Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

# Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF)

## 2014/15 Round

## Applicant Guidelines

Issue Date: October 2013

# Contents

# 1. About this document

## Purpose of this document

This document supports applicants through the process of applying for funding in the 2014/15 SFF round.

The document will provide information on the purpose of the SFF and on the funding criteria. An overview of the funding process and detailed guidance for making an application through the portal is also outlined.

## Intended Audience

This guide is aimed at all parties interested in applying for funding in the SFF round 2014/15.

## Help and Support

If you require further information, please contact MPI at:

Ministry for Primary Industries
Sustainable Farming Fund
PO Box 2526
Wellington 6140

Telephone: 0800 00 83 33
Email: sff@mpi.govt.nz

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is intended to provide general information to the public. The Ministry for Primary Industries has taken all reasonable measures to ensure the quality and accuracy of the information provided. The information does not constitute legal advice. In the event of any uncertainty, the applicant should obtain independent legal advice.

## 2. Important Dates

The key dates for the 2014/15 SFF round are as follows:

| Step | Description | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Fund round opens | Fund round criteria and process are published. Interested parties are able to begin preparation of applications | 19 August 2013 |
| Grants portal opens | MPI grants portal opens. Applicants can now register and submit applications through the grants portal | 21 October 2013 |
| Fund round closes | Fund round closes. All applications must be submitted through the grants portal by the time | 2pm 18 November 2013 |
| Applicants notified of outcomes | All applicants will be notified on whether they have been successful via the grants portal and email | Late April 2014 |
| Successful projects contracted | All successful applicants have signed contracts in place with MPI | 30 June 2014 |
| Projects commence | All funded projects commence | 1 July 2014 |

# 3. Using the Grants Portal

The MPI grants portal went live on 21 October 2013 and all SFF applications must be lodged through the portal. The grants portal will make it more streamlined for you and for us. Features we hope you will like in the new portal are:

- A single place for all your funding activity
- The ability to manage all stages from application through to milestone reporting (if you're funded)
- The ability to see updates and progress of your application

In order to use the grants portal to submit your SFF application, you are required to:

- **Register to use the grants portal**. Click here to register. You'll be asked to provide some contact details including an email address which we'll use to communicate with you. Once you're registered, you'll be able to submit and manage your applications.

- **Complete all the application questions.** Click here to login. Once logged in, you'll be presented with a list of open fund rounds. Click on 'Apply' next to the Sustainable Farming Fund round and complete all the required application questions. You will be able to save your application at anytime, so don't worry if you don't have all the required information to hand.

- **Submit your application.** Once all the mandatory questions have been completed, you'll need to attach your completed SFF Budget and agree to the fund round terms and conditions. Just remember to submit your application before the fund round close date which is 2pm on 18 November 2013. The portal automatically closes at this time. No late applications will be accepted.

You can find full step by step details on how to apply through the grants portal in our Grant Portal Getting Started Guide which can be found on the Sustainable Farming Fund homepage.

## Important Notice

- All applications for the 2014/15 SFF funding round must be submitted to MPI through the grants portal before the round closes at **2pm on 18 November 2013.**
- **No late applications will be accepted**.
- Applications and all supporting material not submitted to MPI through the grants portal will be returned to the applicant and NOT accepted for consideration.

## 4. Background to the Fund

## What is the purpose of the SFF?

The SFF invests in farmer, grower and forester led projects that deliver economic, environmental and social benefits to New Zealand's primary industries. Since 2011, the SFF has been open to aquaculture projects that support economic, environmental and social performance in the marine and land-based aquaculture sector.

The SFF funds "Communities of Interest" to undertake applied research and extension projects that tackle a shared problem or develop a new opportunity. SFF projects are led by rural land owners and managers often with the support of industry organisations, agribusinesses, researchers or consultants. Most successful projects are able to leverage a high proportion of other funding or in-kind support to complement the SFF grant.

### What does SFF fund?

SFF projects contribute to the economic, social and environmental viability of farmers, growers, foresters and their wider rural communities.

**Projects can include, but are not restricted to:**

- Applied research and development;
- Demonstration projects;
- Information, knowledge and technology transfer;
- Identifying barriers to, and options for, improved land use and management;
- Improving decision support;
- Adding value and exploring market opportunities;
- Adaptation and business opportunities around climate change;
- Sustainable land management;
- Māori agribusiness;
- Capability building;
- Field trials;
- Scoping projects; and
- National/regional workshops.

