

2025 APEN member survey

Summary

The 2025 APEN Member Survey, completed by 56 respondents (13% of members), highlighted key trends in priorities, effectiveness, and engagement. Most respondents were based in Queensland (25%) and South Australia (20%), with 59% identifying as expert or advanced in extension experience.

Key Findings:

- **Networking:** The top priority (80%) and most effective service (63%). The Biennial Conference was the highest-rated networking initiative for both priority (77%) and effectiveness (75%).
- **Extension Training:** Conference Workshops (66% priority, 59% effectiveness) and APEN Awards (56% priority, 50% effectiveness) were the most valued, while REIS Journal, Mentoring Programs, and Website Resources had lower effectiveness.
- **Engagement:** Engagement improved, with 36% of members feeling “Very” engaged (up from 17%), though 22% felt only “Slightly” or “Not at all” engaged.
- **Renewal Likelihood:** 87% of members were likely to renew.
- **Communication:** The e-Bulletin remained the most valued communication tool (70%), while social media was the least preferred (<2%).

Recommendations:

1. **Networking:** Focus on the Biennial Conference, expand regional events, and reinstate a Members’ Directory.
2. **Training:** Promote underused resources, create practical tools, and improve website accessibility.
3. **Advocacy:** Establish measurable goals.
4. **Engagement:** Introduce a website “members zone” and flexible training formats.
5. **Support Younger Members:** Develop targeted training, leadership roles, and focus groups for early-career professionals.
6. **Cost Accessibility:** Bundle membership fees with conference registration.
7. **Leverage Strengths:** Maintain successful initiatives like the Biennial Conference, APEN Awards, and e-Bulletin.

Conclusion:

The survey highlights positive trends in member engagement and satisfaction, particularly in Networking and Governance, while identifying areas for improvement in Advocacy, Training, and member engagement. Implementing these recommendations will strengthen APEN’s value and support its members’ professional growth.

Promotional methods

The survey was initially promoted and conducted at the Conference (Oct 2025). However response rate was very poor, so the survey remained open and further promotion was conducted in the eBulletin and social media channels.

Completion rate

56 people completed the survey out of a possible 417 members (December 2025), meaning a 13% completion rate (double the completion rate of 2023).

Geographic Spread

Most respondents were based in Queensland (25%), followed by South Australia (20%), New South Wales (18%), and New Zealand (12.5%). Members in remote areas, such as Tasmania (9%), NT (4%), and WA (2%), make up a smaller proportion of the survey respondents.

Extension Experience Level

59% of survey respondents consider themselves expert to advanced in extension experience, making them the largest group, with another 38% intermediate. Only 4% have no experience to beginner level.

