

Business Development Groups

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are Business Development Groups?

Knowledge transfer through Business Development Groups is a scheme under the Farm Business Improvement Scheme, part funded by the EU through Pillar II of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020. The scheme uses a group approach to improve the technical efficiency of farm businesses and will also offer participants the opportunity to gain a level 3 qualification. The groups will be known as Business Development Groups (BDG).

2. Is this call for applications to BDGs open to all farmers?

This call for applications is open to all eligible dairy, pig, beef, sheep, poultry, arable, mushroom and top fruit farmers and growers. DAERA will continually review the need to re-open the scheme to other sectors in the future.

3. Why do I need to be involved in a BDG?

Farmers participating in the scheme will benchmark their business to identify areas that have the potential to be improved. A business development plan will be created to identify the actions to be taken to improve the technical efficiency of the business and improve the sustainability of the farm.

4. Will being a member of a BDG impact on my ability to apply to other DAERA schemes?

There is no link between the BDG scheme and other DAERA schemes.

5. What will be expected of me as a member of a BDG?

Farmers that participate in the programme will have to maintain an active business development plan, benchmark their business, attend training events, and be willing to share benchmarking information with other group members and be willing to host a group training event on their farm.

6. How do I apply to join a BDG?

Applications to join a BDG can be submitted online, electronically by email or by a paper version sent by post. The scheme will open for applications at **10.00am on 12 February 2019** and close at **4.00pm on 5 March 2019**. For information about the application process, you can access the BDG web page on the CAFRE website www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/business-development-groups.

A paper version of the application form can also be requested by emailing kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk or by calling Knowledge Transfer Administration on 028 9442 6790. Alternatively, applications can be requested in writing to CAFRE Knowledge Transfer Administration, Greenmount Campus, 45 Tirgracy Road, Antrim, BT41 4PS.

7. When can I apply?

The scheme will open for applications on 12 February 2019 at 10.00am and will close on 5 March 2019 at 4.00 pm.

8. When will the first training events take place?

If your application is successful, you will be invited to a registration event in March 2019. You will be invited to join BDG training events from April 2019.

9. Where will the training be held?

Training events will be held on host farms and local community halls. Bio-security restrictions may result in group training events being held in non-farm venues. All participants should be willing to host a training event during the life of the scheme. There may also be larger scale training events which could be held at CAFRE venues.

10. Will I receive funding to attend a BDG?

Participants will be eligible to claim for costs associated with analytical services and an allowance of £600 remains available for hosting a training event.

11. Is there a charge for the training?

There is no fee payable for this training.

12. Can more than one person from the same business apply for the scheme?

Yes, on the provision they meet the rules of the scheme and will attend a Business Development Group for a different enterprise type. A valid DAERA Category 1 Farm Business Identification Number is required at the time of application as part of the application process which must be matched to Departmental records.

13. Will I obtain a qualification?

As participants work to improve the efficiency of their businesses, they will generate information, for example, a farm development plan, grass measurements and growth rates that can be used as evidence which will build up as credits towards a level 3 qualification. Further details about the level 3 qualification will be provided following successful selection to the scheme. Those participants who wish to gain the qualification will need to pay a registration fee to the awarding body.

14. What support will be available to me if I do not apply, or my application is unsuccessful?

CAFRE Development Service advisory staff will focus their work on BDGs. General advice will be available, to those farmers who have chosen not to participate in the BDG scheme, through the Farm Advisory Service (FAS).

15. Why should I be in a BDG?

The following points outline the benefits of participating in BDGs.

- A clear development plan for your business.
- Improve your profitability.
- Keep up to date with the latest technologies.
- Access to a CAFRE Development Adviser.
- Option to gain a qualification.
- Meet with like-minded individuals.

16. What age do I have to be to apply for the scheme?

Applicants and the nominated group member must be 18 years or over at the time of application.

17. Can I be a member of a BDG if I have a disability or learning need?

Yes, reasonable adjustments can be implemented prior to commencing group meetings. You will receive an opportunity to declare any disability or learning need prior to the first meeting of your group.

18. How will I know if my application has been successful?

Applicants will be notified of an outcome within 8 weeks of the application closing date.

19. Can I appeal if my application is deemed invalid?

Applicants can appeal in writing. Appeals must be received within 14 days of the date of the letter notifying the applicant of the grounds for an invalid application. Further details about the review of decision procedure will be made available.

20. Why would my application be deemed invalid?

Applications could be deemed invalid due to the following:

- Applications received after 4pm on the closing date.
- Farm Business Category 1 ID and Farm Business ID owner named do not match Departmental records.

