

FLEXFORUM |

Steering Group meeting

When	Thursday 14 August 2025
Where	Virtual
Who	Shay Brazier, John Campbell, Rebecca Osborne (from 1030), Matt Smith, Toby Stevenson and Terry Paddy Secretariat: Craig Evans Observers: Brian FitzGerald (EECA), Sean McCready (CC),
Apologies	Tim Calder, Fiona Wiseman, Peter Bartlett (MBIE), Daniel Gnoth (Ara Ake) and Mark Herring (EA)

Session notes

1: Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the session.

The SG:

- confirmed there was a quorum
- noted their individual obligations relating to the Commerce Act 1986 prohibiting anti-competitive conduct
- noted apologies
- confirmed the agenda.

Strategic items

2: 2025 AGM materials

The SG reviewed and endorsed the 2025 AGM materials after noting and discussing key points for each item on the AGM agenda.

- **A report from the chair on FlexForum affairs for 2024-25.** This report is being developed. It will be presented at the AGM.

- o A SG member suggested highlighting / celebrating the FF Members that have joined in the last year, including providing them a chance to introduce themselves to help build awareness and connections across the membership.
- **Annual statement of accounts for 2024-25.** The accounts must be signed by Toby, John and Terry before being sent to Members. The signing process was nearly complete.
- **Progress with delivering the Flexibility Plan 2.0.** There was extensive discussion of the progress report. See further detail below.
- **FlexForum Workplan and Budget for 2025-26.** The workplan proposal is intended to deliver the FF objective and what members have asked for via feedback to the chair and the progress report process. The budget proposal is intended to deliver the workplan, ensure prudent management of member subscription funds and accelerate flexibility progress. The budget must be approved by 50% of members at the AGM.
- **Decide the appointment of new Steering Group members.** No voting was required because the nominations matched vacancies. Candidates will be endorsed by voice/thumb vote.
- **Constitution.** The item is to approve amendments to the constitution to align with the new Incorporated Societies Act 2022 and other matters. The amendments must be approved by 2/3 of members present at the AGM. See further detail below.
- **Other business.** No other business was requested. Other business may be considered at the AGM if a majority of all Members at the AGM agree.

The SG discussed the implications of the conclusions/insights in the 2025 progress report:

- The progress report is about progress of the industry with delivering the flexibility plan, not FlexForum's progress as an organisation.
- Progress is generally not sufficient and not fast enough. This is clear from the assessment outlined in the report, and aligns with examples of day to day experience recounted by several SG members
- The chair observed two key messages kept repeating in conversations with members: people want to know more about the flexibility activities of others, and things are not going fast enough.
- The key problem and indicator of slow progress is the slow pace of efforts to put money on the table and increase the range of flexibility propositions. ‘...why would someone bother to invest in extra flex to support the system (versus their own use) if the electricity sector is going to control/curtail/manage the resource to suit themselves (and disadvantage me).
- The SG agreed complaining has its place, but the FF should focus its energy on what it can do to accelerate progress. The SG discussed options:
 - o more explicit leadership and commitment to action from sector leaders and/or the government
 - o FF providing its independent and expert perspective about priorities, particularly government and regulators
 - o co-opting industry leaders (executives/Boards) to more actively support flexibility champions. Experience with standing up flexibility projects suggests there is a small group of flexibility champions in most traditional participants, ie, 2-5, who do what they can, but face inertia or opposition from the rest of the organisation. The implication is a smart, flexible system requires whole of organisation and whole of system change; it is a cultural and technology change
 - o flexibility champions would benefit from transparency/greater visibility of how challenges are and have been addressed. Each practical challenge encountered in developing flexibility provides a reason

for the organisation to say no, particularly when addressing the challenge involves changes to long standing practices.

- o motivating and accelerating flexibility progress will be helped by highlighting opportunities, but real progress could require regulatory intervention to push flex-enabling activities up the to do list.
- o FF Members should be asked what they think FF can do to accelerate flexibility progress.

The SG noted the proposed constitutional changes involve amendments to:

- align with requirements of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. These are needed for FF to re-register as an incorporated society by 6 April 2026.
- meet IRD requirements for FF to be exempt from resident withholding tax. The RWT exempt status makes FF eligible for product/service discounts available to charities/not for profits, eg, free pro-slack
- ensure effective operating practices and consequential changes.

