, Technical Experts and the PDS Coordinators will assess 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 hosts.

Observer Producers - producers are those producers beyond the core group, they will be the broader group members, and other local producers or service providers who attend project workshops and field days etc and who will receive regular updates on progress of the PDS, through communication activities.

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.

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: miracledog@bigpond.com

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

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

Alana McEwan, Ph: 0417 541 000 Email: amcewan@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