

Municipal Form of Government, 2006 Trends in Structure, Responsibility, and Composition

The 2006 *Municipal Form of Government* surveys were mailed in summer 2006 and winter 2007 to the Municipal Clerks in municipalities with populations 2,500 and over and to those municipalities under 2,500 in population that are in ICMA's database. Of the 8,278 municipalities that received surveys, 3,864 responded (46.7%).

For more information on the ICMA's *Municipal Form of Government* survey, please contact [Survey Research](#).



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Definitions for the survey that follows:

The term *municipality* refers to cities, towns, townships, villages, and boroughs.

The term *council* refers to an elected body whose members may be called council members, aldermen, selectmen, freeholders, trustees, commissioners, or a similar title.

The *chief appointed official* of the local government is often referred to as city manager, chief executive officer, city administrator, chief administrative officer, town administrator, village manager, or a similar title.

The *chief elected official* of the local government may have the title of mayor, president, board chair, etc.

1. Indicate your municipality's current form of government as defined by your charter, ordinance, or state law. (*Check only one.*)
 - 34.3 a. Mayor-Council.** Elected council or board serves as the legislative body. The chief elected official is the head of government, with significant administrative authority, generally elected separately from the council.
 - 54.5 b. Council-Manager.** Elected council or board and chief elected official (e.g., mayor) are responsible for making policy with advice of the chief appointed official. A professional administrator appointed by the board or council has full responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the government.
 - 0.9 c. Commission.** Members of a board of elected commissioners serve as heads of specific departments and collectively sit as the legislative body of the government.
 - 5.1 d. Town Meeting.** Qualified voters convene to make basic policy and to choose a board of selectmen. The selectmen and elected officers carry out the policies established by the government.
 - 0.7% e. Representative Town Meeting.** Voters select citizens to represent them at the town meeting. All citizens may attend and participate in debate, but only representatives may vote.
 - 4.4% f. Did not report**
2. How is your municipality's *structure or form of government* established? (*Check only one.*)

56.9 a. Charter	0.6 d. Resolution
26.6 b. State law	0.4 e. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>) _____
15.5 c. Ordinance	

3. Does your municipality have the position of chief appointed official? (*The chief appointed official of the local government is referred to as city manager, chief executive officer, city administrator, chief administrative officer, town administrator, village manager, or a similar title.*) **84.9** Yes **15.1** No

A. If your municipality does have the position of *chief appointed official*, what action established the position? (*This question refers only to the establishment of the position, not to the person or group that does the hiring.*)

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 46.3 a. Charter | 3.6 d. Resolution |
| 8.6 b. State law | 2.6 e. Chief elected official created position |
| 3.6 c. Ordinance | 2.0 f. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>) |

B. If your municipality does have the position of *chief appointed official*, who appoints the chief appointed official?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 3.8 a. <u>Appointed by</u> chief elected official | 8.5 d. <u>Nominated by</u> chief elected official and <u>approved by</u> council |
| 67.7 b. <u>Appointed by</u> council | 0.2 e. <u>Nominated by</u> council and <u>approved by</u> chief elected official |
| 18.9 c. <u>Appointed by</u> combination of chief elected official and council | 0.8 f. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>) |

4. Who has the independent authority to develop and make recommendations for the budget submitted to the council? (*The term "develop" means that the person has responsibility for content of the budget.*)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 11.1 a. Chief elected official | 10.0 d. Chief financial officer |
| 65.3 b. Chief appointed official | 5.3 e. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>) |
| 7.5 c. Combination of chief elected official and chief appointed official | 0.9 f. Finance committee |

5. Are your department heads: (*Check only one.*)

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 0.7 a. All elected | 87.7 b. All appointed | 11.5 c. Combination, some are elected and some appointed |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---|

A. If any of your department heads are appointed, who appoints them? (*Check only one.*)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 9.1 a. Chief elected official | 16.2 f. Council |
| 34.7 b. Chief appointed official | 8.0 g. Chief appointed official with advice and consent of council |
| 3.2 c. Combination of chief elected official and chief appointed official | 3.2 h. Chief elected official, chief appointed official, and council |
| 11.7 d. Combination of chief appointed official and council | 1.4 i. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>) |
| 16.2 e. Chief elected official and approved by council | |

6. Does your municipality have a provision for

A. **Initiative?** **57.5** Yes **42.5** No

Initiative allows citizens to place charter, ordinance, or home rule changes on the ballot by collecting a required number of signatures on a petition.

