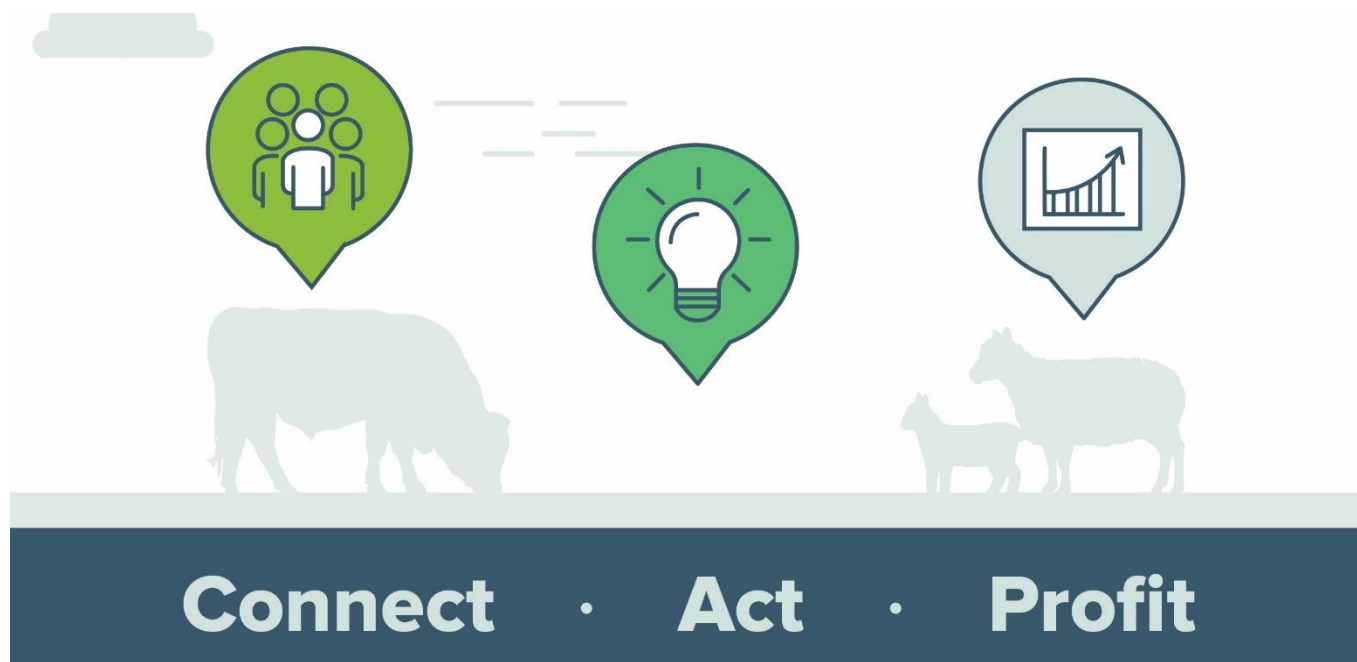




# Handbook

Guide to help connect, form  
and facilitate an Action Group



**Connect · Act · Profit**

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# 1. Welcome

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Welcome to B+LNZ Action Group, developed by Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP) a Primary Growth Partnership programme that worked to help the red meat sector increase productivity and profitability. Funded by meat processors, banks, Beef and Lamb New Zealand and the Ministry for Primary Industries, RMPP worked with farmers and sector businesses to develop, test, and introduce new ideas, new technology solutions and new ways of working.

The B+LNZ Action Group model was developed by RMPP with input from sheep and beef farmers and rural professionals around New Zealand. It was born out of the RMPP Extension Design project, involving 75 pilot farmers from across New Zealand. This project started in October 2015 and concluded in July 2018. Armed with the knowledge RMPP gained on this project, an Extension Model was developed called RMPP Action Network and this underpins B+LNZ's Action Groups. The RMPP Action Network was rolled out nationally to the red meat sector late in 2017 with the aim of giving farmers the confidence to put their ideas into action on-farm. On 1 April 2021 all active RMPP Action Groups transitioned to B+LNZ Action Groups.

This RMPP Action Network handbook has been adapted to help guide those involved in connecting, forming, and running B+LNZ Action Groups. It outlines the different roles within the process, the steps required to set up a successful group, how to develop an Extension Plan and Farm Action Plans as well as how to manage invoicing and payments. It was primarily developed to support facilitators having undertaken the RMPP or B+LNZ facilitator training. We also invite others to read this handbook to understand how you can get involved with B+LNZ Action Groups and the benefits from collaborating with our industry.

Throughout this handbook we refer to the Knowledge hub ([www.knowledgehub.co.nz](http://www.knowledgehub.co.nz)). Located on the Beef + Lamb New Zealand website, the Knowledge hub has brought together a range of resources provided by RMPP and new resources developed by B+LNZ. This material from industry experts helps farmers get the information they need to confidently make more informed decisions. It includes short 'how to' videos, fact sheets, presentations by experts and a whole lot more. It's a great tool to use to refresh your knowledge, for training staff and it will help farm businesses understand the application of some of the farming fundamentals.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) along with other resources and information can be found on the B+LNZ website ([www.beeflambnz.com/action-groups](http://www.beeflambnz.com/action-groups)), otherwise please get in touch with us on 0800 733 632 or [actiongroupinfo@beeflambnz.com](mailto:actiongroupinfo@beeflambnz.com) if you require any support.

We look forward to having you on board.

**This handbook is effective from 01 April 2021**

Key points to remember are shown in blue boxes throughout this handbook

Things to do as a member of an Action Group are shown in green boxes throughout this handbook

## 2. What is B+LNZ Action Groups?

RMPP was a Primary Growth Partnership programme that worked to help the red meat sector increase productivity and profitability. Funded by meat processors, banks, Beef and Lamb New Zealand and the Ministry for Primary Industries, RMPP worked with farmers and sector businesses to develop, test, and introduce new ideas, new technology solutions and new ways of working.

RMPP Action Network was a new initiative designed to help farmers connect with other farmers and the expertise they need to confidently make changes in their business.

Research into best-practice and lessons from the RMPP Extension Design project has shown that change happens on-farm when well-facilitated, small groups of farm businesses come together with a shared focus. Where the group is farmer-centered and brings in the expertise to help farmers, this provides participants with the confidence to take action on-farm.

The RMPP Extension Design project was designed to help farmers connect with other farmers and expertise

What made the RMPP Action Network small group learning model different?