**Activities and expenditure appropriate for SFF support include, but are not restricted to:**

- Applied research activities;
- Demonstration and extension activities and resources;
- Project management;
- Data collection;
- Data analysis;
- Website development;
- Report writing;
- Literature reviews;
- Interviews;
- Gaps analysis;
- Pilot programmes; and
- Financial management.

## What doesn't SFF fund?

**SFF does not fund projects that include:**

- projects involving unsustainable land management or environmental practices;
- projects primarily benefiting an individual or single business or farming unit (including the funding of whole farm plans);
- conservation, mining and wild fisheries projects;
- projects from applicants not resident in New Zealand for tax purposes;
- participation in statutory processes, litigation, or resource inventory work;
- projects not directly related to New Zealand primary industries: e.g. amenity horticulture; and
- fundamental research

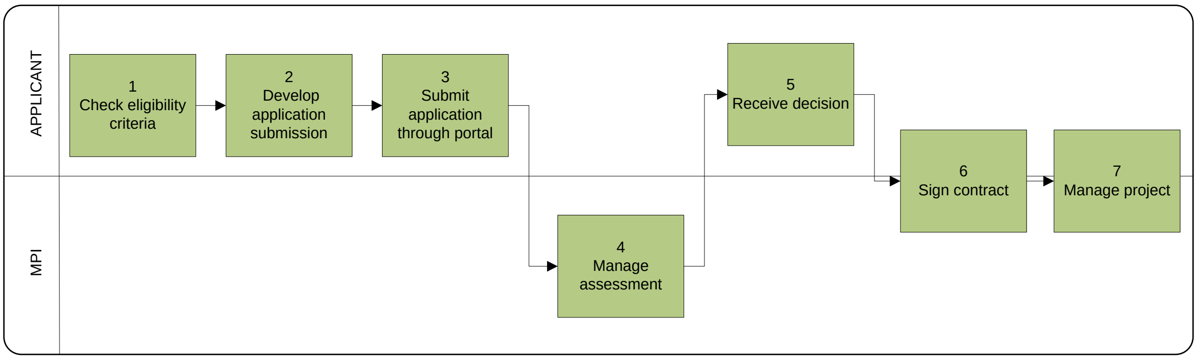
**SFF does not fund projects that include the following activities and expenditure:**

- long-term on-going costs of an organisation;
- long-term on-going costs of a trial or project (including breeding trials and variety trials);
- capital expenditure;
- retrospective costs;
- local or central government fees or charges;

- commercial product trials;
- product commercialisation; and
- IP development for private good.

## 5. Funding Process Overview

The 7 stages of the grants process are described below




| Step | Title | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Check eligibility criteria | • Applicants check their project is eligible for funding. See Chapter 6 for eligibility criteria.<br>• If eligible, continue to application stage. |
| **2** | Develop application submission | • Applicant develops grants submission in the grants portal.<br>• MPI has also provided a downloadable copy of the application questions if applicants wish to create, edit and share responses to the questions with colleagues. Applicants who choose to do this can copy responses directly into the grants portal. |
| **3** | Submit application through grants portal | • Applicants submit their completed application and attach SFF budget in the grants portal. Only applications submitted through the portal will be considered for funding.<br>• Applications must be submitted by **2pm 18 November 2013.** |
| **4** | Manage assessment | • Applications are initially assessed by MPI for completeness and eligibility before input sought from subject matter experts.<br>• An external panel assesses all complete and eligible applications against the fund criteria (see Chapter 8) and make funding recommendations to MPI.<br>• Final funding decisions are made by MPI. |

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| **5** | Receive decision | • Successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified of the decision. |
| **6** | Sign Contract | • Project deliverables and dates are finalised following any panel recommendation.<br>• Successful applicants sign contract with MPI.<br>• All contracts must be signed by 30 June 2014. MPI may withdraw any offer of funding if a contract is not signed by this date.<br>• A reference copy of the contract to be signed can be found on the MPI website. |
| **7** | Manage project | • The project is now live.<br>• Project is monitored against contracted milestones.<br>• Payments are made against successful completion of milestones.<br>• All project reporting is submitted through the grants portal. |

## 6. Eligibility Criteria

Before an application can be considered for funding, it must meet the SFF eligibility criteria. Ineligible applications will not be considered for funding.