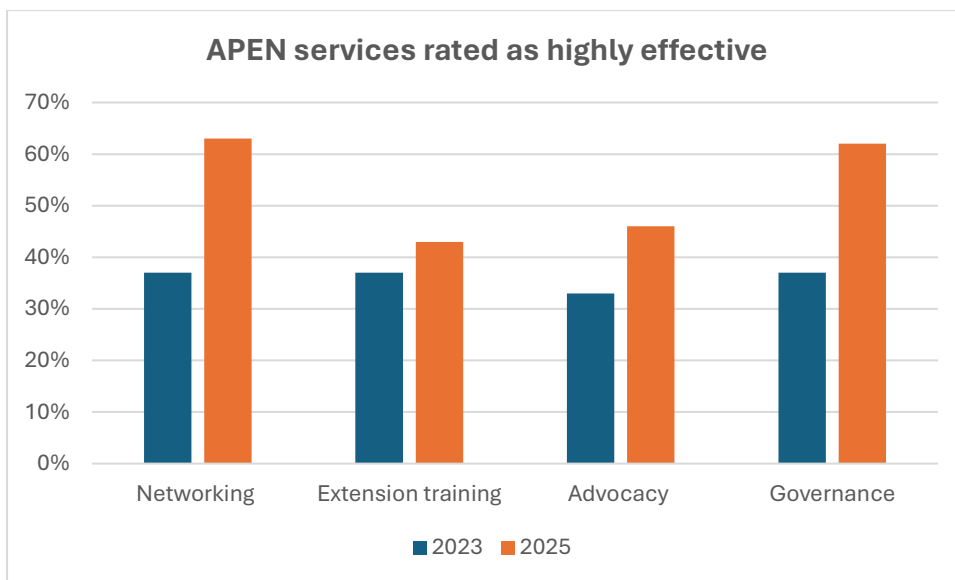
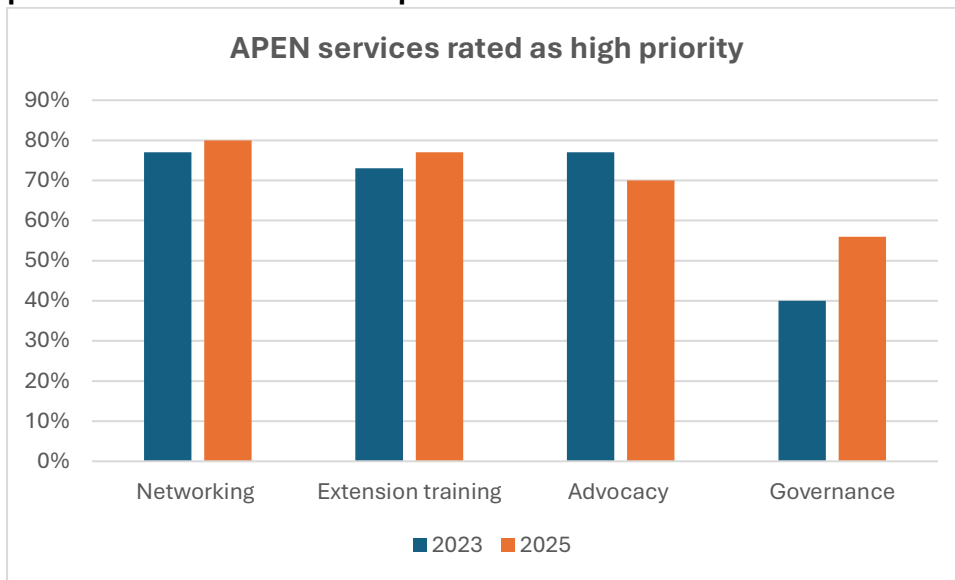
Priority and effectiveness of APEN services

	High priority (rating 4 or 5)	High effectiveness (rating 4 or 5)
Networking	80%	63%
Tools & resources for extension training	77%	43%
Advocacy	70%	43%
Governance	56%	62%

- **Networking:** Rated the highest priority, with **80%** of respondents marking it as a high priority (4 or 5). It also received the highest effectiveness score, with **63%** rating it as highly effective.
- **Training Tools and Resources:** A significant priority for **77%** of members but showed mixed effectiveness, with **43%** rating it as highly effective and **39%** as moderately effective.
- **Advocacy:** Rated as a high priority by **70%**, but its effectiveness was the lowest, with only **43%** rating it as highly effective and **14%** rating it as low in effectiveness.
- **Governance:** Received fewer high-priority ratings (**56%**) but was perceived as effective, with **62%** rating it as highly effective.

A comparison of the priority and effectiveness of APEN services between the 2023 and 2025 survey are shown in the graphs below. These show that **Networking and Extension Training consistently remained high-priority services** for APEN members, with slight increases in rankings (Networking: 77% to 80%, Extension Training: 73% to 77%). Advocacy also remained important, though its ranking declined slightly from 77% to 70%. The most notable change was in Governance, which saw a significant increase in priority from 40% to 56%, reflecting a growing focus on organisational management and leadership.