- **Farmer led** - they determined the structure and rules of their group and how they spent their funds
- Farm businesses formed into **small groups** (seven to nine farm businesses per group)
- Operated with a **shared vision/focus**
- **Planned** and had some base **structure** - ground rules, Extension Plan, individual Farm Action Plans
- **Well facilitated** - encouraged, focused, and supported the exploration and adoption of new ideas
- Drew on **expertise** - relevant experts and information at the right time, that suited the needs determined by the group
- **Supported** - by people and information
- Built the **confidence** in individual group members to take knowledge and turn it into **action on their farm** in a way that was relevant for them. This led to a continual increase in confidence in bringing new knowledge and learning back into a group setting and at an industry level, provide continuous improvement and growth.

Groups must be farmer led

The principles of the Extension Model developed by RMPP are a key extension delivery mechanism within the B+LNZ Farming Excellence Strategy. More detail on the small group learning model (namely Action Groups) can be found in *Section 4 - What are the roles in B+LNZ Action Groups?*

For further information about the Extension Model refer to the [Extension Best Practice Guidelines](https://www.knowledgehub.co.nz) found at [www.knowledgehub.co.nz](https://www.knowledgehub.co.nz)

### 3. How does it work?

B+LNZ Action Groups are made up of seven to nine farm businesses. An Action Group will:

- Be made up of seven to nine farm businesses with a shared focus
- New groups formed from 1 April 2021 will be allocated \$2,000 (excluding GST) per group upon the submission and approval of an Extension Plan
- Existing groups will be eligible for \$2,000 annually upon the completion of group evaluation and approval of an Extension Plan for the coming year.

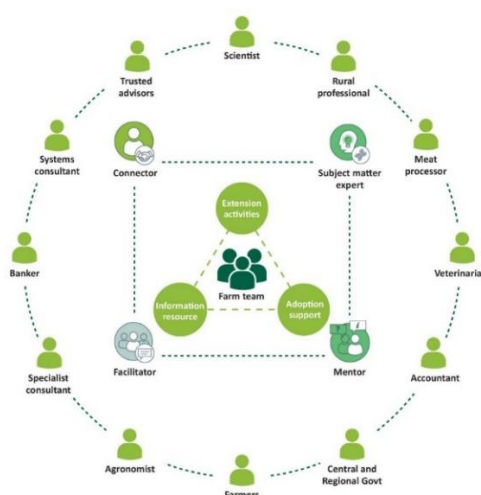
The funds are available to fund facilitation of activities as well as cover the costs of experts to work with the Action Group. Each Action Group will be responsible for managing their own funds.

### 4. What are the roles in B+LNZ Action Groups?

The extension model developed by RMPP is the foundation from which B+LNZ Action Groups were built. With the farm team at its centre, the model incorporates the four components of effective extension programmes:

- **Recognition of different roles in the extension system** - these roles are key in the successful delivery of extension activities, information, and support/follow-up
- **Well-developed information resources** - will be most useful to farm teams when they are written in farmer-friendly language and help digest technical concepts and information into practical, 'how to' explanations
- **Effectively facilitated extension activities** - provide farm teams with the opportunity to learn about a topic. There is a broad range of potential activities such as workshops, farm walks or field days. Generally, a combination of activities will be required over time.
- **Adoption support** - enables farm teams to properly implement and monitor changes.

More detail can be found in the [Extension Best Practice Guidelines](https://www.knowledgehub.co.nz/extension-best-practice-guidelines) at [www.knowledgehub.co.nz](https://www.knowledgehub.co.nz)



The information below outlines the roles (people and systems) involved in the B+LNZ Action Group process.

The icons are used throughout the handbook to indicate which parts are relevant to each role. The narrative provides context and significance of the roles.

The following four key roles are critical for supporting change on-farm.



**Connector**

The connector role brings individual farm businesses together to form an Action Group. They may also identify the most appropriate subject matter expertise once an Action Group has formed.



**Facilitator**

The facilitator role is important for helping identify the topics to focus on at both an Action Group and individual farm business level. Facilitators help run extension activities. They also are integral to adoption support (as identified in the Extension Model), helping to identify what is needed to help farmers make changes on-farm.



**Subject Matter Expert**

Subject matter experts deliver specialist information and advice via extension activities, information resources and through adoption support.



**Mentor**

Mentors have a particular role in adoption support to help build confidence in farmers within the Action Group to make changes on-farm.

When involved in an Action Group, a person may take on more than one role e.g. a connector might become a facilitator once an Action Group is formed. A facilitator may step into the expert role for an extension activity and ask another person to step into the facilitator role for that time. In addition, one organisation can play several roles via the same or different individuals.

If an individual is playing the part of more than one role within a group, they need to communicate to the group which role they are performing (or the 'hat' they are wearing) at that point in time e.g. if a farm consultancy business is facilitating an Action Group, they may have a colleague who is a subject matter expert who can deliver an activity for that Action Group. It is important that group members understand which role each-individual is playing at any one time, so expectations are aligned between all parties.

For more detailed information on the roles and their operation, see the [Extension Best Practice Guidelines](https://www.knowledgehub.co.nz) on [www.knowledgehub.co.nz](https://www.knowledgehub.co.nz)

## 4.1 The farmer-related roles



**Farmer**

Farmers are at the core of B+LNZ Action Groups. They determine the structure and rules of their Action Group and how the group spends its funds.



**Lead Farmer**

Lead farmers are like the 'captain' of a sports team. They represent the Action Group and are responsible for being the point of contact between the facilitator, the Action Group and B+LNZ. They are also responsible for submitting the Extension Plan and coordinating B+LNZ group finances.



**Farm team member**

Members of the farm team are encouraged to be involved in an Action Group. Farm team members can be added into the system once the Extension Plan has been approved.

The **lead farmer** is like the 'captain' of a sports team representing the Action Group and will be responsible for:

- Being the point of contact between the Action Group, the facilitator and B+LNZ
- Submitting the group Extension Plan
- Coordinating group finances
- Coordinating payment of B+LNZ \$2,000 kick start funding invoice for the Action Group
- Resolving any disagreement over amounts charged by the facilitator and subject matter expert
- Establishing and managing the Action Group's expectations with facilitators and subject matter experts.
- Key contact person for the B+LNZ Regional Team to ensure that the group is supported

## 4.2 B+LNZ Action Group-related roles



**B+LNZ**

B+LNZ provides the structure and support for B+LNZ Action Groups such as handling queries, supporting facilitator training and ongoing support, managing the evaluation process.



