

30 July 2026

A report on FlexForum affairs in 2025-26

It has been 3 years since FlexForum incorporated. And 4.5 years since the group that became FlexForum first came together.

There has been significant flexibility progress since then - if progress is judged by flexibility shifting from the periphery to being a priority topic of the electricity sector.

The greater interest in flex is demonstrated through the practical efforts of FlexForum Members, plus the efforts of:

- ERGANZ which recently sought FlexForum advice on flexibility options for financially vulnerable customers
- EECA in partnering with 6 distributors (including 5 Members) with support from FlexForum to deliver the Scaled flexibility pilot programme
- the Electricity Authority which is '[Enabling flexibility](#)' as one of five key work programme priorities.

This activity, while excellent to see, has not yet translated into widespread tangible benefits for households, businesses or communities. There are flex propositions in the market, but these are niche products available to a small number of customers and don't maximise the full system or customer benefits of flexible resources. Right now, flex is neither easy nor consistently paying its way.

The window of opportunity to best use the power of flexibility will close. We must be ready to harness the full potential and value of flex within the next 2-3 years to avoid large infrastructure investments being made that would not be needed by a smart, flexible power system.

The urgency is heightened by the emergence of a political consensus that one way or another will drive a surge in household investment in solar, batteries and other potentially flexible resources. As things stand, these resources will benefit individual customers, but will not necessarily be accessible to flex users across the supply chain to reduce system costs.

Failing to move fast enough now puts us on the path to an inflexible, higher cost power system and higher power bills than otherwise would be the case for decades to come. This path exacerbates affordability challenges facing financially vulnerable customers without the financial capacity to access flexible resources to insulate themselves from rising power prices.

Fortunately, FlexForum is well placed to support a lift in the pace of progress. We can collate experiences from the learning underway and planned, build consensus on the practical implications, and what should be implemented to hurry toward a smart flexible power system which realises the benefits of flex for individual customers, the economy, and everyone now and in the future.

With these observations, here is a report on FlexForum activity from the past year.

- FlexForum membership
- A list of activities and achievements from the past year
- Closing comments

FlexForum membership

FlexForum currently has 46 Members. While a similar number as 12 months ago, membership has not remained static.

Membership continues to span the electricity ecosystem with equal representation from traditional industry participants and non-traditional 'new grid' firms (both 29%) complemented by experts from universities and advisory firms (27%) and individuals who are consumers (16%).

Membership interest remained constant across the year with 1-2 enquiries a month, mostly from start-up and flex-curious businesses. Many of these prospective members describe opportunity costs of participation – tight budgets and limited time – while acknowledging the value of our activities. New memberships (5) offset Member exits (4). The exits do not appear to indicate a lessening of the FlexForum value proposition, with exit reasons including business closure or ownership change.

Several Members made good use of their membership, with Transpower in particular, accessing the pool of FlexForum expertise to inform its approach to its western Bay of Plenty non-traditional solutions (flexibility) programme and get input to its Te Kanapu programme. Other Members simply got in touch to ask questions and share concerns, and in doing so, helped to expose dots to be joined and barriers to overcome to enable a smart flexible power system.

The FlexForum value proposition was more actively leveraged in the past year by EECA and ERGANZ partnering with us to access FlexForum advice and expertise.

- We supported the EECA scaled flexibility pilot programme across the year by providing an independent expert perspective on pilot design questions and assisting with practitioner focused knowledge sharing. The partnership will extend into 2027 including activities to collate, synthesis and share practical experience gained through programme delivery.
- In June 2026, we provided ERGANZ with advice at its request on flexibility options for financially vulnerable households. This advice highlighted the importance of making customer propositions the organising objective of flexibility progress; to move from niche and relatively unknown flexibility offers to a growing range of propositions that are available to households, businesses and communities wherever they are and whatever flexible resources they have.

Finally, this year FlexForum provided insights to the Electricity Authority behind the scenes as it developed its flexibility programme and flexibility-related tasks such as the [digitalisation roadmap](#).

This is what collaboration looks like in practice; a cycle of conversations between trusted peers and partners with differing yet overlapping interests which build understanding and feed into action to change practices, processes and capabilities.

Activities and achievements from the past year

FlexForum operates day-to-day with about 1.5 FTEs. We could not do everything Members want without the contributions of Steering Group members and Members who make time in their busy schedules to share perspectives and expertise.

With this in mind, the list of activities and achievements from the past year is a testament to Member's commitment to the FlexForum objective: to make it easier for households, businesses and communities to maximise the value of consumer and distributed energy resources and flexibility.

Manage and monitor the Flexibility Plan

- We undertook the 2026 Flexibility Plan progress report. This 3rd annual assessment of flexibility progress reflects the expert input of 24 FlexForum Members, the Electricity Authority, EECA and the Commerce Commission provided in five separate workshops. This robust and comprehensive view of both the current state, and forward-looking expectations, of flex progress enables FlexForum to check its priorities and provide advice to decision-makers about how to best accelerate flex progress.

