



MLA's Producer Investment Call

Charter of operations



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Version control

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1	First working group discovery workshop	10/02/2022
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Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
1.1	Background.....	4
2	Who is involved in the process?	4
2.1	Regional committees.....	6
2.2	Research Advisory Councils	7

2.3	Red Meat Panel.....	8
3	The Producer Consultation Process.....	9
3.1	Priority Setting Process	10
3.2	Step 2 – Terms of Reference.....	12
3.3	Step 3 - Producer Investment Call.....	13
3.4	Feedback.....	16
4	Expert panel members.....	17
4.1	Expert panel observer - early career researcher(s).....	17
4.2	Producer panel members	17
4.3	MLA and Red Meat Panel Chair	18
4.4	Preliminary proposal review.....	18
4.5	Full proposal review	18
5	Strategic partnerships and the Producer Investment Call	19
5.1	Strategic partnerships and their role	19
5.2	Terms of reference allocated to strategic partnerships.....	19
5.3	Ensuring the Red Meat Panel remains informed about strategic partnerships	20

1 Introduction

This document describes the producer priority consultation process which informs **MLA** research, development, and adoption (RD&A) investment of levy funds for the red meat industry. It ensures that a transparent process is used for the identification and investment in research across the red meat industry. The Process has undergone several changes following consultation with the Red Meat Panel.

This document describes the consultation process and the steps involved in the Producer Consultation and Producer Investment Call steps, as well as the panels and their members which are involved as lastly Strategic Partnerships investment process.

1.1 Background

MLA's producer consultation process empowers grassfed beef and sheep meat producers to directly influence the on-farm RD&A activities their levies are invested in. This process ensures national and regionally relevant RD&A priorities are identified to deliver optimum value to producers.

Since the implementation of the producer consultation process in 2016, MLA has funded more than \$50 million worth of projects that find solutions to producer priorities. The Producer Investment Call (the Call) has attracted more than 600 submitted preliminary proposals from 83 different applicant organisations and has resulted in almost 70 contracted projects.

MLA aims to invest in on farm research that is relevant and has impact. To ensure this is achieved, MLA asks producers to identify on farm RD&A priorities which are funded via the Call. The Call focuses on maximising effective producer involvement balanced with being fast and effective to implement. The Call ensures that funded projects contribute towards producer RD&A priorities across the following five program areas:

- i. Feedbase
- ii. Beef productivity
- iii. Sheep productivity
- iv. Animal wellbeing
- v. Sustainability

RD&A priorities are determined through the national producer consultation prioritisation process. RD&A priorities are collected once every 2 years at a minimum.

The Call is used for levy funded projects that meet producer RD&A priorities and takes place when funding is available. This process may also be used for MLA Donor Company funding if MLA and the Red Meat Panel (RMP) deem this appropriate and if:

