

Terms of Reference

Call for Collaborative Investment Genetics Projects (MDC Funding Call) 2023/24

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) is based on the RD&A priorities from the NLGC, [NLGC Strategy to 2030](#) as well as the [MLA 2025 Strategic Plan](#) and [Red Meat 2030](#).

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 in order to improve commercial profitability and sustainability. The implementation of R&D as well as improving adoption in livestock genetics will in turn improve productivity, a common goal of industry strategic plans.

Project proposals will be reviewed by the NLGC Taskforce to assess alignment with NLGC's RD&A priorities. 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 Priorities

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 contribute to achieving goals of the NLGC and Red Meat 2030 through one or more of the following 3 key R&D investment areas defined by the NLGC;

1. New models for future reference populations

Establish and apply a framework to value phenotype and genotype collection, that facilitates self-sustaining and cost-effective reference populations. This is to consider the ongoing collection for easy to measure traits, harder to measure traits and future traits of importance.

2. Accelerate the contribution of genetics towards environmental sustainability

New tools and collaborations to accelerate the contribution of genetics toward environmental sustainability. This may include new tools to fast track data collection for genetic evaluation and/or collaboration with international organisations.

3. New and novel genomic technology

Development of real-time genomic tools for genetic selection that can be value-added to provide other on-farm benefits. This may include areas relating to sustainability, welfare and disease. This could also include the validation of genomic tools that are currently available in the market.

All projects must strongly consider and address the adoption and industry application of the proposed project and detail this within the proposal. Projects without well-formed adoption considerations 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 set by the NLGC will be viewed favourably. These NLGC strategic priorities 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.

The strategic priorities from *Red Meat 2030* that the Livestock Genetics investment contributes to have been outlined below:

1. Double the value of sales of Australian red meat
2. Achieve carbon neutrality

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 central data platform. 'Accessible National Data Platform'
- Scientific, peer reviewed publications in Australian and international journals

Within these terms of reference, proposals will be at different points across research, development and 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 that contribute to Red Meat 2030 targets

Funding Mechanism

Successful projects will be funded via the MLA Donor Company (MDC) funding mechanisms. The MDC will contribute up to 40% funding where there is eligible voluntary partner contributions. This call will not support projects using levy funds. In order 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 2023/24 will be as follows:

1. November 2023 – Project call for preliminary proposals opens
2. 15th March 2024 – Preliminary proposals due
3. April 2024 – Preliminary proposals review by NLGC and feedback provided (within 10 business days of meeting)
4. 30th June 2024 – Full proposals due
5. July 2024 – Full proposal review by NLGC and prioritisation

Deadline for submissions and further information

Preliminary Proposals must be received by MLA before 11:59pm AEDT, 15th of March 2024. Late proposals will not be accepted. All proposals must be submitted on the NLGC preliminary proposal template electronically to MLA: livestockgenetics@mla.com.au

As above further information surrounding full proposal deadlines and submissions will be advised post Preliminary Proposal review in April 2024.

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 June or failure of their proposal within 10 business days of the next NLGC Taskforce meeting scheduled in April 2024.

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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