



Farming and Agribusiness Reference Group

Terms of Reference

April 2025

Purpose

The Farming and Agribusiness Stakeholder Reference Group (the Group) is a diverse, strategically focused group of representative agriculture and farming businesses from the City of Greater Bendigo (the City) region.

The purpose of the Group is to:

- Share information on current and emerging issues and opportunities in the farming and agribusiness sector in the City, and discuss how participants can work together to resolve these issues.
- Provide input to strategies, plans and policies that impact the agricultural sector and, by extension, rural communities in the City.
- Facilitate opportunities for collaboration and connection between the various agribusinesses, agencies and farmers in the City, with the aim to promote new initiatives that support Bendigo agribusiness.
- Assist to disseminate information to community and stakeholder networks regarding forums and events that the City runs relevant to the City's farming and agribusiness community.
- Identify and share relevant funding opportunities and disseminate to members for discussion.

The issues discussed may be local / place based, or they may relate to the wider agricultural industry.

The following matters are out of scope for the Group:

- Private issues or personal requests which should be resolved through Council's normal customer service channels.
- Matters unrelated to the farming and agribusiness sector.

Meetings

Committee meetings will be held **four times per year**. Extraordinary meetings may be called by the Chair in exceptional circumstances with appropriate notice.

The City of Greater Bendigo will prepare and distribute the agenda at least a week prior to the meeting. The Chair and Agribusiness Officer will set the agenda. An invitation to contribute will be sent to Group members approximately 2 to 4 weeks prior to the meeting.

The timing of meetings will be confirmed by the Group at the first meeting.

Meetings will be held **at City of Greater Bendigo offices, at Galkangu Gov Hub** unless otherwise agreed with the Group. Online meeting options will be enabled and provided through Teams.

Feedback and advice may be sought from members between meetings (out of session via email) to progress initiatives and actions raised during meetings.

As required, guest speakers can be invited to speak to topics to provide specific technical expertise or participate in specific projects. These guest speakers should be submitted to the Agribusiness Officer ahead of time.

If needed, working groups can be established to tackle specific issues and projects. The working groups will meet outside of the Farming and Agribusiness Stakeholder Reference Group, and should provide reports at the quarterly meetings.

Membership

The Group members should represent the diversity of expertise and experience in farming, agriculture and agribusiness relevant to the City. Ideally there should be a balanced representation of genders and culturally diverse persons.

One to two Councillors may be assigned to the Committee to keep up to date on issues impacting the farming sector. Any Councillors who choose to attend the meetings in an informal capacity are welcome to attend.

Membership shall comprise:

1 x City of Greater Bendigo Agribusiness - Executive Officer for the Group.

1 x City of Greater Bendigo - The Manager of Climate Change and Environment Unit, who is the Chair for the Group.

1 x City of Greater Bendigo – Councillor

1 x City of Greater Bendigo - Youth Council

1 x North Central Catchment Management Authority

1 x Agriculture Victoria

1 x Coliban Water

8 x community members representing different sectors of the farming and agribusiness industry such as:

- Cropping or hay production (broadacre)
- Livestock production (broadacre)
- Wine production
- Small scale farming / horticulture / market gardening
- Rural finance or agricultural consultancy
- Agricultural products and services

Representatives should demonstrate a general interest in all aspects of agriculture in the local region, with the capacity to consider the views of the wider community and to consider issues strategically and impartially.

Expectations of members

The roles and responsibilities of the Committee members are to:

- commit to a minimum term of 12 months;
- prepare for, attend and actively participate in a minimum of 75% of meetings.
- complete pre-reading of relevant Council strategies;
- to bring expertise, local knowledge and broad community experience to the table and take an active role in communicating the views, ideas and concerns of the community to the Group;
- provide advice, suggestions and feedback to Council officers when they approach the Group with Strategies;
- agree to participate in a collaborative meeting format, and engage with fellow Group members in a constructive, inclusive and respectful manner.
- Register as a volunteer on the *Better Impact* system

Code of Conduct

The City is a values based organisation, working together to be the best we can for our community. The City integrates our values and behaviours into its day – to – day work, including how this contributes to our preferred organisational culture and service provision. As a volunteer member of the Group, during meetings members are required to act in accordance with the Volunteer Code of Conduct. A copy of this can be requested from the Executive Officer.

Appointment of members

Agency and state government representatives

Relevant agencies will be invited to nominate a representative to participate on the Group via a direct invitation.

Community representatives

Expressions of Interest for community representatives will be sought through a public Expression of Interest process. The expression of interest will consider applicants skills, experience and ties to the agricultural industry.

Expressions of Interest will be considered by a selection panel of Council staff. Interviews may be conducted if considered necessary.

The final selection of community representatives will be confirmed by the Director of Healthy Communities and Environments

Term of appointment

Agency and state government representatives can remain on the Group for so long as they represent their relevant organisation. If they leave their position, a suitable replacement will be requested by the Executive Officer.

Community representatives on the Group will be appointed for 3 years from the time of the first meeting. Retiring Group members may re-apply for additional terms.

Retirement or dismissal of members

Members are free to resign from the Group by notifying the Executive Officer in writing. Group members will be advised at the next meeting.

Members may be terminated from the Group if:

- a Group member misses more than two meetings in succession without informing the Executive Officer or Chair with an apology;
- a Group member breaches any material matters in the terms of reference, such as breaching confidentiality or failing to declare a conflict;
- are otherwise considered not to be a proper Group member, at the absolute discretion of the Chair and Executive Officer.

If members retire before the term is completed, the Agribusiness Officer and the Chair can co-opt new members after discussion with the Group, especially if there is a particular perspective or industry missing. **If more than three members need to be brought in at one time, a new Expression of Interest process will commence.**

Conflict of interest

Group members should declare a conflict of interest during the meeting if they are to discuss an item that, if supported by Council, could result in a direct or indirect benefit or loss to them as opposed to a large sector of the Greater Bendigo community. The provisions of the Local Government Act 1989 and/or 2020 apply to Councillor members.

Insurance

Members of any Group established by the Council under the Local Government Act or any other enabling legislation or, whilst acting in that capacity within the scope of their duties for and on behalf of the Council, are provided with cover under the LMI Broadform Public and Products Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance, subject to the LMI policy terms, conditions, endorsements, exclusions and deductibles and the like.

The City of Greater Bendigo's insurance policies provide indemnity for personal injury, property loss, products liability and claims for breach of professional duty, subject at all times to the Policy "Conditions and Exclusions".

Confidentiality

The Group will, from time to time, deal with matters subject to confidentiality. Items of confidentiality will be specifically identified and Group members are expected to observe this provision for the period that the provision applies.