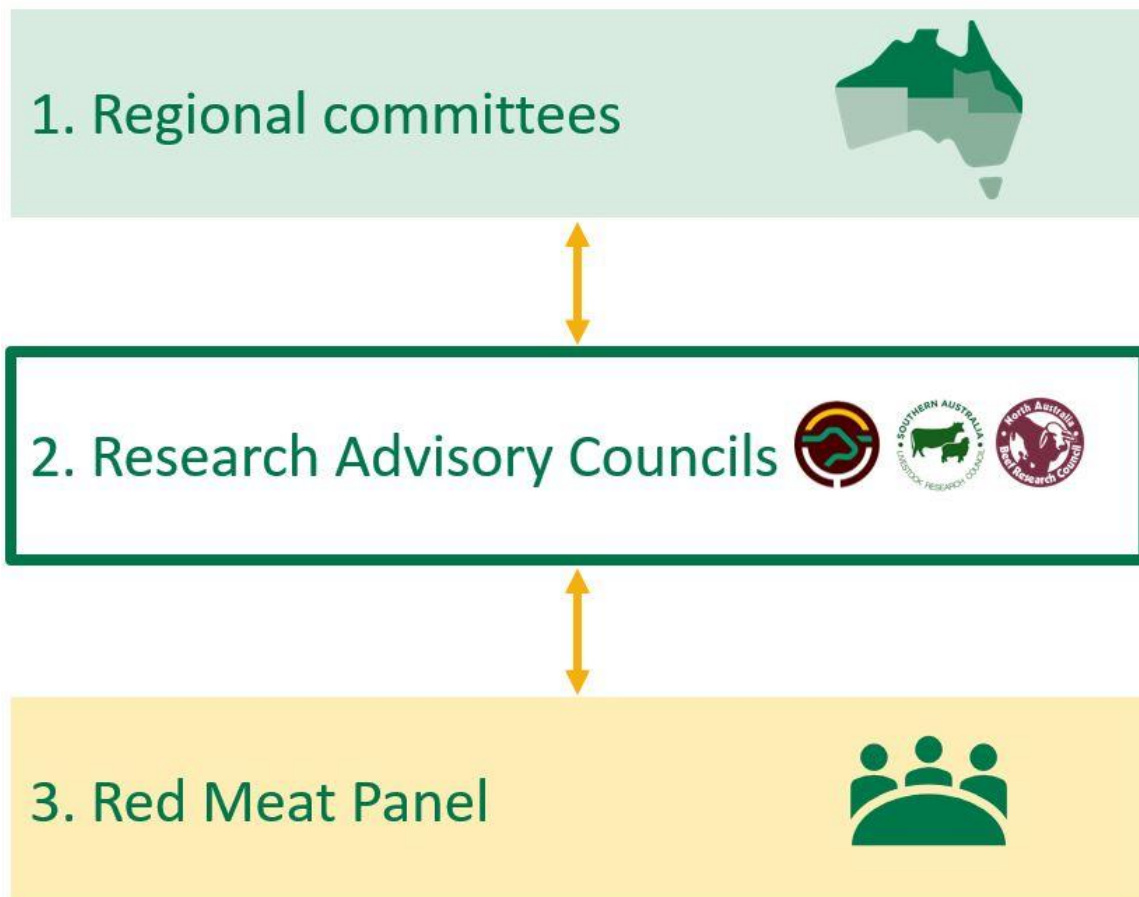
1. The terms of reference align with priorities from the producer consultation process.
2. There are no limitations due to confidentiality.

2 Who is involved in the process?

There are three levels of stakeholder groups involved in the consultation process, Regional Committees, Research Advisory Councils, and the Red Meat Panel. Regional Committees represent local regions across Australia, and broadly align with the Agro-Climatic Zones and local government

boundaries. The Regional Committees are managed by three Research Advisory Councils representing Northern, Southern, and Western Regions of Australia. The Red Meat Panel is a nationally representative panel and includes members from a broader range of industry stakeholders (described in more detail below).

Figure 1: The stakeholder consultation process builds up from regional level through to a Nationally representative stakeholder panel.



2.1 Regional committees

There are 19 regional committees throughout Australia.

The 19 regional committees come together face to face 1–2 times per year and may also meet virtually, at other time throughout the year to:

- i. identify the priorities for research, development, and adoption in their region.
- ii. keep updated and have input into research relevant to their regions and priorities.

Figure 2: The 19 regional committees are shown in the diagram below.



2.2 Research Advisory Councils

The three Research Advisory Councils are responsible for coordinating the Regional Committees.

There are three Research Advisory Councils (RACs):

- North Australia Beef Research Council (NABRC)
- Southern Australia Livestock Research Council (SALRC)
- Western Australia Livestock Research Council (WALRC).

Members of these councils provide recommendations on RD&A investments in the Australian red meat industry. Members of each council include sheepmeat and grassfed beef producers and representatives from the following organisations:

Figure 3: Current stakeholders in NABRC, SALRC and WALRC



2.3 Red Meat Panel

The Red Meat Panel (RMP) guides MLA by providing strategic oversight into the Call process. The Panel has several functions including:

- a) Approving new Terms of Reference (ToR)
- b) Endorsing successful proposals from the review process
- c) Reporting on projects that have been funded through the Producer Investment Call
- d) Evaluation of the call process and recommendations for improvements

The Red Meat Panel membership includes:

- a) An independent Red Meat Panel Chair
- b) The Chair from each of the Research Advisory Councils (NABRC, SALRC and WALRC)
- c) Two producer members from each Research Advisory Council
- d) Two representatives from Sheep Producers Australia
- e) Two representatives from Cattle Australia
- f) One representative from Meat and Livestock Australia

The RMP meets quarterly, including once a year, face to face. The timing of the meeting is dictated by when there are Terms of Reference (ToR) for are ready for endorsement, or when there are project proposals which have been assessed by the Producer and Expert Panels require endorsing. The approximate schedule for Red Meat Panel meetings is shown in Table 1. The Appendix includes an outline of the 2023-2024 Producer Investment Call timeline.