All services showed improvement in perceived effectiveness over the two years. Networking and Governance experienced the most significant increases, with Networking rising from 37% to 63% and Governance from 37% to 62%, demonstrating substantial progress in these areas. Extension Training and Advocacy also improved, though to a lesser extent, with Extension Training increasing from 37% to 43% and Advocacy from 33% to 46%. This suggests that while all services improved in effectiveness, Networking and Governance saw the most notable gains, whereas **Extension Training and Advocacy, despite improvement, remain areas with potential for further development.**



Priority and effectiveness of APENs initiatives to support networking

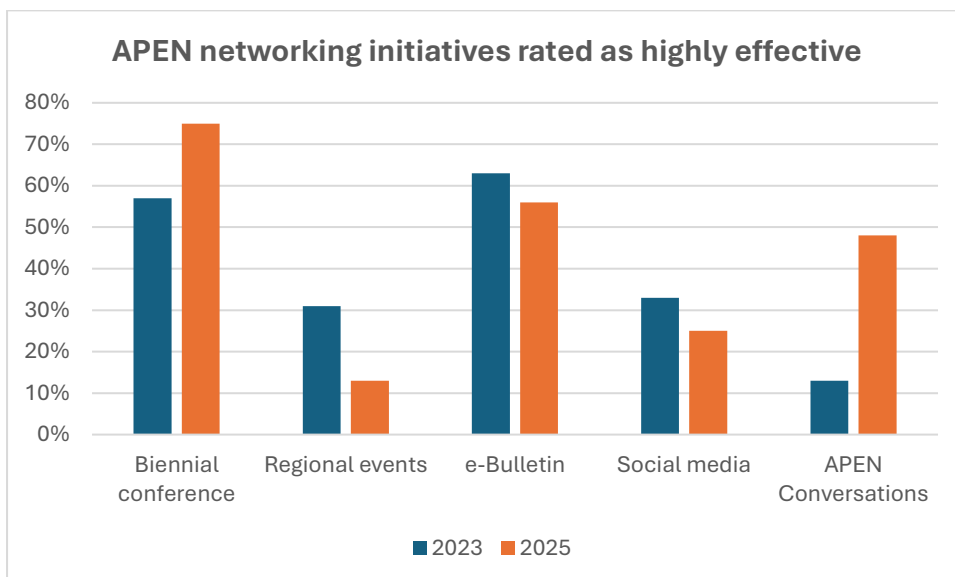
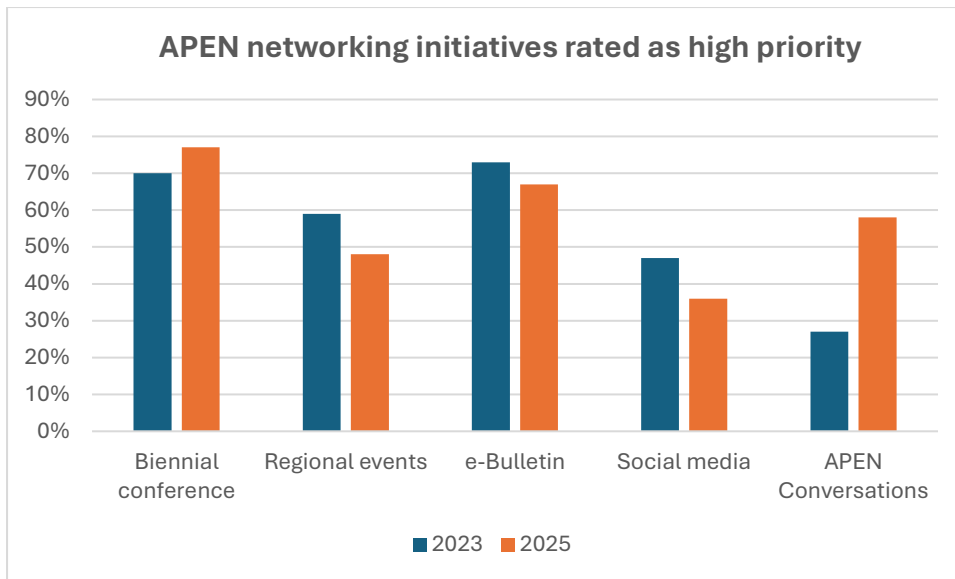
	High priority rating (rating 4 or 5)	High effectiveness rating (rating 4 or 5)
Biennial conference	77% (1 st in 2023)	75% (1 st in 2023)
Regional events	48% (3 rd in 2023)	13% (5 th in 2023)

