

Terms of Reference

Call for Collaborative Investment Genetics Projects (MDC Funding Call) 2025/26

National Livestock Genetics Consortium (NLGC)

Summary

Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) is seeking Preliminary Proposals (to be followed by Full Proposals post feedback and initial review) from individuals, organisations or project teams with the capability to undertake research, development and adoption (RD&A) activities in the Livestock Genetics sector that achieve outcomes in line with the priorities of the National Livestock Genetics Consortium (NLGC).

Background

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) are based on the current RD&A priorities identified by the NLGC.

There is an opportunity to increase the rate of genetic gain across all sectors of the red meat industry and to align genetic investment to value chain outcomes to improve commercial profitability and sustainability. Implementing effective R&D, along with increasing the adoption of improved livestock genetics, will drive productivity gains and support the core objectives of industry strategic plans.

Project proposals will be reviewed by the NLGC Taskforce to assess alignment with NLGC's current RD&A priorities along with the [NLGC strategy to 2030](#), [MLA strategic plan](#) and [Red Meat 2030](#). The NLGC Taskforce acts in an advisory capacity to recommend appropriate projects for funding by the MLA Donor Company (MDC). Final project approval will be subject to MLA funding availability, governance processes and contractual agreement between the applicant/s and MDC.

Project Call Investment Areas

MLA and the NLGC are seeking **Preliminary** RD&A proposals that support genetic progress in the red meat industry through conducting research, development and promoting adoption of livestock genetics. Proposals should address one or more of the following four R&D investment areas defined by the NLGC:

1. Innovative analytical methods and genotyping efficiency

- Novel or enhanced computational models for the calculation of breeding values.
- Investigate optimal SNP coverage and density, along with the value and application of targeted next generation sequencing technologies for cost-effective genomic prediction.
- Innovative on-farm DNA sample collection techniques to improve practicality and adoption.

2. Climate suited genetics and advanced phenotyping

- Advance balanced breeding programs and novel phenotyping methods for traits associated with improved resilience and sustainability, including but not limited to climate resilience, tick resistance, heat tolerance, feed efficiency, survival and immune competence.

- Integrate alternate and novel data sources in the calculation of breeding values (e.g., carcass measurements, methane phenotypes, sensor data) to strengthen prediction accuracy for hard-to-measure traits.

3. Connecting Genetics to Industry Outcomes

- Develop and validate the genetic tools and information to describe animals with genetics that are fit for purpose. This can be described as ‘Genetic Credentials’ linking on-farm genetics to outcomes both on farm and/or within the supply chain—including eating quality, sustainability, welfare, and production system fit—to support market differentiation and product claims.

4. Driving Adoption and Impact

- Evaluate how genetic information is presented for the commercial producer audience, including novel displays of breeding values for different market segments.
- Increase the use and uptake of new and emerging genetic tools in the commercial sector.

All project proposals must strongly consider and address the adoption pathway and industry application of the proposed project and detail this within the proposal. Projects without well-formed adoption and industry application plans will not be considered within the review.

In addition to the above investment areas, R&D projects that also successfully address the strategic industry outcomes identified in the NLGC strategy 2030 and MLA strategic plan 2030 will be viewed favourably.

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 typically be 1-3 years and in some cases up to five years, especially where several cohorts of animals are studied. Collaborative teams across institutions and internationally are encouraged to leverage complementary skills including research, development, adoption expertise and investments. Participation of producers and engagement with producer networks is preferred, especially in setting and reviewing the direction of proposals.

Outputs and Outcomes

Proposed RD&A activities will meet agreed milestones which will identify progress in achieving one or more of the objectives and outcomes identified in these ToR to result in the impact of improved annual rate of genetic gain in the red meat industry.

Outputs specific to each project must be clearly identified in the proposal and may include:

- Tools to enable the ease of application and use of livestock genetics
- Alignment of genetics to value chain outcomes to improve commercial profitability and sustainability
- Practical tools, industry messages and packages that contribute to ease of application and on-farm decision support
- Milestone and final reports including progress, data, analysis and recommendations for future work, development and extension
- Records, data and information that will contribute to industry through ‘Breeding Value Services’ e.g. Sheep Genetics, BREEDPLAN and contribute data towards a national

central data platform.

- Scientific, peer reviewed publications in Australian and international journals

Within these terms of reference, proposals will cover research, development and/or adoption, depending on the area and emphasis. Outcome/s should be identified and may include:

- Results of testing adoption strategies, packages and introducing practice change on farm
- Expected productivity and profitability impact from adoption of the resulting research
- Records of producer consultation, engagement and networking
- Improving the productivity, profitability and sustainability of beef and sheepmeat breeding enterprises

Funding Mechanism

Successful projects will be funded via the MLA Donor Company (MDC) funding mechanisms. The MDC will contribute up to 50% funding where there is eligible voluntary partner contributions. This call will not support projects using levy funds. For projects to achieve funding, they must be recommended for funding by the NLGC Taskforce before going through the MLA governance process. For more information on MDC funding please see [here](#).

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, defined in the proposal guidelines, for further research consistent with NLGC program overview.

Where further information is available which may assist the successful applicant in meeting the requirements of the project, MLA will provide such information to the successful applicant.

The successful applicant will be required to enter into a [standard umbrella agreement](#) 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 1-2 minute pitch outlining the key outcomes of the proposal, essentially an elevator pitch, is to be included with the submission.

Project call cycle

The project call cycle for 2026 will be as follows:

1. February 2026 – Project call for preliminary proposals opens
2. 1st April 2026 – Preliminary proposals due
3. April 2026 – Preliminary proposals reviewed by NLGC and feedback provided (within 10 business days of meeting)
4. 15th July 2026 – Full proposals due
5. August 2026 – Full proposal review by NLGC and prioritisation

Deadline for submissions and further information

Preliminary Proposals must be received by MLA before 11:59pm AEDT, 1st of April 2026. Late proposals will not be accepted. All proposals must be submitted on the NLGC preliminary proposal template electronically to MLA: livestockgenetics@mla.com.au

Please find the link to the project application guidelines here: [MLA Project Funding Application Guidelines](#).

Please find the link to the preliminary project application form here: [MLA Preliminary Project Funding Application Form](#).

As above further information surrounding full proposal deadlines and submissions will be advised post Preliminary Proposal review in April 2026.

Proposals will be acknowledged on receipt, and applicants will be advised in writing of the next steps for their proposal, either a full proposal submission in July or failure of their proposal within 10 business days of the next NLGC Taskforce meeting scheduled in April 2026.

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

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