Table 1 Schedule of Red Meat Panel meetings:

Activity	Year 1				Year 2			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Extended Red Meat Panel								
Quarterly online RMP meeting								
Face to face RMP meeting								
Priorities received from RACs								

3 The Producer Consultation Process

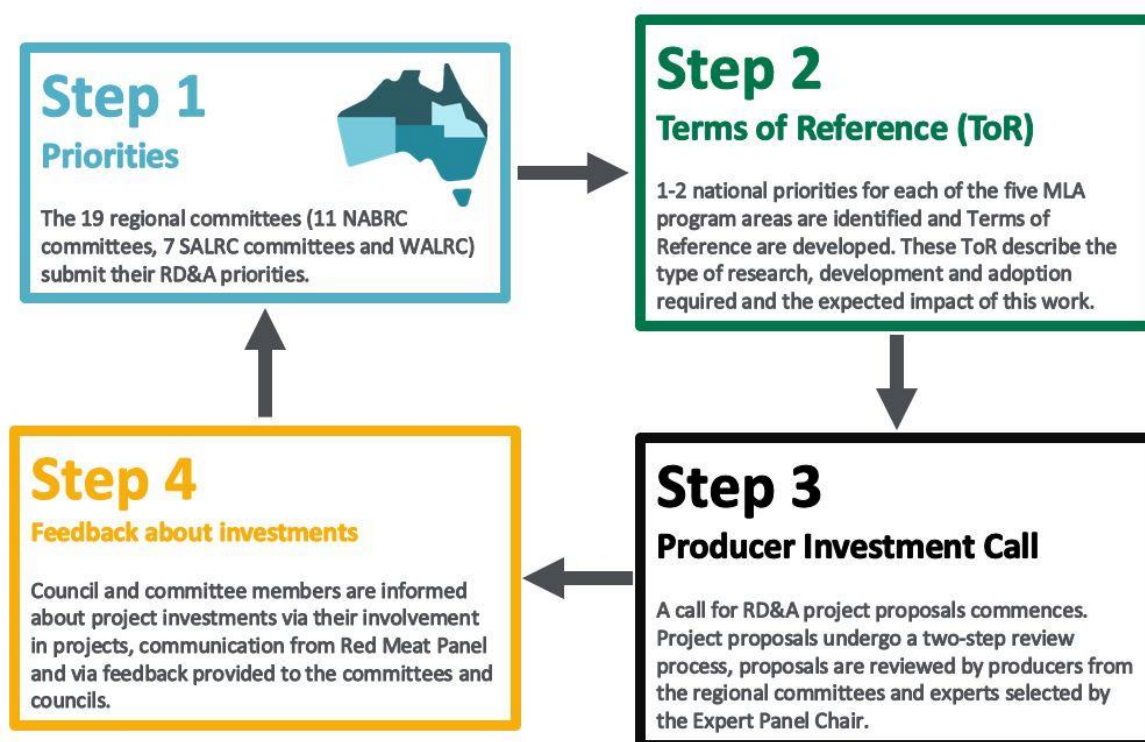
The Producer Consultation process informs investment decision making s across the five MLA Beef and Sheep program areas:

- i. Feedbase
- ii. Beef productivity
- iii. Sheep productivity
- iv. Animal wellbeing
- v. Sustainability

The Producer consultation process is a cycle containing four steps. It starts with collecting RD&A priorities from producers and finishes with feedback about investments decisions made to address identified priorities provided to councils and committee members. This feedback is designed to inform the next round of priorities.

Below is an overview of the producer consultation process which is summarised in (Figure 4). Figure 5 expands Step 1 of the process to explain the number of sub-steps undertaken.

Figure 4: Consultation Process steps



3.1 Priority Setting Process

As described in Figure 4 Consultation Process Step, Step 1 of the process is the collecting RD&A priorities. Step 1 has four stages as shown in Figure 5 below. The process is designed to allow feedback between MLA and the producer members of the regional committees who identify priorities.