1. If *yes*, which of the following initiative processes does your municipality provide? (*Check all applicable.*)

- 49.4** a. **Indirect:** Requires that *before* any charter, ordinance, or home rule change proposed by citizens through a petition process is placed on the ballot for vote, the council must consider it. Vote results are binding on the local government.
- 49.2** b. **Direct:** Requires that any charter, ordinance, or home rule change proposed by the citizens through a petition process must be placed directly on the ballot for a vote. Vote results are binding on the local government.
- 15.0** c. **Non-binding initiative:** Allows citizens to place on the ballot a question for voter approval or rejection. The voter response is non-binding on the local government.

B. **Legislative referendum?** **76.1** 1. Yes **23.9** 2. No

Legislative referendum allows the council to place any question on the ballot for voter approval or rejection. The results may be binding or non-binding.

1. If *yes*, which of the following items must be placed on the ballot for voter approval? (*Check all applicable.*)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 67.4 a. Local bond measures | 24.9 d. Proposed home rule changes |
| 55.7 b. Proposed charter amendments | 12.9 e. Other |
| 17.2 c. Proposed ordinances | |

C. Popular referendum? 45.3 Yes 54.7 No

Allows citizens to collect signatures on a petition to place on the ballot any charter, ordinance, or home rule change that has been adopted by the local government before the change can take effect.

D. Recall? 60.3 Yes 39.7 No

Allows citizens to collect signatures on a petition to place on the ballot a question of whether an elected official should be removed from office before the expiration of his/her term.

7. **Since January 1, 2001**, have there been any attempts to change your municipality's *structure or form of government* (e.g., change from at-large to ward or district elections or add or eliminate the position of chief appointed official, etc.)?

8.8 Yes 91.2 No

A. If yes, approximately how many attempts have been made to change your municipality's *structure or form of government* since January 1, 2001? **1 Average**

B. Check each item that describes the proposed change(s) and indicate whether the change(s) was approved. **Average**

Attempted change	Not approved	Approved	Year approved
1. <i>Change</i> from at-large to ward or district elections	39.5	42.1	2003
2. <i>Change</i> from ward or district to at-large elections	39.1	47.8	2005
3. <i>Change</i> to a mixed system with some at-large and some ward or district elections	45.0	45.0	2003
4. <i>Change</i> the mix between the number of council members elected at large and the number elected by ward or district	47.4	36.8	2004
5. <i>Increase</i> the number of council or board members	34.5	58.6	2004
6. <i>Decrease</i> the number of council or board members	36.4	54.5	2004
7. <i>Change</i> the method of election of the chief elected official	29.4	55.9	2003
8. <i>Increase</i> in powers/authorities of the chief elected official	50.0	41.7	2004
9. <i>Decrease</i> in powers/authorities of the chief elected official	29.6	55.6	2004
10. <i>Add</i> the position of chief appointed official (the appointed professional administrator)	21.1	71.8	2004
11. <i>Eliminate</i> the position of chief appointed official (the appointed professional administrator)	52.9	29.4	2004
12. <i>Change</i> who appoints the chief appointed official from (enter the previous appointment authority) _____ to _____ (enter proposed)	25.0	0.0	-
13. <i>Change</i> the form of government	44.1	44.9	2004

CHIEF ELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL/MAYOR/BOARD CHAIR

The chief elected official of the local government may have the title of mayor, president, board chair, etc.

8. Does your municipality have a: **68.8** a. mayor **13.9** b. council president/board chair **17.2** c. both

*If you have both a mayor and a council/board president, answer the questions below for the position of **mayor**. If you do not have a mayor, but have a council president/board chair; answer the questions for the position of **council president/board chair**.*

9. Is the position of chief elected official in your local government *officially* full-time or part-time?
14.5 a. Full-time **85.5** b. Part-time

10. How is your chief elected official selected? (*Check only one.*)
76.2 a. Voters elect directly
21.5 b. Council selects from among its members
0.5 c. The council member receiving the most votes in general election becomes chief elected official
1.5 d. Council members rotate into the position of chief elected official
0.2 e. Other

