

## Call for Collaborative Investment Proposals

### Eating Quality and Carcase Value Projects (MDC Funding Call)

Issued: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024

#### 1. Purpose and description

MLA is seeking preliminary co-investment proposals (to be followed by full proposals post feedback and initial review) from research organisations and businesses which address eating quality priorities, as determined by industry, to generate additional value across the Australian red meat supply chains.

#### 2. Objectives

MLA is interested in research, development, adoption and commercialisation in the following areas:

##### 2.1. On-farm and carcase eating quality prediction (beef and sheepmeat):

- Tools and methods for on-farm and feedlot prediction of carcase/cut eating quality outcomes. Other value drivers such as cut yield and animal health will be considered in addition.
- This may include genetic and genomic tools, to predict primarily MSA consumer sensory scores, though other existing or new related traits may be considered.
- Carcase tools and measures to improve the prediction of eating quality outcomes and explain eating quality variation. This includes further sheepmeat categories i.e. mutton, in an aim of expanding eating quality predictions generated by the MSA Sheepmeat Model for all sheepmeat.

##### 2.2. Beef and sheepmeat flavour:

Research and commercialisation pathways to:

- Understand the variables and science influencing flavour and use this to create commercial value. This includes understanding beef and sheepmeat flavour responses from consumer groups in different populations and the underlying chemistry that influences the outcomes.
- Develop standard laboratory flavour evaluation and analysis protocols. Identify and commercialise tools, processes and draft Standards to realise value generated from flavour knowledge.

These may include but are not limited to:

- Processing (and further along the supply chain) interventions and value adding to improve the eating quality/flavour of secondary cuts or lower grade product
- The use of flavour characteristics for branding and/or integrity for production systems and/or regions and ultimately differentiating Australian red meat
- The links between flavour, food safety, ageing and other processing techniques and interventions, resulting in modifications to improve consumer and product eating quality/flavour outcomes.

### 2.3. Improving on-farm and supply chain outcomes through long term producer practice change programs:

- Partnerships with beef and sheepmeat supply chains (processors/brand owners) to improve supplier performance, productivity, eating quality, sustainability and overall profitability.
- Projects focusing on long term (5+ years) practice change adoption principles which are based on, but not limited to, producer groups and supported learning principles to implement research and practices to improve on-farm performance. Short term and awareness activities to engage and communicate should be included to extend the reach of the projects.
- Topics of focus will vary between groups and will change over time depending on group priorities but may include (but not limited to) genetics, feedbase, analysing feedback, nutritional management and sustainability improvements.

### **Additional details**

Other research questions of interest and focus areas to be considered and may be included in proposals addressing the above priorities are:

- High pH in beef and sheepmeat: Further investigation in the impact on eating quality of high pH beef and sheepmeat, primarily focussed on shelf life and microbial spoilage, particularly for long aged product, using updated methods and analysis.
- Odour of sheepmeat: Understanding the impact of odour of sheepmeat on consumer response and relationship to shelf life and flavour.
- Additional production pathways (to enable the MSA grading of more cattle and sheep), additional ageing periods (to existing datasets) and cooking methods may be included in applications, with justification.
- Meat science education and future researchers (undergrad/postgraduate) is important for the long-term viability and advancement of the red meat sector. Where applicable, projects may include opportunities for new researchers to enable long-term succession of research knowledge and skills for the red meat sector.

### **3. Specifications**

Proposals will be evaluated based upon:

- How the research, tool/technology will improve the eating quality or eating quality prediction along the beef and/or sheepmeat supply chains and/or improve animal/carcass value.
- Integration and practicality for commercialisation into the supply chain, including feedback to producers and data flow, where applicable.
- Commercialisation and adoption plan as part of the project is considered favourable, ideally including commercial supply chains and other applicable commercial partners.
- Return on investment including assumptions for industry benefit outlined.
- Previous experience of the organisation.
- Team capability.

Further considerations:

- Proposals would need to consider animal ethics requirements.
- Proposals in partnerships between research organisations and/or commercial supply chains considered favourably.
- Proposals combining multiple priorities is encouraged, where applicable.

#### **4. Deliverables**

New tool, methods or technologies should include a robust commercialisation and adoption plan, which should consider industry implementation to ensure any investment will benefit the red meat industry.

On-farm practice change projects will require comprehensive MER plans to be developed and implemented in alignment to the MLA MER framework.

All projects will require a comprehensive Final Report that captures the lessons learnt, including challenges encountered and solutions identified to improve opportunities for future adopters.

#### **5. 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 are eligible voluntary partner contributions. This call will not support projects using levy funds. For more information on MDC funding please see Section 9. below.

#### **6. 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.

#### **7. Requirements for the proposals**

The provided MLA Project Funding Application Form - Preliminary must be completed to submit your proposal.

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.

#### **8. Next steps – Request for Detailed Proposal**

Following MLA review, successful applicants will be invited to submit a detailed project application to the [MLA Donor Company](#) (MDC). MLA will provide a standard application form to assist interested partners to submit their applications. All partners will need to agree to [MLA's Umbrella Research agreements](#) and project(s) will be contracted under the standard Terms and Conditions of the MLA Donor Company. This includes:

- The MDC's statutory requirement for industry partners to provide matching financial contributions to the project(s).

- The production of a comprehensive Final Report which captures lessons learnt, challenges encountered and solutions identified to improve opportunities for future adopters.

Further information on the MDC program, including background and application guidelines is available at [Project application guidelines and forms | Meat & Livestock Australia](#).

## **9. Project call cycle**

The project call cycle for 2024/25 will be as follows:

- 1) 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 – Project call for preliminary proposals opens
- 2) 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024 – Preliminary proposals due
- 3) 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024 – Preliminary proposals review by MSA and feedback provided
- 4) 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024 – Full proposals due
- 5) January 2025 – Full proposal review by MLA and prioritisation

### **Deadline for submissions and further information**

Preliminary Proposals must be received by MLA before 11:59pm AEDT, **4<sup>th</sup> November 2024**. Late proposals will not be accepted. All proposals must be submitted on the MLA template electronically to MLA: [nlalaurie@mla.com.au](mailto:nlalaurie@mla.com.au)

As above further information surrounding full proposal deadlines and submissions will be advised post Preliminary Proposal review in November 2024. Proposals will be acknowledged on receipt, and applicants will be advised in writing of the next steps for their proposal, either a detailed proposal submission in December 2024 or failure of their proposal by the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024. If you have any questions regarding the Eating Quality and Carcase Value Project Call, or would like to discuss possible project applications, please email Nathalie Lalaurie at [nlalaurie@mla.com.au](mailto:nlalaurie@mla.com.au).