Step 1 is collecting the priorities at the regional level; this is a facilitated process that the MLA Consultation Team will undertake. This is to ensure that the information is collected, prioritised, and recorded in a consistent way for all Regional Committees.

Step 2 provides the opportunity for the MLA Program Managers to respond to the priorities that have been collected. This step ensures that the regional committees are aware of past and current activities that may address their identified priorities and ensures that new ideas and research are presented to the Regional Councils for further prioritisation.

Step 3 of the process is where the two priorities for each program, from each Regional Committee are consolidated based on the feedback from Program Managers.

Step 4 involves taking these priorities to the meeting of the extended Red Meat Panel. The purpose of this workshop is to finalise the national research priorities that should be funded over the following two years, subject to the availability of funding. Up to three ToR for of the five programs are agreed upon.

Figure 5 the Priority Setting Process



3.1.1 Extended Red Meat Panel workshop

The Extended Red Meat Panel workshop brings together a broader network of Stakeholders. The workshop is held in person and runs over two days.

- Red Meat Panel members
- Chairs and Secretariats from NABRC, SALRC and WALRC
- Regional Committee Chairs (11 Regional Beef Research Committee Chairs, seven Regional SALRC Chairs and the eight Producer Members from WALRC) or an appropriate regional committee representative.
- Where a Regional Chair is unable to attend the meeting, a proxy can be sent from the region, in their place.
- MLA Program Managers from:
 - Animal Wellbeing
 - Beef Productivity
 - CN30
 - Feedbase
 - Sheep and Goat Productivity
- In addition, MLA Program Managers from the following program areas are also invited to provide technical and research input occurring in other areas pertaining to livestock production:
 - Adoption
 - Genetics
 - Live Exports
 - Meat Standards Australia (MSA)

3.1.1.1 Functions of the Extended Red Meat Panel

The workshop allows for feedback and feedforward about gaps in RD&A that need to be addressed and communication around what has already been funded and what RD&A is in the pipeline. The meeting is also an opportunity for regional committee chairs or their delegates, the RAC's, the RMP members, and MLA Program Managers to come together and discuss common industry priorities.

The Extended Red Meat Panel workshop in Step 4 undertakes several activities and functions which are listed below:

- i. Updates from Sheep Producers Australia and Cattle Australia provide about strategic priorities for their industries.
- ii. Program Managers collect feedback obtained at the workshop to inform the development of the Terms of Reference. The feedback should inform us of the type of research, development and adoption work required to deliver on the priority. Program Managers should also consider the regional relevance of the feedback.
- iii. Establishes a shortlist of potential producers who wish to be involved in reviewing proposals that are submitted under each Terms of Reference.
- iv. Establish recommendations on which Terms of Reference should be included within a strategic partnership.

3.2 Step 2 – Terms of Reference

Step 2 of the Consultation Process Steps is the development of Terms of Reference (ToR). These are developed by the relevant MLA Program Manager using the feedback received at the extended Red Meat Panel Workshop. MLA Program Managers can consult with producers from the RACs to refine the ToR before they are submitted to the Red Meat Panel for endorsement at one of their quarterly meetings. Once the ToR is endorsed, they are ready to move through the Producer Investment Call.

The outputs of the extended Red Meat Panel workshop assist with the development of targeted Terms of Reference. Detailed Terms of Reference include information about where, how, and why the research should be done. Creating targeted Terms of Reference helps to reduce the number of proposals which require review.

3.3 Step 3 - Producer Investment Call

Step 3 of the Consultation Process Steps is the Producer Investment Call. This step identifies projects to fund that work towards solutions to industry priorities identified through the Producer Consultation Process. The Producer investment call is designed to maximise producer input, give sufficient time for researchers to write effective research proposals, including attaining input from producers and the relevant Regional Committee, and accommodate MLA strategic partnership and MDC funding where appropriate. The Call uses the ToR endorsed by the Red Meat Panel which are put up on the MLA website.

The process from end to end takes approximately six months from approval of the ToR to the selection of a successful project. The Call is a two-stage proposal process, broken into preliminary and full proposals. This is designed to reduce the number of proposals that proceed to the full proposal stage which reduces the workload of the review panel and increases the success rate of full proposals (less work required by applicants). To assist applicants in developing a proposal to address the ToR, webinars and workshops are hosted by MLA Program Managers help applicants better understand MLA's preliminary proposal expectations.

