



SECOND REQUEST
If you have already returned
this questionnaire,
please disregard this request.
Thank you.

Municipal Form of Government, 1996: Trends in Structure, Responsibility, and Composition

August 1996

Dear Municipal Clerk:

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has conducted a *Form of Government Survey* for almost thirty years. This year, the National Civic League (NCL) is joining ICMA in its effort to gather the most comprehensive information available on form of government, election systems, provisions for referendum/recall, and term limits. In addition, information on characteristics of the local governing body is covered in this survey. A summary of the survey results will be available on the Internet after the data have been tabulated.

Please contribute to this significant body of knowledge by completing the survey and returning it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope as soon as possible. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William H. Hansell, Jr.".

William H. Hansell, Jr.
Executive Director, ICMA

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher T. Gates".

Christopher T. Gates
President, NCL

Definitions

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.

CAO refers to the chief *appointed* official of the local government. The person may be called city manager, town administrator, village manager, or a similar title.

The term *mayor* refers to the chief elected official of the local government. The person may be called the president, board chair, etc.

1. Indicate your current form of government as defined by your charter, ordinance, or state law. (*Check only one.*)

- a. **Mayor-Council** Elected council or board serves as the legislative body. The chief elected official is the head of government, generally elected separately from the council, with powers that may range from limited duties to full-scale authority for the daily operation of the government.
- b. **Council-Manager** Elected council or board is responsible for making policy. A professional administrator appointed by the board or council has full responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the government.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- f. Not sure

2. Does your municipality have the position of CAO?

1. No 2. Yes

A. If yes, by which of the following methods was the position established? (*Check only one.*)

1. Charter 2. State law 3. Ordinance 4. Other (*Please specify.*) _____

3. Who has the overall responsibility for *developing* the budget submitted to the council? (*Check only one.*)

- a. Chief elected official b. CAO c. Combination chief elected official and CAO
 d. Other (*Please specify.*) _____

4. Are your department heads a. Elected b. Appointed c. Both

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

1. Mayor 2. CAO 3. Combination elected head of government and CAO
 4. Other (*Please specify.*) _____

5. Does your municipality have a provision for any of the following? (*Check all applicable.*)

- a. **Initiative** Permits citizens to place charter, ordinance, or home rule changes directly on a ballot for approval or disapproval by the voters.
- b. **Binding referendum** Allows voters to determine the outcome on public issues by binding the governing body to act on voters' opinions.
- c. **Non-binding referendum** Allows voters to express an opinion on a specific topic without binding the governing body to act on voters' opinions.
- d. **Recall** A vote by the citizens to remove an elected official from office before the expiration of that official's term.
- e. **Petition or Protest Referendum** Allows voters to delay enactment of a local ordinance or bylaw until a referendum is held.

6. Since January 1, 1991, have there been any attempts to change your municipality's *structure or form of government* (i.e., a change from at-large to ward or district elections, elimination or addition of position of CAO, etc.)?

1. No 2. Yes

A. If yes, approximately how many attempts have been made to change your municipality's *structure or form of government* since January 1991? _____

B. Check the items that describe the changes.

	Proposed	Not approved	Approved	Year approved
1. Change <i>from</i> at-large <i>to</i> ward or district elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2. Change to a mixed system with some at-large and some ward or district elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3. Change <i>the mix</i> between the number of council members elected at large and the number elected by or district	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4. <i>Increase</i> the number of members of the council or board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5. <i>Decrease</i> the number of members of the council or board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6. Change the method of election of the chief elected official	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
7. <i>Add</i> the position of CAO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
8. <i>Eliminate</i> the position of CAO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
9. Change who appoints the CAO from (list previous appointment authority) _____ to _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
10. Change in form of government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

a. What was the proposed change? (Place a check in the box in the "From" column that indicates the original form and a check in the box in the "To" column that indicates the proposed form.)

From	To
<input type="checkbox"/> Mayor-council	<input type="checkbox"/> Mayor-council
<input type="checkbox"/> Council-manager	<input type="checkbox"/> Council-manager
<input type="checkbox"/> Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> Commission
<input type="checkbox"/> Town meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Town meeting
<input type="checkbox"/> Representative town meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Representative town meeting

Chief Elected Official/Head of Municipal Government (Mayor, Chair, etc.)

Please respond to the following questions regarding the chief **elected** official of your government. The term *chief elected official* will be used to represent that position.

