

Steering Group meeting

When	Friday 2 February 2024, 0930-1100
Where	Virtual
Who	Steve Batstone, Shay Brazier, John Campbell, Ryan Kuggeleign, Terry Paddy, Matt Smith, Evie Trolove, Fiona Wiseman, Secretariat: Craig Evans Observers: Mark Herring, EA
Apologies	Nicole Kirkham (MBIE), Brian Fitzgerald (EECA), Sean McCreedy (ComCom)

Session notes

1: Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the session and welcomed Ryan to the Steering Group (SG).

The SG:

- confirmed there was a quorum
- noted their individual obligations relating to the Commerce Act 1986 prohibiting anti-competitive conduct
- noted the reminder to review and update interests
- noted apologies
- confirmed the agenda
- noted the intention to start sessions with strategic matters to enable observers to depart for the subsequent operational matters.

Strategic items

2: Funding agreement with Ara Ake

The SG discussed the proposed memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Ara Ake and the separate funding agreement.

- the MOU is an agreement to cooperate. It is separate to the funding agreement so that cooperation endures any funding partnership.
- the funding agreement was reviewed and revised during January to clarify commitments and ensure obligations are practicable

- the agreement sets out agreed deliverables discussed with Ara Ake in November 2023. The deliverables are all things FlexForum is committed to doing anyway.
 - several have already been delivered. All are on track
 - work is underway scoping the functionality and specifications of the Knowledge Hub
 - an engagement plan will be developed using the work done in 2022.

The SG discussed how to achieve ongoing financial sustainability from 1 September 2024 given the AA funding was offered on a 1-off basis, with the possibility of project specific funding.

- experience indicates that securing funding involves long lead times. Best to start now to avoid impacting operation
- financial support from Members and partners will be easier to secure if FF is demonstrating it is solving problems and delivering valuable outputs
- a output-focused and time-limited approach aligns with views about the transition regarding an immediate time-limited investment need to enable the shift to the future state
- involving the wider Membership in the engagement/funding discussion will provide more depth of perspective, including how to demonstrate a value proposition that encourages support (including funding) from non-traditional players.

The SG:

- approved the Chair signing the MOU and funding agreement on behalf of FlexForum
- agreed to communicate the MOU and funding agreement to Members once it is signed
- noted the process and timeline to identify functionality of the knowledge hub
- agreed to establish a small group to consider engagement and funding activities.

3: Observers - involvement and coordination

The SG discussed the role of observers and how to effectively coordinate the activities of FF and regulatory/policy bodies. The SG agreed that observer is a label saying you are not a Member, but are encouraged to have an active role. The discussion identified three main roles for observers

1. champion a topic/issue/matter at governance level within their organisation and share information across the organisation
2. more joined up coordination and planning by supporting a two-way conversation/exchange of ideas, eg, the EA is currently pulling together its annual workplan and it would be useful to get the FF view of the priorities/focus to avoid duplication, manage sequencing and enable timely input to scoping etc. Going the other way, the FF could get input from the EA on the level of robustness/evidence needed to get prompt regulatory action
3. Assisting with delivering the work by getting SMEs involved in delivery. This role includes joining the dots across regulators, eg, the regulatory agencies agreeing a collective view of what they would like FF to assist with/work on.

The SG agreed to discuss its perspective on the observer role with the other observers ahead of documenting the nature and expectations of observer involvement.

Standing items

4: Engagement update

The SG noted the completed and planned engagement activity and discussed the offer by Ara Ake to host FF at its booth at Downstream.

5: Workplan update

The SG noted the workplan update.

- good progress by workstreams with developing the task plans. On track to finalise these by mid-February
- discussions continue with EECA regarding assisting with co-design of an EECA workplan on EV charging workplan

- draft terms of reference setting out the role/function of the conveners collective have been shared with the SG and will be shared with the conveners.

The SG agreed to defer discussing a process and criteria for deciding which consultations get a response.

6: Finance update

The SG noted the finance update.

Procedural items

7: Membership requests

The SG noted Gridsight had joined FlexForum during January 2024.

The SG agreed to update the membership process to clarify that the SG may offer people from prospective Members the opportunity to attend FF/workstream sessions to assist them in building the case for membership to their organisations.

8: Actions

The SG noted the status of actions from previous sessions.

9: Next Steering Group meeting

The SG confirmed its next meeting is 0930-1200 7 March 2024

10: Any other business

The SG discussed two items of other business.

- FF does not need to nominate someone to join the EA Technical Working group on DER Connection, and encourages Members to get involved.
- adding an item to a future agenda about maintaining support for FF from across the electricity ecosystem

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