The preliminary and full proposals are reviewed together by a Producer Panel (identified at the Extended Red Meat Panel Meeting) and the Expert Panel which are recruited based upon skill set. Details on the selection and function of the Expert Panel and Producer Panels are described in Chapter 4.

The Producer Investment Call is an 18-step process which begins with the extended Red Meat Panel workshop and is completed when a project, is ready to be contracted by MLA (

Table 2).

Table 2 Producer Investment Call process

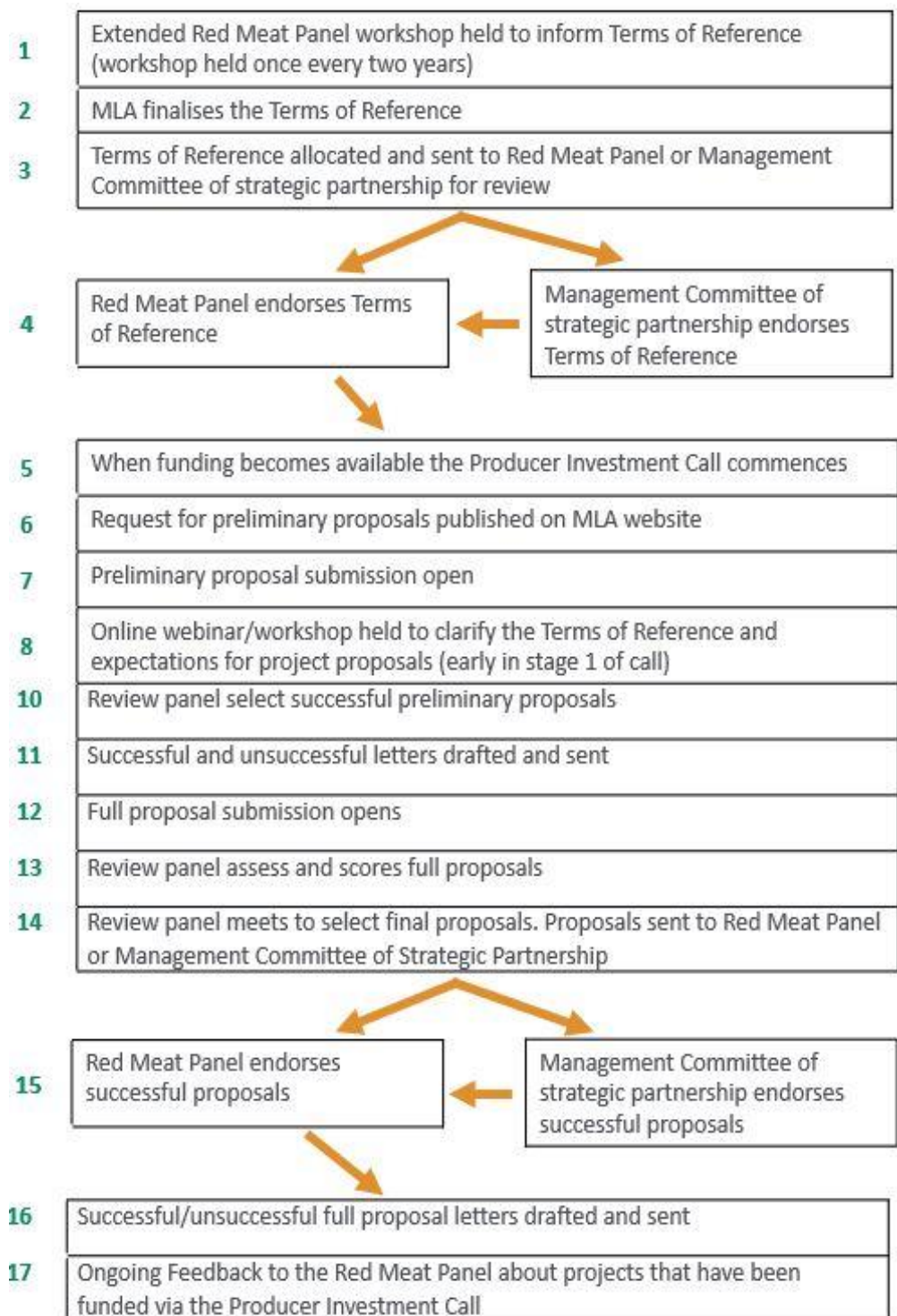


Table 3 Producer Investment Call review process

		6 months (26 weeks)																											
Activity		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
1	RMP or strategic partnership approve Terms of Reference(s)																												
2	Call preview																												
3	Preliminary phase																												
4	Preliminary proposal review																												
5	Preliminary proposal selection																												
6	Successful proposals informed																												
7	Full proposal open																												
8	Full proposals reviewed																												
9	Full proposal review																												
10	RMP or strategic partnership endorse successful proposal(s)																												
11	Review and revise call process																												

3.4 Feedback

The MLA Consultation Team is responsible for communicating to Regional Committees and Research Councils about investments into research, development, and adoption. This includes investments via The Call or other investments related to the five program areas. Communication can be via meetings, workshops, phone calls or email updates.

Providing feedback is important to show how priorities are being addressed through the consultation process. It also helps identify gaps in research, development, and adoption requirements to better inform priorities from NABRC, SALRC and WALRC.

4 Expert panel members

The Expert Panel includes up to three researchers selected based on the expertise required to review proposals for each ToR that are developed out of the extended Red Meat Panel workshop.

The Expert Panel will be selected based on literature searches and national and international networks. The Expert Panel Chair is responsible for timing and selection of members of the expert panel. Expert panel members should have:

- a strong track record in their area of research, development, and extension/adoption expertise relevant to grassfed beef and sheepmeat
- experience in peer review
- a commitment to maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process
- an interest in and commitment to the on-farm component of the red meat industry.

4.1 Expert panel observer - early career researcher(s)