11. How long is the chief elected official's term of office? (*Important: If the chief elected official is a member of the council, specify the term for the position of chief elected official, not of council member.*) (Check only one.)
13.5 a. 1 year **34.5** b. 2 years **6.0** c. 3 years **45.0** d. 4 years **0.9** e. Other (*Please specify.*)
12. Is there a legal limit on the number of terms allowed for the position of chief elected official?
9.1 1. Yes **90.9** 2. No (*go to question 13*)
A. If yes, what is the maximum number of terms allowed by law?
4.7 a. 1 term **54.0** b. 2 terms **28.3** c. 3 terms **8.4** d. 4 terms **4.7** e. Other (*Please specify.*)
B. If yes, when was the term limitation for the position of chief elected official enacted? **1990** (year) **Average**
C. If yes, what authority limits the number of terms for the position of chief elected official? (*Check only one.*)
9.9 a. Ordinance **70.9** b. Charter **15.6** c. State law **3.6** d. Other (*Please specify.*)
13. Is the chief elected official a member of council, that is, does the chief elected official serve on the council?
72.2 Yes **27.8** No
A. If yes, does the chief elected official receive supplemental compensation for these additional duties?
51.2 Yes **48.8** No
14. Under what circumstances does the chief elected official have the authority to vote in council meetings?
56.8 a. On all issues **34.4** b. Only to break a tie **7.2** c. Never **1.7** d. Other (*Please specify.*)
15. Does the chief elected official have the authority to veto council-passed measures? **28.2** Yes **71.8** No
A. If yes, is a "super majority" vote of the council required to overturn the mayoral veto? **90.8** Yes **9.2** No
16. Does the chief elected official have the authority to (*Check all applicable.*)
75.3 a. Assign council members to chair or serve on committees and make assignments to those committees
77.0 b. Appoint citizens to serve on advisory or quasi-judicial authorities, boards, or commissions
41.8 c. Receive the annual budget developed by the chief appointed official and present the budget with comments and suggestions to the council for consideration
19.3 d. Prepare the annual budget
49.5 e. Make an annual report to the council and citizens on the state of the community
31.2 f. Nominate the chief appointed official
45.1 g. Initiate the involuntary termination of the chief appointed official with review and approval by the council
4.7 h. Remove the chief appointed official without council review or approval
17. Since 2001 have any recall initiatives been filed against the chief elected official? **3.9** Yes **96.1** No
A. If yes, were any successful? **23.1** Yes **76.9** No
18. How many staff work directly for the chief elected official? a. Full-time staff **11** b. Part-time staff **7** **Average**

COUNCIL/BOARD OF SELECTMEN/TRUSTEES

The term **council** refers to the elected governing body of the local government. The elected body may be called the board of selectmen, trustees, aldermen, etc.

19. Does the political party affiliation of council candidates appear on the ballot in a local general election? **20.4** Yes **79.6** No
20. What is the current filing fee for running for a seat on the council? (*If there is no fee, enter zero.*) **\$66** **Average**
21. How many council positions are there on your council? **6** **Average**
(*Include the chief elected official if that position serves on the council. If the chief elected official is a member of the council, your answer to question 13 should be "yes."*)
22. How are your council members selected? (*Check only one.*)
66.0 a. All at large **17.3** b. All by ward/district **16.7** c. Combination of at large and ward/district.
A. If you selected **c**, indicate the number of council members elected by each of the following methods:
2 a. At large **5** b. By ward/district **Average**
23. Are all of these council positions filled? **97.6** Yes **2.4** No A. If *no*, how many council positions are filled? **6** **Average**

24. How many current council members are (*Total number of council members should equal the total in question 21 if all are filled. If all are not filled, this number should equal the total in 23A.*) a. Male **5** b. Female **2** **Average**

25. How many current council members fall into the following age groups? (*Total number of council members should equal the total in question 21 if all are filled. If all are not filled, this number should equal the total in 23A.*) **Average**

a. Under 22	1	d. 40-49	2
b. 22-29	1	e. 50-59	2
c. 30-39	2	f. 60 and over	2

26. How many current council members are (*Total number of council members should equal the total in question 21 if all are filled. If all are not filled, this number should equal the total in 23A.*) **Average**

a. Native American	4	d. White, not of Hispanic origin	6
b. Hispanic	2	e. Black, not of Hispanic origin	2
c. Asian or Pacific Islander	1		

27. How many current council members are in each of these occupational categories? (**Count members only once.** *If any member has more than one occupation, include that person in the category where he or she spends the greatest amount of time. Total number of council members should equal the total in question 21 if all are filled. If all are not filled, this number should equal the total in 23A.*)

1 a. Lawyers	1 g. Homemakers
2 b. Other professionals (medicine, engineering, etc.)	1 h. Teachers and other educational personnel
2 c. Business executives/managers	1 i. Clergy
2 d. Business/industry employees	2 j. Retired persons
2 e. Service industry employees	2 k. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>)
1 f. Farmers or ranchers	