The eligibility criteria for the SFF are:

| No | Criteria |
|---|---|
| 1 | All projects require a minimum of 20% non-governmental (cash co-funding and/or in-kind) contribution towards the total project expenditure. Successful projects are likely to have a higher proportion of cash and in-kind co funding contributions. |
| 2 | Projects should run for no more than 3 years. All projects should run between 01 July 2014 – 30 June 2017. After this time, it is expected that all project objectives should have been achieved. |
| 3 | Successful applicants must have arranged to contract through a legal entity. |
| 4 | Applicants can apply for up to $200,000 (GST exclusive) per annum for a maximum of three years. The maximum SFF grant available is $600,000 exclusive of GST. |
| 5 | The applicant must be able to demonstrate their capabilities in delivering the project and be able to provide tangible outcomes. |
| 6 | All applicants MUST complete the SFF budget template provided. |
| 7 | The application must be submitted through the grants portal. |

## 7. Applying for funding

To apply for funding your application will need to be submitted through the grants portal. The portal will close at **2pm on 18 November 2013.** No late applications will be accepted. Applications and all supporting material not submitted to MPI through the grants portal will be returned to the applicant and **NOT** accepted for consideration.

You can find full step by step details on how to apply through the grants portal in our Grant Portal Getting Started Guide which can be found on the Sustainable Farming Fund homepage.

**All applicants are required to do the following:**

- Read the Project Management guidelines
- Prepare responses to the application questions
- Complete the SFF budget template
- Read and understand the funding contract
- Submit your application through the grants portal

### Assistance in completing your application

Further guidance on completing the application questions can be found in Chapter 11 of this document.

Further guidance on completing the budget template can be found within the budget template. It is important that your budget matches the financial information detailed in the milestone section of your application.

Further information on using the grants portal can be found in the Grant Portal Getting Started Guide which can be found on the Sustainable Farming Fund homepage.

### Downloading the templates

A copy of all the templates and guides can be found on the MPI website
http://www.mpi.govt.nz/agriculture/funding-programmes/sustainable-farming-fund.aspx.

# 8. Assessment Process and Criteria

Each application is assessed only on the information provided in the application and supporting material.

All projects are assessed by an independent panel made up of external experts from the primary industries, including farmers, foresters, growers, education providers, consultants and regional council staff. Panellists score projects against each of the 8 criteria listed below. Applications are given a score of 1-7 depending on how well they demonstrate delivery under each criterion.

MPI may also ask external parties to review applications. These could be sector bodies, regional and local councils, other government agencies, technical experts and other key primary industry people. External parties provide context on applications that helps the panel members with making funding recommendations to MPI.

The final funding decisions made by MPI and are generally based on:

- Panel scores against the assessment criteria (see below)
- Whether the area has already been covered through previous SFF or other research projects
- The level of funding available
- Regional coverage
- Topic area

It is important to note that the fund is consistently three to four times oversubscribed and therefore not all applications can be funded.

**Note**: The Minister for Primary Industries is not involved in the assessment process.

## Assessment Criteria

Your application will be assessed by the panel against the following criteria:

| Assessment Criteria | Description |
|---|---|
| Contribution to sustainability | Projects must demonstrate how they will contribute to economic, environmental and/ or social sustainability for the Community of Interest included in the application. |
| Significance of the problem or opportunity | Projects need to describe how significant the problem/opportunity is to the Community of Interest submitting the application. Importance and relative priority to the sector and/or region, plus links to strategic plans or policy objectives (if applicable) will be taken into account. |

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| Community of Interest commitment | A 'Community of Interest' is a group of people directly affected by a common problem or opportunity who will benefit from a successful project. SFF requires the Community of Interest to demonstrate their commitment to the project e.g. by their representation on the project team and their level of cash and in-kind support. The Community of Interest should be led by farmers, foresters or growers. |
| Ability to deliver | Project management, financial management and technical skills plus a sound methodology are needed. MPI must have confidence that the project team can deliver on the proposed project. |
| Adoption and extension | The proposal needs to demonstrate that the results can be disseminated through appropriate networks that the team has the capability to develop and implement a robust extension strategy that will lead to adoption. It must be clear how the success of the project will be evaluated, what the long term benefits will be and how they will be measured. |
| Risk | Is the risk involved in the project acceptable? Identify any risks posed by the project as well as any technical and/or delivery risks and how such risks might be mitigated. MPI must be satisfied that the level of residual risk is acceptable and that the funding sought is appropriate for this level of risk. |
| Value for money | Projects need to demonstrate a good return on investment. The overall value of the outcomes of the successful project – whether economic, environmental, and/ or social – will be taken into consideration. The level of non-SFF funding and in-kind contributions will be assessed relative to the project outcomes. |
| Innovation | Does the project demonstrate an innovative approach with appropriate linkages to other research/work or is it "re-inventing the wheel".<br>What new skills, opportunities, technologies or information does your project provide? What potential does the innovative technique(s)/approach provide to the primary industries? |

## Decision Notification

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application via email by the end of April 2014.

