State of Associations Quarterly: 2025 Q1

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Key findings

- Chapters holding a **monthly roundtable report a median 34 percent of member organizations sending someone to at least one meeting a quarter**, against 21 percent for chapters meeting quarterly.
- Rotating in-person format — moving the meeting location across a chapter's footprint — raises participation among the smallest member organizations more than any other single change measured.
- Chapter size does not predict participation rate. NANA's largest and smallest chapters by member-organization count show overlapping participation ranges.
- A virtual-every-month option, layered on top of an in-person cadence, adds participation from organizations with two or fewer staff without reducing in-person attendance from larger organizations.

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Why chapter participation, and why this brief

NANA's six regional chapters run on different cadences and formats by design, shaped by geography and history rather than a single national template. That variation is also a natural experiment: this brief uses attendance and roundtable participation data reported by the six chapters to ask what actually predicts whether a member organization sends someone to a chapter meeting.

Monthly cadence versus quarterly cadence

Chapters holding a monthly roundtable report a median 34 percent of member organizations sending at least one representative to a meeting in a given quarter. Chapters meeting quarterly report a median of 21 percent. The gap holds even accounting for the fact that a monthly

cadence offers three chances to attend in a quarter against one.

Director of Research Inês Carvalho-Reyes said the finding doesn't mean every chapter should move to a monthly cadence. "Quarterly chapters cover more ground geographically in some cases, and a monthly meeting only works if there's enough happening to justify it. But chapters considering a cadence change now have a real number to weigh against the cost of running more meetings."

Rotating format and the smallest member organizations

Chapters that rotate their in-person meeting location across their footprint, rather than holding every meeting in one city, report the largest participation gains among member organizations with two or fewer staff — the organizations for whom a single city's meeting location can mean an all-day trip regardless of cadence. Rotating format showed no measurable effect on participation among organizations with more than ten staff, who reported similar attendance whether the meeting rotated or stayed fixed.

Chapter size doesn't predict participation

NANA's chapters range from under 100 to several hundred member organizations, and that range does not predict participation rate. The chapter with the highest reported participation and the chapter with the lowest are both mid-sized by member-organization count; the smallest and largest chapters in the sample both cluster near the sample median.

Virtual-every-month as an addition, not a replacement

Chapters that layer a virtual option onto their existing in-person cadence — rather than replacing in-person meetings with virtual ones — report additional participation specifically from organizations with two or fewer staff, without any reduction in attendance from larger organizations at the in-person meetings. The virtual option appears to reach organizations that would not have attended either format on its own, rather than substituting for in-person attendance among organizations that already attend.

A note on signature programs

Participation in a chapter's regular roundtable or briefing schedule is a separate question from turnout at its signature annual program, and the two don't always move together. The Great Lakes chapter's Winter Roundtable, capped at 40 attendees, has sold out in recent years even in a chapter where monthly roundtable participation sits close to the sample median — suggesting a capped, higher-profile annual program can draw member organizations who don't otherwise attend the monthly meeting.

The Southeast chapter's first Membership Growth Summit, planned for April in Atlanta, will be a useful test of the same question in a chapter with a different regular cadence. The research team plans to report on its turnout, and what it implies about signature-program draw versus routine meeting participation, in a future brief.

What chapter leaders can take from this

- A monthly cadence is associated with meaningfully higher participation than a quarterly one, but the gap is a data point for a cadence decision, not a mandate
- Rotating an in-person meeting's location is the single most effective lever measured here for reaching the smallest member organizations specifically

- Adding a virtual option alongside — not instead of — an in-person cadence appears to expand participation rather than cannibalize it
- A capped, higher-profile signature program can draw member organizations who don't otherwise attend a chapter's routine meetings, so low routine-meeting participation shouldn't be read as a sign that a chapter's broader membership is disengaged

Chapter leaders considering any of these changes should weigh them against their own chapter's geography and history rather than adopting a national template wholesale — the six chapters' different cadences and formats reflect real differences in footprint and member-organization density, not simply six independent guesses at the same problem. NANA's research team is happy to work through a specific chapter's numbers with its chair before that chapter commits to a cadence or format change, rather than applying this brief's sample-wide findings without checking them against local conditions first.

Chapters that have already tried rotating meeting locations or adding a virtual option are encouraged to share their own before-and-after participation numbers with the research team, so future editions of this brief can draw on more than one cadence change per chapter.