Monthly eBulletin	67% (2 nd in 2023)	56% (2 nd in 2023)
Social media (Facebook & LinkedIn)	36% (5 th in 2023)	25% (4 th in 2023)
APEN Conversations	58% (6 th in 2023)	48% (6 th in 2023)

- **High-Priority Networking Initiatives:** The **Biennial Conference** and **Monthly e-Bulletin** were rated as the top priorities for networking, followed by the **APEN Conversations**.
- **Lower Priority Areas:** **Regional Events** and **social media** were rated lower in priority, with **25%** of members indicating limited engagement with these services.
- **Most Effective Networking Tools:** The **Biennial Conference** was rated as the most effective.
- The **Monthly e-Bulletin** and **APEN Conversations** were also considered reasonably effective.
- **Areas for Improvement:** **Regional Events** and **social media** were rated as the least effective networking tools, with over **21%** and **23%** of members, respectively, rating them as ineffective. These areas require improved accessibility, awareness, and engagement strategies.

A comparison of the priority and effectiveness of APEN’s networking initiatives between the 2023 and 2025 survey are shown in the graphs below. Between 2023 and 2025, APEN members showed varied shifts in their prioritisation of networking initiatives. The **Biennial Conference** and **APEN Conversations** saw significant increases in priority, rising from 70% to 77% and 27% to 58%, respectively. In contrast, the priority for **Regional Events**, **e-Bulletin**, and **Social Media** decreased, with Regional Events dropping from 59% to 48%, the e-Bulletin from 73% to 67%, and Social Media from 47% to 36%. While the overall importance of networking initiatives remains evident, the focus has shifted.

Between 2023 and 2025, APEN members reported notable changes in the effectiveness of networking initiatives. The **Biennial Conference** and **APEN Conversations** saw significant improvements, with effectiveness ratings rising from 57% to 75% and 13% to 48%, respectively. Conversely, the effectiveness of **Regional Events**, **e-Bulletin**, and **Social Media** declined, with Regional Events dropping sharply from 31% to 13%, the e-Bulletin from 63% to 56%, and Social Media from 33% to 25%.