## 9. Contract Information

A copy of the standard SFF contract is available on the MPI website. It is important you read and understand the contract terms and conditions before you apply to the Sustainable Farming Fund.

All contracts for funded projects need to be signed and returned to MPI before 30 June 2014. MPI reserves the right to withdraw any offer of funding if a contract is not signed by this date.

# 10. Project Management and Reporting

## Project Management

MPI will provide project management guidelines to help successful applicants manage their SFF project.

## Reporting

All projects that are funded are expected to submit reports against each of the contracted milestones.  Payments will only be made upon when the success measures of each milestone are completed to MPI's satisfaction.

Reporting documents should consist of:

- Completion of the grants milestone report.
- Attachment of any supporting documents which provide evidence of the milestone completion e.g. reports, presentations, project plans etc.
- An invoice for the milestone amount.  All GST registered projects must submit a GST compliant tax invoice.

The final milestone for each project will also require the project to complete a project fact sheet. This is a 2 page document which is intended to summarise and showcase the project and its findings. This template is provided by MPI.

Agreement of milestone completion and approval of payment is at the sole discretion of the Ministry for Primary Industries.

**IMPORTANT:** All milestone reports will be submitted through the grants portal.  The portal will remind you when your reports are due and provide a simple mechanism to submit your reports. Further information on how to use the portal will be provided if your application is successful.

## Audit

It is important all successful applicants keep detailed financial records.  This is good financial management practice.  While proof of expenditure is not normally requested in milestone reporting, MPI could request this at any time.

Each year a group of projects will be randomly selected for performance validation by the MPI auditor. The auditor will request the project's associated reporting and financial records to assess the project's financial management and milestone progress. MPI may also ask for a copy of the accounts to be supplied with any payment request

## 11. Notes on completing an SFF Application

Please read through these notes before completing the application questions. The following outlines what is required by applicants in completing each section of the application.

### Project Overview

| Title | Mandatory? | Requirement |
|---|---|---|
| Project Title | Yes | Provide a short title for the project (not a description). |
| Amount Requested | Yes | Enter the amount of SFF funding required. This excludes any co-funding, in-kind contributions and GST. |
| Proposed Start Date | Yes | Enter the date you expect the project to start. |
| Proposed End Date | Yes | Enter the date you expect the project to finish. |
| Sector | Yes | Please select the sector(s) that your project will benefit. |
| Sub Sector | Yes | Please select the sub sector(s) that your project will benefit. |
| Topic | Yes | Please select the topic(s) covered by your project. |
| Region | Yes | Please select the regions(s) where your project benefits. |
| Applicant Group Name | Yes | Please enter the name of the group of people applying on behalf of the community of interest. |

## Project Details

| Title | Mandatory? | Requirement |
|---|---|---|
| Project Summary | Yes | Summarise your project in less than 150 words. What are the main objectives and outcomes, how will they be achieved and who will benefit? This section needs to provide a good overview of the whole project application for quick reference. If your project is successful, this information will be placed on the SFF website. |
| Problem or Opportunity | Yes | Describe the problem that your project will solve or the opportunity it will take advantage of. Quantify the size of the issue to the community of interest and describe how widespread or locally important the project is. How urgent is the issue? Remember to provide some context where possible e.g. size of region/industry/hectares affected/ impact on return etc, and avoid jargon. |
| Project Deliverables | Yes | Describe the deliverables of the project and how they will address the problem or take advantage of the opportunity. State what you propose to do. Remember to be clear and concise with your deliverables. |
| Innovation | Yes | Describe how your project will be innovative. What new practices or methods etc will be generated. How will you evaluate the innovative approach? |
| Project Outcomes | Yes | Describe the differences this project will make, both at the completion of the project and in the longer term. State how you will evaluate this and demonstrate that the project has achieved its outcomes. |
| Risks and Mitigation | Yes | Describe the risks that may be posed in carrying out this project – both to the wider primary industries (e.g. political, biological etc) and to project delivery. What are the barriers to success and how will these risks be mitigated? |
| Contribution to Sustainability | Yes | Describe how the project will contribute to economic, social and/ or environmental sustainability – both through the project's deliverables and its end outcomes. Provide examples if possible. |

