

How to Run a Board Meeting

Guidance for State Coalitions

How often should our Board Meet?

Your own state's law and your state coalition's bylaws govern how often your Board of Directors must/should meet. Generally, once a year is a minimum and quarterly is a best practice. Jump\$tart's national Board meets quarterly with additional special meetings, if needed.

It's important that you follow state laws and your own bylaws for giving **sufficient notice** for a meeting. Our state coalition template bylaws specify written notice at least seven days in advance.

Can our Board meet by conference call or videoconference?

Probably, if your state laws and your own bylaws allow it. Based on DC law, Jump\$tart's national bylaws state that if a Board member can hear and be heard, then telephonic/virtual participation would be considered the same as in-person participation. Consider both the pros and cons of virtual meetings—which may be more convenient, less expensive, and may promote better attendance; but are thought to inhibit interaction and engagement.

Can our Board vote by e-mail and/or by proxy?

Many states allow voting by mail/e-mail following specific procedures; but this one is tricky and we recommend that you seek counsel in your own state and ensure that it is allowed by both your state laws and your own bylaws. Many Boards will take a vote without a meeting following the rules of unanimous consent – that is, everyone votes in favor, in writing. Jump\$tart's national Board does not use mail/e-mail voting but does on occasion – very infrequently – seek unanimous consent.

Many states allow proxy voting by membership organizations, but not by Boards of Directors. Again, we encourage you to seek counsel in your own state. Jump\$tart's national Board does not allow proxy voting.

What is a quorum?

A quorum is the minimum number of people that must be in attendance at a meeting in order to conduct business. The quorum is set by the state coalition and is established in the bylaws. Jump\$tart's national bylaws and the template bylaws for state coalitions both set a quorum at a majority of the Board Members (half + one). At the beginning of the meeting, the presiding officer must establish a quorum.

Must we follow parliamentary procedure?

Rules for conducting your Board and other meetings are set by your state and your own bylaws. Nonprofits, like our state coalitions, are not required to follow Robert's Rules of Order or any other type of parliamentary procedure, but a well-known set of rules will help you maintain order and conduct an effective meeting.



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Many nonprofits, including national Jump\$tart, have adopted a more relaxed version of order. For example, we follow parliamentary procedure for elections and votes, but allow (and encourage) an open and free-flowing discussion on most topics without first requiring a motion. For additional information and guidance, Board Effect offers [The Nonprofit's Guide to Parliamentary Procedure](#) and the Houston Chronicle has a good small-business article on [Nonprofit Organization Business Meeting Rules](#).

What can we do to make our Board meetings more effective?

Effectiveness is a subjective notion, so there's no single approach that will work for all organizations or that will work all the time. There are, however, plenty of articles online to give you some ideas, including: [Nonprofit Hub's 7 Tips for Running Effective Nonprofit Board Meetings](#); [How to Run and Effective Nonprofit Board Meeting from Donorbox](#); and the National Council of Nonprofits' [Effective Board Meetings for Good Governance](#).

There seems to be some consensus around:

- Well-planned meeting logistics, including the location or virtual medium, scheduling, meeting notice, timeliness, and complete information.
- A thoughtful mission-focused agenda that emphasizes actions over updates and engages participants in meaningful discussion and calls to action.
- Appreciation for your Board members as volunteers and respect for their time.
- Procedures – even if somewhat more casual than parliamentary procedure – to maintain order, fairness, and clarity.
- A good leader who knows when to let discussion follow its own course and when it needs to be reeled back in; who knows how to bring out the best in fellow board members, but also knows when to take control.