

Parliamentary Consultants

Setting the Standards for Parliamentary Consultants

What should parliamentary consultants know about parliamentary procedure? What should they be able to do?

Consultant education is designed to prepare a parliamentarian to serve as a paid or unpaid consultant to client organizations of which he or she is not a member.

Domain 1: Motions and Meeting-Related Procedures

A parliamentary consultant must:

- Apply a thorough knowledge of main, subsidiary, privileged, and incidental motions and of motions that bring a question again before the assembly, including each motion's purpose and standard descriptive characteristics, to circumstances encountered in a meeting.
- Apply a thorough knowledge of parliamentary rules and procedures to the conduct of meetings, including rules and procedures related to:
 - Quorum, the standard order of business, agendas, programs, and orders of the day;
 - Minutes, including their proper form and the procedures for approving and correcting them;
 - Recognition of members, including assignment of the floor when more than one member claims it and interruption of a member assigned the floor;
 - Handling motions and taking action without a motion by unanimous consent;
 - Debate, including permitted length and number of speeches, decorum, the chair's participation in debate, discussion outside of debate, and principles of debate for motions;
 - Voting, including standard and unusual bases for decisions, rights and obligations in voting, and actions that would render a vote null and void;
 - The different types of business meetings and the relationship of meeting and session;
 - Motions that are not in order, including dilatory motions and improper motions;
 - Renewability of a motion during the same session or at a later session;
 - Previous notice of motions and giving proper notice of meetings; and
 - The conduct business in board and committees, including modified rules for small boards.

Domain 2: Governing Documents

A parliamentary consultant must:

- Identify the types and appropriate content of governing documents and the procedures necessary to adopt, amend, revise, or rescind them.
- Conduct review of governing documents to ensure consistency, clarity, and relevance to the organization's needs.
- Determine how higher authorities (statutes, parent bodies, etc.) will impact an organization's documents.
- Write clear and logical governing documents.
- Write scripts for adopting, revising, and amending bylaws.
- Interpret governing documents according to standard principles.
- Identify which rules may be suspended and the procedures for suspending them.
- Distinguish between customs and written rules and advise clients when customs and rules conflict.

Domain 3: Serving as Parliamentarian in Meetings & Conventions

A parliamentary consultant must:

- Help the client before the meeting to prepare an agenda, to review meeting procedures, and to plan solutions to anticipated problems.
- Advise the client on drafting and adopting rules to govern the meeting.
- Train and assist the presiding officer to preside effectively.
- Write scripts for the conduct of the meeting and for specific motions.
- Provide parliamentary advice to the client during the meeting.
- Meet with the client after the meeting to assist with the drafting of minutes, to assist with the incorporation of adopted amendments into the bylaws, to review the conduct of the meeting, and to answer client questions.

Domain 4: Teaching

A parliamentary consultant must:

- Design and present effective and appealing educational programs.
- Apply basic adult learning theory.
- Measure participant knowledge and performance.

Domain 5: Business and Professional Responsibilities for Parliamentarians

A parliamentary consultant must:

- Comply with the Joint NAP/AIP Code of Professional Responsibilities for Parliamentarians (COPR).
- Comply with local business legal requirements.
- Develop a business plan.
- Prepare business proposals, contracts, and invoices for professional services, and establish a method of setting fees.

Domain 6: Governance

A parliamentary consultant must:

- Advise clients regarding the rights and responsibilities of a board.
- Advise clients regarding the responsibilities of individual officers and individual board members.
- Advise clients regarding methods and considerations in the appointment and instruction of committees and regarding limitations on the authority of committees.
- Distinguish between various types of governance structures.

Domain 7: Consulting Skills

A parliamentary consultant must:

- Work with client to solve problems.
- Work effectively with other consultants and staff.
- Advise client on and write scripts for disciplinary procedures including removal of officers.
- Prepare formal parliamentary opinions in writing.
- Answer parliamentary questions orally.

Domain 8: Nominations, Elections, and Voting

A parliamentary consultant must:

- Advise clients on and write scripts for the conduct of nominations, elections, and voting by standard and alternate methods.
- Organize and instruct tellers.
- Handle election challenges.