**DARD Directed Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Research Work Programme 2015/16 (Supplementary A)**


# Background

The DARD Evidence and Innovation Strategy (EIS)[[1]](#footnote-1), published in 2009, provides a high-level framework for DARD’s evidence gathering and innovation support activities (2009-2013). One of the key principles of the EIS is that DARD-funded evidence gathering and innovation support activities will be both robust and policy-led. Whilst the EIS sets out a framework for research, the detailed evidence and innovation activities are co-ordinated through four Programme Management Boards (**PMB**s), which align broadly to the EIS Strategic Goals.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **EIS Goal** |  | **PMB** |
| **Goal 1:** To improve performance in the Marketplace | **PMB1:** Performance in the Marketplace |
| **Goal 2:** To strengthen the Social and Economic Infrastructure of Rural Areas | **PMB2:** Social and Economic Infrastructure in Rural Areas |
| **Goal 3:** To enhance Animal Health and Welfare, Fish and Plant Health | **PMB3**: Animal and Plant Health and Animal Welfare |
| **Goal 4:** To develop a more Sustainable Environment | **PMB4:** Sustainable Environment |

The PMBs annually assess DARD’s evidence and innovation needs, consult stakeholders and make recommendations on the content of a work programme for their area of responsibility. An overarching Evidence and Innovation Priorities Group (EIPG) then makes final decisions on the overall size and shape of the DARD directed AFBI Research Work Programme.

# Programme development

One of the major roles and responsibilities of each PMB is to review, identify and prioritise investment in evidence gathering or innovation support activity in light of policy needs and/or evidence gaps. Evidence and innovation needs are identified by DARD on an ongoing basis, informed by both informal and formal engagement with stakeholders. This process ensures the development of an evidence and innovation programme that is appropriately aligned to policy needs, provides a robust evidence base for future policy development, implementation and review and/or supports industry innovation within the scope of DARD’s policy interests.

PMB 2 is responsible for social and economic infrastructure in rural areas and consequently any evidence and innovation activity associate with conacre fall into it..

This supplementary DARD Directed Agri-Food Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Research Work Programme has been developed as a result of this process and proposals approved through it form part of the annual work programme[[2]](#footnote-2) delivered by AFBI for DARD.

**Liaison with DARD Policy**

* Further information on each priority need can be obtained from the nominated DARD Policy Lead - AFBI project leader(s) are encouraged to make contact at an early stage. Contact details are listed at **Annex B**;
* A Full Format Proposal (FFP) must be completed for each proposal. The template form can be obtained from the AFBI Administration. AFBI project leader (s) must work closely with the DARD Policy Lead to ensure that the proposal is the correct fit for the priority need(s) identified. In **most cases,** the FFP forms the Economic Appraisal for the proposal.

**Co-Funding Opportunities**

If AFBI project leader(s) consider there are opportunities for co-funding of research proposals and wish to pursue that option, they should inform SEIPD (contact details below) who will co-ordinate co-funding arrangements with DARD.

**Closing Date**

* The proposal window closes on **14th May** **2015** and all FFP(s) received up to this date will be scrutinised by PMB 2;
* RCNs will not be accepted as a substitute for FFPs; and
* All completed forms should be submitted to:-

Gillian.Doherty@dardni.gov.uk

or

Gillian Doherty

Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Division, DARD

Room 356, Dundonald House

Ballymiscaw

Upper Newtownards Road

Belfast BT4 3SB

**Assessment and Approval Process**

* All FFPs will be scrutinised and, where appropriate, challenged by DARD Policy Leads, and DARD Science Advisory Branch. AFBI should answer any queries promptly;
* FFPs will be selected at random for assessment by DARD Research Economics Branch. AFBI should answer any queries promptly;
* All FFPs will be assessed and scored by DARD Policy Leads;
* EIPG will provide final approval for proposals. Approval will be subject to a satisfactory economic appraisal (mostly within the FFP) and proposals must have a sound scientific basis;
* **Work cannot start until EIPG signs off the proposal; and**
* **The outcome of this process is referred to as the DARD directed AFBI research work programme 2015/16. Publicity or marketing of any of the proposals must acknowledge DARD as the core funder.**