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| Community of Interest | Yes | Describe the stakeholder group(s) represented by the applicant and who will benefit from the project. Indicate approximately how many landowners/stakeholders/farmers your Community of Interest represents. Explain if this group regional, national or cross sector. Provide some background into the group's formation and its purpose. |
| Knowledge Sharing and Extension | Yes | Demonstrate clearly what project results/outcomes will be shared and how they will be extended to, and taken up by, the Community of Interest and also the wider industry. Applicants are expected to develop an extension and communications plan (although the plan itself may not be part of this application). Remember to also build extension activities into your milestone and activities tables. Will this project actually make a difference, who will it make a difference to and how will it make a difference? How will this be evaluated?<br>What will happen after the SFF project is complete – are there plans for on-going or future work? |
| Related Work | Yes | Describe how this project relates to any previous or current projects and/or programmes, SFF or otherwise, either in New Zealand or overseas. The applicant group, or its members, does not necessarily have to be involved in this related work – we want you to demonstrate that you are aware of what else is being done and how it fits with your proposal. Make it clear if the proposal is for new work, or builds on previous work. |
| Methodological Rationale and Project Design | Yes | Describe in detail your project's experimental design or research methodology. Explain the research design in detail including the population to be studied, the tools you will be using to do this, who will be involved, sample size etc. |
| Other Information | No | Enter any other information that you feel is relevant to your application. |

## Funding and Milestones

## Milestones

Milestones are major stages or deliverables of a project. Successful delivery of the milestones is critical for the project to achieve its overall objective. The milestone table will become the main basis for contracting the project deliverables so must include sufficient detail to enable SFF to monitor progress and substantiate payments. Milestones should be specific, measurable, achievement-focused and time-bound.

Each milestone should contain a detailed description along with how you will prove the milestone has been successfully completed. Once your project has demonstrated successful delivery of the milestone, MPI will make the associated payment. This is upon submission of the appropriate documentation to MPI.

Each milestone requires the following to be completed:

| Title | Mandatory? | Requirement |
|---|---|---|
| Due Date | Yes | Enter the date you expect the milestone to be completed by. |
| Milestone Description | Yes | Enter a concise title for your milestone. |
| Activities Undertaken | Yes | The description should define the key activities that will be undertaken in achieving the milestone. |
| Deliverables/Evidence of Completion | Yes | Provide details of all deliverables and how you will confirm that the milestone has been successfully completed e.g. a report or a presentation. |
| SFF Funding ($) | Yes | Enter the $ amount of funding requested from MPI. This should represent the cost of completing the milestone less any non-SFF cash received. This should match the milestone value in the SFF budget template. |

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| Non- MPI Cash ($) | Yes | Enter the $ amount of Non MPI cash contributions that you will receive for this milestone. |
| In Kind Contributions ($) | Yes | Enter the $ amount of In Kind Contributions that you will receive for this milestone. |
| Total ($) | Yes | This is the total milestone value. This is the sum of SFF Funding ($) + Non- SFF Cash ($) + In Kind Contributions ($). |

## Co Funding

Enter details of all cash and in kind co funding required. For further information, see Chapter 10

| Title | Mandatory? | Requirement |
|---|---|---|
| Co-Funder | Yes | Enter the name of the organisation or individual who is providing the co-funding. |
| Total Amount ($) | Yes | Enter the amount of cash co-funding or in-kind contribution that is being provided. |
| Type | Yes | Indicate whether the co-funding is non-MPI cash or in-kind. |
| Status | Yes | Indicate whether the co-funding has been confirmed or is still provisional. |

When you submit your application, the portal will check that:

- The sum of your project amount requested = the sum of SFF Funding ($) for all your milestones

  e.g. if you are requesting SFF funding of $200k, then all your milestones SFF Funding amounts must also equal $200k.

- The sum of all your milestone non MPI cash amounts = the sum of all your Non-MPI cash co funding amounts

  e.g. If all your milestones show that you will receive $150k of non MPI cash, this should be fully detailed in the co funding section and add up to $150k.