**Action Group  
Management  
System**

The Action Group Management System (AGMS) supports the successful set up, delivery and tracking of Action Group activity.

Where you see the Action Group Management System icon in this handbook there will be steps to complete online

## 5. What are the criteria and requirements?

### 5.1 Farmers



Working in an Action Group with seven to nine other farm businesses creates a positive environment for individual farmers to confidently express ideas, gain feedback from experts and take action on-farm.

Farmers will work in an Action Group of seven to nine farm businesses

To be eligible to participate in a B+LNZ Action Group an individual need to meet three of the four criteria below:

- Be a Beef + Lamb New Zealand levy payer
- Own or manage a farming operation that produces red meat in New Zealand;
- Is committed to working alongside other farmers to deliver environmental outcomes in a catchment
- Consider making some on-farm changes.

The person who directly oversees the management of the block/farm can join an Action Group as a farmer participant representing that farm business unit.

Farmers are welcome to invite others from within their farm team to participate in the Action Group. Note: the group should determine the allowable attendee numbers at the group formation stage.

Ideally at least two people from each farm team will participate in an Action Group

By participating in B+LNZ Action Group each farm business agrees to:

- Actively participate in the Action Group and act reasonably and in good faith throughout
- Adhere to the Action Groups' 'ground rules' which will be agreed during the first few meetings.

And is recommended to:

- develop a Farm Action Plan which outlines what will be done on-farm to achieve their objectives, and use all reasonable endeavours to meet those objectives

Each farmer is recommended to complete their own Farm Action Plan

Once an Action Group has been formed, the facilitator will assist in the development of an Extension Plan for the Action Group. This will outline the key objective of the Action Group, the goals they are wanting to achieve and the difference that meeting these goals will make to their businesses.

## 5.2 Connector



The connector is the role that initiates the B+LNZ Action Group process with the farmer. Their role is to bring individual farm businesses together and to identify the potential common purpose for an Action Group - a shared challenge or opportunity they want to address.

If you wish to understand more about getting involved in B+LNZ Action Groups as a connector, more information on what it involves can be found at <https://beeflambnz.com/action-groups> or in the [Extension Best Practice Guidelines](#), [www.knowledgehub.co.nz](http://www.knowledgehub.co.nz)

The connector brings farm businesses together  
They can play an ongoing role connecting groups and facilitators with relevant information and expertise

## 5.3 Facilitator



The role of facilitator is crucial within B+LNZ Action Group and needs to meet certain criteria.

Before getting started, a facilitator must:

- Complete the B+LNZ facilitator training. Refer to <https://beeflambnz.com/action-groups> for more information
- Successfully register with B+LNZ Action Group in the online system as a facilitator as part of an Action Group
- Agree to meet the requirements of the facilitator role description including the Code of Conduct.

Once an Action Group has been formed and is ready to get started, there are a few key responsibilities for the facilitator. These include:

- Leading the Action Group in the development of their Extension Plan
- Facilitating the Action Group to complete its activities as set out in the Extension Plan
- Planning, organising, and communicating progress of the Action Group's activities back to B+LNZ by updating the Action Group Management System
- Facilitating positive relationship management within the Action Group
- Ensuring compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 in relation to any Action Group events or activities.

Working closely and in conjunction with the lead farmer, the facilitator needs to:

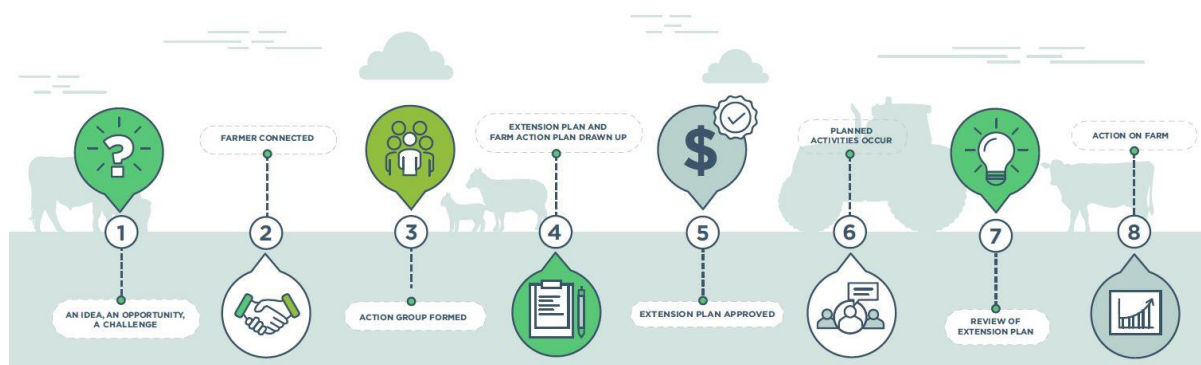
- Indicate to B+LNZ that activities have been completed by updating the Action Group Management System
- Provide feedback to B+LNZ on how the Action Group has been going/tracking
- Share good news stories with B+LNZ.

Facilitators need to make their own arrangements with the Action Group members to have their costs and expenses covered. This also needs to consider how the group will cover costs for Subject Matter Experts. by the group.

Further information on how to be an effective facilitator can be found in the [Extension Best Practice Guidelines](#) or [www.knowledgehub.co.nz](http://www.knowledgehub.co.nz) and is covered as part of the B+LNZ facilitator training

## 6. What is the B+LNZ Action Group process?

The B+LNZ Action Group process follows the seven steps illustrated in the following diagram. The icons for the steps represented, are referenced throughout this handbook for ease of identification.



- 1 The process begins with the current state - farmers face challenges and the demands of ongoing change and often have plenty of ideas to meet these. But the ideas sometimes require some external expertise and support in order to work out whether they are worth implementing. B+LNZ Action Group has been created to give farmers the confidence to turn those ideas into action.
- 2 After initial enquiry and farmer identification by a connector, a farmer is invited to connect into an Action Group through the Action Group Management System.
- 3 Once connected, the Action Group will establish their area of common focus and their operating foundation i.e. develop their ground rules.
- 4 They then develop an Extension Plan which is submitted for consideration to B+LNZ by the lead farmer.
- 5 The plan must be approved by B+LNZ before the funding becomes available.
- 6 Once an Action Group is up and running, it is recommended each participating farm business develops a Farm Action Plan, which will detail the activities they intend to undertake to meet their own farm business goals.
- 7 Group Extension Plans will be reviewed, and new plans refined and submitted for the subsequent year.
- 8 The aim of being involved in an Action Group is to give farmers the confidence to put their ideas into action on-farm. This should spark new ideas and opportunities and the cycle begins again.