An early career researcher can be an observing member of the Expert Panel for each unique Terms of Reference. This is encouraged and will help build capacity within the industry. This provides the opportunity to observe the review process which could assist in developing their understanding of a good quality proposal. Early career researchers would take part in the full review process; however, as they are classified as an observer, they will not contribute to the proposal selection process. Selection of early career researchers will be based on expressions of interest and selected by the Expert Panel Chair and will require the signing of a Confidentiality Agreement prior to participation.

4.2 Producer panel members

Producers Panel Members can be a Regional Committee Chair (11 from NABRC and 7 from SALRC) or a Producer member from WALRC (8 in total from WALRC). When a ToR is developed by an MLA Program Manager from issues/priorities/challenges identified by a single or multiple Regional Advisory Committees, all Chairs of the Advisory Committees will be offered to be on the Producer Panel. A Chair can choose to not be part of the review because they feel they do not possess the skills or time required to participate in the process or the ToR are not relevant to their region. Where appropriate that Chair may choose to nominate a proxy producer from within their Regional Committee to take their place. Where a RD&A priority that has informed the ToR has been developed up for a specific region, a Producer from that region must be on the Producer Panel as part of the review process.

The Producer Panel Member will remain part of the Panel to review both the Preliminary and Full Proposals. At least one producer who is a member of the Red Meat Panel must be part of the Review Panel. The Producer Panel is coordinated by the MLA Consultation Team and all panel members must have signed a confidentiality agreement as part of their appointment to the panel. MLA Consultation Team will ensure that a minimum of three producers are part of the Panel for each ToR. Nominations to be part of the Producer Panel will be taken at the extended Red Meat Panel workshop.

4.3 MLA and Red Meat Panel Chair

The review of preliminary and full proposals is facilitated by the independent Chair of the Red Meat Panel with support from the MLA Producer Consultation secretariat. Preliminary and Full proposals are reviewed by the same Expert and Producer Panels to ensure consistency across the process. The relevant MLA Program Manager from each ToR will be part of the review process to help answer questions or provide support to the reviewers.

4.4 Preliminary proposal review

During the preliminary proposal review, the producer's role is to rate proposals according to:

- i. Feasibility - Does the proposal address a clear problem which is relevant to producers in your region?
- ii. Desirability - What is the scale of the impact of the proposed work? Is it mainly relevant for your region, or is it relevant across a larger portion the livestock industry?
- iii. Viability - If the proposal achieves the desired outcomes, how practical would it be for producers in your region (regional committee/RBRC and/or council) to adopt the research findings?

