



Assessment protocol for resource allocation to new and on-going projects in VistaMilk SFI Research Centre

Context

The VistaMilk Board and Scientific Advisory Committee have independently requested a protocol for prioritising resource allocation to projects, but also for establishing new targeted projects or platform projects. The purpose of this document is to outline some of the criteria to be considered when undertaking this exercise. Each project will be reviewed annually by the operation teams, with due consideration to this document. Observations from the VistaMilk Scientific/Industry Advisory committees, the external site reviewers, the VistaMilk governance board and SFI themselves will also be considered when reviewing projects. It should be noted that due consideration will be given to the staff hired in each project and post-graduate students committed to; therefore while this document is a useful template, the details provided are still guidelines.

Quality of research

Projects must be able to demonstrate they satisfy several (but not necessarily all) of the following criteria:

- *Stakeholder relevance*: all projects outputs and outcomes are expected to clearly relate to VistaMilk SFI Centre's vision as well as deliver on its mission statements.
- *Sector relevance*: all project outcomes should be of value to the Agri-Food and/or ICT sectors; VistaMilk's innovation management tool will be used to assess the capacity to access the market within a reasonable timeframe and impact for industry.
- *Scientific excellence and novelty*: all projects should clearly demonstrate novelty and their likelihood of delivering scientific excellence. The Logic Models developed will be used to quantify their capacity to deliver excellent science. Intellectual property generated (including publication) will aid in the deduction of the level of scientific excellence in line with the stage of the project; due consideration will also be given to associated restrictions on publications, so as not to forego intellectual property.

Funding (for targeted projects only)

Targeted projects (as well as align with VistaMilk's mission) must demonstrably satisfy several criteria:

- The responsible research team for the targeted project should have secured a financial commitment from industry partners of 15% cash and 20% in-kind (excluding overheads); in-kind cannot compensate for cash. However, it is acknowledged that funding acquisition can be a difficult step at the start of a Targeted Project and that seed funding might be required to generate initial results.

- Once a project has started, industry partners may depart leading to difficulties in maintaining the minimum 15% of industry cash contribution; the project team will then have 3 months to obtain strong evidence of funding commitment from (new) industry partners.
- It is the responsibility of the FI or PI to acquire and negotiate the funding.
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Administration and delivery

Projects must be able to demonstrate they satisfy several criteria:

- *Leadership*: the responsible FI or PI must be an active champion for the project, representing it at the different levels within the VistaMilk SFI Centre. (S)he has to demonstrate accountability for the delivery of the project
- *Timely recruitment*: the responsible FI or PI must ensure that the project is adequately staffed and resourced for its successful delivery.
- *Timely delivery*: the responsible FI or PI must ensure that milestones and deliverables are achieved as per the contracted timelines. It is expected that delays may occur but, unreasonable and/or unjustifiable delays in the delivery cannot be accepted.
- *Budget*. The project FI or PI is responsible for the project remaining within budget. Projected under- or over-spend should be communicated early to the executive team and mitigation options proposed.