## 6.1 How does the management system support the process?



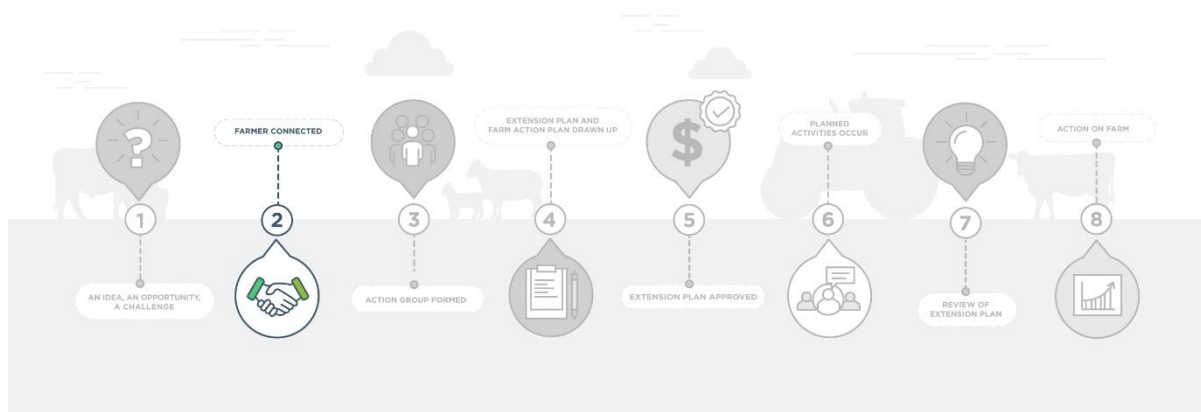
Setting up an Action Group, the development of Extension and Farm Action Plans, and the management of funds is managed through the B+LNZ Action Group Management System (AGMS). This is a user-friendly system contained within the Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) website, alongside the Knowledge hub. It is open to users when they register or are invited to join an Action Group. The typical approach to connecting and forming a group in the AGMS is as follows:



All farmers, farm team members, connectors and facilitators must register in the system. If you are a first-time connector or facilitator you will need to register and agree to the Terms and Conditions before you can create a group and contribute to the development of an Extension Plan.

- Log in to your B+LNZ account at [www.beeflambnz.com](http://www.beeflambnz.com)
- If you do not have an account, select Login/Register at the top of the page and complete the "Create new account" form
- Once logged in, select "My dashboard" from the drop-down menu under your name
- Click "Join B+LNZ Action Group" to enter your details
- Click "Create Group" or "Create Another Group" to create a group and invite others to join.

## 6.2 How do farm businesses connect?



The connector brings individual farm businesses together and helps identify the common purpose for the group – a shared issue or opportunity they want to address.

The connector may also:

- Help identify the most appropriate subject matter expert to support the group or have an individual farmer address the issue/opportunity
- Work with a facilitator to develop an Extension Plan for the group
- Encourage action on-farm
- Stay with the group over time (or leave the group once it is established)
- Check in with the group at times to monitor progress and get a general feel for what's working well and what is not.

There are several ways a group can connect:

- A connector recruiting and mustering a group and managing this process – typically with a facilitator in mind/involved. In most cases, the connector will arrange this (preferred approach)
- Farmers getting together to form their own group – they may or may not have a facilitator in mind
- Facilitators performing the connector role
- Farmers registering individually (not currently associated with a group and not sure where to get started).

1. Connectors looking to set up an Action Group should cast the net wide. For example, you could advertise that you want to start an Action Group in company newsletters or local papers. Or, if you know of one or two farmers who are interested, speak to them, and ask them to recruit a few extra people.
2. Hold a preliminary meeting. This will help generate or gauge the level of interest in forming an Action Group. This could be an informal gathering over lunch or dinner or come at the end of a field day or seminar.

3. At the initial meeting record the names and contact details of those attending so you can follow up potential membership.
4. Outline the opportunities that exist for Action Group members by being involved in B+LNZ Action Groups. As a connector you might facilitate a discussion of these opportunities by asking small groups to talk about **what are some of the big decisions, they will have to make over the coming 12 months? What are they finding challenging?** Use this as a way of starting to gauge whether there is a common purpose amongst the farm businesses present.

Discuss opportunities by asking questions like:

- What big decisions will you need to make over coming 12 months?
- What are you finding challenging?

5. Follow-up those who are keen, with the aim of getting seven to nine farm businesses involved. B+LNZ's recommended approach for farmers is to work with a connector (i.e. rural professional) to create a group and then invite farmers to join the group.

Prompt them to keep thinking about the on-farm decisions they are finding challenging or getting stuck on at present and to give consideration towards what their farm business goals are, as a means of helping determine the focus/objective for the Action Group.



To register a group on the system and to invite farmers the following farmer details will need to be entered:

- Farmer's name
- Email address.

Upon entering these details, an email invitation will be sent to farmers inviting them to join the group. They will be prompted to log into their B+LNZ account, accept the invitation and B+LNZ Action Group Terms and Conditions.

If they don't have a B+LNZ account, they will be prompted to create one and provide their details.

## 7. What happens in the first meeting?



The first meeting of an Action Group is crucial. As the group intends working together over an extended period, it's important that at the first meeting the facilitator invests time to negotiate and agree the purpose with the group, as well as establish ground rules for how the Action Group will be run. This will ensure the Action Group has a strong foundation from the beginning. It's about starting everyone on the same page and the farm businesses buying into the focus and expected behaviours of their Action Group.