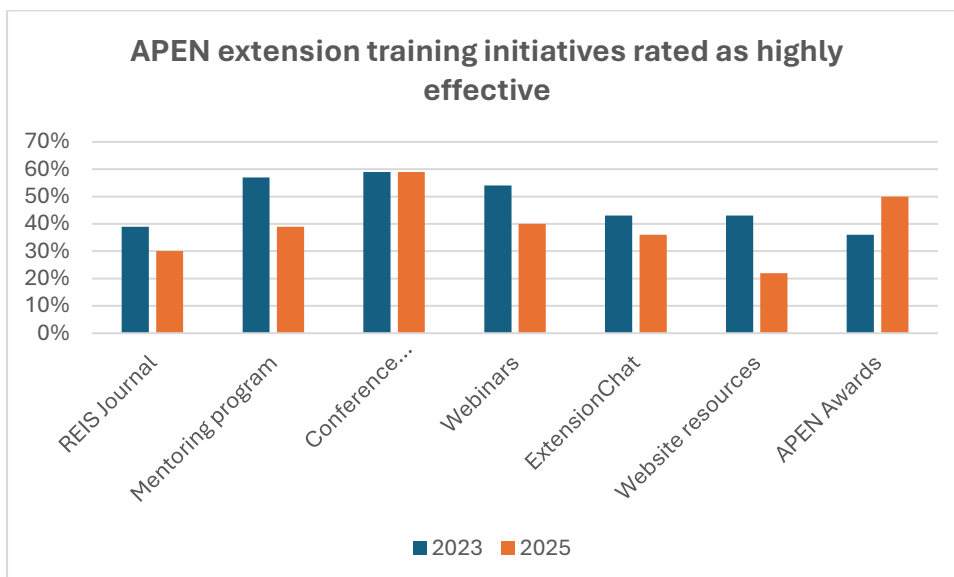
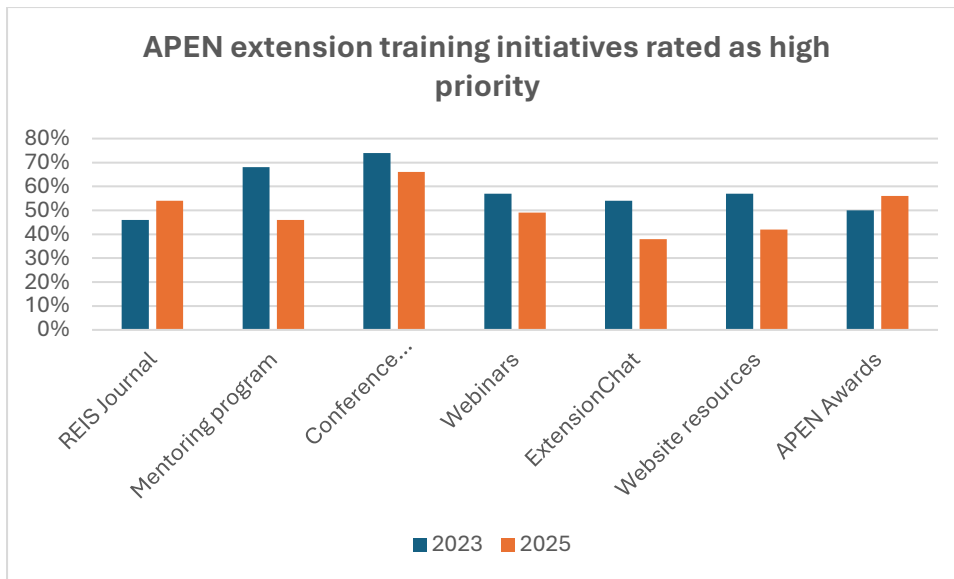
Priority and effectiveness of APENs initiatives to support training in extension

	High priority rating (rating 4 or 5)	High effectiveness rating (rating 4 or 5)
REIS Journal	54%	30%
Mentoring program	46%	39%
Conference workshops	66%	59%
Webinars	49%	40%
ExtensionChat	38%	36%
Listing of training tools & resources on website	42%	22%
APEN awards @ Conference	56%	50%

- **Top Priority Training Initiatives:** **Conference Workshops** (66%), **APEN Awards @ Conference** (56%) and **REIS Journal** (54%) were rated as the highest priorities.
- **Moderate Priorities:** **Webinars** (49%) and **Mentoring Program** (46%) received notable high-priority ratings, though many members marked them as "Not Applicable" (**28%–35%**), indicating limited awareness or use.
- **Website resources** (42%) and **ExtensionChat** (38%) were rated as lower priorities, with **26%–34%** of respondents indicating they had not used these services.
- **Most Effective Training Initiatives:** **Conference Workshops** (59%) and **APEN Awards @ Conference** (50%) were rated as highly effective by the majority of members.
- **Moderately Effective:** **Mentoring Programs** (39%) and **Webinars** (40%) were seen as effective by a significant portion of respondents.
- **Areas for Improvement:** **ExtensionChat**, **REIS Journal**, and **Website resources** received the lowest effectiveness ratings.

A comparison of the priority and effectiveness of APEN's extension training initiatives between the 2023 and 2025 survey are shown in the graphs below. Between 2023 and 2025, APEN members' prioritisation of extension training initiatives showed both increases and declines. The **REIS Journal** and **APEN Awards** saw modest increases in priority, rising from 46% to 54% and 50% to 56%, respectively. In contrast, other initiatives experienced a decrease in priority, including the **Mentoring Program** (68% to 46%), **Conference Workshops** (74% to 66%), **Webinars** (57% to 49%), **ExtensionChat** (54% to 38%), and **Website Resources** (57% to 42%).

