

Business Development Group (BDG) Scheme

Notes for Farmers

1. Introduction

Knowledge Transfer through Business Development Groups (BDG) is a scheme part funded by the EU through Pillar II of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020.

BDGs are part of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme which will provide support for knowledge transfer, innovation, cooperation and capital investment to farmers. The BDG will use a group approach to improve the technical efficiency of the farm business and will also offer participants the opportunity to gain a level 3 qualification. More details can be found on www.cafre.ac.uk/business-development-groups.

The scheme will open for applications on **12 February 2019 at 10.00am**. Completed applications must be submitted by **4.00pm on 5 March 2019**. Applicants will be notified of the outcome within 8 weeks of the scheme closing date. The BDG meetings will commence from April 2019.

2. What is involved?

Group members will be invited to engage in a programme which will involve:

- Joining a small group of like-minded farmers.
- Meeting a minimum of six times per year, mainly on members' farms.
- Attend meetings focusing on topics agreed by the group. Activities will include on-farm meetings, demonstrations and skills training.
- All meetings are facilitated by a dedicated CAFRE Development Adviser.

The benefits to being part of a Business Development Group are as follows:

- Development of a business plan specifically for your farm
- Guidance with interpreting farm benchmarking data to help identify areas that have the potential to be improved.
- Improve your profitability
- Keep up to date with latest technologies
- Option to gain a qualification

3. Scheme Eligibility

Stage 1:

In order to be eligible for the scheme, applicants must:

- Have a DAERA Category 1 Business ID.
- Be currently managing a beef, sheep, dairy, pig, poultry, arable, top fruit or mushroom enterprise.
- Be willing to host a group training event.
- Be willing to share benchmarking information within their development group.
- Be 18 or over.

No dual applications will be accepted (i.e.no second application to the same sector).

Stage 2:

If the number of applications is greater than the target (550), a selection process will be applied based solely on the information contained in the application form and supporting documentation. The selection criteria below will be applied and the points awarded to each criteria accordingly.

Age –10 additional marks will be awarded to applicants who are under 40 years of age.

Online application –10 additional marks will be awarded to applicants who apply online.

Stage 3:

In the event that applications remain oversubscribed after Stage 2 is complete, then CAFRE will use random selection to award places to a BDG for those applications affected. This random selection will be witnessed by a representative independent from CAFRE.

The success of the scheme depends on the willingness of group members to engage with the CAFRE Development Adviser or Facilitator to work towards meeting the objectives of the scheme. Members will also be required to maintain confidentially within the group. It is important that farmers appreciate the value of the key elements of the scheme which are;

- maintaining an active business development plan
- benchmarking their business
- attending the training events
- sharing information with other group members.

4. Payments

Participants will be able to claim a payment of £600 for hosting a training event at their farms and also benefit from assistance to complete a range of analytical tests.

5. Administration of the Scheme

This scheme is administered by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and is delivered by CAFRE. Each BDG will have a dedicated CAFRE Adviser or Facilitator assisted by a Support Assistant.

Successful applicants will be issued a Membership Agreement which will detail the requirements of the scheme, rules and conditions for payment. It shall be the responsibility of the applicant and the group member to familiarise themselves with this information.

6. Application to the Scheme

The scheme will open for applications for three weeks at **10.00am on 12 February 2019** and close for applications **4.00pm on 5 March 2019**. Please refer to the Application Form Guidance Notes for more details on the application process. Applicants will be notified of the outcome within 8 weeks of the scheme closing date. The BDG meetings will commence from April 2019.

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

All applications must either be submitted online at www.eugrantfundingni.org or received by **CAFRE Knowledge Transfer Administration, Greenmount Campus, 45 Tirgracy Road, Antrim, BT41 4PS** before the closing date of **Tuesday 5 March 2019 at 4.00pm**. Late applications will not be accepted after the closing date/time.

Unsuccessful applications will have the right to a review of the decision. Details of this process are available on request.

For more information on the Business Development Group Scheme, please e-mail Kt.Admin@daera-ni.gov.uk or call Knowledge Transfer Administration on 028 9442 6790 or visit www.cafre.ac.uk/business-development-groups.

***Closing Date for receipt of completed
application forms is:***

Tuesday 5 March 2019 at 4.00 pm

***No LATE or INCOMPLETE applications will
be accepted.***