At the first meeting invest time to negotiate and agree the purpose of the Action Group and establish ground rules for how it will run

Facilitators should run through the following six stages (the 'six pack') at the first meeting of the Action Group:

Stage	Purpose	Prompts
<b>1. Get to know each other</b>	<p>Members introduce themselves and their business</p> <p>Set the expectation that the Action Group will have open and honest discussions</p> <p>Share stories</p>	<p><i>What decisions are you getting stuck on at present?</i></p> <p><i>What decisions are you finding hard at the moment?</i></p> <p><i>How much did that cost?</i></p> <p><i>How much was that worth?</i></p>
<b>2. Start with purpose</b>	<p>Remind the Action Group of the opportunities that exist through B+LNZ Action Groups</p>	<p><i>What should Action Group members expect from their facilitator?</i></p> <p>(see following page)</p>
<b>3. Ground rules</b>	<p>Establish ground rules for the Action Group</p> <p>Gain agreement then record them and revisit</p>	<p><i>How do you want to treat each other?</i></p> <p><i>How do you want to work together?</i></p>

	at the start of each session	
<b>4. Get people moving</b>	Explore the focus/objectives for the Action Group - use information from the first stage	<i>What do you want to focus on?</i> <i>What would help with your tough decisions?</i>
<b>5. Respect difference</b>	Ensure that all members of the group contribute to the discussion  Ensure reflection time is built into the day	<i>Would anyone else like to add to the discussion?</i> <i>Who has a different idea?</i>
<b>6. Close with purpose</b>	Check in with each business in the Action Group  Talk through the costs of running the Action Group, including funding from B+LNZ	<i>What do we need to do before the next activity?</i> <i>Who are the key people who will assist the facilitator?</i>



## What should Action Group members expect from their facilitator?

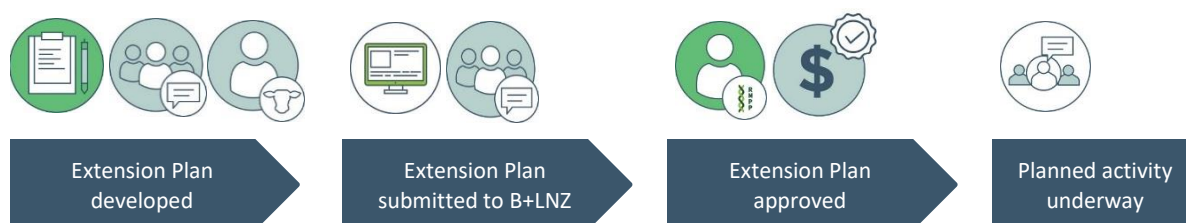
Accredited Action Group facilitators will have agreed to the Facilitator's Code of Conduct (based on the International Association of Facilitators Statement of Values and Code of Ethics, 2004).

1. The focus is on the Action Group and members - not what the facilitator might think is important. If you, as a facilitator have expertise not otherwise available to the Action Group and feel the Action Group must have this in order to be effective, you should offer it, after explaining the change in your role from facilitator to subject matter expert.
2. As a facilitator, you will discuss any possible conflict of interest, personal bias, prior knowledge of the facilitator/subject matter expert organisation or any other matter which may be perceived as preventing you from working effectively with the interests of all Action Group members.
3. Facilitators work to ensure there is an environment of respect and safety where all farm businesses can participant in the Action Group freely.
4. Facilitators will maintain confidentiality of information within an Action Group.

## 7.1 How do Extension and Farm Action Plans get developed?



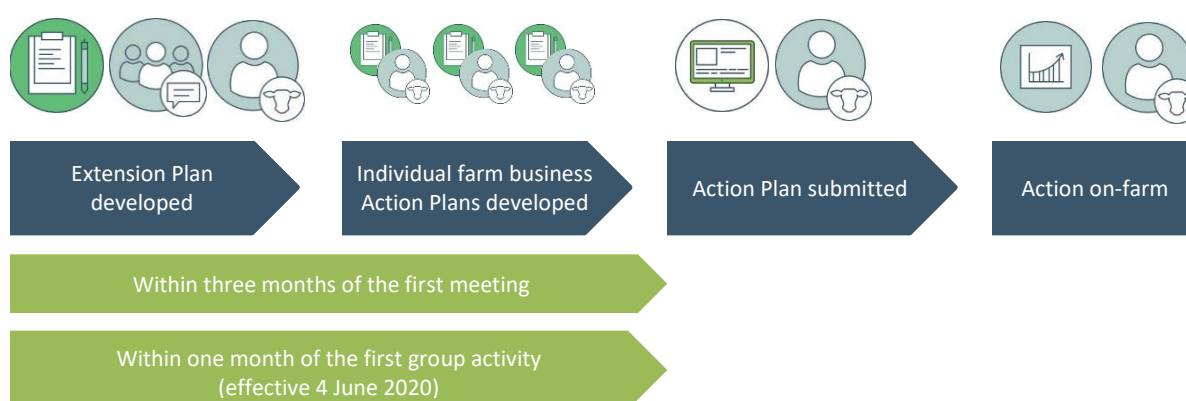
### Creating an Extension Plan



Once the Action Group has formed, identified their common area of focus, and established their ground rules, they take the step of turning this into their group Extension Plan. This is submitted by the primary contact farmer to B+LNZ for approval and commitment of funding.

The facilitator plays an important role in guiding the Action Group through developing a relevant and meaningful plan.

### Creating Farm Action Plans



Once an Extension Plan is approved each individual farm business is encouraged to develop a Farm Action Plan that aligns with the Extension Plan goals, then outline what relevant actions they will undertake on their own farm.

Giving prior thought and planning towards the Farm Action Plan in particular farm business goals, is encouraged and will help the group formation and Extension Plan development process.

## 7.2 How does the Extension Plan get developed?



The Extension Plan will be developed to capture the overall Action Group objective, the group goals that the group will work towards to meet that objective, the difference achieving these goals will make on-farm, and a 12-month plan of activities to work towards achieving those goals.

Ensure a planned and focused approach is taken within the group and good disciplines applied

The Extension Plan is crucial as it will ensure a planned and focused approach is taken within the group and good disciplines applied as well as allowing B+LNZ to track Action Group progress over time.

When developing the Extension Plan the facilitator should:

- Reflect on the focus/objective for the Action Group and the goals needed to achieve this
- Draft this into the Extension Plan template.

Remember when planning activities there are different levels of change to consider:

Outcome: what is the intended outcome of the activity?

Practice change: for the outcome to occur, a change of practice is needed – what is the change of practice?

KASA changes: What Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Aspirations are needed for the practice change?

Activities: What activities will engage the group and create opportunities for learning – KASA change?

Resources: What resources do you need to run these activities?

The development of the Extension Plan should reflect the Extension Model, i.e. think about activities, information, resources and adoption support and follow-up.

Extension Plan components:

- Objectives
- Specific goals
- On-farm benefits
- Activity plans.