7. Is the position of chief elected official *officially* full-time or part-time? (Check only one.) a. Full-time b. Part-time

8. How is your chief elected official selected? (Check only one.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Voters elect directly | <input type="checkbox"/> d. Council members rotate into the position of chief elected official |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Council selects from among its members | <input type="checkbox"/> e. Other (Please specify.) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. The council member receiving the most votes in the general election becomes the chief elected official | |

9. What is the length of 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.)

- a. 1 year b. 2 years c. 4 years d. Other (Please specify.) _____

Please turn the page.

10. Is there a legal limit on the number of terms allowed for position of chief elected official? 1. No 2. Yes

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

- a. 1 term b. 2 terms c. 3 terms d. 4 terms e. more than 4 terms

B. When was the term limitation enacted? _____

C. By what authority is the number of terms limited? (Check only one.)

1. Ordinance 2. Charter 3. State law 4. Other (Please specify.) _____

11. Is the chief elected official a member of council? 1. No 2. Yes

12. Under what circumstances does the chief elected official have the authority to vote in council meetings? (Check only one.)

- a. On all issues b. Only to break a tie c. Never d. Other (Please specify.) _____

13. Does the chief elected official have the authority to veto council-passed measures? 1. No 2. Yes

A. If yes, in what cases may the chief elected official exercise veto power? (Check all applicable.)

1. Over ordinances 4. Over appropriations
 2. Over specific sections of ordinances 5. Over specific items of appropriations
 3. Over resolutions 6. Other (Please specify.) _____

14. If the chief elected official also serves on the council, does the chief elected official receive supplemental compensation for additional elected head of government duties? 1. No 2. Yes 3. Not applicable

15. Since 1991, how has the involvement of the chief elected executive changed in the areas listed below? (Check the box in the column that best describes the involvement of the chief elected official.)

	Significantly increased	Somewhat increased	Remained the same	Somewhat decreased	Significantly decreased
Policy making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiation with the private sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With citizen groups/the public	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Since 1991, have any recall initiatives been filed against the mayor? 1. No 2. Yes

If yes, were any successful? 1. No 2. Yes

Council or Board (Selectmen, Aldermen, Trustees, etc.)

If your chief elected official is a member of the council, please include the chief elected official in your answers to the following questions about your elected council or board.

17. Does the political party affiliation of candidates for board or council appear on the ballot in a local general election?

1. No 2. Yes

18. What is the present filing fee for running for city council? (Indicate zero if none.) \$ _____

19. How many members serve on your council? _____

29. Since 1991, have any recall initiatives been filed against council members? 1. No 2. Yes

A. If yes, were any successful? 1. No 2. Yes

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

- a. Special election d. Appointed by chief elected official
 b. Appointed by council e. Position left vacant until next regular election
 c. Method depends on length of term remaining f. Other (Please specify.) _____

31. Are any council members (excluding the chief elected official) paid for any of their services? 1. No 2. Yes

A. If yes, please indicate the approximate dollar amount by type of compensation that your council members receive.

- | | Annual salary | Stipend |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Full-time council member \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Part-time council member \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

32. How often does the council meet in formal session? (Check only one.)

- a. More than once a week c. Three times a month e. Once a month
 b. Once a week d. Twice a month f. Less than once a month

33. Does the council have standing council committees (subsets of council) that consider specific policy matters? 1. No 2. Yes

A. If yes, approximately how many standing committees did the council have as of January 1996?

- a. 1-2 council committees c. 6-10 council committees e. more than 15 council committees
 b. 3-5 council committees d. 11-15 council committees

34. Does the council use citizen boards/commissions? 1. No 2. Yes

A. If yes, are members 1. Elected 2. Appointed

B. If yes, in what capacity do they serve? 1. Advisory 2. Decision/policy making

C. If yes, in which areas are they used? (Check all applicable.)

- a. Parks and recreation e. Neighborhood planning
 b. Community-police relations f. Environmental issues
 c. Economic development g. Transportation
 d. Growth h. Other (Please specify.) _____

35. How many staff are employed by the council to work exclusively on council business?

a. Full-time staff _____ b. Part-time staff _____

36. How many personal staff work directly for the chief elected official? a. Full-time staff _____ b. Part-time staff _____

37. When does your next fiscal year begin (i.e., 07/96)? Month _____ Year _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Office telephone number _____

Thank you. Please return the survey to Lisa Huffman at ICMA, 777 North Capitol St., NE, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002-4201.