Deep dives to build understanding on complex topics

- We published a FlexForum Insights in May 2026: [A strategic approach to the data system is needed to achieve a smart flexible power system](#). The insights drew on Member views on digitalisation and the characteristics of a digitalised power system provided in workshops on 30 June, 1 and 2 July, and 15 October 2025. The FlexForum conclusions were affirmed and reinforced by the Electricity Authority in its recently published [digitalisation system roadmap](#).
- We started a deep dive in June 2026 to explore the pricing and physical orchestration mechanisms for a smart flexible power system. An initial workshop in early June 2026 underpinned advice provided to ERGANZ later that month on flexibility options for financially vulnerable customers. The importance of this deep dive cannot be understated as it is looking at what Members have repeatedly indicated (most recently through the progress assessment) as the top priority issues and questions to be addressed to maximise the benefits and value of flexibility for the power system, the economy and people.

Knowledge sharing

- We delivered [Flex Day 2025](#) in September 2025 in partnership with the EEA.
- We hosted 8 monthly lunchtime discussions: Cortexo (09/25), Our Energy (10/25), Concept Consulting (11/25), Ivory Egg (12/25), Rewiring Aotearoa (02/26), a university student discussing their multiple trading relationships research (03/26), Vector (04/26), Heatr (05/26), and Anthill Technologies (06/26).
- We provided regulators with fewer formal pieces of advice (2) than in previous years, but participated in several regulatory workshops and provided lots of 'informal' advice. We also shared FlexForum thinking at the March 2026 Future Networks Forum event.
- The website attracted more than 2,100 active users in the year to 30 June 2026. The new and improved Knowledge Hub was set up in November 2025, with the Learning Project Updates section added in December 2025. The Knowledge Hub is the second most visited page on the website.
- 12 newsletters were published across the year. The mailing list now has 454 subscribers, up from 396 a year ago. It's popular, with a 39% average open rate (compared to an industry average 29%).
- The FlexForum LinkedIn page saw a 29% increase in followers from 512 to 660. We shared just over 1 post a week with an average 8.1% engagement rate (compared to a 2.4-5.1% utilities and energy sector average).

Support for learning-by-doing

- We supported EECA throughout the year to deliver its scaled flexibility pilot project. Five FlexForum members are partnering with EECA on this project, and more are expected to get involved as the pilots get underway. FlexForum is the programme learning, market development and independent evaluation partner for the programme with a focus on collating and sharing experience.
- We hosted workshops for Transpower to use the pool of FlexForum expertise to inform its approach to its western Bay of Plenty non-traditional solutions (flexibility) programme and get input to its Te Kanapu programme.

Closing comments

The coming year represents the best ever opportunity for FlexForum and the wider flex community to make strides in ensuring the benefits of flex are easily and routinely available to both people and the power system.

The increased learning-by-doing currently underway, and planned, provides the conditions to explore options and solutions which are needed to make flexibility benefits easily and routinely available to the system – to reduce system costs – and to households, businesses and communities.

FlexForum is well placed to help to maximise the value of this learning by addressing two major progress roadblocks:

- A prioritisation problem. Effort is not consistently being allocated to strategically address issues raised through the learning-by-doing activities. Learning remains siloed, and there is a bigger focus on technical and network-related flex learning than on critical customer-related flex learning. This is needed to show customers that flex propositions will lower power bills and costs and make them better off with no impact on their day-to-day activities.
- A transition problem. There is no coordinated delivery pipeline shepherding activity from understanding to exploration to learning to implementation. This gap is evident from the 2026 progress assessment exercise which finds many steps lack clear responsibility or timing for delivering the next steps emerging from the activity to date.

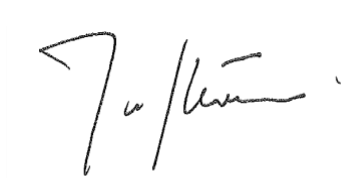
Over the coming year, with the support and contributions of its Members, FlexForum can help move these roadblocks by:

- capturing, testing and sharing the insights from the learning-by-doing
- using these insights to build consensus on the practical changes required to develop a smart, flexible power system.

Of course, FlexForum cannot do this alone. It is a big job. We look forward to collaborating with Members and partners, particularly the Electricity Authority and EECA, and fellow flex champions.

I would like to acknowledge:

- **The Steering Group.** Membership of the Steering Group is a voluntary position. Far from a perfunctory administrative function, this is a group of people who represent the membership and are fixated on 'making it easier for households, businesses and communities to maximise their value from flexibility'.
- **Members.** The many conversations with members that I have had in the past 12 months have exposed me to the engine room for making flexibility easier for people. Your efforts in your day jobs and in turning up to FlexForum sessions to discuss, debate, and test thinking about critical flexibility topics is how we will unlock the full potential and benefits of flex for the power system and households, businesses and communities.



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