28. Indicate the length of term for council members. (*Even if the chief elected official is a member of council, specify the length of term for other council members, not for the chief elected official.*)

A. Council members elected <i>at large</i>					
20.7 a. 2 years	14.8 b. 3 years	62.4 c. 4 years	1.4 d. 6 years	0.7 e. Other	
B. Council members elected <i>by ward or district</i>					
26.8 a. 2 years	7.3 b. 3 years	65.0 c. 4 years	0.3 d. 6 years	0.3 e. Other	

29. Terms of office are (*Check only one.*) **84.3** a. Staggered **15.7** b. Concurrent

30. Is there a legal limit on the number of terms a council member may serve? **9.1** Yes **90.9** No

A. If yes, what is the maximum number of terms allowed by law? **3** **Average**

B. If yes, when was the term limitation enacted? **1991** (year) **Average**

C. If yes, by what authority is the number of terms limited? (*Check only one.*)

10.2 1. Ordinance	71.7 2. Charter	15.8 3. State law	2.2 4. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>)
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31. How many incumbents ran for reelection to council in the last general election? **3** **Average**

a. How many of those incumbents were reelected? (*If none, enter zero.*) **2** **Average**

32. How is a council member's seat filled if it is vacated before the term has expired? (*Check only one.*)

24.9 a. Method depends on length of term remaining	9.6 d. Appointed by chief elected official
8.3 b. Special election	1.1 e. Position left vacant until next regular election
51.3 c. Appointed by council	4.9 f. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>)

33. Since 2001, have any recall initiatives been filed against council members? **4.5** Yes **95.5** No

A. If yes, were any successful? **32.9** Yes **67.1** No

34. Are any council members (*excluding the chief elected official*) paid an annual salary or stipend for any of their services?

85.0 Yes **15.0** No

A. If yes, please indicate the approximate annual dollar amount that your council members receive. **Average**

1. Full-time council member	\$5,457	2. Part-time council member	\$4,798
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35. How often does the council meet in formal session? (*Check only one.*)
- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 0.3 | a. More than once a week | 20.1 | e. Once a month |
| 5.3 | b. Once a week | 0.1 | f. Less than once a month |
| 4.4 | c. Three times a month | 1.3 | g. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>) |
| 68.3 | d. Twice a month | | |
36. Does the council have standing committees (*permanent bodies with set memberships and regularly scheduled meeting times*) that consider specific policy matters? **54.1** Yes **45.9** No
- A. If *yes*, approximately how many standing committees did the council have as of January 2001?
- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| 17.0 | a. 1-2 standing committees | 5.9 | d. 11-15 standing committees |
| 43.2 | b. 3-5 standing committees | 4.1 | e. More than 15 standing committees |
| 29.8 | c. 6-10 standing committees | | |
37. Does your municipality have citizen authorities, boards, or commissions? **94.5** Yes **5.5** No
- A. If *yes*, are members **5.9** 1. Elected **99.6** 2. Appointed (*Check all applicable.*)
- B. If *yes*, in what capacity do they serve? (*Check all applicable.*)
- | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 88.7 | 1. Advisory | 40.9 | 2. Decision/policy making | 31.3 | 3. Quasi-judicial |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
- C. If *yes*, in which areas are they used? (*Check all applicable in the list below.*)
- | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 28.9 | a. Growth | 16.6 | i. Civil service | 19.4 | q. Architectural review |
| 21.2 | b. Transportation | 40.6 | j. Libraries | 25.1 | r. Code enforcement |
| 86.2 | c. Zoning | 30.3 | k. Housing | 66.3 | s. Parks and recreation |
| 19.7 | d. Finance | 13.9 | l. Community-police relations | 7.8 | t. Ethics |
| 18.4 | e. Airports | 40.6 | m. Economic development | 11.8 | u. Charter review commissions |
| 15.2 | f. Art | 84.2 | n. Planning | 15.9 | v. Other (<i>Please specify.</i>) |
| 26.5 | g. Beautification | 21.5 | o. Environmental issues | | |
| 16.9 | h. Cable TV | 38.9 | p. Historic preservation | | |
38. How many staff are employed by the council to work exclusively on council business? **Average**
- | | | | |
|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| a. Full-time staff | 3 | b. Part-time staff | 2 |
|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
39. When does your next fiscal year begin (i.e., 07/2001)? **Average**
- | | | | |
|-------|----------------|------|-------------|
| Month | May (5) | Year | 2010 |
|-------|----------------|------|-------------|