

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.

BDG is 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 at **10.00am on Monday 18 November 2019**. Completed applications must be submitted by **4.00pm on Friday 24 January 2020**. Applicants will be notified of the outcome within 8 weeks of the scheme closing date. The BDG meetings will commence from April 2020.

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 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 application call is subject to oversubscription, 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 criterion accordingly.

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

On-line application – 10 additional marks will be awarded to applicants who apply on-line.

Stage 3:

In the event of oversubscription after Stage 2 is complete, then CAFRE will use random selection to award places on a BDG to 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 confidentiality 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 may 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 and 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 at 10.00am on Monday 18 November 2019 and close for applications at 4.00pm on Friday 24 January 2020. Applicants will be notified of the outcome within 8 weeks of the scheme closing date. The BDG meetings will commence from April 2020.

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.

To begin your on-line application click on the following webpage or type into your browser <https://eugrantfundingni.org/>. If you are a new user of this site, you will need to register. This registration process will result in the creation of a username and password. If you have previously registered on this website your username and password is still valid. If you have forgotten your Username then you will need to re-register as a new applicant.

Once you have registered or logged in, at the home page select 'View Open Calls'. You will then see a table where you will find 'Business Development Groups - Tranche 5'. Select 'Apply Now'.

All applications must either be submitted online at <https://eugrantfundingni.org/>

or received by CAFRE Knowledge Transfer Administration, Greenmount Campus, 45 Tirgracy Road, Antrim, BT41 4PS before the closing date of 4.00pm on Friday 24 January 2020. 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:

Friday 24 January 2020 at 4.00 pm

No LATE or INCOMPLETE applications will be accepted.