



Final report

Leadership Team Member - Profitable Grazing Systems

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Abstract

The overarching objective of the PGS program is to encourage and support red meat producers to improve their management skills, to increase profit. It is on track in Western Australia to achieve this due to Leadership and State Coordinator activities. The leadership team's role was to help build deliverer capacity in their state by assisting the State Coordinator to support and mentor deliverers, provide feeder and capacity building activities. This worked well in WA, with a close working relationship between the leadership team and the state coordinator.

The leadership team successfully achieved their objectives, meeting as determined by the National coordinator to supply insights into the program and identify opportunities for improvement. In addition, they worked to increase awareness and involvement in PGS, championing the project in their states.

Despite this, the PGS program has not met the overall objectives within its timeframe. Partially due to a lack of clarity, and the complexity of the project, this has also resulted in a lack of deliverer engagement and producer demand. Despite the program falling below its targets, skills and knowledge of involved producers have been successfully improved, leading to practice change through the supported learning approach.

Executive summary

Background

The aim of the Profitable Grazing Systems (PGS) program has been to encourage and support red meat producers to improve their management skills, to increase profit. The leadership team's role was to assist the development and improvement of PGS, while championing it within their states.

Objectives

The engagement of the leadership team was intended to:

- - address the deliverer capacity issue by championing the program,
- - work closely with the national co-ordinator to support and mentor the deliverer network
- - develop or deliver feeder activities
- - deliver supported learning programs.

Methodology

The leadership team met regularly to report on local activities and provide insights into the program, with the aim to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement. This was done while increasing awareness of the program and supporting deliverers and producers to get involved.

Results/key findings

Key findings are:

- PGS leadership team reached their objectives, but despite this, the project overall has not.
- PGS's focus may have been too broad, covering too many production systems.
- There was difficulty creating clear messaging to target the industry with, and a lack of project clarity.
- The experienced deliverers had not sufficient reward or incentives, professionally & financially, with a large amount of administration and compliance.
- The PGS concept is sound, due to relying on a proven extension model- repetition of messages in a supported learning format.

Benefits to industry

Clear industry benefits are the improvement in skills and knowledge of involved producers. There is also the availability of programs that cover a wide range of topics, and access to the under utilized but highly effective supported learning method. In addition, the knowledge and skills of the national team have been improved through the experience of developing PGS, with the experience to assist developing future projects within the red meat industry.

Future research and recommendations

It is recommended that PGS simplifies the program, to make it easier to define and support. A focus on clarity to better engage producers and deliverers would also be beneficial. Continuing to focus on supported learning methodology is highly recommended when looking to make sustained practice change on farm.

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1. Background

PGS Vision

A financially sustainable adoption program aligned to the MLA 2020 targets that extends MLA R&D outputs and achieves increased producer skills and capability, practice change and whole farm business improvement through increasing producer understanding of:

Business profit = management capability + evidence + value chain approach

Profitable Grazing Systems (PGS) is MLA's new flagship adoption program which will drive measurable, improved business performance outcomes for participating red meat producers. The program will use a supported learning methodology to develop the skills of red meat producers and support implementation of these new skills into businesses, improving profitability and productivity. Profitable Grazing Systems builds on previous red meat industry extension and adoption programs including Making More from Sheep and More Beef from Pastures and will have a focus on achieving adoption through high quality delivery underpinned by robust monitoring evaluation and a commercial approach.

Objectives

1.1 Overarching Project Objectives

The overarching objective of the PGS program is to encourage and support red meat producers to improve their management skills, to increase profit. The program objectives to be completed by 2022 are:

1. To increase the average profitability of participating red meat producers by 2.5% ROAM by improving their skills and capability.
2. A commercial model which involves user pays for the private good component of the activity (generally the delivery), with MLA contributing a maximum of 30% of the delivery cost of supported learning projects.
3. 5,000 producers attend feeder activities with 10 -15% of them going on to participate in a supported learning program.
4. 2,900 producers participate in supported learning programs to increase their skills and knowledge:
 - a. 2150 producers increase their skills and knowledge above a skills audit score of 75% (competent);
 - b. 50 deliverers have increased capability to a point where they can deliver effective high quality supported learning programs;
 - c. Increase the average confidence rating of participating producers to use key skill sets or do key tasks to greater than 8/10;
 - d. At least 70% of participating producers have made practice changes underpinned by a change in skills.

The project is working towards its objectives, due to the responsiveness of the national coordinator to feedback. This is from industry, deliverers, state coordinators and the leadership team. Continuing to react positively to this feedback is the only way PGS will achieve the objectives above. Despite not

reaching these targets, producer and deliverer skills have been improved, and practice change enacted due to the PGS SLPs.