- Applicant and/or nominated group member is under 18 at time of application.
- A duplicate application has been submitted (two applications submitted for the same enterprise type, for example, two applications to join a suckler beef group).
- Applicants with a relevant criminal conviction may not be able to proceed.

21. What is a relevant criminal conviction?

A relevant criminal conviction includes a fraud conviction related to a previous Rural Development Programme (RDP).

22. What if I have forgotten my username and password?

There is a link on the online application if you have forgotten your password. If you do not know your username it is best to start again by re-registering.

23. What if I don't have a DAERA Category 1 Farm Business Identification Number?

If you are a new farm business you must have first obtained a DAERA Category 1 Farm Business Identification Number before an application can be made. If you have not already done so you should contact your local DAERA office as soon as possible to obtain advice and the New Farm Business (FB1) application form or access the guidance at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/area-based-schemes-2018-guidance-and-forms>. CAFRE cannot accept any responsibility if a Category 1 Farm Business Identification Number is not issued before the closing date for applications.

24. Is being a member of the BDG scheme linked to future Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 schemes?

A farm business does not need to be part of a BDG to apply for future Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 schemes.

25. Can an application form be logged on by one individual representing a number of farmers e.g. a group come together and apply individually at a central location or can we log on the details for individual farmers?

Yes, one person can submit applications on behalf of a number of farm businesses and each application will be treated individually and allocated 10 marks for applying on line. One person can set up a Username and Password and make multiple applications for different Farm Business owners.

26. Can I withdraw my application on-line, if I have made a mistake and resubmit during the application period i.e. up until 5 March 2019?

Yes. You must contact the CAFRE Knowledge Transfer Administration on 028 9442 6790 or email kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk

27. How will I receive any payment attached to the BDG scheme?

Payment will be made by a BACS payment to the bank account link to the Category 1 Farm business number. If no bank account has been set up to the Category 1 DAERA number, then you should contact DAERA at Orchard House on 028 7129 9084. This can be done separate from the BDG application and does not need to be set up before the closing date.

28. Can the same person from a farm business attend more than 1 BDG group?

Yes. They must make two separate applications and be offered a place on two different BDG representing two different sectors i.e. dairy and pigs. They must complete all aspects of both BDG, i.e. attend a minimum number of training events and complete a development plan for each BDG enterprise.

29. Will the closing date of the 5 March 2019 be extended?

No. The closing date will not be extended, however future calls for applications may be considered in 2019, but no dates have been confirmed.

30. If one member of a farm business applies and is accepted for BDG's but is unable to attend a specific meeting can they nominate another member of the same business to attend on their behalf that night?

At the application stage the applicant nominates a person (which may be themselves) to attend and commit to the BDG scheme. The justification for this is to establish and maintain trust within each group and to encourage sharing of data and protect client confidentiality. The same person also needs to attend if they wish to avail of the opportunity to gain the qualification. However, a BDG participant can, with the agreement of their Adviser, nominate an alternative attendee, who would be better placed to attend a particular meeting. For example, the person on the farm with responsibility for calf rearing, would particularly benefit from attending a BDG training event focused on calf rearing

31. If a father and son/daughter wish to apply using the same business ID does this mean that only one person receives payment and is there any issues with two members from the one business attending the same group?

Multiple people can apply to the BDG scheme using the same Category 1 Business ID but they must agree to attend different enterprises. For example: Father could apply to join a suckler beef BDG and son/daughter to join an arable BDG. Therefore two members from the one business cannot attend the same type of BDG group. The online application system and hard copy application will not stop them entering multiple applications to the same BDG enterprise, but the validation process will identify these as duplicate applications. In a case like this, duplicates will not be eligible and only one application per enterprise will progress.

32. Can I submit a hard copy form to the local DAERA Direct office?

No. All hardcopy application forms and supporting documentation must be received at the CAFRE Knowledge Transfer Administration at the Greenmount Campus, Antrim by 4pm on Tuesday 5 March 2019.

33. Can an existing group apply as a group to the BDG scheme?

No. An existing group cannot apply as a group however the individuals within an existing group can each apply. There will be no guarantee that they all will be offered a place on the BDG scheme or a place within the same CAFRE BDG. A representative for the group can upload the application forms for individual group members.

34. How will applications be selected if the call is oversubscribed?

If more than 550 applications are received, CAFRE will award 10 additional marks to those applicants who are under 40. Applications submitted on-line will also attract 10 additional marks.