The Expert panel's role is to rate proposals according to:

- i. The track record of scientists submitting proposals
- ii. The quality of the science
- iii. Training for early career researchers

4.5 Full proposal review

During the full proposal review the Producer's primary role is to ensure that each proposal is consistent with the preliminary proposal. They must also consider the impact of each potential project and the likelihood of adoption.

The Expert panel's primary role is to assess if the research methodology is sound. Both the Producer and Expert panel will prioritise and agree on the proposals to recommend to the RMP for funding.

5 Strategic partnerships and the Producer Investment Call

5.1 Strategic partnerships and their role

MLA strategic partnerships are designed to tackle long term priorities that were identified by the Consultation process. An example of this is the Sheep Reproduction Strategic Partnership (SRSP), designed to improve lamb survival and reproduction rates in sheep flocks nationally.

Strategic partnerships are established to tackle priorities identified by the Research Advisory Councils and align with the Red Meat 2030 strategic plan. Partnerships are designed to ensure stakeholders from industry work collaboratively to overcome these challenges.

Strategic partnerships provide strategic oversight to the process of finding solutions for big industry challenges. Investments made by MLA under these partnerships are informed by priorities received via the consultation process with NABRC, SALRC and WALRC.

SRSP have their own Management Committee that oversees the strategic partnership with links to the Red Meat Panel via the Research Advisory Council Chairs.

The Sheep Reproduction Strategic Partnership management committee includes:

- i. A producer Chair (currently a SALRC Regional Committee Chair)
- ii. The partnership coordinator
- iii. Two additional producers (1 currently a WALRC Producer Member)
- iv. Both the SALRC and WALRC Chair
- v. Sheep Producers Australia CEO
- vi. One representative from MLA
- vii. One representative from Australian Wool Innovation

5.2 Terms of reference allocated to strategic partnerships

Terms of Reference will be managed under strategic partnerships if they are more suitable to the purpose of those strategies.

Terms of Reference will be allocated to strategic partnerships via the following process:

- i. The suitability of the Terms of Reference for a partnership will be discussed at the extended Red Meat Panel workshop
- ii. If a Terms of Reference should be offered to a strategic partnership a recommendation will be made at the Red Meat Panel meeting directly after the extended Red Meat Panel workshop
- iii. Based on the recommendations from the Red Meat Panel, MLA will decide if a Terms of Reference will be offered to a strategic partnership
- iv. The Terms of Reference will be offered to a strategic partnership to oversee. If the strategic partnership declines, the Terms of Reference will be overseen by the Red Meat Panel.

If a strategic partnership agrees to oversee a Terms of Reference, this means that the Management Committee of the strategic partnerships performs the role of the Red Meat Panel in steps five to 16 of

Table 2. These Terms of Reference will follow the same review process as other Terms of Reference managed through the Red Meat Panel. This process will ensure that producers are involved in the review of projects that address priorities identified through MLA's consultation process.

5.3 Ensuring the Red Meat Panel remains informed about strategic partnerships


The Red Meat Panel must remain informed about funded projects which respond to priorities identified via the consultation process, this applies when projects are managed under a strategic partnership. Updates about projects which have been funded by the Call that are managed by strategic partnerships will take place at the quarterly Red Meat Panel meetings and include:

- i. The Terms of Reference that were endorsed by the strategic partnership
- ii. Successful project proposals selected and endorsed in the strategic partnership
- iii. Progress on projects including project outcomes and next steps.

6 Appendix

Timeline to complete steps in the consultation process

Year	2023												2024											
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	
Step 1 – producer groups	[Yellow bar]												[Yellow bar]											
Step 2 – feedback	[Yellow bar]												[Yellow bar]											
Step 3 – RACs	[Yellow bar]												[Yellow bar]											
Step 4 – Extended RMP	[Yellow bar]												[Yellow bar]											
Step 5 – Terms of reference	[Yellow bar]												[Yellow bar]											
Step 6 – RMP	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	[Green]	
PDS priorities due	[Yellow bar]												[Yellow bar]											

 Red Meat panel for endorsing terms of reference and projects and refining the process. The extended Red Meat Panel helps consolidate national priorities and collects the information needed for developing terms of reference