# Priority Needs

**PMB 2 – SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL AREAS**

The overall objective of PMB 2 is to build the evidence base to inform the Department’s broad rural policy agenda. In particular, it is seeking to use research to develop a more robust and sophisticated understanding of the social and economic characteristics of rural areas, with a particular focus on identifying the specific needs of disadvantaged groups and what this means for the development and equitable delivery of government policy for both the farming and non-farm sector. A second key objective of PMB 2 is to commission cross-cutting economic research that will be provide a deeper insight into the impact of policy options right across the Department’s remit and inform future policy development on agri-food industry competitiveness, animal health and welfare and environmental sustainability.

PMB 2 aims to achieve this objective through the delivery of evidence and innovation projects in 3 themed areas as outlined in the Evidence and Innovation Strategy (EIS):

**Key Themes**

1. Addressing the economic evidence needed to support policy development, implementation and evaluation.

2. Addressing needs of rural communities.

3. Evidence to facilitate assessment of equality of opportunity aspects of policy development.

Flowing from these themes, the following priority area to be addressed by this Supplementary Request for Proposals is indicated in Table 1 below.

**TABLE 1 - Priority area to be addressed by EIS Theme**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **EIS Theme** | **Budget[[3]](#footnote-3)****£k** | **No****Years[[4]](#footnote-4)** | **DARD contact(s)** |
| **Theme 1. Addressing the economic evidence to support policy development, implementation and evaluation.** |
| An assessment of the impact of the conacre system on farm-level productivity and the effective use of agricultural land in Northern Ireland | £87k | 1 year | Dan CartlandAgri-Food Strategy Board Support |

**Annex A**

**Timetable**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Activity** |
| **30th April 2015** | Supplementary proposal window opens |
| **14th May 2015** | Latest date for FFP(s) submission |
| **15th May2015** | FFP(s) assessed & scored by DARD Policy Lead and Science Advisory Branch |
| **29th May 2015** | EIPG makes final decision on approval of project(s) |
| **1st June 2015** | Approved projects commence |

1. **Evaluation criteria**

# Scoring for each proposal received will be based on the following criteria (not in order of importance).

* Ability of objectives to meet policy needs;
* Scientific quality;
* Appropriate and realistic milestones / deliverables;
* Possibility to provide additional information to that already known in this area;
* Management of risk;
* Benefits in relation to cost;
* Knowledge exchange mechanisms; and
* Evidence of collaboration with other scientific groups / industry.
1. **Additional information**
* FFP forms should be completed in **Arial font size 12.**
* Word limits where designated will be **strictly applied – this means a proposal may be rejected**.
1. **Feedback**
	* + Feedback on unsuccessful proposals will be coordinated by DARD Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Division and passed to a central contact in AFBI. DARD Policy leads will not provide feedback to AFBI Project Leaders directly.

**Annex B DARD Contact Details**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DARD Contact** | **Division/Branch** | **Tel. No** | **E mail** |
| Gillian Doherty | Research Policy Branch (SEIPD) | 02890524625 | Gillian.Doherty@dardni.gov.uk |
| Dan Cartland  | Agri-Food Strategy Board Support | 02890524517 | Daniel.Cartland@dardn.gov.uk |
| Paul Devine | Science Advisory Branch (SEIPD) | 02890520821 | Paul.Devine2@dardni.gov.uk |
| Ann McMahon | Science Advisory Branch (SEIPD) | 02890521478 | Ann.McMahon@dardni.gov.uk |

1. http://www.dardni.gov.uk/e\_i\_strategy\_2009-2013\_final.pdf.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2004/3327/article/6/made> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Budget - figures are indicative. As budgetary allocation is additional to GIA, non AWP platform/overheads apply.** [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **No. of years - suggested project duration assuming similar cost per year in yr 2 & 3** [↑](#footnote-ref-4)