Between 2023 and 2025, APEN members reported varied changes in the effectiveness of extension training initiatives. The **APEN Awards** was the only initiative to show a notable increase in effectiveness, rising from 36% to 50%. The **Conference Workshops** maintained a consistent effectiveness rating at 59%. However, other initiatives experienced declines, including the **REIS Journal** (39% to 30%), **Mentoring Program** (57% to 39%), **Webinars** (54% to 40%), **ExtensionChat** (43% to 36%), and **Website Resources**, which saw the largest drop (43% to 22%).



Topics interested in learning more about or completing training

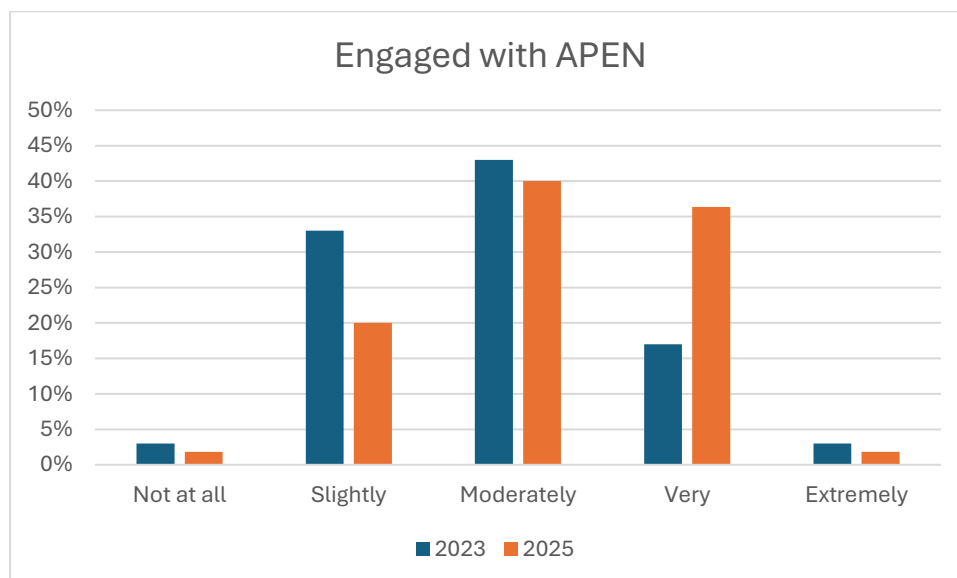
1. **Extension Program Design:** Strategies for designing, managing, and delivering effective extension programs, including trial design and content development.
2. **Human Behaviour and Change:** Behaviour change strategies, facilitation, networking, and understanding human behaviour for effective engagement.
3. **Evaluation and Monitoring:** Long-term impact evaluation, advanced techniques, measuring practice change, and M&E fundamentals.
4. **Technology in Extension:** Leveraging AI, websites, and social media to enhance extension practices and stakeholder engagement.
5. **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Training on mental health, wellbeing, and accidental therapy for extension professionals.
6. **Advocacy and Professional Growth:** Advocacy training, private sector engagement, and professional development opportunities for extensionists.

7. **Best Practices in Extension:** Traditional techniques, social science methods, and effective audience engagement strategies.

How engaged do you feel as a member

Most members (76%) feel either moderately or very engaged, but a significant portion (22%) feel only slightly or not at all engaged, suggesting room for improvement in fostering higher engagement levels.

A comparison of how engaged members are feeling between the 2023 and 2025 surveys is shown in the graph below. **Between 2023 and 2025, APEN members' engagement improved, with the proportion feeling "Very" engaged more than doubling from 17% to 36%, raising the weighted average from 2.8 to 3.2. Those feeling "Slightly" engaged dropped significantly (33% to 20%), while "Moderately" engaged remained stable (43% to 40%). Overall, the results indicate an improvement in engagement with APEN.**