The SG agreed details of two specific amendments:

- new clause 6.10 is 'If a Steering Group member misses [three] consecutive meetings, the Steering Group may terminate that person's membership of the Committee, thereby creating a casual vacancy.' The SG agreed three meetings was an appropriate threshold.
- amended clause 6.15 is 'At Steering Group meetings ...In the case of an equality of votes the Chair will [not] have a casting vote.' The SG agreed the chair should not have a casting vote to foster consensus-based decisions.

3: Engagement

The SG discussed engagement activity since the previous meeting and upcoming.

Lunch session #1 led by Bluecurrent was well attended (32 people) and prompted good Q&A. The September session will be led by Factor.

- The SG agreed the lunch sessions should be run according to chatham house rules and this means excluding AI note-taking bots.

The SG noted a conversation with the Commerce Commission will be held quarterly.

The SG discussed the report back by the chair about the flexibility-related items at the Framework meeting on 13 August.

- A measures and metrics report produced by Transpower for the Framework was endorsed. But several people noted the measures did not include anything about flexibility being deployed/accessible.
- Flexibility is recognised as a way to improve affordability, and questions were asked about what is happening to help flexibility deliver affordability. The response was 'there is some activity' eg, from some distributors and the EA, but the activity is not resulting in non-traditional parts of the ecosystem to develop/offer more flexibility propositions.

The SG noted the update on website, newsletter and LinkedIn channel activity.

4: Workplan

The SG noted the update on workplan activity.

- **Supporting the EECA scaled DF pilot project:** participating distributors are scoping/developing their pilots. Most of the distributors are part of a coordination group. Recent focus has been developing a Flex Day agenda to support project scoping efforts.
- **Advice to regulators:** two pieces of advice sent to the EA since the previous SG meeting: 29 July on its MTR proposal; and 12 August on its electricity product data proposal. The advice simply noted which Flexibility Plan 2.0 steps the proposals would help tick off.
 - o the SG noted member comments that the volume of consultation is material, and stretching the capacity of the smaller parties who potentially are more enthusiastic supporters of the proposals, but the activity is a positive thing.
- **Assessing progress with the Flexibility Plan:** A draft of the 2025 progress report was shared with Members on 8 August. Comments were requested by 14 August, but revisions can be made up to the AGM when the report will be endorsed/finalised.
- **Deep Dive into Digitalisation and Data:** no progress since the July SG meeting. Further progress pending work on the 2025 progress report.
- **Other items on the to do list** for doing when time/bodies/priorities permit. FlexForum engagement regularly identifies questions/topics that are highly relevant to delivering the FP2.0 and warrant FF investigation/consideration.
 - o work out how to improve transparency of flexibility project information that people want and make it easier for people to provide that information. This task is being prioritised given member expectations that FF support more information sharing and equivalent insights coming from the 2025 progress assessment
 - o develop a stylised board paper for a distributor's decision to use flexibility identifying the main decision criteria and considerations. The purpose is to isolate the practical factors influencing decisions to use/not use flexibility.
 - o discuss/understand how distribution pricing signals practically inform/affect network operation, planning and investment decisions. The purpose is to isolate the practical impacts on costs of discretionary/predictable pricing signals versus dependable/unpredictable signals.

5: Finance

The SG noted the finance update.

- 2025 budget is tracking under forecasts due to extra doers not being as available as expected.
- 1 new membership and 4 membership renewals were invoiced this month.
- The chair observed the SG should be reasonably confident that members will renew their membership, but that renewal decisions are aided by providing a case/compelling reasons to justify the subscription cost to decision-makers/budget holders. The note that accompanies each invoice was recently updated to include a case/reasons for participating.

The SG approved arrangements to enable the smooth handover of financial duties from retiring SG members.

- At least 1 SG member (potentially) need to be added as signatories/account holders of the bank and IRD accounts to meet the finance-related requirements of the policies and procedures. The SG agreed John could continue to undertake financial activities until a replacement is confirmed.
- The SG noted the revised constitution makes all members 'officers' of the incorporated societies.

Procedural items

6: Membership requests

The SG noted 1 membership is interested in joining FlexForum.

7: Actions

The SG noted the status of actions from previous sessions.

8: Next meeting

The SG agreed to reschedule the next SG meeting to 0930 Wednesday 17 October 2025 to provide some breathing space after Flex Day.

The SG noted the 2025 AGM has 31 confirmed attendees based on accepted meeting invites, and the quorum is 9 members.

9: AoB/Close

The Steering Group heartily endorsed a warm and sincere thanks to retiring SG members Shay Brazier and John Campbell.

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 1109.