The key criteria of the Extension Plan are:

**1. The objective for the Action Group**

Each Action Group needs to discuss and decide on an objective for their group. This is the focus or purpose of the Action Group based on an area of common interest, common challenge, or opportunity.

**2. Goals to help achieve the objective**

The group goals are to help break down the objective into manageable bits of work. SMART goals are encouraged, i.e. **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**imely.

**3. The difference this will make on-farm**

A statement about the difference the planned objective, goals and activities will make on-farm for members of the Action Group. This is useful for farm businesses to have thought through as it should link to their Farm Action Plans.

**4. A twelve-month plan of activities, resources, and estimated costs**

A list of activities to achieve the goals and objective for the Action Group are important. Those activities planned first will have more detail than later ones. As part of this list, the type of activity should be identified (e.g. meeting on-farm, field trip), along with any expertise needed.

The organisation of experts and mentors etc in conjunction with the Action Group is required. New goals can be added to the Extension Plan as the Action Group progresses.

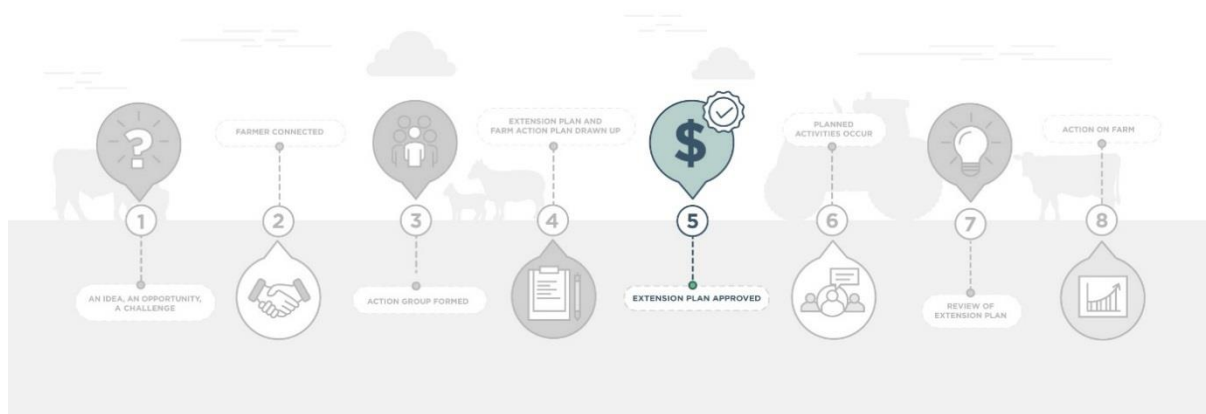
An estimate of costs needs to be provided. A balance of 60 percent facilitation, 40 percent expertise costs should be aimed for across a year.



Once the Extension Plan has been written:

- Start talking to Action Group members about the Extension Plan and their Farm Action Plan – encourage them to start drafting their individual Action Plan. **NOTE:** The Farm Action Plan is not mandatory however we encourage farm business to prepare a Farm Action Plan for their business.
- Complete the Extension Plan in the system for approval
- Advise the lead farmer when the Extension Plan is completed for their review and subsequent submission to B+LNZ for approval.

## 7.3 How does the Extension Plan get approved?



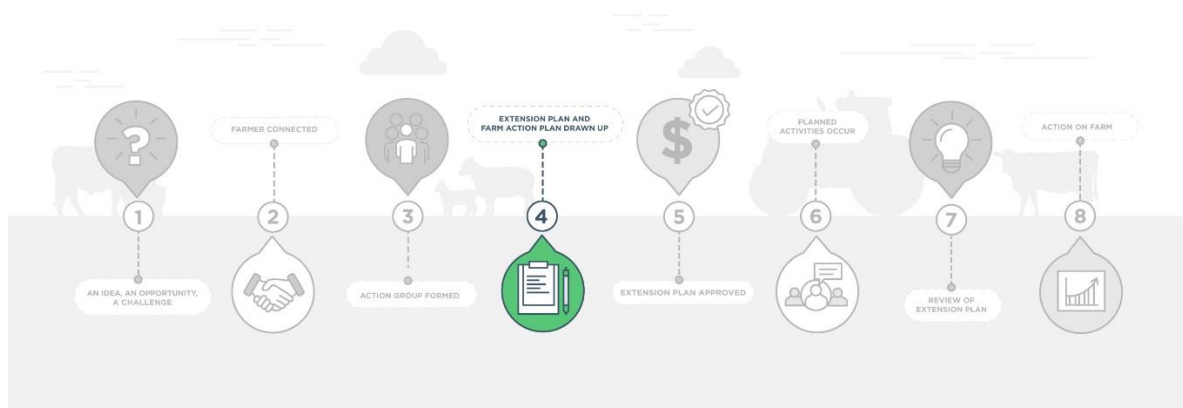
Once a plan is submitted it will go to the B+LNZ Extension Team for review and approval. If the plan doesn't meet all the criteria, B+LNZ will engage with the facilitator to talk through issues and/or recommended refinement. These criteria include:

- How clear is the purpose of the Extension Plan?
- How clear are the goals in the Extension Plan?
- Are the goals SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**imely)?
- Is there a statement on what the on-farm change will be?
- How do the activities relate to the purpose and goals? Is there a clear link?
- Are there details on the facilitator costs and subject matter expert costs?
- Does the first activity relate to developing the Extension Plan? Are the costs within reasonable limits?

Once developed, the Extension Plan is by no means 'set in stone'. The ability will remain to add to the plan during the annual cycle to ensure that the activities and goals remain relevant to the objective, as well as a review at the conclusion of 12 months to ensure everything remains valid and achievable.

Any post approval activity updates and additions will be reviewed by B+LNZ, but do not require approval by B+LNZ. Reviewer notes will be available to the facilitator and lead farmer via the Action Group Management System.

## 7.4 How does the Farm Action Plan get developed?



The Farm Action Plan links what the Action Group activities and outcomes are with the goals and activities of each individual farmers' business, i.e. why they are participating in the Action Group and what they will get from participating in the Action Group. This ensures each farmer has clearly defined goals and a set of activities they will work towards on-farm.

The key criteria of the Farm Action Plan are:

### **1. Goals from the Extension Plan**

The goals from the Action Group Extension Plan form the first part of the Farm Action Plan. These are automatically copied from the Extension Plan when completed online.

### **2. The farm business goals**

The farm business goals should relate to one or more of the Extension Plan goals. These will reflect what the farm business wants to achieve from participating in the Action Group.