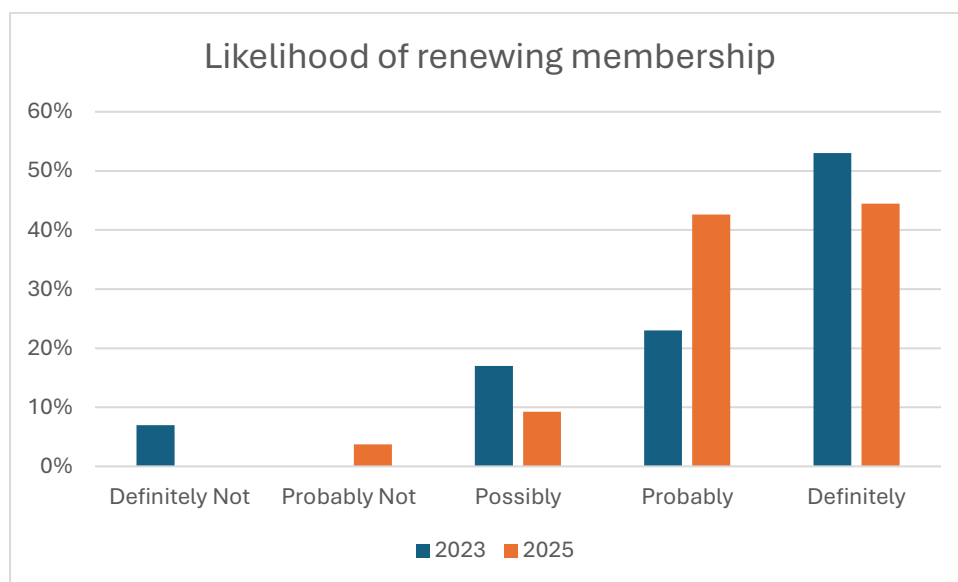
Ideas to help improve engagement

1. **Address Time Constraints:** Provide flexible, accessible options for events and resources to accommodate busy schedules.
2. **Expand Regional Activities:** Organise more local events and workshops, especially in underserved areas like New Zealand, and Tasmania.
3. **Boost Networking:** Introduce informal initiatives to encourage member connections.
4. **Enhance Content:** Offer diverse, relevant topics, and ensure webinars are affordable and scheduled at convenient times.
5. **Improve Communication:** Share more member stories and case studies to foster community and showcase effective extension practices.
6. **Increase Digital Interaction:** Develop a more interactive "members zone" on the website for networking and resource sharing.

Likelihood of renewing membership next year

Most members (87%) are likely or very likely to renew their membership, indicating overall satisfaction. Improvements in communication about membership benefits, providing more engaging and accessible content, and addressing cost barriers could help retain members who are uncertain about renewing.

A comparison of how likely members are to renew their membership between the 2023 and 2025 surveys are shown in the graph below. From **2023 to 2025, APEN members' likelihood of renewing membership slightly improved**, with the weighted average increasing from 4.2 to 4.3. While the percentage of those who would “Definitely” renew decreased from 53% to 44%, those selecting “Probably” rose significantly from 23% to 43%. Notably, the “Definitely Not” group dropped from 7% to 0%, reflecting a **positive shift in renewal intentions overall**.



Preferred communication channels

- The **monthly eBulletin** is the most effective and widely preferred communication tool (70%).
- **Emails from regional coordinators** (26%) are also valued and could be further leveraged to enhance member engagement.
- Social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) has minimal preference (<2%), suggesting it is not a primary channel for most members.
- Some members prefer receiving information through **all available channels**
- Members value reminders and personalised communications to stay informed about events and updates.

Most value from APEN membership

1. **Networking and Community:** Members highly value networking opportunities, with the conference being a key highlight. They appreciate connecting with peers, exchanging ideas, and building support networks.
2. **Professional Development:** Webinars, training, and the mentoring program are valued for supporting skill development, particularly for early-career professionals. Members also benefit from learning about "good practice" and practical extension tools.
3. **Knowledge and Resources:** Resources like the eBulletin, REIS Journal, case studies, and newsletters are appreciated for providing access to research, tools, and materials that enhance extension practices.
4. **Validation and Advocacy:** APEN is recognised for its role in validating extension as a profession and advocating for its importance in industries and communities, especially in land management.
5. **Opportunities for Growth:** New members and first-time conference attendees value the chance to learn, grow, and connect with others in the extension field.