- The sum of all your milestone in-kind contribution amounts = the sum of all your in-kind funding amounts

  e.g. If all your milestones show that you will receive $50k of in-kind contributions, this should be fully detailed in the co-funding section and add up to $50k.

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## Project Resources

It is important that applicants can demonstrate they have the necessary skills to deliver a successful project. Project management, financial management and technical skills plus a sound methodology are required.

## Project Team

Enter details of your proposed project team. It is mandatory for each project to nominate a Project Manager, Finance Manager and a Chair Person.

| Title | Mandatory? | Requirement |
|---|---|---|
| Name | Yes | Enter the name of the person performing the role. |
| Organisation | Yes | Enter the name of the Organisation that the person primarily works for. |
| Role | Yes | Enter the nominated person's role. It is mandatory to select a Project Manager, Finance Manager and a Chair Person. |
| Confirmed? | Yes | Indicate whether the nominated person has confirmed they will perform the role in the project. |
| Phone | Yes | Enter the person's phone number. |

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| Mobile | Yes | Enter the person's mobile number. |
| Email | Yes | Enter the person's email. |
| Communications Contact? | Yes | Indicate whether the person is the nominated project communications contact. You must nominate one person to perform this role. The nominated person's details will be published on the MPI website. |

## Sub Contractors

Enter the names of any subcontractors that will be involved with the project. This could be research, delivery or tech transfer contractors.

| Title | Mandatory? | Requirement |
|---|---|---|
| Name | Yes | Enter the name of the sub contractor. |
| Organisation | Yes | Enter the name of the sub contracting Organisation. |
| Role | Yes | Enter the nominated sub contractor's role. |
| Confirmed? | Yes | Indicate whether the sub contractor has been confirmed. |

## Attachments

You are required to attach your completed SFF budget. You will not be able to submit your application until this has been completed.

You can also attach any copies of confirmation of co-funding you have.

## Declaration and Acceptance

Please read through each of the statements and ensure you understand and agree to them.

## 12. Non SFF Funding

### Non SFF Cash Co-Funding

The SFF will only fund projects that can secure a minimum of 20% of the total project cost through non government cash and/or in-kind sources. MPI prefers that project budgets have at least 20% cash investment from non government sources.

### In-Kind Contributions

In-kind contributions are materials, equipment or services given to the project at no charge. These would normally come from the community, farmers or foresters involved in the project, councils and sector bodies.

### Valuing In-Kind Contributions

For a contribution to count as "in-kind", the contributor should incur actual and real costs resulting from their direct involvement in the project. For example, ploughing a field or sowing a crop which is a project trial plot, using a private vehicle to get to a project site, or giving up time to deliver a project workshop. This does not include undertaking activities that form part of their normal day-to-day duties (i.e. doing something that would be done anyway).

For in-kind personnel costings please use the following rates:

- Personnel - Personnel should be valued at rates that allow for overheads, administrative costs and local travel expenses, which form part of the work done by an individual. These expenses cannot be claimed separately. Personnel rates are:
  - Rate A: $135 per hour for consultants, scientists, lawyers and expert advice;
  - Rate B: $85 per hour for technical, scientific expertise or professional advice (council officers, engineers, accountants, etc.); and
  - Rate C: $35 per hour for general labour, administration and those not covered by Rate A or B.
- Project support costs - These should be valued at the lower of actual cost or market value (e.g. cost of hire, workshop costs and catering).

## 13. Other Important Information

The following information should be considered when making an application.

### Confidentiality

Information in project applications will usually be limited to the SFF team, panellists, other MPI staff and external assessors (including other funders or pan-industry organisations). However, if MPI receives two or more applications that are similar, MPI may ask those applicants to work together in an amalgamated project. In this instance information between applicants may be shared.

If the applicant considers any part of their project to be confidential then they must make a written request at the time of submission. The request should specify the party(s) whom the applicant does not wish to view the application and the reasons why.

### Publicity

The Ministry for Primary Industries reserves the right to use information regarding funded projects for publicity purposes.

### Acknowledgement of Funding

The Ministry for Primary Industries must be acknowledged as a source of funding in all publications and publicity regarding grant funded projects. MPI may specify the form and content of such acknowledgement. The MPI logo should also be used where ever possible. This will be provided to funded projects when required.