

Forms of Local Government

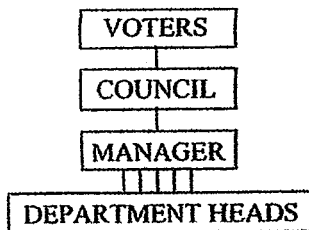
Council Manager

In the council-manager form of government, the council is the governing body of the city elected by the public, and the manager is hired by council to carry out the policies it establishes. The council usually consists of five to nine members including a mayor (or council president) who is either selected by the council or elected by the people as defined in the city charter. The size of the council is generally smaller than that of a mayor-council municipality, and council elections are usually nonpartisan.

The council provides legislative direction while the manager is responsible for day-to-day administrative operation of the city based on the council's recommendations. The mayor and council as a collegial body are responsible for setting policy, approving the budget, and determining the tax rate. The manager serves as the council's chief advisor. Managers also serve at the pleasure of the council and are responsible for preparing the budget, directing day-to-day operations, and hiring and firing personnel.

Typically, the mayor is recognized as the political head of the municipality, but is a member of the legislative body and does not have the power to veto legislative actions.

The Council-Manager Form



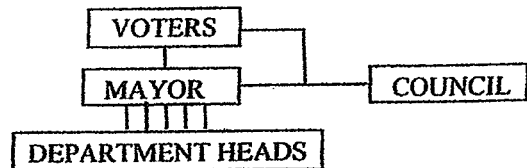
Mayor-Council

The mayor-council (council-elected executive counties) form of government is the form that most closely parallels the American federal government, with an elected legislature and a separately elected executive.

The mayor or elected executive is designated as the head of the city or county government. The extent of his or her authority can range from purely ceremonial to functions to full-scale responsibility for day-to-day operations. But the mayor's or elected executive's duties and powers generally include the following: hiring and firing department heads, preparation and administration of the budget, and veto power (which may be overridden) over acts of legislature. The legislature has the following responsibilities: adoption of the budget, passage of resolutions with legislation, auditing the performance of the government, and adoption of general policy positions.

In some communities the mayor or executive may assume a larger policy-making role, and responsibility for day-to-day operations is delegated to an administrator appointed by and responsible to the chief executive.

The Mayor-Council Form



3. The manager carries out the policies established by the elected governing body with an emphasis on effective, efficient, and equitable service delivery
4. Because decisions on policy and the future of the community are made by the entire governing body rather than a single individual, council-manager governments more often engage and involve their residents in decision making. Residents guide their community by serving on boards and commissions, participating in visioning and strategic planning, and designing community-oriented local government services
5. The form is flexible enough to adapt to local needs and demands. For example, some communities elect their councils at large, while others elect them by district or by a combination of an at-large-and-by-district system. Also, the mayor can be directly elected by voters or selected by and from among the council.

What is the role of the manager under council-manager government?

The manager is hired to serve the council and the community and brings to the local government the benefits of his/her training and experience in administering municipal or county projects and programs. The manager prepares a budget for the council's consideration; recruits, hires, terminates, and supervises government staff; serves as the council's chief advisor; and carries out the council's policies. Council members and residents count on the manager to provide complete and objective information about local operations, discuss the pros and cons of alternatives, and offer an assessment of the long-term consequences of their decisions.

Appointed managers serve at the pleasure of the governing body. They can be fired by a majority of the council, consistent with local laws, or any employment agreements they may enter into with the council. The manager makes policy recommendations to the council for consideration and final decision. The manager is bound by whatever action the council takes, and control is always in the hands of the elected representatives of the people.

What is the role of the council?

The council is the community's legislative and policy-making body. Power is centralized in the elected council, which, for example, approves the budget and determines the tax rate. The council also focuses on the community's goals, major projects, and such long-term considerations

as community growth, land use development, capital improvement and financing, and strategic planning. The council hires a professional manager to implement the administrative responsibilities related to these goals and supervises the manager's performance.

What is the role of the mayor or chairperson?

Mayors or chairpersons in council-manager communities are key political and policy leaders, and their specific duties, responsibilities, and authorities depend on the organization's charter. In council-manager communities, typically the mayor or chairperson is a voting member of the city council who presides at council meetings, represents the city in intergovernmental relationships, appoints members of citizen advisory boards and commissions (with the advice and consent of council), assigns agenda items to committees, facilitates communication and understanding between elected and appointed officials, and assists the council in setting goals and advocating policy decisions.

What value does a professional manager contribute to a community?

Professional managers contribute value to a community because they:

- Work in partnership with elected officials to develop sound approaches to community challenges by bringing together resources to make the right things happen and produce results that matter
- Bring a community-wide perspective to policy discussions and strive to connect the past and future while focusing on the present. They help the governing body develop the long-term vision for the community that provides a framework for policy development and goal setting
- Promote ethical government through commitment to a set of ethical standards that goes beyond those required by law. Managers who are members of ICMA subscribe to the organization's Code of Ethics, which requires them to "affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and maintain... a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant"
- Encourage inclusion and build consensus among diverse interests (including those of elected officials, the business community, and citizens), by focusing on the entire community rather than the centralized interests of one or two individuals

What is the role of the administrator??

The administrator is hired to serve the council and the community and brings to the local government the benefits of his/her training and experience in administering municipal or county projects and programs. The administrator prepares a budget for the council's consideration; recruits, hires, terminates, and supervises government staff; serves as the council's chief advisor; and carries out the council's policies. Council members and residents count on the administrator to provide complete and objective information about local operations, discuss the pros and cons of alternatives, and offer an assessment of the long-term consequences of their decisions.

Appointed administrators serve at the pleasure of the governing body. They can be fired by a majority of the council, consistent with local laws, or any employment agreements they may enter into with the council. The administrator makes policy recommendations to the council for consideration and final decision. The administrator is bound by whatever action the council takes, and control is always in the hands of the elected representatives of the people.

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What is the role of the mayor?

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