Noting that networking and professional development were the top 2 membership values in 2023 as well.

Summary of other comments for the APEN Board and Regional Coordinators

1. **Appreciation:** Members expressed gratitude for APEN's efforts, particularly recognising volunteers and the support provided to remote extension officers. The 2025 conference was highly praised as excellent. A similar sentiment was expressed in 2023.
2. **Engaging Younger Members:** Members recommend focusing on younger professionals with initiatives like focus groups and encouraging their involvement in leadership roles to boost engagement and retention.
3. **Membership Costs:** Consider bundling membership fees into conference registration to support state government employees who often pay out of pocket.
4. **Content and Engagement:** The monthly eBulletin is valued but could be shorter for better engagement. Members also suggested improving access to resources and addressing time constraints.
5. **New Models:** Explore innovative business models and strategies from similar organisations to enhance APEN's offerings.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Networking Opportunities

- **Key focus should be the Conference** for both networking and training
- **Strengthen Regional Networking:** Consider options to improve networking particularly in under-represented areas such as New Zealand, Tasmania, and regional towns.

- **Online Members' Directory:** Investigate the possibility and logistics of creating an accessible directory to facilitate direct networking and collaboration among members.
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2. Improve Extension Training

- **Increase Awareness of Existing Resources:** Promote lesser-known resources like the REIS Journal, Mentoring Program and Website information to enhance their perceived value.
 - **Provide Practical and Actionable Content:** Shift focus from academic journal articles to more practical tools, tips, and case studies (e.g., similar to the Enablers of Change blog).
 - **Enhance Website Content:** Build a user-friendly library of resources (e.g., a comprehensive list of webinars, case studies, and training materials) to improve accessibility and engagement.
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3. Strengthen Advocacy Efforts

- Develop **clear and measurable advocacy goals** to promote the value of extension to industries, government, and communities.
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4. Better Engage Younger Members

- Consider options to improve engagement with younger members such as:
 - **Younger Members Focus Group:** Involve younger members in focus groups to identify their needs and interests.
 - **Leadership Opportunities:** Provide pathways for younger members to join the Board or take on leadership roles within APEN to foster long-term engagement.
 - **Targeted Training:** Develop training programs specifically tailored to support early-career extension professionals e.g. fundamentals of extension. Increase the visibility of APEN's mentoring program.
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5. Address Cost Barriers

- **Incorporate Membership into Conference Fees:** Explore bundling membership with conference registration, especially for state government employees who face challenges in obtaining employer funding for memberships.
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6. Optimise Communication Channels

- **Focus on eBulletin and Regional Coordinator Emails:** Continue investing in the monthly eBulletin as the primary communication tool but make it more concise and reader friendly.
 - **Personalised Communication:** Leverage regional coordinators to provide personalised updates to members and share relevant opportunities.
 - **Improve Social Media Engagement:** Continue to reinvigorate APEN's presence on LinkedIn and Facebook by posting photos, videos, and event updates to engage members more effectively.
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7. Refine and Expand Training Offerings

- **Focus on High-Demand Topics:** Prioritise training in extension program design, human behaviour and change, evaluation and monitoring, and technology in extension, specifically AI.
 - **Increase Accessibility:** Ensure training programs, webinars, and workshops are available on-demand (recordings) and scheduled at convenient times. Consider hybrid conference options.
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8. Leverage APEN's Strengths

- **Maintain High-Performing Initiatives:** Continue to focus on the Biennial Conference, APEN Awards, Conference workshops and eBulletin, as these are highly valued by members.
 - **Celebrate and Communicate Achievements:** Share the success of APEN initiatives (e.g., conferences, awards, webinars) to highlight the value of membership and encourage renewals and new memberships.
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9. Explore New Organisational Models

- Investigate business models and strategies used by similar organisations to identify opportunities for growth and innovation.
- Consider diversifying revenue streams to ensure financial sustainability and reduce dependence on membership fees.