Some high level or well refined goals should be given thought prior to the first meeting that focuses on forming the Action Group. These goals will help guide the Action Group discussion around developing a common focus for the group. After the development of the Extension Plan, the individual farm business goals may undergo further refinement and alignment with the Extension Plan goals.

### **3. Key Performance indicators (KPIs)**

Understanding how a farm business is performing is critical to making decisions on how to improve performance. B+LNZ have identified a set of top-level measures which are recommended as the starting point for calculating KPIs within a farm business.

- EBITRm per Effective Hectare
- Farm Operating Expenditure (FOE) Ratio
- Net Production per Effective Hectare.

There are other KPIs a farm business may choose to track in addition to these. Discussions with the Action Group, facilitator and subject matter experts might be helpful when developing the Farm Action Plan.

RMPP developed a series of online calculators to ensure the calculating of KPIs is consistent and the entering of information easier. RMPP also developed a learning module around benchmarking and KPIs, along with a booklet to aid the understanding and support the calculating of these.

The resources are available on the Knowledge hub.

In addition, RMPP has developed a four-hour workshop for sheep and beef farmers called 'Taking Ownership of Your Financials'. The workshop is designed to build farmer confidence in understanding the financial performance of their business. It enables farmers to identify where the farm business is performing well and areas with further potential.

Farmers are taken through a set of financial accounts and learn how to calculate the three key performance indicators (KPIs) required for a Farm Action Plan.

To find out more about the workshop contact your local B+LNZ Extension Manager or telephone 0800 733 632.

The online KPI calculators are available through 'My dashboard' on the B+LNZ website

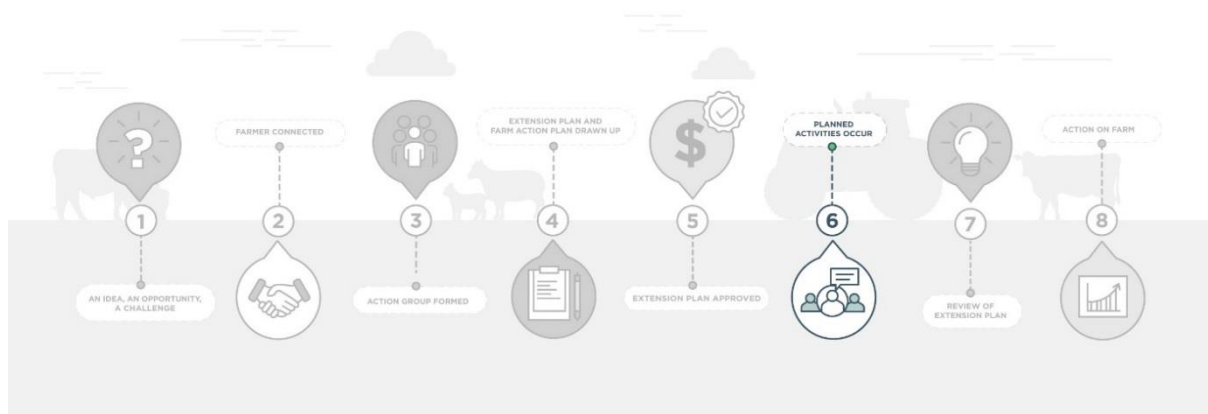
#### **4. Actions**

The final part of the Farm Action Plan is to record two or more actions that the farm business will undertake over the next 12 months as a means of achieving the goals for the business and helping achieve the Extension Plan goals.

Some farmers may be interested in or have already taken their business planning to another level. B+LNZ have developed a business planning tool that is available for use through 'My dashboard' on the B+LNZ website. This is supported by a business planning case study that is available in the Knowledge hub.

A Farm Action Plan can be submitted online or by filling in a Farm Action Plan template. If a Farm Action Plan template is completed manually, this can be emailed or sent to B+LNZ where it will be upload into the Action Group Management System.

## 7.5 What happens after the Extension Plan is approved?



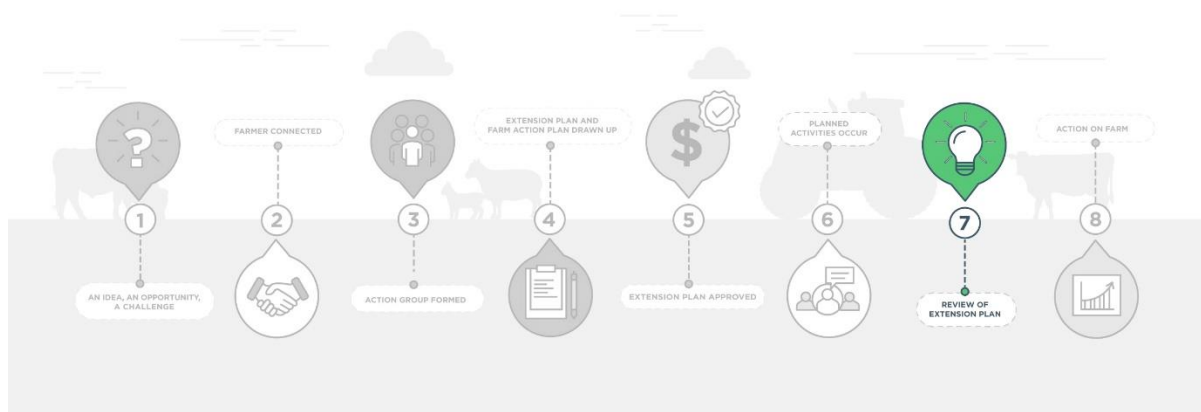
Once an Extension Plan is approved, funding becomes available and an Action Group undertakes their activities as planned.

As activities are completed, the lead farmer can mark them as complete, indicating that the activity took place as planned and to the Action Groups' expectations. This is done in the Extension Plan within the Action Group Management System.

It is at this stage that all the relevant roles are in action, working and learning together. The Extension Plan should be reviewed and updated as activities occur or if the group decide that different activities are required, or some changes need to be made to what has been planned.



## 7.6 When do the plans get reviewed?



At the end of each Action Group's operating year, they will review their current Extension Plan and develop a new plan for the next year. This will involve reviewing progress, their focus, and objectives, then mapping out a new plan for the year ahead.

This plan will need to be submitted to B+LNZ for consideration and review each year

We encourage groups to record any ongoing changes in their group Extension Plan in the Action Group Management System

Just like with the Extension Plan, farmers will have the ability to review and refine their Farm Action Plan as work progresses to ensure that they remain relevant to the objective and goals of the group.