1.2 Leadership Team Objectives

The key role of the leadership team is to provide support to the national and state coordinators in delivering their roles and mentor deliverers to build their capacity. Core principles of the role:

1. Deliver feeder and recruitment activities on behalf of delivery network deliverers (these will be arranged by the state & national coordinators)
2. Support state or national coordinators in reviewing supported learning projects developed by MLA or deliverers, as required
3. Deliver supported learning projects under the proposed adoption program banner (minimum of one per year)
4. Provide support to the PGS national coordinator by providing feedback and recommendations for overarching program improvement and individual supported learning project progress
5. Act as a champion for PGS
6. Support good governance of PGS

The Leadership team objectives were met by myself as outlined in results, using the methodology from section 3. The exception is the delivery of a SLP, with reasoning outlined in sections 5,6 and 7.

2. Methodology

The team relied heavily on their own networks to promote PGS. The leadership team met regularly, as determined by the National Coordinator. These meetings involved reporting local findings and assessing the program in each state. Changes to the program were enacted due to this feedback from the leadership team members and monitored.

6-month long workplans were developed outlining engagement activities, which included capacity building workshops, working closely with the State Coordinator, and increasing program awareness. The strength of this methodology is that it allowed for flexibility, taking advantage of opportunities as they arose, and meant that feedback was regularly collected and acted on. However its weakness was a lack of clear targets when it came to state-based activities.

3. Results

Table 1. Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator	Comment (nature of work done and outcomes achieved)
Deliver feeder and recruitment activities on behalf of delivery network deliverers	Capacity building workshop run on October 14 2021, with heavy focus on recruitment. 14 potential deliverers attended the day, with 3 making contact after the event to discuss available PGS SLP's and the process to become an approved deliverer.

Support state or national coordinators in reviewing supported learning projects developed by MLA or deliverers, as required	Reviewed SLP's for Benchmarking for Profit and Production (2018), Grazing Matcher (2019), as well as others briefly.
Deliver supported learning projects under the proposed adoption program banner	Did not achieve.
Provide support to the PGS national coordinator by providing feedback and recommendations for overarching program improvement and individual supported learning project progress	Supported through 3x staff changeovers at a national level. Pleased to hear changes to MER collection and analysis. Developed a close working relationship with the WA state Coordinator. Attended all leadership team meetings, providing honest feedback on PGS in WA and from a whole project perspective, looking at strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.
Act as a champion for PGS	Promote PGS at events and share SLP's running in WA, showcase them at events when possible. Developed a close working relationship with the WA state Coordinator. Engaged and identified potential new deliverers, promoting PGS and assisting them to see if it was a fit for them, their business and clients. Encouraged industry to investigate PGS packages and opportunities, through inclusion in presentations, discussions and events.

4. Conclusion

As a whole, the PGS Leadership Team achieved their objectives, however this has not translated into achieving the program objectives.

4.1 Key findings

- The leadership team successfully supported the coordination team and deliverers, assisting in advisory and feeder activities, capacity building workshops, and producer and deliverer recruitment, as well as mentoring and reviewing SLPs.
- PGS's focus may have been too broad, covering too many production systems. This flexibility is both a strength and a weakness, but it seems it meant it has been too difficult to create clear messaging for advertising, and a program methodology that suits everyone. This made PGS extremely large, and cumbersome, with difficulty creating clear messaging to target the industry with.
- This was particularly evident when discussing the issues in integrating Northern Australian producers and programs, and when assisting to 'on board' the numerous new PGS coordinators. While unavoidable, lack of continuity in staff was a major issue that impacted PGS.

- For PGS to have an impact, more SLPs and groups need to be run across the country, and its profile raised. This links back to clear messaging and deliverer recruitment.
- Deliverer recruitment was difficult in WA. The experienced deliverers had not sufficient reward or incentives. This is a combination of the financial incentives, professional rewards and the large amount of administration and compliance. For both deliverers and SLP developers.
- There was a lack of clarity early in the project, which impacted its success.
- A clear comparison for the points above is the Life Time Ewe Management program, which was highly successful due to its simplicity, clarity and the rewards for deliverers.
- The PGS concept is sound, utilising a proven, successful, extension model, with a focus on message repetition.

4.2 Benefits to industry

The benefits to the industry is that there is programs available crossing a large area of expertise, with knowledge and skills ready to be applied on farm. This has been proven through the successful adoption of practice changes on farm by PGS participants. Productivity and profitability increases due to these sustained practice changes are undoubtedly a benefit of the PGS program, and its use of the supported learning method which is underutilized within agricultural extension and adoption.

There has also been a learning curve within the project team as to what will work when it comes to successfully rolling out large scale programs, engaging deliverers and addressing producers' demands. This experience and knowledge has helped shape a continually improving PGS program, and will help guide future projects within the red meat industry.

5. Future research and recommendations

It is recommended that PGS simplifies the program, making it easier to define and support. This simplicity will also ensure it is clear to deliverers what is involved and what is in it for them, potentially increasing recruitment and delivery. This includes simplifying administration and compliance requirements.

Clarity in projects from the start, and focusing on simplicity before it is launched will also help ensure future projects are successful and high impact.

Better utilisation of the M&E data collected should be addressed, as it could have helped further guide the program and deliverers.

Continuing to focus on supported learning methodology is highly recommended when looking to make sustained practice change on farm.