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.

Click here to buy the complete dataset from bookstore.icma.org.

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
   
   26.6 b. State law
   
   15.5 c. Ordinance
   
   0.6 d. Resolution
   
   0.4 e. Other (Please specify.)________________________
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.)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State law</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinance</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief elected official created position</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify.)</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appointment Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointed by chief elected official</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed by council</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed by combination of chief elected official and council</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify.)</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed by chief appointed official</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated by chief appointed official and approved by council</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated by council and approved by chief elected official</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief elected official</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief appointed official</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of chief elected official and chief appointed official</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief elected official and approved by council</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of chief appointed official and council</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief financial officer</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify.)</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance committee</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department Heads</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All elected</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All appointed</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination, some are elected and some appointed</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appointment Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief elected official</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief appointed official</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of chief elected official and chief appointed official</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of chief appointed official and council</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief elected official and approved by council</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief appointed official with advice and consent of council</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief elected official, chief appointed official, and council</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief elected official and approved by council</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify.)</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Legislative referendum? 76.1 Yes 23.9 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.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local bond measures</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed charter amendments</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed ordinances</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed home rule changes</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

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

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
1.5 c. The council member receiving the most votes in general election becomes 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.)
   1. 1 year  34.5  2. 2 years  6.0  3. 3 years  45.0  4. 4 years  0.9  5. 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  1. 1 term  54.0  2. 2 terms  28.3  3. 3 terms  8.4  4. 4 terms  4.7  5. 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  1. Ordinance  70.9  2. Charter  15.6  3. State law  3.6  4. 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  1. Yes  27.8  2. No

A. If yes, does the chief elected official receive supplemental compensation for these additional duties?
   51.2  1. Yes  48.8  2. No

14. Under what circumstances does the chief elected official have the authority to vote in council meetings?
   56.8  1. On all issues  34.4  2. Only to break a tie  7.2  3. Never  1.7  4. Other (Please specify.)

15. Does the chief elected official have the authority to veto council-passed measures?
   28.2  1. Yes  71.8  2. No

A. If yes, is a “super majority” vote of the council required to overturn the mayoral veto?
   90.8  1. Yes  9.2  2. No

16. Does the chief elected official have the authority to (Check all applicable.)
   75.3  1. Assign council members to chair or serve on committees and make assignments to those committees
   77.0  2. Appoint citizens to serve on advisory or quasi-judicial authorities, boards, or commissions
   41.8  3. 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  4. Prepare the annual budget
   49.5  5. Make an annual report to the council and citizens on the state of the community
   31.2  6. Nominate the chief appointed official
   45.1  7. Initiate the involuntary termination of the chief appointed official with review and approval by the council
   4.7  8. 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  1. Yes  96.1  2. No

A. If yes, were any successful?
   23.1  1. Yes  76.9  2. 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  1. Yes  79.6  2. 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  1. All at large  17.3  2. All by ward/district  16.7  3. 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  1. At large  5  2. By ward/district  Average

23. Are all of these council positions filled?  97.6  1. Yes  2.4  2. 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 23.A.) 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 23.A.) 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 23.A.) Average
   a. Native American 4
   b. Hispanic 2
   c. Asian or Pacific Islander 1
   d. White, not of Hispanic origin 6
   e. Black, not of Hispanic origin 2

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

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 at large
      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 by ward or district
      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 (Please specify.)

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 (Please specify.)

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
35. How often does the council meet in formal session? (Check only one.)
   a. More than once a week [35]  
   b. Once a week [53]  
   c. Three times a month [44]  
   d. Twice a month [68]  
   e. Once a month [20]  
   f. Less than once a month [0]  
   g. Other (Please specify.) [1]  

36. Does the council have standing committees (permanent bodies with set memberships and regularly scheduled meeting times) that consider specific policy matters?  
   a. Yes [54.1]  
   b. No [45.9]  

A. If yes, approximately how many standing committees did the council have as of January 2001?  
   a. 1-2 standing committees [17]  
   b. 3-5 standing committees [43]  
   c. 6-10 standing committees [29]  
   d. 11-15 standing committees [5]  
   e. More than 15 standing committees [2]  

37. Does your municipality have citizen authorities, boards, or commissions?  
   a. Yes [94.5]  
   b. No [5.5]  

A. If yes, are members  
   a. Elected [5.9]  
   b. Appointed [99.6]  

B. If yes, in what capacity do they serve? (Check all applicable.)  
   a. Advisory [40.9]  
   b. Decision/policy making [31.3]  
   c. Quasi-judicial [3]  

C. If yes, in which areas are they used? (Check all applicable in the list below.)  
   a. Growth [28.9]  
   b. Transportation [21.2]  
   c. Zoning [86.2]  
   d. Finance [19.7]  
   e. Airports [18.4]  
   f. Art [15.2]  
   g. Beautification [26.5]  
   h. Cable TV [16.9]  
   i. Civil service [16.6]  
   j. Libraries [40.6]  
   k. Housing [30.3]  
   l. Community-police relations [13.9]  
   m. Economic development [40.6]  
   n. Planning [84.2]  
   o. Environmental issues [21.5]  
   p. Historic preservation [38.9]  
   q. Architectural review [19.4]  
   r. Code enforcement [25.1]  
   s. Parks and recreation [66.3]  
   t. Ethics [7.8]  
   u. Charter review commissions [11.8]  
   v. Other (Please specify.) [15.9]  

38. How many staff are employed by the council to work exclusively on council business?  
   a. Full-time staff [3]  
   b. Part-time staff [2]  

39. When does your next fiscal year begin (i.e., 07/2001)?  
   a. Month [May (5)]  
   b. Year [2010]  

Average