At the end of each anniversary year, farm businesses will need to review the previous year's activity, then develop a new Farm Action Plan for the year ahead. At this point we encourage farm businesses to also re-run the KPI calculators and input the results into the new Farm Action Plan, along with new targets for the year ahead.

## 7.7 What happens on-farm?



The farm business implements the planned actions they intend to undertake on their farm as per their Farm Action Plan.



Regular checking in with farmers, getting the Action Group to track the changes individual farm businesses have made, offering support and ensuring they are seeking outside support from subject matter experts and mentors is encouraged, as this assists with building trust and confidence.



## 8. How does invoicing and payment happen?



Invoices must be made out to Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) and be received by the 10th of the month. Invoices will be paid by direct debit on the 20th of the month following receipt of the approved invoice by B+LNZ.

On receipt of an invoice being received by B+LNZ, a copy is sent to the group's lead farmer for review and approval. Once approved B+LNZ will process the invoice for payment. An **invoice will not be paid by B+LNZ until the lead farmer has approved it.**

Invoices should include:

- The words 'tax invoice'
- Your name (or trade name) and address
- An email address if you wish to receive a remittance
- Bank account details for payment
- Date invoice was issued
- Invoice number
- GST number (if appropriate)
- Action Group name\*
- Action Group number\*
- Extension Plan number eg. EP1\*
- Extension Plan start date\*
- B+LNZ Electorate\*
- GST and total amount payable.

\* This information can be found on the email confirming Extension Plan approval.

**IMPORTANT: If the invoice does not include the information listed above, it will be returned AND NOT PAID.**



Invoices should be emailed to:  
actiongroupaccounts@beeflambnz.com  
or posted to: Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ)  
PO Box 121  
Wellington 6140

You will find a sample tax invoice on the B+LNZ Action Group web page. Use this as a reference when completing Action Group invoices.

A separate invoice **must** be raised for each Action Group. Invoices will not be paid if they contain costs for multiple Action Groups, or do not include the information outlined on page 25.

## 8.1 What costs can be invoiced?

The following costs may be invoiced for as part of an Action Groups:

- One off facilitation fee of up to \$2,000 on B+LNZ approving the action groups annual extension plan.

## 8.2 What costs are excluded?

The following costs cannot be invoiced by a B+LNZ Action Group:

- Any costs associated with the purchase of alcohol, e.g. gift cards or vouchers for outlets where alcohol can be purchased - winery, restaurant, bottle store etc or drinks following a group activity.
- Any costs incurred by a farm business as a result of their participation in B+LNZ Action Group, such as travel costs to or from an B+LNZ Action Group event, farmer time or on-farm costs related to an B+LNZ Action Group activity
- Costs of getting to and from the start/finish of a farm learning tour (i.e. flights and/or mileage)
- Accommodation and meal costs outside of any planned activity
- Any costs incurred by a facilitator in respect of any activity in which the facilitator was also a subject matter expert
- Any costs incurred by a subject matter expert (time and disbursements)
- Any costs incurred by a connector
- Subscriptions (software, magazines etc.)
- Capital costs even if documented in an Extension Plan.
- Gift vouchers
- Any costs other than facilitation

## 9. How are Action Groups evaluated?

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Both farmers and facilitators will be asked to provide feedback as part of being involved in B+LNZ Action Group. This is to give B+LNZ insight into the effectiveness of Action Groups, facilitation, and the use of expertise and to identify areas for continuous improvement.

There are three areas the evaluation will offer insight:

1. How are Action Groups performing?
2. Are B+LNZ Action Groups effective?
3. What areas can be improved?

There are several forms of feedback. For most, the main form of feedback is through completing online surveys. Each Action Group will need to fill out a survey:

- On the 10 month anniversary of the Groups Extension Plan

Another form of feedback is through case studies where, with permission, successes are shared beyond an individual Action Groups. Facilitators and farmers may be asked to identify case studies from time to time.

As part of the B+LNZ facilitator training programme there will be adoption support provided.

## 10. What are the Health and Safety obligations?

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### 10.1 Facilitators



Facilitators are responsible for ensuring that all Action Group activities comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and any other applicable regulations.

More information on the obligations of facilitators in relation to health and safety can be found on this website: [www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/getting-started/understanding-the-law](http://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/getting-started/understanding-the-law)

### 10.2 Farmers



The only circumstance in which farm businesses will hold health and safety responsibilities within B+LNZ Action Group is if they host events at their property or workplace. In such circumstances, farm businesses have agreed to:

- Comply with their obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and any applicable regulations
- Adopt and implement a health and safety policy
- Provide visitors with a health and safety briefing.

Facilitators are responsible for ensuring that farm businesses are aware of these responsibilities prior to any event taking place.

## 11. What about Professional Indemnity?

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B+LNZ recommends that all individuals being paid for their services in B+LNZ Action Groups hold an appropriate level of Professional Indemnity insurance. It is designed for professionals who provide advice or a service. If you are getting paid for your professional advice or opinion, then you have a duty of care to those you are providing that advice and you need to make sure you are covering yourself.

If someone alleges that you've made a mistake, overlooked a critical piece of information, misstated a fact or they have misinterpreted you in the course of your work, and this results in a financial loss to those with whom you are providing advice, then they may take legal action against you to recover these losses. Whether or not the allegation is true, Professional Indemnity insurance seeks to protect your assets and your reputation should this occur. This means you can continue in your business without the stress of financial or reputational ruin should a claim arise.

Please contact your insurance company for more information.

## 12. How can B+LNZ provide support?

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Support from B+LNZ is available for all involved in B+LNZ Action Groups.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) and other information can be found on the B+LNZ Action Groups webpage (<https://beeflambnz.com/action-groups>), otherwise please contact B+LNZ with any queries you may have.

Telephone: 0800 733 632

Email: [actiongroupinfo@beeflambnz.com](mailto:actiongroupinfo@beeflambnz.com)

It is expected that all individuals involved in B+LNZ Action Groups act reasonably and in good faith to meet the objectives of their Action Group to ensure the greatest possible chance of success. However, if a dispute arises within an Action Group, B+LNZ recommends that the group, led by the facilitator must first attempt to resolve any concerns, issues or conflicts. As a last resort, complaints about the operation of an Action Group can be made in writing to B+LNZ and sent to the email address noted above.