Role Description

General information

Title:	Associate Subprogram Leader - Molecular Diagnostics				**Classification:**	PO4	
Division:	SARDI	**Branch:**	Crop Sciences			**Business Unit:**	Plant Health and Diagnostics
Type of Appointment:	Term up to 5 years	**Hours of Duty:**	37.5 hours per week	**Location:**	Waite		

About Us

South Australia is internationally recognised for the quality of its agriculture, food, and wine. Our regions are the backbone of our state and the economic powerhouse that drives prosperity for all South Australians.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) is a key economic development agency working in partnership with our primary industries, regional stakeholders and across all levels of government to advance the prosperity and sustainability of South Australia's primary industries and regional communities.

We are a passionate team of around 800 people working across metropolitan and regional South Australia to develop and protect our state's regions and food, wine, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, grains, livestock, dairy and horticulture industries.

Purpose

The Associate Subprogram Leader for Molecular Diagnostics is positioned within the Plant Health and Diagnostics Program of SARDI's Crop Sciences Research Division. The role provides senior scientific and operational leadership to support the Molecular Diagnostics subprogram and the SARDI Molecular Diagnostic Centre (MDC). Key responsibilities include overseeing complex research, development and extension projects, managing high-volume molecular diagnostic services, and contributing to strategic planning, quality systems, funding initiatives, and biosecurity preparedness.
The role contributes to delivering the agency's priorities including (1) Increasing productivity of our primary industries and agribusinesses (Stimulating Value Growth); (2) Securing production through biosecurity and efficient and sustainable use of resources (Sustaining the Resource); (3) Growing regions by supporting key regional development drivers and growing opportunities available to our regional communities; (4) Building partnerships with industry, stakeholders, research organisations and regional communities; and (5) preparedness to contribute to PIRSA's response and recovery obligations in emergency situations.

Key Accountabilities

- In collaboration with the Subprogram Leader, lead the delivery of complex molecular diagnostics RD&E projects and drive diagnostic service innovation within delegated portfolios, ensuring alignment with subprogram objectives and government priorities.
- Managing and overseeing allocated externally funded projects in accordance with contractual, financial and reporting requirements, ensuring timely delivery of project outputs, within scope and budget.
- Providing operational leadership for nominated molecular diagnostic services, ensuring quality, timeliness, regulatory compliance and client satisfaction.
- Contributing to continuous improvement and innovation of the fee-for-service diagnostic operations.
- Overseeing the development, validation and implementation of diagnostic protocols, SOPs and quality documentation aligned with NATA, biosecurity and other regulatory requirements (e.g. WHS).
- Contributing to the preparation of research and commercial proposals, including technical, and costing input.
- Representing the subprogram at technical forums, industry meetings and collaborative networks; contributing to national working groups.
- Providing strengthened support to the Subprogram Leader by taking on increasing people, financial and operational leadership responsibilities.
- Providing direct line management for allocated staff, including performance management and professional development; mentoring scientific and technical staff.

Key Deliverables / Results

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- Allocated research projects are developed, actively managed at technical, financial and operational levels, and delivered to agreed scope, schedule and budget.
- Throughput, turnaround times and resource utilisation for the delegated diagnostic services are monitored and maintained; cost recovery and performance targets are achieved, contributing to the overall MDC sustainability.
- Continuous technical and operational improvement that enhance the MDC service viability is supported.
- Validated diagnostic methods, protocols and SOPs are developed; compliance with NATA, biosecurity and other regulatory requirements is maintained.
- Line management is provided for allocated professional, technical, operational and casual employees, including training, mentoring and supporting career development; employees are effectively managed, and their performance assessed.
- Research and commercial opportunities are identified; proposals and business cases are prepared in consultation with the Subprogram Leader.
- Leadership capability is actively developed, with increasing responsibility undertaken to effectively support the Subprogram Leader.

Relationships

- Reports to the Subprogram Leader Molecular Diagnostics.
- Directly supervises allocated research and technical staff within the Molecular Diagnostics group.
- Develops working relationships with other subprogram leaders and research scientists in the Plant Health and diagnostic program and within SARDI.
- Develops and maintains professional networks including scientists nationally and internationally and industry stakeholders.
- Participates in project meetings, working groups and committees as required.

Requirements

- Possession of a current driver's license and willingness to drive.
- Out of hours work and inter / intrastate travel may be required.
- Australian residency or current works permit is required (responsibility of applicant to provide evidence of a current work permit).
- You acknowledge your work, health and safety obligations and our expectations when applying for a role.
- The incumbent will be required to undertake emergency management training and must be willing to participate in emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities required by government agencies.

Qualifications

- Postgraduate qualifications, preferably in molecular biology, plant pathology or a related discipline.

Capabilities

Capability	Behaviours
Professional & Technical Knowledge Demonstrates expert knowledge in molecular diagnostics and the skills required to develop and manage a complex portfolio of research	• Develops collaborative research projects to address molecular diagnostic needs of state and national priority. • Investigates innovative technologies and concepts and drive their implementation to expand research and diagnostic delivery scope of the MDC. • Has expert scientific and technical knowledge to develop and deliver diagnostic to primary industries to support access to international markets, and manage the risk from pests and diseases of concern.

Updated on 23 September 2026

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projects and services to primary industries in South Australia and nationally.	• Establishes high professional credibility with research and industry partners. • Transfers expert knowledge in a meaningful and understandable manner to non-technical colleagues. • Demonstrates a strong understanding of MDC capability and actively works to enhance and expand the services delivered. • Demonstrated experience in molecular diagnostics RD&E.
Leadership	• Has preexisting managerial skills and willingness to develop further to effectively lead and manage a multidisciplinary research and service team to achieve goals and encourage staff development. • Acts confidently and decisively to deliver research project and service outcomes; manages pressure associated with meeting multiple deadlines. Regularly thinks outside the given parameters and identifies innovative and creative new ideas. • Contributes to and promotes the strategic vision developed for the Molecular Diagnostic Centre by the Subprogram Leader; actively looks towards future opportunities for growth and collaborates effectively with government agencies, industries and other stakeholders for implementation, and turns high level strategies into plans that can be implemented.
Collaboration and Relationship Building	• Develops and maintains productive working relationships with research and industry stakeholders; utilises existing networks and relationships to build new opportunities. Builds partnerships and alliances at state, national and international levels. • Uses high-level communication skills to establish professional credibility with research and industry stakeholders. • Collaborates with other government agencies, industry and other stakeholders to support and implement the Molecular Diagnostic subprogram vision.
Communication, customer orientation	• Communicates with people effectively both verbally and in writing; connects with others through exchanging information and idea; adapts communication style to audience and situation to deliver clear message. • Understands the needs and requirements of complex matrix of customers/ stakeholders, takes actions to meet their needs; develops and maintains customer confidence with both internal and external customers.

HRMS No:		**ANZCO Code:**		**Objective ID:**	
Delegate Approval:	Professor Mike Steer, Executive Director, SARDI			**Date:**	23/09/2026
Approved and Classified by People and Culture:	[Date] [Reference Number]				

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